

A Study Of Philippians:

A verse by verse examination of the
apostle Paul's epistle of joy to the
beloved Philippian church.

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Introduction

Ten miles inland from the harbor city of Neapolis was Philippi. It was one of the principle cities of Macedonia and was historically famous in the annals of both Greece and Rome. It was founded by and named after Philip of Macedon, the father of Alexander the Great. In Roman history, Philippi was best known for the battle that took place there in 42 B.C. between the Second Triumvirate (Octavius, Antonius, and Lepidus) and the republicans of Rome under Brutus and Cassius, which resulted in the defeat and death of the latter. After the victory, Octavius made Philippi a colony (cf. Acts 16:12). After the battle of Actium in 31 B.C., Augustus transported a large number of Roman veterans to the colony and granted it the status of *jus Italicum*, which placed it on a par with the Roman colonies of Italy. Consequently, Philippi considered itself as being an entirely Roman city. Its citizens were Roman citizens who enjoyed all the rights and privileges of such: exemption from scourging, from arrest except in extreme cases, and the right to appeal to the emperor. The official language was Latin. They were governed by their own magistrates who took great pride in calling themselves *Praetors*. These appeared in public with attendant lictors who bore the official bundles of rods or *fascies* with a mace protruding from the center which were the symbols of Roman power and authority.

From our point of interest, Philippi is the first place in Europe where the gospel was preached. The story of the founding of the church at Philippi is told by Luke in Acts 16:11-40. Apparently, the Jewish population of Philippi was so small that they did not even have a synagogue in which to worship, only a “place where prayer was customarily made” by the riverside. The first convert, Lydia, as exhibited by her conduct in offering her house and hospitality to Paul and his entourage, was a generous and kind woman, and her actions set the tone of generosity for this church. In Philippians 4:15,16, this church sent gifts to Paul who was then in Thessalonica. And, of course, this present epistle returns thanks for a gift sent by the hand of Epaphroditus while Paul was in Rome during his first imprisonment. This church, along with the other churches of Macedonia, had made a name

for themselves when it came to liberality (II Corinthians 8:1-5). What a joyful occasion their concern for Paul must have been to him. Consequently, it should not surprise us to hear him refer to them as “my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown” (Philippians 4:1).

Even though things began and continued well at Philippi, soon after the conversion of Lydia and her household, persecution lifted up its ugly head. Perhaps to demonstrate that the Lord's work is advanced by difficulties and discouragements, rather than by ease and prosperity, Paul and Silas are brought into conflict with heathen superstition in one of its worst forms, and with the rough violence of colonial authorities. In expelling a demon from a slave girl, who had been a source of much gain for her masters, Paul incurs the wrath of these men, who then falsely accuse Paul and Silas of teaching “customs which are not lawful for us, being Romans, to receive or observe” (Acts 16:21). This appeal to political prejudice resulted in the imprisonment and beating of Paul and Silas, who were subsequently released from prison by an earthquake. As a result of all this, more people are converted to Christ, including the Philippian jailor.

When Paul left Philippi in the year 52, Timothy and Luke remained behind to build up the new church. Timothy soon followed Paul, and when he was sent back to Macedonia from Athens, he probably again visited Philippi. Luke, it would seem, continued to work in Philippi. His first “we” section (Acts 16:11-40) ends with Paul's departure from Philippi and the second does not begin until Paul again returns to the city (Acts 20:5,6). This occurred in 58, when Paul and the servants of the churches took the great collection to Jerusalem (Acts 20:4). Paul had actually been in Philippi the previous summer when on his way from Ephesus to Corinth he spent some time in Macedonia (II Corinthians 2:13). Therefore, Paul was in Philippi on three different occasions. His second visit was probably his longest. It seems very likely that his second letter to the Corinthians, which was written while he was in Macedonia, was written in Philippi.

Timothy is mentioned along with Paul in this epistle (1:1). He was with Paul when the

church was established. As was mentioned earlier, when Timothy was sent back to Thessalonica from Athens, he probably went back to Philippi (I Thessalonians 3:1,2,6). Timothy was also in Philippi when Paul sent him by land on an extended commission from Ephesus to Corinth prior to Paul's own slower journey over the same land route. This occurred in 57. Finally, Timothy was in the group that took the collection from Corinth to Jerusalem via Philippi (Acts 20:4). Timothy's connection with Philippi cast light on the statements Paul made about him in Philippians 2:19-23. Once more this faithful and beloved servant of Paul's is being sent to this beloved church.

The Occasion For And Date Of This Epistle

In Paul's time, letters were written to people at a distance when opportunity presented itself to forward them to their destination. In this particular case, Epaphroditus was about to return to Philippi (2:38). He had brought Paul a gift and also possibly a letter from the Philippian church (4:1-14,17,18). Verses that intimate he may be replying to a letter are found in 1:12; 1:19; 1:25f; 2:26; 3:2; and 4:10-13. But, even if he had not recently received a letter from them, he had received their generous gift. As Epaphroditus was about to go back to Philippi, Paul took the opportunity to send his warm expression of gratitude, along with his fervent admonition to steadfastness and humility. Also, and maybe even more importantly, this epistle was an opportunity for Paul to inform his beloved brethren just how his appeal was proceeding.

Although the epistle does not easily lend itself to outline form, we gather the following from this letter: Paul wrote (1) to express his appreciation for their fellowship in the gospel, his confidence in their progress, and his ambition

for them (1:3-11); (2) to report his circumstances, hopes, and fears (1:12-26); (3) to exhort them to unity, humility, and consistency (1:27-2:18); (4) to inform them of his purpose to send Timothy and Epaphroditus to them (2:19-30); (5) to warn them against the Judaizers (3:1-14) and the antinomianists (3:15-4:1); (6) to appeal for the reconciliation of Euodia and Syntyche (4:2,3); (7) to admonish them to joyfulness, prayerfulness, and the pursuit of all that is good (4:4-9); (8) to express his gratitude for their recent gift (4:10-20); and (9) to send his greetings (4:21-23).

The letter was clearly written from Rome by Paul while he was in "chains" in the *Praetorium*. He sends greetings from "Caesar's household" (4:22), indicates that he expects something to happen very soon concerning his appeal (1:20-26), and expresses confident hope that he will visit the Philippians again (1:26; 2:24). This all points to Paul's first imprisonment in Rome, which we know lasted for "two whole years" (Acts 28:30). It must have been written during the end of these two years, which would make the date somewhere around A.D. 63. Considerable preaching had already been done in Rome since Paul's arrival (1:12-18). Furthermore, his case is on verge of a final decision (1:12,13,23-26). This could not have been the case during his early months in the city. In addition, considerable time was needed for the events to transpire that lie between Paul's arrival at Rome and the writing of this letter. (1) News of Paul's arrival had to travel to Philippi; (2) Epaphroditus had to come from Philippi; (3) the news of his illness while at Rome had to get back to Philippi; and (4) the news of the Philippians' concern for Epaphroditus had to get back to Rome. Many scholars believe that Philippians is the last of the so-called four "Prison Epistles."

Chapter One

Greetings—1:1-2

(1) Paul and Timothy, servants of Jesus Christ, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons: (2) Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

1. **Paul and Timothy,**. Timothy is with Paul at Rome. He helped found the church at Philippi and was going to be sent to it again (2:19f). **Servants of Jesus Christ,**. Paul does not identify himself as an apostle in this letter as he does in many of his other epistles. Perhaps this is because his right to be called an apostle had not been called into question by this church as it had been in some other places. When it was not necessary to defend his apostleship and his teaching as from God, he was modest and unassuming and simply placed himself on an equality with the humblest servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. He assumed no titles or dignities. The spirit of Christ and His religion are contrary to the assumption of titles and dignities that exalt one Christian above another—something so prevalent in the religious world. Timothy, who was not an apostle and did not have Paul's authority, was considered by Paul to be his equal when it came to servanthood. **To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi,**. This letter is being written to all the sanctified, set apart from, separated to, or set apart ones *in Christ*. The term “saint” to designate a Christian is regularly used in the New Testament beginning with Acts 9:13. When one obeys the gospel, he is set apart or sanctified by the blood of Christ. The more the saint sanctifies the word of God in his heart, the more he is sanctified and deserves the name “saint.” Even so, all disciples are saints, no matter how weak or liable to err they may be. Therefore, it must be understood that this term does not suggest perfectionalism. **With the bishops and the deacons:**. This wonderful church was blessed in that it was fully organized scripturally. These bishops or overseers are elsewhere referred to as “elders.” The men who would oversee the local congregation, were to be older mature men who met the qualification set down in I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. The use of

the term “bishop” to refer to men who exercised control over more than one church is completely foreign to the New Testament and originated with the doctrines of men so prevalent in denominationalism. Deacons were servants of the church and served the local congregation under the oversight of the bishops. It is interesting to note that there was a plurality of both bishops and deacons. This is the New Testament pattern.

2. **Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.** This is the usual salutation extended by Paul (cf. Romans 1:7; I Corinthians 1:3; and II Corinthians 1:2).

Thankfulness And Prayer—1:3-11

(3) I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, (4) always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, (5) for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now, (6) being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete {it} until the day of Jesus Christ; (7) just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers with me of grace. (8) For God is my witness, how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ. (9) And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, (10) that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, (11) being filled with the fruits of righteousness which {are} by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

3. **I thank my God upon every remembrance of you,**. Paul is always thankful for the Philippians brethren. Thankful for their faithfulness to the Lord and to him.

4. **Always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy,**. His prayers for them were always of joyful supplication to God to bless them. Often Paul was forced to pray for his brethren with grief and tears, but not so with the Philippians. This makes them unique among the early New Testament churches.

5. **For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now,**. From the very beginning they had been moved with sympathetic cooperation in the furtherance of the gospel. For this end, the Philippian worked together, with one another, or with Paul and others.

6. **Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete {it} until the day of Jesus Christ;**. Paul, although he and his companions started the work in Philippi, gives all credit to God. According to Paul, it must always be remembered that it was God, through the gospel, who started this work. Furthermore, what He started, He will finish! Even so, we must do our part. As Paul stresses in 2:12b, "Work out you own salvation with fear and trembling."

7. **Just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers with me of grace.** Paul loved them and they loved him. They had proved their faithfulness and love over and over again. He was, therefore, confident that they were always going to be faithful to the Lord and to him.

8. **For God is my witness, how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ.** Paul loved the Philippians and was willing to suffer for them, just as Christ loved us all and was willing to suffer for us. Paul is not making a oath, as some think, but is simply saying that his longing for them is hidden in his heart, hence God alone is the direct witness of its presence.

9. **And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment,**. He prays that their love for God and His word will cause them to grow in knowledge and understanding. This would fit them more and more to cherish the same love for man that God cherishes. In Romans 14, love must use the knowledge of the strong Christian so as not to hurt the weak. Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up (I Corinthians 8:1). To have all knowledge but not love is to be nothing (I Corinthians 13:2). Godly wisdom, knowledge, and understanding come after faith and love (Ephesians 1:15-17).

10. **That you may approve the things that are excellent,**. This will allow them to be able to discern between good and evil. If we distinguish between things that differ, it is for the sake of approving what is excellent. In this process, we are not merely to distinguish the good from the bad, but the best from among the good. This, then, is a true description of Biblical wisdom, love growing continually richer in knowledge

and spiritual discernment. **That you may be sincere.** Sincerity denotes truthfulness and uprightness. When a person is sincere, there will be agreement between heart and tongue. A sincere person is not double-minded or deceitful. **And without offense till the day of Christ.** Offense is the cause of stumbling. It means without giving or receiving offense. The idea being conveyed here is that by the increase of the knowledge of God's will, one may neither find occasion himself, or cause others, to stumble in the Christian race.

11. **Being filled with the fruits of righteousness which {are} by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.** Here, the fruits that are produced by righteousness are under consideration. Some of these are mentioned in Galatians 5:22 and 23. All this comes as a result of Christ and glorifies the Father, whose eternal plan was that men and women would be conformed to the image of His wonderful Son.

Christ Is Preached—1:12-18

(12) But I want you to know, brethren, that the things {which happened} to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel, (13) so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ; (14) and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. (15) Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from good will: (16) The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains; (17) but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel. (18) What then? Only {that} in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice.

12. **But I want you to know, brethren, that the things {which happened} to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel,**. When this letter is being written, Paul has been a prisoner in Rome for some time. He had appealed his case while at Caesarea to the emperor of Rome. For a long time, it seems, the trial before Caesar is delayed. He was allowed to live in his own hired house, guarded by a soldier, for two years. Now, it would seem that the trial had begun or had already taken place and he was awaiting the verdict, expecting to be released, but still not sure. As they might have looked upon his imprisonment as a hinderance to the

furtherance of the gospel, he wants to dispel this idea. By all earthly standards, what would seem to have been a loss, God had turned into great gain.

13. **So that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ;** It had become evident to the palace guard and to all at Rome that his imprisonment was not a political matter, neither was it on account of any crime he had committed; but it was because of his connection with Jesus Christ. It was for this, and this alone, that he was on trial.

14. **And most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.** “Most” means not all the brethren at Rome had become more bold in preaching and teaching the word. Courage, as well as fear, is contagious. Seeing Paul preach Christ before the highest officers and dignitaries of the Roman government had inspired many others to boldly “speak the word of God without fear.”

15. **Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife,** Paul is addressing himself to the motivation of some who proclaim the gospel. Those referred to here are not preaching Christ out of any desire to exalt Him, but because of their envious and contentious spirit toward Paul. The gospel had preceded Paul in Rome. Evidently, some who had received a degree of prominence in the church before Paul's arrival in chains were fading in the light of Paul's success in proclaiming the gospel. While in chains, Paul had done more to spread the gospel throughout Rome than they had done in their freedom. Consequently, they resented his presence in Rome. Therefore, in their preaching, which ironically had become much bolder as a result of Paul's experience with the Roman authorities, they hoped, being unfettered by Paul's chains, to have more success than the apostle. This, they believed, would allow them to regain their prominence at Rome. As horrible and ungodly as this kind of thinking is, it should not surprise us that, living in the seat of power of the most powerful government on the face of the earth, some brethren could, and did, get caught up in the pursuit of power, striving out of envy for preeminence among the brethren. Unfortunately, Paul mentions nothing that is not still present with us today. Are there not preachers today who are envious and contentious toward their fellow preachers? They preach Christ with the same competitive spirit as did their Roman counterparts.

And some also from good will: The good will mentioned here is contrasted with envy and

strife. Like envy and strife, good will is a personal motive, but unlike envy and strife, a motive of good will is noble and pure.

16. **The former preach Christ from selfish ambition,** According to *Strong's Greek and Hebrew Lexicon*, the word translated “selfish ambition” means “electioneering or intriguing for office.” From the earliest times, the churches were troubled by those who sought adherents only that they might glory in their abilities as leaders. **Not sincerely,** Their motivation was not pure and honest. **Supposing to add affliction to my chains;** These were mean people who were more than willing to add insult to injury.

17. **But the latter out of love,** Loving the Lord, they preached the gospel with the sole purpose of exalting and glorifying Him through the salvation of sinners. Loving Paul, they did not preach the gospel with any sense of competition with him, but with the realization that they were his co-workers in the furtherance of the Lord's work. “Love does not envy” (I Corinthians 13:4). **Knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel.** The word “appointed” designates the apostle's work in defending the gospel as being of divine appointment (cf. Acts 22:14,15; I Thessalonians 3:3). Those in Rome who preached the gospel out of good will toward Paul, who loved both him and the Lord, knew that his defense of the gospel was not out of any self-seeking, self-exalting motive, but only with the desire to exalt Him who had appointed him to this great work. Having the same motive as the apostle in their preaching, they obviously cooperated with him in every way they could to see that the gospel was defended from all charges made against it so that sinners would accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. It was not really Paul who was on trial, it was the gospel of Jesus Christ.

18. **What then? Only {that} in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice.** Unlike his enemies in the church, Paul's great desire was not to exalt himself and build up a clique, but to exalt Christ and build up His church. Thus, he would rejoice, and continue to rejoice, whenever Christ was preached, whether “in pretense” (the message was correct but the motive was wrong) or “in truth” (the message was correct and the motive was right). It is illogical to assume that those who preached with a wrong motive also preached a different gospel from those who preached from a pure motive. The difference in their preaching was not in substance but in purpose. Paul would certainly not have rejoiced in the preaching of a false gospel. Furthermore, a wrong motive in preaching an

unadulterated gospel does not nullify its saving power. Therefore, Paul could rejoice at the preaching of the gospel by his enemies.

To Live Is Christ—1:19-26

(19) For I know that this will turn out for my salvation through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, (20) according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but {that} with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. (21) For to me, to live {is} Christ, and to die {is} gain. (22) But if {I} live on in the flesh, this {will mean} fruit from {my} labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. (23) For I am hard pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, {which is} far better. (24) Nevertheless to remain in the flesh {is} more needful for you. (25) And being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith, (26) that your rejoicing for me may be more abundant in Jesus Christ by my coming to you again.

19. For I know that this will turn out for my salvation. The context (verses 20-23) indicates that Paul is thinking of his heavenly salvation. He “knows” that no matter how his trial turns out, he is going to heaven. **Through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.** He is assured of this because of their prayers on his behalf and the supply (in consequence of those prayers) that comes from the Spirit of Jesus Christ (namely, the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Godhead). His confidence here reminds us of his affirmation in II Timothy 1:12.

20. According to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed. Looking ahead in his defense of the gospel, he knew that, with the prayers of his fellow Christians and the work of the Holy Spirit, he was not going to fail. In other words, Paul knew that he could do all things through Christ who strengthened him (4:13). **But {that} with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body.** Instead of being put to shame by failing to preach the gospel in the face of opposition, becoming in the process a disgrace to himself and the cause of Christ, Paul affirmed that he would continue to boldly preach the gospel in his imprisonment, just as he always had. Therefore, the body he used to boldly proclaim the gospel of Christ, to suffer for Him and His cause, was the means by which he was currently magni-

fying and glorifying His Lord (cf. I Corinthians 6:20). **Whether by life or by death.** Paul, although inspired, was not omniscient. Although he was expecting to be released, he could not be certain that he would. But, whatever happened, he was confident that he would be able to magnify Jesus. If he continued to live, he would magnify the Lord by faithfully preaching His word and living for Him. On the other hand, if his trial resulted in him being put to death, he would still be able to magnify Jesus as one who was martyred for Him and His cause. This knowledge must have had a very good effect on the mind of Paul...no matter what happened, the Lord would be magnified!

21. For to me, to live {is} Christ, and to die {is} gain. No finer example of a soul that is truly surrendered to Christ can possibly be found than this. His ego had been merged with Christ's. Consequently, he declared, “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the {life} which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me (Galatians 2:20). His philosophy of living was that the sum total of his life belonged to Christ: his time, strength, ability, body, soul, and spirit. Paul was saying that he was a Christ-intoxicated, Christ-led, Christ-dominated Christian. Can we make this claim? Of this one thing we can be sure: If we are ever going to be willing to die for the Lord, we must first be willing to live for Him!

22. But if {I} live on in the flesh, this {will mean} fruit from {my} labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. This is a difficult and disjointed passage. The grammar probably reflects the real conflict of feelings in Paul's mind, expressed by the next verse.

23. For I am hard pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, {which is} far better. The “two” refers back to the life and death previously mentioned in verse 21. Of course, the only resolution he could make to such a dilemma, which every likeminded Christian will also make, is found in James 4:15, which says, “If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that.” His preference, of course, was to die and be with the Lord (cf. II Corinthians 5:6-8; Acts 7:59). Such a desire expressed Paul's great trust in the promises of the Lord and a steadfast, unmovable hope of being with Him after this life is over (I Corinthians 15:58).

24. Nevertheless to remain in the flesh {is} more needful for you. Paul knew that it would be much better for him to be with the Lord than to continue living in a body that was subject to sickness, suffering, and sorrow. “Nevertheless,” it was to their advantage that he remain alive at

the moment. Paul knew that after his departure many evils and departures from the faith would occur (Acts 20:18-35). To the Thessalonians, he wrote, "For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains {will do so} until He is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming" (II Thessalonians 2:7,8). Paul may very well have been writing of himself in this passage.

25. **And being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith.** Consequently, he has come to realize that there is much work left for him to do and he will probably be released from prison so that he can administer to them once again.

26. **That your rejoicing for me may be more abundant in Jesus Christ by my coming to you again.** The ground of glorying was first and comprehensively in Christ; then in Paul as representing Christ; then in Paul's personal presence with them. This latter would be the cause of their glorying since all his work on their behalf would contribute to their spiritual growth and joy in Christ.

Striving And Suffering For Christ—1:27-30

(27) Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel, (28) and not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from God. (29) For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, (30) having the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear {is} in me.

27. **Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ.** The word translated "conduct" has to do with living as a citizen. Therefore, Paul was saying that, as citizens of the kingdom of God, they needed to reflect in their lives their exaltation, adoration, and glorification of the gospel of Jesus Christ. **So that whether I come and see you or am absent.** Even though he has expressed his firm confidence that his case would be resolved successfully, he had to leave some doubt concerning the matter, recognizing the possibility that the Lord might not allow him to fulfill his confidence. **I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast .**

Either way, he wanted to know ("hear") about their faithfulness to Christ and His cause. The Greek word rendered "stand fast" conveys the idea of holding one's ground in a battle. **In one spirit.** The words "one spirit" indicates the disposition and attitude of unity that should prevail in the Lord's body. The Devil's tactic is to divide and conquer. Christians must stand fast against such a tactic. **With one mind.** This one mind is to be the mind of Christ (2:5-11; I Peter 4:1; cf. I Corinthians 1:10). **Striving together for the faith of the gospel.** As the Philippians stood fast in the disposition of togetherness or unity, they were to strive with one concerted mind or purpose to maintain the integrity and purity of the gospel system. The word "striving" in the Greek literally portrays an athletic contest. Paul here thought of the Philippian church as a team, cooperatively working against every opposition to uphold and defend the faith which was once and for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3).

28. **And not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from God.** Although Paul makes his point in the negative, what he is talking about is the united courage of the Philippians, which serves as evident proof of the ultimate defeat and punishment of the enemies of the gospel, while at the same time indicating that courageous Christians are going to heaven. God, of course, is the One who has prepared both heaven and hell, and the "proof," that some are going to heaven and some to hell (the courageous and united defense of the gospel) can be read by either side. Like the pillar of God's presence mentioned in Exodus 14:20, it is "the cloud and darkness" to the one group, but "light by night" to the other.

29. **For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake.** The Philippians had been granted grace or favor in that they were not just allowed to believe in Christ, but to suffer for Him also. After the apostles had been condemned and beaten by the council, it is said, "So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name" (Acts 5:41). And Peter wrote, "But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, {you are} blessed. And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled" (I Peter 3:14). Christians ought to think it an honor when they are permitted to suffer for the name of Christ.

30. **Having the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear {is} in me.** The word "conflict" in the Greek (*agona*) is used of an athletic contest. From it, we get our word

“agony.” The apostle used it to describe his untiring work for the Lord in the face of all opposition. When he had preached at Philippi, he suffered persecution (Acts 16:19-40; I Thessalonians 2:2). This was the conflict the

Philippians brethren “saw” in him. They now had the opportunity to “hear” about his Roman imprisonment. They, too, were suffering. Why? Because they were involved in the same “conflict”; they were on the same team.

Chapter Two

Unity Through Humility—2:1-4

(1) *Therefore if {there is} any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, (2) fulfill my joy by being like minded, having the same love, {being} of one accord, of one mind. (3) {Let} nothing {be done} through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. (4) Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.*

1. **Therefore.** The word “therefore” here indicates that Paul is expounding on the exhortation of 1:27, i.e., “in one spirit, with one mind, etc.” He now lists four things that would motivate them to unity. **If {there is} any consolation in Christ.** The first motive Paul gives is “consolation in Christ.” The Greek word translated here as “consolation” is translated eight places in the New Testament as “exhortation,” and conveys the idea of admonition. In other words, the Philippians were to strive for unity on the basis of the will of Christ, because he admonished them to do so in His word. This, of course, should be the basic motive for unity in any congregation—loyalty to the exhortation or teaching of Christ. **If any comfort of love.** In the Greek, the word here translated “comfort” indicates “a word which comes to the side of one to stimulate and encourage him.” Thus, the idea of encouragement is conveyed in the use of this word. The love under discussion is divine love or *agape*. Christ exhorted the Philippians to unity, but He did so through the appeal or encouragement of His love for them. Their appreciation of the divine love that had saved them through Christ would encourage them to live together in unity. Furthermore, the love they had for each other, which was but a reflection of the love Christ had for them, would cause them to live and work together in unity. **If any fellowship of the Spirit.** The human heart is said to be full of the Spirit when its inward state, its affections, and its acts are directed and controlled by Him so as to be a constant manifestation of His presence. If the Philippians had an intimate, loving, forbearing relationship with each other because they jointly

enjoyed fellowship with the Holy Spirit, then they would be “endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:3). The presence and power of the Holy Spirit in the lives of Christians are never an incitement to confusion and factionalism, but always to peace and unity (cf. I Corinthians 14:33). **If any affection and mercy.** This is the fourth and final reason given for the Philippians to live in harmony with each other. Paul is writing of *tender mercies* and *compassion*. With these graces present in their lives, they would live at peace with one another—quarrelings would cease, differences would be patched up, and estrangements would be healed.

2. **Fulfill my joy.** Paul dearly loved and appreciated the Philippians. He felt great joy in them. But now he wanted this joy to be made full or complete by any unity that was lacking in them (cf. 4:2). **By being likeminded.** The Greek here literally means “think the same thing.” It is defined by the two clauses that follow. **Having the same love.** Here they are being exhorted to unity of *affection*. They were to love the same things (1:9,10) and have the same love for one another and for the Lord. **{Being} of one accord.** Here they are being exhorted to unity of *sentiment*. The Greek word rendered “accord” does not appear anywhere else in the New Testament. It literally means “with united spirits.” The Philippians were to so think and act as if they were but one soul. This was Paul’s plea to Christians everywhere, “Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and {that} there be no divisions among you, but {that} you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (I Corinthians 1:10). **Of one mind.** This is a little stronger form than the phrase “being likeminded.” Its literal meaning is “thinking the *one* thing.” The unity Paul is writing about is found in Romans 15:5-7, which says: “Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus, (6) that you may with one mind {and} one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. (7) Therefore receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God.”

3. **{Let} nothing {be done} through selfish**

ambition or conceit. Selfish ambition, self-seeking, and rivalry, which always lead to factions or party making, must not rear its ugly head among brethren. The factious man wants to win followers to himself rather than to build up the body of Christ (cf. I Corinthians 12:12-27). The word “conceit” means groundless self-esteem and empty pride. Many churches have been torn asunder by the conceit of elders, preachers, and other members who desired, like Diotrefes, to have the preeminence rather than to exalt Christ and seek for the edification of their brethren. **But in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.** The only way to counter things being done through selfish ambition or conceit is through cultivating “lowliness of mind.” This word means humility, having a humble opinion of one's self, or a deep sense of one's moral littleness. This word is elsewhere translated “humbleness of mind” (Colossians 3:12) and “lowliness” (Ephesians 4:2). In both these passages, the word comes just before meekness and long-suffering, demonstrating that it is only by a wise and lowly estimate of ourselves that we come to know what is due to others. Humility, then, describes the spirit of one who knows himself in relation to God. It is, therefore, primarily a Christian grace and not a social virtue. Contrary to pagan thought and current wisdom, there is nothing weak about humility. In fact, it is the badge of the strong, the first test of a truly great man. It is the one specific virtue and quality that above all others explains the work and character of Christ, our Savior, who “made Himself of no reputation” (2:7) and “humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death” (2:8). “Lowliness of mind” was the creation of Christ Himself; it was He who brought this new spirit into the world and illustrated it in his own person because He was “gentle and lowly in heart” (Matthew 11:29).

4. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. A healthy self-concern or self-esteem is not what Paul is here condemning. Self-interest is entirely consistent with the will of God; but it must not be confused with selfishness. The two are diametrically opposed to each other. The Christian who has a healthy concern for his own welfare, who is truly humble and unselfish, looks out “*not only* for his own interests, but *also* for the interests of others.” He realizes that self-concern and concern for others are inextricably tied together (cf. Romans 13:9; I Corinthians 10:24; 13:5). Such a person willingly gives himself in the service of others, realizing that the greater blessedness of the Christian life is not in receiving but in giving (Acts 20:35).

The Humbled And Exalted Christ—2:5-11

(5) *Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,* (6) *who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,* (7) *but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a servant, {and} coming in the likeness of men.* (8) *And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to {the point of} death, even the death of the cross.* (9) *Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name,* (10) *that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth,* (11) *and {that} every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ {is} Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

5. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus. The mind which Paul exhorts the Philippians to imitate was the loving, self-denying lowliness of mind demonstrated by the Lord Jesus Christ in the flesh. The Christian with this kind of mind will always make himself of service to his fellow men, no matter how ignoble or self-abasing his service may be (cf. John 13:3-17).

Note: *The next seven verses are controversial.* Down through the ages, volumes have been written on these passages. Presently, they are the center of attention in a controversy over the deity of Christ. So-called “Kenotic theory” holds that these verses teach that Jesus divested Himself of His divinity and Godhood and became a man, just a man, and only a man as He lived here on this earth. Therefore, I find it more than just ironic that these passages, originally designed to counter factionalism, have become the focal point of what promises to be one of the greatest factions that has ever occurred in the churches of Christ. The Bible teaches that Jesus was not just God in human disguise, nor was He simply a man with divine qualities; He was, and is, the God-man, *fully* man and *fully* God. Refute this idea and Christianity suffers a mortal blow.

Consequently, it is not surprising to learn that recent critics of Christianity have pounced upon belief in this core doctrine as being nothing less than a *logical contradiction*. They argue that just as it is logically impossible, according to the “law of noncontradiction,” for something to be a *property* (A) and its logical *complement* (non-A) at the same time in the same sense, it is just as impossible for Jesus Christ to be fully God and fully man simultaneously. These critics are quick to point out that God, according to the traditional definition, possesses certain attributes

that man does not possess, like eternalness, omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, immutability, incorporeality, and absolute holiness. On the other hand, they tell us, man seems to have the opposite properties, i.e., human beings are *not* without beginning, *not* all powerful, *not* all knowing, *not* sinless, etc. Therefore, according to these antagonists, the only conclusion to be reached by one who wants to reason soundly is that the doctrine of the incarnation, as traditionally vocalized, is nothing more than an incoherent theological construct articulated in the creeds of the “early church” councils: namely, the Council of Nicea in 325 and the Council of Chalcedon in 451.

Personally, I have never felt the need to defend the machinations of an apostate church and its councils, but it is only fair to point out that truth is still truth even when it is spoken by an apostate church. The beliefs expressed by the Nicean and Chalcedonian councils that Jesus Christ was fully God and fully man are not inconsistent with what I believe the Bible teaches on this subject. Therefore, when I defend what I believe the Bible to be teaching on this subject, the unprincipled critic will seek to discredit my defense by saying it is simply a regurgitation of the Nicean and Chalcedonian creeds. Unfortunately, there are those presently among us who are saying and writing this very thing. They think a defense of Jesus that says He was, and is, fully God and fully man at the same time is goofy and laughable. It is, they tell us, a logical contradiction that is definitely not scriptural, and, in the end, is simply a reflection of the man-made creeds of a recreant Christendom. They are wrong!

As long as Colossians 2:9 is a part of Scripture, then I know that all the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Jesus bodily. I did not learn this truth by reason alone. Nevertheless, I am firmly convinced that a revelation from God cannot contradict reason or logic. If it does, then it is not from God. Therefore, if Colossians 2:9 is a violation of Logic's law of noncontradiction, then it simply does not mean what it seems to mean. This, of course, is exactly the conclusion of some among us. Thinking the idea that Jesus was fully God and fully man a logical contradiction, they have attempted to interpret Colossians 2:9 totally different from the way it has been traditionally understood. According to their erroneous position, the Son of God gave up His Godhood, divesting Himself of His divine attributes, and became a man, just a man, just an ordinary man like you and me. Consequently, Colossians 2:9 should be interpreted, “All the blessings of God resided on or in Jesus totally.”

But, and here is my point, before one assumes that the clear teaching of a Bible passage is not its true teaching because he thinks the obvious teaching contradicts a rule of logic, he had better make sure he has fully examined his own thinking, fully understands the rule he believes has been violated, and has actually formulated the question correctly.

The critics of Jesus being fully God and fully man are wrong not because the law of noncontradiction is faulty (in fact, this law is absolutely necessary if we are to make sense of anything), they are wrong because they have made some incorrect assumptions about what it means to be human. They have assumed that man's *common* characteristics (viz., *not* without beginning, *not* all powerful, *not* all knowing, *not* sinless, etc.) are, in fact, *essential* characteristics of being human. There can be no question that these characteristics are common to mankind, but where is the argument that says they are essential to being fully human? Jesus, I believe, was fully God. Consequently, He possessed certain *essential* characteristics or attributes of Deity, like eternalness, omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, immutability, incorporeality, and absolute holiness. In other words, and using the terms of logic, anyone lacking these properties (A) could not be God. But, all this being true, where is the argument, other than a false assumption on the part of the critics, that says the complement (non-A) of these are essential characteristics and attributes of being fully human? True, these are essential characteristics and attributes of being *merely* human, but the Bible never teaches that Jesus was merely human; it teaches He was and is fully human and fully God at the same time. I am fully human in that I possess all the essential characteristics of basic human nature (e.g., body and spirit). It is in this respect that Jesus is like me. Furthermore, I am merely human in that I have some additional limitation characteristics or properties, as well, such as lacking omnipotence, omniscience, etc. In this regard, Jesus was not and is not like me. Correct thinking about Jesus Christ diminishes neither His full and complete Deity nor His full and complete humanity. Far from being contradictory, belief in the God-man is absolutely reasonable.

In trying to explain the verses that follow, I reject the classical interpretation that says these verses begin with the Son of God in heaven in the glory of His preexistent condition of sharing the divine essence with God the Father (“in the form of God existing”) then tracing His *downward* movement by means of the incarnation (“Himself He emptied”) to His “cross work” as the Father's Servant, and then His *upward*

movement by means of the Father's exaltation through resurrection and ascension to His present session at His Father's right hand as Lord. In rejecting this interpretation, I want to make it very clear that I do not take exception to the sentiments behind such an interpretation or the "high Christology" extracted from these verses by such an exposition. I state unequivocally that I do not intend to deny the full unqualified deity of the incarnated Son or His full equality with the Father in power and glory. One can be assured, then, that I do not espouse the kenotic theory. On the contrary, my interpretation of Philippians 2:6-8 is thought to eliminate any advantage the kenotic theorists believe they have in these verses.

And what are these alleged advantages? First, if one understands, as most do, that the beginning point of the descent-ascent flow of Philippians 2:6-11 is the preexistent state of the Son of God, who existed in the form of God and was equal to God, and take the phrases "Himself He emptied, taking the form of a servant" as the allusion to the "downward" event of the incarnation, then, it is only with great difficulty, because of the intervening clause, that one can avoid the conclusion that the "emptying" involved His surrendering the "form" (very nature"—NIV) of God. About this, Lightfoot, Warfield, Murray, Wells *et al.* say, "When our Lord is said to be in 'the form of God,' therefore, He is declared, in the most express manner possible, to be all that God is, to possess the whole fullness of attributes which make God God" (Warfield, *The Person and Work of Christ*, p. 39). The advantage the kenotic theorists think they have is the intervening clause, "He did not consider His equality with God [i.e., His divine nature] a thing to be held onto," which in the "flow" of things has to reflect an attitude in the preexistent Son on the "prior side" of the incarnation. What would be the point of telling us the pre-incarnate Son did not consider His equality with God or divine nature a thing to be held on to if He did not, as the next clause says, "empty Himself"?

Although I totally reject kenotic doctrine, it seems to me that these verses, as traditionally interpreted (*viz.*, the descent-ascent flow), give credence to the kenotic assertion that the pre-existent Son of God gave up at least some of His equality with God in the incarnation. One can escape this dilemma by only one of two methods: hermeneutical gymnastics or a rejection of the traditional interpretation.

When resorting to hermeneutical gymnastics, some say that the Son did not divest Himself of His divine attributes, but only the

independent use of these attributes. But when did the Son ever exercise His attributes independently? Others say He did not divest Himself of His deity, but only His rights (i.e. powers and prerogatives). But which rights did He give up when He became a man? Still others say He did not divest Himself of His deity, but only His divine glory. But does not this divine glory belong to deity? Remember, the traditional interpretation of this passage says that the pre-incarnate Son of God did not consider His "equality with God" a thing to be held on to. Therefore, He emptied Himself and took the form of a servant. I believe the latter are right when they say the majestic glory (*doxa*) of the incarnate Son of God was veiled by His flesh (cf. Hebrews 10:20). Otherwise, why would He pray that the Father restore to Him the glory He had with Him before the world was (cf. John 17:5)? However, the traditional interpretation does not say that the pre-incarnate Son of God did not think His "majestic glory" was something that He needed to hold on to; instead, it says, He did not consider His "equality with God" a thing to be held on to. Consequently, according to the traditional interpretation, not holding on to "equality with God," the Son of God emptied himself by taking the form of a servant. The emptying, one would argue, was effected by the Son taking on the role of a servant and being seen in appearance as a man. But, in reality, this will just not work when one wants to turn around and argue that the Son did not give up His equality with God. It now seems to me that there is something terribly wrong with such hermeneutical gymnastics.

This brings us to a closer examination of my rejection of the classical interpretation of Philippians 2:6-11. I reject the idea that these verses indicate a descent-ascent flow. I believe these verses begin with the incarnate Son of God, who, in his incarnated state, existed in the very form of God (i.e., possessed all the characteristics and attributes of the divine nature). In other words, Philippians 2:6a and Colossians 2:9 are parallel in that they teach that all the fullness of the Godhead (i.e., all the characteristics and attributes of deity) dwelt in Jesus' body. Consequently, the attitude of mind these passages instruct us to develop is not that of the pre-incarnate Son of God, but the humility exhibited by the God-man, Jesus Christ, the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53, who poured himself out unto death (cf. I Peter 2:18-25).

With this said, let us now spend some time with the verses.

6. **Who.** This speaks antecedently of Jesus Christ. **Being in the form of God.** This is not speaking of His pre-existence. This speaks of the

Word after He became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14). While on earth, He was in the form of God. In other words, all the fullness of the Godhead dwelt in Him bodily (Colossians 2:9). **Did not consider it robbery to be equal with God.** In the Greek, the word translated “robbery” means “the act of seizing.” Therefore, this passage could rightly be rendered “did not regard equality with God a thing to be seized.” Paul, who in other places is willing to contrast the first Adam with Christ, who he called the “last Adam” (cf. Romans 5:12-19; I Corinthians 15:45-49), is here saying that Jesus Christ, the “last Adam,” unlike the first Adam, did not attempt to seize equality with God, the Father. You remember that in the serpent's temptation, he said, “...you will be like [or equal to] God” (Genesis 3:5). Jesus, the Last Adam, when urged to “seize equality with God” (cf. Matthew 4:3,6: “Since you are the Son of God...”) by taking matters into his own hands and asserting His rights as the Son *per se* and not as the Son already dispatched on His Messianic mission as the Servant of the Lord, “did not regard equality with God a thing to be seized.” Jesus, praise God, refused to succumb to the tempter's suggestion that He achieve “lordship” of the kingdoms of the world (Matthew 4:8) by a means of self-exaltation. Let this same mind be in us also.

7. **But made Himself of no reputation.** In the flesh, as the Servant of the Lord, the Son of God made Himself of no reputation or, as other translations put it, *He emptied Himself*. The Greek word under consideration is *kenoo*. It is from this word that the kenotic theory gets its name. Again, this theory contends that the divine Logos, who *had been* equal with God in heaven, gave up (emptied) His Godhead and became a man, just a man, and only a man. Actually, kenoticists try to make this phrase say that He emptied something *out* of Himself (*viz.*, His divine attributes). The point is, Jesus emptied Himself (i.e., He humbled Himself or “made Himself of no reputation”). We will have more to say about this further along. **Taking the form of a servant.** Here now is the real crux of the matter. Did Jesus empty Himself or make Himself of no reputation by taking on the form of a servant, as the passage, as translated, clearly seems to indicate, or is there another way of translating this phrase? The Greek word translated “taking” in this phrase is *lambano*, an aorist participle, and can be translated “having taken,” according to a common rule of Greek syntax which says that an aorist participle generally denotes action preceding the main verb. (Anyone interested in pursuing this further is referred to Robert L. Reymond, *Jesus, Divine Messiah*, footnote 54,

page 264.) Of course, this puts a whole different twist on the verse. Jesus' emptying did not occur prior to Him taking the form of a servant; instead, it occurred coincident with it. In other words, Jesus Christ, who was and is God, even when He took upon Himself flesh, did not, unlike Adam, regard equality with God a thing to be seized at His temptation by a self-willed exercise of power, but poured Himself out unto death, having taken the form of the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53. In fact, the phrase “He emptied Himself” is the nonliteral Greek equivalent of the “He poured out His soul [which means, `He poured Himself out'] unto death” (which means, “He voluntarily died”) of Isaiah 53:12. Thus interpreted, the phrase refers to the humble sacrifice of Jesus' life and not the self-emptying of His incarnation. **{And} coming in the likeness of men.** “And” is supplied by the translators in order to connect this phrase with the preceding phrase, “taking the form of a servant.” Actually, a separation could just as legitimately be made between these two phrases, with “coming in the likeness of men” being the starting point for a retelling of what has already been mentioned. Redundancy is an excellent way to teach and is often resorted to by the apostle Paul. Consequently, I am suggesting that a period after “servant” in the preceding phrase is just as legitimate as the present punctuation. This means that “Coming [or `having been born'] in the likeness of men” ought to start the next verse. (Remember, verses and numbers were added later and are not inspired.)

8. **And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to {the point of} death, even the death of the cross.** Put a comma after “men” in the previous phrase, and you have the completed idea that having been born in the precise likeness of men, and having been found by external appearance to be a man, Jesus humbled Himself, having become obedient unto death—even the death of the cross. Again, tie this in with Isaiah 53, and the point Paul is making is emphatic.

9. **Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name.** Because of Christ's servant work, He has been highly exalted and given a name above all others. The exaltation mentioned in this passage does not refer directly to God the Son *per se*, but to God the Son in His incarnate state as the Messiah. In other words, it is the God-man, Jesus Christ, who is exalted. Therefore, without denigrating in any way His divine nature, it can be said that the Father's exaltation of Jesus Christ entailed for the Son, *as the Messiah*, a new and genuine experience of exalta-

tion.

10. **That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth.** The King's name is Jesus. Because we must use the word "human" as part of our description of Him now, we can also say that something truly new and unique occurred at the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ: Jesus the man—the Last Adam—assumed actual sovereignty over the universe, over all the principalities and powers in heavenly places, and over all other men, demanding that they submit to the authority of His scepter.

11. **And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.** At the mentioning of His name, some day every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus, the Messiah, is Lord! This confession will rebound to the glory of the Father, who elevated Jesus to this exalted state.

Light Bearers—2:12-18

(12) Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; (13) for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. (14) Do all things without murmuring and disputing, (15) that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, (16) holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain. (17) Yes, and if I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. (18) For the same reason you also be glad and rejoice with me.

12. **Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed.** With Christ's obedience as their guide and with His exaltation as encouragement, the Philippians had been faithful from the very beginning. **Not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence.** In this parenthetical statement, Paul's says their obedience was even now more evident in his absence. Here were people for whom it was not necessary for Paul to be in their midst watching over them in order for them to be faithful to the Lord. Here were Christians who were serious about what they were doing. This is why this letter is called the epistle of joy. **Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.** The Greek word translated

"work out" means "to perform, accomplish, achieve, or complete." The word "own" emphasizes the personal responsibility each Christian has concerning his own salvation. Having been saved by grace through faith, the Philippians were going to complete their salvation by continuing in obedient faith to the will of the Lord. This obedient faith would be properly motivated by fear and trembling. In Isaiah 66:2, the Lord said, "But on this one will I look, On him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who tremble at My word." In Paul's letters, these two words occur together in three other places and always refer to obedience (I Corinthians 2:3; II Corinthians 7:15; and Ephesians 6:5). This fear is of the greatness of the task we have been given and the consequences of failure. When it comes to the instructions of the Lord, the Christian must be very careful about what he is or is not doing: "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall" (II Corinthians 10:12). "Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. (2) For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, (3) how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation..." (Hebrews 2:1-3). This fear and trembling is the caution and circumspection that shrinks away from whatever would offend and dishonor the Godhead. This is not to be confused with the fear that has torment, which perfect love casts out (I John 4:18). On the contrary, the fear and trembling of this passage helps us demonstrate our love for God by keeping His commandments (cf. I John 5:2,3).

13. **For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.** When one is obedient to the word of the Lord, God is working in and through this person to do His good pleasure. The term "good pleasure" comes from a Greek word meaning *will* or *choice*. It is God's word that produces in us both "to will" (the motivation) and "to do" (the work) His will. Without the word of God and the example of Jesus Christ, the works God prepared beforehand that the followers of His Son would do (cf. Ephesians 2:10) would not be done.

14. **Do all things without murmuring and disputing.** The Greek word translated "murmuring" conveys the idea of a secret debate. In other words, complaints and charges made not openly and honestly, but those done behind the scene. This fault had been prevalent in ancient Israel (Exodus 16:7; Numbers 16:41; I Corinthians 10:10), and if it became prevalent in the Philippian church, their good work and name would be sorely effected. The word translated

“disputing” means to suspiciously question and doubt. If the Philippians developed this sort of attitude with each other, then wranglings and disputings would arise to wreck spiritual havoc in their midst. Of course, murmuring and disputing could arise against God or their fellow Christians, and the cause would be the “selfish ambition and conceit” of 2:3.

15. **That you may become blameless and harmless,**. Paul now mentions the basic reason why they should abstain from murmuring and disputing. The word “blameless” addresses itself to moral integrity, which will manifest itself in the sight of others. “Harmless” means un-mixed, unadulterated, sincere, and guileless, and represents moral integrity with respect to the mind or heart. Paul was exhorting the Philippians to be upright both in what was seen and unseen, both outwardly, and inwardly. **Children of God without fault.** The illusion is to animal sacrifice. They were already children of God, but Paul wants to encourage them to go on to perfection (cf. 3:13). **In the midst of a crooked and perverse generation,**. Peter used the word “crooked” in the indictment of his generation (Acts 2:40), and particularly to describe harsh or bad-tempered masters (I Peter 2:18). It means “wicked.” “Perverse” conveys the idea of “distorted” and is a little stronger word than “crooked.” It is used here and in Matthew 17:17 to denote a moral nature all warped and knotted and describes the extreme depravity of a generation that has turned from the truth of God's word. **Among whom you shine as lights in the world,**. In their crooked and perverse culture, the Philippians were to maintain their moral integrity. They were *in* the world, but they were not *of* the world (cf. John 15:19; Romans 12:2).

16. **Holding fast the word of life,**. As the Philippians “held forth” the word of life, both by example and by teaching, they would be light-bearers. In doing so, they would be pointing men and women to Him who is “the light of the world” (John 8:12). **So that I may rejoice in the day of Christ.** The Philippians' fidelity will be a source of Paul's rejoicing at the second coming of Christ (cf. 4:1; II Corinthians 1:14; I Thessalonians 2:19). **That I have not run in vain or labored in vain.** Paul's “run” or “labor” among the Philippians had been to bring them to Christ and encourage them to live in conformity to His will. If they remained faithful, then his labor among them was not in vain.

17. **Yes, and if I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith,**. Paul, who is imitating Christ, is pouring himself out for the Philippians. If the ul-

timate sacrifice is required, then he, like Christ, will pour himself out unto death. **I am glad and rejoice with you all.** In doing so, he will be glad (“filled with joy”). The word translated “rejoice” means “to rejoice together, to congratulate.” Paul is saying he felt genuine personal joy in that his dying would be a means of honoring the faith of the Philippians and goes on to say, “I congratulate you upon it”: i.e., upon the honor occurring to you by my blood being poured on the sacrifice and service of your faith.

18. **For the same reason you also be glad and rejoice with me.** Paul wanted the Philippians to see the situation as he saw it. As he “congratulated” the Philippians on the honor his martyrdom would bring their faith, so they were to “congratulate” him on the honor that such a death would bring to his own faith.

Timothy Commended—2:19-24

(19) But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, that I also may be encouraged when I know your state. (20) For I have no one like minded, who will sincerely care for your state. (21) For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus. (22) But you know his proven character, that as a son with {his} father he served with me in the gospel. (23) Therefore I hope to send him at once, as soon as I see how it goes with me. (24) But I trust in the Lord that I myself shall also come shortly.

19. **But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, that I also may be encouraged when I know your state.** Having just spoken of the possibility of his death, he now seems to revert to the conviction that he would receive a speedy release or at least an improvement in his circumstances that he could dispense with the presence and service of Timothy for a season. He trusted that with the approval of the Lord, and under His ordering, he would be able to send his beloved son in the gospel to know how they were doing. He expressed confidence that the report he would receive concerning them would be favorable.

20. **For I have no one like minded, who will sincerely care for your state.** Paul was willing to pour himself out unto death for the Philippians, and there was no one else in Rome like minded (“equal in soul”) except Timothy, whose “care” or “interest in what was best for” the Philippians was faithfully “sincere” or “genuine.” Consequently, any concern he overtly showed them would not be of necessity or grudging, but of a willing, sympathetic, and loving heart (cf. II Cor-

inthians 9:7).

21. **For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus.** In light of 1:15-17 and II Timothy 4:10, 16, we are not shocked by what we now read. There is no way to soften what he is saying. This is a severe indictment of the evangelists who were currently in Rome. In seeking their own things, these people, who graciously remained unnamed by Paul, were not willing to be poured out for the cause of Christ and were therefore unfit for the journey to Philippi.

22. **But you know his proven character, that as a son with {his} father he served with me in the gospel.** Timothy's faith in and love for the Lord had been proven in the crucible of Christian service. This "proof" had been amply demonstrated to the Philippians from the very beginning. Furthermore, Timothy was Paul's child in the faith (I Corinthians 4:17; I Timothy 1:2; II Timothy 1:2). However, Paul does not speak of Timothy serving him but of Timothy serving "with" or "along side of" him. Their working together was for a common goal; namely, the furtherance of the gospel.

23. **Therefore I hope to send him at once, as soon as I see how it goes with me.** As soon as Paul was able to be certain about how things were going to go with himself (whether he would be sentenced to death or acquitted), he would send Timothy to them immediately.

24. **But I trust in the Lord that I myself shall also come shortly.** In the preceding verse, Paul expressed his uncertainty as to what the outcome would be. In 2:17, he said he was willing to die if necessary. But now he expresses trust he will be released and be able to come to them. His confidence here no way contradicts any uncertainty he previously expressed. Paul's words reflect the reality of faith and trust. Whatever happened would have to be according to the Lord's will, not his own think-sos. As James 4:13-15 expresses it: "Come now, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit'; whereas you do not know what {will happen} tomorrow. For what {is} your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. Instead you {ought} to say, 'If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that.'"

Epaphroditus Praised—2:25-30

(25) Yet I considered it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier, but your messenger and the one who ministered to my need; (26) since he was

longing for you all, and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick. (27) For indeed he was sick almost unto death; but God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. (28) Therefore I sent him the more eagerly, that when you see him again you may rejoice, and I may be less sorrowful. (29) Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness, and hold such men in esteem; (30) because for the work of Christ he came close to death, not regarding his life, to supply what was lacking in your service toward me.

25. **Yet I considered it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier, but your messenger and the one who ministered to my need;** As messenger of the Philippian church, Epaphroditus had brought things to Paul and was expected to minister to his needs. Now, concerned about the Philippians, he was returning Epaphroditus to them. As we shall see, Epaphroditus was not just a brother in Christ. In addition, he was a true fellow worker and soldier of the cross.

26. **Since he was longing for you all, and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick.** Epaphroditus was homesick and longed to see the faces of those he had left in Philippi. Add to this terrible homesickness his acute concern for their distress over his ill health, and it was time for Epaphroditus to go home to Philippi.

27. **For indeed he was sick almost unto death; but God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.** In his service to Paul, Epaphroditus had hazarded his health. As a result, he had almost died from some illness, but the Lord had mercy and compassion on both Epaphroditus and Paul and raised Epaphroditus up. The apostle had already been caused great sorrow by Epaphroditus' illness, but if his brother in Christ, fellow worker and fellow soldier had died, he would have had sorrow upon sorrow. It is wonderful to know that the heart of God is filled with mercy.

28. **Therefore I sent him the more eagerly, that when you see him again you may rejoice, and I may be less sorrowful.** Although we can be sure Paul hated for this wonderful man to part from him, out of his unselfish love for Epaphroditus and the Philippians, Paul was even the more eager to send Epaphroditus back to them. Knowing of their happiness at Epaphroditus' return, Paul, from a heart motivated by his unselfish love for them, would indeed be less sorrowful. Their joy would make his burden

lighter.

29. Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness, and hold such men in esteem; They were to receive this faithful minister with deep gratitude to the Lord. Like Paul and Timothy, here was one of their own who was willing to pour himself out for the cause of Christ. Therefore, they ought to hold Epaphroditus in high honor.

30. Because for the work of Christ he came

close to death, not regarding his life,. From the viewpoint of the world, and in the minds of carnal Christians, what Epaphroditus did was very foolish. Would that the modern church would become fools for Christ (cf. I Corinthians 4:10). **To supply what was lacking in your service toward me.** The only thing lacking in their service to him was their ministering to him *in person*. This, of course, had been provided by Epaphroditus.

Chapter Three

All For Christ—3:1-11

(1) Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. For me to write the same things to you {is} not tedious, but for you {it is} safe. (2) Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation! (3) For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh, (4) though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: (5) circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, {of} the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; (6) concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. (7) But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. (8) But indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ (9) and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which {is} from the law, but that which {is} through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; (10) that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, (11) if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

1. **Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord.** He encourages them to rejoice *in the Lord*. “In the Lord” marks the true ground for rejoicing and is to be contrasted with “confidence in the flesh” (verse 3). **For me to write the same things to you {is} not tedious, but for you {it is} safe.** The “same things” to which Paul is referring is probably found in 1:27-30. There he warns the Philippians to stand against opponents. Now he issues the same warnings against another set of opponents. The word translated “tedious” also means “slothful.” In other words, Paul was not being slothful by repeating the same things over and over again, but was doing so for their own good. He wasn't just an old negative preacher, born in the kickative mood; he was, instead, a conscientious servant who was not going to fail to warn the Philippians concerning the problems

they faced.

2. **Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation!** These are very strong words addressed toward the Judaizers. The Jews referred to the Gentiles as “dogs” and Paul hurls this name back at them. As evil workers, their motives and actions are base. They are the kind of people who “suppress the truth in unrighteousness” (Romans 1:18). Furthermore, their circumcision (peritome), something the Judaizers took great pride in and were trying to bind on the Gentiles, was nothing other than mutilation (katatome). Changing the prefix of their favorite word, Paul stigmatized these people as the “mutilation party.” They were not the true circumcision at all!

3. **For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.** In the Old Testament, circumcision was a symbol of faithfulness. The Judaizers were arguing that in order to be faithful to God one needed to be circumcised in his flesh. Paul is saying that under Christ circumcision of the flesh has nothing to do with one's faithfulness to the Lord. In the New Testament, faithfulness is to be judged solely by one's reliance on Christ. Consequently, those who are obedient to Christ are the true circumcision or faithful. This expression is used in other places: “For he is not a Jew who {is one} outwardly, nor {is} that circumcision {which is} outward in the flesh; but {he is} a Jew who {is one} inwardly, and circumcision {is that} of the heart, in the Spirit, {and} not in the letter; whose praise {is} not from men but from God” (Romans 2:28,29).

4. **Though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so:** Here Paul argues that if anyone with a Jewish background had a right to have confidence in the flesh, it was him. Nevertheless, he disclaimed all such confidence (verses 3,7), and every Judaizer was bound to do the same (cf. II Corinthians 11:22,23).

5. **Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, {of} the tribe of Benjamin.** The fact that he was circumcised on the eighth day in strict conformity to the law shows that he was neither a heathen or Ishmaelite, but was born of

law-observing Jewish parents. (Converts to Judaism were circumcised in maturity and Ishmaelites in their thirteenth year.) He was a descendent of the patriarch Israel, or Jacob. Therefore, he could trace his genealogy back as far as any other Jew. The tribe of which he was a member was not one of the tribes that apostatized in the time of Rehoboam, but maintained its allegiance to Judah. **A Hebrew of the Hebrews;** Even though Paul was a Jew, he could have been a child of Greek-speaking Jews. But this was not the case. His parents were Hebrews who had retained their native tongue and customs (cf. II Corinthians 11:22; Acts 6:1). **Concerning the law, a Pharisee;** Paul had been a member of what he called “the strictest sect of our religion” (Acts 26:5).

6. **Concerning zeal, persecuting the church;** Paul had not just been a follower of Judaism, but he was very zealous in persecuting those who he thought believed and taught things contrary to the law of Moses. **Concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.** Paul was not saying he had not violated the law and therefore was not a sinner; to do so would be a contradiction of what he taught elsewhere (Romans 3:9,10,19,20,23; Galatians 3:10,11; 3:12). It seems evident then that he is saying that his observance of the law was so strict that in the eyes of men he was held blameless.

7. **But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ.** Having found the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6), he now counted all the things associated with his Jewish heritage as loss.

8. **But indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord,** Not only did he consider all things associated with his Jewish heritage as loss, but also all other things that could come between him and his Lord, such as material possessions, the esteem of his fellow men, family acceptance, etc. Everything pales in significance to his relationship with Jesus Christ his Lord. **For whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ.** Not only did he *consider* all as loss for the knowledge of Christ, he actually lost them. When he embraced Christianity, he gave up or lost all things that stood between him and his Lord. The word translated “rubbish” can mean *excrement* or *what is thrown away from the table*. Everything he gave up he considered so worthless as to be considered “dung,” as this word is translated in the KJV.

9. **And be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which {is} from the law, but that which {is} through faith in Christ, the**

righteousness which is from God by faith; Any righteousness that Paul had as a Jew (through the perfect keeping of the law) was imaginary. But now, in connection with Christ, he had a righteousness that was given to him by God as a result of his faith in Christ (Romans 3:22).

10. **That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,** The knowledge of Christ that Paul is here writing of is not mere intellectual recognition. It is, instead, a personal, intimate, trusting, loving relationship with the living Christ. The power of His resurrection probably speaks to its redemptive effect. By His resurrection He was made both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36). As such, He is the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him (Hebrews 5:9). As Jesus suffered for righteousness' sake while on earth, all who know Him, walk with Him, and follow His example will also suffer for righteousness' sake (cf. 1:21; 4:13; Galatians 2:20; II Corinthians 2:14). This is what Paul is referring to when he mentions the “fellowship of His sufferings.” The death Paul wanted to be conformed to was the Lord's pouring Himself out unto death, which was comprised of an entire earthly life of denying self in order to serve others.

11. **If, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.** Paul's goal was the “resurrection from the dead.” Obviously, the apostle is not referring to the general resurrection of all the dead, but to the resurrection of the righteous to eternal life (cf. Luke 20:35; 14:14).

Pressing Toward The Goal—3:12-16

(12) Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. (13) Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing {I do}, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, (14) I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. (15) Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you. (16) Nevertheless, to {the degree} that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind.

12. **Not that I have already attained,** Salvation in heaven is in the future. True, there is a sense in which we are saved now (from past sins), but eternal salvation is something yet to be

obtained. (The idea of “Once saved, always saved,” is simply not taught in the Bible.) **Or am already perfected;** Paul says he had not yet reached a state of perfection. Only when he receives the crown of righteousness will he have been made perfect (II Timothy 4:7,8). (The idea that one would be perfectly holy in this life is not taught in the Bible.) **But I press on.** The verb “press” in the Greek indicates the intense action of a runner in a stadium. Paul was intensely running toward a fixed goal. **That I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.** The Lord seized Paul to serve Him and go to heaven. Paul was determined to seize that for which the Lord seized him.

13. **Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended;** Again, he repeats that he had not yet laid hold of all those things for which the Lord had laid hold on him, but in order to attain it, he made it the one supreme end of his life. **But one thing {I do}, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead.** Forgetting all earthly aspirations, honors, and desires, he pressed ahead to obtain his goal.

14. **I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.** With heaven as his goal and eternal life his prize, Paul pressed onward and upward: “If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth” (Colossians 3:1,2).

15. **Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind;** To be intensely engaged in the spiritual race is the mind-set of which Paul here writes. This, then, is the sign of a mature Christian. **And if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you.** Paul has just articulated *the principle* (i.e., we are still far from perfect, but in Christ we ought to be striving for perfection). In the meantime, it seems that he is saying that if there is some minor differences on the specific application of this principle to a particular situation, then, as one continues to mature in Christ, *the correct application* will be revealed. The ability to make the correct application is called “wisdom.” Wisdom comes from *a study of God’s word* (cf. Proverbs 8:33; 9:8; II Timothy 3:15; Colossians 3:16) and *prayer* (James 1:5). Either way, the revealing of the right application is from God.

16. **Nevertheless, to {the degree} that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind.** Whatever we have already learned, let us walk in light of that knowledge. We must remember that our religion does not consist so much of precept upon pre-

cept, as it does upon the application of various principles taught throughout the Scriptures. Spiritual maturity is a process, and the more spiritually mature we are, the more enlightened we become, and the more enlightened we become, the more spiritually mature we are—“For everyone who partakes {only} of milk {is} unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, {that is,} those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil” (Hebrews 5:13,14). If this is fully understood, then there will be less problems among Christians. What do we mean? Sometimes folks think they know more than they do and, therefore, think they are spiritually mature. Consequently, they make their conscience the standard for judging everyone else. In doing so, they are proving themselves to be “babes” who are still thinking carnally (cf. I Corinthians 3:1-5). Speaking to the spiritually mature Christian in Romans 14, as he does here, Paul warned against receiving a spiritually immature Christian into the fellowship if he engages in disputes over doubtful things (Romans 14:1). He then goes on to write of the “law of liberty” that is to be applied by the mature Christian. Let each of us who thinks himself to be mature spiritually be determined to learn all the truth we can, weigh all the difficulties, look upon every side of the question, teach others what we learn, sacrifice no truth, but be patient and forbearing in teaching it, and give the other person time to grow or mature. This, we think, is what Paul is teaching in these passages.

Our Citizenship In Heaven—3:17-21

(17) Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. (18) For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, {that they are} the enemies of the cross of Christ: (19) whose end {is} destruction, whose god {is their} belly, and {whose} glory {is} in their shame - who set their mind on earthly things. (20) For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, (21) who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.

17. **Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern.** Paul and others, who imitate Christ (I Corinthians 11:1), are themselves to be

imitated. This is not said in any self-asserting, self-confident, egotistical spirit. However, neither is he filled with false modesty. He recognized that to the extent that he and others (like Timothy and Epaphroditus) patterned their lives after Christ's it was worthy of imitation (cf. I Corinthians 2:16). What a wonderful learning experience it is for us to have those around us who are imitators of Christ who we can, in turn, imitate.

18. For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, {that they are} the enemies of the cross of Christ. Paul appears to be writing of those Peter mentions in II Peter 2:1-22 and Jude identifies in Jude 1-16. These kinds of folks are not to be imitated. The message of the cross is humiliation. The gospel calls on all men everywhere to repent (Acts 17:30) and humbly submit to Jesus Christ as Lord of one's life. In contrast, these enemies of the cross "allure through the lusts of the flesh" (II Peter 2:18). Their's was a feel-good religion that promised liberty but actually retangled them and those that heard them into bondage to sin (II Peter 2:19). No doubt, the pagan philosophies prevalent at that time provided the "great swelling words of emptiness" (II Peter 2:18) that deluded these people and their converts. Paul's sorrow about all this may have been in the fact that these errorists sheltered themselves under his own teaching about the liberty we have in Christ and the superiority of the gospel of Christ over the law of Moses. These, Peter wrote, had wrested some things Paul had written in his epistles to their own destruction (II Peter 3:15-17).

19. Whose end {is} destruction. The unrepentant end result of these "ungodly men" who turn "the grace of God into lasciviousness" (Jude 4) is the destruction that consists of eternal misery in hell. **Whose god {is their} belly.** If Paul is using "belly" literally, then he has in mind gluttony. Probably, he is using this term metaphorically, which would include gluttony and every other appetite driven sin (e.g., fornication, drunkenness, etc., cf. Galatians 5:19-21; II Timothy 3:2-4). **And {whose} glory {is} in their shame - who set their mind on earthly things.** Instead of being ashamed of their carnality, these "lovers of themselves" (II Timothy 3:2) were so depraved and perverted that they took pride in their shameful conduct (cf. I Corinthians 5:1,2). In minding earthly things, they had given themselves over to "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" (I John 2:16). We are reminded of Romans 8:5,6, which says: "For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh,

but those {who live} according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded {is} death, but to be spiritually minded {is} life and peace."

20. For our citizenship is in heaven. In contrast to those who set their minds on earthly things, the spiritually minded set their things on the things that are above (Colossians 3:1,2). The *commonwealth* to which we belong, and this is the meaning of the word translated "citizenship," is the New Jerusalem above (Galatians 4:26; Ephesians 2:19; Hebrews 11:13-16; 12:22; Revelation 3:12; 21:3). As citizens of this heavenly commonwealth, we, as resident aliens here on earth, must be constantly moving spiritually toward our heavenly home. This, as Paul has already pointed out to us, is the goal of every maturing Christian. **From which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.** In John 14:2,3, our Lord said: "In My Father's house are many mansions; if {it were} not {so}, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, {there} you may be also." Therefore, the true Christian eagerly awaits the Lord's return with great expectation. The goal toward which we are all eagerly running (eternal salvation in heaven) is dependent upon the Lord's return (Hebrews 9:28). Therefore, with great anticipation we are "looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13).

21. Who will transform our lowly body. Paul is referring to what the Lord will do to those who are raised to eternal life. Our earthly mortal body that goes down to the grave he calls our "lowly body" or, as some other translations say, "vile body" or "the body of our humiliation." It is this body that is subject to all the earthly woes of weariness, pain, sickness, sorrow, tears, sin, etc., and finally the corruption of death. The fleshly body must be turned into a spiritual body so that our immortal souls will have a fit habitation in which to live in the spiritual realm of heaven. Such a transformed body will be free from all the woes that we are subject to during our earthly state (Revelation 21:4; cf. I Corinthians 15:35-58; II Corinthians 5:1-5). **That it may be conformed to His glorious body.** The resurrected body of the faithful Christian will be conformed to the Lord's glorified body. Now, we don't know just what this body will be like, but when the Lord returns for us, we shall be like Him (I John 3:2). **According to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.** The word translated "working" is used only of superhuman power,

whether of God or the devil. By virtue of the fact that the Lord is able to bring all things in subjection to Himself, He has the power to raise

us incorruptibly, conforming us to the body of His glory (cf. I Corinthians 15:27,28).

Chapter Four

Paul's Beloved And Loved For Brethren—4:1

(1) Therefore, my beloved and longed for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved.

1. Therefore, my beloved and longed for brethren, my joy and crown. This is the concluding remark of the entire third chapter, and not just verses 17-21. These are not words of flattery, but sincere love. They are similar to I Thessalonians 2:19,20, where Paul says: "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For you are our glory and joy." The word translated "crown" is *stephanos*, and signifies the wreath worn by the victor, not the king. **So stand fast in the Lord, beloved.** With these words, Paul is encouraging the Philipians to be faithful. Again, he calls them his beloved.

Be United, Joyful, And In Prayer—4:2-7

(2) I implore Euodia and I implore Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. (3) And I urge you also, true companion, help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names (are) in the Book of Life. (4) Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice! (5) Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord (is) at hand. (6) Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; (7) and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

2. I implore Euodia and I implore Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. These two women, as indicated by verse 3, had been quite energetic in the work of the gospel. Unfortunately, there were some long standing differences between these two. It was not doctrinal, as Paul did not take sides, but he instructed them both to be of the same mind in the Lord (cf. notes on 2:2).

3. And I urge you also, true companion. Who does Paul have in mind here? Who is this true companion or "genuine yokefellow"? Some have suggested that Paul is addressing this statement to Epaphroditus, the bearer of this epistle (2:25), or to Timothy, the co-author of the letter. When one takes into consideration that Euodia means "long journey" and Syntyche means "happy chance," it seems more likely that Paul has in mind a member of the Philipian church named Syzygus, which means "true companion." **Help these women.** The Greek word for "help" literally means "to take hold together with one." Like Barnabas, whose name means "son of consolation," Paul believed that Syzygus was one who lived up to his name. Paul wanted him to be a true friend to these two women by helping them to settle their difference once and for all. **Who labored with me in the gospel.** The word "labored" is a strong word indicating that Euodia and Syntyche had "striven" together with Paul for the sake of the gospel. **With Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names {are} in the Book of Life.** There were others at Philippi who had energetically cooperated with Paul in the Lord's work, one of who was named Clement. Paul considers these all to be faithful brethren whose names are written in the book of life (cf. Exodus 32:32; Psalm 69:28; Ezekiel 13:9). This expression is also used seven times in Revelation. It designates the register of those whose "citizenship is in heaven" (3:20).

4. Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice! The word "always" indicates the Christian is to rejoice even when beset by afflictions (1:28-30). Joy ought to be present in the lives of all who enjoy all the spiritual blessings that are "in the Lord."

5. Let your gentleness be known to all men. We have no exact English equivalent for the Greek word translated "gentleness." It means "yieldingness, sweet forbearance, fairness," etc. It's the quality of one who is considerate to another. One who has this quality does not demand that he be able to exercise his rights but unselfishly yields to the rights of others. This loving consideration and kindness is to be exhibited to "all men," not just the church. Nevertheless, only a perverted mind would think the

Christian's gentleness somehow forced him to yield truth to error, right to wrong, or virtue to vice and crime. **The Lord {is} at hand.** Some think this expression is a reference to the Lord's second coming. It seems to me to refer to our special relationship with the Lord and the fact that He knows our circumstances and will defend us from our enemies.

6. **Be anxious for nothing.** In connection to what he has already written, and what he is going to write, Paul is saying that the Christian - the one who trusts the Lord and is aware of His presence - ought not to be anxious about promoting his own interests. He ought not to "worry" or be "fearful" about the future. Instead, he ought to be willing to make his perceived needs known to the Lord in prayer and then be willing to trust that His response to us will be the correct one. **But in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;** We are reminded of I Peter 5:7, which says, "Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you." "Prayer" and "supplication" are often found together in the Bible, as in Ephesians 6:18; I Timothy 2:1; and 5:5. "Prayer" is more general but "supplication" conveys the idea of asking God to supply specific needs. "Thanksgiving" emphasizes that prayer and supplication ought to always be accompanied by an appreciation for God's blessings. Being truly thankful of what He has done for us in the past will help us not to be anxious about the future.

7. **And the peace of God,** The kind of dependence we have been talking about - the kind that trusts God -- snuffs out anxiety and produces a mind at peace, the very antithesis of the troubled, fretful, fearful, apprehensive mind. **Which surpasses all understanding,** Probably, the meaning here is that the peace of God is beyond all that the mere reason of man can do to relieve anxiety. **Will guard your hearts and minds.** "Hearts" and "minds" are used here interchangeably, and designate the sources of the thoughts. The Greek word for "guard" is a military term, signifying a sentinel who keeps guard over a castle or camp, or a well-garrisoned stronghold (cf. Isaiah 26:1-3). Therefore, the mind of the Christian who trusts in the Lord is a well-garrisoned stronghold, and no matter what assaults are coming from the outside, on the inside there is peace. **Through Christ Jesus.** All this takes place as a result of our connection with Jesus Christ.

Meditate On These Things—4:8-9

(8) *Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things*

(are) just, whatever things (are) pure, whatever things (are) lovely, whatever things (are) of good report, if (there is) any virtue and if (there is) anything praiseworthy - meditate on these things. (9) The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.

8. **Finally, brethren,** Paul now specifies six motives which all who seek maturity should keep constantly in mind. **Whatever things are true,** This is not just truth in speech; not in discharge of social trusts; it is truth in itself and for its own sake. It is truth as an achievement of the mind, truth as a rule of conduct, covering all possible spheres and relationships in which one can stand. **Whatever things are noble,** The word "noble" in the Greek is *semna*, which was used in classical Greek as an epithet of the gods, meaning "venerable" or "reverend." It conveys the idea of a dignity and majesty that inspires reverence and relates to either persons or deeds. The KJV translates it as "honest." **Whatever things {are} just,** The Greek word for "just" is *dikaios*, which conveys righteous conduct and has to do with doing good or positive goodness. Doing justly is the duty of every Christian. **Whatever things {are} pure,** *Hagnos*, the Greek word translated "pure," literally means that which is untainted. It here designates right conduct in the sense of abstaining from evil - negative goodness. **Whatever things {are} lovely,** *Prospiles*, the Greek word rendered "lovely," refers to that which is acceptable, agreeable, or pleasing. **Whatever things {are} of good report,** Here Paul is writing of things so excellent and good that to name them is a good or "fair-sounding" thing. If (there is) any virtue. The word "virtue," here and in II Peter 1:5, means moral courage or integrity. Whatever the circumstances a Christian finds himself in, if he has virtue, he will be compelled to do what is right. **And if {there is} anything praiseworthy.** The Christian ought to be ready to praise anything and everything worthy of commendation. The standard the world would use for this would be much different than the standard the Philippians would use. - **meditate on these things.** The meditation prescribed here is not Eastern, New Age meditation, which is an emptying of the mind; instead, it means to give oneself over to careful reflection (i.e., letting the word of Christ dwell in us richly in all wisdom, Colossians 3:16). The meditation (or filling the mind) of which Paul here speaks will enable the Christian to do the will of the Lord in all things.

9. **The things which you learned and re-**

ceived and heard and saw in me, these do. The first two verbs refer to his conduct as an instructor when he preached to the Philippians. From him they both “learned ” and “received” the word of the Lord. The last two verbs refer to his private conduct. The Philippians had heard from others and seen with their own eyes how Paul essentially practiced what he preached. **And the God of peace will be with you.** If the Philippians would do what Paul had said, the God of peace, who brings peace, would be with them. To enjoy this relationship, not only does the Christian need to let his requests be made known to the Lord by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving (4:6,7), but he must also endeavor to obey the divine will. As works without prayer are in vain, so prayer without works is also vain (cf. Hebrews 13:20; I Thessalonians 5:23).

Philippian Generosity—4:10-20

(10) But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your care for me has flourished again; though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity. (11) Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: (12) I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. (13) I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. (14) Nevertheless you have done well that you shared in my distress. (15) Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only. (16) For even in Thessalonica you sent (aid) once and again for my necessities. (17) Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account. (18) Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things (which were sent) from you, a sweet smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God. (19) And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. (20) Now to our God and Father (be) glory forever and ever. Amen.

10. **But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly.** Not only did Paul feel grateful to the Philippians for their kindness toward him but, above all, to the gracious Lord who made this kindness possible. The effect of such gratitude was great joy. **That now at last your care for me has flourished again;** The Philippians' contribution to his support had finally arrived, and not a moment too soon. The word translated “flourished again”

means literally “have made the dry tree to flourish.” **Though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity.** The fact that their support was late in arriving was not because they were not concerned for him. The lack of opportunity (cf. Galatians 6:10) may have been from a lack of means or the lack of a messenger.

11. **Not that I speak in regard to need.** Paul's joy was not because he was short of means and their contribution had taken care of his needs, although this was apparently the case, but because of the flourishing of their thoughtfulness toward him once again. In other words, his joy is not selfish, but derives solely from his thoughts of them and the “proof” of their godly care for him. **For I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content:** Paul is saying that he had learned by the teaching of the Holy Spirit and by divine providence to be content in whatever state he found himself (cf. Hebrews 5:8). *Autarkes*, the Greek word for “content,” appears only here in the New Testament. The word literally means “sufficient for one's self, strong enough to need no aid or support.” It was a familiar word in Stoic egotism. Paul did not claim his self-sufficiency originated with himself, or that it had anything to do with his own wisdom or power. He was independent of circumstances, thus self-sufficient, because of his trust in and dependence on the Lord.

12. **I know how to be abased.** The Greek word for “abased” means “to make low, to reduce to meaner circumstances.” The apostle had learned to accept his abased circumstances in a gracious, uncomplaining spirit (cf. II Corinthians 4:8; 6:9,10). **And I know how to abound.** The Greek word for “abound” means “to have in abundance.” Paul, as a faithful Christian, did not let poverty degrade him nor prosperity exalt him. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. Whether full or hungry, prosperous or poor, Paul had learned to conduct himself as a trusting, loving disciple of the Lord.

13. **I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.** This is not some Positive Mental Attitude (PMA) proof-text, as many try to make it. In other words, this is not a faith in the power of faith statement. It is, instead, a statement of faith in Christ that says in all the circumstances of life Paul was convinced that he could bear fruit to the glory of God through the strength the Lord gave him.

14. **Nevertheless you have done well that you shared in my distress.** In declaring his dependence upon the Lord, the apostle was careful not to disparage the Philippians' gift. God was doing His part and the Philippians were doing

their part, and the latter as a result of the grace of God (cf. II Corinthians 8:1-4).

15. **Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only.** In those early days of preaching the gospel in Europe, when he departed from Macedonia (Acts 17:14), no church other than the Philippian church had fellowship with him. This is not to be confused with the fellowship they had with him when he was at Corinth, where he subsequently went after leaving Macedonia (Acts 17:15-34; 18:1), in which other churches were involved (II Corinthians 11:8,9). In this particular case, only the Philippians were involved. The words translated "giving and receiving" are a business term referring to the credit and debit side of the ledger. The Philippians were greatly indebted to Paul since it was through his preaching and teaching that they had been brought to Christ and nurtured in the faith. Thus the apostle had certain credits on their ledger that they were obligated to honor. He referred to a similar matter in I Corinthians 9:11, "If we have sown spiritual things for you, (is it) a great thing if we reap your material things?" This responsibility is included in the "all good things" of Galatians 6:6, "Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches."

16. **For even in Thessalonica you sent {aid} once and again for my necessities.** Not only had they supported him when he left Philippi, but also in his first gospel effort after Philippi when he established a church at Thessalonica (Acts 17:1-4). Their affection for Paul and their appreciation for the work he was doing prompted them to keep up with his needs, sending support to him in Thessalonica more than once. This support was in addition to what he was able to supply for himself from his own labor (I Thessalonians 2:9, II Thessalonians 3:7-9).

17. **Not that I seek the gift,** Paul was not preaching the gospel to make money, or out of covetousness. He certainly did not deny the usefulness of their support, making it possible for him to preach the gospel; but he wanted to emphasize that his interest in such support involved no self-seeking or selfishness on his part. **But I seek the fruit that abounds to your account.** The not/but construction emphasizes the latter at the expense of the first. In other words, Paul was indeed grateful for their gift, which was useful in the furtherance of the gospel; but his chief concern had to do with the good it did those who gave it. The phrase "to your account" is taken from commercial dealings, which literally means "interest which may accumulate to

your account." This reminds us of the following passages: "But, beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, yes, things that accompany salvation, though we speak in this manner. For God (is) not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, (in that) you have ministered to the saints, and do minister" (Hebrews 6:9,10); "Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. (Let them) do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life" (I Timothy 6:17-19). In the gift the Philippians sent Paul, they laid up for themselves treasures in heaven (Matthew 6:20). The principle to which the apostle appeals is the fact that "it is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).

18. **Indeed I have all and abound.** "I have" is the regular expression found in the papyri to indicate the receipt of what is due. The Philippians had paid the debt they owed Paul "in full." I am full. He was lacking nothing concerning his physical needs. **having received from Epaphroditus the things {which were sent} from you,** "The things" Epaphroditus delivered to Paul probably included clothes and other necessities, as well as money. Epaphroditus must have been loaded down by the generosity of the Philippians. **A sweet smelling aroma,** The reference is to the odor of the sacrifices offered to God under the Old Testament. Like these sacrifices, the gift of the Philippians to Paul was considered as sweet-smelling in God's presence (cf. II Corinthians 2:15,16; Ephesians 5:2). **An acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God.** What the Philippians were doing for Paul, they were doing for the Lord (Matthew 25:40). Therefore, it is designated as an acceptable, well-pleasing sacrifice to God. Their care for Paul was an act of worship rendered to God. When a Christian does anything to help another person, prompted by his love for the Lord and the recipient of his good work, he worships God, offering Him a well-pleasing, acceptable sacrifice. "But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased" (Hebrews 13:16).

19. **And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.** The Philippians were generous in their gift to Paul from their limited means, but they were going to receive back from the unlimited storehouse of God's blessings! Anything a Christian gives in support of the gospel, motivated by love, will yield a rich return far beyond one's fi-

nite ability to understand (cf. Luke 16:9-12).

20. **Now to our God and Father {be} glory forever and ever.** When one considers the wonderful richness of God's blessings, praise cannot be repressed. **Amen.** The "amen" is a fitting conclusion. As the lips shut themselves, the heart once again surveys the facts and adds, "So be it."

Greeting And Blessing—4:21-23

(21) Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren who are with me greet you. (22) All the saints greet you, but especially those who are of Caesar's household. (23) The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

21. **Greet every saint in Christ Jesus.** Paul wanted his greetings to go to each member of the Philippian church. **The brethren who are with me greet you.** This probably denotes Paul's co-workers mentioned in 1:14 and 2:19.

22. **All the saints greet you.** All the Chris-

tians at Rome not mentioned above extend their greetings. **But especially those who are of Caesar's household.** It would be encouraging for the Philippians to know that there were now saints in Nero's household. The term could refer to his kinsmen, but probably refers to servants holding more or less important positions in the imperial household. Furthermore, the fact of these conversions testifies to the unwearied effort and influence of the apostle, who was willing to use every opportunity to preach and teach the gospel.

23. **The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.** This epistle closes with the recognition of Jesus Christ as the means of divine grace, and the invoking of this grace on the Philippians. **Amen.**