

# THE WORD OF TRUTH

Published Quarterly

*"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free"—Jno. 8:32.*

Volume 22

WINTER, 1978

Number 4

*"Of His own will begat He us with the Word of Truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures" (James 1:18)*

## SET FOR THE DEFENSE OF THE GOSPEL

### ISSUE DEVOTED TO A COMMENTARY ON PHILIPPIANS

Commentary written by Brother Richard Ebler, Contributing Author

Introduction by Editor, Given O. Blakely

Throughout the years of our pilgrimage upon earth, we are often blessed with extraordinary and consistent friendships in Christ Jesus. Generally speaking, life is spattered with fleeting acquaintances, those that leave for other areas and fields of service, and those whose age does not permit them to linger long in the tabernacle of clay. But now and then the Lord will bless his child with a friend that, like Jesus Himself, "sticketh closer than a brother" (Prov. 18:24). These are not fair weather friends, not those that abandone the ship in the midst of the storm, but are rather characterized by the sort of stability that is required to buoy up our confidence and keep us in the race. While others, like Demas of old, may "forsake us, having loved more this present world" (II Tim. 4:10), these endure during storms and the heat of the day. Such as this cannot be measured in worth by earthly standards, nor can the expression of mere words contain an adequate portrayal of their unspeakable worth. What burdens have been lightened by the knowledge that such as these exist—and that you have been blessed to even know some of them personally! What turbulent waters have been forged with assurance simply because of a "fellow" in the boat, whose affection and understanding are known to be faithful and consistent. Lonely travelers have been known to traverse the mountains of trial and sail the stormy tempests of darkness because of such companions. Words need not pass between them—sometimes only a glance, a brotherly embrace, a clasp of the hand—or even a memory of their comforting words—has meant the difference between night and day, sorrow and joy, discouragement and encouragement, faint-heartedness and a strong faith. It would do our readers well to survey their own gallery of friendships and give thanks for acquaintances such as these. They are gifts from God. God uses such to comfort us; "God that comforteth those that are cast down, comforteth us by the coming of Titus" (II Cor. 7:6).

Such an one is Brother Richard Ebler to myself. He has, over that past eleven or twelve years, proven himself to be stable in the faith, and able to endure the tests of time and the trials of life. He has not hesitated to get under burdens that were too heavy for me to bear alone. His labors in the Kingdom have been consistent, and marked by a sincerity and a quest for truth that has not been equalled by many. He stands, in this respect, above many of his peers. He is noted for being godly, and for being a student of the Word of the Living God. Those that

*(Please turn to page 2)*

CHAPTER 1

VERSE 1

**Paul and Timotheus.** Paul, the apostle and sole writer of this epistle, begins by stating his name. He was once called "Saul" and had been notorious for persecuting the church, but what a change can be wrought in a man's life by the power of God through Christ! "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature" (II Cor. 5:17), and so is worthy of a new name!

Paul links his name with Timothy's. The brethren at Philippi knew Timothy, for he had been with Paul when the apostle first preached at Philippi (Acts 16:1-40), and Paul was about to send him back to Philippi as one like-minded who would naturally care for their spiritual state (Phil. 2:20). Note the humility of the great apostle in joining young Timothy's name with his. What an encouragement for Timothy! Furthermore, there was nothing in the flesh to tie these two brethren together, yet their bonds in Christ were close. Timothy was his "own son in the faith," and spent much time with Paul. This was necessary for growth in grace and godliness.

**The servants of Jesus Christ.** Paul does not need to use his usual formal title of "apostle" with the Philippians, for they had never questioned his apostleship, but had continued steadfastly in the faith and were very dear to the apostle (ch. 1:7, 8), as he was to them (ch. 4:10). Therefore he says "servants". It is the highest honor to be this kind of servant! A servant to the King of Kings! The word "doulos" denotes a slave. Paul was a slave of love, one who for love of his master had (as it were) been willing to have his ear put to the door and pierced (Ex. 21:1-6) that he might serve him forever. And why not? One must either be a slave of sin or else of Christ (Rom. 6:17, 18). Service to sin is hard bondage, offering empty pleasure for a season, followed by sorrow and eternal torment. Service to Christ is perfect freedom, for it is done in a state of joy, love, and faith, issuing forth in life. It is simply a matter of "whom ye shall serve."

**To all the saints.** Notice that Paul does not have the faith of Christ with respect of persons (Jas. 2:1-8) for God does not, and as followers of God neither should we (Acts 10:34, Eph. 5:1). He writes to "all the saints," the lowest as well as the highest. It is good to cultivate this spirit and to pray always for all saints (Eph. 6:18).

"All" is a word common to this epistle, perhaps because of his godly concern for their unity (ch. 1:27, 2:2, 3:16, 4:2), for he knew the devastating effects of division and thus exhorts certain disciples to "mark them that cause divisions among you and avoid them . . . lest they seduce your own soul and draw you away after themselves. God hates those that sow discord among brethren" (Prov. 6:16-19). This is the devil's work.

Paul uses the word "saint" as a general name for his "brethren," and not as it is used by the

THE WORD OF TRUTH

Published Quarterly by the Church Meeting at 78th and Independence Streets, Merrillville, Indiana.

Author and Editor .....Given O. Blakely

Contributing Author .....Richard Ebler

Circulation Managers .....Bro. and Sis. Al Stoner

Publication Office: 78th and Independence Streets,  
Merrillville, Indiana 46410

(Do not send mail to this address)

Address all mail to: 10701 West 124th Ave.,  
Cedar Lake, Ind. 46303

Sent free upon request to all interested parties.

Issue Devoted To A Commentary on Philippians

(From page 1)

Speak with him cannot speak long before the Lord is injected into the conversation, and a testimony of the truth is given boldly to them. Brother Dick, like anyone that labors for the Master has not been met with the approval of everyone—he too has critics. But, then, it was our Lord Himself that said; "Beware when all men speak well of you" (Luke 6:6). Those however, that have a genuine appetite for the Word of the Lord, and whose quest is for heaven, find a true friend and companion in Brother Richard Ebler.

Brother Dick, as we call him, is a teacher of History at the Merrillville High School in Merrillville, Indiana. He has taught there for some years, and has developed a reputation for being a Christian—a man of God. Daily, a group of students meet in his room for prayer, and those students that are seeking the Lord eventually find their way to Brother Ebler for consultation and advice in the Scriptures. Brother Dick also assists in the ministry of the fellowship meeting at 78th and Independence. He regularly instructs the adult Bible Class, leads in the songs, ministers at the Lord's Table with others, and often ministers the Word in my own absence. He also instructs and guides the younger children each Lord's Day evening. Brother Dick is married to Sister Lee Ebler, and they have two children, Suzanna (5 yrs.), and Eden (2 yrs.). The whole family is always present at the services, and they have formed part of a nucleus of believers here that lead the way for others to follow.

This issue is devoted to a commentary on the book of Philippians that has been authored by Brother Ebler. You will observe from his comments that his mind is saturated with not only the Word itself, but with the concepts that are taught in the Word. A true follower of Christ, and a faithful brother, we recommend both him and his writings to our readers. Your expressions of thankfulness and appreciation may be addressed to: Brother Ebler, 10701 West 124th Ave., Cedar Lake, Indiana 46303.

Roman Catholics. The Greek word "agios" is sometimes rendered "holy," sometimes "saint." They were not holy of themselves for holiness is not the result of outward activity, but it is a quality of soul possessed by those who are inwardly brought into fellowship with Christ. These are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, mourn over sin, are pure in heart, are willing to suffer persecution for righteousness' sake, are zealous of good works, and feel themselves to be strangers and pilgrims in this present evil world simply because they truly believe God! (Matt. 5:1-12; Titus 2:14; Heb. 11:13).

**In Christ Jesus.** They are holy only because they are "in Christ." They have a borrowed holiness, which they partake of from Him. They were "chosen in Christ from before the foundation of the world that they should be holy" (Eph. 1:4). Personal holiness is the fruitage of the personal election of God. God freely, unconditionally, immutably chooses whom He pleases to be "partakers of His holiness" apart from any foreseen merit, faith, or works (Eph. 1:4-11). This election manifests itself in the area of time by the Providential hearing of the gospel, by the reception of repentance and faith which are the gifts of God, and by continuance in the way of holiness (Acts 13:48, 5:31; Eph. 2:8, 9; I Peter 1:5; Phil. 1:6). To be "in Christ" experimentally is to be baptized into his body (I Cor. 12:13), of his flesh and of his bones (Eph. 5:30). "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit" (I Cor. 6:17). It is to spiritually dwell where He dwells, in the heavens and not upon earth. It is to be out of self and into Christ, to think like Him and to have His affections as your own. In short, it is to experience spiritual union and communion with Him.

**Which are at Philippi.** Paul was writing only to the saints which were at Philippi. This intimates that not everyone at the city of Philippi was a saint. There are some who are children of the devil (John 8:44). Although this may seem to be an obvious and unnecessary point, many today would try to force the walls of God's sheepfold out to include many carnal persons who are destitute of spiritual life, grace, and truth. It is a hard saying, but "narrow is the way and few there be that find it" (Matt. 7:14).

**With the bishops and deacons.** The "bishop" is synonymous with "elder" or "presbyter" (Acts 20:17, 28 Gk.) being a term designating a minister of the Word of God in a local assembly. There were several men capable of preaching at Philippi and we rejoice to have it so at our own assembly at Colfax. It is precious to find one's own experiences and situation matching that of Scripture. Many today misuse the term "bishop" to refer to a ruler over many churches. This is another perversion of Babylon. Let us speak in "words which the Holy Ghost teacheth" and avoid fostering false concepts.

(v. 3) "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you."

Immediately after the salutation we find Paul giving thanks. This is the first thing on the agen-

da. Paul often did this at the beginning of his epistles: "First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all . . ." (Rom. 1:8), "I thank my God always on your behalf . . ." (I Cor. 1:4), "We give thanks to God always for you all . . ." (I Thess. 1:2), "We give thanks to God . . ." (Col. 1:3), "I thank God . . ." (II Tim. 1:3). God desires primarily to be worshipped (John 4:23), and two principal parts of worship are praise and thanksgiving. In fact, the primary ministry of the church is that we should be to the praise of the glory of His grace (I Peter 2:9, Eph. 1:6, 12, 14).

Accordingly, Paul makes the work of grace in the saints the object of his praise and thanksgiving. It is God who works righteousness in the hearts of His people. This indeed is a mighty work! It is worthy of the utmost praise! The new creation requires a greater display of the Divine power than did the first creation, for when God created the heavens and the earth He had no opposition. But when He made us new creatures in Christ Jesus He faced and overcame opposition from not only Satan, but ourselves also. He had to first bind the strong man (Satan), and then turn us from the power of Satan unto God (Matt. 12:29, Acts 26:18). This was no small feat considering that by nature we were totally dead in trespasses and in sins, being alienated from the life of God, and unable in ourselves to take the first step in seeking Him (Eph. 2:1, 4:18, Rom. 3:11). Truly we do live in a spiritual universe in which men are ruled by the things which do not appear, i.e. the spiritual powers under the control of God. Only after much suffering did Nebuchadnezzar learn that "the heavens do rule" (Dan. 4:26). Therefore we see that the spiritual overthrow of sin in the heart of a mortal man is indeed the greatest work of God, for it requires the very power that brought Christ from the dead and is fittingly the cause of Paul's thanksgiving.

Note that Paul does not view the brethren after the flesh, but views them as trophies of grace. When one wishes to give a sincere compliment to a brother (perhaps even in public, if the case requires that we give honor unto whom honor is due), the best way of phrasing it is on this wise: "I thank God for the grace that is given to our Brother So-and-So in this particular area . . . he ministers to me in this way." This manner of speech will both encourage the brother and yet give God the pre-eminence in all things.

Note that he said, "I thank MY God. . . ." We have a personal God. As it is written in David: "Thou are **my** father, **my** God, and the rock of **my** salvation" (Psa. 89:26). Man craves and needs a personal God, One that is Himself a person so that man can love Him, talk to Him, deal with Him, trust Him, worship Him, and be conformed to His image, One that is personally interested in us in a personal way; yes, even numbering the very hairs on our head. And such is our God!

Observe that he saith, "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you." How wonderful this is! Suppose that every brother could always say

this with the apostle Paul! All evil thoughts would automatically be eliminated and a general spirit of love and thanksgiving would pervade the atmosphere of the soul, which would be most wholesome. The word "devil" literally means "slanderer," and truly he does slander the brethren to one another in an attempt to disrupt the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. This habitual thanksgiving upon every remembrance is a method whereby we may bring every thought into captivity unto the obedience of Christ. At the same time we see herein an exhortation to live such sober, righteous, and godly lives as are pleasing to the Lord and will redound to his glory by giving our brethren ample cause for thanksgiving as they behold our steadfastness in the faith.

What a wonderful spirit Paul had! Surely these brethren had faults as we all have, yet Paul continued to constantly thank God upon every remembrance of them. The bonds of affection between Paul and the Philippians were especially tender.

Paul says "upon every remembrance." The Christian life is largely a matter of remembering. Paul here remembered the Philippians often and gave thanks every time. Those who are most advanced in the faith find themselves often engaged in the holy exercise of simply remembering precious truths and experiences in the Lord over again and again. The gospel is said to save us if we keep it in memory (I Cor. 15:2). Peter desired to stir up the pure minds of the saints by way of remembrance. Knowing the weakness of our frame, Christ instituted ordinances and said "This do in remembrance of me." We are exhorted to "hold fast the form of sound words," and to "be not moved away from the hope of the gospel." How simple! How humiliating! How wise of God to design it thus! Let us meditate and feed much on the truth!

## VERSE 2

**Grace be unto you, and peace.** "Grace" is always mentioned before "peace" because there can be no peace with God until grace has been experienced. We speak of that blessing of God upon the soul which makes the saints to worship God in the spirit, to rejoice in Christ Jesus, and to have no confidence in the flesh (Phil. 3:3). It is that quality of soul which enables one to let the word of Christ dwell in them richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in their hearts to the Lord (Col. 3:16). It is that which causes us to be strong in Christ Jesus (II Tim. 2:1), to have good hope (II Thess. 2:16), to perceive truth and to hunger and thirst after righteousness. It is the soil in which we grow (II Peter 3:18) and are established (Heb. 13:9). It is only by this that we may serve God acceptably with godly fear (Heb. 12:28), and by it we obtain help in time of need (Heb. 4:16). It is easily perceived in them that have it (Gal. 2:9), and by it we are saved (Eph. 2:8, 9). The term "grace" de-

notes that it is wholly unmerited favor that we have in view. It is free, sovereign, and unconditional in its nature.

In like manner, peace is also a gift of God. Jesus said, "My peace I give unto you" (John 14:27). This is speaking of peace with God and not of peace with the world, for we are at enmity with those who hate Christ, and we have experienced the truth that "friendship with the world is enmity with God" (James 4:4). As did King David, we "hate them with perfect hatred" (Psa. 139:22). (We love them in view of our desire for their spiritual regeneration and eternal welfare, but we hate them in a sense when we contemplate what they are. They are at enmity with God, and thus we who partake of the divine nature cannot be at peace with them.)

Nor are we at peace with Satan our arch-enemy. He assails our minds at strategic seasons with thoughts of failure, fear, despair, frustration, and worry. Truly great vigilance is needed (along with sobriety) for our adversary the devil walks about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. He can only be effectually resisted by remaining steadfast in the faith (I Peter 5:8, 9). Satan attacks us in our thought-life and thus we are to bring "every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (II Cor. 10:5). Our weapons are faith, truth, prayer, righteousness, the gospel of peace, the hope of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God (Eph. 6:10-18). There is really never a dull moment when one is a Christian. Not unless fighting on the front lines could be counted dull!

**From God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.** Here again, it is important to notice the order in which these two members of the Godhead are mentioned. First, God is mentioned, then Christ. Few people realize that there is a hierarchy in the Godhead. The Father is supreme, then comes the Son, and finally the Holy Spirit. They are all of the same Divine nature, but the distinction is in their authority. Notice the wording of Scripture: "The head of every man is Christ; the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God (I Cor. 11:3). And again, "For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all. (I Cor. 5:27, 28). As Christ was sent forth by the Father, even so was the Holy Spirit sent forth by His superior, even the Son. "But when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth His Son . . ." (Gal. 4:4). Even so, Jesus said, "If I depart, I will send Him (the Holy Spirit) unto you" (John 16:7). It seems that churches today seldom dwell upon the glorious perfections and offices of the Godhead as they all cooperate in our salvation, the Father electing us, the Son redeeming us, and the Holy Spirit calling us. The supremacy of the Father is seldom mentioned while on the other hand, the unobtrusive member

of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit, is sometimes over-emphasized. These things ought not so to be.

The Father as He is seated upon a throne of grace is well able to dispense both grace and thereby peace. This will always be done through Christ who is the Prince of Peace. As Matthew Poole expresses it, this is the "evangelical salutation, as in Romans 1:7; Ephesians 1:2; II Peter 1:2; praying for the free and undeserved favour of God the Father to them, as the fountain, James 1:17; together with all inward and outward blessings flowing thence through Christ the procurer of them."

It is interesting to note that "grace and peace" is the common salutation of Paul's earlier epistles, whereas in his pastoral epistles "mercy" is added. I am persuaded that this is not without significance. Every Christian needs grace and peace, but those who are in a position of leadership need additional "mercy" because they must undergo a special measure of suffering. Satan torments them more than anyone else because they pose the greatest threat to the kingdom of darkness. Satan aims to discourage them and tempt them to give up the battle. Also he tempts them to sin in any way possible so as to ruin their reputation and to diminish their influence. Pray for them!

#### VERSE 4-5

"Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now;"

Paul has just said that he thanked God upon every remembrance of the Philippians and now tells them in what manner he was accustomed to remember them; namely, before the throne of grace making request with joy for their fellowship in the gospel. This is the best way to be remembered: before the throne of grace. For this will bring the most benefit to the one remembered and also to the one who is doing the remembering.

Also let us note that thanksgiving is a good accompaniment of prayer (Phil. 4:6) because it genders a wholesome attitude before the throne, reminds us of all the blessings already received (which we are apt to forget), silence our flesh, props up our faith, and, most of all, redounds to the glory of God (II Cor. 4:15).

Coming before the throne of grace is a spiritual reality that the saint may consciously enter into. We are to pray to God (Acts 12:5), and be aware that He is listening from the throne to which we draw near by faith. This adds a whole new dimension to prayer, and better enables us to make request with joy, for what else is depicted before the throne of God besides joy? Satan has been banished from the heavenly places where we have been made to sit together with Christ; therefore, let us be lifted up by faith into this rarified atmosphere through the holy work of meditation and prayer that we may dwell on high with Him!

Brother Calvin notes on this verse that "joy" refers to the past while "prayer" refers to the future. "For he rejoiced in their happy beginnings

and desired their perfection. Thus it becomes us always to rejoice in the blessings received from God in such a way as to remember to ask from Him what we still lack."

Along with joy the Christian has seasons of sorrow, as Peter saith, "Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations" (I Peter 1:6). The cause of sorrow is sin or the temptation to it, for we are troubled on every side by our flesh, the world, and the devil, and if we fall seven times, yet before we rise up again we may endure chastening as sons, which for the present time seemeth not to be joyous but grievous. Now grief has a way of distorting our spiritual vision, as David saith, "Mine eye is consumed with grief" (Psa. 6:7). Perhaps it is for this reason that Paul speaks of having his seasons of intercession in seasons of joy when he may view situations with a sound mind. Herein is much wisdom. Knowing how frail we are, that our frame is as dust, and knowing the power of the carnal mind to trouble us when we would do good, let us order our activities with wisdom. It is best to keep a constant regard to our state of being so as to detect when we are in the flesh. This is not always easy, for sin is deceitful and every man's way is right in his own eyes (Prov. 21:2). But with experience this holy art can be learned, and when one detects he has been brought temporarily into captivity by the carnal mind, then having no confidence in the flesh he can refuse to evaluate situations, make decisions or make commitments.

On the other hand, if the sorrow be godly sorrow (not wordly) then the Lord hath special respect to those supplications also, for he saith in another place, "to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word" (Isa. 66:2). Also, God is especially touched by those who sigh and cry for the abominations that are done in Jerusalem (Ezekiel 9:4). We are often exhorted to be sober (Titus 2:1-6) and are told that those who mourn are blessed (Matt. 5:4), while a woe is pronounced upon those who laugh much in this sin-cursed life (Luke 6:25).

Note that Paul prays for all, not having the faith of Christ with respect of persons, for if we do so, then we are convinced of the law as transgressors (Jas. 2:9). This applies to many areas of our lives. When we deal with saints we are not to despise or neglect the weaker members of the body but bestow upon them the more abundant honor (I Cor. 12:23). When we witness to close friends or relatives, we are not to regard their persons, but teach the way of God in truth (Matt. 22:16). When we deal with our brethren, we must not allow a fleshly relationship to develop, but keep it strictly in the Lord; "henceforth know we no man after the flesh" (II Cor. 5:16).

Paul makes request for their fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now. Compare this with Colossians 1:3, 4. Out of fervent godly love he ceased not to pray for them. Let us do the same for one another!

## VERSE 6

"Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."

Last month we labored to define this "good work" in order to distinguish it from the many counterfeits of Satan. In short, true conversion issues forth in the continued pursuit of godliness. This month we will deal with the second part of this verse showing that once God has begun the work, He continues it unto the end and causes genuine saints to persevere in the way of holiness and inward godliness.

Paul's confidence in this matter did not rest on the weakness, instability, fickleness, folly, spiritual blindness, and innate perversity of man, but upon an infinite, sovereign, righteous, all-powerful, all-knowing, all-sufficient, only-wise, ever-loving, gracious, and faithful God. In fact, this whole earth is but the stage on which the drama of our redemption is being enacted so that God might display all His glorious attributes before angelic hosts (Eph. 3:10). The true saint is in a sinful world (including the religious segment) which exerts a tremendous, subtle, conforming pressure (Rom. 12:2). He retains that part of himself which is powerfully bent toward sin. He must face an invisible, powerful, and supernaturally intelligent foe, Satan. Yet in spite of all this opposition and suffering the righteous hold on their way by the inward powerful working of God through faith and thus bring Him glory (I Peter 1:5, Job 17:9). Indeed, God will do this because His honor is at stake, His faithful promises in the Word are at stake, and the enormous price of our redemption (the precious blood of Christ) means nothing if the elect are not kept by the power of God. The Deity would then appear to be unfaithful, fickle, and changeable. This is unthinkable.

Perseverance is a necessity for the Christian lest he perish, for it is written that they who draw back do so unto perdition (Heb. 10:39). Not that he will always travel with equal speed, for it is not said that he shall hold on his pace but on his way (Job 17:9). Nor will he be exempt from occasional stumbling, yet he shall rise up again (Prov. 24:16), and the tenor of his life will be toward holiness.

Having been washed and made clean every whit he needs only to have his feet washed sometimes as he tramps through a defiling world. Hating sin and aspiring unto perfection, he holds on his way (Phil. 3:12-14).

Some may object that the Biblical warnings against falling away must presuppose the possibility that a true child of God may do so. But no one is to **assume** that he is a child of God. "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure," Paul said (II Peter 1:10). Genuine assurance is the fruit of genuine experiences with the Lord as they are understood by Scripture.

Scriptural warnings against falling away are the means in the hand of God used to keep His own elect from wandering. Remember that in the epistle to the Hebrews which contains the most solemn warning against apostasy, the apostle al-

ways takes care to add words which show that he did not believe that those whom he warned would actually fall away (Heb. 6:9, 10:39). Those who apostatize are spoken of in the Word of God as having been more **professors** and not **possessors** of divine life (I John 2:19). Branches in Christ (by profession) which bear no fruit are certainly cut off and burned (John 15:6), but then can we imagine a true saint who does not bring forth **any** fruit? "By their fruits ye shall know them" (Matt. 7:20). When false professors in that day shall say "Lord, Lord," He will reply, "I never knew you," not "I have **forgotten** you" (Matt. 7:23). They were never really His disciples.

The life which the saint receives at regeneration is eternal in nature, and therefore it can be said, "he shall never die" (John 11:26, John 3:36). Furthermore he cannot be at rest living habitually in sin for the general bent of his life is toward holiness. The new life (inner principle) in him cannot sin and wars against his old nature, prevailing against it (I John 3:9).

Faith, the outward sign of this life, is also a conquering principle (I John 5:4). Surely those who are truly in Christ are safe and no man is able to pluck them out of the Father's hand (John 10:27-30). In fact, it is even impossible to ultimately deceive the elect (Matt. 24:24). Christ's present intercession is effectual and saves his people to the uttermost (Heb. 7:25), even as it was for Peter (Luke 22:31), who, though he experienced a measure of sin and sorrow, it was the exception to the great rule of his life, and he was kept from total apostasy. Christ's character is so unimpeachable that His work is perfect, and He fully succeeds in keeping those that were given to His charge as a faithful steward by the Father before the foundation of the world in the everlasting covenant of grace (John 17:12, 6:39, 40; II Sam. 23:5) wherein the Father declares "I will not turn away from them . . . and they shall not depart from me" (Jer. 32:40). There are no "if's" here as there was under the old covenant (Rom. 10:5), the covenant of law which depended on man's works and thus failed. Here we have a certain and sure thing, the "sure mercies of David" (Isa. 55:3). This love is called an "everlasting love" (Jer. 31:3), and indeed if Christ died for us when we were His enemies, certainly He will continue to save us now that we are His friends (Rom. 5:9, 10). Yea, nothing shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 8:28-29), for we are now joined to Him in spiritual union as His bride and members of body (I Cor. 6:17, Eph. 5:30-32). Can He then be amputated? Is He fitted with new limbs as old ones are lost? The thought is repulsive as well as false. Nay, rather He has sealed us with His Holy Spirit as an earnest and pledge of this certain salvation (Eph. 1:13, 14)!

## VERSE 7-8

"Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bands, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my

grace. For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ.

Paul has just expressed his confidence that the Philippian brethren were genuinely regenerated sons of God (i.e. wheat, not tares) and his assurance that God would continue to uphold the work that He Himself had begun in them. Now in this verse Paul begins by giving a reason why it is meet (fit) for him to think this of them all: because he has them in his heart. This means that Paul by the Holy Ghost had a godly yearning over them for the welfare of their souls. In verse eight he says that he greatly longed after them all in the bowels (compassion) of Christ, and in verses nine through eleven he prays a godly prayer for them.

How few today have such real genuine deep godly concern for the spiritual growth and health of God's dear saints! How few comprehend the nature of God's true ministry of edification! Yet the true saints of God are depicted in the Scripture as automatically engaging in this sort of activity (Matt. 25:31-46).

Aaron and the priests of Levi wore a breastplate containing twelve precious stones representing the twelve tribes (all of them; compare with the "all" of this verse) of Israel. Aaron was to bear them upon his heart before the Lord. Thus does Christ, our High Priest, bear his own elect upon his heart as he intercedes for them, and thus do those who are being conformed to his image as they pray for one another. The Spirit-prompted prayers of God's saints are the foretokens that his eternal purposes are about to be fulfilled concerning those specific requests; therefore, Paul reasons from effect to cause as if to say "It is fit for me to believe that God is going to save you because God Himself had laid you upon my heart." It takes a godly heart to be able to say this.

Paul continues to confirm his opinion by saying that the Philippians evidenced that they partook of the same true grace as that of the apostle whether Paul was shut up in prison or whether he was out in the defence and confirmation of the gospel (Amplified New Testament). That is, they were without hypocrisy, being unafraid to own Paul and his message whether he was in or out of prison. Another legitimate view of this verse is that they were especially dear to the apostle inasmuch as they had received benefit from his ministry by having grace communicated from God through Paul to them, thus being made "partakers of his grace" (Matthew Henry). Or, emphasizing the sufferings of the apostle that were being shared by the Philippians through their continued gifts and godly care (Phil. 4:14-18), both in his bonds and in the defence of the gospel, we may view the Philippians as partaking of his grace in the sense of sharing the consolation that God always sends on the heels of suffering (II Cor. 1:7). Those who share the burden will share in the reward, and fellow sufferers are dear to one another. Also, there is an alternate reading in this; namely, "because you have me in your heart." This was undoubtedly true because the Philippians had

borne evidence of their genuine love to the apostle by sending him aid on more than one occasion. Thus Paul was confident that God had begun a good work in them and would finish it, because loving the brethren is an evidence that one has passed from death unto life (I John 3:14).

In verse eight we find Paul taking an oath to confirm the testimony of his sincere, true, inward, godly, spiritual love for them. Paul says "God is my record." He could not have called upon a higher authority. God is a God of truth and integrity, bearing witness of things as they really are. Also He has all knowledge, knowing even the mysteries of the other world as well as this one and even knows the secrets of the hearts of men, for He "searcheth the hearts" (Rom. 8:27). Godly men of all ages have taken lawful solemn vows such as "The Lord do so to me and more also" or "As the Lord liveth" or "Verily, verily" (II Sam. 2:27, Job 27:2, I Sam. 20:13, John 5:24). God Himself is seen taking a solemn oath and occasion may demand that we be followers of Him as dear children (Heb. 6:17).

I point this out because certain religious sects have been known to forbid the taking of solemn oaths on the basis of such passages as Matthew 5:33-37, but Jesus was simply correcting the common practice of the Jews during his time. They had the custom of taking all sorts of oaths upon every trivial occasion such as "By heaven," "By Jerusalem," "By the hair of my head," etc., when rather they should have led such dependable lives that their "Yes" could be simply a brief "Yes" and their "No" simply a brief "No" for whatever is more than these cometh of the evil one. Likewise are rash oaths unwise (Luke 14:28) because "better is it that thou should not vow, than that thou shouldst vow and not pay" (Ecc. 5:4).

"In the bowels of Christ" shows the mystical union of Christ with His people. His affections have become ours and our hearts throb with His, loving those things which He loves and hating those things which He hates. "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit" (I Cor. 6:17). Praise the Lord!

#### VERSE 11

"Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God."

What are the "fruits of righteousness" in this verse? Most commentators take them to be good works, and this writer feels constrained to pay his sincere respects to their judgment. However, an alternative interpretation seems possible. According to the American Standard Version the Greek word for "fruits" is actually better rendered literally in the singular, "fruit." Righteousness itself seems to be the fruit, and we are exhorted to be "filled" with it. Scripture generally uses the word "filled" to refer to the filling of the soul with such holy affections as love, joy, peace, etc. (Rom. 15:13, 14; II Tim. 1:4; Acts 13:52), which in their aggregate sum do in fact constitute the experiential righteousness of the saint of God. All righteous

acts must flow from a righteous heart which is itself a fruit of faith in Christ (Acts 15:9). Righteousness, then, is let down out of heaven into our hearts as we "see Jesus" (John 12:21, Acts 7:55, 56), and it is faith in Christ that we are exhorted to in this verse.

This highlights the Scriptural emphasis upon man's heart, for it is "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness" (Rom. 10:10), and he must keep it diligently, for "out of it are the issues of life" (Prov. 4:23). We do this by bringing every thought into captivity unto the obedience of Christ (I Cor. 10:5), because it is a spiritual fact that in a sense we are continually "fashioning ourselves" (I Peter 1:14) by our thought-life. As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he (Prov. 23:7). Thus if we are going to be filled with the fruit of righteousness we must fight the fight of faith to keep the truth of God in our eye and thus abide in Christ that we might bring forth fruit (John 15:5) as it is written "I am like a green fir tree. From me is thy fruit found" (Hosea 14:8).

Of course before one can be filled, he must first be made empty. The love of self, sin, and the world must go (Gal. 2:20, Rom. 12:9, I John 2:15), for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness (II Cor. 6:17, 18)? These two are contrary the one to the other. Indeed some are spoken of as being "filled with all unrighteousness" (Rom. 1:29). Of these it can be said "Why hath Satan filled thine heart?" (Acts 5:3), whereas God's sheep have this mark; they desire to be filled with all the fulness of God (Eph. 3:19). Those who have righteousness dwelling in their hearts will find that "the work of righteousness shall be peace and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever" (Isa. 32:17). The fruit of righteousness is both sown in peace and also works peace in the heart (James 3:18 cf. Isa. 32:17).

The glorious thing about this righteousness is that the very faith in Christ which purifies the heart is the same faith that legally justifies the believer from all things which he could not be justified from under the law of Moses (Gal. 2:16, 3:11). Faith may be weak (Rom. 14:1) and it may be only as a grain of mustard seed (Matt. 17:20), but it means so much to God that He will forgive all of one's sins because of it (Rom. 5:1). This is how much God desires His truthfulness and integrity to be acknowledged by His creatures. Those that do not believe His word have "made him a liar" (I John 5:10). Those who would try to achieve righteousness by the works of the law would turn "the fruit of righteousness into hemlock" by saying "Have we not taken to us horns by our own strength?" (Amos 6:12).

The expression "which are by Jesus Christ" reminds us that all spiritual blessings have been conferred on Christ (Eph. 1:3) including "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. 2:3), and it is as we occupy ourselves with Him with whom we have to do that we draw from His fulness (John 1:16). He has conquered the powers of darkness in His resurrection and ascension up

on high leading captivity captive and is now seated upon the throne of David, being made head over all things to the church (Eph. 4:8, Eph. 1:11). As such He dispenses righteousness to His people.

The last phrase "unto the glory and praise of God" reminds us of God's ultimate purpose in the whole scheme of redemption. The glory of God's grace can only be seen as the contrast between God and man is seen in truth. Man is filthy and abominable by nature (Job 15:16), while God is thrice holy (Isa. 6:3). Yet God by His great grace chooses some to salvation, and as He works this out in the earth against opposition He is glorified among the heavenly host (Eph. 3:10).

#### VERSES 12-14

"But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel; So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places; And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear."

Paul expresses his earnest desire that the Philippians have a sound spiritual understanding. By this we see that knowledge is important, for by it we escape the pollutions that are in the world (II Peter 1:4). On the other hand, spiritual ignorance has a blinding power (Eph. 4:18). How can we intelligently battle against sin unless we are instructed concerning it? This may seem elementary, but it is an extremely necessary point in view of the fact that many today (especially Pentecostal groups) tend to belittle a knowledge of God's word on the grounds that it is mere "head-knowledge" while they emphasize what they call "The Spirit." But fleshly religious human emotions are not the same thing as the Spirit of God, and the only objective test we have to distinguish the two is the Word of God which is "able to divide asunder "between man's animal-soul and his higher nature, his spirit, wherein he worships God "in Spirit and in truth" (John 4:23) having his spirit enmeshed with God's Spirit (I Cor. 6:17). Whatever we think or feel that is contrary to God's Word is flesh no matter how spiritual it may seem to be. One thing is certain: a person who is full of God's Spirit will be full of God's word (Col. 3:16 compare with Eph. 5:18).

Paul desires that they have a good understanding that they might correctly evaluate his circumstances. Some of the Philippians may have been troubled by the knowledge of his imprisonment so as to wonder if God were truly with Paul. It was difficult to see what good could come of his imprisonment. Paul's enemies probably made much of this circumstance to turn men away from him. But circumstances can be deceiving. They also must be interpreted by a godly mind through principles laid down in God's word. The truth of the case was that God had a purpose in Paul's imprisonment and was using it to "work salvation in the midst of the earth" (Psa. 74:2).

The problem that the Philippians might have had in seeing this truth lies in the fact that the



flesh is always offended by the lowliness of the cross and of its messengers. Although some of the Philippians may have been fearful of suffering a fate similar to Paul's, the apostle encourages them by showing how God worked this adversity for good. Such glorious dealings are consistent with God's nature, His promises, and His past record (Num. 23:19, 20; Rom. 8:28; Gen. 50:20). Like Jacob of old, Providence crossed its hands and blessed that which seemed to be the illogical object of blessing. "A strange chemistry of Providence this, to extract so great a good as the enlargement of the gospel out of so great an evil as the confinement of the apostle."

With this principle in mind we can see how "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church." Paul's sufferings made him known at the Roman court where perhaps he would never have otherwise been known; and this led to the inquiry of many concerning the gospel for which he suffered, which they might otherwise have never heard of. It was apparent to all courtiers, citizens, Jews, and foreigners, that Paul did **not** suffer as an evil-doer, and it appears that Paul had not a few converts among Caesar's household (Phil. 4:22) and "in all other places" (v. 13), the populace being much affected by the emperor's court. Truly "the word of God is not bound" (II Tim. 2:9).

When Paul speaks of his bonds one cannot help thinking also of his spiritual bonds which made him a bond-slave to Christ, one whose ear had been pierced against the door of his master in order to serve Him forever (Ex. 21:1-6).

Paul says that his bonds were **manifest** in all the palace and in all other places. "Whatsoever doth make **manifest** is **light**" (Eph. 5:13). People ordinarily dwell in a sleepy darkness, unaware of eternal realities. These bonds were a mute testimony of the truth of God. What makes an innocent man willing to suffer so cheerfully? There were some in Caesar's household that said within themselves as Moses of old, "I will now turn aside, and see this great sight. . . ." (Ex. 3:3). People have a responsibility to investigate when they see a spiritual light. We live in the midst of so much indifference that we tend to excuse it, but God does not. Modern rabid soul-winners (so-called) tend to overlook this fact and to place the whole responsibility upon the saint for results in his witnessing. While we accept the duty to witness, the modern conception seems lopsided and unapostolic.

Paul says that his bonds encouraged bold preaching. "As the lily is increased by its own juice that flows from it, so is the Church by its sufferings." Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus were but secret disciples before Christ's suffering, but upon his death they openly owned him for their Lord (Matt. 27:57, John 19:39). Such are the works of God!

#### VERSES 15-18

"Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to

add affliction to my bonds: But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defense of the gospel. What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretense, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice."

Paul has just mentioned in verse fourteen how God had used his imprisonment to cause many of the brethren to speak the word boldly (as they ought to speak, Eph. 6:19, 20). It is God's usual way to make evil work for good to them that love him (Rom. 8:28), as it was said by one in a certain place, "Ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good" (Gen. 50:20). Nothing tunes us up like persecution. This is one of the many evils that is "sufficient unto the day" to drive us to the Lord (Matt. 6:34).

Some of these were preaching Christ from an impure motive. They seemed to be envious of Paul's influence and success among the saints in various quarters. Today this would be called "preacher-jealousy" and exists among Babylonish churches. They also preached from a spirit of strife, which is listed as a work of the flesh in Galatians 5:20. Here then is a lesson in motives that will bear upon the doctrine of works. Wrong motives spoil right actions, and the human heart is a cesspool of evil lusts and selfish desires (Matt. 15:19). God, speaking by the mouth of Jeremiah, declares that it is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked (Jer. 17:9). Add to this the fact that the only good and acceptable work that a mortal man can do before God is that work which proceeds from a regenerated heart acting from a principle of faith in God's Word and unfeigned love for Him (I Thess. 1:3) through Christ. Hence all mere human goodness appears to be truly filthy and abominable (Job 15:15, 16; Isa. 64:6), so that the very plowing of the wicked is sin (Prov. 21:4).

These men, then, were taking the holy things of God and using them for selfish ends. This is a very horrible Judas-like sin. It would be far better not to profess the faith at all than to do so from a carnal motive and be found a hypocrite in the last day when Christ shall say to those who thought they had prophesied in His name, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire. . ." (Matt. 25:41). It is a frightening thing, but nevertheless it is the truth, that hypocrites do not usually know that they are hypocrites, for "every man's way is right in his own eyes" (Prov. 21:2). Furthermore, it is to be remembered that these hypocrites were religious teachers, as was the son of perdition (John 17:12). It is amazing how much the apostles emphasized in their epistles that saints ought to beware of false teachers (II Tim. 3:6-9; Titus 1:10, 11; II Peter 2:1-19; I John 2:18; Jude 4). Why do we not hear this emphasis today? Because false teachers themselves have multiplied and lulled the multitudes into a sleep of lukewarmness and carnal indifference. Against such the God of heaven pronounces His most terrible judgments (Matt. 23:13-39)!

One can not always detect a false prophet by what he says. Like Satan, he may quote God's word for his own purposes (Matt. 4:6). Paul rejoiced that Christ was preached by these men because he knew that God could overrule their wrong motives and use what truth was being preached to the salvation of souls. After all, Balaam was instructed out of the mouth of an ass (Num. 22:28-32). Nevertheless we are never to presume upon the Providence of God by allowing ourselves to remain under the regular teaching of ungodly men. The Word of the Lord is "Cease my son to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge" (Prov. 19:27). Of those who have a form of godliness but deny the power thereof it is commanded "From such turn away" (II Tim. 3:5) for "their word will eat as doth a canker" (II Tim. 2:17) and can a man take fire into his bosom and not be burned? The very spiritual environment that surrounds such men is contaminating; as it is written, "evil communications corrupt good manners" (I Cor. 15:33). Again, these are men who will usually mix a good portion of truth with their error, but it is "by their fruits ye shall know them" (Matt. 7:20). If they have not the heart-fruits of unfeigned faith and love, of hungering and thirsting after the things of God, of zeal for the Word of God, of holy living, of willingness to suffer for Christ's sake, of a sense of God's truth and a lively response toward Him in daily fellowship, of a shepherd's heart, of power to instruct in the way of salvation with an ability to edify, then they are examples of dead orthodoxy and probably only hold the truth by tradition and not by the revelation of God to their own souls. They are "trafficking in unfelt truths." All that receive not the love of the truth will be damned (II Thess. 2:10-12).

But, praise God, Paul knew of others that were preaching Christ "of good will," "of love," "in truth," and knowing that Paul was sent by God for the defence of the gospel (Gal. 1:15, 16; Acts 13:2; II Tim. 1:11). These spoke with a view to glorify God, edify saints, and save sinners. May God send us more such men!

#### VERSES 18-21

"What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretense, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice. For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, according to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

The key to this whole passage lies in the foregoing context. Verse twelve says, "I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel." Paul goes on to expound and interpret the marvelous, mysterious, and all-wise providence of God in using his imprisonment as a means of furthering the truth. In the first place, Paul's imprisonment gave him

converts within Caesar's household where he otherwise would probably not have had much fruit (ch. 1:13, 4:22). The populace, being much influenced by the king's court, was also touched by the truth of Christ's death and resurrection so that fruit was borne "in all other places." Many good and godly brethren waxed confident by Paul's bonds and were much more bold to speak the word without fear. His imprisonment also provoked his religious rivals to preach Christ out of motives of envy and strife, supposing to add afflictions to Paul's bonds by gaining converts to themselves. They foolishly thought that Paul was just like themselves, i.e., a religious opportunist and "denomination-builder." Yet in spite of all of this, Paul rejoiced that Christ was preached in pure doctrine so that God could overrule the impure motives of sectarian preachers to the salvation of his elect. Thus we see how Paul correctly evaluated his providential circumstances to the great increase of his own personal joy. This was because his affections were set on things above, so that he set the highest importance upon that which was indeed of eternal value and viewed his circumstances in the Spirit with the mind of Christ and not with carnal reasoning. Instead of bemoaning his own deprivations, he rejoiced in the increase of God's kingdom in the hearts of men as the truth prevailed.

In verse nineteen Paul says that he knows that these circumstances will turn to his salvation through the prayers of the brethren and the supply of the spirit of Jesus Christ. At first sight this expression seems odd, but this is only because churches today do not speak in words which the Holy Ghost teaches (I Cor. 2:13). God has given to His apostles and prophets a heavenly nomenclature that perfectly expresses spiritual reality. We must learn to adopt the language of Scripture in its pristine purity until such a time as we are able to rise up to the level of spiritual experience which it is describing and then be able to know the reality first-hand, speaking of the things which we have seen and heard. Indeed, this is the only course left to us if we are going to approach the Scriptures honestly without trying to twist them to fit some pre-conceived mold. In this immediate context Paul uses the word "salvation" to refer to the boldness that he anticipated from the Lord as he was about to bear witness to the truth in the face of death itself. This is elsewhere called being a "partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God" (II Tim. 1:8). Such boldness would save him from denying the Lord or from bringing shame upon Him by a timid, fearful witness (Eph. 6:18, 19, 20). This inward victory over a truth-hating, wicked world would come through the prayers of the saints and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Thus Christ would be magnified in his body by his boldness of faith whether the outcome be martyrdom or otherwise. In Christ he would be victorious one way or another; for Christ was gain to him in life or death.

The word "salvation" is also used in a similar sense in I Peter 1:8, 9. Here we read that by be-

believing on Christ whom we have not seen, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, receiving the end of our faith, even the **salvation** of our souls. When the soul is boldly rejoicing in Christ, it is saved from the defilements of fleshly affection and strengthened against temptation, as it is written, "the joy of the Lord is your strength" (Nehemiah 8:10). It is in this sense that the gospel will **save** us if we keep it in memory (I Cor. 15:2). The truth that is in Christ Jesus must be held in the mind in order for it to be believed in the heart. Thus we are told to receive with meekness the engrafted word which is able to save our souls (James 1:21).

This is not to imply that such a salvation has no eternal significance as some teach today. On the contrary it is written "he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life **everlasting**" (Gal. 6:8). As we expand our appetite for the things of God in this life, we will enlarge our capacity to enjoy them in eternity. As we suffer for Him in witnessing we also heap up rewards. In this way we can lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven. Indeed, nothing that transpires in time is without eternal significance. Therefore, let us also have this earnest expectation to always magnify Christ by bold, joyful believing as we bear witness to the truth.

#### VERSES 25-26

"And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith; that your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again."

Paul speaks of his confidence in Divine providence that God would do what was best for the church, and confidence that it was more needful for the Philippians that he abide in the flesh awhile longer before departing to his reward. This, then, was a discernment of God's will through familiarity with His usual way of working. Such a familiarity is only acquired through prolonged exposure to the pure word of God, mingled with an intimate experiential union with Him over the years. Soon the mind becomes so saturated with God's word that one begins to think like God. His affections become our affections so that we cherish the things pertaining to the kingdom. His cause becomes our cause so that we mold our lives around the edification of the saints. With a vision of these realities before us, our decisions become easy to make and we have less confusion over what God's will is for our lives. Paul was able to say with certainty, "having this **confidence I know I shall abide. . .**"

Such terms of certainty are seldom heard among Christian circles today concerning the Lord's will for their future lives and ministry. Perhaps it is because they try so hard to make decisions that they actually hinder themselves and minister **indecision** to themselves. There is a trend among Christian youth groups to emphasize how to make decisions. Many paperbacks are published which give little secrets and tips on finding God's

will for one's life. This emphasis is never made by the apostles. It casts one upon his own understanding and cannot minister peace and assurance. Actually, our minds are to be principally occupied with God (His person and work as seen in the whole of Scripture) and not with our circumstances. This promotes faith and a sound mind so that decisions can be made more easily. Victory is attained by indirection. It is God with whom we have to do. Apostolic emphasis is the great need of our day.

It is true that there were times when the Lord gave Paul a special revelation concerning the sphere of his future ministry as in Acts 23:11, but Paul was not exempt from the usual exercises of faith that the saints undergo. Even the apostles chose Matthias by lots, rather than demand a voice from heaven. We must learn not to tempt God, but only go so far as our faith can carry us.

Abiding and continuing with them implies that Paul may have later been delivered from his imprisonment in Rome and restored to the churches for a time. There is need of a settled ministry for the steady furtherance of the saint's faith through a regular ministry of the word (Eph. 4:10-14).

This faith is the fountainhead of joy. We are filled with all joy and peace in believing (Rom. 15:13) as our faith is nourished upon stable truths; namely, that Christ **really did** die for our sins, that our home in heaven **really is** secure, that He which hath begun a good work in you **shall** perform it until the day of Jesus Christ, that all things **do indeed** work together for good to them that love God, that the steps of a good man are ordered of the Lord, that Christ now reigns and will soon appear, that our election is of God. All these things bring great joy apart from one's circumstances.

Joy in the Lord is an emphasis of Scripture as well as of this very epistle. The reason is that the joy of the Lord is our strength (Neh. 8:10). Some have the opinion that there is something sinful in being joyous and something meritorious in a long face filled with so-called piety. It is hard at times to accept the fact that God wants us to rejoice, not in carnal jesting (Eph. 5:4), but in holy joy in the Spirit (Phil. 4:4). They had already rejoiced to hear him first bring the gospel to them (Acts 16:1-3). Now Paul wants their rejoicing to be more abundant. No matter how far we have advanced there is still room for improvement.

At first glance to a carnal observer, Paul would seem to be guilty of vainglory when he says in effect "Here I come! Get ready for a blessing!" But he is actually boasting in the Spirit. Personality or personal gifts in nature have nothing to do with this. Paul is stating truth about God's work within himself which enables others to glorify God in him and rejoice in the benefit of his presence. In another place he says that this rejoicing in one another is mutual between himself and the saints (II Cor. 1:14).

God has many blessings for His people and a good portion of these are distributed to them as they fellowship in one another's presence. This is why one of the apostles wrote "I trust to come

unto you and speak face to face that our joy may be full" (II John 12). Let us never cease to highly prize and cherish the fellowship of God's true sheep. Here is a prime source of strength and safety for our souls. It is ordained of God for our good.

I am not speaking of nominal churchmen, but of true sheep. This is another reason why fellowship with true brethren is doubly precious: because truly godly people are very rare and a few in number, even as it is written, "few are chosen," "few there be that find it" (the way that leadeth unto life) and "Fear not little flock, it is the Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Matt. 20:16, 7:13, 14, Luke 12:32). Thus it has been in every age.

If the reader is perhaps the only member of his church who is truly serious about the things of God, I would urge that you begin praying for one truly godly person with which to fellowship. Remember Paul's words "I trust that through your prayers I shall be given unto you" (Philemon 22). Then, rather than make a futile attempt to reform a whole institution, obey the Lord who said "Let them alone" and "from such turn away" (Matt. 15:14, II Tim. 3:5). Withdraw yourself from dead, stifling church services which distort your thinking and abate your zeal. Gather together with "two or three" other seekers of truth and of the "God of truth" (Matt. 18:20, Psa. 31:5). Meet together in your home regularly for unhindered prayer and Bible study so that real progress can be made in the faith. A regular systematic reading of such Reformed writers as Matthew Henry, John Calvin, Martin Luther, John Bunyan, Charles Hadden Spurgeon, and any of the Puritans is highly recommended.

#### VERSE 27

"Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;"

Brother Alexander Cruden points out that the word "conversation" in the King James Version never carries the meaning of discoursing with another person, but always means "behavior" or "manner of life" (II Peter 2:7, James 3:13, Heb. 13:5, I Tim. 4:12, Eph. 2:3, Psa. 37:14). This verse is also translated "Behave as citizens worthy of the gospel," and in chapter three of this same book we read "For our citizenship is in heaven," i.e., we are from another world and of another order. The exhortation, then, is that we ought to behave as such. Through heavenly birth we partake of the divine nature and become strangers and pilgrims upon the earth as we look for a better country, a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God (Heb. 11:10, 13-16). This is that "heavenly Jerusalem" (Heb. 12:22, 23), the gathering place and home of all sanctified spirits whether in the body or out of the body. This is the Jerusalem which is above, which is free, and is the mother of us all (Gal. 4:26). It is that king-

dom which cannot be shaken, where we worship God before His throne in fellowship with an innumerable company of angels and the spirits of just men made perfect. It is, in short, to be lifted up in spirit through the enemy hosts of the prince of the power of the air (Eph. 2:2) into the very throne-room and presence of God, for by faith the spirit of man is unrestricted so that it can rise into the heavenlies and be made to sit there with Christ (Eph. 2:6 cf., I Cor. 5:3, 4). Truly, we are even now at times residents of heaven as well as citizens thereof.

To further demonstrate our heavenly citizenship, let us note the resemblance between heaven itself and the gospel church, its outpost and "gate" (Gen. 28:17). If the tabernacle of old was a figure of the true, even heaven itself, we should not be surprised to find it so with the church (Heb. 9:24).

The resemblance is seen in the fourth chapter of Revelation which describes the attributes of a gospel minister under the character of four beasts: the lion, the calf, the man, and the flying eagle. They are all full of eyes, showing their watchfulness over the flock and insight into spiritual things, even as prophets were beforetime called "seers" (I Sam. 9:9). They are as courageous as a lion and are able to oppose the enemies of the gospel. They are as laborious as the oxen (cf. Ezekiel 1:10), as human and sympathetic as a man (Heb. 5:1-4), and as far-sighted and close to heaven as an eagle dwelling in the top level of the ark of grace (Gen. 6:16, 20). The four and twenty elders can be emblematic of the whole of God's elect on both sides of the cross, whether springing from the twelve patriarchs or the twelve apostles. It was when the beasts fell down and worshipped that the congregation did so. And it is not the same in a gospel church? As the word of God goes forth the people rejoice and worship.

Being citizens of this other country makes us a mystery to the ungodly. They think it strange that we run not with them (I Peter 4:4) and they cannot comprehend us (I Cor. 2:15). As the wind is a mystery, so are the godly to the ungodly (John 3:8). The natural man cannot see the things of the Spirit of God (John 3:3, I Cor. 2:14), nor can he speak the language of Canaan, but can only say, as it were, "Sibboleth" (Judges 12:6). The things of God are as puzzling as Samson's riddle to him until he is converted by repentance and faith in Christ (Acts 20:21).

Although the ungodly do observe us as a city set on a hill that cannot be hid, and we are to walk in wisdom toward them that are without, giving no offence in any thing, thus putting to silence the ignorance of foolish men and adorning the doctrine of God, yet this verse seems to be focusing upon the behavior of the saints toward one another in their local assembly. The allusion is to cities which have their peculiar rules and laws to which citizens are to conform. Paul, then, is exhorting them to heavenly unity. As there is no discord in heaven, so let there be none

in the church. As there is no sin, carnality, and worldliness in heaven, so let there be none in the church. Let your walk be worthy of a citizen of heaven and of a heaven-sent gospel, which, when fully embraced, **does** bring a measure of heaven to earth and give power to live a holy, orderly life.

The chief and key way in which we are counted worthy of the gospel is by our willingness to suffer for it. Since the best of our works are imperfect and unable to commend us to God, our God-given faith commends us to Him, especially when our faith costs us something. We suffer things that we might be counted worthy of the kingdom which He has appointed for us (II Thess. 1:5, Matt. 5:12).

When Paul mentions his visiting them or hearing of their affairs, we get a glimpse of Paul, the shepherd. Upon him came daily the care of all the churches (II Cor. 11:28), and he frequently traveled to see how brethren were faring in the Lord, or else sent men like Timothy or Epaphroditus who were especially suited to such a work (Phil. 2:19, 25).

The exhortation to stand fast is so common in Scripture that it clearly implies that the common experience of the saints is to endure many "hard knocks" from the devil and his servants who seek to unsettle them by false doctrine of threat of harm. However, with the whole armour of God we are able to stand in the evil day (Eph. 6:10-18) and to defend our field of lentiles as valiantly as Shammah did (II Sam. 23:11, 12). The real battleground is our mind and heart. Our real goal is to keep the faith. As long as we are fully persuaded of the reality of the things of God, we are conquerors.

Calvin expounds his translation "one spirit, one soul" as follows: "The first is, that we agree among ourselves; the second, that we be united in heart. For when these two terms are connected, spirit denotes the understanding, and soul the will. Moreover, agreement comes first in order; and then from it springs union of will."

This epistle is much occupied in exhorting the saints to unity (ch. 2:2, 4:2, 3:16). The importance of unity among believers cannot be over-emphasized because the fruits of righteousness are sown in peace (James 3:18). Spiritual growth is stifled by constant fleshly strife and discord. Satan delights to divide us since we are the only ones who pose a threat to his kingdom. On the other hand, those who strive together for the faith of the gospel will not be likely to strive with each other. May it be so with all believers. Amen.

(v. 28) "And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God."

This verse teaches us that those who have their conversation as it becomes the gospel of Christ will indeed have adversaries. It is good to know this and to be ready for it, understanding why the adversaries exist. There is a warfare between two worlds now in progress: the kingdom of Satan

which could be called "earthdom" and is marked by the seen, the temporal, the love of this present life, the pleasurable appetites of the flesh, selfishness, sin, and godlessness; against the kingdom of God which is called the kingdom of heaven, and is marked by the unseen eternal realities, the expectation of the next life, the appetites of the Spirit, unselfishness, holiness, righteousness, and Christ-centeredness. Now the inhabitants of the earth are basically in servitude to one or the other of these two spirit-worlds. Those who cling to Christ and keep His ordinances will undoubtedly incur the wrath and ridicule of the ungodly. "Yea and **all** that will live godly in Christ Jesus **shall** suffer persecution" (II Tim. 3:12). They bring persecution upon themselves inadvertently by living single-heartedly unto the Lord. Their very lives and existence condemns the world and bears witness of it that the works thereof are evil. Stronger lights will bring on more severe persecution but are automatically better equipped to bear it; while weaker flames endure less and are able to bear less. Therefore, we see how that by obeying verse twenty-seven that we bring upon ourselves the persecution of verse twenty-eight.

The Lord stirs up our adversaries; as it is written, "the Lord stirred up an adversary unto Solomon, Hadad the Edomite;" and again, "God stirred him up another adversary" (I Kings 11:14, 23); and again, "The Lord hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil" (Prov. 16:4). Adversaries are sent to buffet our faith that it might endure by grace to the glory of God before the hosts of heaven (Eph. 3:10). However, being terrified by adversaries is the result of lack of this vision. The servant of Elisha was terrified by the enemy hosts until his eyes were opened to the heavenly fiery chariots on the mountains round about them (II Kings 6:17). The situation was ordered of God for His own glory. It is **God** with whom we have to do. He reigns over all, and none other is worthy of our prime attention. Rather than fear our adversaries, let us fear God (Luke 12:45).

From this text we learn that it is important to suffer in the right manner, that is, calmly, lest we disgrace our Lord by lack of composure under the heat of persecution. When Jesus suffered, he opened not his mouth but committed himself to God, leaving us an example to follow (I Peter 2:21-23). We will be in **nothing** terrified when we have forsaken **all** for Christ and made Him pre-eminent (Luke 13:33).

The real meaning of this text lies in the word "which." It refers to the calmness and composure of a saint under persecution. The **Amplified New Testament** renders it thus: "And do not (for a moment) be frightened or intimidated in anything by your opponents and adversaries, for such (constancy and fearlessness) will be a clear sign (proof and seal) to them of (their impending) destruction; but (a sure token and evidence) of your deliverance and salvation, and that from God." The adversary here spoken of is probably a religious one or else he would not be thinking in terms of damnation.

We have an illustration of this verse in the religious persecutors of Stephen who must have sensed their own wrongness and wickedness by his supernatural calmness, joy, and power in triumphant martyrdom. The record tells us that they gnashed on him with their teeth, cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran upon him (Acts 7:54-60). "Persecutions are seals of adoption to the children of God, if they endure them with fortitude and calmness. The wicked give a token of their condemnation, because they stumble against a stone by which they shall be annihilated." "The condition of the persecuted is much better than the condition of the persecutor."

The last four words of our text read "and that of God." The salvation which is in the soul of the saint is of God (I Peter 1:8, 9), the persecution which this salvation engenders is of God (I Thess. 3:3), and ministers to his eternal reward in heaven (Matt. 5:10). In fact, it is because our appointed reward is great that we must suffer in order to be counted worthy of it (II Thess. 1:5).

Our salvation is of God from start to finish. He is the author and the finisher of our faith (Heb. 12:2). It began with God before the world was created when He elected some to salvation (Eph. 1:4). It was of God that He sent Christ to die on the cross (Gal. 4:4, 5). It is of God that He brings all of His elect into their natural being through the birth of water (Jer. 1:5). It is of God that He sends a gospel preacher to them (Rom. 10:15) and that they believe (Acts 13:48, 8:29, 10:1-48); and it is of God that all the elect are kept preserved in the way of holiness unto the end (John 10:27-30).

(Jonah 2:9). Nebuchadnezzar confessed it after seven years of unspeakable abasement (Dan. 4:28-37). Let us confess it by faith in the Word!

### VERSES 29-30

"For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake; Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me."

The conjunction "For" at the beginning of this verse connects it with the preceding verse, showing two great primary reasons why we are not terrified by our adversaries; for when we know that our suffering is a gift from God, we are able to take it calmly as a token of salvation. (v. 28). Furthermore, when we see that even believing on Christ is a gift from God so that our whole salvation is "of God" (v. 28) rather than by our own supposedly free will (Phil. 2:13, James 1:18, John 1:13), this also fortifies us to endure suffering.

When he says "unto you" he is comforting the Philippians with the truth of their personal, specific election of God, as it is written, "Blessed is the man whom thou chocest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts" (Psa. 65:4).

Paul, then, says that both faith and suffering are gifts from God. "He wisely joins faith to the

cross by an inseparable connection, that the Philippians may know that they have been called to faith in Christ on condition that they endure persecutions for His Name; as though he had said that their adoption can no more be separated from cross-bearing than Christ can be torn asunder from Himself."

Suffering appears to be contrary to salvation when we view it apart from faith. Saints sometimes fear that suffering will drive them away from God, but Paul in the eighth of Romans tells us that nothing can separate us from the love of Christ, and that God has ordained suffering to conform us to Christ's image. We are appointed unto afflictions (I Thess. 3:3) which are "accomplished" in all true brethren yet in the world (I Peter 5:9). It is the pathway to God and not from Him as long as we are not too lazy to take up our spiritual food and weapons daily.

This explains why suffering is truly a gift. It works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. It expands our eternal reign with Christ. It is an effectual means of putting off the old man and putting on the new man. It burns truth into our hearts. It drives us to the throne of grace. It reminds us of our sinfulness, Christ's suffering, and God's sovereignty. It makes us discontent with earth and whets our appetites for heaven. It keeps us humble. It provides insight into many Scriptures. It exercises our faith, our hearts, and our minds.

That these twin gifts are from God should require little proof, for "a man can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven" (John 3:27); no, not even power to do evil (John 19:11, I Kings 22:23, Acts 4:27, 28). Not only faith, but repentance is of Divine origin (Eph. 2:8, Acts 13:48, Acts 5:31, I Tim. 2:25).

The Philippians had a demonstration of this in Lydia "whose heart the Lord opened" (Acts 16:14), as well as others. Not only faith, but the exercise of it and the fruit of it, are given of God, "even as the fruits of trees at the first creation were produced, as well as the trees which had a power to bear them."

The expression "in the behalf of Christ" is sometimes rendered "for the sake of Christ" and then the verse would mean "because of Christ's merit before God these blessings are bestowed," even as David blessed Mephibosheth for Jonathan's sake (II Sam. 9:1). Yet in several versions this expression is rendered the same as in the King James Version, "in the behalf of Christ," as though to encourage us to look to Christ Himself as the One who "measures" our sufferings and sends them forth to us (Isa. 27:7-9), since he very highly qualified for the task as a man acquainted with grief and able to be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. He Himself when He ascended from the earth left "behind" a measure of His sufferings for His church to "fill up" (Col. 1:24). It sweetens the cup of suffering to know that we are partaking of His suffering, and thus it is called the "fellowship of his suffering" (Phil. 3:10).

This willingness to suffer for Christ's sake separates the sheep from the goats. Those who always live unto the Lord uncompromisingly will find that whenever they suffer, it will be for Christ's sake. But the hypocrite with his seasonal, formal religion will not be willing to suffer for Christ. Babylon is conspicuous for this mark.

To suffer for Christ's sake is a comprehensive term. One writer has said that it is to suffer "for the sake of Christ personal; for the sake of Christ mystical, for his body's sake the church; for the sake of his Gospel, and for the sake of his cause and interest in the world;"

"This is the lowest subjection that can be to God, but the highest honour both to him and us. This made Latimer, after the sentence pronounced on him, cry out, 'I thank God most heartily for this honour.' Saunders said, 'I am the unmeetest man for this high office that ever was appointed to it.' 'Such an honour it is,' said Carless, martyr, 'as the greatest angel in heaven is not permitted to have. God forgive me mine unthankfulness.'" The apostles rejoiced that they were accounted worthy to suffer shame for his name (Acts 5:41).

Along with common conflict comes common consolation, for God comforts us in all our tribulations that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God (II Cor. 1:4). Thus Paul is able to both comfort the Philippians and confirm his teaching by his example.

The Philippians were probably undergoing persecution at this time and Paul had probably heard of it through Epaphroditus who had taken provisions to him and would soon return. Paul fortifies them by recalling to their minds that they had beheld his own persecutions there in Philippi (Acts 16) and that from Epaphroditus they would hear of his similar imprisonment at Rome. He calls his spiritual offspring to his fatherly example of suffering to encourage them in bearing the image of their parent, since every seed **does** bring forth after its own kind (Gen. 1:21). Genuine spiritual suffering springs from genuine faith and is universally of the same nature whether in Philippi or Rome. So may ours be found!

## CHAPTER 2

### VERSES 1-2

"If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind."

Paul opens this chapter with the expression, "If there be." He is referring to the certain existence of spiritual realities which every true saint has tasted of in their experience; namely, consolation in Christ, comfort of love, and fellowship of the Spirit. He holds them out as enticements to stimulate the Philippians to strive for unity, be-

cause in an atmosphere of harmony these spiritual blessings can be more easily cultivated and enjoyed. Paul knows that as long as the saints are still here below in Satan's territory, dwelling in corrupt bodies in a wicked, spiritually defiling world, their experience of God's richest spiritual blessings will merely be "in part" (I Cor. 13:9). Yet these blessings which at times produce "joy unspeakable and full of glory" are like delicious bait dangled before them, which, when striven for, will automatically bring about a glorious "unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3).

This is much more than a mere fleshly agreement in a formal creed or church tradition, but is an inward apprehension of spiritual realities. Pursuit of these things evidences a wholesome "spiritual selfishness" by which our hunger is satisfied, our thirst for righteousness is quenched, and our reward is obtained. God has constructed us both spiritually and physically so that in our right mind we seek our own betterment, profit, and enjoyment. Thus Paul gave them powerful motives for seeking unity.

Some think that Paul may have been requesting that the Philippians bestow all of these blessings upon himself by their achievement of unity among themselves, so having mercy upon him who longed over them. This would fulfill his joy and be his consolation while in prison; their love would comfort him; his soul would be enabled to enjoy richer fellowship from the Spirit of God; and their compassionate mercy showed unto him in this matter would not be forgotten by the apostle.

It is a legitimate goal to strive to maintain one's spiritual joy in the Lord; in fact, it is commanded (Phil. 4:4). It was not only the goal of Paul (Phil. 2:2; Philemon 20; II Tim. 1:4), but was held forth as such by Jesus (John 15:11). Paul mentions joy so much in this epistle that he closes it with instruction on how to obtain it (Phil. 4:4-9).

Here we see how Paul's spiritual vision gave him proper values. He appears to have little concern about his own personal welfare in the flesh while shut up in prison with his life threatened, yet none of this prevented him from rejoicing wholeheartedly if he could only see that it was well with the churches. It would have been worse than cruel for the Philippians to torture the mind of this holy man of God by not ending the disagreement among themselves. The trouble in the church seemed to center around two women in the assembly, Euodias and Syntyche (Phil. 4:2), weaker vessels who needed to learn their proper office of silence and humility. Knowing that the importance of unity cannot be over-emphasized among fellow soldiers who are battling against the world, the flesh, and the devil for their very lives, Paul tenderly exhorts them to mutually cherish harmony among themselves as the best defence against the false teachers, the concision, who were near at hand to deceive and divide (Phil. 3:2). He could have used his paternal authority to demand respect from them as his sons, but

knowing that he was dealing with sensitive saints, he was ready to assume this character for their sake.

Some have rendered "consolation" to read "exhortation," as in Acts 13:15; I Thess. 2:3 and I Tim. 4:13. Then the meaning would be "If an exhortation by the authority of Christ has any weight with you, and if His inner presence has a very stimulating and exhorting influence about it, fulfill ye my joy . . ." But the best translation is probably "consolation" which is inevitably and justly given as a reward for suffering in this life. It is now received as "strong consolation" (Heb. 6:18) and will endure into eternity where it will blossom and prove to be "everlasting consolation" (II Thess. 2:16). This is that meat which perishes not but endures unto life eternal (John 6:27).

The "comfort of love" springs out of our perception of God's "everlasting love" (Jer. 31:3) which provokes us to love Him and one another, thereby producing great comfort. If it is rendered "persuasion of love" (ASV, margin), then the expression becomes a good companion to the preceding possible phrase, "exhortation in Christ."

A "fellowship of the Spirit" is a fellowship "with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ" (I John 1:3), and carries with it all the experiences and fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22, 23). It is "of," or rather, "from" the Spirit which originates and sustains it. They were partakers of a common inner life and were bound to promote it in one another. This Spirit of life is poured by the Father upon Christ the anti-type of Aaron in Psalms 133:1-3 where the ointment flowed down to the various members of the body, even to the "skirts of the garment."

"Bowels" speaks of the seat of the feelings of compassion, while "mercies" are the feelings of compassion themselves. This atmosphere in an assembly is conducive to unity.

Concerning the last four expressions, "the apostle's earnestness leads him to dwell on the idea of unity, clothing the one thought again and again in different words." The sum is this, that they be united in heart and mind, i.e., with mutual love and agreement in doctrine. The second two expressions repeat the first two, only in opposite order.

It would seem staggering that the apostle would exhort them to think alike, but such is necessary and also possible when men are humble enough to take the Scriptures as they stand without making them secondary to a preconceived church tradition of human conception which requires that every verse beyond their understanding be "harmonized" or explained away rather than simply believed. The key to agreement in doctrine is deep reverential awe before the very letter of the majestic word of God which is transcendental to our poor mortal minds. When we learn to speak in words which the Holy Ghost teaches how can division be possible? Division and heresy spring from pride and refusal to wait on God to reveal the meaning of Scripture rather than attempting to interpret it in the flesh.

Some combine the last two expressions to read "with accordant souls minding the one thing." We read in Luke 10:38-42 that Martha was cumbered about with much serving and troubled about "many things" when only "one thing" was needful, a fellowship with God in his word. Paul said, "this one thing I do" (Phil 3:13). David said, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple" (Psa. 27:4). Here is the key to true unity: when all are truly seeking the same thing.

#### VERSES 3-4

"Let nothing be done through strife or vain-glory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others."

In the preceding verse Paul has exhorted the brethren at Philippi to unity. Now in verse three he identifies the causes of division: (1) Strife (faction, party-spirit, see ASV) and (2) Vain-glory (fleshly pride). Brother Calvin says, "These are two most dangerous pests for disturbing the peace of the Church. 'Strife' is aroused when everyone wants to guard obstinately his own opinion; and when it has once begun to rage it rushes headlong along the road it has entered on. 'Vain-glory' tickles men's minds, so that everyone is delighted with his own inventions. Hence the only way of guarding against dissensions is when we avoid strifes by deliberating and acting peacefully. . . ."

"Strife" is listed as one of the works of the flesh in Galatians 5:20, while our text exhorts us to let **nothing** be done through strife or vain-glory. Therefore we see this as an example of how no provision whatsoever is made for the flesh to express itself among the saints. God permits no flesh to glory in his presence; indeed, once the nature of God and the nature of flesh is truly discerned, it is easy to see why.

By the term "flesh" we refer to everything natural about man. It is everything that came from the womb: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh" (John 3:6). It is human nature apart from God's Spirit. It includes the heart, mind, and body, and it is set against the true and living God. It loves sin, self, pleasure, false gods, and a host of other vanities and deceits. It hates the true God and His eternal word of truth, yet strangely loves to counterfeit true religion, even as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses by duplicating the works of God up to a point (II Tim. 3:8). Thus religious flesh, i.e., flesh in the church, is the most subtle and damning of all.

In Galatians 5:26 we read, "Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another." The glory of the flesh is vain glory because of its ephemeral and godless nature. The prophet Isaiah compares it to the flower of grass which withers and perishes (Isaiah 40:6-8). To this the Holy Spirit contrasts the



things of God which have "eternal glory". Yet flesh wants glory for itself. The fleshly mind sits in the temple of God, our bodies, declaring that it is God and there is none else, opposing and exalting itself above all that is called God (II Thess. 2:3, 4). Flesh desires worship and glory as much as Satan who uses flesh as his domain of operation. Flesh desires glory so much that it even glories in its shame, i.e., in that which it should be ashamed of, such as nakedness (Gen. 3:7, Ex. 32:25, Phil. 3:19).

Flesh has a way of provoking flesh. When one desires vain glory the disease can spread. Just as hatred tends to provoke hatred, so pride can tend to provoke pride. Then we are found "provoking one another, envying one another."

Even if others do things through strife we must not come down to their level and strive with them in our own flesh. Victory over carnality within any individual or within any assembly is largely obtained by simply ignoring it and rising in the Spirit to the heavenly realm where flesh cannot come. This is victory by indirection. If we try to attack flesh directly in the strength of our own flesh we shall soon become like unto them. "The beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water: therefore leave off contention, before it be meddled with" (Prov. 17:14). Emulate Elijah who refused to come down from his mountain to do battle in the flesh with his enemy (II Kings 1:9-12).

We also are to esteem others better than ourselves. If it is asked how this can be done when there are obviously going to be differences in levels of grace and growth represented in any assembly the answer is easy. This is possible when we have a right estimate of God's gifts and our own infirmities. "For however anyone may possess outstanding endowments, he ought to consider that they have not been conferred upon him that he might be self-complacent, that he might exalt himself or even esteem himself. Let him instead employ himself in correcting and detecting his faults, and he will have abundant cause for humility. In others, on the other hand, he will regard with honour whatever there is of excellence, and will in love bury their faults. The man who will observe this rule, will have no difficulty in preferring others before himself."

Another fact that makes this possible is that the graces of the Spirit can be poured out upon any person regardless of their age, experience, or natural ability, for anyone can be given grace to love God. Thus zealous beginners are often very refreshing to older veterans in the faith. Also, the possession of natural or spiritual abilities should humble us when we consider that they are gifts from God which bring with them grave responsibilities of stewardship. Furthermore, it is true that in a sense each member of the body of Christ is indeed superior to all others in some way, for each has been placed in the body with a special endowment for the profit of the whole body. If we look mainly upon this gift in gratitude to God there will be no schism in the body.

Finally, we are told to "Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth" (I Cor. 10:24). We are able to do this by faith since it is written, "He that watereth shall be watered also himself" (Prov. 11:25). We ought to seek one another's spiritual profit above all else and make our decisions in the light of this principle: "What will most greatly be a blessing to God's people?" Then that verse will be fulfilled in us, that they which love Jerusalem shall prosper (Psa. 122:6).

## VERSE 5

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus;"

In this verse we have the key to the formation of a Christ-like character; namely, that of letting his mind be in us. Since the Scriptures are a transcript of the Divine mind, it is the same as saying "Let your thoughts be in harmony with Scripture," for Christ's mind was saturated with Scripture at all times. Thrice He overcame Satan by quoting "It is written . . ." He often replied to the Pharisees, "Have you not read in the Scriptures. . .?" He frequently instructed his disciples by saying, "This was done that the Scriptures might be fulfilled," and in his dying hour He expressed Himself in the language of Scripture. Strange it is that the vast majority of professing Christians do not evidence this Christ-like attribute of love for the Scripture and inward harmony with it. This belies their profession, for it is written, "He that is of God heareth God's words" (John 8:47). On the other hand, a truly regenerated person will have "received the love of the truth that he might be saved," (II Thess. 2:10) and will be able to say, "we have the mind of Christ" (I Cor. 2:16).

We are to "learn Christ" (Eph. 4:20), i.e., experientially learn what Christ was really like as He walked on earth and what conformance to His image really entails; namely, wining the inward struggle between flesh and spirit (Gal. 5:17), putting off the old man and putting on the new man (Eph. 4:22-24). Clear instruction is given on this matter in the last-cited text: "and be renewed in the spirit of your mind" (Eph. 4:23). We are transformed by the "renewing" of our mind (Rom. 12:2) when we "receive with meekness the engrafted word" (Jas. 1:21), and hold it "fast" (Titus 1:9, II Tim. 1:13). Thus we are exhorted to "let the word of Christ dwell in us richly in all wisdom" and to "think on these things" (Cor. 3:16, Phil. 4:8), for as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he (Prov. 23:7). Let us thoughts be as lengthy and numerous as Samson's hair and we will have his strength. Let not lust cut them short or we shall lose not only our strength, but our vision as well, for lack of vision comes from not keeping God's word in our hearts (Prov. 29:18). Let not our minds gravitate to earth and be pinned there, as was Sisera's. Instead, let us cast down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God (II Cor. 10:3-5), realizing that the mind is Satan's battlefield. Power in prayer is promised to those in whom Christ's word abides (John 15:7). We are not to fellowship with those who abide not in the doctrine of Christ (II John 9) and if we

ourselves do not keep the gospel in memory it will not save us (I Cor. 15:2). Therefore let us "gird up the loins of our mind . . . not fashioning ourselves according to the former lusts in our ignorance" (I Peter 1:13, 14), but let "Christ be formed" in us (Gal. 4:19), and we shall be saved.

There can be no Christ-likeness apart from a heart that is cleansed by the purifying effects of the word of the gospel. This is pictured in the Levitical laws for the ceremonial purifying of a healed leper (Lev. 14:1-7). He was to be sprinkled with a mixture of water and the blood of a clean bird that had been sacrificed (cf. I John 5:5-8). The water had to be taken from a running stream, denoting the liveliness of the Holy Spirit as it applies the truth of Christ's sacrifice to the soul by the sprinkling of the hyssop branch (faith), the same sweet-scented absorbant used by Israel on their door-posts on the night of the Passover.

In the case of a person who has contracted ceremonial uncleanness through contact with a dead body (Num. 19:1-22), the word of the gospel is compared to the ashes of the red heifer which was stored in a clean place (sanctified heart) until mixed with water (the Holy Spirit) and applied with hyssop (faith).

That the word of God dwelling inwardly has power to produce a Christ-like character is pictured beautifully in Revelation 21:19, 20. The spiritual qualities which adorned the apostles (who are the foundation of the church; see Rev. 21:14, Eph. 2:20-22) are set forth as precious stones. These are attributes of Christ formed in the apostles by the staple doctrines that Christ gave them which were enlivened to them by the power of the Holy Spirit. This is how true spiritual character is created. Such attributes did indeed "garnish" the apostles and "adorned the doctrine of God" (Titus 2:10).

I will briefly offer these thoughts as to the meaning of the precious stones. The jasper (diamond) represents constancy and endurance. The sapphire, being blue, is heavenly-mindedness. Chalcedony has a misty grey color, clouded with blue, yellow, and purple, which may denote patience in suffering arrived through heavenly-mindedness, faith more precious than gold, and royal serenity. The green emerald depicts spiritual life. The sardonyx being the shape and color of a man's fingernail (from which it gets its name) and often being used for making cameos may denote the dual nature of the apostles with the Divine standing out in relief against their human natures. The red sardius denotes their readiness to shed their blood for Christ. The chrysolite ("the golden stone") depicts faith (I Peter 1:7). The pale green beryl depicts common daily grace (spiritual life.) The transparent gold topaz depicts clearness of sight into Divine mysteries. The "gold leek-green" chrysoprasus denotes life by faith. The purple jacinth represents regal composure, and the amethyst (by tradition) has power to induce sobriety.

These attributes dwelt in the apostles collectively, but in Exodus 28:15-21 we read of the same gems being worn on Aaron's breastplate as emblematic of the twelve tribes of Israel. This

teaches us that all of God's chosen people collectively have these same attributes dwelling in them. And how? They are produced by having the doctrines of Christ and His apostles dwelling in their hearts and minds by faith!

(vs. 5-8) "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

In past articles this author has blended his own thoughts with brief quotations from the past masters such as Calvin, Luther, Matthew Henry, Spurgeon, Bunyan, Gill, Poole, and many others. Although all of these men made great contributions to the cause of truth, it is this writer's conviction that the prince of them all is John Calvin. I do heartily recommend to my readers that they obtain his volumes and diligently profit from them. His depth of insight, richness of thought, spirituality, maturity, conciseness, scholarship, integrity, and vividness of expression will prove very edifying to the spirit and instructive to the mind.

Toward this end I am featuring Bro. Calvin in this article by beginning with a lengthy sample quotation which covers the whole text for this month. Following this I will offer some more modest thoughts of my own.

**Let this mind be in you.** "He (Paul) now commends humility from the example of Christ, to which he had before exhorted them in words. There are, however, two clauses, in the first of which he persuades us to imitate Christ, because this is the rule of life: in the second, he invites us to it, as being the road by which we attain true glory.

**Being in the form of God.** "Christ's humility consisted in abasing Himself from the highest pinnacle of glory to the lowest ignominy; our humility consists in not exalting ourselves by a false estimation. He yielded voluntarily: all that is required of us is that we do not assume to ourselves more than we ought. Hence he sets out with this, that, inasmuch as He was in the form of God, He reckoned it not unlawful for Him to show Himself in that form; yet He emptied Himself. Since, then, the Son of God descended from so great a height, how absurd that we, who are nothing, should be uplifted with pride!

"The form of God means here His majesty. For as a man is known by the appearance of his form, so the majesty which shines forth in God is His figure. Or if you prefer a more apt similitude, the form of a king is the equipage and magnificence which shows him to be a king, his sceptre, his crown, his robe, his attendants, his judgment-throne, and other emblems of royalty. . . . Christ, then, before the creation of the world, was in the form of God, because from the beginning He had His glory with the Father, as He says in John 17:5. For in the wisdom of God, before He assumed our flesh, there was nothing mean or contemptible, but a magnificence worthy of God. Being such as

He was, He could with perfect right show Himself equal with God; but He did not manifest Himself to be what He was, nor did He openly assume in the view of men what was His of right.

“Moreover, he is utterly blind who does not perceive that His eternal divinity is clearly set forth in these words. . . . Christ’s divine essence is rightly proved from Christ’s majesty.

**But made himself of no reputation.** “Christ, indeed, could not renounce His divinity, but He kept it concealed for a time, that under the weakness of the flesh it might not be seen. Hence He laid aside His glory in the view of men, not by lessening, but by concealing it.

“It is asked . . . how He can be said to be emptied, who, nevertheless, proved Himself throughout by miracles and powers to be the Son of God, and in whom, as John testifies, there was always to be seen a glory worthy of the Son of God? (John 1:14). I answer, that the abasement of the flesh was, nevertheless, like a veil, by which His divine majesty was covered. This was why He did not want His transfiguration to be made public until after His resurrection (Matt. 17:9); and when He perceives that the hour of His death is approaching, He says, ‘Father, glorify thy Son’ (John 17:1). . . . In fine, the Image of God shone forth in Christ in such a manner that He was nevertheless abased in outward appearance and brought to nothing in the estimation of men; for He bore the form of a servant, and had assumed our nature, expressly that He might be the Servant of the Father, nay, even of men. For Paul calls Him the Minister of the circumcision (Rom. 15:8); and He Himself testifies of Himself, that He came to minister (Matt. 20:28); and the same thing had long before been foretold by Isaiah, ‘Behold my servant, etc.’ (42:1).

**Made in the likeness of men.** “Paul means that He had been reduced to the level of mankind, so that in appearance He differed nothing from the common condition of mankind. . . . He lived in such a way that He seemed a man among the number of men, and yet He was very different from man, although He was truly man.

**And became obedient.** “Even this was immense humility, that from being Lord He became servant; but he says that He went farther than this, because, while He was not only immortal but the Lord of life and death, He nevertheless became obedient to his Father, even so far as to undergo death. This was extreme abasement, especially when we consider the kind of death, which he immediately adds to emphasize it. For by dying in this way He was not only covered with ignominy in the sight of men, but also accursed in the sight of God. It is assuredly such an example of humility as ought to absorb the attention of all men; it is impossible to explain it in words suitable to its greatness.”

Behold! The eternal Son of God by nature, essence, and substance, co-eternal and co-equal, uncreated, extant with the Father before the beginning, veils His glory by clothing it with the rags of human nature, as the cloud obscures the

sun without changing the sun, and becomes the beginning of the new creation, the God-man, the man Christ Jesus. Laying aside his independent exercise of the divine attributes, he becomes the model man, in demonstrating complete obedience to and dependence on the Father, fulfilling the law and offering himself a spotless sacrifice for his bride, the church. Put the two expressions together, “the form of God” and “the form of a servant” and admire the amazing stoop!

#### VERSES 9-11

“Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

In the preceding verses Paul has spoken of the humiliation of Christ. Prior to this humiliation the Logos dwelt in that glory which He had with the Father before the world was (John 1:1, 17:5). His majesty was such that even to behold the things that are in heaven He would necessarily have to humble himself. Yet this exalted Being who was in the “form of God” (v. 6) took upon himself the form of a servant” (v. 7), that is, the form of man (who is a creature of servitude) and made Himself of no reputation among the spirit-world by laying aside his independent exercise of the Divine attributes. Realizing this was not enough, He further humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, **even** the death of the cross. None ever humbled himself as much as Christ. None was ever exalted as much. In fact, His exaltation was in proportion to His humility. Here was the supreme demonstration of the truth: “He that humbleth himself shall be exalted” (Luke 14:11).

Christ’s exaltation began from the lowest point, even in Hades itself, “the lower parts of the earth” (Eph. 4:9), and preached the gospel to the antediluvian spirits in prison during the three-day interim following his crucifixion (I Peter 3:19, 20; 4:6). However, the gates of hell did not prevail against the rock of His divinity, and, like Samson, He tore off the gates of the “city” and ascended up through Satan’s territory, the air (Eph. 2:2), leading captivity captive and sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high, denoting that his triumphant work was finished. There from David’s throne he reigns as head over all things for the good of the church, dispensing gifts (as David did, I Sam. 30:21-25) to his chosen people. The fact that the Spirit was poured out on the day of Pentecost evidenced His reign to Peter and the apostles (Acts 2:16-18, 25-33).

The glorious exaltation and reign of Christ, however, like other mysteries of the kingdom, is not apparent to the flesh. It is only apprehended by faith. Sin **appears** to be an over-throw of His purposes, when in reality it is **servicing** His purposes by providing a contrast to His righteousness, and giving occasion for Him to manifest His grace on some and His justice on others.

In verse nine we read that God gave His exalted

son "a name which is above every name." Some think that the name referred to is "Jesus" (v. 10) which means "Saviour" and denotes that His work of salvation brought Him the greatest glory. Others think that since "Jesus" was a common name in His time (Col. 4:11) the name "Christ" is meant (Acts 17:3). Others that "Lord" (v. 11) is intended. But it seems not probable to this writer that "name" in verse nine refers to the majesty, glory, status, authority, and dignity of the exalted Son of God. Note that the Holy Ghost did not say "the name Jesus" but "the name of Jesus." When God proclaimed "the name of the Lord" to Moses, He proclaimed His attributes and offices (Exodus 34:5-7). If a good name is rather to be chosen than great riches (Prov. 22:1), then how rich is our exalted Head! He Himself is a proper object of our worship. His Divine method of obtaining a name was in marked contrast to that of the proud and carnal men of Babel (Gen. 11:4). Christ renounced his glory and thereby ultimately increased it.

Not only has the exalted Son received honour, but power as well, for every knee shall bow to him at the last day (Rom. 14:11, 12; Phil. 2:10, 11) and every tongue shall confess Him Lord. This is a reference to Isaiah 45:23 where Jehovah makes this claim for Himself. From this we see the Divinity of our Lord. This universal homage to the Lamb is also depicted in Revelation 5:13. All creation is seen worshipping Him in whom creation is united to its Creator. God's will that all men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father will then be fulfilled (John 5:23). From this passage we also learn that both the body and soul ought to be involved in true worship since our entire being is redeemed. We also see how vain are those who imagine that they can know God apart from Christ (John 14:6).

Some far-fetched theological implications could be drawn from this text, but we are to take it as it stands and let it minister to us. The marvel is that here is an exalted representative **Man** ruling the universe as a forerunner of His people who shall ultimately reign with Him and fulfill God's original purpose for man to reign and have dominion (Gen. 1:28). This is testified of by the writer to the Hebrews: "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels: thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands: Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him. But we see Jesus . . . crowned with glory and honour . . ." (Heb. 2:6-9).

Finally, this universal confession on the Day of Judgment will be to the glory of God the Father as the **author** of this grand and glorious scheme of redemption. For when all things shall be subdued unto Christ, then shall the Son also be subject unto the Father that God may be all in all (I Cor. 15:28). The ultimate end of the whole plan of redemption, then, is to "bring us to God." Ought this not to be enough to challenge us to earnestly

seek after God in this life? We shall bow the knee sooner or later, either now or on the Day of Judgment. How much better to worship Him and confess Him as our Lord in this life! Amen!

(vs. 12, 13) "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye 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. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

Paul begins with the word "Wherefore" in order to connect these verses with previous thoughts; to wit, that in view of Christ's humble subjection to the Father and His subsequent exaltation, let us follow His example.

He calls the Philippians his beloved to show their endearment to him and the more to gain their ear. These were they who had ministered to him in his necessities both in his presence and in his absence from them.

Next the apostle brings up the matter of obedience. No man will be saved apart from obedience, grace notwithstanding, for the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit (Rom. 8:4). "Let no man deceive you, he that doeth righteousness is righteous" (I John 3:7). "If ye live after the flesh ye shall die" (Rom. 8:13). We are never to turn the grace of God into lasciviousness, but to make constant and unremitting war against our own personal sin lest it damn us (I Cor. 9:27). God's purpose has never changed. It is to get man to obey Him. It is true that the moral law drives us to Christ for justification (Gal. 3:24, Rom. 10:4, Gal. 2:16). But Christ sends us back to Moses with grace to live a holy life (Rom. 8:4) to prove that we have truly been with Him.

Paul says "not as in my presence only," showing that the Philippians were not hypocrites. True faith obeys in solitude as well as before the eyes of men (Col. 3:22). On the other hand, it should be a terror to the hypocrite to know that the sins he commits in secret are still within full view of the unseen hosts and God himself. Also, our private transgressions shall shortly be judged openly before the assembled universe (I Tim. 5:21, Rom. 2:16). This same fact, however, will be a comfort to the godly who inwardly strive against sin notwithstanding their failures and infirmities.

"Much more" refers to the added diligence needed when exhorters like Paul are no longer present to spur one on.

He says "Work out your own salvation." "We must not only work at our salvation, by doing something now and then about it; but we must work out our salvation, by doing all that is to be done, and persevering therein to the end. Salvation is the great thing we should mind."

By using the term "work" Paul reproves our laziness, lest our flesh should make the truth of the grace of God working all spiritually good things in us as an occasion for sloth. Those who abuse God's truth in this manner will be found inexcusable for they have taken the highest form

of truth which was designed to produce the highest degree of holiness and used it as an excuse for sin.

By the term "fear and trembling" he reproves pride and carnal confidence, for these two arise from an awareness of how wretched we are, and devoid of all good. Paul says, "You have all things from God; therefore be careful and humble." "There is nothing that should train us more to modesty and fear than when we hear that it is by the grace of God alone that we stand, and that we instantly collapse if He even in the slightest degree withdraws His hand. On the other hand, all who confide in their own strength grow insolent through arrogance and sleep in carelessness."

The apostle does not say our actions work out salvation, but, Work out your own salvation, which is much different. It were absurd to say, because the Jews were enjoined to eat the passover with loins girt, that loins girt were eating the passover. Holy living is the road to glory and on it we must stay if we are to arrive safely home. But the road is not the procuring cause nor the propelling cause. Christ's blood procured salvation for us and His grace propels us on this road because of God's free choice of us from eternity (Eph. 1:3-5). Ultimately holiness is an evidence, not a cause, of salvation. On our part it is a thank-offering for our free justification by faith in Christ's merit. A justifying faith in Christ will purify the heart and bring forth the fruit of holiness (Acts 15:9), but this faith respects the embracing of Christ's merit and not the earning of our own. Signing our paycheck does not earn the money. Boasting is excluded because we **ought** to believe God. When we have done this, we can still say that we are unprofitable servants. Furthermore, God had to give us the faith as a free gift in the first place. He works in us **both** to **will** and to **do** of his **own good** pleasure; therefore, since He does **all** the work of our salvation, He deserves **all** the glory.

Nevertheless, having a renewed will and having our spirit blended with His Spirit, we are energetically involved in perseverance, so that it is truly said in Scripture that we work and we believe (I Cor. 6:17, Col. 1:29, II Cor. 6:1, John 3:36).

Notice also that it is "your **own** salvation" that should be your chief aim. No human friend can work it for you. "Every man shall bear his own burden" (Gal. 6:5). We must take heed to our selves first, before we can help others (I Tim. 4:16). So let us be doing it!

#### VERSES 14-16

"Do all things without murmurings and disputings: that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain."

Babylon (modern professing Christendom) leaves the impression that in order to serve God

one must become a clergyman and promote some religious organization. They replace inward godliness with certain outward activities and thus deprive the ordinary believer of his hope of reward. The truth is that every genuine Christian's earthly occupation is a post assigned to him by God, and he must consciously serve God in it (Col. 3:22-24). Every true Christian is in full-time Christian work." He is a "professional" since he is "trained" by the Spirit of God and Word of God in every department of his life. His whole life springs from an inner principle of faith and love as he is filled with the Spirit in order to be able to do such common daily duties as loving and caring for his wife, obeying his parents as a good child, or obeying the husband as a good wife should, etc. (Eph. 5:18, 21, 25; 6-1). This is why our text says "all things." We must "adorn the doctrine" (Titus 2:10) with godly daily living or else nobody will listen to our words of faith when we have occasion to speak them.

Paul says "Do all things without murmurings and disputings." We do this then, when we humbly accept our lot as from the Lord, labor unto the Lord peacefully and contentedly, and give no occasion to fault-finders.

The word "murmur" is the one used frequently of the ancient people of God (I Cor. 10:10) of which we are the anti-type. The saint is indeed **tempted** to murmur because his lot in this life is hard. He is generally among the "poor of this world" and "oppressed" by the rich (James 2:5, 6). But in addition to common troubles, he has many **spiritual** afflictions due to conflict with his own corrupt flesh, with the carnal, unbelieving, wicked, persecuting world which surrounds him, and with the very real, malicious, wily, invisible personality known as Satan. Furthermore, if he is called to do genuine labor for the Lord in the ministry of the pure unadulterated word (apart from denominational traditions), he will find himself having to labor in the wee hours of the night without outside financial support for his ministry and having his message largely rejected by the masses of carnal religious people. Truly the way of life is strait and narrow, and few there be that find it (Matt. 7:14)! But God has set this whole situation up to demonstrate his grace in causing his saints to persevere in spite of all that is against them and to at last inherit the new heavens and new earth (II Peter 3:13). In the meantime he protects them, sustains them, takes care not to overload them, and works all things together for their eternal good.

"Murmurings" are secret complaints against God. "Discontent makes men's lips like rusty hinges which seldom move without complaining." "Disputings" are open complaints against men, like to the grunting of hogs. Both are unseemly. Both spring from love of pleasure and rebellion against God's providence.

We are to be blameless and harmless (lit. "unmixed" or pure). Although there never has been such perfection in the world (apart from the first Adam in innocency and the last Adam incarnate) the Scriptures use the term "blameless" to describe those who aim at this with the whole bent of their mind. Men may cast false reproach upon

the saint out of hatred for the truth, but the saint must aim to share the impartial verdict that was put upon their Master, "I find no fault with this man."

Men expect more from a Christian, and rightly so, for he professes more. His dignity enforces his duty. He must behave as a Son of God. But doing so in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation takes much grace because the wicked have a strong influence upon the saint toward evil. As he is forced to associate with them, their carnal unbelieving way of thinking tends to draw his own mind into the same channels. Contact with them tends to conform him to their image. His holiness will **not** rub off on them, because it takes a miracle of the new birth to elevate them to faith. But alas, their **unholiness does** rub off on **him**, because he still has an old nature that is fed by their influence. "Clean" does **not** rub off on "dirty" but "dirty" **does** rub off on "clean" (Haggai 2:12). The only antidote to this sort of spiritual uncleanness is large amounts of the water of grace (Lev. 11:36). Another help is to let the spiritual deadness of others minister life to you while you view their case as a warning to yourself.

"Ye shine" respects the godly life mentioned above. Paul alludes to lamps in which wicks are placed to burn. We are the lamps, the Word of God is the wick. A godly life should display the power of the Word of life: it is to be a transcript and interpretation of the Bible. If one puts a bushel over his light, not only others, but he himself will be in darkness. God gives us light that we may let it shine. Moses turned aside to investigate the light he saw (Ex. 3:3, 4), and men have a responsibility to ask the saint a reason of the hope that is in him (I Peter 3:15). If those around us would only rejoice in our light they could in turn carry it to others, but if they reject it, they deprive others of it, and thus "hold (back) the truth in unrighteousness" (Rom. 1-18). Nevertheless, the darker the world, the brighter the light will appear, and the more God will be glorified. Christ is the light of the world and Christians are lights in the world. Let the lower lights be burning, not only holding **fast**, but holding **forth** the word of life.

Paul says that he will rejoice (or glory) in the day of Christ if the Philippians stand fast. What a thought! Our godly life may add to the joy of the heavenly realm on the day of Christ! Let us press towards that great day!

#### VERSES 19-24

"But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state. For I have no man like-minded, who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's. But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel. Him therefore I hope to send presently, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me. But I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly."

At this point in Paul's letter he tells the Philippians that he has immediately dispatched Epa-

phroditus to them (vs. 25-30) and hopes to do the same with Timothy (vs. 19-23) as soon as he finds out whether his own trial will eventuate in martyrdom or release from prison (v. 23). He hopes to send reinforcements to this beleaguered church so troubled by persecution (ch. 1:28), dissension (ch. 2:2, 4:2), and false teachers (ch. 3:2-7). News of approaching help would encourage them, and Paul's earnest care of the saints by letter should rebuke those of us who do not take advantage of modern communications toward the same end.

The carnal mind finds it difficult to understand how men like Timothy and Epaphroditus could be in a state of subjection to Paul, a prisoner at Rome. It certainly wasn't for money. But they knew that all men are prisoners of God, some consciously and some unconsciously. Furthermore they could see that Paul was a future prince of the eternal world to come, and they recognized his spiritual authority.

Paul focuses for a moment on Timothy, his "own son in the faith" (I Tim. 1:2). This young man had been nurtured up in the Hebrew scriptures by a godly mother and grandmother in spite of a divided home (II Tim. 1:5, 3:15; Acts 16:1-3). He was converted at Lystra by Paul (Acts 14:6, 7, 16:1) and became his companion on several of Paul's journeys. Paul hoped to send him to the Philippians, but he refers the whole matter to the will of God who may have providentially decreed otherwise. Thus he demonstrated the proper faith, humility, and reverence for God in this area (Prov. 27:1; Jas. 4:15). Even the inspired apostle was not sure of God's will concerning his future.

Paul says that he will send Timothy in order that he might "be of good comfort." His own happiness was bound up in the spiritual welfare of his converts. Indeed, their loss would be his own for all eternity (I Cor. 3:15); therefore, he would not be at ease until he had learned that all was well with them. Thus Timothy's trip was for his own good as well as their's. Paul had no one else who would naturally care for their state and bring back an accurate appraisal of their spiritual condition.

True Christianity is primarily a matter of the **state of heart**, not of mere religious activity. Oh, that pride would not blind men to their true state! The heart must be purified by believing the gospel (Acts 15:9). A properly balanced feeding on God's Word is essential to spiritual health, combined with honesty and a humble, submissive will (Luke 8:15; John 7:17). A heart in happy harmony with God's Word will be in harmony with God Himself. A man's relationship to God can be objectively measured by his attitude toward the Bible and the amount of free time he spends in it. To promote this is to promote "the things which are Jesus Christ's." This sort of "state-work" had become a natural thing to Timothy, so that for him to be natural was to be spiritual. A noble trait to aspire for!

"When Paul says 'all seek their own' he does not speak of those who had openly abandoned the pursuit of godliness, but of those very persons whom he reckoned brethren, even those whom he admitted to his own circle. These persons, he nev-

ertheless says, were so warm in pursuing their own interests that they were cold in the work of the Lord. . . . It may seem at first sight as if it were no great fault to seek one's own; but how insufferable it is in the servants of Christ appears from the fact that it renders those whom it possesses utterly useless. For it is impossible that he who is devoted to self, should spend himself for the Church. . . . One or the other of these two dispositions shall rule our hearts. Whether, overlooking ourselves we are devoted to Christ and His work, or, intent in our own gain we serve Him perfunctorily. . . . If however, Paul reproves so severely those who were influenced by a greater concern for themselves than for the Church, what judgment may they expect who are completely given up to their own affairs and care nothing for the edification of the Church?

"It must be conceded that one may seek his own interests so long as he is not prevented from seeking the kingdom of Christ. But in that case they will not be said to seek their own interests; for a man's life is estimated according to its chief aim." Again, when he says "all" he does not imply that there were no exceptions, for there were others also, like Epaphroditus, but he ascribes to all what was generally prevalent.

Why would others shrink from this journey? Because to go from Rome to Philippi would have taken several months of risky travel. There might be storms at sea, pirates, persecuting along the way, delays in port, long marches, weariness, the absence of loved ones, and perhaps short provisions. But God's people as the salt of the earth, are sprinkled among many nations as a preservative, and therefore traveling preachers dot the scenes of church history.

It would not be easy for Paul to send Timothy away. He would miss his rich fellowship which was rare even back in what we think of as the Golden Age of the Church. But he knew that Timothy had proven himself in the eyes of the Philippians by laboring alongside Paul when he was among them as a spiritually kindred submissive son. This was a task impossible for a flesh-loving person to perform. Paul's high praise of Timothy shows his humility and wisdom in putting honor on other ministers for the good of the cause of Christ in order to bolster their labors, for those who preach the Word deserve the highest respect and authority. At the same time Paul does not excuse himself from a visit, knowing that a face to face ministry on his part would have a unique advantage that could not be duplicated.

## CHAPTER 3

### VERSES 1-3

"Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe. Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision. For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."

Having concluded the doctrinal portion of his epistle, Paul attempts to begin his practical con-

clusion with his familiar words, "Finally my brethren" (II Cor. 13:11, Eph. 6:10, II Thess. 3:1). However, the joy in this epistle is so overflowing that he writes on until this becomes the midpoint instead of the end. "My brethren" is a title of respect and love that sweetens the cup of exhortation.

In accord with the theme of this epistle, he commands them to rejoice in the Lord. Because of Christ, the believer always has many reasons to rejoice. All that is needed is to clearly see reality by faith. True Christianity plants and nourishes, essentially and chiefly, life-joy in the Lord's person, word, and work. Let us not be as the melancholy owl which was reckoned among the unclean birds in the law (Lev. 11:16)!

The Philippians, like others (Acts 15:1), had been troubled somewhat by Judaizers, which taught that except they "be circumcised after the manner of Moses" they could not be saved. They taught men to "trust in the flesh," i.e. in outward humanly-performed ceremonies. On the other hand, Paul exhorts them to rejoice (glory) in Christ, i.e., in His Person as Lord, Savior, King, Priest, Mediator, etc., and in His work of Incarnation, Humiliation, Death, Resurrection, Ascension, Intercession, and Second-Coming. Being caught up in the glory of these truths would be the best antidote to the vanity of legalistic religion. Besides this, repentance and faith toward Christ **produces** a circumcised heart so that the Judaizers were not advocates of true circumcision at all. They clung to the outward sign while Paul possessed the substance. They tried to mingle Moses with Christ as a means of justification, not realizing that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth (Rom. 10:4). They had lost sight of the original purpose of the rite of circumcision: to teach men to renounce their flesh and to worship God spiritually. Instead they used it to persuade men to approach God by trusting in the works of their hands. They attempted to restrict worship to outward bodily ceremonies at certain times and places while true inward worship engulfs the whole life through the Spirit.

Circumcision, the outward sign of God's covenant with the Jewish nation, was a type of inward circumcision of the heart, man's "secret part", whereby the fleshly affections are painfully cut away, leaving the heart tender and sensitive toward God. It is the token of one's election, i.e., of being included by God in the covenant of grace which He made with the Son before the world began as they agreed between themselves on the method and scope of this effectually-purposed redemption (John 17:2).

Actually, the Jewish nation shall yet be circumcised in heart for "all Israel shall be saved" (Rom. 11:26). In the meantime the Gentiles have been grafted in to the blessing originally intend-

ed for the Jews. We who believe in Christ, whether Jew or Gentile, are the true seed of Abraham (Gal. 3:2, Rom. 2:28, 29).

In view of man's dull slowness to apprehend spiritual realities and his aptness to quickly forget them, Paul finds it necessary and safe to repeat some warnings against the Judaizers. Repetition is the mother of learning. Some are like the Athenians, ever itching to hear "some new thing," as though they were able to fully understand and do all that they have heard. Let us humbly learn to oft such honey from the same rock of truth. As long as we are not slothful we shall not lose a sense of our sinfulness and need of a Savior. The staple meat-and-potato truths of the gospel will still be the "joyful sound" to us. Let us polish up the luster of our old gems and see new facets in them. Men must not find manna monotonous. (See I Cor. 15:1-4, II Peter 1:12-15, 3:1). Paul may have expounded these things at greater length in a previous epistle. In Polycarp's letter to the Philippians (Sec. 3), he speaks of "The Epistles" (plural) of St. Paul to them. Or he may very well have delivered to them the decree of the Jerusalem council concerning circumcision (Acts 15).

Paul sarcastically refers to the Judaizers as dogs, evil workers and the concision. It is edifying to compare these three expressions with those in verse three. The Jews often referred to the Gentiles as dogs, a term of derision, because they were outside of the Jewish religious worship. Now Paul turns the epithet upon them, because of their refusal to inwardly live up to their external privileges. They were the real dogs who trusted in the flesh instead of in Christ. They were outside of the true worship of God which was "in the spirit."

The Judaizers boasted in their zealous religious works. Paul calls them "evilworkers." They were the sons of Cain whose religious works were evil (Gen. 4:1-17, I John 3:12), being void of the faith of Abel (Heb. 11:4). Rejoicing in Christ Jesus is the best antidote to evil religious works.

They boasted that they were of the circumcision. Instead, Paul calls them the "concision" for they were mutilating the body of Christ with their false doctrine. Paul says, "I would they were even cut off which trouble you" (Gal. 5:12) and cast away as a worthless foreskin. Paul's vehemence and sarcasm is a high form of spiritual combat which proceeds from intense personal sympathy for the victims of false doctrine, spiritual keenness, and sagacity. Let us seek to have his zeal and discernment in hating every false way.

#### VERSES 4-7

"Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; Concern-

ing zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ."

In the previous verses of this chapter, Paul warns the Philippians against the Judaizers. These were those who tried to mingle the legalist observance of Moses with faith in the gospel of Christ as a condition of justification. Paul therefore calls them "dogs" since they were outside the pale of the true church, "evil workers" since their religious activity did not spring from true faith, and "concision" because they were mutilating the body of Christ with their false doctrine. He then says that those who worship God "by the Spirit" (ASV), glory in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh are the true circumcision.

With this background we can better understand the verses which follow. Paul says that if it were proper to trust in carnal religion for salvation, then he could boast of more than his opponents possessed. Before his conversion on the Damascus road, Paul was an eminently zealous Pharisee who excelled at natural religion, void of the Spirit. But God delivered Paul and thus made him an expert at refuting that error by which he had once been enslaved.

Paul sets himself forth as an example of trusting Christ alone. Yet he makes it so that his enemies could not accuse him of extolling Christ to excuse his own religious deficiencies, for his fleshly religious pedigree excelled them all. He does not despise external privileges in their proper sphere of usefulness as a means of grace and faith, but he does not want men to boast in religion per se nor rest in such things for salvation. He counts them dung in comparison with the supernal excellence of Christ's righteousness for justification which is apprehended by faith.

Since the Judaizers put such great stock in the ceremony of circumcision, Paul says that he himself was circumcised the eighth day after his birth according to the law of Moses (Gen. 17:12). This proved that he was not merely a proselyte who had been circumcised late in life, but rather was "born within the pale of the church and dedicated to God under the zeal of the covenant at the day of God's appointing."

Paul could also refer back to his remotest ancestry as a descendent of the stock of Israel (Jacob). This proved that he was not an Ishmaelitic son of Abraham nor an Edomite (a son of Isaac through Esau).

The tribe of Benjamin was an honorable ancestry inasmuch as the temple was located on the border of Benjamin (Joshua 18:28); it had adhered to Judah when all the other tribes revolted; it was forward in the Reformation (Ezra 1:5); Benjamin was his father's dearest son (Gen. 44:20); and the tribe was under God's special protection (Deut. 33:12).

Paul refers to himself as a Hebrew of the Hebrews. This name was a most ancient and



honorable name. Moses calls Abram himself an "Hebrew" after "Eber" one of the godly seed of Shem whom Noah blessed above all his brethren. Paul was a full-blooded pure Hebrew on both his mother's and father's side.

Having been a Pharisee, Paul was brought up in the law. He sat at the feet of Gamaliel, an eminent doctor of the law (Acts 22:3). He said that he lived "after the most straitest sect of our religion" (Acts 26:5); in fact, his father was a Pharisee (Acts 23:6). This sect was noted for its zeal in proselyting, for its fairly orthodox doctrine, and for its strict outward observance of ceremonies.

Paul was so zealous in his Phariseeism that he hated the church and persecuted it to the death. This which he later thought to be the greatest sin of his life (I Cor. 15:8, 9), he now reckons by a sort of irony in this controversy with the Judaizers as a glory to himself. At least it did demonstrate his zeal in fighting for what he thought was right and opposing what he thought was wrong. Besides this, it takes zeal to persecute the church because the real sheep of Christ will not fight back. Paul declared that he was exceedingly zealous of the traditions of the fathers and served God with pure conscience. He thought he was doing God service in his persecutions. He had zeal without knowledge.

Paul says that he was religiously faithful and morally blameless in the eyes of men. He does not speak here of absolute moral perfection before God, but of "what would satisfy the common opinion of mankind." Christians do not despise outward morality but they do insist that it is insufficient grounds to trust in for salvation. There are millions of people whose circumstances and background promote moral living, who go to some church once a week, and suppose that they are real Christians. But conviction of sin must precede faith in the Savior. Publicans and harlots enter the kingdom before moral and carnally religious people, because they are quicker to see themselves as sinners in need of a Savior from the power of sin and unbelief.

Paul's fleshly Babylonish-type religion was gain to him before he knew Christ. But now he counted those things loss which hindered him from coming to Christ, for certainly nothing could be more hurtful than what shuts us out of heaven. He says in effect, "I should have reckoned myself an unspeakable loser if, to adhere to my religion, I had lost my interest in Jesus Christ."

Let each reader examine his heart. Is Christ precious to you? I speak of the Christ in the Bible! Does your church environment tend to make him **more** precious? If not, then perhaps you have made an idol out of your church, making it a substitute for Christ as the object of your devotion. To such I say, "Count all things but dung that you might win Christ."

#### VERSE 8

"Yea doubtless, and I count all things but

loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ."

Paul had just finished telling us in the preceding verses how much he could boast in his former fleshly religion were he disposed to do so. Paul had **more** to boast in than his opponents, the Judaizers, who were offering fleshly ceremonial observances as a substitute for faith in Christ. Paul, therefore, says that he was once a model Pharisee, surpassing all others, yet he forsook all confidence in his own religious works in favor of glorying in Christ alone by faith.

Paul now expands his comparison from the sphere of fleshly religion to "all things," and changes his tense from past to present: "I count." Furthermore, he confirms it with an oath saying "yea, doubtless." The import of this was to prove that he still retained the same strong convictions to the present. There had been no wavering with the passage of time and change of circumstances. He held steadfastly to correct values and placed the highest value on the "one thing needful" (Luke 10:42), i.e., the knowledge of Christ. "The knowledge of Christ is a blessing so surpassing and transcendent that nothing else is worthy to be called good in comparison with that one highest good. Its glory, like the rising sun, overwhelms and hides all lesser lights." Yea, it "so far surpasses everything else by its sublimity that, compared with it, there is nothing that is not contemptible. Let us, therefore, learn from this, what value we ought to set upon the knowledge of Christ alone." By it we escape the pollution that is in the knowledge of Christ alone." By it we escape the pollution that is in the world through lust (II Pet. 2:20), grace and peace and multiplied (II Pet. 1:2), and it is that in which we are ever to be increasing (Col. 1:10). Satan, knowing how important this is, makes it the focal point of his attacks in attempting to downgrade the thought-lives of the saints (II Cor. 10:4, 5). This is not surprising, because a spiritual apprehension of Christ is the panacea for all spiritual ills. Whatever spiritual need we have, there is a facet of His Person to answer it. In short, we are changed into His image by beholding His glory (II Cor. 3:18).

When Paul speaks of the loss of all things, it is a "similitude taken from seamen, who, when pressed by danger of shipwreck, throw everything overboard, that, the ship being lightened, they may reach the harbor safely. Paul, then, preferred to lose everything that he had, rather than be deprived of Christ." In other words, "all things" would include anything and everything that competed with Christ for first place in his heart. He was not trusting in nor loving anything more than Christ. This would include not only his dead works which were done as a Pharisee, but his best Christian works done after his conversion. It would include his worldly goods, comfort, ease, yea even life itself. Those who lose all for Christ

will be rewarded. God will some day give all things with him (Rom. 8:16, 17).

Does this mean that everyone must necessarily become poverty-stricken in order to become a Christian? No. For the natural blessings of this life are from God and are to be received with thanksgiving and gratitude. Moreover, it is written by this same apostle that men ought to labor with their own hands and support their families or else they have denied the faith and are worse than infidels (I Tim. 5:8, II Thess. 3:7-12). It is not money itself that is evil, but the love of money. It is not the possessing of worldly goods per se that is wrong. It is **trusting** in them. It is a heart matter. Abraham and Job had wealth, but God was first in their lives as we see by their victory in severe trials.

On the other hand, to love and trust in riches is tantamount to covetousness and idolatry (Col. 3:5). The heart is to be reserved for the God of heaven and earth whose name is "Jealous" (Ex. 34:14). From this we learn to hold the wealth of this world loosely and to be willing to renounce the things themselves whenever the Lord requires. Paul, for one, was actually required to do this.

He called all earthly advantages "dung," "refuse," or literally, "dog's meat," perhaps alluding again to the Judaizers who were referred to as dogs in verse two. They were in the habit of referring to the Gentiles as dogs because they seemed outside of God's covenant with the nation of Israel; but Paul sarcastically turns the imprecation back upon them as being outside of God's covenant of grace (as was manifested by their rejection of Christ). Therefore, they were left with the paltry dog's meat of earthly things, rather than the angel's food of the everlasting gospel.

Paul uses the expression "my Lord." He is baring his heart to reveal his close personal communion with and subjection to the Son of God. Let us follow his example!

#### VERSE 9

"And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."

Paul has just said that he counted all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord. The next words we read are these: "and be found in him." Calvin translates it "and may find them in him." The sense of the text in that case would be that Paul gave up all things that he might gain them all back in Christ. The things that men foolishly imagine they possess apart from Christ will soon be lost eternally. But all things possessed in Him are truly possessed forever, for the Spirit declares that Christ is appointed "heir of all things" (Heb. 1:2), and if we are children then we are "heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8:17). All things in this present life work together for the eternal good of "them that love God" (Rom. 8:28) so that they are presently possessed. "All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all

are your's" (I Cor. 3:21, 22). "He that overcometh shall inherit all things" (Rev. 21:7); yea, "the meek shall inherit the earth" (Matt. 5:5) and "dwell therein forever" (Psa. 37:29). It will of course, be a glorious earth, purified by fire at the coming of our Lord (II Peter 3:10-13).

If this be true (and it is), then how utterly foolish to squander this life trying to heap up riches, only to pass them on to another at death, and then be eternally miserable! How wise to fear God, love, trust, and obey Him in this life, then to inherit all things with Him for all eternity!

The other view of this verse is that one which follows the King James Version: "And be found in him." Then the sense would be that Paul wanted to be found in Christ at His coming. "Be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless" (II Peter 3:14). To be found "in him" would be the same as being found "in the faith" (Col. 1:23, Titus 1:13, Heb. 11:13, I Tim. 1:2). It means to be found in experiential union with Christ, as the branch abides in the vine (John 15:1-7), as a member of His body (Eph. 5:30). One person has said "in Him as the fish is in the sea; in Him as the element of my life."

At the end of the world all men shall be found either in Adam or else in Christ, bearing Adam's likeness or else Christ's. Furthermore, everyone's spiritual state will be fixated at that time (Rev. 22:11). It will be a universal spiritual "wage freeze." Therefore, it behooves us to develop a big appetite for heavenly things. So shall we have treasure in heaven.

Paul next gives us a lesson in the possessive power of faith. We "have" (possess) whatever we have faith in. If we have faith in ourselves we shall stand before God alone and miserably deficient on the Day of Judgment. If we have faith in Christ, we shall possess His perfect righteousness on the Day of Judgment. This will be infinitely better.

"Paul compares two kinds of righteousness. The one he says belongs to man, i.e., the righteousness of the law; the other comes from God and consists of faith in Christ. These are so directly opposed that they cannot stand together. The righteousness of the law must be renounced in order to obtain the righteousness of faith."

There are two basic ways of approaching God. One way is to try to approach God on the basis of personal merit, trusting in one's own good works for acceptance. This is the righteousness which is of the law. However, due to man's fallen state his best works are corrupted. All of his righteousness are as "filthy rags" in God's sight (Isa. 64:6). We learn this especially when we discern the spiritual nature of the law (Rom. 7:14), how it reaches in to our very heart to condemn lust (Matt. 5:28) as well as outward transgressions. Even "the thought of foolishness is sin" (Prov. 24:9). Furthermore, if we decide to approach God through the law, then we are debtor to keep the **whole law perfectly**

at all times. "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (Jas. 2:10). The law then becomes a mirror to show us our sin (Jas. 1:23). When we take the law seriously it becomes our schoolmaster to lead us to Christ (Gal. 3:24). It shows us that we are sinners in need of a Savior.

Christ is just the kind of Savior we need. He perfectly kept the law by leading a sinless life. He fulfilled the law for us and became a spotless sacrifice for our sins that his righteousness might be imputed to us who trust in his blood. Thus, then, is the second way to approach God: renouncing our own righteousness we trust completely in Christ's great work of atonement as fully sufficient to satisfy God and to save us from the wrath to come (Rom. 10:4, 5; 4:3-6). Then the law becomes a rule to live by out of sheer love for God our Savior. Our works become an **evidence** of salvation, not a **condition** of salvation. Christ gets all the glory this way. Let us be found in Him!

#### VERSE 10

"That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death."

Paul has just been stating in preceding verses that he counted all things loss for Christ that he might win Christ and be found in Him. Now he says "that I may **know** him." We must be found in Christ before we can know him.

The term "know the Lord" is used far too loosely among many today. It is more than a bare intellectual knowledge of a historical Christ, but an efficacious, saving, experiential, Scriptural, heart-knowledge. The Holy Spirit expresses it by reference to the senses. It is called "hearing" in John 10:27, "looking" in Heb. 12:2, "tasting" in I Peter 2:3, and "smelling" in II Cor. 2:14. By these senses we become intimately familiar with things and are said to know them. It is exactly the same in knowing Christ. All of our spiritual faculties are mysteriously involved in a very real way.

Needless to say, this produces a changed life. By the knowledge of God in Christ we escape the pollution that is in the world through lust (II Pet. 2:20), grace and peace are multiplied (II Pet. 1:2), and eternal life is realized (John 17:3). The knowledge of the Lord is the panacea for all spiritual ills. He has an attribute to meet our every spiritual need, which, if apprehended by faith, will heal us (II Cor. 3:18).

Paul has said that he counted all things but loss that he might win Christ. We have shown that this included wealth, fame, meritorious works, religious career, even life itself. This, then, was a sort of dying to self and the world. But out of death comes life. Therefore he mentions the power of the resurrection which he inwardly experienced as a result of this.

"Christ therefore is rightly known, when we feel how powerful His death and resurrection are, and how efficacious they are in us. Now all things are there furnished to us: expiation and destruc-

tion of sin, freedom from guilt, satisfaction, victory over death, the attainment of righteousness and the hope of a blessed immortality."

The apostle uses this expression: "being made conformable to his death." This has reference to the continual mortification of the old man. Our whole life is to "represent an image of Christ's death."

Was his head crowned with thorns? Then let me bear the numerous mental tortures that are a part of true godliness, such as the striving against sin in my thought-life, the sorrow for sin perceived in self and others. May I comfort myself in the realization that the more numerous the thorns, the bigger my crown will be in heaven. If I suffer with Him, I shall also reign with Him. Each thorn beat into my head by the reed of the world shall some day be replaced by a jewel for my crown. Satan doesn't know it, but he is only expanding my reign by making me suffer.

Were Christ's hands pierced? Then let the work of my hands be sanctified by painful toil against the inclinations of my pleasure-loving flesh.

Were his feet pierced? Then let my walk be one which is worthy of the vocation wherewith I have been called. May I shun the path of the world, the broad way that leadeth to destruction? May I walk the difficult and narrow way of separated holiness, though it brings upon me the wrath and rejection of men.

So shall my head, my hands, and my feet experience the result of that holy anointing which prepared the priests of old to enter their ministries, which prepared Christ for his high priesthood, and which will prepare me for my eternal ministry as a king and priest unto God.

Peter desired that his head, hands, and feet be washed (John 13:9). So may my own be washed by that life which is in the blood.

Then, after I am spiritually dead (that is to say "alive"), may God open my side, that out of my belly might flow rivers of living water.

Thus will I be made conformable unto Christ's death. Thus will I experience the power of His resurrection.

In closing, let me make an interesting observation on this verse. There once lived a woman named Mary of Bethany. God worked mightily in her life so that she is honored by being mentioned in the Bible exactly three times. In Luke 10:39 we see her at Jesus' feet simply hearing his word. In John 11:43 we find her witnessing the resurrection of Lazarus from the grave. In John 12:3-7 we find her anointing Jesus' body against the day of his burying. It is a tribute to the precision of Scripture that these three incidents perfectly illustrate our text in the very order in which the phrases occur: "that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his suffering." Hearing Christ's word is the chief means of knowing him. The resurrection of Lazarus is the most notable demonstration of resurrection power given during Christ's

earthly ministry. His anointing by Mary was a very notable foreshadowing of his suffering death. Let us strive, like Mary, to enter all three of these areas of fellowship!

#### VERSES 11-12

"If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus."

At first sight verse eleven appears to be an exceedingly strange expression. Why does Paul speak of **attaining** unto the resurrection of the dead? Will not **all** of the dead be raised **unconditionally**? Both saints and sinners? Whether they like it or not? The answer, of course, is a resounding "Amen!" Jesus said "Marvel not at this: for the **hour** is coming, in the which **all** that are in the graves shall hear his (Christ's) voice, and shall come forth: they that have done good, unto the **resurrection of life**; and they that have done evil, unto the **resurrection of damnation**." All men will be raised in the **same hour**, but not all will be raised in the same condition nor will they all be raised to the same destiny. Paul is here speaking of his aspiration to attain unto the "resurrection of life." In another place our Lord said, "they which shall be **accounted worthy to obtain** that world, and the **resurrection from the dead**, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection" (Luke 20:35, 36).

As it commonly happens, the view which we have just drawn from several plain passages in the King James Version is also confirmed by those who are experts in the technicalities of the original Greek manuscripts. Lightfoot and many others take the view that our verse here in Philippians is better translated "the resurrection **from** the dead" rather than "the resurrection **of** the dead," and that when it is so used, the reference is invariably to the resurrection of the **blessed** dead. (See Luke 20:35 quoted above, and Acts 4:2).

Therefore, Paul was looking forward to the end when he would be "perfect" (v. 12), having a glorified body, forever with the Lord.

"The verb 'attain' means to arrive at the end of a journey. It presents the figure of a pilgrimage." The way is long and the difficulties are many, but Paul is humbly determined "by any means" whatsoever to arrive safely at the resurrection from the dead and to stand before the Son of Man.

Nevertheless, Paul's main purpose here is not to comment on the resurrection itself, but rather to express his own dissatisfaction with his present state and his striving after perfection in hopes of exhorting the Philippians to do the same. Their spiritual pride was doubtless at the root of their divisions (see ch. 1:27, 2:2-4, 3:16, 4:2). Here Paul gently rebukes them by setting forth his own humble confession of imperfection and determination to press on. Surely if the great apostle felt a need to shun complacency and strive for perfection, how much more ought the Philippians to do so. They were far behind **him**. But the most advanced Christian is always the humblest. Thus Paul is also quick to acknowledge that Christ **first** laid hold of **him** at his conversion when he was "apprehended" on the Damascus road and made **able** to strive to apprehend Christ, i.e., "win Christ" (v. 8).

Paul teaches here that apprehending Christ involves the effort of a lifetime. For this reason he uses the word "if" here and in other places as well, election notwithstanding: "If ye continue in the faith" (Col. 1:23); "if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end" (Heb. 3:14). The truth of grace does not do away with the necessity for striving to believe. We are now engaged in the "fight of faith." Let us demonstrate our faith to men and angels. Let us not sit back and **assume** we have it. We must show our faith by our works (James 2:17-26)

The truth of election, then, does not negate the fact of man's responsibility. In fact, we find that often when the apostles spoke of God's choosing some to salvation, they used it as an argument for energetic striving after holiness. Note II Peter 1:10, Col. 3:12, I Peter 1:2, II Tim. 2:19, Eph. 1:4, II Thess. 2:13-15.

It is interesting to notice the train of thought Paul follows in this verse and preceding verses. In verse seven he refers to his calling or conversion when he "counted" (past tense) his gain to be loss for Christ. In verse nine he speaks of his **justification** when he expounds the righteousness which is of God by faith. In verse ten he speaks of his **sanctification** when he mentions his fellowship of Christ's sufferings, the power of His resurrection, and of being made conformable to His death. Now he comes to **glorification**: "If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead." These topics are all in their proper order. We see how Paul's mind was carefully reasoning along bedrock principles here. Let us follow his example by staying close to the great foundational truths of Scripture in our meditations and ministrations!