

# *Christ the Servant Saviour*

*Christ in You Serving Through You Joyfully at All Times*

*A 'Walk and Talk' through Philippians*



*Notes for your edification*

*By*

*Geoffrey Bull*

*Christ the Servant Saviour*

*Christ in You Serving Through You Joyfully at All Times*

*Lessons from Philippians*

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PO Box 549 Cowaramup

Western Australia 6284

[geoffrey@geoffreybull.com](mailto:geoffrey@geoffreybull.com)

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## **COURSE OUTLINE**

In our journey through life we will face all sorts of circumstances and situations, some pleasant and some very unpleasant, even proving to be quite difficult at the time. Some will be of our own making, good or bad, and some will be a result of the attitude and actions of others, good or bad. But what really matters, in whatever we are facing, is how we respond, as our attitude and actions can be either of benefit or detriment to both ourselves and, more importantly, to others.

As believers, those in whom Christ lives, we are containers of the One *“who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross”* (Phil 2:6-8). This is the One who said that He *“did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many”* (Mark 10:45). This same Servant Saviour is the Christ in you and me, and He has not changed, He lives in you and me to serve, to bless and to encourage. That is what being called to the *“fellowship or participation in the gospel”* (Phil 1:5) really means – serving to bring the light and life of Christ to others, no matter what challenges we may be facing personally.

As we walk through this Epistle, Paul will show us that there is no place for pity parties and self-serving attitudes and actions.

Paul is writing from prison in Rome, under threat of execution, but all we hear coming from him is the joyful attitude, encouragement, and love of one who is expressing the mind and heart of Christ.

As we proceed in this study, we will find that we can have joy and hope in the midst of persecution, divisions, distress, or whatever we are facing, if we heed the words of both this epistle and words written to the Hebrews:

Phil 2:3-5      ... *“Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus.”*

Heb 12:2-3      ... *“fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.”*

So, the purpose of this course is to encourage us to follow Paul’s example and draw near to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; that we may know Him; that we may ‘gain Christ’; that we may rejoice in Him always; that we may conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ; and as citizens of heaven, that we may live by the life of Christ giving expression to the attitude of humility and love we find in Christ our Lord. In this serving lifestyle we will find real joy.

## INTRODUCTION

### **That I May Know Him**

In this Letter to the Philippians, more in the background than the foreground, more indirectly than directly, Paul deals with controversy and conflicts, but His focus and central theme, which really is the answer to the troubles, is “knowing Christ” and submitting to, and living out, the Christ-life. Knowing Christ, now and forever, is the passion of Paul’s heart and is clear throughout this epistle. Paul’s passion is stated in the single expression: *“for to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain”* (1:21).

This is a letter about the meaning of true fellowship in Christ written by the man who intimately loved all his brothers and sisters in Christ and sought to offer everything to help them grow in the grace and knowledge of their Lord and Saviour.

Now, ‘knowing Christ’ is not to be seen as an intellectual exercise. It is to live in a relationship with Him where we become intimately acquainted with Him and through that intimate knowledge we become conformed to His image; or as Paul puts it, we *“gain Christ”* (3:8). Our words and actions then become an outward expression of Him who is our life and all, and by that lifestyle we ... *“conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ”* (1:27).

This is the single purpose for our redemption, that Christ may be formed in us so that He may be expressed through us in all our attitudes, words and actions. This underlies all the other themes that Paul discusses such as: suffering, joy, unity and pressing on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. It is this singular focus on Christ that holds together the theology of this epistle.

As we read this epistle and draw near to Christ who is our life and all, may we be more and more conformed into His image and likeness, so that we may prove ourselves ... *“to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life”*. (2:15-16).

### **History behind the Philippian Letter**

Before we get into Paul’s message to the Philippians it will be useful to our understanding of what he is saying to have a brief look at the background history to this letter.

Around 356 BC the city Philippi was named after Philip of Macedon (father of Alexander the Great). But, because of its strategic location on the main route between Rome and Asia, after a series of battles, Philippi and its surrounding state of Macedonia was later colonised by the Romans. Following the battles over this city in 42 BC, Octavian (Roman emperor who later was endowed with the title “Augustus” – which means “sacred” or “revered” one) honoured the city by re-founding it as a Roman military colony and endowed its populace with Roman citizenship.

This citizenship resulted in great allegiance to the Roman emperor. An allegiance and devotion equal to that which was attributed to deities. Claudius, who was emperor at the time of the formation of the church, and Nero, who was the emperor at the time of Paul’s writing, were known throughout the empire as *kurios* (lord) and *sōtēr* (saviour).

The Philippian believers, who were both Roman citizens and citizens of heaven, were compelled to conduct themselves ... *“in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ”* (1:27) and in doing so give their allegiance and devotion to **the Kurios** (Lord) and **the Sōtēr** (Saviour) Jesus Christ. Their allegiance was not to Nero but to Jesus Christ. So, this was the main cause and source of the opposition and suffering they faced at the hand of the unbelievers and military personnel in Philippi who were loyal to Rome.

This opposition was fuelled by the gospel they proclaimed, in which Jesus **the Lord and Saviour** was revealed as having taken on the form of the Servant-Man who was finally condemned to die on a cross for our salvation. The pagan unbelievers scoffed at the thought of their deity being a mere “man”, let alone a “slave”, and to add to it, one condemned to die on a cross – something they reserved only for infliction of maximum pain on the condemned. So they had utter contempt for the Christian community.

So it was the gospel of the Servant-Saviour that drew to the Philippian believers much opposition from those unbelievers who revered their emperor Nero. In Phil 2:15 where Paul refers to ... *“a crooked and perverse generation”* who (1:28) are destined for destruction, this can only refer to the opposing pagan citizens of Rome living in Philippi, who were intensely loyal to the emperor. They were the persecutors of the church in Philippi.

If we read Acts 16, we will see that Paul and Silas were met by this same opposition right from the foundation of the church in Philippi. Acts 16:19-20 ... *“These men are throwing our city into confusion, being Jews, and are proclaiming customs which it is not lawful for us to accept or to observe, being Romans.”*

### **The Beginnings of the Church in Philippi**

Christianity reached Macedonia approximately twenty years after the crucifixion of Christ. We establish this from the fact that the first letter to the Thessalonians was written by Paul and sent from Corinth sometime in AD 51, not too long after the establishment of this church, and in this letter there is reference to the visit to Philippi prior to Paul’s coming to Thessalonica (1 Thess 2:2).

Luke records the establishment of the Philippian church in Chapter 16 of the book of Acts.

In short, Paul was called through a vision to go Macedonia. He found no synagogue there (no even 10 devoted Jewish men there), but he found that there were some God-fearing women who met at the river outside the city for prayer. One was Lydia, a gentile lady, who after hearing the gospel from Paul became the first convert there. Each day when Paul and Silas went to the river to proclaim the gospel they were hassled by a young slave-girl who was possessed. Paul eventually cast the demon out of the girl, which met with great opposition from her owners, which then resulted in Paul and Silas being imprisoned, but God miraculously delivered them. Through this Paul was able to share the gospel with jailer, and he and his family were born again and became part of the church in Philippi.

The authorities then gave them a further beating and asked them to leave the city, but before leaving the city, Paul and Silas encouraged the believers of this fledgling church. They were able to do this because they were built up in the Lord as a result of their trial and deliverance. Their unwavering conduct and trust in the Lord in the midst of adversity stood as a wonderful example to the local people.

## Interlude

After the departure of the apostolic team from Philippi<sup>1</sup>, the Philippian church maintained contact with Paul for some time and while he was in Thessalonica, and later in Corinth, they send him gifts. Over time Paul did go back to visit them again a couple of times, but then it appears that sometime after these visits that the Philippian believers lost contact with Paul for some time until they eventually found out that he was in prison in Rome. Sensing he may be in need they sent a love gift to him by the hand of Epaphroditus, one of the brethren from Philippi.

While there, Epaphroditus also informed Paul of the disharmony between Euodia and Syntyche, two women from the Philippian assembly, and would have also updated Paul on the state of affairs in general in the church and in particular concerning the opposition they continued to face. The fact that the congregation is suffering as a result of opposition is evident in Paul's statement in [Phil 1:27-30](#) ... *"Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; in no way alarmed by your opponents—which is a sign of destruction for them, but of salvation for you, and that too, from God. For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear to be in me."*

After delivering the gift, Epaphroditus had fallen ill and word of this illness had got back to Philippi. Their concern for his wellbeing then got back to Paul. So as soon as Epaphroditus was well again, Paul sent him back to Philippi bearing the letter Paul had written to the believers he so loved.

This letter was written around ten years after the formation of the church in Philippi, while Paul was in prison in Rome awaiting judgement that would affect his liberty and possibly his life.

## Context of Suffering

So, it is clear that the Philippian believers are facing opposition and are suffering for their faith. Paul is writing from prison where he is also suffering for his faith. Now, while suffering is not the dominant theme of Philippians, it constitutes the primary historical context for both the church in Philippi and Paul's current situation, and therefore underlies much of what Paul has to say to the Philippian believers.

In explaining his current state of affairs Paul illustrates how he is responding to both his suffering at the hands of the Roman Empire, and to the selfish ambition and rivalry of other believers who are trying to discredit and upset him. While his words are written in a manner that serves to reinforce the bonds of friendship and fellowship between himself and the Philippian believers, they also serve to demonstrate how Paul lives the Christ-life in the face of opposition and suffering providing them with an example to follow.

Suffering and opposition to the gospel also underlie a further very significant theme of the letter – the certainty and security of the believer's future, with its ultimate triumph. So, we will see threaded

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<sup>1</sup> It is possible that Paul left Luke, the writer of Acts, behind in Philippi to oversee the work there as we see the change from "we" or "us" to "they" after Acts 16:16, 17 and the next time we see "we" or "us" is about seven or eight years later again in Acts 20:5,6 when Luke sailed from Philippi.

throughout the letter there are eschatological statements. One of which is Phil 1:6 ... *"I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus."*

### **Internal Dissent**

There was also internal rivalry, dissent and posturing within the church at Philippi. This is evident throughout the letter and lies behind some of the key exhortations of this letter, particularly where Paul calls for humility of mind that will cause them to lookout for the interests of others to replace the attitude of selfish-ambition and empty conceit that are so divisive and damaging.

He writes in such a way that does not just single out the two dissenting women, Euodia and Syntyche, but directs everyone to focus on Christ, in whom they will find the inner graces they are to "put on." Paul's aim is to have the people so engrossed with Christ that their selfish aims or desires fade away and are replaced by an outworking of the inner graces of Christ.

Paul's use of the word "gospel" occurs numerous times, demonstrating that his overarching concern is for the gospel. Specifically, his concern is for the Philippians and their ongoing relationship with Christ. Every time he issues a specific exhortation, as well as in other of his statements, his primary goal is the strengthening of this relationship.

This message is very practical and relevant to us today, and will help resolve situations where the flesh is at work, particularly between believers. It is the epistle that presents Christ as our all. It presents Christ in a way that as we objectively focus on Him in our daily lives and learn to live by His life, we see the subjective result in our lives and the lives of those we affect around us. Hence, in this letter we are encouraged to embrace Christ and live the crucified life in the midst of opposition and suffering.

Christ is our all: He is our life, our hope, our joy, our song and our righteousness, our holiness and our redemption. May we live to His praise and glory!

### **Important Recurring and Associated Words**

We find the repeated use of certain significant words which link to the major themes Paul is presenting. These include: "Christ/in Christ/in Him," "gospel," "joy/rejoice/rejoiced," "Spirit," "glory," "mind/attitude," "imprisonment/prisoner/bonds/bond-servant," and "all."

For example, in the first chapter alone, of these recurring words the word "Christ" occurs 17 times, "gospel" 6 times, "joy/rejoice" 4 times, Spirit 2 times, "glory" 1 time, "mind/attitude" 1 time, "imprisonment/bond-servants 5 times, and "all" 9 times!

While not intended as a doctrinal treatise, this letter presents significant doctrine and contains the greatest doctrinal passage about Christ to be found in the entire Bible. In 2:5-11 is the revelation of how Christ laid aside His preincarnate glory to become a man, and not only man but a servant man. Also in 3:9, where Paul tells of his desire to be found in Christ, we have in this one verse the entire argument of the book of Romans: ... *"not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of the faith"*.



Paul's secret is that his mind is filled with Christ. This is evident in the number of times we see Him refer to Christ. He counts all things to be loss ... *"compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord"* (NLT). In the same way we should be so preoccupied with Christ that we see Him in everything we face in life. Paul exhorts us to ... *"have this mind (attitude) which was in Christ Jesus"* (2:5). Our mind and Christ's should be one. Jesus, our example, emptied Himself in obedience and was totally submitted to the Father; our place as believers is to hold Christ as the focal point and centre of our lives, only saying and doing what we hear and see in Him. Our driving passion should be as Paul's, who said ... *"for to me, to live is Christ"*.

### **Structure of the Letter**

Although Paul would have written it as one continuous letter, rather than the four chapters we have in our modern bibles, there are four natural divisions in the epistle. In each of these, Paul presents Christ in some different way:

- **Christ our life** ... *"for to me, to live is Christ"* (1:21)  
**Engage** in the **fellowship or participation in the gospel**.
- **Christ our example** ... *"have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus"* (2:5)  
**Embrace** and serve with the **attitude of the Submissive Servant**.
- **Christ our object** ... *"but I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was I aid hold of by Christ Jesus"* (3:12)  
**Endure** all we face with eyes fixed on Christ, and **press on steadfast and sure**.
- **Christ our strength and supply** ... *"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."* (4:13)  
**Enjoy** the fact that Christ is our all, and **walk in confidence and security**.

In this epistle we are encouraged to embrace Christ as our all as we make our journey through this world, as He is the author and perfecter of the faith, the one who has begun and who will complete His work in us. He will enable us to face off the enemies of our soul and deal with the spirit of division that so easily besets His church. It's as we draw near to Christ and gain a deeper revelation of Him, and put on the mind of Christ, that we will see the selfish aims, disunity, bad attitudes and other works of the flesh melt away.

So, as we take a journey through Philippians it is my prayer for us all that the God inspired words of this letter will penetrate the depths of our hearts and that we will receive an amazing fresh and powerful revelation of Jesus Christ and that we will embrace Him and His sufficiency to perfect that which He has begun in us. May we emerge from this brief study sounding out the words ... *"for to me, to live is Christ"*!

## Christ Our Life

... ***“For to me, to live is Christ”***

### ENGAGE in the fellowship or participation in the gospel

As we consider the first chapter of Philippians, we will see that with Christ as our life, living by and expressing that life, should be our *modus operandi*. Paul calls this manner of life the ‘fellowship or participation in the gospel.’ This is evident in the many references to Christ and the gospel found here.

... *“I thank my God ... in view of your participation (fellowship) in **the gospel**”* (1:5)

... *“in the defence and confirmation of **the gospel**, you all are partaker of grace with me”* (1:7)

... *“my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of **the gospel**”* (1:12)

... *“I am appointed for the defence of **the gospel**”* (1:16)

... *“conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of **the gospel**”* (1:27)

... *“with one mind striving together for the faith of **the gospel**”* (1:27)

And what is the “**gospel**” Pauls refers to here? Well, we have to go into the heart of the Father before the foundation of the world to see what it truly means. Paul takes us there in his letter to the Ephesians.

From before the foundation of the world, before man was created, before sin entered the scene, our Heavenly Father had a plan and purpose for our lives. That plan is made clear in Eph 1:3-4. We were chosen to be “in Christ,” in order that we could stand in the presence of our heavenly Father holy and blameless, enjoying fellowship with Him. His plan was, and still is, that He place His Seed, Christ, in us so that we may become partakers of His Divine nature (2 Pet 1:3-4), so that we can walk through our journey of life living by the abundant life of Christ in us – expressing Him in all our attitudes, words and actions – and in doing so to bring pleasure to our Heavenly Father.

Way back before the foundation of the world in the counsels of the triune Godhead, Christ, the Son of God, was appointed as the “*Lamb slain from the foundation of the world*” (Rev 13:8). So, the Father’s eternal plan for us, established in eternity past, also included the means for our redemption should man choose to disobey God and for sin to separate us from God. A plan that ensured we could be “in Christ” and live by His life.

This is the “gospel”, the “good news” Paul refers to in his letter. Christ living in and through you and me, expressing everything that flows out of the nature and consistent with the character of Christ in you and me. The “gospel” or “good news” is that we no longer need to live under the power of, or in accordance with, the sin nature, but we can live by the redeeming life of Christ. So, the “gospel” is all about Christ living in and through us, at all times and in all circumstances and situations, in a manner that brings glory to God. Paul urges us to participate in this gospel, to defend, confirm and in unity promote this gospel, and conduct our lives in a manner worthy of this gospel.

In our day, just as it was in Paul's day, the gospel of Christ, living the Christ-life, is under attack. There are a number of contributing influences, including:

- The force of secularisation that is driving all forms of religion, especially Christianity, out into the peripheral corners of life. The overpowering focus that has been placed on the economy, wealth creation, fitness, sport, politics, academic attainment and entertainment has caused the vast majority of our society to become largely ignorant of the gospel. When the few devoted believers, who do attempt to evangelise, discuss and present the gospel they are mostly met with scepticism and disinterest. This has all led to the sad state of affairs in the church, where believers will, in select company and in an unobtrusive manner, declare their faith in Christ and their belief that the world needs Christ, but their zeal for the gospel of Christ has largely diminished. Many have found a comfortable quiet corner, a holy huddle, where they can have their private times of fellowship, isolated from the world and in a place where they know they will not face persecution or opposition from the secular world.
- The deluding attractions of self-indulgence have diminished the spread of the gospel as believers have become more interested in their creature comforts and material security than in a life of self-sacrifice and looking out for the interest of others above themselves. This is most dominant in western cultures where life is relatively easy. Comfortable lounge furniture, TV entertainment and warm beverage have turned prayer warriors into prayerless worriers and ineffective "couch potatoes".
- The rise of a fear of "political incorrectness." Particularly in western nations, we have seen the increase in diversity of races, religions, philosophies, cultures and moral values. While there is nothing wrong with that in itself, with this pluralism has come the fear of treading on anyone's toes by the declaration of the gospel. We can't have prayer or bible reading in our schools for fear of offending the atheists or heathens from other non-Christian religious groups. Evangelism is strongly opposed as it is seen as unacceptable proselytising, and the gospel of Christ is no longer accepted as the only way of salvation. The minority groups, like the gay-rights movements, extreme environmental lobbyist groups and other similar minority groups have everyone dancing to their tune, and woe to anyone who dares to offend them by presenting or promoting the "truth." See note <sup>2</sup> below.

When Paul wrote to the Philippians they were facing similar pressures from the world around them. He was aware of the dangers this young church faced; the internal rivalry and posturing, as well as the external opposition and secular seduction that could so easily beset them. He writes to encourage them to be on guard against the subtle attacks of the enemy and to counter these opposing forces by embracing Christ and fully engaging in the fellowship or participation in the gospel. As we proceed to walk through the Epistle, we will see more fully what this means and how we are to engage.

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<sup>2</sup> Erwin W Lutzer, "We will Not Be Silenced" is a book that really shows how the forces of darkness have planned and are attacking the truth. A book every Christian should read.

## **Philippians Chapter 1**

**V1** ... *“Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons.”*

*“Paul and Timothy”* – we like Timothy are ordinary folk who through the gospel message have come to be “in Christ.” Note here that Paul doesn’t refer to himself as “Apostle” as he does in other letters. He just identifies himself and his young fellow brother in Christ simply as, *“Paul and Timothy”* because he is bringing to us a very important underlying truth here in this letter. There is no superiority coming from Paul, only humility and identification with Christ and those who are Christ’s. This is consistent with what he teaches in 2:3 ... *“with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves.”* We will see more of this underlying truth as we proceed.

This is also a picture of the old seasoned Paul working in mutual dependence and harmony with young Timothy. We see here something important – succession planning – a mature believer discipling a young person with a view to handing the reigns over at some stage. Are you and I doing this? Do we have someone we are pouring into so that when we depart this world they can do as Paul tells Timothy in 2 Tim 2:2 ... *“The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”* This is worth a thought.

*“Bond servants”* – the Greek word here is *doulos* which is ‘slave’ or ‘bondman’ – that’s not just a servant serving someone out of their own volition or need of a job, but someone owned by Another. We have been bought with a price – the precious blood of Jesus – He owned Paul and Timothy and He owns us. We are here to serve Him.

*“Bond servants of Christ Jesus”* – Paul saw himself not a prisoner of Rome, but of Christ Jesus. There is no mention of “woe is me, I’ve been unfairly imprisoned, oh this is so bad, please pray for me to be released from prison.” No. Paul knew and saw he was a prisoner of Christ Jesus, not of Rome. Why? Because Paul’s point of reference in all things was Christ and Christ alone. Paul was the one who wrote, *“I have been Crucified with Christ”* (Gal 2:20) and ... *“for to me, to live is Christ”* (Phil 1:21). For Paul, self and everything to do with the old self-life was dead and gone, and everything at all times now was focussed on Christ. Christ alone was his life and his all. Bond servant of Christ Jesus.

So, as we proceed in this study we will see the underlying focus of Paul’s teaching is, that for us to truly embrace the joy of the Christ-life and to grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ, our point of reference in all things, in all circumstances and situations, must be Christ and not self. You see, Paul was also the one who wrote:

2 Cor 4:7-12 and 16-18 ... *“But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves; we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus’ sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.”*

*... Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal*

*weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."*

So, in all things we're encouraged to look through the eternal eyes of Christ, have the mind of Christ, and in doing so we'll joyfully walk in the will and purpose of Christ, for His glory and honour. In all circumstances and situations we go through know that Christ is in control, and that He has a specific plan and purpose for us, that we may ultimately bring glory to Him. As long as He is our point of reference at all times, He will take care of us and will bring about His perfect will in and through us. That's why we're here, that His will may be done on earth as it is in heaven. He owns us and we're here for Him, and His glory alone. And that's why Paul could say in verse 1:6 ... *"For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus,"* and in 2:12-13 ... *"work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure."*

Again, looking at that opening statement ... *"Paul and Timothy, **bond servants** of Christ Jesus."* Why? Well, if we look at Phil 2:7 Paul tell us that ... *"Jesus Christ ...emptied Himself, taking the form of a **bond-servant**, and being made in the likeness of men."* Paul identifies himself by the life in him, knowing the only life he has is Christ, and that this was Christ the "Bond Servant" who was living in him. The One who was there to serve the Father's eternal plan and purpose. Paul was also the one who declared in 1 Cor 6:17 ... *"But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit."* The one living in Paul and in you and me, with whom we are one spirit, is the one who said in Matt 20:28 ... *"the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and give His life a ransom for many."* The only life we have is Christ, and His life is the "Bond-Servant" life. So Paul is simply saying, all I am and have to offer is Christ, our Servant Saviour, and through Him I am here to serve Him and all His people. So let that also be our motto. We're here to express His life in us, the Servant life, to serve Him and all those for whom He died to save. Later, in Phil 1:27 Paul is going to encourage us to ... *"conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel."* The gospel is encapsulated in Christ's words ... *"the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and give His life a ransom for many."* For Paul, or us, to live any other life is to the quench or grieve the Holy Spirit, who birthed the life of Christ in us so that He may be manifested in and through us in all we think, do, and say.

... *"to **all** the saints in Christ Jesus ... including the overseers and deacons."* There is no superiority or hierarchy here. This message is not just an Apostle and Leader thing. The true gospel is a message to **all**, no matter how the world sees you: how rich or poor, how educated or uneducated, how young or old, or how wise or simple. This is God's word to everyone. It's His message to you and me. Yet, Paul does give due recognition to the leaders. Courtesy is the product of grace. Paul was born of grace, and therefore courteous. Grace and the courtesy that flows from grace, is inclusive of everyone. However, it is interesting that, after singling the leaders out in the greeting, he makes no further reference to them. This is because the thrust of his writing is not dealing with leadership issues, but the encouragement of unity of all the members of the local body of believers. Every member is equally valuable and necessary for the healthy functioning of the whole body.

However, if we look at Phil 4:2-3 we may get a clue as to why Paul singled out the overseers and deacons ... *"I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord ... help these women who have shared my struggle in the cause of the gospel, together with Clement also and the rest of my*

*fellow workers*". It appears that Euodia and Syntyche, who were at odds with each other, were probably among the leaders. So Paul starts the greeting with "*all*" and then adds the "*including*" or "*together with*" as he anticipates his exhortation later in the letter for these women leaders, along with any others dissenters within the local body, to live in harmony and unity.

... "*to all the saints **in** Christ Jesus which are **at** Philippi.*" They were God's people **at** Philippi, but **in** Christ. They were people who because they were "*in Christ*" had weathered the storms of persecution that believers at Philippi had faced right from the inception of the fledgling church. Philippi was the sphere of their living, but it was not the rootage of their life. They were rooted and grounded in Christ.

**V2** ... "*Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*" Grace precedes peace. Grace is the mother of all graces. Where grace abides peace will dwell. Grace is love that never grows weary, it expends without a sign of exhaustion. It's an attribute of God that reaches out to all, regardless of natural status, to endow the unlovely with His loveliness. Grace and peace have their source in the indivisible "*God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*" The Lord Jesus Christ is one with the Father in the origin and sustenance of our salvation. It's by this Divine supernatural grace that we are saved and brought into peace with Him. We can only have peace with God if we first accept His gift of salvation by grace alone. Once we have received the life of Christ within, offered by His by grace, we can not only have peace **with** God, but also the peace **of** God. Paul elaborates on the peace **of** God later in 4:7 where he says ... "*And the peace **of** God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*" Peace is not motionless quietness; it is the absence of strain or friction that would hamper smooth running motion. Peace reigns when man moves in Christ in perfect unison, allowing man to joyfully cooperate with man without strain or friction, and in doing so bring glory to God. So, then as we walk in Christ, His grace and peace bring to us the supernatural ability to cope with difficult circumstances with praise on our lips, with thankful hearts, and with joy and peace of mind. We'll get into more of this later in the Letter.

**V3 – 5** ... "*I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all, in view of your participation (fellowship) in the gospel from the first day until now.*" Paul's immediate focus is not on himself at all but on the recipients of his letter. His servant heart is in action. He is way more sensitive to the grace and mercy of Christ in him than the antagonisms of men, and therefore he begins with a prayer of thanksgiving. His focus is way more on thanks and praise for the work God is doing in them than on censuring them for their internal strife or their possible compromised lifestyles. Paul is simply being consistent with what he presents in 4:8 ... "*whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things*".

It's important to note here that '*fellowship*' in Paul's day did not just mean comradeship or a casual getting together of friends for a chat or cup of tea after a Sunday service as it has come to mean today; it meant a sharing **in** something – a self-sacrificing conformity to a shared vision. This "*fellowship*" went beyond those involved, and past the activity of the moment, into an all-consuming communion in Christ. The Philippian believers were united, not just as friends or by social graces, but by the very life of Christ in them and their common commitment to Christ and resolve to walk in Christ and express His attitude in their words and actions, and in doing so present the "gospel" to the unsaved.

Just think about it. Thinking about the original few believers in Philippi and thinking in line with worldly standards, what would a jailer, a slave girl delivered from demon possession and a businesswoman have in common to bring them and keep them together? Socially they would have been miles apart. It was Christ – it was their oneness in Christ; the fellowship of the gospel of Christ.

If our unity with other believers is based on affluence, or poverty, on social status or on intellectual grounds, we will exclude all those who don't fit our particular status or category, and our witness will be tainted and limited. The effective witness of the church is our *"fellowship"* in the gospel of Christ.

And so, prayer with thanksgiving and joy flow from Paul's heart for believers who are participating in, and expressing, the Christ-life daily, all to the furtherance of the gospel. And remember this is coming from a man in prison in bonds (or chains) where things in the natural are far from nice and comfortable, but not a word of complaint is issued. His focus is Christ, and his concern and prayer is for those for whom Christ had died, in order that they may grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ. Like a general in the army encouraging his troops, Paul's prayer is aimed at encouraging the believers under enemy fire. Paul's prayer of thanksgiving and praise to God show that the person who is eager to trust and praise the One who is at work in His own, is not swift in the censure of men. So, he goes on and in prayer says:

**V6-7** ... *"For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus. For it is only right for me to feel this way about you all."* Like an artist painting on a canvas, the final picture is in his mind. The artist knows what the final product will look like. We may pass by at different stages and wonder what on earth the ugly black strokes or grey panels and odd squiggles on the canvas are meant to represent, and may think it all quite ugly and meaningless. But as time goes by it all makes more and more sense, and finally we will see what the artist had in mind when we see the end product of amazing beauty. Similarly, as we go through various circumstances and situations in life, and at times things look quite ugly, messy and meaningless in the natural, we must remember the Master Artist is at work, and so long as our focus is upon Him and not on ourselves or on the things we're going through we will finally understand that His plan for our lives is something amazing and wonderful.

I love the words of J H Jowett<sup>3</sup> ... *"He who fashions the seed is also Lord of the Harvest... The quickening ministries of the spring are His; His also are the ripening ministries of the autumn. He nourishes the tender sapling into the majestic oak, and the one gracious sunshine is showered upon both. He will not leave us in our spiritual babyhood ... He will "perfect us," adding grace and strength to the growing years, and "everything" shall be beautiful in its season."*

So as Paul says in v7a... *"For it is only right for me to feel this way about you, because I have you in my heart,"* similarly we must also see ourselves and others in this way too, and not focus on temporal imperfections. God has a beautiful plan and purpose for each and every one of us, and as we keep our focus upon Him, the Master Artist, we will finally see what He has in mind – the beauty of Jesus seen in and through us, to His glory and honour! So, like Paul, when we see divisions and issues in others, let us put criticism aside and praise our Heavenly Father for the fact that He is in control and He is bringing each one to conformity with His plan and purpose for each person.

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<sup>3</sup> J H Jowett, The High Calling



**V7a – 8b** ... *“because I have you in my heart ... I long for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus”*  
When people have a warm place in our hearts the light of hope is never absent from our sky. Just think of mothers who have optimism for their wayward kids. It’s because they have them in their hearts that they believe the best for them. 1 Cor 13:7-8 ... *“Love believes all things, hopes all things ... love never fails.”* Resolute and steadfast hope is the product of passionate love. So Paul is showing us that, if we truly care for one another and have a special place in one another’s hearts we will certainly provide, as well as enjoy, mutual encouragement.

**V 7b** ... *“since both in my imprisonment and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers of grace with me.”* Paul reminds them they’re in this together, and of all they have in common. Together they face the “bonds” of persecution from the world; they’re one in their defence of the gospel; and, they all feast and are sustained from the same table of grace, they drink from the same Rock – Christ. He says, were a team, we’re one in Christ. Let’s encourage one another as we each face difficulties of one form or another in living out the Christ-life, knowing God’s grace, in Christ, abounds towards us. That’s why, later in 4:13 Paul can declare ... *“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”*

**V8a** ... *“For God is my witness.”* Paul’s life was totally hidden in Christ. 1:21 ... *“for to me, to live is Christ.”* He lived and walked “in Christ” and nothing was hidden in his life. His sense of the presence of Christ in him was so acute that wherever he is and whatever he looks at, Paul knows he stands in the very presence of the all-seeing Almighty One. Nothing in Paul’s life is the fruit of darkness, he is a child of the Light. So he could boldly declare “God is my witness.” God who birthed Light in me and sustains that Light in me and causes me to walk in the Light is my witness that there is only light in me, in my inner attitude. That’s why later in 3:17 Paul can say ... *“Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us.”* I trust that we all live lives that are transparent so we can also make such assertions.

What is Paul calling upon the Lord to witness? It’s to witness ... *“how I long for you all with the affection (the tender mercies, the heartbeat) of Christ Jesus.”* Christ clearly is the source of the love that embraces and lays claim to Paul’s deep affections for the Philippians. Christ loves the Philippians through Paul. He shares the heartbeat of Christ for the redemption of all. It’s no longer Paul who lives within Paul (Gal 2:20), but Christ, and that’s why Paul is not moved by his inner parts but by the affections or tender mercies of Christ within him. Paul has only one life, that’s Christ, and so his heart beats with the pulse and desires of His Lord. He shares Christ’s travail for the lost, and travail for the growth of the born again. This was the same heartbeat that wrote to the Galatians, Gal 4:19 (KJV) ... *“My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you.”* This is the heartbeat of the true believer. The heartbeat of true Love; love that seeks the best, believes the best and hopes the best. For all. A heartbeat that sees through the eyes of Christ and not the biased eyes of the natural man.

**V9-11** The heartbeat of love (spoken of in the preceding verses) for the encouragement and growth of the Philippian believers now stirs Paul to pray for them, that they may be strengthened even more.

... *“And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and*



*blameless (without offence) until the day of Christ; having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God."*

But, in order to really understand this prayer, let me explain a few things:

First, we need to look at two words used in Paul's prayer:

1. **"Sincere."** The English word *"sincere"* is derived from two Latin words *"sine cera"* – which mean "without wax". In days of old when very fine pottery was being made if it was not of good quality fine cracks would appear when the pot was being hardened through heat treatment in the furnace. An honest potter would throw this cracked pot away, but a dishonest merchant would fill the cracks with coloured wax to hide their presence and fool the customer. A knowledgeable customer would hold the fine pot up to the bright sunlight and if there was wax in cracks it would be seen as fine dark lines where the cracks are present. That customer would not be fooled, but other less discerning customers would be fooled into buying something flawed of no real value.

Now it is very interesting to know that the Greek word *eilikrineis* used here by Paul and that is translated "sincere" also bears a similar meaning to the Latin words *"sine cera"*. This Greek word is made up of two words – *eilé* meaning "sunshine" and *krinow* meaning "to exercise judgement upon". In putting them together the compound word means "that which is viewed in the sunshine and judged to be clear and pure". The "sincere" can walk in the light with confidence!

2. **"Blameless."** The word *"blameless"* (without offence) in the original language actually has the literal meaning – *"not causing someone to stumble"*. It means being inoffensive.

Then we need to look at the order of Paul's statement in prayer:

First, in both Greek and Hebrew the order of written words is most commonly not like English where there is a set order. But in these original languages in which the Bible was written no matter the order of the words, because grammatically they are very precise, there is a specific meaning to the sentence or phrase. For example: The word order in Greek could be written "the wall to paint the brush used the man." Now to us that order makes no literal sense. But in the Greek it has only one specific meaning. "The man used the brush to paint the wall". Often the word order is for emphasis, in this case it may have been to emphasise that it was the "wall" that was painted, and not something else, and, secondly, that a "brush" (not a roller) was used. So, the emphasis Paul's prayer brings is their growth in love, and then the effect this has.

Secondly, Paul often starts with something, then interjects a different thought, and then returns to what he started off saying. Good example is Eph 3:1-21. After what he has said in Chapter 2 he wants to pray (V14-21) for them, but after V1 he interjects V2-13, then goes back to the prayer V14-21. So, the order in what is written sometimes is better understood when we rearrange the order accordingly, and Paul's prayer in Phil 1:9-11 is such a case. But there's more we need to look at first.

A few verses and a little explanation will help us here:

1 Cor 1:30 (KJV) ... *“But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.”*

2 Cor 5:21 ... *“He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”*

Rom 8:10 ... *“If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness.”*

What do these verses tell us? The moment we were born again Christ came to take up residence in our spirit. In Christ we were filled with His righteousness. That’s what Paul refers to in Phil 1:11 when he says, *“having been filled with the fruit of righteousness.”*

The words ... *“having been filled”* are the correct translation as the word (πεπληρωμένοι *peplērōmenoi*) used in the original was a perfect passive participle. A completed action in the past with a present result. You have “been filled” with the result that and now you are “full.” And if you’re “full” you can’t get any more in, you’re full! Christ in His fullness come into your spirit when you were born again. John 1:16 ... *“For of His **fullness** we have all received, and grace upon grace.”*

Rom 5:5 (KJV) ... *the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.”*

The fruit of righteousness is the fruit of the Spirit of Christ in you, and Love is the summation of that fruit (see Gal 5:22-23 and 1 Cor 13:4-8). The heart consists of spirit and soul. Soul is our mind, will and emotion part. The Holy Spirit is our Teacher who renews our soul part by shedding Christ’s love, the fruit of His righteousness, resident in our spirit, across into our soul part. Having Christ and His love in you, in your spirit part, is one thing, but it’s another thing to intimately **know** Christ and His love and allow Him to operate through your mind, will and emotions in love. The greater our revelation of Christ and His love, the more our eyes will be opened to the things that are excellent, to the honest and inoffensive ways.

So, to make real sense of this prayer (V9-11) we put all these thoughts and definitions back into the prayer, rearranging the translated order, starting with V 11a, then go back to V 9-10 and finally tag V 11b on the end. So, a paraphrased version would then read as follows:

*“Having been born again means Christ is in you, and therefore in Him you have been filled, and are full, with the fruit of His righteousness, which is His love. So I pray that this love of Christ may now flow more and more from its source in your spirit on into your soul, so that this illumination and revelation will bring to you a deeper working knowledge of Christ and His love, which will bring you better discernment of His will, particularly concerning others, with the result that you can better recognise and approve and pursue the things that are excellent, and to enable you to stand in the light of God’s presence proven to be sincere, clear, pure and faultless, and inoffensive in all things towards others. And by this manner of conduct now and on to the day Christ returns, bring praise and glory to God.”*

What a wonderful prayer of encouragement!

... *“having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ” ... “(I pray) that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and inoffensive until the day of Christ.” ... “to the glory and praise of God.”*

We haven't been saved just to be freed from judgement from sin so that we can go to heaven one day, but that the character and attributes of Christ may be manifest in our lives here on earth. **Nature is given, but character is developed.** We're saved, given the divine nature in Christ, so that the character of Christ may be developed and seen in and through us. That's why it is so important for us to pray daily for a revelation of Jesus Christ – that we may know Him; know love, know righteousness – so that those inner graces of Christ in us may be fully comprehended, and then expressed outwardly to others around us. When we interact with others let it be the love and righteousness of Christ that is the “fruit” we present for them to partake of and enjoy. By this we will walk in unity with our fellow brethren and be a blessing to outsiders.

Just to add to the above, it is interesting to note that the word (αἰσθήσει *aisthēsei*) in 1:9 translated from the Greek to English as ‘discernment’, ‘judgement’, or insight’ occurs 22 times in Proverbs in the Septuagint, where it means *“the practical understanding which is keenly aware of the circumstances of an action, manifesting itself particularly in discretion of speech.”*<sup>4</sup> So Paul's prayer is that their intimate knowledge of Christ and His love may manifest itself in tactful assessment of the situations before them with a fitting practical, loving responses. ... *“so that you may approve (examine, evaluate and choose) the things that are excellent.”*

**V 12 – 20** Quite possibly the envious believers, who Paul speaks of in verse 15, had been spreading negative rumours about him, and these may have reached the Philippian folks. It is possible the rumours were to do with the assumptions of the dissenters as to why Paul was suffering so much hardship and imprisonment. They may have been saying he's suffering because of sin in his life.

Yes, sometimes suffering is a consequence of sin and our wrongdoings. We reap what we sow. Sometimes it is for our discipline and instruction (Heb 12:6-11). Also, athletes suffer pain because of strenuous exercise; that's not due to sin, it's simply what happens due to muscle cell damage and elevated release of metabolites into the tissue around the muscles. But the reason for the suffering Paul was facing was none of these; it was purely the circumstances, situations and suffering permitted by God in order that the Gospel may be channelled and spread to those He wanted to reach for His greater and eternal purposes. This type of suffering is what Paul refers to when he talks of the ... *“fellowship of His sufferings”* (3:10). Which aligns with what Paul said in 2 Cor 4:12 ... *“For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.”*

So, we see in 1:12 and the words that follow it, Paul immediately shifts the concern the Philippians have for him away from himself and onto the far more important matter of God's plans and means by which His purpose for the salvation of mankind is being achieved. What a wonderful example Paul is of one who constantly views the situation through the eyes of the Father's eternal purpose rather the selfish, self-centred, myopic vision of the flesh.

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<sup>4</sup> P T O'Brien, “NIGTC The Epistle to the Philippians”, pp. 76-77

**V 12 – 13** ... *"Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel, so that my imprisonment (bonds) in Christ has become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else."*

Paul is saying, what outwardly looks like a terrible situation, has turned out to be a blessing. The dark ominous clouds, have brought a shower of blessing. Chains for the flesh, but liberty for the gospel. The negative has been turned into the positive. The destructive enmity of the enemy, has been transformed into productive ministry for Christ.

A person may claim to be a Christian, but it's the 'storms' that will test whether Christ truly lives in us and that we have an unshakable relationship with Him. The storm tests the foundations!

Paul is chained to a guard day and night for two years while awaiting trial. A different guard for each shift. And we can be certain that Paul would have demonstrated in word and action the unconditional love of God towards all of these guards. He would not have viewed these men as anything other than men in need of salvation; men for whom Christ died. He would not have been thinking of his own discomfort in being chained to a guard; his thoughts would have been filled with compassion for these lost souls. He would have been sharing the gospel with them. And while off shift, these soldiers who guarded him would have been quietly talking about him to one another, and most likely also to their friends and family. He was different to anyone else they had guarded. The peace in the midst of great discomfort, the unwavering joy in the midst of adversity, the love and concern for others over concern for himself, and all of this with no sign of abating, would have definitely got their attention and been the topic of their conversation. Initially they would have been asking, by what power does he do this? But soon they would realise his "bonds" were in Christ. And they would receive the gospel and in turn become believers, born again, made new and used to bring the gospel to the entire Governor's Palace and beyond ... *and to everyone else.*"

Paul is God's instrument, the prison is God's chosen circumstance, so that salvation may come those in the Praetorian Guard, the royal palace, and beyond, who it may not have been reached in any other way. It was also from this prison house that Paul had the time to pen his four "prison epistles" which blessed the believers he was writing to, and on through the generations to us today and for others tomorrow! Oh, that we may learn, God's ways are way higher than our ways.

Oh, that we, like Paul, would keep our eyes on the eternal and not on the temporal (2 Cor 4:16-18). Paul's "storm" certainly turned out for the greater progress of the gospel. He did not choose to go to prison, but he also did not see his situation as a problem to be repelled but an opportunity to embrace. He certainly knew the word that declares ... *"The mind of man plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps"* (Prov 16:9).

It was Paul who also wrote the words of 2 Tim 2:9 ... *"I suffer hardship even to imprisonment as a criminal; but **the word of God is not imprisoned.**"*

And so the challenge for us is this: as we face 'storms' and 'imprisonments' can those around us see that our 'bonds' are in Christ? Do they ask, "by what power do you live so calmly and unshaken in this storm. Giving more love and consideration to your oppressors and others than to yourself?"

**V 14** (NKJV) ... *“and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word of God without fear.”* The revelation of Paul’s unshakable foundations in Christ has helped others to become bold. This is one of the mysteries of godliness, the fruit bearing of the faithful which stimulates others to be bold in Christ. Others facing similar ‘dungeons’ and potential opposition have been inspired to such an extent that they cast off their fears and began preaching Christ with boldness.

So, whatever your or my “prison” may be, let’s not let it be a cause for discouragement. God has orchestrated the circumstances for His purpose; we must ask Him how we can be used in this situation. We’re encouraged to share Christ through our attitude, words and actions with those in our “cell”. We’re encouraged to take our thoughts off the causes of our “imprisonment”, off those who “imprisoned” us, off the circumstances, off self, and focus them on Christ and His love for those in our “cell”. We’ll find this will change despair to joy, defeat to victory, and bondage to freedom! It will also encourage onlooking believers to do the same and be bold... and God will be glorified as a result! And remember Paul’s words in Phil 4:13 ... *“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”*

I am reminded of Paul’s words of Acts 14:22 ... *“Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God”*, and the note written in the margin of my bible, which states: Tribulation is the flail which releases the grain from its imprisoning sheaf, so that bread may be made. Pray and ask God to make your troubles your friends so that they may be like keys that unlock the treasures of grace. The people around you are watching, your grace in the midst of tribulation will bring them encouragement and strength.

**V 15-18** ... *“Some, to be sure, are preaching Christ even from envy and strife, but some also from good will; the latter do it out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defence of the gospel; the former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition rather than from pure motives, thinking to cause me distress in my imprisonment. What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in this I rejoice.”*

Believers against other believers bringing each other down instead of being united and strong and showing the world the love of Christ. How sad.

Before His crucifixion Jesus prayed (John 17) His intercessory prayer for us, and over and over repeated the plea that we would be one – united in Him – as this unity would be the undeniable evidence to the unbelievers around us of His presence in us, and that Christ’s love for mankind is real. But that’s not what we see here.

Here is Paul, in prison in Rome awaiting trial, and you would think the church around him would have been standing united with him in prayer for a favourable outcome so that he could continue with his missionary journeys and the preaching of the gospel, but instead on the outside were some believers preaching Christ out of envy and partisanship, elevating themselves and hoping to make things worse instead of better for Paul. In fact, the historical writings of Clements tell us that this opposition from envious believers led to Paul’s second imprisonment and ultimately to him being martyred. Yet Christ, in Matt 24:10-11, said this would happen ... *“At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another. Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many.”* Sad but true!

This very same prideful partisanship is what has led to “denominations”; different groups holding to slightly different understanding of doctrine and using this difference to divide rather than unite believers. How many combined Baptist and Catholic, or Anglican and Pentecostal gospel rallies have you seen advertised or attended! These combinations just don’t happen, or very rarely if ever. The same envy and strife that caused the trouble in Paul’s day occurs in the church today, and whether it leads to martyrdom or not (and it does in some countries), it leads to the declining impact of the gospel of Christ on our society. The opportunity to proclaim the gospel today is wide open like never before, yet in all history we have never seen the church as divided and irrelevant as it is today. That’s really sad!

I believe it’s because ‘self’ is still on the throne of the hearts of many who profess to be Christians – oh how much a revelation of Christ as our life and our all is needed.

Oh, that we would embrace Paul’s words in Phil 2:3-5 where he exhorts us to ... *“Do nothing from selfishness (strife, contentiousness) or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus”*. Paul exhibits this attitude when he says, “it really doesn’t matter if in preaching these people bring me down and are questioning my ministry, so long as the gospel is preached and people are brought to faith in Christ”. In fact, he rejoices that through the preaching of these other envious and trouble making preachers that people are being saved! This same attitude was the attitude of Christ when, on the cross facing those who had put Him there, He said ... *“Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing”* (Lu 23:34).

So, we see that Paul opposes the erroneous theological position of the troublemakers by developing in his message to the Philippians the true theology of Christian humility ... *“have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus”* (2:5).

Paul’s attitude to these trouble makers shows he fully understands God’s word in Isa 55:11 (NKJV) ... *“So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.”* Pauls is saying, regardless of the heart attitude and motive of these envious and divisive preachers, God honours the preaching of His word for the sake of the hearers. The hearers will receive God’s word and be blessed, while the insincere preachers will be judged for their unwholesome lives. I remind you of Jesus’ words in Matt 7:22-23 ... *“Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness’.”*

But Pauls does say ... *“Some ... are preaching Christ ... from good will ... out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defence of the gospel.”* These preach the gospel from pure hearts. They have no personal selfish ambitious agenda, no ulterior motives, and no hidden motives. Their hearts are pure, they have one intent; that the unsaved may come to the knowledge of Christ. Like Paul, their service is born out of love for Christ. They see all other believers as a part of a family, the Father’s family, with whom they desire to cooperate in spreading the gospel.

So Paul declares ... *“What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in this I rejoice.”* He says, either way, let the gospel be proclaimed, because God’s word will be energised by the Holy Spirit when it falls on some dead and barren soil, and an awakening will take place. The Seed, which is Christ, will find a resting place in those hearts, and the life of Christ will be birthed in them. For this I rejoice says Paul.

**V 19 – 20** ... *“for I know that this (the proclamation of Christ) will turn out for my deliverance (salvation) through your prayer (your supplication) and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, according to my earnest expectation and hope, that I will not be put to shame in anything, but that with all boldness, Christ will even now, as always, be exalted (be magnified) in my body, whether by life or by death.”*

We first need to look at one word here: The word (δέησις deēsis) translated as “prayer” is more correctly translated “supplication.” The root from which this word comes (δέω dēō) means “to bind”, “to pronounce or declare to be binding or obligatory.”

So, supplication is that prayer that first seeks the will of God for a specific situation, and then acts as His voice in declaring it in a binding manner or a loosing manner.

Supplication includes but is more than just seeking and declaring the will of God, or the intercessory pushing back of boundaries to their original God ordained positions; it is

- *Continual* praying – an ongoing plea for a matter to be settled according to God’s will. Consistent praying for as long as it takes.
- *Contingent* praying – a calling for God’s order in God’s timing.

Now, considering Paul’s situation, to the natural eye it all looks terrible – prison ... the brakes put on Paul’s itinerant ministry ... false accusations – but beneath the visible is the invisible, the eternal, the Father’s plan at work. Paul knows that the hand of the Father will turn what the enemy means for destruction into good. Why? Because he knows there are like minded believers in Philippi in whom Christ dwells and He knows they will be seeing and praying (supplicating) in accordance with the Father’s will and timing, and what’s more Paul knows that ... *“the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ”* means the only life he has is Christ, and Christ is victor in all things and at all times. He knows God’s ways are above our ways and his trust is fully in Him. Paul was the one who penned 2 Cor 2:14 ... *“But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place.”* And every place includes the prison place and place of false accusations! And for Paul “triumph” here is the gospel getting to those it may not have reached if he had not been in this position.

Pauls knows the power of prayer and knows that the *supplication* of the faithful saints in Philippi will be aligned with the Father’s purpose, will and timing to bring victory in the midst of adversity.

The question and challenge this presents to us is: are we standing in prayer, supplicating, offering continual and contingent prayer for those we know who are on the “front lines” of service? We definitely need to stand in support of our brothers and sisters in Christ. Never underestimate the



powerful lever of prayer over the forces of darkness, to turn unfriendly circumstances into victory for the gospel. We've been entrusted with this powerful tool, so let's use it diligently.

When Paul uses the term "my deliverance" – "my salvation" (the word σωτηρία *sótéria* here means welfare, deliverance, preservation, salvation, safety) he is not thinking merely about getting out of prison, or getting the false accusers off his back. He is not thinking about saving his own skin. His focus is on the Father's will being done, which is, Christ in Paul being exalted, being magnified, in the midst of the present circumstances and situations he is facing. Paul's "*earnest expectation and hope*" is not contingent on whether he lives to see another day or is put to death, it's focused on Christ being glorified. It's focused on Christ in Paul being magnified – in others words Christ's character being seen very clearly through Paul's attitude, words and actions in the face of all odds. It's focused on the unbelievers in his cell being saved. The "deliverance" or "salvation" he speaks of is the turning of what Rome and its imprisonment, and the false accusations against him, intended for Paul's destruction, into the purpose and plan of God being achieved, the gospel proclaimed, and through that Christ glorified.

Paul is simply stating his thoughts, expectation and hope, the "deliverance" or "salvation" he is seeking, is that Christ will manifest through him the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in the current situation in which Paul finds himself. Paul sees the Father's purpose in the prison house is salvation coming to the guards, their families, the palace royalties and everyone else who is looking on.

Paul's innermost desire and hope is for the progress of the gospel, the growth and steadfastness of the believers, and the achievement the Father's redeeming purpose – for which he requests prayer support – and the achievement of which he sees as his 'salvation' or 'deliverance' one day at the heavenly tribunal when his earthly responsibilities are completed.

Oh, that we would grow in the discernment of the Father's will in every circumstance we face, and that we too would have this attitude all the time, living and being expended to fulfil the Father's eternal purpose – that Christ may be glorified in and through our lives.

**V 21** ... "*For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.*" It is very clear as to who occupies the throne of Paul's heart! Everything else in his life is of minor value to him. Christ is his life and his all. For some people life is all about money; to others it's about fame; to others it focuses on pleasure; to others it's popularity; and to many it's sport, or entertainment, or hobbies. The list goes on. And when these fade away and are gone there's only a vacuum of despondency and despair.

Paul cries out ... "*for to me, to live is Christ*" and in saying this is single-mindedly declaring with joy that "life" is synonymous with Christ. He has no thought of life apart from Christ. Paul is saying, to live, to be gloriously alive, is for Christ to occupy every facet of his life. For him everything begins, is sustained by, and ends in Christ. Whether he was making tents, or preaching, or travelling in a ship, or chained in a prison house, everything was through Christ and unto Christ (Rom 11:36).

This must also be our heart cry. As "saints" – "ones that have been separated unto God in Christ Jesus", as children of God, we are called to live every moment of our life by the Life He has placed in us for His glory. To live is Christ. For the true believer there is no division or compartmentalising of "secular" from "spiritual."



Yes, in this world we have to get an education, work, care for others, wash our car, tidy our gardens, exercise, cook meals, go shopping, take vacations, and so on. As believers we worship, study the word, pray, preach, attend fellowship gatherings, have “quiet times,” evangelise, and so on. But as citizens of heaven we must **not** compartmentalise these activities into “secular” and “spiritual.” We are “spiritual” beings living in this “secular” world.

The trap many fall into is to compartmentalise these sets of activities, and because much more of their day is occupied with the work, garden, shop, baby or family care, exercise, and cooking activities they get frustrated with spending the vast majority of their time on what they see and consider as “secular” and they develop a sense of guilt because they only have a tiny bit of the day left for what they call “spiritual” activities, that they wish they could throw it all in and become a “pastor” or “missionary” devoting all their time to the “spiritual” activities.

This is completely wrong thinking. We are “spiritual” beings living in this “secular” world. Who we are is Christ in us as us everywhere we go, whatever we do, and whatever time of day or night is happens to be. Christ in you as you. Our mission field is the office, the school, the sports club, our home, the shopping mall or wherever we go and where we spend our time, not just in some overseas land or meeting hall. The only Christ the people in those places will see is the Christ presented to them, living in the believers that are there. Whatever we do we do through and unto Christ.

1 Cor 1:30 ... *“Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God”.*

Col 3:17, 23 ... *“Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father ... Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men”*

1 Pet 4:11 ... *“Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ”.*

So if I am at work in the office, at home caring for the children, on the golf course, in the shopping mall, at school, serving in an orphanage in Cambodia, in a fellowship group somewhere or wherever I am and whatever I am doing, it is Christ in me as me in action, serving to His glory. Christ is not divided into “secular” and “spiritual”.

So let us for once and for all put to death the misnomer of “part-time” service and “full-time” service that has been bred by the compartmentalisation of “secular” from “spiritual”. If you work as a lawyer, parent at home, builder, doctor, mechanic, teacher, student, pastor, retiree or whatever, it is Christ in you as you doing in that function. You are a full time Christian (Christ-person) in employment as a doctor, builder, teacher, student, evangelist, mother, pastor, or whatever. Everything you do, do all to the glory of God. As God’s child the only life you have is Christ (Gal 2:20; 2 Cor 5:17-18), so live by that life to His glory everywhere and all the time.

... *“For to me, to live is Christ.”*

This mind so focused on the exultation of Christ, this utter absence of self-seeking, is the humble servant attitude of Christ that dominated Paul’s mind, and is the gospel mindset that is characteristic of the true servant of Christ.

And when Paul says ... *“and to die is gain”* he is looking to the day when the “veil” of the flesh is removed and he is ushered into the very presence of Him who is the “resurrection and the life.” So he sees death to the flesh not as an enemy to be avoided, but as a friend to embrace. His balance sheet has death as a credit because it ushers in an eternity of peace and joy in glory. For those who are consumed by accumulating fame, fortune, popularity or pleasures, death sits very definitely on the debit side of their balance sheet of life. For them death is the final destructive foe that strips them of everything they held dear, leaving no hope for the eternity ahead.

If you or I fear death, then we have to ask ourselves what of the world’s non-eternal things are we holding onto in place of Christ being our *all*.

Knowing and walking in God’s purpose in every and any circumstance and situation we face, we can experience such confidence and joy that distinctions between success or failure, acceptance or rejection, even life or death, will mean nothing compared to the joy of knowing we ... *“can do all things through Christ who strengthens us”* (Phil 4:13) and in doing so bring glory to God.

... *“for to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain”* ... means exactly that; if you are alive, no matter where you are and what you are doing, it’s by His life and His faith that you live (Gal 2:20), and you live for, and to, His honour in everything you say and do, and if you are dead, then you’re in His presence worshipping and honouring Him for eternity. Either way, our entire being and everything we are involved in day and night should be a life lived to His honour and glory.

What an incredible influence for change we can be in the marketplace, or in our “prisons” if we grasp the reality of Christ in us as us, sharing His love, kindness, forgiveness, tolerance, concern, diligence, honesty, integrity, wisdom, discernment and grace with those with whom we are employed or with whom we share our “cell”.

This is what Paul had in mind when he spoke to the Romans (Rom 12:1) ... *“present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.”*

This is the normal Christian life, where Christ permeates everything we do and wherever we go. Christ is a person, in us, and His presence in us makes us Christ-persons (Christ-ians).

Gal 2:20 ... *“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me”*

Nothing about Christianity and our life as a Christian will function according to the Fathers plan or be correctly understood unless we have grasped the fact that the only life we have is Christ, and, to live unto His glory is to live by His life and His faith in all we do and say. All the time.

1 John 5:11-12 ... *“And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.”*

Ours is a life centred in Christ, sourced in Christ, empowered by Christ, for the purpose of presenting Christ. That, and that alone is why we exist. That was the Father’s plan from before the foundation of the world (Eph 1:4).

Christ is our all – In all we are, in all we do, in all we say, and wherever we go. So, with Paul let us cry the consecratory words ... *“for to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain”!*

**V 22 – 26** ... *“But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labour for me; and I do not know which to choose. But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better; yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake. Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith, so that your proud confidence in me may abound in Christ Jesus through my coming to you again.”*

Paul’s dilemma. To remain in the flesh with the privilege of living by the divine nature, empowered by the very life of Christ, and submitting to Him that His life may come to those in darkness. To live in union with the Vine and draw on the fruit producing sap, to deliver the fruit of life to those in need. To be the humble servant who lives for the progress and joy of others. Serving and being expended purely for the glory of God. **Or** – To transition from this “earthly home” of knowing in part, of hope and trust, of servitude and sharing in the sufferings of Christ for the benefit of others, on into the place of eternal rest and peace, standing and gazing with awe into the very face of Him who is Life.

Paul is thinking of his words to the Corinthians 1 Cor 13:12 ... *“For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known.”*

Which shall I choose? For me to die is gain. Eternity in the awesome presence of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in pure peace and joy. What more could I ask for? But if I die then my life of service here ends, and there will be those I could have reached with the gospel that may not hear and come to life in Christ. Christ gave His very life in love for these folks to be saved. His life and love in me are what compels me to be expended for Him that His life may be shared with others. Also, those who are in Christ, the believers, they need me to remain and be available to encourage them in their growing in the grace and knowledge of Christ.

On one side he hears the call from the eternal realm of rest, and on the other he hears the call from the harvest fields of service. These calls are not in opposition, they are complimentary, coming from the heart of the Father. The call from the eternal realm simply serves to fire up Paul’s heart to remain here a little longer and engage in more diligent service so that more folks may be disciplined, and ultimately enjoy the final and eternal call. Paul’s concern was for their ... *“progress and joy in the faith”*. He wanted to see them established in Christ, as overcomers walking in the joy of the Lord. So he knew he had to stay on in this world to be an encourager of their faith and life in Christ that they may ... *“know Him”* (3:10), that they may ... *“gain Christ”* (3:8). So Paul, unselfishly, declares to the needy saints ... *“Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith.”*

The thinking of the possibility that he may eventually be released from Prison, and for his desire to be with the Philippian believers once again, he goes on to say ... *“so that your proud confidence in me may abound in Christ Jesus through my coming to you again.”*

The encouragement for us is that if, for you or me, *“to live is Christ”* we will know in our hearts with certainty where our Father would have us be. If His eternal purpose, in which we have a part to play,

needs our continued presence here, His voice directing us on the road to service will be clear. As long as we are here, we are to *“abound in Christ.”*

Just stop for a minute and think about a magnifying glass, its purpose is so we can see things bigger and clearer. So, does your and my life serve as a “magnifying glass” to those around us to bring Christ closer and clearer to them?

**V27 – 28** ... *“Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; in no way alarmed by your opponents—which is a sign of destruction for them, but of salvation for you, and that too, from God.”*

Paul now turns to address the matter of divisions within the body of believers and the need for unity, and to dealing with the pressures they face from outside.

First of all, I would like to point out the word (axiōs ἀξίως) translated *“worthy”* may also be translated *“corresponding to.”* So it will read ... *“only conduct yourselves in a manner corresponding to the gospel of Christ.”*

Then, the English phrase ... *“conduct yourselves”* is a translation of one Greek word *“politeuesthe”* used here by Paul. It is a complicated word, and needs an explanation of its hidden meaning. It is a word that plays on the specific social and political context of the Philippian environment. This word is related to the noun “polis” which means “city”. In the days in which Paul was writing this word meant more than a city, it was a large political unit or state in which people lived and to which they belonged. This unit is something like what we call a “shire” or a “state”. While the noun refers more to citizenship of a city or state, the verb form which Paul uses refers to “the conduct of a citizen of the city or shire,” or, in other words, “the public duties of good citizens.”

Based on these facts, Pauls uses this word knowing that the Philippian believers would have had a full understanding of the true meaning of this word. He knew that as proud citizens of their “shire” and of Rome their loyalty was reflected in their adherence to the laws and customs of the land, and permeated their daily manner of life. So when Paul uses this word to the believers whose ... *“citizenship is in heaven”* (3:20) they understand that, as citizens of heaven, they are to conduct their lives in a manner befitting of loyal citizens adhering to the “laws and customs” (the gospel) of that realm. He is appealing to their loyalty to Christ and the gospel, and to live in accordance with the life and character of Christ in them. Live in a manner corresponding to the gospel of Christ.

What does this say to us today? Our “conduct” or “conversation” speaks of the entire manner of life we live. We are citizens of heaven (Phil3:20). We are ambassadors for Christ (2 Cor 5:20). Our mannerisms, our conversation, our conduct, our lives should reveal whose we are, and where we are from. If our lives express anything other than Christ, if our lives are “dark” and compromised, then when we attempt to share the gospel with unbelievers we will find they will respond with contempt and reject the gospel because they will associate it with the “darkness” and hypocrisy they see in us.

All our dealings in and with the world must align with and be an outflow of the Christ-life, or, as Paul puts it, be worthy of, the gospel of Christ, because the gospel is the declaration of the Light, Life, Love

and Power of Christ. Our lives are to emit a peace and joy that causes people to want to listen and be in our presence. A unifying presence. A lifestyle that draws people to Christ.

As Jesus declared in His prayer (John 17:11-23) it's by our unity in Christ that the world will know Christ's love and experience salvation.

Rev 12:11 ... *"And they overcame him (Satan – the accuser of the brethren) because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even to death".*

The word (logos) of their testimony. Christ is the "Logos" (John 1:1) – He is the word of our testimony. As our life of unity gives testament to the One whose blood was shed to bring us to life and victory, we walk triumphant over the divisions and oppressions incited by the devil.

The call is to ***"strive together for the faith of the gospel"*** (the faith which is the basis of the gospel). Here Paul is addressing the matter of disunity, which is not in line with the gospel of Christ, which has crept into the Philippian assembly. ***"Strive together"*** – side by side cooperating with intent and vigour". We're not solitary soldiers in this battle. We are an army, a body of believers. Our strength is in cooperating together as one united force, united in Christ. United you stand, divided you fall.

Paul implores the believers in Philippi, just as he did to the Ephesian church, to walk unity, as this is how the world will know Christ's love, and that is the gospel for which we are striving.

Eph 4:1-3 ... *"Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace"*

Two things we see here, each individual messenger walking in Christ in a manner befitting the citizenship of heaven, and the team or body of believers striving together in unity – an enemy destroying power!

... *"in no way alarmed (terrified) by your opponents."* The word "alarmed" or "terrified" was used in Paul's day of horses that were frightened or spooked into an uncontrollable frenzy. An inward fear caused by and external stimulus. If you live the Christ-life, the life of the citizen of heaven, standing firm, with your eyes fixed on Christ, not wavering or doubting but firm in the faith of the gospel, you will have no reason to fear or be terrified by anything. ... *"in no way alarmed (terrified) by your opponents."*

The statement in Phil 1:28 ... *"which is a sign of destruction for them, but of salvation for you, and that too, from God ...* simply means that if we who are united in Christ, who ...*"take no account of wrongs suffered"* (1 Cor 13:5), and respond to our oppressors with an attitude of humility, patience and gentleness, steadfast in the strength of Christ, knowing His love never fails, and operate with the attitude that ... *"for to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain,"* our opponents will have no power over us to bring us down. The opponent's efforts will be destroyed, and we will be encouraged. (Gal 5:23-24 there is no opposing "law" that can succeed against you; 1 Cor 13:8 love **never** fails). Praise God!

**V 29 – 30** ... *“For to you it has been granted for Christ’s sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear to be in me”.*

In the world the coveted places are those of ease and comfort. It is our flesh and self-serving interests that will find it hard to accept the *“fellowship of his sufferings”* and to *“suffer for Christ’s sake,”* and to see cross-bearing as a gracious gift we are to embrace. But for the citizens of heaven, the privileged ones are those who willingly share in the sufferings of Christ.

Often we hear folks saying they are enjoying God’s ‘favour’ because everything in their lives is going smoothly and comfortably and they’re not facing any adversity. While it is true that we are to rejoice at all times, including when things are going smoothly, we should never see God’s **‘favour’** in terms of how little suffering for Christ we may experience, but rather as the honour He bestows on those who are appointed a sufferer *“in the behalf of Christ”* (Phil 1:29); ones in His family who bear *“the marks of the Lord Jesus”* (Gal 6:17); and who are *“filling up what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions”* (Col 1:24). These are the ones John spoke of in His final vision:

Rev 7:9, 13-14 ... *“After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes ... Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, ‘These who are clothed in the white robes, who are they, and where have they come from?’ I said to him, ‘My lord, you know.’ And he said to me, ‘These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb’.”*

These are the ones Paul is speaking of in verse 29-30. For Christ crucifixion led to the throne; and it is the pathway for all who are in Christ. John relays Christ’s words in respect of this to us in his gospel:

John 12:24 ... *“unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.”*

John 15:2 ... *“every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit.”*

... *“For to you it has been **granted** for Christ’s sake.”* A grant; a gift; a privilege. When I went to university a ‘grant’ was a financial award, a scholarship, or a gift, given to the best of the best to pay their way through university. It was a means by which a company would choose out a top runner to ensure they went through university, and upon graduation would then offer them employment because they wanted the brightest and best working for them.

Paul here speaks of the **Royal grant**, the privilege, *“to suffer for Christ’s sake.”* This ‘grant’ unlocks *“the surpassing greatness of His power toward us”* (Eph 1:19), it enables Him *“to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us”* (Eph 3:20). It’s the power of that ‘grant’ (to suffer in the behalf of Christ) that enabled Paul and Silas to joyfully sing praises to God, with all the prisoners listening, when chained in prison, and to see Christ glorified when, through the intervening act of God, their chains fell off and the jailer and his family were miraculously saved (Acts 16:23-34). In Phil 3:10 we will hear Paul link the *“power of His resurrection”* with *“the fellowship of His sufferings.”* It’s resurrection power that brings life out of death. There is no resurrection unless

there has first been death. Resurrection power is only available to those who have been to the cross. It's the cross that leads to the throne.

Suffering in the behalf of Christ is God's tool to bring us to the place where we are depleted of any strength or ability of our own, and to where our victory is only possible through the '**grant**' of His power and reliance upon Him. We do well to remember Christ's words:

John 15:5 ... *"apart from Me you can do nothing."*

And Paul's words:

2 Cor 12:9-10 ... *"And He has said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.' Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong."*

Selfishness, self-interest and pride are the enemies of the cross and enemies of the gospel of Christ. These are the attitudes and attributes that retard our growth in Christ. They are the source of disunity that taints and nullifies the witness of the church in the world. As these are placed on the cross and put to death and stripped away from us, that which is hidden deep within us, Christ and His spirit of humility, love, forgiveness and tolerance, are free to come forth. Love never fails (1 Cor 13:8).

As we willingly ... *"suffer for His sake"* ... our self is denied, so that His life may come forth, and through the sharing of His love others receive the salvation His suffering and death provided. It's only the flesh and self that will not see this as a gracious privilege, a **grant**, we have been given.

Oh that we, like Paul, may understand that God's ways are way higher than our ways! Let us embrace, rather than shun, the 'grant', the privilege, or favour bestowed upon us *"to suffer for Christ's sake,"* so His power may be released, so that those in darkness may come to the light.

... *"experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear to be in me."* Paul and the Philippian saints were one in Christ. Fellow soldiers, kinsmen in suffering. Our bonds grow stronger when we go through hardship together. It's only through standing together in the midst of conflict that we can ever know the real depths of the *"fellowship of the Spirit"* (Phil 2:1), the communion of the saints.

There are hidden treasures and truths in Paul's teachings which will never be unveiled to us, and which we can never share, unless and until we are prepared to experience the same conflict and share in sufferings of the Lord as we see in Paul. Luke 9:23 – 24 Jesus said ... *"If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and **take up his cross daily** and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it."*



## **Christ Our Example**

*... “Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus”*

### **EMBRACE and serve with the attitude of the Submissive Servant.**

The focal point in the prayers and discourse for the major portion of chapter one is Christ. Then we see a transition, in the last few verses of chapter one and the first few verses of chapter two, to the focus on unity, which is achieved by applying the mind of Christ in putting others before ourselves. The focus here is on “others” and walking in unity with them.

Our unity in Christ is not to be a superficial and outward look-alikeness; it is a vital spiritual kinship, birthed and sustained in Christ. It’s not all of us with a common ‘label’; it’s having a common heart.

1 John 4:17 ... *“As **He is**, so also **are we** in this world.”*

2 Cor 5:17-18 ... *“Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.”*

So, as we move into Chapter 2, we will see how Paul sets out the basis of this harmony in Christ.

As we move on, we now consider the revelation of the majesty and superiority of Christ, the one to whom every knee will bow and every tongue confess that He is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. In Christ we see the Humble Servant, the one who came to serve and give His life a ransom for many. We see the dying Seed who gave His life that many could live. Paul shows that the Christ-life is a life of servitude and humility and encourages us to embrace this life. For it is through this servant-life we will see the progress of the gospel, and the Father glorified.

## **Philippians Chapter 2**

**V 1 – 2** ... *“If (since) therefore there is any encouragement in Christ, if (since) there is any consolation of love, if (since) there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if (since) any affection and compassion, make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.”*

Whenever we see a “therefore” we must see what it is “there for.”

Paul has, in the last part of chapter 1, talked about living as worthy citizens of heaven, standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith. He has been addressing the matter of disunity amongst the brethren.

Unity is important for two main reasons.

- Firstly, in our battle against the forces of darkness – forces that find a way to work from both “outside” and “inside” – it is either united we stand, or divided we fall. Phil 1:17 says we are to stand ... *“firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel”*.



- Secondly, it is by our unity that the world will know the love of Christ and come to Him (John 17:23). If we are disunited and squabbling the world will certainly not want anything to do with us or our message.

In our communities today, as it would have been in Philippi at the time of Paul's writing to them, there are people of disparate origins, customs and temperaments having to get along with each other. Unity in these situations is possible only if we look to Christ, as the basis for Christian unity is found in Christ.

So now in chapter 2 Paul continues with his appeal for harmony, unity and peace, and states the vital realities in which they are both birthed and sustained. They are:

- Encouragement flowing from Christ within you – resulting in a supporting influence in others.

It's from the deep inner chambers of our union with Christ that we are encouraged and built up, and from which a compelling desire arises within us to support and encourage others.

- Consolation coming from Christ's love in you – providing a cheering influence through gentle and soothing words towards others.

When the heart has sat in this place of quiet communion and tasted of the unconditional love and goodness of our Lord, there will surely arise an all-embracing love which will be expressed through our kind, gentle and uplifting words to others. As His love is shed abroad in our heart, it will beat with a new impulse, and we will reach out with love to others. We love, because He first loved us.

- Fellowship or communion of the Spirit – the whole team participating in being "tuned in" to, and receiving and adhering to the One True Voice coming from the Spirit within.

This communion of the Spirit is like the unseen radio waves; it is the channel of fellowship through which the Spirit and man communicate. He speaks, we listen; we speak and He hears. This fellowship results in the heart of the Father being communicated to us, the compassion, and mercy towards others, especially the lost and needy.

- Affection – sharing with others the tender compassion or pity that flows from the heart of the Father.
- Compassion – the kindness and graciousness, or fruit of the Spirit of Christ, poured out towards others.

He is saying that these are operating realities of the Christ-life, so if Christ lives in you then let that be your manner of life. He says ... *"make my joy complete by **being** of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. **Being**".* Let Christ *"be"* Christ in all He is, in and through you.

You see, this unity and harmony is not just superficial sameness. It's not a "common label." It's not "we're all Baptists", or "we're all Methodists", or "we're all Christ-lifers", or any other label we may adhere to. It's a common heart. It's a vital spirit-kinship. It's about being one in Christ in everything which that means. It's about the mind, the attitude, the values and the very life of Christ being seen and expressed in and through us towards those around us. Peace, unity and love are sourced and

sustained in Christ alone. To the extent we intimately know Him and express Him we will extend unifying love to others.

So, if we are experiencing disunity or strife of any kind, we need to look in the mirror and ask ourselves the question, *“is Christ being seen in and through me, or is self still in control, and am I the one who is at fault in contributing to the disunity or strife?”*

Any foundation other than Christ is shifting sand. Organisations, rituals and creeds, no matter how good they are, cannot substitute for that which comes from a personal and intimate knowledge of Christ. Knowing Him, His love, His compassion, His mercy and His heart, and allowing all He is and values to flow through you to others is the only true source and means of maintaining harmony and unity.

Love has its source in Christ. When the soul (the mind, will and emotions) is permeated with this love through the intimate fellowship of the Spirit, where the Holy Spirit brings you a revelation of Christ and His love, a fire is lit and your heart beats with a new pulse, and your expression of Christ within you flows out to others. Tender mercies and compassion flow and harmony and unity result.

Unconditional love is the bond that unites believers, and is evangelisms most powerful tool.

Just as you need to tune in your radio to hear the news, so we need to have our hearts tuned in to the Holy Spirit so we can receive the revelation of Christ He desires to impart. That’s why Paul prayed earlier (1:9) ... *“And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment.”* It’s this all-seeing and knowing love and compassion which will belong to those who live in this intimate fellowship of the Spirit – those who are sincere and inoffensive, dispensing love and kindness to all. For us to be in harmony with one another we must first be in tune with Christ.

... *“make my joy complete by **being** of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.”* **Being** ... letting the Christ in you **be**. As He truly is, let Him **be** who He is in you, as you. His mind, His attitude, His love, His intents and purposes, seen and expressed in and through you. As believers we are “containers” of Christ and if we, with the help of the Holy Spirit, set our minds upon Christ, submit to Him and allow Him to be the source of encouragement, love, fellowship, compassion and mercy through us, then the evidence of these attributes of Christ functioning in our lives will be, that we will be ... *“of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose”*

If we first “be” then the “do” will follow and peace and unity will reign.

Paul Gilbert wrote the little poem:

*“You are writing a “gospel”,  
A chapter each day,  
By the deeds that you do,  
And the words that you say;  
Men read what you write,  
Whether faithless or true;  
Say, what is the “gospel”  
According to you?”*

**V 3 – 4** ... *“Do nothing from selfishness (strife, faction, rivalry) or empty conceit (vainglory), but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.”*

In these verses Paul is addressing the matter of disunity, which is not in line with the gospel of Christ, which has crept into the Philippian assembly. The party or factional spirit, and the spirit of personal vainglory. Squabblers in a petty campaign over some factional view, more interested in winning their point of view rather than to pursue truth. Instead of fixing their eyes on things above they seek to push others down in the attempt to elevate themselves. These are ones who value the applause of man over the presence of God. Ones who love to appropriate to themselves the glory due only to God. Paul clearly states that we must not do this or have this factional, self-serving attitude.

Scripture is consistent with regard to selfishness, strife and jealousy, as we also see this in the letter James wrote:

James 3:16 ... *“For where jealousy (envying) and selfish ambition (strife) exist, there is disorder (confusion) and every evil thing.”*

James 4:6 ... *“God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”*

With the mind of Christ, having an attitude of humility and focusing on others rather than on self-importance and our own interests, we can look at a believer who is being obnoxious, dogmatic or indifferent and giving you hassles and see them not as an arrogant, unkind or pathetic enemy to be shunned, but regard them highly as they are containers of Christ. After all, they are God’s workmanship being conformed into the image of Christ, ones who the Father dearly loves and in whom He is patiently working and perfecting. That’s how Christ views each one of us, no matter how imperfect we may be at any point in time, and He lives in us and wants us to operate by His mind and attitude. So this is how we are to see others – through His eyes and attitude. That does not mean we have to agree with their point of view, or have to accept their insults or unkindness, it just means we must look past these things and see these dear ones as God’s work in progress and love them as He loves them. This is the attitude of Christ, the attitude of humility that sees others more important than ourselves. It’s the attitude of true love, as defined in 1 Corinthians:

1 Cor 13:4-8 ... *“Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails”.*

... *“but with humility (lowliness) of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves.”* “Carpet, rug, and tapestry” are all words that come from the Greek word (τάπητος, tapēs) which is the root of the word Paul uses (ταπεινοφροσύνη tapeinophrosunē) which is translated as *“humility or lowliness of mind.”* The paths of life for some are very rough, and the stones of circumstances over which they tread are sharp causing much pain. As believers, ours is the privilege of being a soft “carpet” or “rug” over which they can walk and receive some reprieve from the hardships they encountered on their way. Being a soft carpet, a sacrificial and soothing balm, is the hidden meaning behind *“humility of mind”* regarding others *“as more important than yourselves.”* It is the opposite of

haughtiness, selfishness and pride which say, 'might is right, survival of the fittest, and first come first served,' all of which multiply the difficulties of the sufferers and aggravates the agonies of their road.

... *"do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others."* This compels us to ask ourselves, "How wide is our circle of interest?" Do we only look out for ourselves, or do we possibly extend to include our family, or even further to include the people in our town or city, or way out to include and embrace "all nations, and kindreds, and peoples and tongues?"

How wide is our circle of prayers? Do we include "others", intercede for the needs of nations, or just focus on our immediate desires? How far does our service reach? Do we have an ear for the cry from afar, like Paul's call to Macedonia, and in obedience attend to the need?

The Christ-life is a life which prioritises the interests of others, whether they are near or far off. Embracing the mind and attitude of Christ at all times and under all circumstances is the way believers are strengthened and united, and the gospel spread as the world around us sees our love and unity, and through this is Christ glorified.

Servanthood is a privilege and responsibility of all believers. The humility and servanthood of Christ is the benchmark for our attitudes toward one another as well as toward outsiders.

**V 5-11** ... *"Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess (acknowledge) that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father".*

In verses 5-11 we see God's eternal plan for our salvation through His Son as He sweeps from eternity past to Calvary and beyond to eternity future. This statement contains the most important items of the Christian creed; the divinity of Christ, His pre-existence, His equality with the Father, His incarnation in the flesh, His voluntary death on the cross, the guarantee of His ultimate triumph over all evil, and the permanence of His eternal reign.

**Col 1:16-20** ... *"For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities— all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself might come to have first place in everything. For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven".*

**John 1:1, 3, 14** ... *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God ... All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being ... And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us,*

*and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth”.*

The three passages above all confirm that Christ’s deity is unquestionable. He is God. He is Creator. He is ... *“the alpha and omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end”* (Rev 22:13). Let us for once and for all understand that our redemption came at the highest cost possible, the very life of Christ, who is God, Creator – the Divine Son. He willingly humbled Himself that we may partake of His life.

The passage in Philippians 2:5-11 presents what theologians call the doctrine of Kenōsis. The Greek word κένωσις (kenōsis) means “emptiness”, or the verb form κενόω (kenoō) means “to empty”. The doctrine of kenōsis concerns the ‘self-emptying’ of one’s own will and becoming entirely receptive to God’s divine will.

This is the principle of the “dying seed” – death is the path to the “much fruit” of resurrection life:

John 12:24 ... *“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit”.*

2 Cor 8:9 ... *“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich”.*

The eternal Son, equal with God chose voluntarily to empty Himself, divest Himself of all prerogatives of His sublime status and glory ... *“the glory which I (Christ) had with Thee (the Father) before the world was”* (Jn 17:5) and to step down to become incarnate in the flesh, become a man, and not only a man but a servant who took our place on a cross, in order to carry out the Father’s will according to His eternal plan. This is humility personified. His entire life and mission here on earth was characterised by self-denial; He lived to give, to serve and to bless. He lived and died for others, that they might have life.

He emptied Himself. If He had come in all His glory we could never have stood in His presence. The radiance of His glory and holiness would have instantly consumed us, not saved us. Men would have run from Him in fear, not to Him. But he knew this and emptied Himself and became like us so that he would not frighten and paralyse us. He did not make us afraid, He became a servant, He washed our feet, He became our substitute and bore our penalty for sin, He submitted to the very humiliating and degrading death on a cross, and willingly laid down His life for us. He humbled Himself, He emptied Himself, for us, that He may be our Saviour and Lord. He came to bring us life, that we may live by His Life. He came to fulfil the Father’s plan, that we be in Christ holy and blameless (Eph 1:4).

A picture or example may help us here: picture a top class international fast bowler playing cricket, or pitcher playing baseball, with his little 5-year-old son. This 6’ 6” man certainly does not thunder in and bowl or pitch a lightning speed ball, but gently tosses the ball to the little boy, to suit the fragility of the child and encourage him in the sport. He gently throws a much softer ball than used in the formal sport, because he doesn’t want to hurt the child should it accidentally hit into him. He’s not there to prove to his son how great a sportsman he is; he puts aside his reputation. He puts aside his might and strength and skill and focuses on his little son, giving him every opportunity to have time to see the ball coming his way so that he can hit it and be encouraged to do it again and again. The dad’s goal

being to encourage the boy in the sport, not to frighten him away. Christ humbled Himself, he came to us as Lamb not as Lion. And that's the attitude we are to have. Put aside all haughty 'better than thou' and 'oh so mighty and holy' or dogmatic attitude and reach out in humility and love to everyone around you. Meet them at where they're at, and in humility bring them love and encouragement. As Paul said in Phil 1:27 ... *"conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ."*

Christ emptied Himself of all glory and reputation and He, the Creator, put on the flesh and identified with us. When Christ entered this world in which we live, when he was born as a baby in Bethlehem, He entered into a permanent union with humanity. From Bethlehem's cradle as a baby to Calvary's Cross as a mature man He identified with us every step of the way. He came as Servant not as King. He came to serve, not to be served. He came to give us, mankind, His eternal life. He of His own free will humbled Himself to give His own life that we may be lifted out of sin and shame to live by His life, now and throughout all eternity. He emptied Himself so that we might be filled! ... *"He (the Father) ... gave Him (Christ) as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all"* (Eph 1:22-23).

... *"He made Himself of no reputation, and took on the form of a servant."* In humility, the divine was clothed with humanity, so that humanity could partake of the divine nature (2 Pet 1:4).

In contrast, Lucifer, a created being, sought "reputation" and aspired to elevate himself and put on deity, and for his impiety was cast down from the archangel's throne, eternally condemned (Isa 14:12-15). This is the spirit of anti-Christ that is behind all selfishness and self-seeking pride which leads to destruction, disunity and failure.

Jesus Christ, the divine Son of God, equal with God, emptied Himself of His divine prerogatives, humbled Himself and became a man in submission to the will of the Father and in return was elevated to the name above all names and highest position of authority. He showed us that the way up, is down; put self last and others first – that is the path to eternal and lasting blessings.

Matt 23:11-12 ... *"But the greatest among you shall be your servant. Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted"*.

This statement of Jesus contains active and passive parts; whoever exalts himself (active verb) shall be humbled (passive verb), whoever humbles himself (active verb) shall be exalted (passive verb). Christ was not forced to humble Himself; He chose and acted to do this on our behalf and for our good. He acted and humbled Himself. The result was that He was exalted (passive verb) by the Father to a position and name above every name. **He ... "did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped" ... "He ... "emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant" ... "He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death" ... all actions on Christ's part ... and therefore ... "God highly exalted Him".** The choice to humble Himself was action on Christ's part; the result, Christ's exaltation, finds Christ passive and the Father active in rewarding Him.

This attitude or mind that was in Christ, the submissive mind, the mind of humility and lowliness, a **total emptying** of self-interest (not holding back or catering to anything of self), but living for others, should characterise everyone who is a believer.

When we have the mind or attitude of someone, we share the very essence of their inward manner of life, or essence of being. It's seeing as they see, feeling as they feel, acting as they act in all spheres of life. We are called to live by the attitude or mind of Christ, which is to give, to serve and to bless others. Why? Because Christ lives in us and He has not changed His attitude and wants to give expression to this mind of humility through us. It is beautifully caught by the New English Bible translation of Phil 2:5... *"Let your bearing towards one another arise out of your life in Christ Jesus."*

If we embrace this attitude of humility and lowliness of mind found in Christ, and esteem others better than ourselves, it will be impossible for strife and contention to gain a footing and bring division. Also, the result of our choice to act on the behalf of Christ in unselfish devotion for the wellbeing and uplift of others will be that God will cause us to experience true joy and fulfilment in Christ. Our concern is to look out for others; God's concern is to look after us.

James 4:10 ... *"Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you."*

True love is always sacrificial; it willingly lays aside majesty and dignity for the sake of lowly service. John H Jowett<sup>5</sup> puts it so beautifully, *"When love is in the heart, greatness delights to walk unrecognised."*

The person of humble and lowly attitude embraces the cross, no matter the cost of the sacrifice, because he or she knows that this is what brings glory to God, blessing to others, and their own ultimate liberty. This is the paradox of the Christ life; the more we sacrifice the more God releases blessings. The "grant" or "gift" (Phil 1:29) of resurrection power is released when we walk the way of the Cross. The more we give the more we receive. The more we put self aside, the more we "gain Christ" (3:8). Sacrifice and service ultimately leads to joy and fulfilment for everyone concerned.

Just think about this for a moment: Consider the enormity of grace, mercy, encouragement, love, fellowship and compassion you have received both from God and others, and weigh this up against the amount you are passing on to others around you and ask yourself ... "How am I doing? Is the attitude of Christ fully functional in and through me?" We are called to live to give, to serve and to bless others. The Lord's cross cost Him everything; how much does mine cost me? If it costs nothing it will accomplish nothing; if it costs much it will accomplish much.

**V 12-18** ... *"So then (wherefore), my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure. Do all things without grumbling or disputing; so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I will have reason to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain. But even if I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice and share my joy with you all. You too, I urge you, rejoice in the same way and share your joy with me."*

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<sup>5</sup> J H Jowett, The High Calling

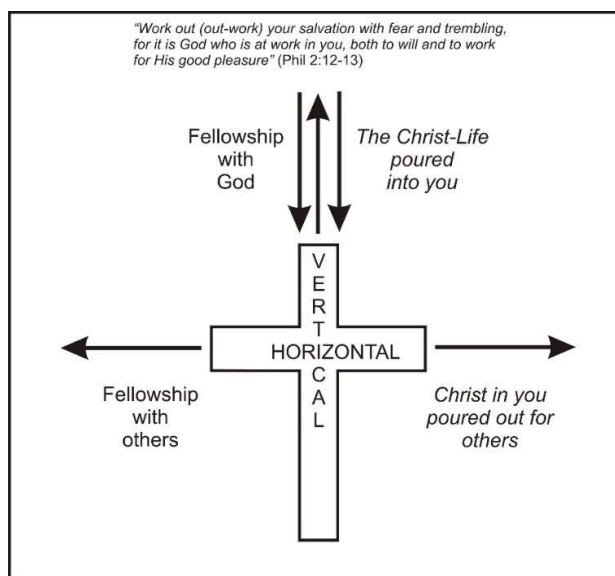


The statement ... *“just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out”* ... is an important reminder that **our true character is who we are when no one is watching!**

... *“so then (wherefore), my beloved.”* And when you see a “wherefore” see what it is there for. This links what is to follow with what Paul has been talking about in the verses leading to this statement. He’s saying, *“So then, my beloved – understanding that we are to have and to operate by the attitude which was in Christ, one of self-emptying, and one of humility, one of seeing others as better than ourselves – ... work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.”* It’s a call to continually “work out” or “out work” your salvation. Christ is your salvation. He is your life, and your all. And the Father’s desire, His good pleasure, is that Christ, in all His humility and love, be seen in and through us. This is a call to let the Christ within you be seen in and through the attitudes, thoughts, words and actions coming from you towards and for the benefit of others.

Paul has been transfixed with deep admiration on the humility of Christ as He, the Creator, the Almighty Majestic One, willingly takes off heavens glory and steps down into the sin-stained earth, setting aside the might and rights of divinity to clothe Himself with humanity, stepping down and identifying with us in our desperate needs, where we are clothed with the darkness of sin and shame. Fully identifying with us He takes our place, bears our sin and shame and suffers the indignation of death on a cross, paying the price for our freedom with His very life. He is raised from the grave, ascends on high and is restored to the place of ultimate glory, and lifts us up with Him, gives us new life and an eternal hope. And in saying “wherefore”, or, “so then, my beloved” linking our fragility with the glorious life of our exalted Lord, Paul says ... *“work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.”* It’s a reminder that it’s the cross that leads to the throne. The way of the cross, the way of sacrifice and humility, is the appointed way of salvation. It’s only as we step down and humbly engage and identify with the needy, gently lifting him or her out of their difficulty, that they can be helped, and we in turn can be raised up and applauded and rewarded by the Father, and one day hears Him say, *“Well done good and faithful servant.”* Stooping precedes conquering; the pathway of descent is the only route leading to the pathway ascending to the heights. Working out your salvation means the working out, or pouring out, of the Christ-life within you for the benefit of others. As Christ has emptied Himself and poured out His life for you, so must you be willing to tread the path of humility and be poured out for others.





Eph 4:7-10 ... *"But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore it says, "When He ascended on high, He led captive a host of captives, And He gave gifts to men." (Now this expression, "He ascended," what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things.)"*

Just look at the key phrases in the passage Phil 2:12-18. They all have to do with letting Christ within you, who is your salvation, be poured out, or worked out for the benefit of others.

... *"work out your salvation with fear and trembling;*

... *Do all things without grumbling or disputing;*

... *prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent*

... *above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation*

... *among whom you appear as lights in the world,*

... *holding forth the word of life*

.... *The sacrifice and service of your faith*

All of this outworking or pouring out of Christ within us, the working out of our salvation, is to be done with ... *"fear and trembling."* And the *"fear and trembling"* is not the cringing, fearful, servile response of a slave, but the exquisite, passionate response of a devoted lover. It's the absolute respect, reverence, admiration and trembling love for the One who is the "name above all names" – The One apart from whom we are nothing; the One who is our very life and all; the One who laid down His life for us.

We love, because He first loved us (1 John 4:19). This is the sensitive, loving, trembling response of a lover who is in the presence of the awesome One who loves them unconditionally and who has poured

out His love for them. Sensitive to the presence, the voice and will of God. Ever sensitive and listening to His still small voice, discerning His purpose and putting into action His desires for those around us. Always attentive, never getting too busy with our preoccupations that we miss the subtle “nod”, “gesture”, or “whisper” from above directing us in service on His behalf.

... *“for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.”* He is not a passive bystander. He is actively at work in you – to will and to work for His good pleasure. He’s pouring into you so that rivers of life can flow out of you. He’s “working in” so that you can “work out.” He creates the desire for service in accordance with His purposes, and also empowers you to accomplish His good pleasure. Life for us, enabling service for others. His light and life poured into us so that we may minister to others. Adopting His attitude of humility we are “emptied” so that He may fill us, and overflow out of us.

... *“<sup>14</sup> Do all things without grumbling or disputing; <sup>15</sup> so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world.”* Grumbling and disputing are like grit, which if thrown into the engine causes it to wear out and eventually fail, while the attitude of true humility is the oil which lubricates and ensures smooth running. Humility accepts the refiner’s fire which drives out the grit and dross and yields the pure gold – *“blameless and innocent” ... “above reproach” ... “lights in the world”* of darkness.

... *“holding forth the word of life.”* You can only “hold forth the word of life” if you know the Word of life. You may be born again and have Christ as your life, but to live and “hold forth” the Christ-life means you need to know Him intimately and allow Him, His attitude, thoughts and desires to be active through you.

An example will help us understand what this really means. Picture a young pilot who has studied and just been given his or her instrument rating license. The pilot goes on a flight and soon the weather changes. Clouds form, mist covers the entire area and the destination airport approaches. The pilot begins to get concerned. He/she has not flown in such bad conditions and knows the destination landing strip has a mountain range nearby, some communication masts, and power lines near the runway approach. The first instinct is to get on the radio and yell “Mayday, mayday” but all the drilling and learning he/she went through to get the instrument rating prevails, and the pilot, without fretting, quietly contacts the airport air controller and requests assistance. The air controller is more than happy to assist, and knowing the pilot understands the contents of the “flight manual” helps him/her navigate the way to a safe and successful landing.

On the other hand, if this was a pilot who had no instrument rating, not knowing all the details required for instrument flying as explained in the flight manual, even the flight controller would not be able to ensure a safe landing.

Now put this into what Paul is saying to us ... *“Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ” ... “In no way alarmed by your opponents” ... “work out your salvation with fear and trembling” ... “prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent” ... “above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation” ... “appear as lights in the world” ... Holding forth the word of truth.”* We can’t expect the Holy Spirit (the Controller) to help us if we don’t know the Word. The Word is our

“flight manual.” The Holy Spirit helps us to know Christ, who is the Word, who reveals Himself through His Word. When the going gets tough we can’t just shout “Mayday, mayday” and expect a soft landing if we have no relationship with the Word, Christ. There are many who profess to be “Christians” but who have no ongoing relationship with the Lord and His word, and when trouble comes they yell out “Help me Lord”, expecting God to get them out of trouble. Jesus said (John 8:32) ... *“You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”* It’s knowing, apprehending, taking in and living in accordance with the Word that sets you free, gets you to “land safely.” Read Psalm 119 and see all the importance of knowing the Word. That’s why we will hear Paul crying out in chapter 3, *“I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord”* ... *“Oh that I may know Him.”* Let us too, press on to know Him who is the Word of Life.

So let our lives truly be a ... *“holding forth the Word of life.”*

... *“But even if I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice and share my joy with you all. You too, I urge you, rejoice in the same way and share your joy with me.”* Many believers are happy to serve provided it does not take them out of their comfort zone, and certainly will not go as far as the “shedding of blood” for others. They’re happy to give whatever they can easily spare, mostly things from which they’re detached and won’t miss. They love the fanfare and recognition when they’re seen to be giving of their energies or substance, but when the call of the cross comes, requiring sacrificial service or giving, they’re nowhere to be found.

But here we see Paul, who is ever willing to be “poured out” for others on behalf of His Lord, rejoicing in the possibility of being “poured out” for these his brothers and sisters in Christ. He is saying, “even if I am poured out, my life given in service for you,” in this I rejoice. He sees the outpouring of his life in service for them along with their selfless, humble, sacrificial service as a “fragrant aroma” offered up and acceptable to God. In this Paul rejoices and encourages them to rejoice with him. We are all priests at the one altar of our Lord; and we can all rejoice with those who willingly offered up themselves in humble selfless service on the altar of service unto our Lord.

**V 19-30** ... *“But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, so that I also may be encouraged when I learn of your condition. For I have no one else of kindred spirit who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare. For they all seek after their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus. But you know of his proven worth, that he served with me in the furtherance of the gospel like a child serving his father. Therefore I hope to send him immediately, as soon as I see how things go with me; and I trust in the Lord that I myself also will be coming shortly. But I thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger and minister to my need; because he was longing for you all and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick. For indeed he was sick to the point of death, but God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, so that I would not have sorrow upon sorrow. Therefore I have sent him all the more eagerly so that when you see him again you may rejoice and I may be less concerned about you. Receive him then in the Lord with all joy, and hold men like him in high regard; because he came close to death for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was deficient in your service to me.”*

... *“But I hope in the Lord Jesus”* – everything that stems from Paul flows out of his life in Christ. He says nothing and does nothing except that it is aligned with Christ, who is his life and his all. Whether

it's the "big" doctrinal issues, the important teachings and admonitions, or the "little" matters of sending a "Timothy or Epaphroditus," it all flows from Christ within Paul, the One with whom he is inseparably one.

Paul was in prison but the gospel God had given him to share was not imprisoned. He could not go personally so he sent Timothy and Epaphroditus in his place. These were men of kindred spirit, who would, like Paul, lay down everything in order that the Philippian believers may be encouraged. They were men whose lives were lived for "others". In return, Paul would receive encouragement from them when these messengers he sent would report back and share with him the news of the Philippian believers and their response to his letter and encouragement given them by his fellow workers.

There are not many who will make the costly personal sacrifices for the welfare of others, like Paul, Timothy and Epaphroditus were prepared to do, and Paul encourages the Philippians to ... *"hold men like these in high regard"*.

Note Paul's description of Epaphroditus:

- *"Brother"* – Paul was speaking to a highly polarised community consisting of Jews and Gentiles, rich and poor, Romans and Greeks, aristocrats and slaves, soldiers and civilians, amongst whom "unity" and "brotherhood" was something previously unheard of and difficult to grasp. The gospel of Christ changed this; Paul was a Jew and Epaphroditus a Gentile, but they were "brothers" in Christ because they had the same heavenly Father that had given birth to the life of Christ in them. For in Christ ... *"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus"* (Gal 3:28). As "brothers" they served together ... *"for the furtherance of the gospel"*. Likewise, as "family", we are to be found ... *"standing firm in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel"*
- *"Fellow-worker"* – He could work together with and for others. He was not a "lone ranger." He was not just a "worker" but a "fellow-worker." He was prepared to take on the necessary menial tasks; unnoticed in the "back-room" work where there is no fanfare and centre stage appearances. He was prepared to lay down everything for the work of Christ coming ... *"close to death for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was deficient in"* the service of the Philippians to Paul. Jesus said ... *"If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it"* (Lu 9:23-24).
- *"Fellow-soldier"* – Epaphroditus was one who knew that ... *"our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places"* and Paul knew he was dependable against the forces of darkness, as he was prepared to ... *"Suffer hardship with Paul, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus"*. Epaphroditus knew and displayed by his example that ... *"no soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier"* (2 Tim 2:3-4). Paul is also using military terminology because Philippi was a Roman colony under the command of the Roman military. The Philippians would have understood that soldiers obey the instructions of their superiors

without questioning or hesitation. Soldiers in those days also walked into battle side by side with shields interlocked as one impenetrable wall. Working out our salvation involves unquestioning obedience and devotion to our Lord and working together ... *“in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel”*.

- *“Messenger”* – he was not only one who conducted himself ... *“in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ”*, but also one who strived together with others ... *“for the faith of the gospel”*. He was a faithful messenger who ... *“came close to death for the work of Christ”* (2:30) in carrying the gift from the Philippian church to Paul and in letting Paul know the state of affairs of the church in Philippi. Paul ... *“having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent”* (4:18) encouraged the Philippians to ... *“hold men like him in high regard”* (2:29).
- *“Minister”* – he was the one to whom Paul was referring (4:3) when he said, ... *“Indeed, true companion, I ask you also to help these women (Euodia and Syntyche) who have shared my struggle in the cause of the gospel, together with Clement also and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life”*. He was like Tychicus who Paul sent to the Colossian church ... *“For I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts”* (Col 4:8). As ministers of Christ we are to ... *“encourage one another and build up one another”* 1 Thess 5:11) and we are to ... *“preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction”* (2 Tim 4:2).

... *“he was longing for you all and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick.”* He wasn’t concerned about his own sickness; he was concerned that they were anxious about his condition. Their anxiety and welfare were forefront in his mind, not his own pain. ... *“He came close to death for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was deficient in your service to me.”*

Not surprisingly, Epaphroditus means “lovely”. He truly is a “lovely” example of a person whose outworking of his salvation is one in which we see the Christ life displayed in action; one worth emulating. It’s fellow-believers like Epaphroditus who we are to ... *“receive in the Lord”* and ... *“hold in high regard.”*

As brothers or sisters in Christ, as fellow-workers, fellow-soldiers, messengers and ministers of the gospel of Christ, we are to respond in faith and obedience to a continual working out of our salvation. “Wearing Christ on our sleeves” will be characterised by our contentment to deny self, and joyfully serve in a manner that encourages and builds up others and endorses the selfless outpouring of those mature leaders who have gone ahead of us.

## Christ Our Object

... *“but I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus”*

**ENDURE all we face with eyes fixed on Christ, and press on steadfast and sure.**

Paul comes to a place where he is about to wrap up his letter and he starts to do this in the first three verses in chapter 3, then it's as if he suddenly remembers something important that he needs to add. So, what we will find between chapter 3:4 and chapter 4:7 is this extra, and very vital, bit of information, encouragement and admonition. We can be most grateful to the Holy Spirit for prompting Paul to write this new section that he inserts as we would have lost something extremely valuable had he not done so.

### Philippians Chapter 3

**V 1** ... *“Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord.”*

Here is a man bound in chains, suffering false accusations and pressures from both the unbelievers as well as the false brethren, who is encouraging the Philippian believers to follow his example to ... *“rejoice in the Lord.”* Here is one who is ... *suffering in the behalf of Christ* yet whose epistle comes forth as a song in the night. The more he suffers the louder is his praise for the one who is his life and his all, and there is a very good reason as to why this is so.

... *“In the Lord.”* That's where Paul is rooted and grounded. ... *“For to me to live is Christ.”* His vitality, his strength, his endurance and unrelenting joy through the many storms of life all find their nutriment in and from ... *“the unsearchable riches of Christ”* (Eph 3:8). He shows us very clearly that if we are rooted and grounded in the Infinite One, Christ in you, then nothing in the finite can possibly disturb us. Paul is saying, no matter what you're facing, draw everything you need from Christ within, and His joy will be your strength. ... *“Set your mind on things above, not on the things that are on earth”* (Col3:2). The One who is above all, the All Sufficient One, Christ in you, who always leads us in His triumph in every place, gives you every reason to rejoice. Yes, at all times and in all circumstances ... *“rejoice in the Lord!”*

Now, to my mind if ever there was a Christ-life statement this is it! ... *“Finally ... rejoice **in the Lord!**”*

*“Finally”* – The summation, all things considered, no matter the circumstances and situations we face, the summing up conclusion is that, our every moment attitude and focus as those who are in Christ is to ... *“rejoice in the Lord.”* And Paul repeats this in Ch4:4 ... *“Rejoice in the Lord **always**, again I say rejoice.”*

... *“In the Lord.”* Firstly, *in the Lord* as our **object** of continual praise. Just take a moment to look around and think and see just who this is in whom we are to rejoice.

- John 1:1-4, Col 1:17 He is the eternal Word, He is God, He is creator, He is our Light and Life. Just go outside on a clear night and look at the stars and get some idea of how great He is. He *spoke* all of that into being! He created something out of nothing but His words. ... *“He is*

*before all things, and in Him all things hold together.”* Look around at all the different colour flowers, the different trees and bushes, the huge variety of animals and birds. He is the Majestic and Mighty Author of all you see.

- John 1:14, Phil 2:6-8 He stepped down from His glorious position, put on flesh and identified fully with us. So Mighty, so Great, so Glorious, yet so humble. So loving, gracious and merciful.
- Rom 5:8, Eph 1:4, 7 He is love and mercy personified. Who died for us when we were sinners, His enemies, so that we could live by His life, and be restored to a place of relationship and fellowship with the Father, just as the Father had purposed before creation, that we would be “in Christ.”
- Phil 2:9-11 He is the Exalted One, the One to whom every knee will bow and declare He is Almighty God. No higher authority, no higher power, He is above all.
- John 14:6 He is the way, the truth and the life.

This is the Christ, the One to whom every bit of reverence, respect, thankfulness and rejoicing we owe. Pray for a revelation of Christ and know Him, more and more every day, then with Paul let us at all times ... *rejoice in the Lord!*”

Secondly ... “*in the Lord*” as our **abiding place** of joy. Just think for another moment of the One in whom we have been inseparably placed, and what that means when compared to everything and anything around us.

- Col 1:27, Col 3:3, Col 2:9 ... “*Christ in you, the hope of glory*” ... “*For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God*” ... “*For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, and in Him you have been made complete.*”
- Acts 17:28 ... “*In Him we live and move and have our being.*” In the One who is above all else, the One to whose name everything is subservient, the One in whom is all authority and power – In Him we live and move and have our being! We have every reason to rejoice in Him!
- Eph 2:6, Phil 3:20 We are seated in Christ in heavenly places. ... “*Our citizenship is in heaven*” – In Christ, in the Lord.
- Rom 8:38-39 ... “*For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*” In Him we are totally secure!

So dear ones – ... “*in the Lord*” – as the **object** of our praise and as our **abiding place** – we have every reason, at all times and no matter what the circumstances or situation, to ... “*Rejoice in the Lord!*”

And that’s why we will hear Paul say what he says in verses 4-16, that everything the world holds dear is but rubbish and that all that really counts is knowing and being transfixed on Christ who is our all. And we will get to that soon, but first let’s continue with the second part of verse 1:

**V 1b** ... “*To write the same things again is no trouble to me, and it is a safeguard for you.*”

Paul started by encouraging us that we need to be reminded over and over to put Christ first ... “*rejoice in the Lord*” and keep our eyes and hearts fixed on Him through thick and thin, as He is our life and our all, apart from Him we can do nothing. This is what is implied by the words ... “*rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things again is no trouble to me, and it is a safeguard for you.*”



Paul shows the Philippians, and us, the way to deal with controversies and divisions – let Christ be seen in your every attitude and action. Let your life and joy, your constant attitude and action of rejoicing in Christ, be the example for others to follow. Then even when you're admonishing or correcting others, they will receive the rebuke yet feel that you are providing them with wings with which to fly.

And then Paul adds a little reminder:

**V 2-3** ... *"Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision; for we are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh."*

... *"Beware of the dogs"*. In those days the Jews referred to the Gentiles as "dogs", but quite clearly this is not the meaning implied here. If we recall the account given in Acts chapter 16, we know that the church at Philippi were in the vast majority gentiles, and Paul would not be using this derogatory term when talking to his gentile brothers and sisters in the Lord.

Most likely, Paul is remembering the definition of "dogs" as used by Isaiah:

Isa 56:10-11 ... *"His watchmen are blind, all of them know nothing. All of them are mute **dogs** unable to bark, dreamers lying down, who love to slumber; and the **dogs** are greedy, they are not satisfied. And they are shepherds who have no understanding; they have all turned to their own way, each one to his unjust gain, to the last one"*.

These were probably the same type of people who Paul referred to earlier (1:15-17). Self-indulgent, self-serving preachers whose interest is not the unity and building up of the body of Christ. They preach a distorted gospel and certainly don't live the Christ life. These certainly have not had a revelation of Christ as their life and their all. Dogs are ones found in the streets living off scraps. Content with the crumbs and scraps of religion. Like the Pharisees content with the externals, observing rituals, ordinances, and able to quote the scriptures but have no relationship with the Author of the Word. Lifeless, whitewashed tombs. Paul says, beware of such people.

... *"beware of the evil workers"*. While the "evil workers" may also include the "dogs", it is possible they are the false teachers, "wolves in sheep's clothing" and the Judaisers that followed Paul's ministry teaching a mixture of law and grace, which Paul called "another gospel" (Gal 1:6-9).

... *"beware of the false circumcision"*. Legalists, ritualists, those who teach and preach a distorted and commingled gospel – a gospel of law and grace; a gospel in which grace aided by self-effort. Such is "anathema" (Gal 1:6-9).

In contrast, verse 3 reveals the marks of a person that truly belongs to the Lord, the true circumcision ... *"for we are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh."*:

- They are worshippers ... *"who worship in the Spirit of God"*. Worship means placing "worth," and "honour" in God and His will and submitting unconditionally to Him.

- They rejoice in Christ ... *“who” ... “glory in Christ Jesus”*. Their boast is in the Lord not in anything they have done or achieved. Christ is their all and their heart cry is ... *“for me to live is Christ”*.
- They lay aside everything of self ... *“put no confidence in the flesh”*. Like John they say ... *“He must increase, but I must decrease”* (Jn 3:30). Regeneration is not the old made new; it is impossible to “improve” the fleshly nature. Regeneration is an exchange of natures; the “old” out and the new “in”. The new nature of Christ that is birthed in us is complete and perfect and does not require improvement. Christ is our new life and our all, and in Him alone can we have complete confidence ... *“Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature”* (2 Cor 5:17) ... *“For in him (Christ) all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, and in Him you have been made complete”* (Col 2:9-10).

Because our completeness is found in Christ, He is our all, we have every reason to ... *“rejoice in the Lord”* and ... *“Glory in Christ Jesus.”*

Now, from 3:4 to 4:7 Paul provides us a vital interjection before finalizing his wrap up of the letter.

**V 4-7** ... *“although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more: circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless. But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ”*.

In terms of the natural Paul had a pedigree second to none. He came from the “right side of town”, from the “right” lineage; he knew the scriptures inside out; he observed the law to the <sup>n</sup><sup>th</sup> degree; he was more zealous in his work than any other person. In the natural he was “Mr Perfect”.

But on that day on the road to Damascus he had a divine encounter. He came to appreciate that the value of his judgements altogether depended upon the quality of his standards. “Mr Perfect” came face to face with the glorified Christ, and in an instant, he came to the revelation of the truth of Isaiah’s words ... *“For all of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment”* (Isa 64:6). He came to realise the value of our judgements altogether depends upon the quality of our standards. Now let me explain that statement with an illustration:

If you look at a clean sheep standing against a background of grass and bushes, or on a dusty road, it looks “white” – but if that same sheep was standing in a field of newly fallen pure white snow it would look quite dirty. It’s the background against which we see the difference. Paul the law-abiding Pharisee against the background of legalistic religion thought he was so righteous, but when he was confronted by the spotless, pure, righteous and holy Christ, against this sight he saw quite clearly in an instant how filthy he was with sin and unrighteousness. Illumined and exposed by the Light of the World everything Paul stood for was shown in their true colours, and all of his masquerading virtues and judgements were shown up to be nothing but presumptuous sins. From that point on it was the “glorious Christ” that was the standard upon which Paul’s judgements and values were formed.

Everything upon which he had built his reputation, his fame and his hopes – everything that up to that point was reckoned to him as being “gain” – suddenly became in his Spirit opened eyes, utterly worthless rubbish and only worth being thrown away never to be picked up again, to be replaced by

that which is priceless – Christ, who became his righteousness. As so in joy he exclaims ... *“But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss on account of Christ”*.

This was not just an exchange of religions – one set of doctrines or rituals for another more superior one. This was an encounter with a Person. The revelation that the once crucified now glorified Christ had, in His mercy and grace, come to take up residence in him and be his life, his righteousness and his all. Paul came to see that Christ is the way, the truth and the life. The one who said, ... *‘I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing’* (Jn 15:5). Paul came to the realization that by resting in Christ and His sufficiency, confidence in the flesh is once and for all at an end. It took a revelation of Christ to bring Paul into this new perspective.

So, if we have learned anything from Paul, we need to look at the “ledger” of our lives and see what we hold dear, and what we consider worthless. It comes down to considering and separating the non-eternal from the eternal. The quality of our standards will determine what goes on either the “credit” or “debit” side. The greater revelation we have of Christ the more of our former “gains” will be moved to the “loss” side. The more we fix our eyes on things above and not on things of the earth, the more we fix our eyes on Jesus the Author and perfecter of the faith, the greater our revelation of Christ, the more we will be able to constantly and consistently ... *“rejoice in the Lord”* and ... *“glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh.”* And with great gusto we can sing the beautiful old hymn ... *“And the things of the earth will grow strangely dim, in the light of His glory and grace.”*

**V 8-11** ... *“More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of the faith, that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead”*.

... *“I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.”* Paul is not saying that the “knowing”, “gaining” or “being found” was something he had to “do” by way of attainment, or something he was to “earn” by self-abnegation, he is just letting us know his deep-down feelings and inner knowing that ever since his revelation of Christ as his life and his all (Gal 1:11-17) that there is nothing else worth living for and nothing else has any “value” compared to **personally and intimately knowing Christ**. He’s clearing out everything worthless to make room for a richer and more manifest presence of his Lord.

All former things considered esteemed were swept across from the “gain” to the “loss” side of his balance sheet, replaced only with an ever-deepening love for the Lord. This is the “pearl of great price” (Matt 13:45-46) for which all else has to go. All the world has to offer, every human attainment or thing the world values can bring no lasting satisfaction. Lasting satisfaction and fulfilment are found in Christ alone. In Him alone will we find our lasting “gains.”

For some, like Jews, Muslims, Hindus and other similar faiths when they come to a revelation of Christ and are born again, this really is a matter of loss of everything – family, inheritances, social acceptance, friends – everything. But no matter our background, our nationality, family, financial status, health

status, culture, education, social standing, as the “born again,” those who are “in Christ,” there is nothing and no one we should hold onto more dearly, or in preference to, than to Christ. If He is not our all, He is not ours at all. And apart from Him we can do nothing, and are nothing.

... “*and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him.*” When we have the Eternal One – Christ – birthed in us ... “*Christ in you, the hope of glory*” (Col 1:27), why would anything of the natural, the non-eternal, trouble us? Why would anything be more valuable or dear to us? Why weep or fret over anything, I mean anything, including every and any circumstance or situation we may face, when we have the absolute security, strength, and assurance of Christ as our ALL? And if we don’t have that assurance, we then definitely need to get on our knees and seek a deeper revelation of Christ. He is the “All Sufficient One.” There’s nothing we need more than to ... “*gain Christ, and be found in Him.*”

To “gain” (KJV “win”) Christ simply means to **personally and experientially know and benefit** from all He is as our life and our all. If we are “*found in Him*” it means we consistently operate by His life, His attitude, His mind, we see as He sees, we think as He thinks, and we do this all the time. It’s about coming to and living in the reality of ... “*in Him we live and move and have our being*” (Acts 17:28). It’s all about being **intimately and personally acquainted with Christ**, so that our life can be an outward live demonstration to everyone around us of the life and righteousness of Christ who lives in us.

... “*not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of the faith.*” Anything we think we can manufacture of righteousness, goodness, or of value is non-eternal artificial rubbish. The whole of the Old Testament period of Law showed us very clearly that we are incapable of manufacturing righteousness let alone walking in righteousness. God quite clearly tells us that our righteousness is as filthy rags (Isa 64:6).

No matter how much of human righteousness a person accumulates, no matter how diligent and “good” they are, this will never make them acceptable to God or qualify them for heaven. James Boice<sup>6</sup> puts it really well:

... “The accumulation of human righteousness is a bit like playing Monopoly. The game has colourful money and is enjoyable to play, but only a fool would take Monopoly money and go into town to buy groceries. A different kind of currency is used in the real world. It is the same spiritually. There are people who think they are collecting assets before God when they are only collecting human righteousness. God tells them that they must leave the play currency to deal in His goodness. Our goodness has no value in heaven”.

The only righteousness that is acceptable to God is that which comes from Him. The righteousness of God is an aspect of His character, it’s part of who He is, and is related to His purity, integrity, perfection and holiness. His righteousness is revealed in Christ.

... *righteousness ... which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of the faith.*” In accordance with the Father’s eternal purpose established before creation, that we would be found in Christ so we could be holy and blameless before Him (Eph 1:4), Christ put

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<sup>6</sup> J M Boice, Philippians -an expositional commentary p 173

all aside and stepped down from glory, put on flesh, and become man (Phil 2:5-8). Then, He went to the cross, and we (our old sinful nature) went with Him ... *"I have been crucified with Christ"* (Gal 2:20). When He went to the cross, He took all our sin and shame and unrighteousness and died in our place and on our behalf ... *"and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness"* (1 Pet 2:24). That's when He who knew no sin became sin on our behalf (2 Cor 5:21), and it was then that **He** was the one who exercised faith that He would not be left in the grave, but that He would be raised from the dead, and that in Him we would be raised from the dead in the newness of His life and His righteousness – to live by His life, His righteousness, His Joy, His peace in this life and for all eternity. Christ is ... *"the author and perfecter of **the faith**"* (Heb 12:2). The Greek text has the definite article "the" before the word "faith." Author and Perfecter of the faith means that what he has started in the faith He exercised on the cross he will complete. ... *"He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus"* (Phil 1:6). Our responsibility is set out simply as ... *"**fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of the faith**"*. Rejoice in Him!

2 Cor 5:21 ... *"He (The Father) made Him (Christ) who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that **we might become the righteousness of God in Him**"*.

The word of God shows us that when we were "born again" our old sinful nature was removed and replaced with the nature of Christ; the Person, Christ, was birthed in us. From that point on the life in us is Christ ... *"it is no longer I who live, but **Christ lives in me**"*. As the "born again" the only life we have is Christ. To function properly in His kingdom, we need to stop trying to live by the old "Monopoly-money-life" and live by His life, His faith and His righteousness. All that He is ... love, righteousness, peace, joy ... (the real or authentic) He is in us – and wants to be seen through us. So, with Paul let our heart cry and desire be to know Him and be found in Him.

In Exodus 12 we read how God spoke to the Israelites and told them that if they put the blood of the lamb on the lintel and door posts that the angel of death would bypass them and they would be spared to live. He also told them to eat the roasted lamb which would give them strength and health for the journey. They acted on His word and it all happened just as He said it would happen. They were saved from the death plague, they were delivered from Pharaoh, they went through the wilderness and not one was sick or weak. He delivered them and He kept them strong.

It was not contingent on how much blood they splashed on the door posts ... so don't say, "I wonder if I have put enough blood there, I wonder if I have pleaded the blood over the situation enough". It was not contingent upon whether they had fasted and prayed enough to make certain it would happen as God had said ... so don't say, "I wonder if I have enough faith, or I wonder if my fear is going to negate the passing over of the angel of death". God did not say, "When I see the blood, plus your understanding, your efforts in faith and obedience and your refusal to submit to fear, then I will pass over you and spare your life". It's the blood of Jesus that saves, heals and delivers you. It's His life that is your life. It's His righteousness that is your righteousness. It's His faith that is your faith. If you think that it's because of *your* faith you will forever be wondering whether you have enough faith. When God looks at you what He sees is the blood of Jesus, the life of Jesus, the righteousness of Jesus and the faith of Jesus – alive and active in you!

God wants it settled in you for once and for all that the salvation, the life, the righteousness which is in you is yours in Christ and is based on *His* faith and is not in any way dependent on you or what you

have done or can do. If you think it is dependent in any way on your faith or your understanding or your “doing”, you will not have the assurance of peace in your heart. When you know that it is Christ’s blood alone that saves, His life that is your sufficiency, His righteousness that has made you righteous, and His faith that has brought this to you and will carry you on, then you will have unshakable peace and joy. Jesus said, ... *“it is finished”*. He has done it. It’s complete. All you need to do is enter His rest. ... *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved*” (Acts 16:31). That’s all God wants; our trust in His finished work. He wants us to believe Him; to rest in Him. His is the only word in the entire universe that is true and dependable. What He has said and done is settled forever. It is sure, it is certain. Rest in Him. Fix your eyes on Him and get to “know” Him because the more you do that the more you will know His word is certain.

Now let’s read verses 7 – 11 again, and reiterate a little before we move on. So, after telling us all the details of his past life and how great he was in the eyes of the world, Paul went on to say:

*... “But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of the faith, that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.”*

Paul had lived in the grey twilight of the Pharasaical ideal, but now the Light of the World had confronted him on the Damascus Road and exposed every hidden detail of his life, and everything was shown in its true colours – all his former masquerading virtues were revealed and exposed as presumptuous sins. As Eph 5:13 (KJV) says ... *“But all things that are reprov’d (exposed) are made manifest by the light.”*

Paul who wrote Romans 7, knowing how wretched the sinful flesh is, who cried out ... *“Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?”* is the one who also knew that it is Christ alone who is the answer. And so now that’s why he so earnestly desires to *“know Christ”* and to *“gain (or benefit from) Christ”* and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings.

He knew his renewal was to be found in the power of the resurrection of his Lord. Paul knew resurrection power is only available to the dead, so he knew that every part of his life had to be put to the cross. *“The fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death”* was no option, it was essential for Christ to be formed in Him in every respect. This was the only way in which he would *“gain (or benefit from) Christ”* and *“be found in Him.”*

Eph 1:3-4 declares ... *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him.”* Every spiritual blessing – the very life, nature and attributes of Christ have been poured into us – all in the big bucket of grace, in our spirit. But for us to benefit from this, it all has to come out of there into our soul (the renewing of the mind) and be demonstrated through our body (words, actions). The biggest barrier to this is our



flesh and selfishness. So, the cross has to be applied. And that's why Paul yearns to participate in the fellowship of His sufferings and to be conformed to His death.

Now it's one thing to know about the facts of the resurrection, but another to have experienced resurrection power personally. And so, Paul is on this pathway where his desire (and example to us) is to live each day in a manner that allows the cross, the fellowship of His sufferings, and conformity to His death, to put to death everything of the sinful flesh and its desires in order that the resurrection power of Christ may bring him into conformity with Christ. That, in Paul's words, it what it means to *"put on Christ and make no provision for the flesh in regards to its lusts"* (Rom 13:14).

That's why Pauls says, ... *"not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of the faith"* (3:9) and he immediately follows this with ... *"that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead"* (3:10-11).

In saying this Pauls is saying, "This One who has demonstrated such love, mercy and grace toward me when I was doomed in sin, and who has made me alive with His life and righteousness, I want to know more and more. I want to know more and experience more of the power of His resurrection that overcomes the encumbrance and sin that so easily entangles me (Heb 12:1). I want to embrace the fellowship of His sufferings because I know without doubt that its only when these old ways of selfishness and pride are put to the cross that resurrection power can bring life and fruitfulness out of death."

This is the mighty Apostle Paul, very conversant with the Scriptures, who was commissioned to bring us the true gospel of Christ, and who, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, wrote most of what we understand of the "in Christ" message, who is crying out, ... *"that I may Know Him"* ... *"that I may gain Christ."* Why? Well, for the following reasons:

### **1. To Know Christ More and More.**

Paul is not just seeking to increase the contents of his brain. He does not want to know more *about* Christ, rather, he wants to continually deepen his intimate, personal experiential knowledge of Christ. When you love someone and they love you, you want to get to know them more and more and spend more time with them. This is an ongoing desire. Paul probably knew Christ better than anyone else but He wanted to deepen this experiential knowledge more and more because he wanted it to affect his daily life more and more. He wanted to be transformed more and more by Christ who was his life, his righteousness and his all. He wanted to be a reflection of the Christ within him. Paul wanted to ... *"gain Christ"* and be ... *"found in Him"*. This was his response to the unconditional love he was given by Christ – to love in return, with every fibre of his being.

So, when folks are looking around where will they "find" you or me? Will your or my conversation and actions be a reflection of Christ to the point they say, "Oh, there you are ... hidden in Christ"?

### **2. To Know and Experience More of His Resurrection Power**

Paul knew all about the war that was going on within him and every other believer in Christ – the war between spirit, which in Christ dwells, and the flesh, which is still corrupted by sin.



Rom 8:10 ... *"If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness".*

Rom 7:18-24 ... *"For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want. But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good. For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?"*

But Paul also knows and provides the answer to this question:

Rom 7:25 ... *"Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord"!*

And therefore, he cries out ... *"that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection."*

We hear this cry in Eph 1:17-21, in Eph 3:14-21 and in Col 1:9:11

It's the resurrection power of Christ that frees us from the bondages of sin – the pulls of the flesh. This is how we ... *"put on the Lord Jesus Christ"* (Rom 13:14).

We may well know and accept the fact of history – the resurrection of Jesus Christ – but have we experienced the power of His resurrection at work in us to lift us out of the imprisoning entanglements of the sins that so easily beset us?

Rom 8:12-13 ... *"So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh — for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live".*

2 Cor 4:7-11 ... *"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves; we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh."*

A tell-tale sign of how well and intimately we "know Christ" is the degree to which the "power of His resurrection" is operative in our lives.

### **3. To Embrace the Fellowship of His Sufferings**

Only Christ, the sinless substitute, was qualified to suffer and die to liberate mankind from sin. So, this is not the suffering Paul seeks. Paul seeks to enter into the sufferings of Christ for a different reason. He knew that Christ in him was the target of Satan's persecution and attacks and so he wanted to be inseparably united, in abiding fellowship, with Christ so that he would be able to respond to the suffering in the strength of His mighty resurrection power. All Paul wanted was that Christ would come forth and be demonstrated in his life as a result of the "breaking" of suffering. He wanted to embrace

Christ's suffering that everything of self and the flesh would be broken off, so that the beauty of Christ would be released from within him to be seen in his attitude, conversation and actions. It's the breaking of the alabaster vial that liberates the beautifully fragrant perfume it contains.

Sharing in the triumphant life of Christ is possibly only to the degree we share in His sufferings. We must share in the "cup of His sufferings" if we will share His throne. The cross is the only pathway to the throne.

After Paul says ... *"that I may know Him in the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings"* ... he adds the statement, ... ***"being conformed to His death"***.

The more we receive a revelation of Christ, the more we see of Him and come to know Him, the more this will expose the sin and pulls of the flesh, and more we will desire to put these to the cross and to death, so that more of the resurrection power of Christ will bring forth the life of Christ in us into our every thought, word and action. Resurrection power is only available, and only has meaning, to those who have died.

... *"being conformed"* (Present passive participle) is an ongoing action. This is a daily submission to the way of the cross. ... *"not my will, but Thy will be done."*

#### **4. To Experience and Walk in Resurrection Life**

... *"in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead."* This tells us why Paul wanted to ... *"know Him in the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death."*

This statement of Paul has nothing to do with a fear concerning his eternal security. He is not trying to "do" something in order to ensure that he will be raised from the dead to live in heaven for eternity. For just a few verses back in chapter 1 he has assuredly stated that ... *"For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus"* (1:6) and ... *"for to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain"* (1:21)

In this statement what Paul is saying is that he desired to experientially "know" Christ and his resurrection power and to participate in the fellowship of His sufferings, in absolute and unconditional obedience no matter the cost, in order that, in and through this intimate union and knowledge, Christ, and Christ alone, may be seen in him. His desire is to live the Christ life in a manner that will be a preview of the life he will live in heaven when he has put on "perfection". He knows that in this body of corruption he will not attain to that "perfection" but he wants to have his mind renewed as much as possible to get as close to "perfection" as possible. His driving desire is that ... *"He (Christ) must increase and I must decrease"* (Jn 3:20).

Also, we can add to our understanding of what Paul means by ... *"that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead"* if we compare the two words used in the Greek text that are translated into the one common word "resurrection" in our English text.

In verse 10 the word for resurrection is *anastaseōs*. It means "to stand up", "raising up", "resurrection". In the Greek mind the living were **"standing up"** and the dead were "lying down".

In verse 11 the word used for resurrection is *exanastasin*. Basically, the same root word (*anastasis*) is used in both verses but to the one in verse 11 a prefix (*ex*) is added. This little prefix means “out”, or “out of”. Now this is the only place this word (*exanastasin*) is used in the entire Bible. So, Paul is very likely playing on words here for emphasis. The “out of” is being emphasised.

In 2:12 he has told us to “work **out**” or “**out** work” our salvation. By this he means that the salvation, Christ who is in us, must be **brought out** and “worn on our sleeve”, or seen in our attitudes, words and actions. Christ must be brought out and made visible. Here in 3:10, 11 he reinforces this thought by his word play. Here he is saying, “I don’t want to plod along in life living in a manner that cannot be distinguished from those who are ‘dead’. I want to ‘know’ Christ, His resurrection power, fellowshiping with Him in His sufferings, and being conformed to His death to such a degree that every bit of deadness and self is eradicated, so that nothing of me can be seen, and that His life and resurrection power operating in and through me may cause me to **stand out** so different, so pure, as if it were Christ Himself with whom you were interacting.”

The Father’s purpose in saving us is that we exhibit the resurrection life – the **outstandingly** pure, holy, loving life of Christ. So, we must ask ourselves, “Is Christ in His purity, holiness and love being seen in me? Is this outstandingly obvious.” Eph 1:4 ... *“just as He (the Father) chose us in Him (Christ) before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him.”*

Compared to all eternity, the time allotted to us here on earth is brief. Soon it will be forever too late to suffer for and with Christ, in order that we may attain to and demonstrate the outstandingly pure resurrection life. What a mistake it is to fritter away the precious moments in things that are of no lasting value. So, the challenge before us is, will we pray and ask that ... *“I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death?”*

No doubt, if any of us knew that today would be our final day, we would wish we had made Christ the very passion and focus of our existence.

**V 12** ... *“Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus”.*

Paul knows that he is not “perfect”, but that there is a day when, finally, he will be transformed and presented “perfect” in heaven. He knew he was on a journey growing in the grace and knowledge of Christ (2 Pet 3:18). He knows that the best is yet to come, and that’s where his attention is focussed.

While he is fully aware that he is not yet “perfect” he sees the “finishing line” and, for him, it’s not too far away now. His heart’s desire, every fibre of his being, is directed towards the goal of “finishing” this race. He so wants Christ to be seen in him in everything he thinks, says and does. Through his life’s hard experiences, he has come to know Christ and his power to deliver. He has fallen in love with his Saviour and seen the power of Christ’s life and love flowing out of him and transforming his enemies as well as the unsaved. The more he has entered into the fellowship of Christ’s sufferings the deeper has been his revelation of Christ and His unfailing love and this has driven him on to know Him even more. So, Paul knows nothing else but to ... *“press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus”.* Like a hound that has picked up the scent of the prey, he relentlessly pursues the intimate knowledge of Christ and the hope set before him. This is the Father’s purpose, that Christ be formed in him, so with every ounce of his being he ... Presses on to lay hold of the prize.

**V 13-14** ... *“Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”*

In his pursuit of the prize of attaining to ... *“the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ”* (Eph 4:13), which status he says he has not yet achieved but that he has the finishing line in view, Paul says there is one thing he has attained – he has learned to put the past aside, not wasting his strength and energies on past vain regrets, but to focus on what is ahead. He knows that there is nothing we can do to alter the past, but there’s everything we can do to make the most of the future. So, every ounce of his attention is directed to this one central purpose, like many little tributary streams flowing toward and into one mighty river, he presses on toward the goal of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Whether the past represents successes or failures, our focus must only be on what lies ahead, that for which Christ apprehended us. Yes, we must in humility always remember that Christ has saved us from sin and shame, and yes, we must learn from our mistakes, but anything of self-importance, worldly achievements, resting on our laurels – all of that must go. Remember Jesus’ words ... *“Whoever loses his life for My sake shall find it”* (Matt 16:25). We are to press on – seek fresh grace for each new day to grow more in our knowledge of Christ. If we have experienced a past of failures, we are not to look back in condemnation for ... *“there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus”*. We cannot progress without this proper forgetting what lies behind.

Failures occur when self rises to the fore. Paul is saying, as we progress in life we should not waste time looking back and stalling on past failure but rather press on, fix our eyes on Christ and draw near to Him and learn Christ, let the fellowship of His sufferings deal a death blow to self, let His resurrection power be the liberating force at work within us, so that He, Christ, and not self, is who we present outwardly and outstandingly to our audience – and all the more as we continually move forward in Christ.

Don’t look back and try not to look too far into the future or you will miss the more immediate blessings we have and are to experience in Christ. The best testimony we can bear is not so much what Christ has done in the past in our lives, but the beauty of our current and growing knowledge and expression of Him.

So, keep the goal in view, don’t be drawn by side attractions which are ever present. Press on, or you will go backward. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you the *“hope of His calling”* (Eph 1:18), *“the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”*

**V 15** ... *“let us therefore, as many as are perfect, have this attitude; and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you.”*

*“Perfect”* here is not the perfection of holy attainment, but the maturity of those who have *“put away childish things.”* Our spirit, the “new man” – Christ in us is “perfect.” It’s our unrenewed mind (soul) and bodies that are not perfect due to the corruption of sin. So, “perfect” here referring to those who have attained the spiritual posture or mind frame which will ultimately lead to perfection.

An example helps: If you are in a strange city and are unsure of your directions and you ask a local person for help, and they show you the route to follow to get to your destination and you follow these instructions, once you are on your way and you know you're now on the right route that does not mean you have arrived at your destination. It just means you're on your way there and sure to get there.

So, the "perfect" are those with the right mind set, knowing where they are headed – those pressing on toward the goal.

God did not make us "puppets" to be manipulated or infants to be commanded and controlled, He made us men and women with minds that can be disciplined and transformed to align with the Spirit of Christ within us. We have to "run the race", "wrestle", "follow after", and "press on toward the mark."

... *"and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you."* Because the nature of the God we serve is gracious and merciful, if we have a "different" attitude, if we are "otherwise minded," right now or at any stage along the way, in due course, provided our hearts are sincere before the Lord, He will graciously open our eyes, get us back on track and cause us to walk in His will in the Way. He will not let us stray into disaster, but rather, He will tenderly steer us back into the Way. If we sincerely want to know and walk in God's will for our lives, He will reveal Himself and His purposes to us and lead us accordingly, even if we falter from time to time – for ... *"He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus."*

Ps 32:8 ... *"I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you should go; I will counsel you with My eye upon you".*

Heb 12:1-2 ... *"let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, **fixing our eyes on Jesus**, the author and perfecter of the faith".*

What is required of us is to press on with our eyes fixed on Christ, so that we can follow His counsel and eventually ... *"apprehend that for which we were apprehended by Christ Jesus."*

**V 16** ... *"however, let us keep living by that same standard to which we have attained."*

Heb 3:6 (KJV) ... *"But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end."*

So, press on and keep on pressing on.

**V 17-19** ... *"Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us. For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things".*

Paul lived what he taught, and he's encouraging us to do the same. He is not being prideful here in calling for the saints to follow his example – he was an example in life and doctrine to all of us who would follow him as he followed Christ.

1 Cor 11:1 (KJV) ... *“Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.”*

Paul, who earlier declared ... *“For to me to live is Christ”*, is so confident and assured in his intimacy with Christ, and he wants that for us all. He knew the result of an intimate knowledge of Christ would be that we would acquire and reflect the beauty of the Lord. If we are friends with the Lord, we most assuredly will be *“transformed into the same image”* (2 Cor 3:18).

The very same Holy Spirit who, long ages ago, worked in Paul to bring him a revelation of Christ as his life and his all, will work in you and me today to bring us the very same revelation if we have a willingness and sanctified determination to follow Paul on the uncompromising path of devotion and obedience to Christ.

... *“and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us.”* We absorb that which we study. We unconsciously take on the traits and attributes of those who we admire and with whom we spend much time (and that can go in either a positive or negative direction depending on who we are following). That’s why I like to read the biographies of men and women who have lived the Christ life to the full – giants of the faith. To learn from them. And Paul is urging us to look closely and learn from those like himself, Timothy, Epaphroditus, and others whose lives demonstrate what it means to *“press on toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”*

Our walk reveals our character. Our walk in Christ should reveal the true nature of His high calling. We are to emulate those who are growing in Christ and not those who are stagnating.

... *“For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things”*.

These are not enemies of Christ, they’re enemies of the **cross of Christ**. They’re wearing the Christian name but they are not living by the way of the cross. Rather than embracing *“the fellowship of His (Christ’s) suffering”* and *“being conformed to His death”* they have their minds set on earthly things, self-satisfaction and self-glorification. They have turned their liberty into license. What the cross was ordained to destroy they are embracing. They even glory in their shame. They wear the Christian name, but they are devoid of the Christian spirit. And Paul knows this is the pathway to destruction and failure, and this he knew grieved his Saviour and Lord, and this caused him to weep.

Paul wept because he was a *“partaker of the sufferings of Christ”*, and everything which grieved Christ, with whom he was one, caused him to grieve. This in itself presents us with a great lesson:

Many times, when a believer fails and falls from grace, other believers around them delight in discussing their frailties and failures, getting some satisfaction from spreading the scandal and gossip. This behaviour adds fuel to the fire rather than being remedial. If we are not prepared to enter our closet and weep in intercession before God for the fallen brother or sister, we should not go out and discuss their sins with others. In fact, if our hearts are not grieved by their failure and sin we should get on our knees before God and ask Him to give us a heart of compassion, the heart of the Father.

So, let us not be among those who are “enemies of the cross” but rather be those who embrace the cross of Christ and allow it to deal a death blow to all of our “appetites” for shame and earthly things,

things of no eternal value, so that Christ who lives in us may be liberated and seen and heard in our lives.

Let us “set our minds on the things above” (Col 3:2), on Christ, and not “on earthly things” (3:19). Like a watch ‘set’ on the GMT time standard, which ensures we have the ‘right time’, we must ‘set’ our minds on Christ so that His life may be seen in us.

**V 20-21** ... *“For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself”.*

The Roman citizens’ allegiance was to the Emperor, and his or her responsibility was to abide by the decrees and laws of the empire. Similarly, the Christians allegiance is to Christ, and his or her conduct is to be regulated by His Word. As we walk in accordance with the decrees of the Sovereign One we enjoy the protection afforded to every citizen of heaven. Nothing can separate us from the love of God (Rom 8:38-39).

More than that, the Roman citizen had an air and confidence in the way they carried themselves and were therefore easily distinguished from the rest of the people. As citizens of heaven, our walk in Christ should reflect the grace and heavenly attributes that make it evident to everyone around us that we are sons of the eternal Father.

Our efforts are to be directed towards the growth in Christ that Paul has spoken of in the main part of chapter 3, and all the more as the day of Christ’s return draws near. Unfortunately, many have allowed the return of Christ, to take us up to be with him in heaven for all eternity, to fade into being a distant and neglected doctrine rather than an imminent reality about which we should be excited and continually motivated. The reality of the imminent return of Christ should have an acute influence on our life and conduct. It should press us on to the attainment of purity and perfection in our expression of Christ – to the attainment of ... *“the stature that belongs to the fullness of Christ”* (Eph 4:13).

1 John 3:2-3 ... *“Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure”.*

Paul’s citizenship was in heaven, his allegiance and guidance came from above, not from the perverted pulls of the world or the flesh. His mind was on things above. His ear was attuned to *“the high calling of God in Christ.”* So, he walked in the path toward the goal that guaranteed the transformation of *“the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.”*

And so, Paul also reminds us here that the struggle against our flesh and corrupted minds will end at the return of Christ. The day in which He ... *“will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself”* (3:21). The day our transformation is completed! What a day that will be! Until then, our yearning and expectation should be focussed on the moment we get to see our Lord and Lover



Himself. Our heart cry should be ... *“Who have I in heaven but You? And besides You, I desire nothing on earth”* (Ps 75:25).

## **Christ Our Strength and Supply**

... *"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."*

**ENJOY the fact that Christ is our all, and walk in confidence and security**

Paul commences this next section with a conjunctive *"Therefore"* to encourage his readers to stand firm in the light of the positive instructions and negative warnings, which he spoke of in the previous chapters.

### **Philippians Chapter 4**

**V 1** ... *"Therefore, my beloved brethren whom I long to see, my joy and crown, so stand firm in the Lord, my beloved."*

... *"My beloved brethren"* ... *"my joy and crown"* ... *"my beloved."* These are brothers and sisters in Christ who Paul dearly loves and cares for, hence his affectionate heart felt encouragement to them. He knows what's best and wants only the best for them. What's best for them is also best for us!

***"Therefore ... so stand firm (in this way stand firm) in the Lord."*** Once more we have an *"in Christ"* statement and instruction – *"in the Lord."* We are to stand firm ... *"in the Lord."* In Christ.

So, Paul starts off here by telling us to look back, recall and embrace, stand firm, in line with his encouragements, exhortations and warnings, which include:

- Embrace the mindset that puts Christ first, have the motivation that ... *"for me to live is Christ, and to die is gain"*.
- Have and hold to the humble and lowly mindset that is found in Christ, live for others, strive together for the faith, do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit.
- Work out (out work) your salvation – let Christ be *"worn on your sleeves"*. Let it be outstandingly obvious to everyone around that Christ lives in you.
- Rejoice in the Lord, as your object of praise and worship, and in Him as your abiding place, the One in whom you live and move and have your being.
- Embrace the steadfast mindset with the mind fixed on Christ, know Him, be found in Him, know His resurrection power and the fellowship of His sufferings, letting the cross have its way in you. Avoid being an enemy of the cross of Christ, with a mind set on earthly things.
- Learn from and emulate those who are walking steadfastly in Christ.
- Forgetting what lies behind, press on and never give up – live in Christ as a worthy citizen of heaven with the expectancy that His return is imminent, at which our transformation will be completed.

... so that, ... *"in this way"*, **we can stand firm in the sufficiency of Christ** as we look ahead, no matter what we face, to function in unity and stability, fostering perseverance and endurance with absolute confidence **in Christ** who is our strength and supply – our all in all.

Remember, we are not *marching* into battle to conquer. Christ has won the victory and He is the victorious One who lives in us. He said, ... *“it is finished.”* We are to **stand** in the victory Christ has gained for us. We are to maintain, consolidate and enforce the victory that has already been won.

The resurrection power that won the battle against sin and raised Christ from the dead is the power that works in us and enables us to stand firm against all hostilities and all divisions. **Christ** is our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption (1 Cor 1:30). He is the All-Sufficient One living in us!

**V 2-3** (NKJV) ... *“I implore Euodia and I implore Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. And I urge you also, true (yokefellow) companion, help these women who laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the Book of Life.”*

Up to this point in his letter Paul has not focused upon or elaborated on the specific discord that has reared its head, but rather he has pointed to the importance of knowing Christ, embracing His mindset, being conformed with Him, and through this allowing the grace of Christ to be shown to others.

You see, discord occurs between folks when they are at a low ebb in their fellowship with the Lord. A believer cannot be intimate with the Lord and at the same time at enmity with others. When you're filled up with the presence and love of Christ, that's all that will flow out of you. Paul does not elaborate on what it was that was bringing division between Euodia and Syntyche, but we can safely assume they were, at that time, not walking closely with their Lord. The fact that these two women were leaders in the Philippian church sounds a warning to all Christian leaders, who can end up like this if they slacken in their walk with the Lord. So, we must all be careful, Satan will watch for when we slacken our walk with the Lord and he will jump in and cause trouble. It only takes a tiny bit of dirt to gather in the driveway cracks for weeds to find a footing. We don't have to become deeply carnal for the weeds of discord to take root in us, it just takes a little neglect in our relationship with Christ to provide that little 'pinch of dirt' for these weeds to take root and cause strife with others.

So, Paul points out that knowing Christ and constantly walking in Christ is the recipe for unity in the body of Christ. And now he doesn't even reprove those who are party to the disunity, he simply calls them to walk in unity in Christ, operating according to the mind of Christ. Again, we have an “in Christ” statement. ... *“be of the same mind **in the Lord**”* (in Christ). All throughout his letter his focus is on the answer, Christ, not the problem. Paul knows that if we have our hearts and minds fixed on Christ, who is our all in all, there will be unity and blessed fellowship between believers, not discord.

Prior to this in the letter, Paul has dealt at length with the attitude of humility and servitude ... *“the ... attitude that was in Christ Jesus”* which fosters unity, and here he gently speaks to the two main offenders, whose differences are bringing division, and encourages them to ... *“live in harmony in the Lord”* by being ... *“of the same mind in the Lord.”* This Paul had elaborated on in 2:3-5 ... *“Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus.”* All throughout Paul points them, and us, to Christ. ... *“In this way stand firm **in the Lord**.”*

... *“And I urge you also, true (yokefellow) companion, help these women who laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the Book of Life.”* It is not certain that the “companion” was Epaphroditus, but while writing this letter, with Epaphroditus at his side possibly even doing the writing for Paul, a letter to be delivered to the Philippians by Epaphroditus, Paul includes in the letter, in writing, his verbal instruction most likely to Epaphroditus ... *“to help these women who have shared my struggle in the cause of the gospel.”* But what Paul really shows us here, by including Epaphroditus, Clement and *“the rest of my fellow workers”* is that unity and the maintenance of unity is the responsibility of **everyone**. Trouble between two believers can be contagious, and can bring about divisions in a fellowship group. It just takes a little leaven to leaven the whole lump. So, we must **all** be on the alert to immediately help repair any breaches and encourage the offenders to draw close to Christ and operate by His mind set. When one part of the body hurts the entire body feels it and is affected by it, and every part should help resolve the problem. We must always encourage one another in Christ. If we do this, we will walk in constant harmony in Christ.

Paul follows this with more encouragement and admonitions.

**V 4** ... *“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!”*

As we ... *“stand firm in the Lord”*, we are to ... *“rejoice in the Lord”* – always! **In the Lord** – in Christ, as our object of worship, and in Christ as our abiding place. When we fix our minds on Christ to **know** Him and enter into the fellowship of His sufferings and are conformed to His death, allowing Christ to be formed in us, we will stand firm and be unshakable, and we will have every reason to rejoice in Him, and to do this at all times, no matter the circumstances and situations we face.

So dear ones – ... **“in the Lord”** – as our worthy object of worship, and as our secure abiding place – we have every reason, at all times and no matter what the circumstances or situation, to ... *“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say rejoice!”* And remember, this is a word of encouragement coming from a man in chains! Paul knows that nothing can separate him from the love of Christ. Christ is in him and one with him, and the joy of the Lord is his strength. So, his prison cell is ablaze with the Light of Life and in this he rejoices! Christ in you, the hope of glory!

We should not confuse joy (rejoicing) and happiness. Joy is like a thermostat, it sets the temperature, whereas, happiness is like a thermometer, it tells what the temperature is. Happiness is an emotional expression. Joy, and rejoicing, is in no way related to the transients of life’s happenings, whether good or bad. Joy is a fruit of the Spirit of Christ. He is the Vine from which the joy sap flows into and through the branches, ultimately bringing about the delicious fruit of the vine for passers-by to partake of and enjoy. Rejoicing is simply evidence of His presence. Rejoicing ‘always’ is evidence of His constant presence as we are continually mindful of Him and walk in constant fellowship with Him.

When Christ was in Gethsemane and on the cross, he was not *happy* at all. That’s why He asked that, if possible, the cup of suffering could be taken away. But in submitting to the Father’s will He went to the cross and ... *“for the **joy** set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame”* (Heb 12:2) because He knew He would be raised in victory over sin and that we would be set free. That impending victory to be brought about by His suffering gave Him reason to rejoice.

As our walk in Christ is constant and continual, so our joy is to be constant and continual ... *“rejoice in the Lord **always**”* (4:1) ... *“Through Him then, let us **continually** offer up a sacrifice of praise to God”* (Heb 13:15).

Paul goes on with another admonition, one which will counter any discord between brethren.

**V 5** (KJV) ... *“Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.”* Or alternatively (NASB) ... *“Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near.”*

When our fellowship with Christ wanes and our heart is cold, this will reflect in behaviour that can be cold, selfish, thoughtless and divisive. Anything but gentle or moderate.

When we look into the Greek and the etymology of the statement ... *“let your moderation be known to all men”*, we could rephrase it as follows: *“Let what all others see in you be humility, steadfast patience, ability to submit to injustice, being disgraced, and to maltreatment without murmuring, hatred or malice, while all the time trusting in the Lord in spite of it all.”* This is the attitude and manner of conduct of Christ as Paul spoke of in 2 Cor 10:1 where he said ... *“I urge you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ.”*

Adding ... *“The Lord is at hand”* to the first part of this verse, Paul reminds us that Christ is both ever present, and that He may return at any time. Knowing this is a powerful incentive to constantly draw near to Christ, to learn of Him, in order to live the meek, gentle, and gracious Christ-life, letting the beauty of Jesus be seen in you always, no matter the circumstances or situation you face. So, as you live in a world of darkness and face abuse, let the character of Christ be formed in you and be evident to all around you. This serves as a strong admonition that we are not to be preoccupied with our issues or welfare, but rather be a positive influence on the people in darkness all around us, so they may find Christ before it's too late. And, again, it also reminds us that a consistent walk in Christ will prevent discord between believers, or others with whom we interact.

Always remember Christ laid aside equality with God, emptied Himself, humbled Himself, laid all rights aside, and took on our sin and shame, in order to redeem us and give us a hope and a future.

Another thing, where you find believers operating in forbearance, gentleness and humility, you will find believers ... *“rejoicing in the Lord always.”*

Paul continues with a further relevant admonition.

**V 6-7** ... *“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”*

Paul, in prison and facing potentially dire outcomes, is not writing this glibly, he is not minimising their struggles, he understands what persecution, injustice and tough circumstances are all about, and he writes with heartfelt feelings. He's basically reminding them, and us, that as containers of the life of Christ we should not be anxious and worrying over adverse circumstances or situations, but rather to take it all to Christ, and leave it with Him. He is far greater than all our troubles, and the One in whom we will find strength and peace in the midst of the storms of life.

The Greek word for anxiety (*merimna*) has to do with the “dividing of the mind”. Anxiety is the opposite of joy and peace. Anxiety pulls the mind away from joy and peace. James tells us that the person with a divided or double mind is ... “*unstable in all his ways*” (Jas 1:8). Anxiety strangles joy and peace.

It’s all about where we are focussed ... “*casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you*” (1 Pet 5:7) ... “*For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace*” (Rom 8:6).

Anxiety cannot provide anything positive; it can only weaken. Anxiety implies lack of trust in Christ, and it is an obstacle to the channels of grace. We certainly don’t want that, so let us heed Paul’s advice. Paul gives us the alternate or antidote to worrying, he says ... “*by **prayer and supplication with thanksgiving** let your requests be made known to God.*” Three things: prayer, supplication and thanksgiving. Our requests must go through this channel or process.

This needs a little explanation.

- ‘**Prayer**’ is two-way conversation with God. We speak to God and He speaks to us, primarily by His Spirit and through His word, but also through preaching, words of knowledge or wisdom, through circumstances and sometimes dreams or visions.
- ‘**Supplication**’ is the translation of the word δεήσει (*deēsei*) which comes from the root word δέω (*dēō*) which means ‘to bind’, ‘tie’, or ‘confine’. A good verse to help understand this comes for Matthew’s gospel, where Jesus said:

Matt 16:18-19 ... “*I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.*”

Note: “*Shall have been bound*” and “*shall have been loosed*” are correct translations of the perfect passive participle. Unfortunately, some translations do not get this right.

We go to God in prayer to find an answer to whatever issue is facing us. Supplication is that the form of prayer that seeks to know what God’s view on the matter is, what has been “bound” or “loosed”, allowed or disallowed, with respect to our request, so we can understand what God’s will is for us, or the situation at hand. With this knowledge of God’s will we can act upon it with ‘**thanksgiving**’ and walk in absolute peace.

- ‘**Thanksgiving**’ – God knows everything about us, all our concerns, before we bring them to His attention. So, in bowing before Him in prayer and supplication with thanksgiving to bring Him our requests we are not so much informing Him of something He knows nothing about, but we are expressing our absolute **trust** in Him, who knows everything about us, to bring us to a place of absolute peace in the midst of the storms of life. The key here is “**thanksgiving**”. It comes from the inner acknowledgement of Jesus’ words ... “*apart from Me you can do nothing*” (John 15:5) and it is an outward statement of an inward trust and confidence that He is... “*able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think*” (Eph 3:20). The focus of our attention is not on the trouble that confronts us but in Christ who is our peace. Our

rejoicing and thanksgiving are not a matter of how we rejoice but in whom we rejoice ... *“rejoice in the Lord”* (4:1).

We should always remember that **seeds of discouragement and anxiety cannot gain root in a heart of gratitude**. A heart overflowing with gratitude has no room for worry.

When we cease to fret and be anxious, when instead we trust God with all our heart, when we lean not upon our own understanding, when we operate in accordance with His revealed will and ‘tie’, or ‘bind’ or ‘confine’ ourselves to His will and are thankful that He knows what’s best and is looking out for us, we can go forward in confidence and peace because ... *“the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”*

God may not change the adverse circumstances that face you, but He will give you peace and assurance that He is in control and that, ultimately ... *“God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son”* (Rom 8:28-29). Conforming us to the image of His Son is God’s primary goal and He will use tough circumstances if necessary to bring us to “learn Christ”, to “gain Christ”, to “be found in Him”. When we “find” our identity in Christ and rest in Him and His completed work we will be at perfect peace in the midst of any storm – for if we are “found in Him” we will be “found in Peace”. As Christ is Peace and just as light dispels and eradicates darkness, so anxiety and unrest cannot exist in His presence.

... *“the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will **guard** your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”* Here Paul is using a military term, “guard”, which the people of Philippi would understand being under Roman military rule. It means that the peace of God shall guard, as with an impenetrable military garrison or an impenetrable military fort, your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. This is the means by which we take ... *“every thought captive to the obedience of Christ”* (2 Cor 10:5) and enter into a peace beyond natural human comprehension. God may not necessarily remove the problem, but He will garrison our minds and hearts with His supernatural peace. Calm will replace anxiety in our minds and thoughts. And remember, it’s when our hearts and minds are “in Christ” they are in that secure and peaceful place.

As mentioned right at the beginning of our journey through Philippians, peace is not is not motionless quietness; it is the absence of strain or friction that would hamper smooth running motion. Peace reigns when man moves in Christ in perfect unison, allowing man to joyfully cooperate with man without strain or friction, and in doing so bring glory to God. So, then as we walk in Christ, His grace and peace bring to us the supernatural ability to cope with difficult circumstances with praise on our lips, with thankful hearts, and with joy and peace of mind.

Peace really means ‘to join’. A ‘joining’ between our heart and Christ. Our hearts and minds ... guarded **in Christ Jesus**. A person and their Lord fitted together and becoming one, establishes a communion of innermost peace. There is no ‘friction’ or reluctance, just one graciously living and having their being **in the Lord**, enjoying the peace of God which passes all understanding.

**V 8** ... *“Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.”*



*“Finally”* – literally *“as to the rest”* – designates the last of the imperatives Paul is giving in this part of his letter where he discusses the detail of how we are to ... *“so stand firm in the Lord”* (4:1).

The word translated *“dwell on”* or *“think on”* more literally means to *“recon, calculate, take into account”*, implying that we must *“intently focus, carefully consider and take into and keep in our minds”* the wholesome things listed.

We are presented with two concluding imperatives that will assist us in the process of renewing of our minds to align with the mind of Christ and be established in His peace. As we diligently align with these imperatives we will see all divisions, like the differences between Euodia and Syntyche, dissolve and be replaced with harmony and peace in our relationships with one another.

The penultimate imperative is:

Constantly dwell on, or focus your mind upon the following things:

- *Whatever is true*

In a law court people are to speak ‘the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth’. That just means they must not lie. Their testimony may contain repulsive things, like seeing a person being murdered, and may be a true statement, but that is not the ‘truth’. When the Bible speaks of ‘Truth’ and things that are ‘true’ these correspond to God, who is the Truth. God’s Word is truth. Jesus said ... *“I am the way, the truth and the life.”* Truth is found in Him. We are therefore encouraged by Paul not to merely think or dwell on accurate things, but to set our minds upon things which reveal Christ, who is the truth, to us. This is what ‘putting on the mind of Christ’ is all about.

- *Whatever is honourable or honest*

Things that are worthy of honour. Things that are dignified.

- *Whatever is right or just*

To be just is to be right with God. So, things that are right or just are those things which accord with the standards of our Heavenly Father.

- *Whatever is pure*

Pure things are unblemished and blameless.

- *Whatever is lovely*

That which is amiable, agreeable and morally pleasant

- *Whatever is of good repute*

Those things that are fair, gracious, morally attractive and appealing

- *The things of moral excellence, virtue or uprightness*

- *The things which are worthy of praise*

This is the inventory of commendable and wholesome things that should occupy our minds, and influence our attitudes, words and actions.

Then, Paul turns our attention to his own life and teachings in issuing his final imperative.

**V 9** ... *“The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.”*

In verse 8 the word “**whatever** things” (a quantitative relative pronoun) is used – it is general as Paul is encouraging the believers to embrace all possible things which are true, honest, right, pure and so on. However, in verse 9 a definite relative pronoun is used “**these** things”, as Paul is not referring to general matters now but rather the specific things he has taught the Philippians and the specific things they have seen in him and learned from him.

In saying ... “**practice these things**” Paul moves us from the thinking and ‘dwelling’ on commendable and wholesome things, those things he has spoken of and shown through his personal practice, to **putting this all into action**. He is spurring us on to live out the Christ-life. To work out, or out work, our salvation.

This may be unnecessary as the character of our attitude, words and actions is inevitably determined by our thoughts. Luke 6:45 ... *“The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart.”*

However, Paul considers it necessary to spur us into action. His life and teaching have centred around Christ and Him crucified; around the Cross. He has taken up his cross and followed Christ and encourages us to do the same.

As the mountain climber follows the footsteps of the Sherpa, who knows the safe route up the treacherous Tibetan Mountain, so Paul encourages us to follow in his footsteps as we journey through the challenges of life.

When we read through all the epistles of Paul and through the accounts of his missionary journeys in the book of Acts, we see a person who, more than anyone else, certainly lived the Christ-life to the full. His life was a testament to that which he preached. He walked the talk. He left behind an amazing legacy – a life that expressed Christ in attitude, word and action regardless of the situation or circumstances he faced. He was a role model to other believers and wanted them to “gain Christ” and advance to maturity in Christ so that they in turn could be an example to others.

Paul wanted the Philippian believers, and us, to be established in Peace. He is saying to us if you fix your mind on Christ and keep before your mind the pure, holy, lovely things and walk in the truths he has passed on, that we would walk in unshakable peace and confidence in the midst of whatever pressures we are were facing. For the reward for meditating and acting in accordance with the word of God is that ... *“the God of peace will be with you.”* If He who is Peace is in and with you in the midst of the storm you are assured of peace.

We do well to ask of ourselves: Have we so embraced Christ and are hidden in Him to the point that our life is an example for others to follow, so that, like Paul, we can confidently say to others ... *“the*

*things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you?”*

Now as we approach the end of Paul’s epistle to the Philippians, we will see something of the true heart of grace and humility displayed by the Apostle. The little things many of us would ignore or not bother about, he gives his full attention and recognition. Not only that, but he always throws the light of Christ onto, and gives praise to his Lord for, every form of assistance rendered to him, no matter how small it may seem to the one offering the service.

**V 10-13** ... *“But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned before, but you lacked opportunity. Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.”*

Now Paul graciously refers to the thoughtfulness and care the Philippians have shown him while in prison, and lifts them up before the Lord with rejoicing and thankfulness. Paul sees and accords everything that happens to him as being in and from Christ, for he relates the Philippian generosity to Christ – *“I rejoiced **in the Lord** greatly”*, implying that it was Christ in them stirring them up to assist Paul by giving to Him, so accordingly he praises the Lord.

Paul is always quick to mention the little heard-of people for their help. Another example is found in 2 Tim 1:16 ... *“The Lord grant mercy to the house of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains.”* Onesiphorus, about whom we know very little, may not have realised what a great blessing he had been to Paul, but Paul makes certain he gets recognition and appreciation, and accordingly he lifts Onesiphorus before the Lord in prayer. This shows us that we may not all be a “Paul” but we can be a “Paul helper.” The “Pauls” around us also need refreshing glasses of water or other seemingly “little” forms of assistance, and we should be alert to the leading of the Spirit to render assistance. We must not hold back thinking these little seemingly insignificant forms of service are unnecessary, or that we will be seen as being presumptuous. A true man of God, like Paul, will be quick to humbly acknowledge their need and appreciation for any help, no matter how seemingly little it may be.

Then in a gracious manner, Paul reminds us that he is in no way dependent on his circumstances, whether they are good or bad, and that they will never be his master. He says ... *“for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.”* He has learned beyond doubt that Christ is the All Sufficient One, his sustainer at all times and in all circumstances. Paul knew that even out of the “dark” times he would see, receive and be able to share something of the *“unsearchable riches of Christ.”* He knew that regardless of the circumstances he faced he would receive of *“the riches of God’s glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man”* (Eph 3:16).

We may be quick to see lack or adverse circumstances as God's disfavour, and times of plenty as times of His blessing, but to do this is wrong. Like Paul, whose contentment remained unchanged, we must learn and know that all seasons, all sets of circumstances, have purpose because our lives are under the hand and care of a loving heavenly Father who ... *"causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son"* (Rom 8:28-29). For this we can and must ... *"rejoice in the Lord **always!**"*

When Paul says ... *"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me"* this comes from one who has encountered just about every adverse set of circumstances and situations possible, and come out victorious every time. No matter what he faced or which pit he was in, he steadfastly, in the strength of the One who was his life and his all, proclaimed the good news, the gospel of redeeming grace. Because he lived by the way of the cross, he walked in resurrection power ... *"**Him that strengthens me.**"* This was a transmission of power from Person to person. Christ in Paul, energising Paul to be able to walk in victory at **all** times. The branch drawing sap from the Vine, to produce fruit. Paul was effective in ministry because he drew powerful sap of spiritual energy from the fellowship with Christ in him, his life and his all.

We can learn much from this example Paul set us. Our strength in ministry or success in life in general is never to be dependent on material wellbeing. No matter what you and I face, we need to understand that our strength comes from constantly drinking from the fountain of life, Christ. Only as we walk in a constant fellowship with the living Christ in us, will His life and power flow forth to sustain, propel and give us the strength to succeed in the calling He has prepared for us. This is true whether we are in times of plenty or times of lack. It is not related to material things. Paul was not in any way dependent on material circumstances, and neither should we. Our dependence should only be in Christ. He is the All Sufficient One in us sufficient for every situation. With Christ as our all we can truly say ... *"I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.*

Paul graciously takes the limelight off himself and immediately returns it to the Philippian believers.

**V 14-19** ... *"Nevertheless, you have done well to share with me in my affliction. You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone; for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs. Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account. But I have received everything in full and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God. And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus."*

Paul was quick to weep with those who weep and spent much time in prayer and gave himself in service to the building up of the body of Christ. We see this in his writings: Gal 4:19 ... *"My children, with whom I am again in labour until Christ is formed in you."* Gal 6:2 ... *"Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ."* Eph 4:16 ... *"Christ ... from whom **the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.**"* So, here he commends the

Philippians for their sharing with him in his time of affliction. When he was doing it tough, they sent gifts and encouraged him. For this he applauds them.

... *“Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account.”* While acknowledging that he has been helped by their gifts, he unselfishly shows his joy is more related to their gain, their increase than his own benefitting. His statement ... *“having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God”*, shows once more how Paul relates everything to his Lord. The blessings they have shared with him, he says are good because they are acceptable and well-pleasing to God. He wants them to know that this service of kindness pleases God, and he assures them it will be to the increase of their account.

What we see here when one part of the body of Christ renders service to another part is that there are three parties that are ultimately blessed: the giver, the receiver, and Christ! So, we do well to remember that every act we render has a threefold influence – it affects others, ourselves and Christ. Any neglect we execute has a similar but negative effect – we lose, others lose and Christ is saddened. So, we do well to heed the verse from Eph 4:16 ... *“the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.”* Also, our sensitivity, or lack thereof, to the needs of others is a sign of the vitality of our communion with Christ. When we are walking in union with Christ, we will have His heart of compassion. Think of it this way, every act of kindness and generosity, especially when it costs us dearly, is ... *“a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God.”*

... *“And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”* Not from “my money” said Paul, but from “my God.” Paul may not have the means in and of himself to be able to return the favour, but he certainly knew that he, and they, had an infinite heavenly bank account from which blessings would flow their way. From this heavenly Source they had at their disposal ... *“every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus”* (Eph 1:3). So, whether we have much or little by way of material things, we can always, at all times, through Christ, be distributors of the wealth of His grace. Never forget Christ’s words from Matt 25:40 ... *“Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.”* This also shows us what it really means to see Christ in others! And Paul certainly did this.

In the midst of any set of circumstances or situations, good or bad, Paul had learned the secret of constant dependence on Christ, so he assures us that Christ is our infinite resource, our all. *“The unsearchable riches of Christ”* (Eph 3:8), *“every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus”* (Eph 1:3), the *“riches in glory in Christ”* (Phil 4:19) – all there to repay those who graciously and kindly offer services to others on the behalf of Christ.

It’s no wonder Paul immediately explodes forth in worship to our great and glorious heavenly Father:  
**V 20** ... *“Now to our God and Father be the glory forever and ever. Amen.”*

But he is not quite finished yet.

**V 21-22** ... *“Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren who are with me greet you. All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar’s household.”*

Now, this great Apostle has given a powerful, uplifting, unifying epistle, and has directed praise to Almighty God in everything, but he does not end just there. Everything in Paul's life is saturated by Christian grace. A very loud and clear message conveyed through this epistle is that we are not to be partial – unity is a dominant theme throughout. This comes out right to the end, where Paul's final greeting is to ... *"every saint."* He doesn't single out any one individual, he is impartial, he directs this to *"every saint."* Everyone is equally important to Paul, as they are to Christ.

So, he concludes this mighty epistle with the sanctification of a courteous common salutation, directed to ... *"every saint."*

This reminds me of days gone by, when a minister would stand at the door after the Sunday service to shake the hand and greet **everyone** as they walked out. We don't see this much anymore, now days it seems that the preachers think they're "too important" and being somewhat aloof and they run off and seclude themselves from the "common" folk. Sad. I guess it shows where they really stand with the Lord.

However, from Paul's example, we learn that our supposedly common salutations – our "good morning", "good afternoon", "how are you, good to meet you" and our "goodbye" – should be distinguishable from those of the world by being infused with the love, grace, genuine care, impartiality, and beauty of Jesus. The world is looking on, so we must ask ourselves *"are our common salutations evangelists bearing the gospel of our loving, caring Christ?"* Pauls shows us here in winding up his epistle that our salutations are such important graces of our life in Christ. You never know when a simple greeting given in genuine love may be the catalyst to bring a person to Christ, or the very much needed encouragement to a downcast soul!

Accordingly, Paul faithfully conveys the greetings from his fellow saints in Rome – all the new converts around him, including the soldiers from the Pretorian barracks who are guarding him, and the slaves of Caesars household. These folks would have seen and noticed the presence of Paul's visitor, Epaphroditus, and the gifts he had brought Paul from the Philippian believers, and Paul, no doubt would have told them about his previous involvement in the Christian community in Philippi. So, knowing he was writing a letter of thanks to them to be taken back by Epaphroditus, they had asked him pass on their greetings, which he did.

Oh, that we may shine forth Christ at all times, even as Paul did despite his circumstances. Always thinking of others and encouraging them.

**V 23** ... *"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit."* Paul's epistle begins with, contains and ends with grace. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ! Paul again prays that the *"riches in glory"*, *"the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ"* would flow from heavens bank and uplift these dear ones. This grace is nothing to do with man's virtues or efforts, nor is it something repayable by man, it's God's unmerited gift to us. It's the mighty, active work of God in Christ that brings us salvation, sanctifies us, unites us, empowers us for His duties, and gives us hope of a glorious eternal future.

So, we conclude this study with this most powerful prayer:

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit! Amen!

## Conclusion

Paul writes to people he dearly loves and cares for, in order to help them along the road of grace. All the way through he does not focus on the divisions or troubles they as a Christian community were facing, in fact he doesn't even tell us exactly what the strife was all about, but rather he focuses everyone's attention upon Christ, the Author and Perfecter of their salvation – The Answer to our every need, and the very life and All Sufficient One within us.

His heart cry to the Philippians, and to us, right from the start and all the way through is that we would know and trust Christ, and allow Him to be seen in and through us. With words like: ... *"For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus"* ... *"Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you that you are standing firm in **one spirit**, with **one mind** striving together for the faith of the gospel"* ... *"make my joy complete by being of **the same mind**, maintaining the **same love**, **united in spirit**, intent on **one purpose**"* ... *"stand firm in **the Lord**"* ... *"rejoice in **the Lord** always."*

The reason Paul can pray and say these things is because he knows absolutely and without and doubt that as born-again believers the only life we have is Christ, and the sooner we all focus our attention upon Him and begin to *"**learn Christ**"* and operate according to the ***mind of Christ***, the more Christ will be seen in us and the more we will stand as one united, victorious body of Christ. One Body, with One mind, driven by One Spirit. It was Paul who penned statements like: ... *"Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God"* (Col 3:2) ... *"fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of the faith"* (Heb 12:2) ... *"Christ in you, the hope of glory"* (Col 1:27) ... *"For to me to live is Christ"* (Phil 1:21). But that's not all, because he also, under the inspiration of the holy Spirit, wrote 1 Cor 6:17 ... *"But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit."* Our spirit and the Spirit of Christ become one. When we are born-again, the one "Seed" – the Spirit of Christ – is birthed in us, in our spirit. Although the Body of Christ is made up of many members, we are all part of the one Body with One Spirit – the Spirit of Christ, the Head of the body. *"We, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another"* (Rom 12:5). One Body, made up of many members, but with One Spirit, One Head – Christ. And, to reinforce all he has said up to this final point, that's why Paul's concluding prayer is: ... *"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your (plural) spirit (Singular)."*

So may we go from here knowing and allowing the *one* Spirit of Christ to be *our* (plural) life and our all. May we all, the many individual members of His one Body all operate according to His Spirit and His mind, presenting to one another, and to the world around us, one united loving community of believers. Let us be seen to ... *"rejoice in **the Lord** always"* – Christ our Object of worship, Christ our Abiding Place – Christ our all. For ... *"in Him we live, and move, and have our being"* (Acts 17:28).

To Him be glory, praise and honour."

Amen!