

## PAUL'S LETTER TO THE PHILIPPIANS

***"Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." (1:1-2)***

### **WHAT DOES IT SAY/MEAN?**

***"Paul and Timothy...to all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi ..."*** - Eleven years before this letter was written, in A.D. 51, Paul, on his first missionary journey (Acts 13-14), ministered in a city called Lystra. There he introduced a young man named Timothy to Christ. On his second missionary journey (Acts 16-18:22), Paul went back to Lystra to encourage the churches and invited Timothy to be a pastoral apprentice under his ministry. After being led by the Lord in a dream to go to Macedonia, Paul made his first ministry stop in the town of Philippi.

Paul and his team set out to teach the gospel and begin a new church. He first sought out those who already had a belief in God, usually of the Jewish faith. He found such a group one Saturday morning at the edge of town. In that group was a woman named Lydia, a business owner, who believed the gospel and was saved. Her family was also converted to Christ (Acts 16:13-15).

Paul then took his message to the streets where he encountered a teen girl who was demon possessed. After Christ (through Paul) delivered her from the demon, her owners started a riot and had Paul and Silas thrown into prison (Acts 16:16-24). Just after midnight and while Paul and Silas were worshiping the Lord, a violent earthquake demolished the prison. As a result, the jailer and his family received Christ (Acts 16:25-34). So the first members of the Philippian church were Lydia/her family, a teenage girl, and the jailer/his family.

Eleven years later, in A.D. 62, Paul was in prison for preaching about Christ (Phil. 1:12-14; 4:22). The Philippian church sent money to Paul to help him with his basic needs. They sent a man from their church named Epaphroditus to deliver the money (Phil. 2:25-30). Epaphroditus stayed to help Paul for a while but got really sick and almost died. When he finally was well, Paul sent a thank you letter back with him to the Philippian church. *This is that letter.* He also used this letter to reacquaint them with Timothy, who Paul planned to send to them later (Phil. 2:19-23) and to give them some additional spiritual instruction.

***"...servants of Christ Jesus..."*** - Paul commonly used the word "servant" (doulos) to describe how he viewed his relationship with Christ. It is the word for "slave". This word implies humility, obedience, and absolute loyalty. It is the word used to say

that one person is completely the property of another person. He saw his life as a life to be spent in service to Jesus.

***"to all the saints...together with the overseers and deacons:"*** – Paul addressed those who were in Christ Jesus as "saints" (hagios). This literally means "holy ones" referring to the fact that they were living holy lives (different in character than the world) and that their lives were set apart for God's service (different in purpose than the world). Paul also wanted to make sure that he acknowledged the pastors "overseers" (episkopos or bishops) and the lay leaders "deacons" (diakonos) of the church.

***"Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."*** – This was also a common blessing of Paul. He wanted grace (charis – the free favor of God) and peace (eirene – peace of the mind/soul) to be in their lives. Notice that Paul said these came from the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. The word used to describe Jesus is "Lord" (Kurios) or master. It was also used in the Greek translation of Old Testament to translate the word "Jehovah". Clearly Paul was describing Christ with Divine language and fully intended for the Philippians to relate to Jesus as God.

### **WHAT DO WE DO WITH IT?**

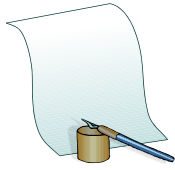
There were many things that caught my attention in today's study. We only have room to mention one.

Nero was the Caesar of Rome in that day and the one who had Paul arrested. Historians tell us that Nero was a prolific writer while he was the ruler of most of the known world. However, isn't it interesting that nothing remains of his writings and yet we are still reading the letters of an itinerant Christian tentmaker named Paul some 1,949 years later? The philosophies and beliefs of an evil man are all but forgotten while the truths taught by Christ's man remain with us even today and are being studied this very day.

How powerful and immortal Nero must have thought himself to be! How humble and submissive to Christ Paul knew himself to be! Christian writer T.R. Glover writes, "...and this is why today people name their dogs Nero and their sons Paul."

The Psalmist said it this way, ***"...Not so the wicked. They are like chaff that the wind blows away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish."*** (Psalm 1:4-6)

*Father, help us to never grow weary in doing what is right. Please remind us that you will not forget the work and labor of love we have shown toward Your name (Heb. 6:10).*



## PAUL'S LETTER TO THE PHILIPPIANS

***"I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart; for whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me. God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus." (1:3-8)***

### **WHAT DOES IT SAY/MEAN?**

After Paul finished the formal greeting part of his letter he expressed his gratitude for all those in the Philippian church. We are not certain how many times Paul visited Philippi over the years of their friendship. The Scriptures mention only three: *First* - when he began the church (Acts 16:12-40); *Second* - after he planted the church in Ephesus he decided to go back to the churches in Macedonia to encourage them (Acts 20:1-2); *Third* - after he discovered a Jewish plot to capture him in Greece he returned to the churches in Macedonia before going on to Troas (Acts 20:3-6).

Regardless of how many times he did or did not visit them, Paul held them dearly in his heart, ***"I thank my God every time I remember you... It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart..."***. He mentioned three reasons for this strong affection, ***"how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus."***

1. Paul began the church - ***"because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day"***. There is something special about being the pioneer who poured blood, sweat, and tears into establishing the gospel in a certain area and who nurtured the new people of God in their early days of following Christ.
2. Paul was continually blessed by their partnership with him throughout the years - ***"because of your partnership in the gospel...until now... for whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me."*** They must have also had a great affection for him. It appears they kept in touch with him through the years and periodically sent him human/financial resources to help spread the gospel of Jesus Christ (Phil. 2:25-30; 4:14-16).

Another example of their sacrifice for the Kingdom of God and partnership with Paul can be found in 2Corinthians 8:1-5. In this passage, Paul was urging the Corinthian churches to give generously to help Christians in another city who were starving and he used the Macedonian churches (of which Philippi was one) as an example.

3. Paul enjoyed watching God's work in their lives as their faith grew and matured – ***"being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."*** It blessed Paul and encouraged his own faith to watch those he loved serve Christ and walk in the light of God's Truth. He was confident in the faithfulness of God to complete the work He had begun in His people right up to the time of Christ's return.

### **WHAT DO WE DO WITH IT?**

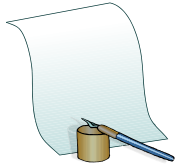
Again, many things are worthy of application from today's study. Let's look at one. I was touched by the sense of partnership Paul felt with the Philippian church. It impressed me that Paul and the Philippians felt such a love and mutual respect with one another. They had a strong commitment to fulfill the Great Commission. Their partnership contained a shared goal, burden, conviction, and a willingness to sacrifice.

I was thinking about how it all began for them. The church began with a Jewish family who had a strong, matriarchal, white collar leader in Lydia, a Gentile teen girl with lots of emotional scars, and a Gentile, working class, jailer and his family. Not exactly a group of people who would come together under natural conditions. I would assume they had very little in common, socially speaking. And yet they had all encountered the love of God. All of them experienced God's mercy, grace, and the power of Christ's Cross and Resurrection. They were forgiven, adopted into God's family, and the Spirit of the Living God came to live within each one of them. They were spiritually born again. Because of this they found enough commonality and sense of unity to work together and advance God's Kingdom. Eleven years later the church seemed to be healthy and strong.

I am grieved over the American church. My heart breaks to see it in its current condition. There seems to be little loyalty among believers regarding the advancement of the gospel. Church has become a competing organization that sells a spiritual service rather than a gathering of believers who have come together for worship, training, fellowship, and deployment. How do you see our church? Why are you there? Will you leave if you find a better offer?

After his initial greeting and in the place where it was customary for the writer to describe his personal well being, Paul associated his personal joy with the well being of the gospel and his ministry partnerships (1:4). For Paul, life wasn't so much about his personal life as it was about fulfilling the mission of Jesus (Matt. 28:18-20). *What an incredible way to live life! Could we live this way...together?*

***"Father, forgive us. Save us from ourselves. Revive the Church. Help us obey."***



## PAUL'S LETTER TO THE PHILIPPIANS

Today's study was preached at Northeast Community Church on Sunday, February 6, 2011. You can hear this sermon at [www.northeastcommunitychurch.com](http://www.northeastcommunitychurch.com). The outline for the message is below.

### Loving God With A Mature Love! (Philippians 1:9-11)

#### Outline of the Section:

- I. Paul/Timothy's greeting to the Philippian church (1-2)
- II. Paul's gratitude for the Philippian church (3-8)
- III. Paul's prayer for the Philippian church (9-11)

#### Today's Message:

1. Our love for God is supposed to grow and develop.

*"And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more..." (9)*

2. Our love for God will grow and develop if we base our love for Him on true knowledge of His nature/character.

*"...that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight...(9)*

3. When we meet and love God based on who He really is, we are inwardly transformed and therefore better prepared to make moral choices, develop a holy character, and think/act in ways that reflect the righteousness of Christ.

*"...so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Christ—to the glory and praise of God." (10-11)*

## WHAT IS GOD REALLY LIKE?

### *What Is It About God That You Love?*

God loves first (John 3:16)  
God extends grace (Rom. 3:24)  
God offers the gift of eternal life. (Rom. 6:23)

God is faithful (1 Corinthians 1:9)  
God is truthful (John 14:6)  
God is compassionate and patient (Exodus 34:6-7)

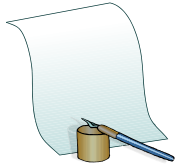
God is omni-present (Psalm 139:7-10)  
God is all knowing (1 John 3:20)  
God is all powerful (Jeremiah 32:17, 27)  
God is eternal (Psalm 90:2)  
God is sovereign (Matthew 28:18)  
God does not change (James 1:17; Hebrews 13:8)

God is holy (Revelation 4:8)  
God is just (Psalm 89:14)

God gets angry (Deuteronomy 9:7-8; 29:23)  
God hates (Psalm 5:4-6; Deuteronomy 16:22)  
God pours out His wrath (Psalm 2:1-6; John 3:36)  
God judges and destroys (Matthew 25: 26-30; Revelation 19)  
God judges and rewards (Matthew 25:19-21)  
God puts some to death (Acts 5:1-11; 1 Corinthians 11:27-30)  
God allows pain and loss into the lives of His people (Job 1 & 2)  
God rebukes and disciplines His people (Hebrews 12:5-11)  
God is jealous (Exodus 20:5)  
God is independent and does not need humanity (Acts 17:24-25)  
God is not accountable to humanity (Job 38-41)  
God created humanity for His glory and pleasure (Isaiah 43:6-7; Ephesians 1:5)

### *Do You Love All of God?*

### *Is Your Love For God Based On The Facts About Him?*



## PAUL'S LETTER TO THE PHILIPPIANS

Today's study was preached at Northeast Community Church on Sunday, February 13, 2011. You can hear this sermon at [www.northeastcommunitychurch.com](http://www.northeastcommunitychurch.com). The outline for the message is below.

### **Loving God Means Loving What God Loves!** (Philippians 1:12)

#### **Outline:**

- Paul's prison experience advanced the gospel. (12)
- A. It took the gospel to the lost. (13)
  - B. It strengthened the faith of the saved. (14)
  - C. It raised the gospel's visibility in the community. (15-18)



### ***Insight into the Heart of a Great Follower of Jesus***

#### 1. The Priority of Paul's Life

*"...the gospel."* (12)

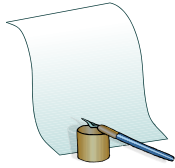
#### 2. The Purpose of Paul's Life

*"...to advance the gospel."* (12)

#### 3. The Philosophy of Paul's Life

*"Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served..."* (12)

*"Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus..."* (1)



## PAUL'S LETTER TO THE PHILIPPIANS

***"As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly." (1:13-14)***

### **WHAT DOES IT SAY/MEAN?**

In our study of verse 12 we heard Paul say that the gospel had actually advanced because he had been thrown into prison for preaching about Christ. In verses 13-18 he gave his readers 3 examples of how it has advanced. We will look at 2 of those examples today.

The *first* way the gospel had advanced because of Paul's imprisonment was - ***"As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ..."*** One of the strategies our enemy uses to keep unsaved people away from God's truth is he often enables those people to build "walls" around themselves that can insulate them from God's people.

These types of relational walls are built with materials such as: believing culture's negative opinions about Christianity, hanging out with only like-minded people who reinforce old ways of thinking, making ungodly priorities/choices, and continuing dysfunctional habits/patterns of daily life. By utilizing some or all of these, the enemy can help a person so distance himself from those who live and proclaim Christ that his exposure to God's truth becomes very limited. God loves these people very much and calls His servants (Christians) to go behind "enemy walls".

This is what God called Paul to do. Caesar's palace guards were, no doubt, a group of high ranking, professionally trained men. By the virtue of their jobs they would naturally have a closed social network. Who would reach these men with the gospel? How would that person get an audience with such people? God's answer?... Have one of His servants arrested and placed under the authority of these men. Brilliant!

Paul had taken advantage of his situation by telling all who would listen about the gospel of Christ and the real reason he was imprisoned. It appears his efforts were fruitful. In fact, through Paul's imprisonment, God eventually had people in Caesar's household (Phil. 4:22).

According to Paul, the *second* way the gospel had advanced because of his imprisonment was - ***"Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have***

*been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly.*” Fear cripples us, doesn’t it? If we are afraid of something we usually don’t go anywhere near it. We can even justify disobedience because of fear. What if we were afraid we would go to jail or be persecuted in some other way if we spoke about Christ publicly? That appears to be the environment in Paul’s day.

Paul’s example of servanthood, boldness, and passion for Christ’s gospel encouraged the first century Christians. In his example they found new courage to speak to others about Christ. Some of those who were afraid and dreaded trouble found new delight in sharing their testimony. Their confidence in God’s Sovereignty had grown and their faith was maturing. Paul’s life shows us the power of a great ongoing testimony.

### **WHAT DO WE DO WITH IT?**

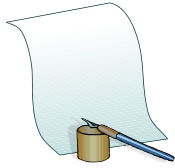
I find it fascinating to look at Paul’s imprisonment, not in terms of being a victim, but in terms of fulfilling an assignment given by the Father (2 Corinthians 5:20). I wonder what would happen if we learned to look at the various events in our own lives this way?

When we face uncomfortable times or when things don’t go according to our own plans do we play the victim card too easily? Does our attention quickly go to our own rights and how unfair the circumstances are? Could we learn to live with the Lord so closely and to trust Him so maturely that when hard times are allowed into our lives, our first response would be one of love and trust? Could we learn to love what God loves so much that we can see any circumstance as an opportunity to advance God’s message?

I also found it interesting to note the way in which God assigned Paul to influence the prison for the gospel. He sent Paul there as a prisoner. He would go as the lowest ranking person there. His influence would come while he submitted to their civil authority. We tend to think that the way we can best influence others is to somehow be in authority over them. We should certainly be responsible with those types of relationships when we have them. But if we are depending upon the power of Christ and His gospel then those things don’t matter so much. The servant can influence his master because the influence comes from God’s Spirit and not by his position or personal magnetism.

Suffering victoriously opens doors of influence for the gospel. It can take us behind the isolating walls of the lost. Suffering can show the character of Christ and the power of His gospel like no other circumstance can, if and only if, the Christian exudes the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-25)...every time.

*“Father, we know you allow suffering to come into our lives. Change our way of thinking about your sovereign decisions. Help us submit to them...trust them...even love and welcome them. Enable us to see everything you allow into our lives as an opportunity to glorify your name and to advance your message. This should be the priority and purpose of our lives. Amen.”*



## PAUL'S LETTER TO THE PHILIPPIANS

***"It is true that some preach out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. The latter do so in love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains. But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice. Yes, and I will continue to rejoice." (1:15-18)***

### **WHAT DOES IT SAY/MEAN?**

In our last study we were reminded of what Paul said regarding the gospel advancing because he had been thrown into prison. In verses 13-18 he gave his readers 3 examples of how it advanced. We will look at the 3<sup>rd</sup> example today.

Paul's imprisonment took the gospel inside Caesar's civil system and household, undoubtedly a difficult group to reach. His time in prison also strengthened and gave courage to other ministers to proclaim the gospel, despite the dangers. And now, the *third* way the gospel had advanced because of Paul's imprisonment was - ***"It is true that some preach out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill..."***

From the list of individual preachers that were strengthened and given courage to preach despite the dangers, two groups of people were formed. If we were to give each group a name, we could call group 1 (the false motives) and group two (the true motives) - ***"whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached..."*** Paul gave a short description for each.

For (the false motives) group he described them as - ***"some preach out of envy and rivalry...preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains."*** He said some were preaching the gospel out of envy and rivalry. This probably means they had personal strife with Paul or strongly disagreed with how he ministered to people or operated his ministry. Their hope was to stir up trouble for him by drawing negative attention on him.

Perhaps they mentioned Paul in their sermons. Maybe they spoke out against him or distanced themselves from his ministry. It could be they ridiculed him, tried to humiliate him, and tried to ruin his reputation so that if/when he was released, not as many people would respect or listen to him.

Paul said they preached Christ out of selfish ambition. Their motives were to fulfill personal interests...their own agendas. They were doing a job for pay. They were building reputations to be profited from later. They were not sincere (pure) in their motives for proclaiming the gospel. This doesn't mean they didn't want the gospel to advance but it does mean they had other motives in the mix.

For (the true motives) group he described them as - *"but others out of goodwill. The latter do so in love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel.* This group who was emboldened by Paul's imprisonment to preach Christ did so out of a love for God, His church, and for the lost. Their motives were out of a desire for the good of all involved. They understood the deeper things of God. They understood the difference between Paul being a "victim" and Paul being on "assignment" to reach the lost. They were not ashamed of Paul and his actions. They were grateful. When they preached they associated themselves with Paul's ministry and helped their audiences see the work of God.

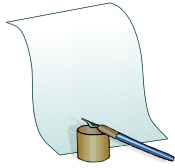
Paul shrugged off the personal vendettas against him and rejoiced that the gospel's visibility in the community had risen substantially because there was a lot more preaching than before - *"But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice. Yes, and I will continue to rejoice."* How could he think this way? How could he look past those who were causing trouble for him? Simple! He was a servant of Christ. His life belonged to Christ and he loved what Christ loved. His life's priority was the gospel. His life's purpose was to advance it. What incredible faith and focus!

### **WHAT DO WE DO WITH IT?**

It was intriguing to see that Paul found joy in the preaching of the gospel, even when those preaching it did not have the right motives. A quick clarification is needed. It is understood from the text that when those with false motives were preaching the gospel they were preaching its content correctly. They were factually correct in their explanations of the nature of Christ and his birth, life, death, and resurrection. Unfortunately, the gospel they preached had not been given permission to affect their own lives to the core. They were orthodox but their hearts were not in the right place. This would be in contrast to those who teach out of a wrong motive and attempt to change the fundamentals of the gospel for their own advantage. Paul would not rejoice over such preaching (Galatians 1:6-9). Unfortunately, this is rampant today.

The gospel has its own power. The truth, by its very nature, influences and impacts separate from that which communicates it. When I was first saved, the evangelist who led me to Christ was later found guilty of stealing sound equipment from the church. It was the Holy Spirit using the truth that opened my eyes, convicted my heart, and led me into a relationship with Christ...not the preacher.

*"Father, help us understand the spiritual power in simply telling people God's truth.  
Help us become truth-tellers to all who will listen. Amen."*



## PAUL'S LETTER TO THE PHILIPPIANS

***"Yes, I will continue to rejoice, for I know that through your prayers and the help given by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance." (1:19)***

### **WHAT DOES IT SAY/MEAN?**

At this point in the letter, Paul shared how he was personally getting along in prison. He told his readers he was doing well because the gospel was doing well. He was happy to report the gospel was advancing *because* he was in prison.

The gospel was shared with Caesar's palace guard and members of his household. Those who were previously fearful about preaching the gospel had found new boldness from Paul's experience. Paul was even excited for those who were preaching about Christ with less than the best motives. He said even in those circumstances more people were talking and thinking about the gospel than before and this caused him to greatly rejoice.

He then stated he would continue to rejoice - ***Yes, I will continue to rejoice...*** for another reason. He would continue to rejoice because he knew that this whole experience would end for his ultimate good. - ***for I know that...what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance.*** Notice the phrase "for my deliverance". Unfortunately, the NIV doesn't give the clearest translation for that phrase. The word "deliverance" is the word (soterian) which is better translated "salvation". So the verse literally says, "...what has happened to me will turn out for my salvation."

Paul's mind is on a bigger picture. He has final victory in mind not just getting out of prison. He knows that his contending for the faith and the faithful striving in this situation will be his witness in the day of judgment. While it is true we do not obtain salvation (enter a relationship with Christ) by works, however, we will reach our final destination only by exercising faith in Christ to the very end (Revelation 2:7, 10). We also know Paul was thinking about the end of his life, because in the very next sentence (verse 20) Paul spoke of having sufficient courage and exalting Christ in life or in death.

Paul knew there were two things that would help him be faithfully courageous in the dire circumstances he faced and would face. He highlighted the Philippians' intercessory prayer and the power of God's Spirit that would come in response to that prayer. - ***for I know that through your prayers and the help given by the Spirit of Jesus Christ...***

Paul needed and depended upon the prayers of his fellow Christians. He understood that it was “through” their prayers that the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Christ would come. As their prayers went up, the supply of the Spirit came down. His dependency upon the prayers of Christians can be found throughout his writings to other churches. He asked for their prayers to be kept safe (Rom. 15:30-31; 2Cor. 1:10-11; 2Thess. 3:2), for his ministry to progress unhindered (Rom. 15:31-32; 2Thess. 3:1; 1Thess. 5:25), so he could proclaim the gospel clearly (Col. 4:3-4) and fearlessly (Eph. 6:19-20).

God ordains the prayers of His people as a means by which He will accomplish His purposes, including His desire for the perseverance of Christians in the faith and for their ultimate salvation. Paul took his responsibility to pray for other believers seriously (Eph. 1:15-19, 3:14-19; Col. 1:9-12; 2Thess. 1:11-12) and he expected his churches to take it seriously on his behalf as well.

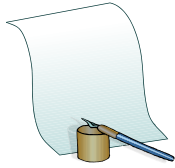
### **WHAT DO WE DO WITH IT?**

Several application ideas come to mind from this text. Did you see the inner connectedness between Paul and the Philippians? They understood they were part of one body (Christ’s body) and had learned to function together in unity. Each part of the body helped the other parts. Each part was dependent upon the other parts fulfilling their roles. There were those who went into the prison and those who prayed and sent resources to support them.

Notice too, Paul didn’t “name it and claim it” when it came to getting out of prison. He had learned to rest in the Sovereignty of God and submit to whatever the Lord decided (2Cor. 12:7-10). He certainly prayed for it but trusted God’s wisdom. The prayers of God’s people made a difference. God gave more resource as God’s people asked for it (Daniel 10:12; James 4:2-3). We are not only to pray for other Christians to be set free from terrible situations but we may instead be led to pray for them to endure it faithfully.

When it comes to the work of God’s Kingdom, it can only progress when the Spirit is at work. Our physical strength nor our creative minds can do the spiritual work in human hearts or in the spiritual realm. Even when Kingdom work has a physical component to it, it is the Spirit that opens the opportunity, provides the vision, shores up men’s hearts, keeps the enemy in check, and brings the final victory (Zechariah 4:6).

*Father, enlarge our hearts. Create within us a large love for other believers. Cure us from the preposterous thought that we are independent of other Christians. Let love compel us to pray for them. Teach our hearts that You respond to our prayers in powerful ways and there are things You will not do for us or others unless we ask for it. Teach us that we are participants with You in the work of Your Kingdom and not side-line observers!  
Amen.*



## PAUL'S LETTER TO THE PHILIPPIANS

Today's study was preached at Northeast Community Church on Sunday, February 20, 2011. You can hear this sermon at [www.northeastcommunitychurch.com](http://www.northeastcommunitychurch.com). The outline for the message is below.

### **The Christian Life!** (Philippians 1:19-26)

#### **Outline of the Section:**

Paul's understanding of the Christian life:

- A. Our prayers and the work of the Spirit (19)
- B. Attitudes toward life and death
  - 1. How to think about life (20-22, 24-26)
  - 2. How to think about death (20-21, 23)



#### **How to Think About Life:**

- 1. Exalt Christ

*I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now, as always, Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. (20)*

- 2. Fellowship with Christ

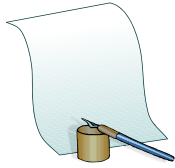
*For to me, to live is Christ... (21)*

3. Be spiritually productive

*If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me... (22)*

4. Assist others on the journey

*...but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, so that through my being with you again your joy in Christ Jesus will overflow on account of me. (24-26)*



## PAUL'S LETTER TO THE PHILIPPIANS

***"I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain...I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far..."***  
***(1:20-21, 23)***

### **WHAT DOES IT SAY/MEAN?**

Our section for this week looks at Paul's understanding of the Christian life. He mentioned three areas. He spoke about the prayers of believers and the work of God's Spirit (Wednesday's study), his attitude toward life (Sunday's study) and his attitude toward death (today's study).

For Paul, his body was the theater in which Christ's glory was displayed. He was committed to bringing honor and glory to Christ with his life (Romans 6:13; 12:1). His life was a yielded vessel through which Christ could convey His own glory. Paul saw death no differently. If his life was to exalt Christ so also would the end of his life. - ***Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.*** Right living ensures right dying. Paul's priority in life was not living. His priority was to serve Jesus (Phil. 1:1). For Paul, both living and dying gave him the opportunity to serve the Lord.

Paul was so confident in life after death that he saw death as an advantage. - ***For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.*** The word "gain" is the word (kerdon). It is a banking term used to describe interest earned on money. Paul was saying that for him to die would be to cash in on both principle and interest and to have more of Christ than when he was alive.

I was thinking back to our last Dinner Theater and our performance of Hamlet. Hamlet, in his famous "To be, or not to be" soliloquy, debated whether it is best to live or die. Neither prospect was pleasant for him. In reading other works of Shakespeare it seems to me he regarded both life and death as evil and wasn't sure which was the lesser of two.

In Paul's view both life and death were blessings...but death was better. - ***I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far.*** It was better because it meant he would be with Christ. Jesus described life after this earth as being in a place prepared for us, a place He will take us to, and a place where we will be with Him (John 14:3). For Paul, death was an opportunity to continue to please the Lord (2Cor. 5:8-9). Death was also better because it meant "to depart" this world. If

Paul were given the choice, to continue living on the earth would be a difficult and sacrificial choice (Phil. 1:23-24).

### **WHAT DO WE DO WITH IT?**

Even a quick study of our North American culture will tell us that we dread and fear death. Untold billions of dollars are spent each year to fight aging and postpone dying. For our beauty conscious, health obsessed, self absorbed culture, death is the worst possible event. For those who believe it is their inalienable right to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness ," death is the biggest spoiler of all.

The saddest point in all this is when Christ's disciples become more comfortable being Americans than being Christians...when we focus more on our earthly citizenship than on our heavenly citizenship. When such emphasis is placed on this life and the comforts it affords, our focus changes. Materialism usurps the place of priority Christ has in our lives. When this happens, the purpose for which we are supposed to live (the advancement of His will) is all but lost.

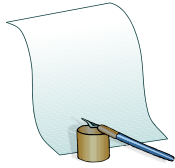
Our lives are given to us so we might exalt Christ in life and in death. I am reminded of our Lord's words in Matthew 10:37-39 when he said, ***"Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me, and anyone who does not take up his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it."***

The Lord is quite serious about what He wants from us...a love that surpasses all other loves, a heart focused on sharing His gospel, and a life lived in sacrifice for Him, even unto death.

I've heard it said before, *"It matters very little to the servant whether he is out in the fields tending the sheep or whether he is waiting on his master at the table. It is service all the same...only it is warmer and lighter in the house than in the field, and it is promotion to be made an indoor servant."*

For the life of a servant of Christ, death should be seen as advancement. It is a promotion to be made an indoor servant and get to serve our master in heaven.

*Father, whether on earth or in heaven, I am Your servant and committed to doing Your will. As always, You choose the place! Amen.*



## PAUL'S LETTER TO THE PHILIPPIANS

***"Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel..."***  
***(1:27)***

### **WHAT DOES IT SAY/MEAN?**

We've already looked at some of the truth in verse 27. Our concentration today will be on the underlined portions above.

Let's remember what was probably on the minds and memories of Paul and the other believers at that time. Since its beginning, Christianity/the church had faced hostility from people in political and religious power. This power was a reflection of the corrupted cultures it served. Years earlier the authorities had crucified Jesus, outlawed the preaching of the gospel, executed James, and imprisoned Peter and Paul several times. They confiscated Christian property and demanded that Christians worship their gods.

Some years later, after the time of Paul's letter to the Philippians, the government would follow evil to another level and make matters worse by feeding believers to the lions as a public sport/spectacle, burning them at the stake, and destroying their Holy Scriptures. This was the volatile environment the early believers lived in.

At the time of this letter, Paul was in prison again. He and other believers were asking the Lord to work for his release. Paul had been thinking about himself with regards to three possible situations: what he would do if he stayed in prison, what he would do if he were released, and what death would be like.

According to Paul's words- *whatever happens...*, it is clear the Spirit had not comforted him with exact knowledge about what was going to happen. He speculated using his past experience with the Lord. He saw the good his imprisonment was bringing (1:12-18). He saw the benefit of being released and continuing to minister to the Philippians and other churches like them (1:22-26). He also understood the great blessing in dying and being in the immediate presence of Christ (1:21, 23). He wasn't sure what he would choose if the Lord were to give him the choice (He didn't!).

The great apostle did not know what would happen and our Father did not answer a prayer for knowledge of the future. Paul didn't appear to be hung up on that fact.

He continued to plan and instruct. He stayed focused on advancing the gospel in the lives of the believers from Philippi. Paul said, - *Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm...*

Paul was more concerned that the Philippians lived in a way worthy of the gospel of Christ than for his personal situation. He understood the spiritual battle and how to contend for the gospel. He knew the gospel could not penetrate behind enemy lines unless he and the other believers were willing to struggle and strive to take it there and establish it there. In order for them to contend for the faith properly, they needed to stand firm in the truth, function as a team and not individually, and not allow the enemy to create fear in them and cause retreat (1:27-28).

### **WHAT DO WE DO WITH IT?**

If we listen to the more prominent T.V. preachers of today we would know that believers are in control by what we think, want, claim, and speak out loud. They teach that believers simply have to pray for something "in Jesus name" and if we have adequate faith, we will have it. Nothing will be withheld from us; not wealth, health, material possessions, or even knowledge.

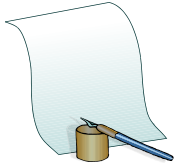
Paul and the early Christians obviously didn't know about this spiritual phenomenon I affectionately call "name and claim it" theology. How much closer to Christ and more advanced than even Paul, are today's believers who know/practice this superior teaching. *Obviously, I am being sarcastic!* I have talked to so many believers who follow such preachers. On the one hand, they admit these concepts do not work in their own lives but on the other hand they are told one day it will work if they only believe enough or plant enough financial seeds (to the preacher's ministry, of course).

The truth is we will not know everything that is in the mind of God. Things will happen to us we do not understand or enjoy. We will not have all the information about our own circumstances and what God is up to. We must learn to function victoriously without all the information. We are to live by faith and live lives based on the truth revealed to us in the Holy Scriptures.

The Lord expects us to keep trusting Him even when we don't know the next step. He requires us to keep cooperating with Him even when we don't understand what is happening to us or around us. Our Father wants us to stand firm, keep obeying Him and continue to contend for His gospel even when it gets uncomfortable, scary, or painful.

Life as a disciple of Christ requires faith over the entire journey. From the moment just before we are saved until the moment we leave this life and enter heaven, we live by faith; not by sight, not by feelings, and not by the world's perspective.

*Father, cultivate in us a higher ability to trust You, even when we don't understand or enjoy what is happening to us or around us. In Romans 10:17, You tell us this kind of faith comes by studying Your Word. Like Paul, help us trust, obey, and continue Your work even when "Whatever happens..." Amen.*



## PAUL'S LETTER TO THE PHILIPPIANS

Today's study was preached at Northeast Community Church on Sunday, February 27, 2011. You can hear this sermon at [www.northeastcommunitychurch.com](http://www.northeastcommunitychurch.com). The outline for the message is below.

### **Real Faith...Real Trust!**

(Philippians 1:27-30)

#### **Outline of the Section:**

Real Faith...Real Trust

- A. Facing the Uncertainties (27)
- B. Living Worthy of the Gospel of Christ (27-28)
- C. Facing Opposition (28-30)



#### **Living Worthy of the Gospel of Christ:**

1. Stand firm in the truth.

*...conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ...stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you... (27-28)*

2. Choose teamwork over personal preference.

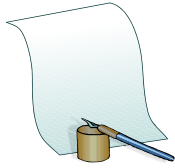
*...conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ...stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you... (27-28)*

3. Devote serious effort and energy to advance the gospel.

*...conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ...stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you... (27-28)*

4. Don't allow the enemy to create fear and cause retreat.

*...conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ...stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you... (27-28)*



## PAUL'S LETTER TO THE PHILIPPIANS

***"...without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved—and that by God. For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him, since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have." (1:28-30)***

### **WHAT DOES IT SAY/MEAN?**

Our context refers to opposition to the gospel and the personal price Paul and the Philippians were paying. Paul told them no matter what happened, they were to do four things: (1) stand firm in the truth (2) stay unified with each other (3) contend for the gospel (4) not be frightened by opposition. Our passage for today gives two reasons why the Philippians did not have to be frightened by their persecutors.

The first reason believers can live fearlessly in the face of great opposition is they know God will use the situation to prove to the opposition that they are on a pathway that leads to final destruction. - ***This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved—and that by God.*** When disciples of Christ stand firm, live unselfishly with others, stay focused on their mission, and refuse to let overwhelming opposition sway them...these very virtues become a ***"sign"*** (endeixis - a pointing out, proof based on evidence) to the unbelievers that something bigger is going on, they are not part of it and Christians are in the right.

Christians, who show such a Christ-likeness in times of persecution, reveal to those who oppose God that He is sovereign, holy, and reconciling the world to Himself through His people. God is at work and we are His workers. There will be those who oppose His work. Because we serve Him, we will undoubtedly get caught in the cross hairs. Whether in this life or in the next, God will right every wrong. We will ultimately be fine. Regarding fear for the opposition, Jesus said it this way, ***"And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."*** (Matt. 10:28, NKJV).

The second reason believers can live fearlessly in the face of great opposition is because they know the opportunity to suffer for Christ's sake is a gift. - ***For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him...*** Perhaps that last statement fell a little flat in your thinking. Suffering for Christ is a gift? Paul said to those who were suffering for their loyalty to Christ and His gospel, it had been granted to them to ***"not only to believe in him"*** but also to

*"suffer for him"*. The word *"granted"* is (echaristhe – meaning grace or favor). Just as God has graced us with the ability to believe in Christ, He also has favored us with the opportunity to suffer for Him.

Suffering is not a mark of God's anger (Matt. 5:11-12; Acts 5:41; 1 Peter 4:13). Quite the opposite! It is a gift. It blesses us by affirming to us that we are united with Christ (1 Peter 4:14) because the world treats us the way it treated Him. Jesus said in John 15:18, *"If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you."* (NKJV) Any suffering we do under those circumstances is done for Christ's sake and benefits the gospel and believer (Phil. 3:10; Rom. 5:3-5; 2Cor. 4:7-12).

### **WHAT DO WE DO WITH IT?**

Paul is not saying that suffering, in itself, is good. The people who were persecuting the Philippians were sinning and it is never God's will for people to sin. However, because of the presence of evil, God does allow His people to experience persecution and, as a result, suffering (1 Peter 4:19).

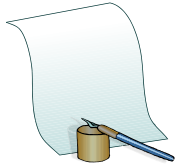
The truth is we in the U.S. don't understand the type suffering Paul and the Philippians experienced. Outside of the occasional snide remark in the work-place or the ridicule of our beliefs at school, in the news, and the entertainment world, we don't encounter real opposition. Because of this we find it hard to identify with and apply Paul's words to the extent they were written.

However, his words should remind us to pray for and support those believers who do live in countries where open hostility toward Christians and the gospel is permitted and even encouraged. Hundreds of thousands of modern day believers across the globe face very harsh living conditions because of their love for Christ.

But how are we in the U.S. supposed to respond when we do face the occasional direct or indirect opposition to the gospel? Answer...the same way those in the New Testament times were supposed to respond when they faced opposition at a more serious level. We are not to repay evil or take revenge. We are to live at peace, trust that God will right every wrong, meet the needs of our enemies, and above all, do good to them (Romans 12:17-21). Jesus said that He expected His disciples to love their enemies and pray for them (Matt. 5:43-44).

The Apostle Peter taught that when we are persecuted, we should not sin. We should not retaliate against those who hurt us (1 Peter 2:21-23). He goes on to say that by the example of our humility and godly living, those who want to cause us harm will be ashamed and may even be won to Christ (1 Peter 3:1-2, 16).

*Father, help us do away with the notion that since we are Your children we are somehow entitled to a life that is above trouble and suffering. Help us realize because we are truly Yours we will certainly face opposition from those who love the darkness and hate the Light. Amen.*



## PAUL'S LETTER TO THE PHILIPPIANS

Today's study was preached at Northeast Community Church on Sunday, March 6, 2011. You can hear this sermon at [www.northeastcommunitychurch.com](http://www.northeastcommunitychurch.com). The outline for the message is below.

### **The Power of Humility!** (Philippians 2:1-11)

#### ***Outline of the Section:***

##### The Power of Humility

- A. In Humility, Think Like Jesus (1-5)
- B. In Humility, Act Like Jesus (6-8)
- C. God's Response to Humility (9-11)



#### ***In Humility, Think Like Jesus:***

1. From our relationship with Christ we learn how to relate to others. (1-2a)

*If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort of his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like minded.. (1-2a)*

2. Among believers, we are to cultivate a mutual love, attitude and purpose.

*...having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. (2b)*

3. If we are going to cultivate a mutual love, attitude and purpose, we cannot be self-promoting.

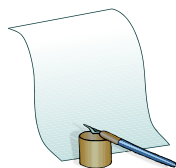
*Do nothing out of selfish ambition... (3)*

4. If we are going to cultivate a mutual love, attitude and purpose, we must have a modest appraisal of ourselves.

*...or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. (3)*

5. If we are going to cultivate a mutual love, attitude and purpose, we must pay attention to what others are going through.

*Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.  
Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus. (4-5)*



## PAUL'S LETTER TO THE PHILIPPIANS

***"Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!" (2:5-8)***

### **WHAT DOES IT SAY/MEAN?**

Paul had been talking to the Philippians about two big topics: how to face opposition to the gospel from those outside the church (1:27-30) and how to face the enemy's attempts to oppose the gospel by creating division from within the church (2:1-5). The strategy to both of those issues will always involve the humbling of ourselves as we trust Christ's power and leadership.

Humility, for humilities sake, was not what Paul was advocating. In Paul's mind, our humility must have a specific model and focus. For instance, we are to learn how to relate to others based upon how Christ relates to us (1-2a). We are to cultivate a mutual love, attitude, and purpose between ourselves and other followers of Jesus because that is what He does with us (2). That type of relationship with each other is possible only when we humble ourselves and are not self-promoting, conceited, and don't only look after our own interests (3-4). Paul's explanation of "how" we can live like that...is where our study begins today.

Paul said - ***Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.*** This phrase serves as the other end of the parenthesis started in verse 2a when we were told to be like minded with Christ. Literally this phrase means that we should let the way Christ thinks...happen in us. Jesus' attitude toward other believers should be allowed to become our attitude toward them, too. How can we do this? Simple! We follow our Leader's heart and example.

Paul drew his readers' attention to three things about Jesus' heart and example. First of all, Jesus chose a humble view of Himself - ***Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped.*** He knew who He was but chose not to take advantage of it. He was God's Son and fully divine, but He willingly set the benefit of that aside in order to accomplish the Father's will. While on earth, Jesus did not insist upon His right to be recognized as equal with God (Matthew 19:17). He set aside His own rights and submitted to the will of His Father. Paul admonished his readers to do the same as they related to others.

Secondly, Jesus chose to fulfill the role of a servant - *but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.* When the Son of God came to earth He came to show love and reconcile the lost through service. Matthew recorded Jesus' own words when He said, "*just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.*" (10:28, NKJV) He chose to set aside His rights as Creator (Colossians 1:15-16) and become a human and to live with those whom He created. His ministry to humanity would be marked by humble sacrifice. He would become a servant to show the way for people to become children of God. Paul admonished his readers to do the same as they related to others.

Third, Jesus obeyed God's will even when it meant death - *And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross.* He humbled himself, took the role of a servant, and committed himself to the Father's purpose, even to the point of dying...even when it meant dying a slow, agonizing death (cross). As a human, physically speaking, He felt what we feel. He had the same impulse for life, preservation, and happiness. However, Jesus loved the Father so much, He would trust and obey His plan, even when faced with death. Paul admonished his readers to do the same as they related to others.

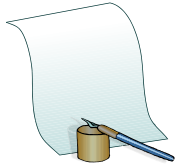
### **WHAT DO WE DO WITH IT?**

It seems from the moment of birth, humans urge other humans to meet their needs. The baby cries until mom/dad feeds or changes him. The toddler acts up until mom/dad stops playing with little sister and gives him full attention. Older aged siblings jockey for position within the family and seek greater privileges than their brothers and sisters have. Adults often seek the biggest and best in jobs, homes, vacations, and toys, irrespective to their actual incomes and the overall well being of their families.

What begins as a survival instinct, as we get older, becomes a clear expression of a selfish nature. We come to believe we must dominate others in order to reach our goals and be successful. Jesus represents the opposite of this human drive to dominate. Although He had access to all the privilege and power to dominate His creation, Jesus considered His deity as an opportunity to obey the Father and serve humanity. *Those who love and follow Him are called to do the same.*

May I challenge us today to examine our motives? Let's look deeply into why we do what we do. Do we decide things based upon a desire to advance Christ's gospel in another's life or to benefit our own interests?...enhance our own comfort?...get our own way? Do we influence others by serving them or by using some means of coercion? Our Father's Kingdom moves forward as we humble ourselves and serve Him and others. We can humble ourselves because we know we are His children and we know where we are going (John 13:3-5).

*Father, I want to live like Christ lived. I want His life living in me. I humble myself before You today and ask that I might be Your servant and do Your work. What joy there is in doing my Father's work! Amen.*



## PAUL'S LETTER TO THE PHILIPPIANS

***"Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (2:9-11)***

### **WHAT DOES IT SAY/MEAN?**

What a beautiful section of Scripture our passage for today is! As I prepared for this devotional I enjoyed reading the passage over and over again.

Let me remind us of the bigger picture in Paul's teaching. His main goal in this part of his letter was to teach the Philippians to contend for the gospel...within the church. Not only do believers have the call to take the gospel out to those who have not heard it before but we also have the call to live out the power of the gospel among our fellow believers. Our contending outside the church will not be very effective if we are not unified within the church.

The foundation for unity within the church is humility...as Christ lived it. When He came to earth and put on our flesh, He took a humble view of Himself. He provided redemption for mankind by becoming a servant. He loved the Father and obeyed Him, even when it meant death. Paul admonished the Philippian Christians and any other believer who would read his letter, to do as Jesus had done.

As a result of Jesus' heart and actions, Paul told his readers - ***Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name...*** It is important here to understand that Paul is talking about the man Jesus of Nazareth... who was the Son of God Incarnate. As the Son of God, before the Incarnation, He was already at the highest place and already had a name above every name. He existed before the beginning of time, was with God, was God, was the One who created all things, and the One who was the possessor and giver of life and light to mankind (John 1:1-4).

Paul's focus in these verses was on Jesus Christ...the man. He humbled Himself, took the role of a servant, and was obedient unto death. Because of this, the Father exalted Him up to the highest place. Jesus' resurrection and ascension were proof of this exultation. Peter described it this way in Acts 2:32-33, ***"God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear."***

The God/man lived a sinless life, sacrificed His own life as a propitiation for our sins, died, rose again on the third day, and ascended back to the Father. He then was given a name that is above every other name in authority and respect. What is that name? Let's look at the next part - *that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

Did you see it? Yes, when the Son of God was incarnated (became human), He was given the name Jesus. Lots of people in Jesus' day were called Jesus. It was a common Jewish name. Paul said all creation (either willingly or unwillingly) will bow at this name. He said all would confess the name that the Father had given Him. What is it? All creation will confess that Jesus Christ is "**Lord**". There it is. That is the name that was given Him that is above every other name. It is the name "Lord" which means...absolute sovereignty.

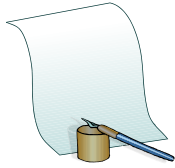
### **WHAT DO WE DO WITH IT?**

Jesus is sovereign over all creation. One day, Paul said, the whole universe will acknowledge what the small, persecuted community of believers at Philippi knew all along— "*Jesus Christ is Lord...*"

With this in mind, Paul placed the example of Christ before the Philippian community and insisted that they follow Him in humility and obedience. They knew they would never be exalted to the highest place or be given a name above every other name. However, the Philippians could be assured that just as Christ's faithfulness will lead to universal acknowledgement of His Lordship, so their faithfulness will lead to identity with Christ and resurrection from the dead on the final day.

The other day, I was thinking about the song Friends In High Places by Darlene Zschech. How exciting to know that we know the One who has a name above all names. How comforting to understand we have a personal relationship with the One who is the sovereign Lord over all.

*Father, my mind struggles to grasp the enormity of the passage I just read. I can immediately think of benefits to my life from personally knowing Someone with such power and leadership. I wonder if there is also a great deal of responsibility given because I know Someone with such power and leadership? Amen.*



## PAUL'S LETTER TO THE PHILIPPIANS

Today's study was preached at Northeast Community Church on Sunday, March 27, 2011. You can hear this sermon at [www.northeastcommunitychurch.com](http://www.northeastcommunitychurch.com). The outline for the message is below.

### **How Teamwork and Unity are Made!**

(Philippians 2:12-16)

*Review: To Promote Teamwork and Provide Unity, We Must:*

A. Humble Ourselves Like Christ Did (2:1-11)

#### **Outline For This Week's Section:**

B. Live Out Our Salvation on the Outside (2:12-13, Sunday)

C. Refuse to Complain to God and Quarrel with Others (2:14, Wednesday)

D. Have the Character and Witness God Intended (2:15-16, Friday)

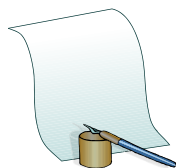


#### **Sunday's Study:**

We cannot fulfill the Great Commission without unified teamwork and unity among believers. We cannot have unified teamwork and unity unless we follow Christ's example and humble ourselves. In addition to humility, we must also:

1. Be just as committed to doing the truth as we are to knowing the truth.

*"Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose."  
(12-13)*



## PAUL'S LETTER TO THE PHILIPPIANS

*"Do everything without complaining and arguing..." (2:14)*

### **WHAT DOES IT SAY/MEAN?**

Our passage today is part of a larger teaching Paul was giving. Let me take a quick minute and set the context.

From our study of 1:27-28 we discovered Paul's admonition toward teamwork and unity among believers as the only way we can cooperate with the Lord and participate in His work. Paul then, began to lay out "how" to promote teamwork and develop unity. Here is the development of his outline so far:

- I. How to Promote Teamwork and Develop Unity among Believers
  - A. Humble ourselves like Christ did. (2:1-11)
  - B. Be just as committed to doing the truth as we are to knowing the truth. (2:12-13)
  - C. Refuse to complain to God and quarrel with others (2:14)

In Today's study we will look at C.

Paul told the Philippians to *"do everything without complaining and arguing."* He used the words (gongysmon) and (dialogismon); one used as a means to fuss with God and the other used to interrupt human relationships. Paul said in everything we do we must refuse to complain to God or quarrel with other believers. This is an important step in promoting teamwork and developing unity. It is also a vital step in protecting them both, as well.

When I hear the word *"complaining"* I always think of the Israelites of old. When the Israelite community, who came out of Egypt, was on its way from Egypt to Mt. Sinai and from Sinai to Canaan, they grumbled (same Hebrew concept equivalent to gongysmon) against Moses and the Lord because they were worried about safety and having enough food/water.

As soon as they were the slightest bit uncomfortable, they complained to Moses about God's provision (Exodus 16:2-9; 17:1-7). This made God upset (Numbers 11:1) because they allowed themselves to doubt Him and His care for them. They so easily forgot His previous provisions for safety, food, and shelter. He loved them and cared for them. They felt they needed to rely upon Him but refused to learn to trust Him. They only looked at His provision and never saw His heart. He had wonderful plans for them but they refused to seek His larger mission.

When people doubt God's care and do not learn to completely trust Him, it becomes easier to quarrel with God's family. Many church related arguments are due to a lack of searching out the truth regarding an issue and trusting the Father's heart and ways. Paul said the only way we can hope to have a sense of unified teamwork is for the members of Christ's body to humble themselves, do the truth even when their emotions tell them something else, and refuse to complain to God and argue with other believers.

### **WHAT DO WE DO WITH IT?**

In Jesus' final prayer for his disciples (John 17:11, 20-23), He specifically prayed for the unity of believers and equated it with the success of reaching the lost. The lost must see the power of the gospel lived out in those who witness to it. If those who claim to have had an encounter with the risen Christ, sins forgiven, and clean hearts continue to live selfishly and in ways that do not reflect a whole hearted trust in the Savior, the lost do not see anything they themselves do not have.

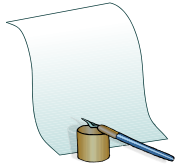
Christians living selfishly and in a spirit of irritability toward God and disagreement with other believers, ruin a vital witness to the unbeliever. They, in effect, prove to the unbeliever that Christ's sacrifice and resurrection have no power to transform and change humanity. Living this way represents the Lord in a bad way and says things about Him and His Kingdom that are not true.

May I encourage us to live carefully regarding these things? God calls us to live above the emotions that rise up in all of us. It is a call to live life led by truth instead of feelings. It means to make choices based upon godly principles and not based upon cultural norms or natural impulses. It is a call to live above the world...to not only take the high road but to live there, remain there, and encourage others to come up there. It is a way of life that embodies the power of the gospel because without the work of the gospel within us, none of us could ever live in such a way. This is holy living because it is a lifestyle that is fully set apart for God and, in character, reflects the holiness of God.

What are your relationships with the unsaved like?...those in your own family?... those you work with?...those who live in the cul-de-sac beside you? Does your life clearly show the power of Christ's gospel? Can you find the power to live selflessly, knowing that Christ is your Lord and will ultimately be your security? The great news about all of this is that we can live this way! We can be transformed and our hearts made clean. We are not stuck with living according to the carnal nature. We can, through Christ, live lives of great spiritual fruit (Galatians 5:16-26).

God has given us His Spirit. Let's live in the power of His Spirit every day.

*Father, help me learn to live intentional. It is so easy to let the ebb and flow of life take over and live life reacting to the feelings that arise inside of me. I am convinced You have called me to live a life that clearly demonstrates the transforming power of the gospel. Teach me to look at each day as a fresh opportunity to show my world who Christ is and what His gospel can do for them. Amen.*



## PAUL'S LETTER TO THE PHILIPPIANS

*"...so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life—in order that I may boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor for nothing." (2:15-16)*

### **WHAT DOES IT SAY/MEAN?**

Today we are continuing in Paul's teaching regarding how to promote teamwork and develop unity among believers. Once again, here is the development of his outline so far:

- I. How to Promote Teamwork and Develop Unity among Believers
  - A. Humble ourselves like Christ did. (2:1-11)
  - B. Be just as committed to doing the truth as knowing the truth. (2:12-13)
  - C. Refuse to complain to God and quarrel with others (2:14)

The result is, not only unity and teamwork, but also

- D. Having the character and witness God intended (2:15-16)

We will look at D today.

Notice Paul's words - *...so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation.* The word "*become*" is (genesthe). This phrase would be better translated "that you may be or may show yourselves to be...children of God". While Christ's sacrifice is the agent by which we are initially made blameless (amemptoi) and pure (akeraioi), there is also a sense in Paul's mind in which our choices complete these characteristics as we continue to live a life "*without fault*" and a life with true sincerity "*pure*", unmixed with the world's character.

Paul said if the believer humbled himself with the heart of Christ, did the truth consistently, truly trusted God's leadership, and didn't allow his heart to selfishly quarrel with others, the believer would show to the unsaved world the power of the gospel to transform lives. In fact, the witness would be so blatantly obvious in our "*crooked and perverse world*" it would be as visible as the sun lighting the day and the moon and stars lighting the night-time sky - *in which you shine like stars in the universe.* The word "*stars*" is (phosteres) which actually refers to all the heavenly lights (sun, moon, and stars).

Believers are to live *without* moral *fault* (blemish) as they - *hold out the word of life*. The apostle John refers to Jesus as the word of life (1John 1:1). It is as if we are holding out to the world the life, death, and resurrection of Christ as we witness to these truths. We are His ambassadors (2Corinthians 5:18-21) and pass along God's appeal to the world to be reconciled to Him. Christ is the light of the world (John 1:9) and we are His light bearers (Matthew 5:14-16). Our role is to reflect His light. Our lives best reflect His light when we are walking in all the light He has provided us.

Paul ended this section with the words - *in order that I may boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor for nothing*. We should take lightly Paul's concept of boasting. He is not being selfish but trying to motivate the Philippians to consider what he had just said with the utmost importance. His mind goes ahead to the Day of Judgment, "*the day of Christ*", when he stands before God and gives an account of his stewardship. He wants to be able to say to God that his time invested with the Philippians was time/energy well spent. His implication is powerful. If they will not function as a unified team and live lives of holiness before the lost, in Paul's mind, he will have labored for them in vain.

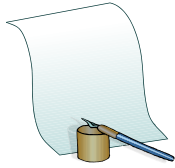
### **WHAT DO WE DO WITH IT?**

I am struck with the power of Paul's words today. His call to a life of blamelessness, innocence, and absolute sincerity communicates a message that is often foreign to the ears of western Christianity. Much of Christianity in the USA spends its time justifying its right to continue to live lives fully mixed with the corruption of our culture. It bellows from its pulpits that to live by "grace" means it is ok and even expected to live immoral lives. Unfortunately, it paints a picture for the world of a weak Savior, an insufficient sacrifice, and an impotent resurrection.

In our passage for today, Paul's words strike a blow to this way of thinking. While there is much mercy and grace given, mercy and grace are given so that we can be transformed and stop living in willful sin (Romans 6:11-14). This is the good news of the gospel. Paul doesn't say these things as words of judgment but as words that bring joy and give hope. As followers of Christ we are not doomed to live carnal, enslaved lives. Praise the Lord! We have a purpose and Christ does the work in us so that we can faithfully fulfill our purpose. All honor and praise go to Him.

The application for our lives is clear. In so many respects we are not a perfect people. We make mistakes. We don't have a full understanding of life or ourselves. We are born with a spiritually fallen nature. These realities often motivate us to live by our emotions or to function with "half-baked" ideas. No doubt we have Heaven's Treasure (The Spirit) living in cracked, earthen vessels. Nevertheless, we are called to walk in moral truth and in matters of good and evil, the God who is holy calls us to be holy in all we do (1 Peter 1:15-16).

*Father, cleanse my heart from all that resists You and Your Truth. Amen.*



## PAUL'S LETTER TO THE PHILIPPIANS

Today's study was preached at Northeast Community Church on Sunday, April 3, 2011. You can hear this sermon at [www.northeastcommunitychurch.com](http://www.northeastcommunitychurch.com). The outline for the message is below.

### **Teamwork and Unity: The Next Level!**

(Philippians 2:17-30)

#### ***Outline For This Week's Section:***

- I. When Maximum Sacrifice is Needed (17-18)
- II. The Art of Accountability (19-24)
- III. The Call of Missions (25-30)



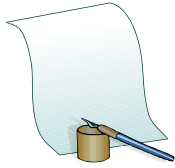
Much like farming, working in God's Kingdom not only involves planting seed (truth) but also preparing soil (hearts/lives). Some fields (people) are in worse condition than others. For those situations, more work/sacrifice is required to prepare them to receive the seed (truth).

#### **When Maximum Sacrifice is Needed:**

1. The heart of a follower of Christ is completely committed to Christ and is willing to give sacrifice on top of sacrifice to enable the work of Christ to be completed in others.

*"But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. So you too should be glad and rejoice with me." (17-18)*

- 2 Corinthians 2:14-16; 4:8-11; 12:9-10
- When we sacrifice: our faith matures, believers are strengthened, unsaved see the character/power of Christ.
- Examples: Acts 14; 16; 18 (2 Corinthians 1:8-10)
- What about Our Lives?



## PAUL'S LETTER TO THE PHILIPPIANS

***"I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you. I have no one else like him, who takes a genuine interest in your welfare. For everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel. I hope, therefore, to send him as soon as I see how things go with me. And I am confident in the Lord that I myself will come soon."* (2:19-24)**

### **WHAT DOES IT SAY/MEAN?**

If taken away from the context, Paul's words in these verses seem general and matter-of-fact. However, if we see them as coming at the end of a strong and difficult teaching, they are filled with meaning and application.

Paul fully expected the Philippians to understand and follow his directives. Because he wanted the very best for the Kingdom of God and the Philippian Christians, he decided to send someone to encourage their obedience to the truth and hold them accountable.

He loved the Philippians and urged them to do the right things. He was concerned and needed to know if they received his message positively. He decided to send someone to them so he could hear, first hand, how they were responding to his message - ***I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you.***

Paul knew not just any representative would do. He sensed they needed someone who had the same heart and passion as himself...someone who would see them through the eyes of the Lord Jesus/His Kingdom and not as just one more church assignment. He would send his son in the Lord, Timothy, who was with him at that time (1:1) - ***I have no one else like him, who takes a genuine interest in your welfare. For everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel.***

Paul told them he would send Timothy as soon as he understood the extent of his legal problems. If the charges were dropped or a fine imposed, he would be free to come visit them himself. If he was to stay in prison longer, he would send Timothy - ***I hope, therefore, to send him as soon as I see how things go with me. And I am confident in the Lord that I myself will come soon.***

### **WHAT DO WE DO WITH IT?**

The main message in our text for today is the message of accountability. Paul sent someone to follow up with the Philippians regarding their obedience to the truth.

Granted, that particular someone was a person Paul had trained/ mentored, someone who had proven himself to be faithful, someone who personally cared for that church, and someone who cared for the things of Christ more than he cared for the affairs of his own life. The Philippians could trust Timothy's heart and influence. Perhaps there is a lesson in there about what a good accountability person should be like. I'll leave that for another time.

What about you? Do you have anyone you trust like that? Are you ok with being accountable to another believer? Do you allow other believers to get close enough so they can ask about your spiritual life, choices, and relationships? Does that fit your understanding of what we are to be for one another? Could you ever do that for someone else?

The New Testament is filled with Scripture references that explain how we are to build one another up like this. The Bible knows nothing of a "lone ranger" type of Christianity. We are not to live out our faith alone but in community.

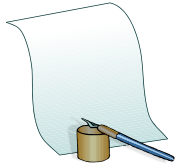
"Community" feels risky to us. Many of us are private people. Something rises up within us that wrestles with the idea of another imperfect person reminding us of what is wrong/right and expecting us to do the right.

I read an interesting article a few months back. Did you know the Supermarket Institute of Washington D.C. estimates a shopping cart is stolen every ninety seconds in America? Retailers spend about \$175 million per year on replacing stolen carts and an additional \$117 million to retrieve abandoned carts.

A San Diego based company has developed a radio controlled locking device for the grocery cart and an underground antenna that surrounds the parking lot perimeter. A painted line around the property identifies the boundary of the carts. If a cart rolls past the painted stripe, the radio signal will activate the locks so the cart can no longer roll. Employees unlock the carts with a small hand-held remote control.

Accountability works much like this. Boundaries are established and great freedom exists within those perimeters. Yet when you start to cross a line, the brakes are applied and you are prevented from going where you shouldn't. Accountability is frustrating to those who like crossing lines, but it is liberating to those who want victory in Christ all the time.

*Father, nothing is more important than walking in truth. You have called us to help each other walk in truth. This is part of Your plan. Help us not resist Your plan. Amen.*



## PAUL'S LETTER TO THE PHILIPPIANS

*"But I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger, whom you sent to take care of my needs. For he longs for all of you and is distressed because you heard he was ill. Indeed he was ill, and almost died. But God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, to spare me sorrow upon sorrow. Therefore I am all the more eager to send him, so that when you see him again you may be glad and I may have less anxiety. Welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honor men like him, because he almost died for the work of Christ, risking his life to make up for the help you could not give me." (2:25-30)*

### **WHAT DOES IT SAY/MEAN?**

On the surface this text is a warm-hearted mixture of gratitude, accountability, and explanation as to why Epaphroditus was bearing this letter and returning home sooner than possibly expected.

The Philippian church had sent Epaphroditus as a missionary to Rome where Paul was imprisoned to help with supplying Paul's daily needs, as well as with serving in Paul's ministry - *it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger, whom you sent to take care of my needs.*

In those days, there were no federal or state run prison systems. When someone was sent to prison, it was up to that person's family and friends to make sure he had food and the basic necessities of life. If those things were not provided, the prisoner would certainly grow weak, get sick, and die.

Sometimes a church would send money for temporary support but it was not uncommon for a family member or friend to move to the area, find work, and give part of their wages for the ongoing support of the person in prison. This is probably what Epaphroditus did. In addition, he worked with Paul as he continued his ministry of oversight to the churches from within the prison walls.

Epaphroditus became very ill, almost to the point of death. No other information was given. Evidently the Philippians had already heard about his illness so Paul didn't feel it necessary to give details - ***For he longs for all of you and is distressed because you heard he was ill. Indeed he was ill, and almost died.*** Epaphroditus probably had family in Philippi and was concerned that they be updated on his condition. After his illness and when he was strong enough to travel, Paul felt it

best for him to return home - ***But I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus...***

Paul told them to give him a hero's welcome because the hard work and sacrifice he gave was appreciated and honorable - ***Welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honor men like him, because he almost died for the work of Christ, risking his life...*** Paul made it clear that Epaphroditus was no quitter. He served with distinction - ***my brother, fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger...risking his life...*** His return was the direct order of the Apostle Paul.

Slightly below the surface, this section has more to offer us. Within this couple of paragraphs we have a good description of what the call to missions' work is like. Missionaries face the same kinds of things Epaphroditus faced.

Notice the list: They are sent out of local churches away from their brothers and sisters in the Lord, they must also develop other teammates abroad with whom to partner, they get homesick and miss their family/friends, they encounter strange germs and often suffer physical illnesses...sometimes severe, and they often risk their lives working in less than safe environments for the sake of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

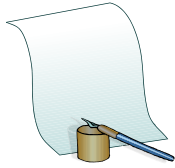
### **WHAT DO WE DO WITH IT?**

I think Paul's own words can answer this question best for us - ***Welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honor men like him...*** Paul seemed to say that we should express appreciation and respect to people who serve far from home and sacrifice much for the Kingdom of Christ. When they come home we should welcome them with arms wide open and tell them how proud we are of them and how grateful we are that they have obeyed the Lord's call. We can honor their call by giving financial support or writing letters to them while they are away or by simply remembering their birthdays and anniversaries. We can do special things for their families at Christmas and Easter.

And last but not least, we can pray, pray, pray. Our prayers, not only encourage them, but also open spiritual doors of opportunity that would not open unless we prayed. If you would like to pray for specific missionaries, I invite you to go to [www.nazarenemissions.org](http://www.nazarenemissions.org) and look at the missionary profiles. There you can find missionaries from any part of the world and learn more about their families and specific ministry focus.

Why not give it a try? Why not adopt a missionary family to pray for and encourage? It might be a life-changing experience for the both of you.

*Father, enlarge my spiritual heart. Grow my capacity to care for others. Increase my burden to pray for those who sacrifice so much to win others to Your Kingdom. Amen.*



## PAUL'S LETTER TO THE PHILIPPIANS

Today's study was preached at Northeast Community Church on Sunday, May 8, 2011. You can hear this sermon at [www.northeastcommunitychurch.com](http://www.northeastcommunitychurch.com). The outline for the message is below.

### **Attacked From Without and From Within! (An Overview)** (Philippians 3:1-11)

#### ***Outline For This Week's Study:***

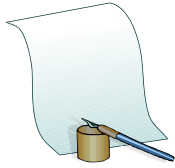
- I. The Enemy's Double Dirty Trick (1-7)
- II. The Real Deal (8-11)



One of the basic goals of successful warfare is to confuse your opponent with propaganda. One of the most effective methods for spreading propaganda is to have people on the inside providing false information to leaders and troops. From its inception, the Church has been under attack and our enemy has used such methods.

#### **An overview:**

1. One of the enemy's most effective strategies is when he gets people to use God's name to work against God's plans. (2-3)
  
2. Keeping rules/rituals does not produce righteousness. (5-7)
  
3. The only way to have a right relationship with God is by personally knowing Jesus Christ through faith. (9)



## PAUL'S LETTER TO THE PHILIPPIANS

*"<sup>1</sup>Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you. <sup>2</sup>Watch out for those dogs, those men who do evil, those mutilators of the flesh. <sup>3</sup>For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh— <sup>4</sup>though I myself have reasons for such confidence. If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: <sup>5</sup>circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; <sup>6</sup>as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless. <sup>7</sup>But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ." (3:1-7)*

### **WHAT DOES IT SAY/MEAN?**

To this point in his letter, Paul spent his time encouraging and teaching the Philippian believers regarding the enemy's attack upon Christianity from outside of Christianity. Paul was in prison and the enemy was influencing non believers to shut down the spread of Christ's Gospel. Paul encouraged the believers to not be afraid and to not stop spreading God's truth. In fact, he said the Gospel was actually advancing because believers were becoming bolder and communities were talking about the Gospel more often, because of Paul's imprisonment.

In chapter 3 Paul continued to teach about the enemy's attack but moved his focus from outside of Christianity to inside the Church. The enemy's strategy included infiltrating the church and spreading false information from within, what was considered at the time, mainline Christianity. Paul had spoken with them about this before but was glad to re-teach some of this material - *<sup>1</sup>Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you.*

Paul used tough words to describe those who were teaching wrong doctrine from within the Church - *<sup>2</sup>Watch out for those dogs, those men who do evil, those mutilators of the flesh.* He called them "**dogs**". In that day, dogs were rarely the tame, "man's best friend" breeds we have today. They were mostly scavengers and disease spreaders. Because this group insisted believers in Christ must also go through the ritual of circumcision (the cutting away of flesh), Paul called them "**mutilators of the flesh**".

The idea of circumcision began with Abraham (Gen. 17). God established it with Abraham as a sign of His covenant with him. The covenant was already established

in chapter 15 and this ritual was to be an outer reflection of the inner work of a heart that trusted God in covenant. It was a sign that as the outer flesh was removed in circumcision, the people of the covenant would forsake their trust in the sinful (fleshy) nature and would undergo a moral transformation. The false teachers had turned circumcision into a law to keep so one could be saved.

Evidently, the false teachers expressed spiritual pride, claiming they were the only real people of God- <sup>3</sup>*For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh—* Paul told the Philippians they were the ones who pleased God, worshiped properly, and had put away confidence in carnal things, not the false teachers.

Paul also testified he had tried the Judaizers' way, rising to the top in what that system had to offer - <sup>4</sup>*though I myself have reasons for such confidence. If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: <sup>5</sup>circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; <sup>6</sup>as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless.* Paul had been circumcised, had the right blood line, studied and became a Pharisee, and exercised great zeal for that system by persecuting the church. When he met Christ Paul gladly gave the old system up completely - <sup>7</sup>*But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ."*

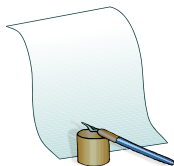
### **WHAT DO WE DO WITH IT?**

As we consider applications a few ideas come to mind. (1) Let's not be naïve. Satan fights dirty. He infiltrates the Church and fights God from within the Church. He uses those who use God's name to work against God's plans. The last few thousand years of church history are sprinkled with heresy after heresy, properly so called and some modern versions still undetected. We need to set aside those things that distract us and make a habit of studying the Bible from cover to cover.

(2) Let's not be confused about faith/works. The Bible describes faith as a verb. Faith requires action. Faith has two parts...belief and action based on that belief. If either is absent, God does not count it as true faith (James 2:14-26). Let's not confuse the actions of faith with the works of the Law. They are not the same. We are not saved by our works (Eph. 2:8-9). We cannot do enough good religious things to convince God to save us. However, beginning a faith in Christ will include the actions of confession, repentance, asking, and trusting. To continue a relationship with Him based in faith further includes the actions of obedience.

Everything God has for you...wants for you...plans for you...will come to you only through Jesus Christ. If you and I will love Him, follow Him, and obey Him every day of our lives, we will never miss God's will for us. All we need is a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, entered into and maintained by faith.

*Father, we often forget about the spiritual battle raging around us. Our enemy is a liar. Help us know Your Word and be able to discern the truth from his lies. Amen.*



## PAUL'S LETTER TO THE PHILIPPIANS

*<sup>8</sup>What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ <sup>9</sup>and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. <sup>10</sup>I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, <sup>11</sup>and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead. (3:8-11)*

### **WHAT DOES IT SAY/MEAN?**

Paul had just shared that he used to live in the legalistic religious world of Judaism. He was a serious citizen and climbed the wall of success almost as high as it could take him. He had everything going for him...his Jewish blood line...his specific tribal blood line...his birthright...religious accolades...his education and a respected reputation. He did all that the law required and beyond...flawlessly. And yet, even after doing all of this, it did not bring him into a right relationship with God and fulfill the spiritual longings of his heart.

When he met Christ that day on the road to Damascus (Acts 9), he found what he was longing for. He traded the old ritualistic system in for a personal relationship with Jesus Christ -*<sup>8</sup>What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things.* Paul lost the respect and confidence of those involved in the old system. He lost the religious position, the money, the influence, the old and cherished friendships, and the life-long accomplishments the old way afforded.

Paul was not grieving. He saw that Christ was the fulfillment of all that God planned for the world foreshadowed in the old system. When he compared the old way with Christ's way, he called the old way "*rubbish*" (skubala) which means excrement or dung. He was saying that he found the Law and all its ways of no more use than the garbage thrown into the trash heap in matters that could help him get into a right relationship with God - *I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ <sup>9</sup>and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.*

He gave up trying to create a righteousness of his own through keeping the law. He came to God through Christ and was brought into a right relationship with God

through faith in Christ and the righteousness Christ supplied. A right relationship with God is not achieved by man. It is a gift given by God. It is accepted and cared for through faith. He traded ritual for a relationship. He exchanged the Old Testament foreshadowing of what was to come for a real fellowship with the One it all pointed to in the first place.

Paul's goal since the relationship and fellowship began was - <sup>10</sup>***I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,*** <sup>11</sup>***and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.*** Paul wanted to personally know Christ more and more. He wanted the power which raised Christ from the dead to operate in his life conquering sin, defeating the enemy's schemes, and reaching the lost/captive.

He wanted to know the fellowship with Christ that comes when we share in Christ's sufferings (suffering for His name's sake and for what Christ suffered for). Only through this close fellowship can a person endure great suffering and at the same time live a life permeated with a redemptive quality for others. When this type of life is lived, a fear of death is released and a purpose in death can be embraced. Paul wanted to live for the things Christ lived for and die to the things Christ died to (Romans 6:4-14) and as his final prize, be raised to new life in Christ after death.

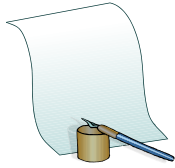
### **WHAT DO WE DO WITH IT?**

I wonder if we look at the Christian life the same way Paul did? Do we see it as a role to play?...rules to keep?...a system to uphold?...rituals to perform?...favors from God to win? If you can find your view somewhere within the last few lines, could I point you to Paul's words at the beginning of verse 10 - ***"I want to know Christ..."***

No games, no hurdles to jump, no hoops to shoot, no backs to scratch, no one hand washes another, no ladders to climb, no people to impress, no any of that sort of thing. Simple...clean...easy to understand. All we need to do is concentrate on a relationship with Jesus. Invest in it...cultivate it...enjoy it. Love Him...listen to Him...talk to Him...obey Him. Get up every day and live the life He gave you with Him, in step with Him, interacting with Him.

Does this sound more attractive than the way it is now with you and Him? How can you get rid of the old way and embrace the real way? Do like Paul did. Consider the role playing, rule keeping, system upholding, ritualistic performance doing, favor winning thing as ***"rubbish"***. Stop trying to win God's approval and accept what God has made available for you. Receive it and care for it by trusting the person of Christ. Concentrate on growing that relationship and enjoy.

*Father, why do we make it so complicated? Help me keep the main thing...the main thing.  
Help me focus on my relationship with Your Son, Jesus. Amen.*



## PAUL'S LETTER TO THE PHILIPPIANS

Today's study was preached at Northeast Community Church on Sunday, May 22, 2011. You can hear this sermon at [www.northeastcommunitychurch.com](http://www.northeastcommunitychurch.com). The outline for the message is below.

### **How to Win the Race of Life!**

(Philippians 3:12-15)

#### ***Outline For This Week's Study:***

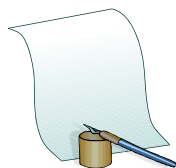
- I. Decide Who Will Influence You (16-19)
- II. Remember the Big Picture (20-21)



Very often, when teaching about living the Christian life, Paul likens it to an Olympic race. Obviously there are the starting line (salvation) and the finish line (death). However, Paul shares God's perspective on how to run and finish strong.

#### **How to Win the Race of Life:**

1. Choose the right race to enter. (12)
  
2. Always know where you are in the race. (13)
  
3. Looking back will distract and slow you down. Concentrating on pushing yourself forward brings focus and momentum. (13)
  
4. Keep your mind on the finish line and the prize. This will motivate you to finish strong. (14)
  
5. This is the mature way to look at the Christian life. (15)



## PAUL'S LETTER TO THE PHILIPPIANS

***"Only, let us live up to what we have already attained. Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you. For, as I have often told you before, and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things."***  
**(3:16-19)**

### **WHAT DOES IT SAY/MEAN?**

Paul had just shared that he still had some spiritual growing to do (12). However, he lived up to and expected the Philippian Christians to live up to the knowledge and maturity God had already developed within them - ***Only, let us live up to what we have already attained.*** This is a very important principle. God develops these things in us for a reason...so that it will produce Godly and mature living. To ignore what God has taught us and make choices against the knowledge He has given us is unacceptable to Him.

There was an extremely high amount of negative influence in the Philippian world. They were being attacked from without and from within. The easiest choices were those that went along with the political and religious powers. Paul challenged those believers to choose who they were going to allow to influence them. They could choose what influence they would follow - ***Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you.*** Paul advocated following his words...his example...and those who had already listened to him. He told them to trust him and those who had already trusted him. He asked them to look at his life and do likewise.

As mentioned there were many influences surrounding the Philippian believers. Many of those influences wore a religious/Christian label. He had warned them before and did so again with great sadness. Unfortunately, there were ***"many"*** who claimed Christ but who lived their lives as people who disrespected what the sacrifice of Christ stood for - ***For, as I have often told you before, and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ.***

He said of this kind of person - ***Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things.*** Even though they named Christ as Lord, the end of their days would be filled with eternal destruction. Even though they claimed to know the power of the cross of Christ, they had grossly mis-applied it to their lives. Stomach is an analogy for appetite.

Paul's phrase meant they lived to satisfy the appetites of the body without restraint or moral considerations. The appetites controlled them like a god, leading them through each day. They gloried in their teaching...their philosophies of life. Their beliefs led them to shameful living. Their thinking was filled with earthly, carnal pursuits.

### **WHAT DO WE DO WITH IT?**

I cannot read this passage without feeling a deep sadness for those who so unwisely misunderstood the Gospel of Christ. Instead of seeing it as the gift of God to free them from sinful, carnal living, they saw it as grace that gave freedom to continue to live in sin and not pay an eternal consequence for it. They were tragically mistaken.

Unfortunately, this same misunderstanding is prevalent in the American Church today. Many who fill church pews every Sunday misunderstand God's grace and His purpose for giving it (Romans 6). So many believers use the idea of God's grace as a license to continue to live sinful lives and mistakenly believe that lives given to disobedient living will not affect eternal destinations. May the Lord help the American Church return to the Scriptures.

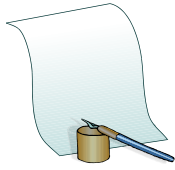
However, the point that stood out to me in today's passage was Paul's admonition for the Philippians to follow his example in how to think and live out the Christian life (17). There seems to exist in our Christian culture a type of humility among believers that would lead them to say something like, "*Do as I say, not as I do.*" Why is it no longer acceptable for believers to be confident in the fact that they obey God and walk in His light, and based upon that, encourage other believers to do as they do?

That kind of statement doesn't necessitate the presence of pride or mistake-free living. But in matters of morality and mature choices, why can't we live so carefully that we can be an example to others of what it means to follow Christ?

Paul told a young man named Timothy - ***Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.*** (1Tim. 4:12). The writer to the letter to the Hebrews tells his readers to - ***Remember your leaders who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith.*** (Hebrews 13:7) He stated they should have a message worth remembering, a lifestyle worth considering, and a faith worth imitating.

I wonder if it would make a difference in our parenting or our marriages or our relationships at work/with friends if we lived in a way that testified, "Follow me as I follow Christ"?

*Father, help us be as sure of our walk with You as we are of our own names. Help us walk in obedience and confidence with You so we can say to others, "Follow us as we follow Christ". Amen.*



## PAUL'S LETTER TO THE PHILIPPIANS

***"But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body."***  
**(3:20-21)**

### **WHAT DOES IT SAY/MEAN?**

The first sentence in this passage was meant to contrast the last sentence in verse 19, - ***Their mind is on earthly things.*** Those who called themselves Christians but who were living - ***as enemies of the cross of Christ,*** chose to react to the influences of evil by submitting to and becoming like them. Their focus was on temporary pleasures and pursuits.

Paul contrasts that lifestyle with his own (and those who follow his teaching). He/they live life on earth with their minds focused on the reality that - ***our citizenship is in heaven.*** The word "***citizenship***" refers to belonging to a colony or commonwealth. His words paint the picture of a colony of heaven's citizens living on earth. The meaning is clear. Heaven's citizens, even while living on earth, are to be loyal to the King of heaven and His leadership. Their conduct must represent the values and priorities of their home land.

As citizens of heaven we are eagerly awaiting two things. First, we are waiting for Christ to come from heaven (a second time) - ***And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ.*** The word "***Savior***" is the word (soter) which means rescuer. As citizens of heaven we are living in this fallen land until He comes back and rescues us (or we die and go to Him). His return time is known only by the Father (Matthew 24:36). He will come to take us to our new home land (John 14:1-3; Revelation 21:1).

The second thing we are waiting for is for the resurrection of our bodies - ***who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.*** The word "***lowly***" means humiliated or of low estate. This word is not meant to describe the value of our bodies only their unfortunate condition. Currently our bodies are subject to aging, fatigue, illness, death, and decay. We long to be delivered from such bodies (Romans 8:23; 2 Corinthians 5:2, 4). When He returns, He will transform our bodies to be like His resurrected body (I Corinthians 15:50-57 and context). Our physical bodies are good and not evil. God created them with great value.

However, because of sin, they are greatly affected by sin's consequence (Genesis 2:16-17; 3:19). When He returns, He will reverse the consequence and give us a deathless life.

### **WHAT DO WE DO WITH IT?**

When the enemy presses upon us and his tactics feel overwhelming there are three things we can remember that will encourage us to stay the course.

(1) We are only passing through this land. We don't belong to the earth's kingdom. We are citizens of heaven and have a heavenly King. We are to commit to the values of our home land and to always respect the leadership of our King.

(2) We are only here temporarily. Christ will come back to take us to be with Him. We live life on earth with an eternal expectation. We won't have to put up with the hurt and pain of this world for ever. He will rescue us from this place. Those who are looking forward to being rescued don't live in ways that inappropriately tie them to the philosophies of this world. Those who are waiting to be rescued are keeping their eyes on the One who is coming and not on the one who is already here (the god of this age – 2 Corinthians 4:4).

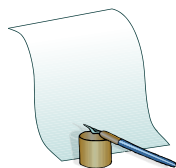
(3) We are not stuck in these bodies forever. Our bodies (including our mind and emotions) are limited. They experience various weaknesses, fatigue, illnesses, and decay. These can lead to a struggle with maintaining motivation and focus. We may be tempted to do what is easy or to take the path of least resistance. Our bodies are constantly reacting differently to our environment. Our movement in life is susceptible to outside elements like food, medicine, temperature, and light. For examples, a person could take allergy medicine and suddenly feel hyper or melancholy. Some can go without sunlight for a few days and feel depressed. The amount and/or timing of food can affect a person's ability to concentrate and act.

These sensitivities and limitations are not eternal. Christ will transform our current bodies into bodies that are like His resurrected body. Thinking about this gives us great hope. Knowing this truth motivates us to do our best at disciplining our bodies here and now. It also influences us to trust the Lord to help strengthen as many of these infirmities as possible.

The enemy has enormous influence in our world. True followers of Christ are grossly outnumbered. Our spirits seem to sense that reality. Paul's words encourage us to look at the big picture...to back away from the trees and look at the forest. Our reality is bigger than our next breath or step. The truth we follow is greater than those things that press down on us and overwhelm. Take courage. We love and serve a wonderful Savior. That Savior loves us and has promised to be with us to the very end (Matthew 28:20).

*Father, thank you that this life is not all there is. Thank you that those in Christ are citizens of a wonderful home land. Thank you that Jesus is coming back for us. Thank you that we will get new bodies to enjoy in the new heaven and new earth. Thank you that we are Your children and that we have an inheritance.*

*Amen.*



## PAUL'S LETTER TO THE PHILIPPIANS

*<sup>1</sup> Therefore, my brothers, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, that is how you should stand firm in the Lord, dear friends! <sup>2</sup> I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to agree with each other in the Lord. <sup>3</sup> Yes, and I ask you, loyal yokefellow,<sup>[a]</sup> help these women who have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life. <sup>4</sup> Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! <sup>5</sup> Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. <sup>6</sup> Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. <sup>7</sup> And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (4:1-7)*

### **WHAT DOES IT SAY/MEAN?**

Our study in Philippians has almost come to a close. We will finish chapter 4 this week. As Paul was finishing his letter to the Philippians, he gave them some final thoughts and encouragement. He began this last section with an expression of his love and deep concern for them - ***Therefore, my brothers, you whom I love and long for*** - His teaching was not based on obligation or a job he felt he must do. Paul loved the people in this church and had a deep sense of burden for their well being.

The way they could bring him joy and show the Lord he had been faithful would be for them to stay faithful to the Lord and His instruction through Paul's teaching - ***my joy and crown, that is how you should stand firm in the Lord, dear friends!*** He then highlighted 8 different areas of life for them to consider. We will look at 4 of those today and the remaining 4 on Friday.

The first area he asked them to stand firm in was the area of unity - ***<sup>2</sup> I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to agree with each other in the Lord. <sup>3</sup> Yes, and I ask you, loyal yokefellow, help these women who have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.*** Within that church there was some type of a rift between Euodia and Syntyche. These ladies were Christians who had worked directly with Paul in spreading the gospel. We are not told what the disagreement was about but Paul was concerned and encouraged them to ***"agree with each other in the Lord"***. If they could not do this on their own, he pleaded for others in the church, ***"loyal yokefellow"*** to assist this process. Notice the words, ***"in the Lord."*** Our reason for unity is Christ and His Will. The brotherhood of man is impossible without the Lordship of Christ.

The second area he asked them to stand firm in was the area of their attitude and outlook about life - . <sup>4</sup> ***Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!*** Joy had nothing to do with their circumstances, or Paul's for that matter. We all know that a person can be living with uncomfortable circumstances and have a heart filled with joy and another person can be living in the lap of luxury and be miserable in heart/mind. The secret is with the phrase, "***...in the Lord...***" Paul was saying that happiness depends not on things but on being with the right person. As Christians we are in the Lord and He is in us. He is the greatest of all persons. Nothing can separate us from His presence and therefore nothing can separate us from His joy.

The third area Paul challenged them to stand firm in was the area of how they interacted with other people - <sup>5</sup> ***Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.*** The word "***gentleness***" is the word (epieikeia). It literally means justice or beyond justice. It indicates that the Philippians should interact with others (saved or lost) with a strong sense of patient fairness. He was advocating for believers to be filled with the presence/joy of Christ and then to relate to others with a grace-filled gentleness, just the way Christ related to them.

The fourth area Paul encouraged them to be faithful in was the area of how to respond to the problems and stresses of life - <sup>6</sup> ***Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.*** <sup>7</sup> ***And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*** I encourage you to listen to last Sunday's sermon for more details on this one. Paul laid out a process the Philippians could walk through that would produce peace in their hearts/minds, regardless of what they were facing. First, they were to choose to face their issues God's way - "***Do not be anxious about anything...***". Next, they were to talk out every situation thoroughly with the Lord - "***...but in everything, by prayer...***". Third, they were to ask the Lord for specific solutions to the issue at hand - "***...but in everything, by...petition***". Fourth, they were to thank the Lord for what He was going to do and what He had already done - "***...but in everything...with thanksgiving...***". If they followed this process, God's peace would replace anxiety and protect their hearts/minds - "***And the peace of God will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.***"

### **WHAT DO WE DO WITH IT?**

Obviously, for the four topics in front of us today, life application is easy. Since I spent a considerable amount of time on the fourth one in last Sunday's message, I'll pick from one of the remaining three. From that list, the area that I feel the most led to is number three, even though my heart is most burdened for number one among God's people and I personally needed to be reminded and corrected with number two.

However, this morning I am drawn to the idea of how to interact with other people - "***...to let your gentleness be evident to all...***". The more I studied (epieikeia) the

more intrigued I became. I am coming to understand it as a word that describes relating to people as we consider their context.

Here is a simple example I ran into last semester with one of my students at NBC. As you would imagine, tardiness is not a good thing in one of my classes. I work very hard at preparing for each class and I expect my students to work just as hard at being on time and participating in each class. One of my students got off work 30 minutes before class started. She worked across town from the college. If she hit all the traffic lights just right and there were no traffic jams, she could make it to class with a few minutes to spare. However, if even one thing did not fall into place, she would come into class late. This happened several times.

I looked at her situation differently than I looked at another student who was often late because he was talking with friends at the café and forgot the time. Yes, the class did start at 6 pm. and it was very important to be on time. However, when I considered the context of her life and the fact that her "lateness" was not of her own choosing and she could not leave work earlier, I worked with her with a patient fairness and not with the letter of the law. It was only right. This was *epieikeia*.

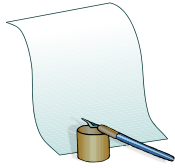
This word does not advocate loosening a standard of right and wrong...to somehow call something that is wrong...right and something that is right...wrong. It simply describes an attitude toward people that can simultaneously insist upon right behavior and can give grace when the person, for legitimate reasons cannot reach the behavior. It is to treat others with a kind gentleness, thinking the best of them while encouraging them to do what is best. It does not excuse deliberate defiance or habitual carelessness. It is caring more about people than about the rules. People were not created for the rules but the rules were created to help people.

This is how the Lord treats us, isn't it? He does not sweep sin under the rug. He insists on obedience and attention to His will. However, He does take into consideration our physical, mental, and emotional weaknesses called (*astheneia*), (Romans 15:1; 2 Corinthians 12:5, 10; Hebrews 4:15-16). He sees these weaknesses differently than He sees sin.

Sometimes these "weaknesses" keep us from doing everything the way we should do them. Physical, mental, and emotional limitations can prevent us from handling some situations the right way. In those times, as long as there is not defiance in our hearts, Christ looks at our motives and intentions. He treats us with a grace-filled gentleness.

The Scriptures tell us that the Spirit convicts of sin (John 16:8) but helps us in our weaknesses (Romans 8:26). This is the spirit, led by THE SPIRIT, Christ wants us to interact with others with.

*"Father, help me understand how You relate to me and then help me treat others with the same attitude. Amen."*



## PAUL'S LETTER TO THE PHILIPPIANS

Today's study was preached at Northeast Community Church on Sunday, May 29, 2011. You can hear this sermon at [www.northeastcommunitychurch.com](http://www.northeastcommunitychurch.com). The outline for the message is below.

### **Facing the Problems and Stresses of Life!**

(Philippians 4: 5b-7)

#### ***Outline For This Week's Study:***

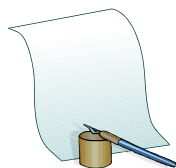
- I. Eight Things That Make Life Work Successfully (1-19)
- II. Final Blessings and Goodbyes (20-23)



Anxiety is a natural reaction to the problems and stresses of life. However, when Christ becomes our Savior and Lord, anxiety becomes an unnatural reaction to those circumstances. Why? The God factor!

#### **The Secret to Inner Peace:**

1. Make a choice to face problems/stress the Lord's way. Don't allow any circumstance to create anxiety in your life. (5b-6)
2. Talk out every situation thoroughly with the Lord. (5b-6)
3. Ask the Lord for specific solutions to the issue at hand. (5b-6)
4. Thank the Lord for what He is going to do and for all that He has already done. (5b-6)
5. If we face negative circumstances the Lord's way, peace will replace anxiety and will protect our hearts/minds from damaging stress. (7)



## PAUL'S LETTER TO THE PHILIPPIANS

<sup>8</sup> *Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.* <sup>9</sup> *Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.* <sup>10</sup> *I rejoice greatly in the Lord that at last you have renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you have been concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it.* <sup>11</sup> *I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.* <sup>12</sup> *I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.* <sup>13</sup> *I can do everything through him who gives me strength.* <sup>14</sup> *Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles.* <sup>15</sup> *Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only;* <sup>16</sup> *for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid again and again when I was in need.* <sup>17</sup> *Not that I am looking for a gift, but I am looking for what may be credited to your account.* <sup>18</sup> *I have received full payment and even more; I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God.* <sup>19</sup> *And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.* <sup>20</sup> *To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.* <sup>21</sup> *Greet all the saints in Christ Jesus. The brothers who are with me send greetings.* <sup>22</sup> *All the saints send you greetings, especially those who belong to Caesar's household.* <sup>23</sup> *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. (4:8-23)*

### **WHAT DOES IT SAY/MEAN?**

We will continue our look into the 8 final areas that make the Christian life successful. The fifth area Paul asked them to stand firm in was the area of what they gave their minds to - <sup>8</sup>*Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.*

It is encouraging to be reminded that there are things/people in our lives that are true, noble, right, pure...etc. Even in a fallen world these characteristics do still exist. Second, we are to look for them in people and the circumstances of life.

Third, we are to give our minds to such virtuous concentration. It is true that our attitudes and actions will follow what we allow ourselves to continually think about.

The sixth area he asked the Philippians to be faithful in was the area of doing the truth - <sup>9</sup>*Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.* Paul said they should be in the habit of doing the truth. The knowledge of truth is a good thing but can become a curse if not put into practice. With more knowledge of the truth comes more responsibility to walk in its light. Sin increases when we know what God wants and refuse to do it. This would never describe “normal” in a believer’s life.

The seventh area Paul asked them to stand firm in was in how they assessed their own success - <sup>11</sup>*I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.* <sup>12</sup>*I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.* <sup>13</sup>*I can do everything through him who gives me strength.* Sometimes life doesn’t go the way we planned. Sometimes we measure the success of our lives by how many times life goes according to what we planned. Paul had learned to be content or at peace in every situation, whether it went according to plan or not.

His secret was the person and leadership of Christ in his life. There is not a circumstance we face that can prevent Christ from being in us and with us, in it. If we can love God and obey Him in our hearts in any situation, we can be satisfied that as far as we can control and He allows, we have success in life, in Him. If our hearts are right/obedient with Him we are fulfilling what we were created for.

The eighth area Paul wanted them to be faithful in was the area of sacrificing and investing in ministry - <sup>10</sup>*I rejoice greatly in the Lord that at last you have renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you have been concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it...* <sup>14</sup>*Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles.* <sup>15</sup>*Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only;* <sup>16</sup>*for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid again and again when I was in need.* <sup>17</sup>*Not that I am looking for a gift, but I am looking for what may be credited to your account.* <sup>18</sup>*I have received full payment and even more; I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God.* <sup>19</sup>*And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.*

Much of what Paul was saying was an expression of gratitude for all the help the Philippians had given Paul’s ministry to the Gentiles. When Paul or the ministry had a need, they usually met that need, either financially or by sending extra hands for the work. However, there are two lines that I want to make sure we don’t

miss...verses 17 and 19. Paul understood that sacrificial giving to the work of God's Kingdom did two things for the one doing the sacrificing and the giving. He saw, first of all, that God noticed and kept track of the sacrifice - *...what may be credited to your account*. Paul's joy in receiving their gift was not fully in what it did for him but also in what it did for them by giving it.

The second thing sacrificial giving does for the believer is that it opens him up to the gifts of God - *And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus*. It is like Paul was saying that the gifts they had given to his ministry were like a loan they gave that was drawing compound interest. Paul could not repay it. However, his God, who saw and kept track of the sacrifice, would supply their needs through Christ, out of His own abundant riches.

Paul drew his words to a close to this wonderful church. His hope was that his whole life and all that he taught them in this letter would bring glory to God - *<sup>20</sup>To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen*. He asked that greetings and grace be extended to all in the church and those believers who may attend other churches in the area - *<sup>21</sup>Greet all the saints in Christ Jesus*. Those believers who were either in prison or worked in the prison sent their formal greetings to the Philippian Church - *The brothers who are with me send greetings*. The believers who were from the surrounding area, especially those who Paul had won who were either relatives of Caesar or worked in his household also sent greetings to the Philippian church - *<sup>22</sup>All the saints send you greetings, especially those who belong to Caesar's household*. His last words were a prayer of blessing upon the church. He prayed that the grace of Christ would touch each and every person's spirit - *<sup>23</sup>The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen*.

### **WHAT DO WE DO WITH IT?**

For our application today, I am drawn to the last 3 verses commonly referred to as the final greetings. Notice a couple of things. (1) Notice the network of believers and the common support and encouragement there seems to be. Christians in Philippi were cared for and prayed for by Christians in Rome. Their bond was their common love for Jesus and His will.

(2) Notice God plants His people everywhere. He even had His followers working for Caesar's administration. Why? Caesar was evil. His empire did evil things. Was it because Christ wanted to get His foot in the door by leading some of the people who served the leader of the known world? Maybe that was part of it, although it would be almost another 300 years before Christianity would be the official faith of the empire. Talk about a long range plan! Do you think it could simply be to reach the people who lived and worked in those places? How else would He tell them of His Gospel? His people needed to go to the places where the lost lived and worked so they could see Christ through His people and hear about His Good News. Why do you suppose you live and work where you do?

*"Father, please remind me daily that it is not about me. It is about You and Your work. Amen."*