

Bible Study Series on...

*The Letter
To the*

PHILIPPIANS

13 Lessons

**Prepared by:
PAUL E. CANTRELL**

2005

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“The Study of Philippians”

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Lesson One

***“Introduction & Greetings to the Saints
at Philippi”
(Philippians 1:1-2)***

The church at Philippi was established on Paul’s second mission trip (50-53 AD). His co-workers traveling with him were Timothy, Silas, and Luke. This was Paul’s first efforts to preach on the European continent. Lydia and her household were among the first converts (Acts 16). A short time later we read about the conversion of the Jailor and his household. There were probably many more that composed the church at Philippi, and was made up of both Jews and Gentiles. Upon Paul leaving to go preach elsewhere, Luke seems to have stayed with the church to help stabilize them. Timothy may have stayed for a while. The church was very generous towards Paul. They helped him after leaving from Philippi (Phil. 1:5-7; 4:15-16), as well as while he was establishing the church at Corinth (2 Cor. 11:8-9). And when they learned of Paul’s imprisonment at Rome, they sent help by Epaphraditus (Phil. 4:18). It is easy to see why Paul felt very close to this church (Phil. 1:8). By the time of this letter (AD 62-63), the church had already appointed Bishops and Deacons (Phil. 1:1). The church also had a very dedicated minister by the name of Epaphraditus (Phil. 2:25-30). This letter was written from his Roman imprisonment towards the end of his two year stay. He hoped to be release soon, but wanted to express his gratitude for their help again.

PAUL’S GREETINGS TO THE CHURCH.

The letter is from Paul and Timothy who are “bondservants” of Jesus Christ. They had been purchased by the blood of Jesus (Acts 20:28) and belonged to Christ (1 Cor. 6:20). But they were willing “bondservants!” The letter is addressed to the “saints” in Christ Jesus with the bishops and deacons. The fact that they had elders and deacons shows the maturity of the church at Philippi. We are not told when these men were appointed to serve in these capacities, but it would have been within a ten year span of time that it could have been done. There are three Greek words that are used to describe the men and their work as bishops: *Episcopas* (Bishop or Overseer); *Presbuteros* (Presbyter or Elder); *Poimane* (Shepherd or Pastor) (Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Peter 5:1-2). The church as a whole are referred to as “saints” who are “in Christ Jesus.” In this lesson we want to look at the concept of “saint” and see what God intended to indicate by the use of this term for His people. It is found in several of Paul’s letters (Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:2; Eph. 1:1; Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:2).

WHY REFER TO CHRISTIANS AS “SAINTS?”

The misuse of the term has brought about confusion as to its Biblical use. One religious group uses the term to refer to only dead people who have been made “saints” after their death. They have to be judged by a group of high officials to see if they are worthy of the title. Upon being appointed a “saint” they have special powers when prayed to. Even non-religious people have misunderstood the Biblical concept of the term. They use such expressions as: *“I am not a*

Saint!” or “*I am a good person, but I am not a Saint!*” Sometimes even God’s people get caught up in this kind of terminology. The King James Version of the Bible hasn’t helped this matter either. They refer to the writers of the New Testament Books as “Saint Matthew,” etc., as though they were different from other people. It should be quite obvious that the term is used to refer to all of God’s people—all Christians are saints of God.

The word “saint” is a very appropriate term to refer to Christians. The Greek word carries with it the idea of those who have been cleansed, purified, sanctified by the blood of Jesus (Eph. 5:25-27) and set apart for special service for God (Rom. 12:1-2) unto His glory (1 Cor. 6:20). The term infers a contrast to something. We are set apart from the world—no longer to be identified with the world, but now with the redeemed of God (John 15:19; 16:16). We are no longer a part of the world that is against God, but a part of those people who are willing to be in subjection to God. It also infers a way of life that is different from the world (1 Pet. 1:16). It is to be a life of righteousness unto God. It is a striving to be perfect (complete) as God is perfect (complete) (Matt. 5:48). We are called to be different from the world, not to be of the world. We are expected to live in a world that is contrary to a life of holiness. This causes us to face the pressures, taunts, and persecutions that the world will bring upon us and still not give in and live as they do. We are to live righteous lives in a world that is hostile to us—to be a “light” in a world of “darkness.”

WHY ARE WE CALLED TO BE SAINTS?

1. In order to live set apart (holy, righteous) Lives! We are not called to be saints just to live any way we want to! The very term itself directly or possibly indirectly states this purpose. We are called to be saints (holy ones, sanctified ones, righteous ones).

2. In order to bring glory to God! Living righteous lives will cause people to praise and glorify God for His goodness to mankind (1 Cor. 6:20). We glorify God by living godly in the midst of ungodliness; by living a holy life in the midst of unholiness; and by being faithful to God in the midst of a world that has rejected God.

3. But, we are also called to be saints that we might become servants unto the world! (John 17:15, 18). We are not to abandon the world, but to go out to win the world. We are to live in the world so that we might influence it and leaven it. We are good servants of God when we serve the world about us. We have a good purpose for being saints—to affect the world for good!

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

We have been called unto a high and holy calling—to be saints of God! We are reminded that at one time we walked in darkness, but now we are light in the Lord and are to walk as children of light (Eph. 5:8). We are also admonished not to participate (have fellowship) with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove—so we won’t lose of purpose for being saints (Eph. 5:11). We are to live up to our name “saint” of God!

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

True or False

1. It is wrong to refer to someone as a “saint” in the church.
2. “Sainthood” is only attainable after one dies.
3. The King James Version of the Bible has confused the issue somewhat over its use of the word “saint.”
4. The Greek word can be translated “saint” or “holy.”
5. God has not called His people to be separated from the world.
6. To live a holy life is to be different from people in the world.
7. One of the purposes of saints is to bring glory to God.
8. Saints can be a servant to the world.
9. A saint is one who walks in the light.
10. A saint should have nothing to do with those who walk in darkness.

Lesson Two

“Partners in a Great Work”**(Philippians 1:3-8, 12-14)**

In my years in working with several different congregations I can look back with mixed emotions. With some, I can look back upon with sadness and disappointment. However, with others I can look back upon with a great deal of joy and anticipation. It seems that the Apostle Paul was experiencing similar feelings as he addressed different congregations that he had help to start.

1. To the **Galatians** he could say: *“I marvel that you are so soon removed from Him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another Gospel.”* (1:6).
2. To the **Corinthians** he could say: *“It has been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you.”* (1:11).
3. To the **Thessalonians** he could say: *“We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.”* (1 Thess. 1:2-3).
4. But to the **Philippians** he could say: *“I thank my God upon every remembrance of you. Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with Joy. It is proper for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart. God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the love of Jesus Christ.”* (1:3-8).

It is a real joy to know that God’s people are living and serving God as they should. But Paul was thankful for the Philippians’ partnership in the greatest work on earth—saving souls!

THE APOSTLE’S BURNING DESIRE

The Apostle’s burning desire was to reach as many people as he could with the Gospel. He said to the Corinthians: *“For necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!”* (1 Cor. 9:16). And again he said: *“I am made all things to all men that I might by all means save some.”* (1 Cor. 9:22). He expressed this same desire to the church at Rome: *“I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise.”* (Romans 1:14). A great number of churches were established because of this spirit. Paul’s concern led him to travel a great deal and endure many hardships. The church at Philippi was one of the churches that had been started by Paul.

THE CHURCH’S PARTNERSHIP WITH PAUL

The Greek word that is used is KOIKONIA and is translated partners, partnership, fellowship. The idea is to have joint-participation in something. It is a working together to

accomplish a desired end. The joint-effort here was the spreading of the gospel to others. It was the Apostle and the church working together to a common end. Both were concerned about the same thing—reaching the lost, saving souls, or getting the gospel preached!

In what way had these two worked together? During the time that Paul was with them there was a mutual encouragement and concern for reaching the lost. But after Paul left they continued their concern (Phil. 1:5) for the Apostle's efforts to preach to the lost, as he also indicated in Phil. 4:15-16. They helped Paul financially at Thessalonica and again in Corinth. And ten years later, when Paul was in Rome in a prison, they helped him again with finances and also by sending their brother in Christ, Epaphroditus (Phil. 4:10, 18). They continued to share in the great work of preaching. And the Apostle wanted them to know that his imprisonment had been used by God for a greater work of spreading the gospel among the Prataerium Guard and even in Caesar's household (1:12-14; 4:22). And as a results, many of the brethren became bolder in their own proclamation of the Gospel.

THE APOSTLE'S SPECIAL DESIRE

It was Paul's longing to preach the gospel where it had not been preached before, but with no help from the church he was establishing. That was his desire, not the Lord's command (Romans 15:20). This spirit had not only caused many churches to be established, but also at least six books of the New Testament came to be written. So, the church at Philippi was a partner with Paul in this pioneering spirit. They were a missionary church from the very beginning. They too were spreading the gospel to new people....especially through Paul. The Apostle encouraged them to stand fast in one spirit and continue to strive together for the faith of the gospel.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

God still wants the spirit of cooperation and pioneering to get the gospel into all the world. No church is what it ought to be without this desire. We must want to be a part of the spreading of the gospel into all the world. We need to be of the same mind as a congregation, but also work with those who will be doing the preaching of the gospel into all the world. Whether we are flat on our back or able to be involved in the affairs of this life, we should seek ways to be co-workers in the spread of the gospel.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

True or False

- 1. Every Christian needs to be able to look back upon those they have helped to bring to Christ.**
- 2. Paul expressed gratitude for their financial help in his preaching of the gospel.**
- 3. God wants his people to be filled with the fruits of righteousness.**
- 4. Paul's preaching while in prison helped to encourage others to become more bold in their preaching of the gospel.**
- 5. Paul wrote to the church at Philippi about 10 years after he had been among them.**
- 6. The church at Philippi would not send money to Paul to preach somewhere else.**
- 7. We share in the preaching of the gospel when we help to support those who preach.**
- 8. Paul was a pioneer in the sense of wanting to preach the gospel where it had not been preached before.**
- 9. Six books (letters) of the New Testament were written to new churches started by Paul and company.**
- 10. All can help to spread the gospel around the world in different ways.**

Lesson Three

“The Well-Dressed Child of God” (Philippians 1:9-11)

A man died that was known for his sinfulness. He had even made fun of religion, life after death, heaven and hell, etc. He was laid out for viewing in a funeral home. One man who knew him observed his lifeless form and remarked: *“It’s funny, Joe made fun of religion and the afterlife, but here he is all dressed up as though he was going some place.”* The other person that he was talking too retorted: *“Hummm, all dressed up and no place to go.”* The Christian needs to get dressed up, for he has some place to go! His dressing up is with the inner beauty—**“the beauty of holiness.”** Titus was to encouraged God’s people to adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things (2:10). Philippi 1:9-11 is describing the well-dressed Christian—tells us how we can dress up our lives to adorn the gospel of Christ.

WE ARE TO OVERFLOW IN LOVE

“And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment.” (1:9). To abound more and more is to overflow! There are two things inferred at least: (1) They already had love in their midst; and (2) There is always room for growth in love. Love is the noblest of the Christian graces, it is the greatest in comparison to faith and hope (1 Cor. 13:13). John reminds us that love is the nature of God and those who love are born of God and know God (1 John 4:7). We are also encouraged to love God with all of our heart, soul, and mind (Matthew 22:37). And as well, we are to love our neighbor, as well as our enemy (Matthew 22:39; 5:43-48). So, it seems obvious that there needs to be an endless, unceasing desire to grow in love for both God and man.

This love is not to be an ignorant love. It is not to be an unintelligent love. Rather, it needs to be an informed, directed, and enlightened love. Love without proper knowledge can cause a father to spoil his child! Our love needs direction, spiritual insight to direct it. We must submit our minds and hearts to the learning of the Word of God. A knowledgeable love becomes a perceptive love. It will have discriminating powers and be able to appreciate the true nature of things. It will be enabled to **approve things that are excellent**” (1:10) Intelligent love will approve of the good, the best, and the holy. Love, rightly guided, penetrates through all disguises of error. It is a preventive from going into error. It will enable us to prove all things and hold fast to the good. We will avoid moral pitfalls, avoid excesses, and it will help us to determine our duty in all situations. It will help us to habitually say and do the right things, at the right times, in the right ways.

Love is the grand principle and motive power of the Christian life. This love is divine in origin (Love is of God—1 John 4:7). It is God’s avenue of dwelling in us (He that dwells in love, dwells in God—1 John 4:11-13). It is the true basis of obedience (If you love me, keep my commandments—John 14:15). It is the **“bond of perfection.”** (1 John 4:12).

WE ARE TO BE SINCERE AND BLAMELESS

“That you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ.” (1:10). An intelligent and discerning love helps to make our actions sincere! When our soul is regulated by the Will of God our actions will be genuine, unmixed, without dissimulation, unmixed in motives. We will have a conscience void of offense! Our honesty and integrity will be unquestioned.

But if we are genuine people, then our actions will be without offense. We will be blameless in our lives towards others. Neither will we be a stumbling block before others, but rather an example. Where there is inward purity, there is outward blamelessness. We will also have a good report from those about us. We will do nothing to produce unsteadiness or spiritual inconsistency in others.

WE WILL BE FRUITFUL

“Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.” (1:11). Knowledgeable, enlightened love will be active, productive, or fruit-bearing. A Christian is to be more than harmless or blameless; there is a positive action or good works that need to fill his life (John 15:2, 8). It is through such fruit that God is praised or glorified. We need to be like the trees that are loaded down with desirable fruit!

This kind of fruitfulness is made possible by Jesus Christ. It is when we abide in Him that we are enabled to bear such good fruit (John 15:4-5). He is our motivation, our example, and our guide. And most of all, the well-dressed Christian brings glory to God! When men give glory to God, they are merely acknowledging or recognizing his great attributes. Praise to God is when we acknowledge with our lips His greatness. When we are fruitful, we make known God’s glory and excellence among men. Men are thereby encouraged to praise Him for His excellence.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The Apostle was praying for the Philippians to be well-dressed Christians! We need to pray that we and all other Christians will grow in our love; that it will be an intelligent and enlightened love; and that it will be a discerning, perceptive love. Also, that this love will be able to recognize the excellent things and will motive us to great fruitfulness to the glory, honor, and praise of our loving heavenly Father. Do we need to upgrade our garments?

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

True or False

- 1. Christians need to “dress up” and not “dress down!”**
- 2. Love is said to be greater than faith and hope.**
- 3. Loving God is more important than keeping His commandments.**
- 4. Love needs to be directed by proper knowledge.**
- 5. Christians need love in order to approve things that are excellent.**
- 6. Love can help us avoid the pitfalls and excesses of life.**
- 7. Sincerity requires that a person be genuine with unmixed motives.**
- 8. Sincerity can help us not to be a stumbling block to others.**
- 9. Fruitfulness is a must for every Christian.**
- 10. Abiding in Jesus and His Word is a necessity in order to be truly fruitful.**

Lesson Four

“How the Apostle Handled Tribulations”**(Philippians 1:12-20)**

The tribulations that the Apostle Paul had to face were manifold! He was presently in Rome in prison awaiting trial. He had been arrested in Jerusalem and stopped from preaching for a time. His appeal to be judged by Caesar had resulted in his being brought to Rome to await that trial. He was not in a dungeon, but had his own hired house. He was under guard constantly by Roman soldiers. However, that did not stop him from doing what preaching and teaching that he could do. The church at Philippi had sent money to help with Paul's expense and to be an encouragement to him while he awaited his trial. The Apostle was able to set an example for us in how to view and deal with the circumstances and tribulations of life. We all have to face undesirable circumstances at times. How we view these and how we react to them become very important for our spiritual well-being.

TRIBULATIONS PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES (1:12-14)

Paul had been imprisoned in the Palestine for around two years. When he saw no hope of being given a fair trial there, he made his appeal to go before Caesar to be tried. This was his privilege as a Roman citizen. Where he was in Rome was certainly not as bad as it could have been, but it wasn't the situation he wanted to be in. But he took advantage of his circumstances to preach to those that would listen. He was able to say: **“The things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel.”** (1:12) We should always look for the good that can come out of the bad! Something important was happening in spite of and even because of the circumstances that he was in.

A woman who had come into the local hospital was asked by the visiting doctor: *“When were you first in the hospital?”* She had her right leg cut off at the hip at age 27. Then the doctor asked her if she had been in the hospital for anything else. Her reply was: *“Yes, at age 42 I had cancer and lost my left arm.”* Then the doctor asked her what she was in the hospital for this time. Her reply was *“Rheumatism!”* She reached out and grabbed the doctor's hand and said to him: *“Doctor, could you please make me well soon, because I have to get home to take care of my grandchildren.”* What an unselfish attitude! But this was the Apostle's spirit. His undesirable circumstances were put in proper perspective. There was something far more important than his situation. The Gospel was being spread widely because Paul was in prison. There are many goals or ambitions that men can have: (1) To accumulate money; (2) To build a comfortable home; (3) To achieve success at work; (4) to make a name for himself; or (5) To enjoy life and be secure. But Paul's ambition was **“The furtherance of the Gospel!”** His enemies could not keep his ambition from happening. They imprisoned him, but he took advantage of the situation to preach even to his palace guards.

But there was also another thing that was happening because of Paul's boldness to preach Christ even while imprisoned at Rome. The brethren at Rome were taking courage also from

Paul's example and were being more bold and confident in speaking the Word of God to those around them. And....they were doing it without fear! The sight of a suffering saint, patient, contented, and happy does more to win souls than many sermons! God's message needs to be spoken boldly without fear.

CORRECT MOTIVES IN PREACHING (1:15-18)

There was no question that Paul's motives were pure in his preaching Christ. But some of his brethren at Rome (who probably disagreed with him about some points of teaching) were not happy with what he was doing. However, most of the brethren were greatly encouraged by Paul's efforts and their motives were also pure in their preaching. They preached out of love that souls could be saved.

Unfortunately, some at Rome were willing to preach Christ—not out of goodwill, but out of envy and to stir up strife against the Apostle. Their preaching was out of selfish ambition—to gain their own ends! If this made Paul's lot worse...so be it! They evidently envied Paul's success in his preaching. Instead of rejoicing over his success, they were unhappy and sought ways to add affliction to his chains.

Notice how Paul was able to handle these selfish brethren. Instead of being bitter and angry towards them, he rejoiced in their efforts to preach Christ whatever their motive was towards him. His chief desire was for Christ to be preached. Paul did not seek his own glory, but glory for God. He was free from a party spirit, or sectarian animosities, as well as earthly motives. He rejoiced in the progress of the Gospel by anyone's hands!

GOOD OUT OF THE BAD (1:19-20)

There are people who are not Christians that can face death without fear. Christ has helped to take away the fear of death for the child of God. Paul was prepared for life or death and was determined to be faithful in face of whatever may come. If he lived, he would continue to boldly live and preach Christ. If he is to die, he wanted Christ to be magnified in his death. However, he believed that through the prayers of the Philippian brethren that he would be delivered from death so that he can further serve them and Jesus Christ.

If a person lives for self, for pleasure, for comfort, for success, or for security—death puts an end to all of these things. So death is very threatening to such a person. In death, his life's ambitions are brought to an end. But the man who lives to glorify Christ should be different. If he lives, he can glorify Christ. If he dies faithfully upholding Christ, Christ is glorified. Thus, death poses no threat to him.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The Christ must never give way to despondency. We can serve God wherever we are, no matter what our circumstances! We will never fully realize the great value of a faithful example of a devoted Christ. Paul reminds God's people that we have not been given a spirit of fear; but

of power, and of love, and of a sound mind (2 Tim. 1:7). We can do all that God expects of us with the strength that comes from Christ's example before us. (Phil. 4:13).

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

True or False

- 1. The Apostle was under the sentence of death in prison at Rome.**
- 2. Paul was in a dungeon at Rome awaiting his death.**
- 3. Paul had been imprisoned for close to four years in Palestine and Rome.**
- 4. Preaching was being done throughout the palace and elsewhere in Rome.**
- 5. Paul's example of faithfully preaching Christ caused some brethren to be more bold in their preaching.**
- 6. However, some were envious of Paul's success in preaching.**
- 7. A person can hold to the wrong motive for preaching Christ.**
- 8. We should not allow our circumstances to keep us from trying to glorify Christ.**
- 9. Death is not a threat to those that know they can glorify God in life or death.**
- 10. God has not given His people a spirit of fear (timidity), but of power, love, and a sound mind.**

Lesson Five

“Living or Dying With Christ”
(Philippians 1:21-30)

A rich man in Texas wanted to be buried in his Cadillac Car. They dug a large grave and placed the Cadillac on a lowering device. They dressed the rich man in a sport jacket, with a cigar in his mouth, and placed him behind the wheel. They even set the speedometer at 60 mph. A friend made an observation about the sight that he saw: *“Man, that is living!”* It really wasn't for the man was dead! This expression usually comes from doing something that we enjoy or feel is worthwhile in life—*“This is living!”* The Apostle Paul was chained to a guard every day for two whole years awaiting his trial. He wrote to the Philippians and told them: *“This is living!”*

This expression had nothing to do with his circumstances, but in spite of it. Paul was a Christian, living in Christ and serving Christ. He had committed himself unto Christ even to the point of dying for Christ. He could truly say: ***“For me to live is Christ and to die is gain.”*** Can we say the same words? Is our Christian life boring, uninteresting, unchallenging, or a burden? Or, is it real living? To Paul, this was real living!

FOR ME TO LIVE IS CHRIST

At one time, the Apostle thought he was really living! He had a good education, status, security, and a promising future—things when men seek for. He had a blue-blood pedigree and worldly achievement. At one time, he was proud of these things. But when they are compared to being a new creature in Christ, he called them “garbage!” (3:8). This is Paul's way of saying that real living is possessing Christ. It is allowing Christ to have complete control in one's life and to use the life of Christ as a pattern for my living. It was in reality to let Christ live through the life of Paul (Gal. 2:20).

If it was God's will that the Apostle would be set free—then he would continue to produce fruit unto the glory of God. Men look forward to retirement so they can take it easy. But the Christian never retires from his great purpose—as long as he is alive he wants to glorify Christ in all he says or does. Thus, if Paul was released, he would still be useful to God in helping not only to reach others with the Gospel of Christ, but to encourage those who become Christians to be faithful. The Apostle had a preference—to die and go on to be with the Lord! But that was selfish—and he was willing to abide by whatever decision God made about his life.

Paul seems to have been given some insight as to his possible release. All four prison letters do seem to indicate that he expected to be released soon. And upon his release, he was sure that he and the Philippian church would be able to continue to work together for the further spread of the Gospel throughout the world; and also that their reunion again would bring rejoicing upon the part of all. There is a general census among Bible scholars that Paul was released and was able to travel possibly even to Spain in an effort to preach the Gospel to those who had never heard the message of Christ.

TO DIE IS GAIN

The more trials, tribulations, and persecutions one has to face as a Christian—the more it would seem better to die and go on to be with the Lord. Paul could certainly see this clearly. However, I am not exactly sure how to understand the expression—to be with the Lord! Whatever the expression means, it certainly would be “far better” than remaining upon earth and having to endure many of the heartaches of life. The Bible seems to picture to us that when men die we go into the world of departed spirits called “Sheol” in the Old Testament and “Hades” in the New Testament. In Sheol or Hades there is a great separation between the righteous and the unrighteous. The righteous are comforted, but the unrighteous are tormented. (Luke 16). From this standpoint alone it would seem to be very desirable to die and go on into such a place. But the expression says “to be with Christ.” A person will not only have rest from his labors (Rev. 14:13), but also from the temptations, sorrows, conflicts, and cares of this life. So, the Christian’s choice is simply: (1) To live on in this life to glorify Christ; or (2) To die and go on to be with Christ....which Paul said was “far better!” In some sense, we are in the presence of Christ in the world of departed spirits or Paul is using this expression in a general sense—to ultimately be with Christ for all eternity.

HOW TO GLORIFY CHRIST BY LIVING

The Apostle now comes back to the reality of the situation. We are still living, so how should we live to bring glory to Christ? He spells it out clearly:

- 1) Let your conduct (manner of life) be worthy of the Gospel of Christ. Our lives need to measure up to the Gospel....we should be reflecting the Gospel of Christ by our lives lived before others.
- 2) To stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the Gospel. We are to develop and maintain a spirit of oneness, harmony, or unity among us. We are to all have the same goal—to strive together for the faith of the Gospel. We have no other message!
- 3) Not to be terrified by our adversaries. We are not to let them terrify us by their threats of pain or persecution. If we show fear, we will lose the battle. But if we are fearless and bold, it will be obvious to them that their way of living is worthless and only leads to destruction; while our boldness only deepens our assurance of our salvation in Christ Jesus. We need to realize that we have not only been given the privilege to hear and believe in Jesus, but also to suffer for His sake as well.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Our convictions and trust in God must be developed to the point where we can say with the Apostle: ***“For me, to live is Christ; but to die, is gain!”*** Have we come to this kind of a relationship with Christ that gives us such an assurance? Are we truly willing to be crucified with Christ, so that Christ might truly live in us?

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

True or False

- 1. True living is to possess Christ in one's life.**
- 2. True living is to be crucified with Christ.**
- 3. For Paul to continue to live would be a blessing to the Philippians.**
- 4. Death was more desirable to the Apostle than living.**
- 5. Paul felt that he would never be released from his imprisonment.**
- 6. Upon death, all men go into Hades.**
- 7. Those who die as a faithful Christian are allowed to be with Christ in some sense.**
- 8. The choice of life or death for the Christian is only a choice between two blessings.**
- 9. Unity and harmony among God's people is living worthy of the Gospel of Christ.**
- 10. Christians should thank God not only for the privilege of believing in Jesus, but to suffer for Him as well.**

Lesson Six

“The Oneness of God’s People” (Philippians 2:1-8)

When Jesus prayed for the unity of His people (John 17), was He just day dreaming? Is it actually possible to have this unity? If so, what will help to make this unity possible? Or, to put it another way: *“What makes for good relations with our brethren?”* What promotes good people to people relationships? There is one thing for sure in trying to reach people with the Gospel, we must exemplify the benefits of the Gospel before them. A divided congregation destroys the very message it should be trying to teach—*“Oneness in Christ!”* Both the Ephesian letter as well as the Philippian letter emphasizes the necessity of oneness or unity of the people of God. To the Ephesians, Paul admonished: *“Endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”* He then gives a list of the seven basic onenesses: Body, Spirit, Hope, Lord, Faith, Baptism; God and Father. The letter to the Philippians takes a little different approach to the question.

BASIS FOR THE APPEAL TO UNITY

1. ***“If there be therefore any consolation in Christ.”*** Does Christ have something worthwhile to offer to people? And the answer comes back...assuredly! Then, upon the basis of this concept we must remain unified as the people of God. This message needs to get out—there is consolation in Christ!
2. ***“If any comfort of love.”*** Has the love of Christ brought any blessings to our lives and the lives of others? If so, then we must be unified so we can let people know of these blessings.
3. ***“If any fellowship of the Spirit.”*** Does the Holy Spirit of God dwell in me as a child of God? Is it the same Spirit that dwells in me that dwells in all of God’s people....then, should we not be unified?
4. ***“If any affection or mercy.”*** Has Christ aroused in my heart tender and affectionate feelings for my brothers and sisters in Christ? Then, we will be unified.

DEFINITION FOR UNITY Or GOOD PEOPLE RELATIONSHIPS

The Apostle has made his appeal for unity or oneness upon the basis of the four things above that should characterize all Christians. Now, he turns and defines the kind of unity that he is speaking about.

1. ***“Being likeminded.”*** “Two great minds in the same track!” is a saying that has arisen because two persons’ thinking are exactly alike. The same should be said of all of God’s people when it comes to the Word of God. This is a simple way of saying: *“See how close you can come to think exactly alike!”*

2. ***“Having the same love.”*** The word “Love” can be an illusive word at times. It can have different connotations. The Christian should know only “sincere” love for God and his fellow-man. It is not a one-sided affair, but all have the same kind of love towards each other.

3. ***“Being of one accord, of one mind.”*** It is more than outward harmony, it is a uniting of the souls, minds, and hearts of God’s people in one mind—the mind of Christ! We all center our minds upon Christ as our Lord and Master. Our unity is found in believing in Him.

THE AVENUE OF UNITY

1. ***“Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory.”*** Selfish ambition or conceit should not be found among God’s people. Unity is destroyed by strife, factions, party spirits, or contentions. Pride, vainglory, or empty conceit is a manifestation of our own self-importance. We are not to act for our own private ends, with selfish motives, but to act out of a desire to please and glorify God.

2. ***“But in lowliness of mind, let each esteem other better than themselves.”*** A lowliness of mind or humility is shown by a proper evaluation of ourselves before God and our fellow-man. To compare ourselves with others for the sake of self-exaltation shows our want of excellence. The tendency of frail humanity is to exalt one’s own virtues and magnify the faults of others. The reverse is true of Christianity—we are to look at our own many faults and see the virtues and good in others.

3. ***“Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.”*** We are not to just seek our own good, but the good of others as well. We are to be unselfish, to be considerate and thoughtful of others, to be kind to others. We are to make the welfare of others a major challenge in our lives. It is not a question of seeing who the better Christian is, but for all to help one another to be the best Christians any of us can be.

MOTIVATION FOUND IN OUR SUPREME EXAMPLE

The old saying *“I had rather see a sermon any day than hear one”* is certainly a valid thought. God knew this and has given us the supreme example on how to live by allowing His Son to come to earth and live among us! The Apostle tries to encourage God’s people to look at the example of the Son of God for our motivation to higher living! We are to have the same mind, the same spirit, the same disposition that Christ had. He should be our example of what our attitudes should be.

1. ***“Made Himself of no reputation.”*** He was in God’s full likeness—that is, he had the nature and attributes of Deity; yet, He did not let this stop Him from doing the great act of service to mankind that needed to be done. He emptied Himself—he did not think of Himself, but he thought about others and their great need. He laid aside His glory with the Father and took on human flesh like a mere man.

2. ***“He took upon Him the form of a servant.”*** He veiled His Deity behind a servant’s form! He took on the attributes of man—human in every respect! This He did voluntarily—no one made Him do it!

3. ***“He became obedient unto death.”*** His was the greatest of all condensations—from the glory of Deity to human servanthood! But even more—he die one of the most horrible of human deaths that had been devised by men—crucifixion. But still even more—he took our sins upon Himself and bore them for us.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

If we look to Christ for our example, there is no excuse for disunity among God’s people. We will have good people to people relationships! Christian unity prevails when:

- a) We seek the glory of God and not our own glory or self-importance;
- b) We seek the interests of the whole church, rather than our own interests only;
- c) We do not allow the clashes of human personalities to be the end of the matter;
- d) We seek to be a servant, not to be served;
- e) We are willing to sacrifice for the good of others;
- f) We keep Jesus as the center of our thoughts and lives;
- g) We have developed an obedient spirit unto God.

It is this kind of fellowship into which Jesus bids sinners to come!

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

True or False

- ___ 1. **Unity among God’s people is something that has to be worked at.**
- ___ 2. **To be likeminded is to be concerned about the same things.**
- ___ 3. **Strife and pride makes unity impossible.**
- ___ 4. **The Christian should not be concerned for himself, but for others.**
- ___ 5. **Competition in the church is a sure way to cause disharmony.**
- ___ 6. **Jesus is the human form that the Son of God took when He came to earth.**
- ___ 7. **Humility means that we have to degrade ourselves.**
- ___ 8. **To humiliate one’s self is the same as humbling one’s self.**
- ___ 9. **To have the mind of Christ means that we need to think like he thought.**
- ___ 10. **An obedient spirit unto God is a necessity for unity of His people.**

Lesson Seven

“The Route to Glory”
(Philippians 2:9-11)

In verses 1-4, the Apostle makes a strong appeal to God’s people to be united in Christ! This unity or oneness cannot exist where there is strife or vainglory, selfishness or inconsiderateness of others. He then, turns to the great example of Christ (verses 5-8) and exhorts us to have the same kind of spirit that He showed to us in the giving of Himself for us. In verses 9-11, we find that God exalted Christ because He was willing to humble Himself to be a servant. The Father raised Jesus up and placed Him at His own right hand of glory. He also gave Him a Name of great glory—a Name at which every knee shall bow and every tongue confess Him to be Lord to the glory of God. The outcome of all of this is GLORY to God the Father! The whole purpose of Jesus’ humiliation and exaltation was to glorify God (John 17:1). The great work of man’s salvation is to bring glory to God (Eph. 1:12).

DO ALL TO THE GLORY OF GOD

There is a strong emphasis throughout the Bible on glorifying God. At Jesus’ birth, the angels sang: ***“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.”*** (Luke 2:14). Jude states: ***“To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion, and power, both now and ever. Amen.”***(verse 25).

It was Jesus’ constant desire to always bring glory to the Father (John 17:4; 13:31; 14:13, etc.) He wanted mankind to truly see God as He really is—the Great, Majestic, Perfect, Holy, Merciful, and Loving God. And mankind is called upon to glorify God as Jesus had sought to do (1 Cor. 10:31). It is the church (God’s people) that gives glory to God (Eph. 3:21). God is not glorified through our own self-chosen methods of self-humiliation, but by being submissive to God’s Will in our lives (Rev. 14:7; 16:9). We give glory to God the same way Jesus did by obedience to the Will of God. It is done by our turning from our own ways and walking God’s ways. It is done by living a submissive, humble life to the Will of God.

GOD WANTS TO GLORIFY US

Everything that God has done will ultimately bring Him glory from men! But everything He has done has been for the good of mankind! He wants man to be blessed. He has greatly given of Himself for the good of mankind. He has planned for man’s ultimate glorification as well.

Christ’s glorification came after his humiliation! On the night of His betrayal, Jesus knew that his hour of humiliation was near; but, he also knew of the glory that would follow (John 17:1). During His public ministry He spoke of His coming glorification (Matt. 19:28; John 17:24). But elsewhere, the New Testament speaks of the factuality of it (1 Peter 1:21).

Our glory from God will only come after our humiliation! (James 4:10; Rom. 8:18). The submissive person unto God can expect sacrifice and service, but the end of such is eternal glory (1 Peter 5:10).

THE GLORY OF JESUS

The way to glory is the way of serving others! It is the fixed Law of Heaven that the way up is always down. Jesus' glorification came after his humiliation. God highly exalted Him. He gave Him a name that is above every name. And in the Day of Judgment every knee will bow to Him and every tongue will confess Him to the glory of God. Jesus greatly humbled Himself, but the Father highly exalted Him.

What does it mean to be glorified? If Angels or humans do not recognize God for who He is, where is His glory! His glory comes from the recognition by Angels and humans. It is quite obvious that the Angels have already and do presently offer recognition to the highly exalted position that He has been given. Redeemed mankind on the earth also give recognition. Possibly, even those redeemed before Christ are expressing their recognition of His greatness. But one day for sure....all will give recognition to His greatness!

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Man's greatest glory and purpose in life is to glorify His Maker! The way we give glory to God is to be submissive to His Will in our lives. But, in the very process of submission, man is also promised glorification! When we humble ourselves before God, He will lift us up. But we must empty ourselves of all selfish motives and the thinking that I will go my own way. No one can receive glory from God who does not first seek to glorify God. Have we humbled ourselves to the Will of God?

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

True or False

1. Submission comes before glorification.
2. Servanthood is the pathway of glory.
3. Jesus gave glory to God by coming to earth and doing the Father's Will.
4. All that we do is to bring glory to God.
5. The church are the ones that glorify God.
6. We give glory to God the same way Jesus gave glory to God.
7. Our glorification will come when this life has been faithfully lived to the glory of God.
8. Jesus' glorification came after His resurrection and ascension.
9. The greater the humility, the greater the glory.
10. Who gets the glory is an important issue.

Lesson Eight

***“Blameless & Harmless Sons of God
(Philippians 2:12-18)***

We often talk about influences that people have on others about them. While it is hoped that such influence is good; yet, we all realize that influence can be for the best or for the worst. God definitely wants His people to have a good influence (Matthew 5:13-16). We have also noticed that some people are more effective in working with people—they seem to be more outgoing and people oriented. Generally, these are the people in the church that often are able to bring someone with them to the services. However, this doesn't have to be this way—in reality, all of us can be more people oriented if we really saw the need for such. If we really wanted to be a friend and a help to others, we could become such. We believe that the Apostle is giving us the motivation that we need to reach out to others about us who need to hear the Gospel of Christ. How good and how effective we are in serving others will greatly depend upon our commitment to Christ. But our eternal salvation also depends upon our diligence in fulfilling our commitment we have made to follow Christ.

WORKING OUT OUR SALVATION

When the Apostle was with the Philippians he could teach, exhort, encourage, and help them to be obedient to God. It is like an airplane pilot training instructor—he is sitting next to me and can help if I do something wrong or have to make a quick and critical decision. However, when I make my solo flight, it is without him—I must depend upon my own inner resources, knowledge and confidence. And so it is with us as Christians. No one in reality can live the Christian life for us. They can help and encourage, but it is up to us to live it correctly. We must work out our own salvation by living it according to the Will of God (1 John 1:7-10; Rev. 2:10). When the trials and tribulations come, we will need all the strength that we can have to make it through successfully. One thing seems to be quite evident—if we don't have answers for how to work out our own salvation, we certainly are not in a position to help others.

Two important key words are used here that helps to identify a Christian: Blameless and Harmless.

1. Blameless. Be beautiful as a Christian! Let your life be marked by purity, consistency, and loftiness of purpose. Let your life be marked by the Christian virtues (2 Pet. 1:5-10) that shows God is at work in your life because you have opened up to Him. God has redeemed us from sin and a sinful life-style; so, don't mar it as Israel of old did (Ezek. 16:11-15). God wants us to have His beauty, His character, so that we will appear beautiful to the world. They need to see in us Integrity, Honesty, Concern for others—in short, a way of life that works and gives peace.

2. Harmless. One who is meek, gentle, and offers no threat to anyone! ***“Wise as serpents, but harmless as doves.”*** Such a life will cause people to trust in us and feel confident with us. We need to be known as one who cares. It is to live in a violent, hateful, and fighting world; and to be

known for our non-violence. It is to communicate by our harmless lives the Gospel of peace and love to all. We need to be in their midst as a witness, not isolated from them. What we are can communicate a message loud and clear to all who see!

One of the grave dangers of being in such a crooked and perverse nation of people is the danger of being drawn into sin again. We must be aware of the dangers and evaluate our decisions well. But we must live in the midst of a world of sin—without taking on that way of life. And, we must show by such a life that when the going gets rough—that God’s way is the best and most meaningful life.

WHAT WILL HELP ME LIVE SUCH A LIFE?

1. It should be with fear and trembling. It is not going to be easy. It will require much of us, but we can do it. We must realize the gravity of the situation and try hard to escape the dangerous mistakes that would damage our ability to influence the world towards Christ.

2. Realize that God can work with us and in us. It is almost like a contradiction! We do it ourselves; yet, God is doing it in us! But in reality, it is a cooperative effort. God works in us, but only when we want Him to do so. We must let Him into our lives. We must trust in God, in his word, obey it, follow it, and then look for the fruit that such will bring.

3. Be cheerful in your outlook. Live your life without murmuring or complaining about what life has brought you. Who wants to be around a constant complainer?

4. Avoid a contentious spirit. Such a person always wants to argue, push his point and create strife. We are to live at peace with all men! How effective can our life and words be if we have a contentious spirit?

5. Shine as lights in a world of darkness. The world doesn’t need poor examples—it has enough of these already. It doesn’t need anymore darkness, it needs light by which to walk.

6. Holding forth the word of life and truth. We can both live and speak the word of life to those about us. But remember that a person must be taught before he can be converted to Christ as Lord and Master.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

God wants His people to be beautified by His Spirit and then sent out into our world to be on display before them. It is like what God said to Satan about Job: **“How you considered my servant Job?”** And doesn’t He also say about us: **“Have you considered my servant _____?”** What kind of an influence will we have upon our society?

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

True or False

- 1. Our impact upon our world depends upon our personality (temperament) rather than our commitment.**
- 2. A person cannot work out his own salvation.**
- 3. To be blameless is to be a person that no one can find a fault in.**
- 4. A harmless person is one who offers no threat to another.**
- 5. The world (people) is described as crooked and perverse.**
- 6. We can only be faithful in our lives if God works in us.**
- 7. Christians are to avoid being a constant complainer.**
- 8. Christians should strive to live at peace with all men.**
- 9. We hold forth God's Word of life by our lives.**
- 10. God wants to beautify us with His Spirit.**

Lesson Nine

**“Showing Respect for Others”
(Philippians 2:19-30)**

The word “respect” is defined as: “to look up to,” “to admire,” “to esteem,” “to value,” or “to revere.” In the above verses, we believe that Paul is setting an example of not only the need to show respect for others, but how and why it is done. It is a sin to show “respect of persons” in its bad sense (James 2:1-9). James makes it very clear that to devalue or disrespect someone just because they are not wearing as nice of clothes as yourself is wrong for the child of God. Peter was helped by God to see that God is not a respecter of persons now, but both Jew or Gentile can be right with God through faith in Jesus (Acts 10:34-35). Paul, in Romans 2:1-11, makes it very clear that God is not partial but will save both Jew and Gentile if they work that which is good. Let’s look and see how Paul showed respect to those to whom he wrote and also toward those who were his fellow-workers.

PAUL’S RESPECT OF TIMOTHY

Timothy had been converted through the preaching of the Apostle in one of the cities of Galatia on his first mission trip. A short time later, he and Silas go back through the Galatian Province and see him and decide to ask Timothy to join them in their travels and work. He seems to have willingly done so. Paul’s description of Timothy in Philippians 2:19-24 can help to show how much he respected him.

1. He is dependable. Paul had no one that he could depend upon any more than Timothy. What made him so dependable as a fellow-worker was his like-mindedness with Paul. Their thinking was so much alike in things that really mattered. His concern for them was exactly the same as the Apostle’s.....he really cared about their condition (spiritually and otherwise)! He has a genuine interest in your welfare. He had noticed that most people are really caring for their own affairs and not that interested in the welfare of others....and the things that Christ, Himself, is interested in.

2. He has a proven Character! You saw how he worked with me and the special attitude that he showed towards me—just like I was his father and he my son. Timothy has proven himself worthy of all of our respect.

PAUL’S RESPECT FOR THE PHILIPPIANS

Of all of Paul’s letter, this one seems to catch your attention when it is talking about his attitude toward these brethren. Of all the churches that Paul helped to establish, this one seems to have been the main one (if not the only one) that sent time and again unto Paul’s support in his preaching. He has nothing but kind words to say about these people. When they had heard that Paul was in prison at Rome, they sent money by the hands of Epaphroditus (their preacher) to help with Paul’s expense in his own hired house. He needed to let them know, not only how

much he appreciated their help, but to let them know how he felt about them as a people. Two things are indicated in these two verses (2:23-24):

1. I'm sending Timothy at once! Their love had meant so much to him and he wanted to let them know that. He was also desirous of knowing about their state or condition as a church. As persecution would begin to spread, they may be the first (as a Roman Colony) to bear the brunt of that persecution. So, he is sending his most trustworthy friend and one whom they knew and appreciated to learn about their affairs.

2. I'm hoping to come shortly! As soon as he knew that he would be release, he would send Timothy to let them know. And then, he would follow up and see them himself as soon as he could work it in his mission travel plans. It is possible that God gave Paul the insight to his possible release or that he assumed that with no accusers coming to Rome that he would not even have a trial.

HIS ATTITUDE TOWARDS EPAPHRODITUS

Since Epaphraditus had been sent by the church at Philippi to help and encourage the Apostle Paul, it is logical to assume that he was probably the bearer of this letter to the Philippian church—especially since Paul was insisting on him returning to Philippi. He had evidently stay for quite a while helping Paul in whatever way that he could and during this stay became sick—in fact, he almost died because of his work for Christ's cause and kingdom. So, Paul thought it necessary to send him back now so that their minds could be relied (since they had heard of his sickness and how bad it was). And Epaphroditus was longing to see them as well. He states that God showed mercy, not only on Epaphroditus, but on him as well not to let him die. Why didn't Paul heal him??? The following verses (2:25-30) will show how much Paul respected this man of God:

1. He is a true brother in Christ. There was nothing “wishy washy” about this man—he was genuine. He did what would be expected from a brother in the flesh. He ministered to Paul's needs continually.

2. He is a true fellow-worker. Paul was willing to endanger his life to serve Christ and this man has proven that he had the same spirit as the Apostle. He was a true soldier willing to bear the burdens of warfare, as well as its battle scars.

3. Paul calls upon the Philippian church to esteem him highly. He has proven his character and is due the respect as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. He did not regard his own life as he served others.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

What a wonderful spirit to have towards our brothers and sisters in Christ. To highly esteem and respect one another cannot help but make us better children of God and more fruitful in the serve of our king.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

True or False

- 1. To be a respecer of persons is what God expects of His people.**
- 2. We show respect for others by being concerned about their welfare.**
- 3. Timothy had proven his character by his life that had been lived since his conversion.**
- 4. We should still respect a person even if they do not live right before God.**
- 5. James condemns showing respect of persons.**
- 6. The Philippian church had shown their respect for Paul and his work by sending financial help to him time and again.**
- 7. Paul used the Philippian letter to show how much he respected them as a church.**
- 8. Epaphroditus was healed miraculously by Paul when he got deathly sick.**
- 9. Paul wanted the church to let Epaphroditus to stay with Paul.**
- 10. Mutual respect for one another helps to build a beautiful spirit in the church.**

Lesson Ten

“Confidence in Christ” **(Philippians 3:1-11)**

The Apostle next challenges the church at Philippi to rejoice! While there are several things that bring sadness to our hearts, it is not wise to dwell on them. We need to see the things about which we can rejoice—and that rejoicing can come from the Lord and in the Lord. A primary reason why we can rejoice in the Lord is our “confidence” in Him. Paul spoke of this confidence in 2 Cor. 5:6-9. The Christian can be confident of his hope in Christ. This hope is based on what Christ has done for us and our efforts to always be well pleasing to the Lord (Heb. 5:8-9).

But there is a danger that false teachers can change their confidence to something else and be lost. In these few verses (1-11) Paul is contrasting confidence in two different things.

CONFIDENCE IN THE FLESH

Some men place their confidence in the flesh! The Apostle warns them about the “Judaizers who were traveling after him and trying to undo what he has accomplished in Christ. He calls these people dogs, evil workers, or mutilators. Why did he use such strong terms? Was it possibly because of how they were acting? These false teachers were like dogs that follow a person around yapping at his heels constantly and won’t let up. The Apostle told the Galatians that if they bite and devour one another, they would eventually consume one another (Gal. 5:15). They were evil workers because what they were teaching and producing was not righteousness, but unrighteousness. These false teachers were advocating that the Gentiles had to be circumcised to become a Jew before they could be saved (Acts 15:1ff; Gal. 6:12-18). Paul called them mutilators! He was not belittling circumcision under the Law for it had been divinely given to the Jewish Nation even back to the time of Abraham. Circumcision was what brought the person under the Old Covenant with God. But that Covenant has been done away—the Messiah had come that was to bless all nations of people. Circumcision is no longer required in order to be right with God. The Christian does not put his confidence in the flesh, but in Christ.

Paul used himself as an example to drive home his point. If confidence in the flesh is what is necessary, Paul could easily boast of his situation.

1. He was circumcised the eighth day like all male children of the Jewish race.
2. He was an Israelite of the tribe of Benjamin.
3. He was a Hebrew of the Hebrews—an outstanding and promising young man.
4. He was a Pharisee knowing the Law of Moses.
5. But he was a zealous Jew that persecuted the church of Christ.
6. As concerning the righteousness in the law he was blameless.

No one could measure up any better than he in such matters. He even adds to this list in 2 Cor. 11:18-28. But he learned a great lesson when Christ confronted him on the road to Damascus—none of these things mattered any more. He turned to Christ and put his confidence in Him.

Christians are to put their trust (confidence) in Christ for our eternal salvation. We are the true circumcision now. But our circumcision is one of the heart, not of the body. All of our sins have been taken away (cut away) by the blood of Jesus and we are made right with God through our obedient faith. We made the decision to die to sin and were then buried with Christ in baptism and then raised by cleansed—a new creation in Christ (Col. 2:11-17). We rejoice in Christ and not in ourselves. Our acceptability depends on our trust in Christ.

PAUL'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE FLESHLY

Those things that he formerly prized, and for which he diligently worked, and held to are no longer valid in his eyes. They have been put aside as you would a useless garment. Paul came to the realization that Christ, the Messiah, the Promised One, was mankind's only hope of eternal life. Even though he had striven to keep the Law of Moses, he had failed in many respects and needed mercy, not justice. The Law can only pronounce one as just and righteous or unjust and unrighteous. The Law has no power to save—only to condemn those who break the Law. Christ is man's hope for forgiveness. True righteousness is found in Christ who can make us righteous by His righteousness (Perfect Life—Heb. 5:8-9). But most of all, Jesus gives us an assurance of the resurrection from the dead. What profit is it to live righteous lives and have no hope in death? Paul was willing to turn his back on all of those things that people seek after and boast about so that he could have this hope of a resurrection unto life (John 5:28-29).

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

These Judaisers were invalidating Jesus as Savior by their insisting that the Gentiles had to be circumcised and keep the Law of Moses. It is as though they were saying that Jesus cannot really save us! It was advocating that salvation came through the Law and not through Christ. So, it was important that all people see that salvation is in Christ Jesus, not in our fleshly attainments in this life.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

True or False

1. It matters what we put our confidence in for our salvation.
2. Paul was wrong to refer to people as dogs.
3. There is such a thing as evil workers as opposed to righteous workers.
4. Paul used an expression that was meant to belittle circumcision.
5. The Judaisers were people who considered themselves Christians.
6. A true Christian has undergone a circumcision.
7. Paul could have boasted about his previous life as a Jew.
8. One's acceptability before God depends on our trust in Christ.
9. Paul's zealotry under the Law was seen in his persecution of Christians.
10. Paul said that he was blameless before the Law.

Lesson Eleven

“Winning the Race”
(Philippians 3:12-21)

Our forgiveness and hope of a resurrection unto life does not depend upon any fleshly attainments that we do, but upon our faith in Christ! But we must not get caught up in this idea of justification by faith only! The Bible is very clear as to our responsibilities before God in order to become a child of God or in order to retain our relationship with God. Paul has emphasized what he gave up in order to gain Christ and be found in Him. Now he turns to emphasize the necessity of maintaining that relationship in Christ and illustrating it as a race to be run by us.

FOUR NECESSITIES IN WINNING OUR RACE

1. Dissatisfaction (vs. 12-13a). Paul was satisfied with Christ, but not with his life. He made it clear that he had not attained or been perfected. It seems that the idea of being satisfied means an end of spiritual growth. Paul felt that he still had room for such growth in Christ. So, this was no time for sitting down and resting on our laurels. It is also a mistake to compare ourselves with other runners and sit down. The maturing Christian evaluates himself in view of Christ and then does better. There are two dangers in self-evaluation:

- a) To think that we are better than we really are.
- b) To think that we are worse than we really are
- c) Revelation 3:1, 17; 2:9

Paul had no allusions about himself. He had not finished his race yet. He had not laid hold on the prize.

2. Direction (v. 13b). He had to let go of the past. To forget means that we no longer let the past influence or affect me. Nor do I let it deter me from running my race correctly. Paul had to concentrate his life, his energies, and his thinking in one direction (James 1:8). Christ had called him unto glory—that was his goal towards which he ran.

3. Determination (v. 14). Paul pressed on with intense endeavor. He was like a hunter eagerly pursuing his prey. We do not become winners spiritually by just reading the Bible and listening to good sermons. We have to get up and get into the game and compete. We have to have a determination to win the prize. The half-hearted person will never make it—never win the prize. There are two extremes that we must constantly guard against however:

- a) I must do it all by myself.
- b) God must do it all.
- c) It is a combination (Phil. 2:12-13).

4. Discipline (vs. 15-16). The mature person will have this kind of mentality about the race—that it is God and I working together to win the prize. But also, the mature will run by the rules. If he does not, he will be disqualified (1 Cor. 9:24-27; 2 Tim. 2:5). It is not what I think, but what God commands that is necessary. The race will only be won by the disciplined person.

THE CARNAL versus THE SPIRITUAL VIEW OF THE RACE (17-21)

Paul challenges these Christians to follow his example in all these matters. The spiritually minded person listen to the Word of God and makes every effort to live by His directions. He runs the race according to God's directions.

The carnal view of the race is to ignore what God says, or the lives of godly people before us and walk our own way. When they do this they become the enemies of the Cross of Christ. The Cross stands for self-sacrifice, but they are indulgent. They undermine even the example of Christ. Their god is in gratifying their fleshly desires. They are actually glorying in what is their shame. Their carnally-mindedness does not represent true Christianity. Rather such brings shame on the name of Christ.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The reward of the spiritually minded person is not in what this world has to offer, but what God has to offer. Our citizenship is not of this earth, but it is heavenly. We are like a colony of heaven on earth for a short time to influence the world (Heb. 11:16). Earth cannot satisfy our longings and we are drawn to a celestial world. We serve a risen Savior that is coming back for us. When He comes, He will change our vile bodies (body of humiliation) into a glorious body because he loves us and has redeemed us and has the power over death.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

True or False

- 1. The satisfied person does not have the incentive to improve.**
- 2. A person can go to one of two extremes in self-evaluation if not careful.**
- 3. Paul made it clear that he had not arrived in his life.**
- 4. We cannot win the prize that Jesus offers unless we get into the race of life.**
- 5. Rules are given by God, but they are not necessary to follow.**
- 6. Paul called upon the Philippians to follow his example in all these matters.**
- 7. The undisciplined person is usually a carnally-minded person.**
- 8. Paul said that the carnally-minded person glories, but in that which is a shame.**
- 9. Earthly things cannot satisfy our heavenly longings.**
- 10. This body of humiliation will be changed into a glorious body.**

Lesson Twelve

“Vital Admonitions”
(Philippians 4:1-9)

The Philippian Church was an ideal church from many standpoints; but, they were not perfect—they had not arrived! He begins chapter three with a reminder: **“For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe.”** After reminding them that they were in a race to be run and that the prize had not been won as of yet; therefore, it was necessary and helpful for him to write and admonish them about their lives. He gives several basic admonitions in these nine verses.

STAND FAST IN THE LORD

Paul used affectionate terms in addressing them such as: (1) Brethren; (2) Dearly beloved; (3) Longed for—wanting to see them again; and (4) His joy and crown. In the midst of so many problems, they were a true source of joy for the Apostle. They were a reward to him that gave him a sense of accomplishment. The church had come into union with Christ in Baptism (Rom. 6:1-4). He encourages them to stand fast or continue to maintain that union by being obedient to Christ (2 John 9; 1 Jn. 1:7).

The reasons for this admonition should be obvious. Materialism, Covetousness, idolatry, greed, having too much interest in this present world are big temptations that they could easily be caught up in (1Thess. 4:3-7). There is the danger of neglecting their salvation (Heb. 2:1-3). There is also the danger of allowing our hearts to be drawn back into a worldly way of thinking (Heb. 3:12-15).

LIVE IN HARMONY WITH EACH OTHER

Two women must have had a disagreement (Euodia & Syntyche) that was affecting the church. They needed to quickly resolve their differences so that the work of the Lord would not suffer. They may have been prominent in the church which made it even more important to solve the differences quickly. There are two dangers we need to avoid:

- 1) Holding too high opinion of one’s own person and opinions.
- 2) Being extremely censorious of others’ opinions and actions.

The solution is to be of the same mind—to bring our minds into union on the matter (Phil. 2:3-4; Rom. 12:3). Learn to live in harmony with each other.

BE CONCERNED FOR ONE ANOTHER

What might have brought on the problem with the two women may have been connected with the urging of Paul in verse 3—help these women who labored with me in the gospel. The women and men who had been Paul’s fellow-workers had needs and no one was willing to help. Such a condition may be illustrating that they may have some selfishness, jealousy, faultfinding,

or gossip, etc., in their midst. Don't be jealous, but thankful for them. Remember that their names are also written in the Book of Life—along with yours!

REJOICE ALWAYS

Paul had already stated this admonition several times, but repeats it again. Life isn't always a "bed of roses!" Circumstances, tribulations, trials, persecution, etc., often come our way. Things do not always go the way we might want them to. If we are not careful, we can develop a pessimistic outlook on life. We can become failure oriented! We can see nothing to be glad or happy about. But Paul does not just say rejoice, but he says rejoice in the Lord always. In Jesus, we have much to rejoice about. There is never a time, even in the worst of circumstances of life that we cannot rejoice about being a child of God and having a hope of heaven someday. And it is possible that the only way that I can rejoice always is to just make the decision to do so instead of waiting for something good to happen in my life. I will determine to not allow circumstances to dictate what I do or how I feel. I will choose to find a reason for rejoicing even when there are bad times. This rejoicing is in the Lord. We have a relationship with the Lord and its promised outcome. This is reason enough to rejoice at all times (Gal. 5:22).

EXERCISE SELF-CONTROL

It is easy to react wrongly to people and events in our lives. We can do so with anger, harshness, or even vengeful attitudes and actions. And it becomes easy to blame others or circumstances for our bad attitudes and actions. We are to be known for our gentleness and forbearance—not our anger and harshness. We have to learn to make allowances for people. We need to put ourselves in others' circumstances and try to understand things better. But most of all we need to have ourselves in control—rather than letting people or events control us.

DON'T WORRY

Don't be anxious or worry over things—any things! Learn to go to God with your concerns and place them in His hands. Make your supplications to Him, but do so with thanksgiving. If we put them into God's hand; then, we can live a peaceful and serene life. God's peace will serve as a guard about our hearts and minds.

MEDITATE ON GOOD THINGS

Instead of spending our time thinking about all the bad things, why not use our time wisely and think on the things that can build us up rather than tear us down. We need to think on such things that are noble, just, pure, lovely, of good report, or any other thing that is praiseworthy. Our time will not be wasted on such things.

FOLLOW THE RIGHT EXAMPLES

Paul challenged them to look at his life—remember what they had learned from him that was from God; remember how Paul lived in their midst; and in remembering, make every effort

to follow him in all these good things. If they will do so, God's peace will be upon them. The writer of the Hebrew letter challenged his reader to do the same—to follow their godly leaders (Heb. 13:7, 17).

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

It is amazing how much we need to be reminded on how to live our lives. Repetition seems to be needed by all of us and the Apostle Paul was certainly showing that he felt the need of reminding them, just like Peter stated also in 2 Peter 1:12-13.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

True or False

1. Affectionate terms are not really appropriate to use in mixed company.
2. Paul's admonition to stand fast in the Lord does not infer that Christians can fall away and be lost.
3. We do not really know for sure why the two women were in a disagreement.
4. To be of the same mind means that somebody has to give in.
5. Selfishness indicates a need to grow up—to mature as a person.
6. The Christian can rejoice in the Lord under any circumstances.
7. A person has to be in control of himself if he is to be gentle in all circumstances.
8. The Christian should not have anything to worry about.
9. God's peace comes to those whose faith is strong to be obedient to the Lord.
10. What we think about and dwell on has little to do with the outcome of our lives.

Lesson Thirteen

“Ingredients of Contentment” **(Philippians 4:10-23)**

In the previous lesson there was an admonition for the Philippians not to be anxious or worry over things. Rather, they should learn to rejoice always (in all circumstances of life), place their trust in God, and bring their petitions before the Throne of God with thanksgiving. Also, they needed to meditate continually on positive and good things and follow the godly examples that have been set before them. As a follow-up, the Apostle now gives some additional things that will help us to be contented people—people that will be comfortable, at ease, and happy with our lives and situations. We have entitled this lesson “Ingredients of Contentment.”

IT HELPS TO KNOW THAT OTHERS CARE (10)

The church at Philippi was concerned about Paul, and had helped him time and again after establishing the church there. But now, Paul was in prison at Rome awaiting his trial before Caesar. The church at Philippi had sent their messenger to help Paul and evidently some financial help as well. Paul was very grateful for their concern. It caused him to greatly rejoice in the Lord. Human seem to have a need to know that they are loved and appreciated. It brings about a sense of contentment in our lives.

CONTENTMENT IS A LEARNED PROCESS (11-12)

Paul stated that he had learned to be content in whatever state he was in. Contentment is something we learn by experiences in life along with proper teaching and outlook. Paul had given up all to follow Christ. He had to undergo all kinds of suffering for Christ. He had faced death on more than one occasion. He had been undergoing close to four years of being confined to one or more jails or prisons situation. How could he be content in the midst of all of that? He had possibly learned a very important lesson—contentment does not depend on one’s outward circumstances. It is something we have to apply our minds and hearts to. Through experiences, study, and understanding we gain these insights. It is going through the difficult experiences of life that helps us learn the lesson of contentment. Contentment can be in the midst of being abased or abounding, being full or hungry, or abounding or suffering. It is learning to graciously accept the inevitable or unchangeable things because some things we have no control over. There is no need to worry because worry can’t change these things. We learn to accept and deal with them in our minds.

CHRIST MAKES ALL OF THIS POSSIBLE (13)

Paul said that he could do all things (whatever God expects of him)—deal with all things—handle all things—accept all things through the strength that comes from Christ. He gives the strength (understanding) to deal with life’s changes. We can be more than conquerors through Him (Rom. 8:37). We can be victorious over death (1 Cor. 15:55-57). When we turn to

Christ and listen to Him and put our trust in what He says and what He has done for me.....I can be at peace and be content in whatever my situation in life.

CONTENTMENT COMES THROUGH TRUSTING IN GOD'S PROVIDENTIAL CARE (14-19)

God works in circumstances and situations in life (Rom. 8:28). Joseph is a good illustration of this. He was sold into Egypt as a slave, but was later exalted to a very high position which made it possible for him to save his family and carry out God's promises of a redeemer to come through the descendants of Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3; 22:18; Gal. 3:15-19). God works through His people. The Philippian church had helped Paul time and again. They voluntarily sent him help. God used them to care for Paul's needs. This caused Paul to say: *"My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus."* (19).

FINAL GREETINGS & PRAISE (20-23)

On the basis of all of the things he has written to the Philippians, it is obvious that God should be praised and glorified in all of these things. It was always Paul's desire also to be sure that all the saints were greeted to whom he was writing, but also that the brethren with him also send their greetings. But he did add an interesting sideline—greetings were being sent also from Caesar's household.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

It is generally stated by those who read this letter in comparison to Paul's other letters that this church was very close to Paul's heart. It may not be an automatic conclusion then that what he wrote in the letter were some problems they were having. It could be that it is more preventive than corrective in being written.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

True or False

1. Worry is a sin.
2. Contentment is being satisfied.
3. Paul was encouraged because the Philippian church cared about him.
4. Contentment is something that has to be learned by experience.
5. We can be content and still be hungry.
6. Contentment is graciously accepting the inevitable or unchangeable things.
7. Christ is the foundation of our contentment.
8. Contentment comes through trust in God's care.
9. God works through His people to care for His own.
10. The things Paul dealt with in this letter showed how many problems they had.

