

MR. D'S NOTES ON PHILIPPIANS



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The book was written by Paul between 60-64 A.D.

The church at Philippi seems to have been a matured church in that verse one mentions both elders and deacons, the two offices of the local church. Both sets of leaders in place would take some amount of time.

Paul visited Philippi on his second journey Acts 16.12. Most of the sixteenth chapter of Acts relates to this visit.

Paul is writing them to thank them for a material gift to him that he mentions in chapter four.

The key verse might be 1.21 For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. This thought is also conveyed in Col. 3.4 "When Christ, who is our life"

OUTLINE OF PHILIPPIANS

QUALITIES OF A CHURCH

Lesson 1: ERECTED (Acts 15:36-16:40)

Lesson 2: ELDERED (Phil. 1:1-2)

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Lesson 11: EXPECTING (Phil. 3:12-21)

Lessons 12: EXEMPLARY (Phil. 4:1-9)

Lessons 13: ENDORSING (Phil. 4:10-23)

(Based on the divisions used in a study by Robert L. Deffinbaugh (<http://www.bible.org>))

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"E-SWORD" and associated reference materials (If you need a GOOD - FREE Bible program for PC or PPC go to <http://www.e-sword.net> - you will enjoy it :-).

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Lesson 1

QUALITIES OF A CHURCH

ERECTED (Acts 15:36–16:40)

Act 15:36 And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do.

37 And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark.

38 But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work.

39 And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus;

40 And Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God.

41 And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches.

Act 16:1 Then came he to Derbe and Lystra: and, behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father was a Greek:

2 Which was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium.

3 Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek.

4 And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem.

5 And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily.

Act 16:6 Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia,

7 After they were come to Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not.

8 And they passing by Mysia came down to Troas.

9 And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; there stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us.

10 And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavored to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them.

11 Therefore loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis;

12 And from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony: and we were in that city abiding certain days.

13 And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither.

14 And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.

15 And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us.

16 And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying:

17 The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation.

18 And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour.

19 And when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas, and drew them into the marketplace unto the rulers,

20 And brought them to the magistrates, saying, These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city,

21 And teach customs, which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans.

22 And the multitude rose up together against them: and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat them.

23 And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailer to keep them safely:

24 Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks.

25 And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.

26 And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed.

27 And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled.

28 But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here.

29 Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas,

30 And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?

31 And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.

32 And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house.

33 And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway.

34 And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.

35 And when it was day, the magistrates sent the sergeants, saying, Let those men go.

36 And the keeper of the prison told this saying to Paul, The magistrates have sent to let you go: now therefore depart, and go in peace.

37 But Paul said unto them, They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison; and now do they thrust us out privily? nay verily; but let them come themselves and fetch us out.

38 And the sergeants told these words unto the magistrates: and they feared, when they heard that they were Romans.

39 And they came and besought them, and brought them out, and desired them to depart out of the city.

40 And they went out of the prison, and entered into the house of Lydia: and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them, and departed.

The book was written by Paul between 60 and 64 A.D. from Rome where he was in prison.

Barnes has a lengthy section on the character of the book which I will include at the end of this study for your possible interest.

The city was located ten miles inland from Neapolis which is the modern Kavala. It was founded in the fourth century B.C. It was located on the main highway from the East which ended in Rome. Originally it was named Krenides, but when Philip of Macedon came on the scene he named it after himself. Philip was the father of Alexander the Great.

There were gold and silver mines in the near area. This might give some insight into the city and its people. There probably were lots of poor working miners as well as lots of rich businessmen and traders. Nothing out of the ordinary, other than to call attention to the churches need to reach all sorts of people, not just the poor that are in need of a boost out of their dreary life. The rich need Christ just as much as the poor - not to say they will be as open to the Word, but the need is the same.

It was considered an entirely Roman city, and the official language was Latin according to Lenski. We will see the significance of it being a Roman city later.

Acts 16:1-40 is the beginning of the Philippian church.

Lenski has a scenario which has value at this point.

"When Paul left Philippi in the year 52, Timothy and Luke remained to build up the infant congregation; but Timothy soon followed Paul, and when he was sent back to Macedonia from Athens he most likely again came to Philippi. Luke, it seems, worked steadily on in Philippi. His first "we" section (Acts 16:11-40) stops with Paul's departure from Philippi; the second does not begin until Paul again reached Philippi (Acts 20:5,6). This occurred at Easter, 58 when Paul and the delegates of the churches (Acts 20:4) took the great collection to Jerusalem. Paul had been in Philippi during the previous summer when on his way from Ephesus to Corinth he spent some time in Macedonia (II Cor. 2:13). Thus Paul was in Philippi three times, the second visit probably being the longest. It seems likely that Second Corinthians, which was written in Macedonia, was written in Philippi.

"Timothy is joined with Paul in this epistle (1:1). He was with Paul when the church was founded. when he was sent back to Thessalonica from Athens, Timothy probably went back also to Philippi (I Thess. 3:1,2,6). Timothy was also in Philippi when Paul sent him by land on an

extended commission from Ephesus to Corinth prior to Paul's own slower journey over the same land route. This occurred in 57. Finally, Timothy was in the party that took the collection from Corinth to Jerusalem via Philippi (Acts 20:4). These connections of Timothy with Philippi cast light on Phil. 2:19-23. Once more this beloved assistant of Paul's is being sent to this beloved congregation." (p 693-694)

This was the first city of Europe in which the Gospel had been preached. This would have been quite a job to tackle. I'm sure the citizens had heard of Jews, and maybe even of the Christians, but the two would not have been household names. Paul would have truly been starting from scratch with this church plant.

He would probably not have had much of an interest base or group to talk to about the gospel. Rather like entering a new country today. A country where you had to begin by telling the people there is a SINGLE God that loves them. The Philippians would have been in the isms of the day for their spiritual uplifting and probably well set in their belief systems.

Some countries today are in a similar condition. They have their religion and are not interested in someone else's. I am told that for the most part Sweden is a country that believes in nothing spiritual. You have to tell them there is a God before telling them that God loves them.

Barnes Notes has a good section on the history of the city if you are interested. I will quote a portion of his section to give further on the Roman aspect of the city.

"This city is celebrated in history from the fact that it was here that a great victory, deciding the fate of the Roman empire, was obtained by Octavianus (afterwards Augustus Caesar) and Antony over the forces of Brutus and Cassius, by which the republican party was completely subdued. In this battle, Cassius, who was hard pressed and defeated by Antony, and who supposed that everything was lost, slew himself in despair. Brutus deplored his loss with tears of the sincerest sorrow, calling him "the last of the Romans." After an interval of twenty days, Brutus hazarded a second battle. Where he himself fought in person he was successful; but the army everywhere else gave way, and the battle terminated in the entire defeat of the republican party. Brutus escaped with a few friends, passed a night in a cave, and, seeing that all was irretrievably lost, ordered Strato, one of his attendants, to kill him. Strato for a long time refused; but seeing Brutus resolute, he turned away his face, and held his sword, and Brutus fell upon it. The city of Philippi is often mentioned by the Byzantine writers in history. Its ruins still retain the name of Filibah. Two American missionaries visited these ruins in May, 1834. They saw the remains of what might have been the forum or market-place, where Paul and Silas were beaten, Ac 16:19; and also the fragments of a splendid palace. The road by which Paul went from Neapolis to Philippi, they think, is the same that is now travelled, as it is cut through the most difficult passes in the mountains. It is still paved throughout."

Authenticity: Lenski mentions that the book was accepted as early as Polycarp (Polycarp c.70-c.155). Most agree that only the most radical critics ever call the book into suspicion.

Author: Paul wrote the book from Rome. His Hebrew name was Saul meaning, "to ask" or "pray." Paul is Latin meaning "little." This is why many feel he was small in stature. This was his Gentile name.

Theme: The Christian Experience according to Scofield. Ray Stedman introduced his series on Philippians with the following comments. "We want to begin our studies in the book of Philippians today and through the summer continue in what I consider the most delightful epistle of the New Testament. There is a wonderful note of joy and thanksgiving that runs through this entire epistle, and yet as you know this is one of the so-called "prison epistles" written while Paul was a prisoner. It was written to the saints at Philippi."

The church at Philippi seems to have been a matured church in that verse one mentions both elders and deacons, the two offices of the local church. Both sets of leaders in place would take some amount of time.

Some suggest that this church was made up of mostly if not all Gentile believers. This is based on the fact that Paul does not use any Old Testament quotes in the book. I don't know if that is a valid point or not, but probably is a possibility.

Paul visited Philippi on his second journey Acts 16.12. Most of the sixteenth chapter of Acts relates to this visit.

Key phrase: "JOY".

A King James note at the end of I Corinthians mentions that the letter to the Corinthians was written from Philippi by four people, evidently Paul was speaking to them and they were writing. "Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus and Timotheus." A note at the end of II Corinthians mentions that book was written by "Titus and Lucas"

I Thess. 2.1-5 mentions "2 :1 For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain: 2 But even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention. 3 For our exhortation [was] not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile: 4 But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts."

See Acts 16.12-40 and Acts 20.20 for further on Paul's relationship to the city.

Note should be taken from I Thess. 2.2 that Paul and those with him "were bold in our God to speak unto you the Gospel of God...." This boldness is related to suffering of the apostle at the hands of those that rejected his claims.

Suffering is never the anticipated in the Christian life, but it is the required. Without it there will

be little character building, there will be little patience building, and there will be little spiritual life building. Suffering is God's building block for life.

Now, some might think that this depicts God as an old meany sitting up there somewhere casting down suffering on his children. Not so. He allows suffering in life because He is not over-riding the effects of sin. Man thumbed his nose at God and man reaps the consequences.

Suffering is a part of the curse that Adam brought upon mankind. The curse states that man will work for his living. Thorns are mentioned. Ever stumble into a bed of thorns? The suffering is great and it is not God's fault. Thorns are in life because man sinned. As we walk through the thorns, God assists us to grow through the experience. This is profit from suffering for us.

My earthly father was in a train accident when he was twenty-one years old. His back was broken and there were also many other injuries. When he regained consciousness he had to pull a sheet off of his face. He looked both ways and he was in a long line of dead people.

He was seriously crippled for the remainder of his life. In his sixties he broke his leg and due to negligence of his care takers he was confined to a wheel chair for a number of years until he died of cancer.

Through all of this he worked until a few months before he died. He was one of the most patient beings I have ever known. He allowed nothing to bother him. He also was a man of great character. He was the country treasurer for many years and well trusted by the public.

However, from what he told me of his younger years - pre twenty-one years old - he was anything but patient and most would have wondered of his character. His suffering in life was not something that he requested but it was something that he put up with most of his life. Without this suffering, he would not have been the man that he was. It molded him and shaped him for the life ahead.

Thus, when suffering comes, do not shirk it, but get on your knees and pray that the Lord will help you through these hard times and that you will gain the lessons that are yours to learn. Suffering is for a reason. Suffering is a good thing.

One minor point that may not relate too much, but Ray Stedman pointed out one item of interest in the way Paul introduces his letters. He tells the reader who it is from. Today, if we get a letter without a return address we have to go to the end of the letter to see who it is from. He told them to save them the trouble. It might be a good reason for having letter heads today. I receive mail and email that is not signed until the end and find it a frustration to have to sort through several pages looking for the signature. In fact, in some emails people don't sign them and I am left to wonder who the communication is from.

One of our children and spouse send email all the time without signatures leaving the old folks to

guess and wonder which loved one they are communicating with. Generic answers and comments are a must in such occasions.

This is, to come to the point - finally - that letters in Paul's day were very important communication tools. Today we have other methods, but back then there was no email, no cellular phones, no phones, no satellites, and none of the modern communication methods that we have today. The face to face and the letter were about the only ways available. Since Paul was in prison, a letter was the only method open to him.

Imagine the thought that must have gone into his letter. He was writing to a group that needed to know these things and he was desirous of giving them the teaching that they needed. To put the importance of the communication to paper would have taken some faith and prayer. Faith that the people would read it with understanding, and prayer that the Spirit would use the letter to the desired gain in the people's lives.

There is a second thought as well. Not only did Paul have to commit his thoughts to a letter, but he had to let it go as a best foot forward effort. He could not sit back and wonder if he did it right, he could not sit back and wish he could recall it so that he could rewrite it, and he could not change the outcome of what would happen.

Again, faith came into the picture. He had to rest in the thought that he had done the best he could with the Holy Spirit's leading and he had to allow the Spirit of God to produce the needed results.

I trust that you will consider your letter writing to others as a possible way to allow God to use you. There are many that encourage missionaries with letters. There are others that allow themselves to be used of God to communicate Scriptural truth to others via the mail. The letter might be the need of some person you know. Consider how God might use you in this area.

Acts 16.9 And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us. 10 And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them. 11 Therefore loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next [day] to Neapolis; 12 And from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, [and] a colony: and we were in that city abiding certain days.

We see here that Paul entered into this city because of a vision from God. He was going elsewhere but God directed him to go to Philippi. This church is the direct result of a direct intervention by God Himself. That should have been very special to the Philippian believers. To know that God specifically wanted them in His family.

Likewise each of us is a part of that family due specifically to the direct leading of God in the

circumstances of our belief.

On the part of the messenger, we must note that obedience to specific leading results in God's plan being fulfilled. What a grand knowledge to know what you are doing is because of God.

There is a side application that some might consider. If a man knows that God has put him in a certain position, then no one should be so arrogant as to set about removing that man from God's place for him.

Years ago, a group of men had been assembled to minister. Each and every one of them knew that God had specifically placed them in that particular place. Some of them had prayed long and hard for an opportunity to minister there, and God had moved to allow this to come to pass.

At one point in time the board that was over the men made a situation which forced all to resign and seek other ministries. In my mind, this board is open to some serious discussions with the Lord as to their actions in setting up this situation where a number of called men were forced to move on. I am sure the board thought they were doing what they should but it would be wise of them to seek God's mind on this in retrospect.

Yes, the Lord used those men that were sent away in other ministries. Yes, the organization that they worked within progressed well without them, however, what might have been had those CALLED men been allowed to continue to minister as God was leading?

Just beware of the situations you seek to change. Are you very sure that God is in what you are doing. Are you very sure that you have Biblical reason to seek these changes.

It is also of note that the Acts text mentions Paul went through Neapolis to get to Philippi. We don't know whether Paul had been specifically told by the Lord to go to Philippi or if he was just headed for the population center of the area as he was known to do.

To go to the center of a province to set up a church is the wise choice. From that one central location many will be reached and they will, by natural movement of peoples go out into the other areas. People from the other areas also come into the center for commerce etc. This is a valid missionary principle even in our own day.

It is possible that they took some time at Neapolis, but there is no indication of this in the text.

Paul had a vision relating to his direction from God. There are some in our own day that believe in visions and dreams, but those methods of communication seem to be in the past. None of the major movements have held to these methods through church history. The Word of God has been revealed in its entirety and for the most part it is our leading and guiding.

God directs today via His Word, His main communication method prayer and at times through

circumstances and godly people. I have found direction in all of these in different parts of my life, but mostly through the Word and prayer. I have found that circumstances may not be the only way for guidance, and at times it is unreliable - sometimes it is just not related. Godly people can be a source of direction, but be sure that they are really godly and not just opinionated.

If you want to be sure of God's direction rely heavily on the Word and prayer and you will be better off for the effort.

When the Word is suggested as a guiding force it is not meant to mean "Flop open the Bible and point to a verse and start moving." Some have been directed in this manner, but it is not a method suggested in the Word itself, so should be avoided. When the Word is set forth it is meant in the using, reading and remembering of the same. As you know the Word much in life is made clear.

For example an unmarried couple need not pray about whether God would have them living together. He has made it quite clear that they should not in the Bible. The Bible is clear that all are to be witnesses, so again we don't have to seek His will on the subject - He has made it clear.

As you need direction, just continue in the Word and begin praying about your need. Yes, if you have godly men around seek input, but don't jump on their words as fact - use their words wisely and sparingly as you seek God's direction. Remember Ps. 119.105 "Thy word [is] a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." The Psalmist chose the word "word" rather than the words "godly men" for a good reason.

APPLICATION

1. The obvious application is the planting of churches. Paul was not in the business of evangelism, he was in the business of starting churches. He began by evangelizing anyone he came in contact with, and then as there were enough believers, he would gather them together into a church and begin working on church leadership. We will touch on leadership in a moment but for now let us look at church planting.

There are many books written on the subject so this will not be a detailed study, only an encouragement to begin with the program. Many churches are growing into monsters that just kind of wallow in the hole of their own making. The large church that continues to function and thrive is usually the one that has outreach and purpose. Without purpose you are little more than wallowing, struggling for continued existence even though there is little purpose for it.

A church that is outgrowing its building ought to consider expanding by planting another church in a needy area. To do this will take a little financial assistance as well as some people. Find someone that can lead the Bible study, someone that can lead others in evangelism and find an area that needs a church. Start knocking on doors and as people accept the Lord gather them

together for a Bible study. As the study grows, move to a Sunday service and go from there.

The people that the main church invested can return as the new church begins to grow or find another area in need of a church and continue as they have been. Church planting is the key to many things. It keeps you from having to continue to build bigger buildings, it keeps the spiritual life of the church going, and it is the natural progression of a body of believers - producing off-spring and then raising them. It also, if I might observe, the key to all financial problems of a church. As people are brought in the church grows - as will the funds.

This concept requires a few things. It requires that the main church is healthy. If it is full of sin, full of strife, and full of problems, then do not propagate that sort of thing into another body. The church should be healthy and reproducible.

The concept requires that the body has a purpose. They should have as a congregation a clear knowledge of where they are going and what they feel God wants them to do as a church body.

Recently we were attending a small church and all of a sudden a church purpose statement showed up in the bulletin. The pastor had set the purpose, not discussing it with the people or the church leadership. This is not the way to set a purpose statement. All must own it or they will never support it.

The body needs to know just what God is doing in and through them before they attempt to move on in a single direction. If there is no common interest and purpose then all will begin to pull in their own direction and you gain wallow.

2. Church leadership is the need of our day. Leadership is the major anti-wallow tool that a church body has in its toolbox. The pastor is a key leader, but the other leaders will set the tone and direction of the church. Their spiritual insight is needed for the times of problems.

Without leaders the church will have no one to look to for direction and assistance. The leaders are there to assure smooth implementation of the church purpose statement. All they do must be a part of that purpose. They are not there to follow the pastor, they are there to assist him and keep him on track toward the main purpose. He does not set it, the church sets it and he fits into that purpose because he feels it is God's direction.

This is one of the keys of a church needing a pastor. The church must determine God's intentions for the body, and then they should go looking for a man that has like passion from God. Stick someone in that is counter to the body's purpose and you will only gain grief.

This is quite counter to the days thinking. Today, there is little thought to what the church purpose is other than to continue on as things are. This is why, when a new pastor comes in there is massive change so that the church can do it his way, then another pastor and his way sweeps away the old. No. The church body is responsible to know God's will for the church and find a

pastor that is willing to join into the labors toward that goal. ALL are believer priests and ALL should know what the church is aiming to accomplish.

It is foolish to think that God would communicate only with the pastor and communicate to him all that is desired for the body. Each one in the body is a priest in their own right; they have no need of one to intervene on their behalf. As the body grows to know one another, and prays and contemplates their ministry, God will make it evident to all what the primary focus of the group should be.

Many are the churches that have never even considered what God might have them do because most churches have no concept that their purpose in life is to be "DOING" for God. They view the pastor as the DOER on their behalf.

Barnes on the "THE DESIGN AND CHARACTER OF THE EPISTLE

"THE object of the epistle is apparent. It was sent by Epaphroditus, Php 2:25, who appears to have been a resident at Philippi, and a member of the church there, to express the thanks of the apostle for the favours which they had conferred on him, and to comfort them with the hope that he might be soon set at liberty. Epaphroditus had been sent by the Philippians to convey their benefactions to him in the time of his imprisonment, Php 4:18. While at Rome, he had been taken ill, Php 2:26,27. On his recovery, Paul deemed it proper that he should return at once to Philippi. It was natural that he should give them some information about his condition and prospects. A considerable part of the epistle, therefore, is occupied in giving an account of the effects of his imprisonment in promoting the spread of the gospel, and of his own feelings in the circumstances in which he then was. He was not yet certain what the result of his imprisonment would be, Php 1:20; but he was prepared either to live or to die, Php 1:23. He wished to live only that he might be useful to others; and, supposing that he might be made useful, he had some expectation that he might be released from his bonds. There is, perhaps, no one of the epistles of the apostle Paul which is so tender, and which abounds so much with expressions of kindness, as this. In relation to other churches he was often under the necessity of using the language of reproof. The prevalence of some error, as in the churches of Galatia; the existence of divisions and strifes, or some aggravated case requiring discipline, or some gross irregularity, as in the church at Corinth, frequently demanded the language of severity. But, in the church at Philippi, there was scarcely anything which required rebuke; there was very much that demanded commendation and gratitude. Their conduct towards him, and their general deportment, had been exemplary, generous, noble. They had evinced for him the tenderest regard in his troubles: providing for his wants, sending a special messenger to supply him when no other opportunity occurred, Php 4:10, and sympathizing with him in his trials; and they had, in the order, peace, and harmony of the church, eminently adorned the doctrine of the Saviour. The language of the apostle, therefore, throughout the epistle, is of the most affectionate character--such as a benevolent heart would always choose to employ, and such as must have been exceedingly

grateful to them. Paul never hesitated to use the language of commendation where it was deserved, as he never shrank from reproof where it was merited; and he appears to have regarded the one as a matter of duty as much as the other. We are to remember, too, the circumstances of Paul, and to ask what kind of an epistle an affectionate and grateful spiritual father would be likely to write to a much-beloved flock, when he felt that he was about to die and we shall find that this is just such an epistle as we should suppose such a man would write. It breathes the spirit of a ripe Christian, whose piety was mellowing for the harvest; of one who felt that he was not far from heaven, and might soon "be with Christ." Though there was some expectation of a release, yet his situation was such as led him to look death in the face. He was lying under heavy accusations; he had no hope of justice from his own countrymen; the character of the sovereign, Nero, was not such as to inspire him with great confidence of having justice done; and it is possible that the fires of persecution had already begun to burn. At the mercy of such a man as Nero; a prisoner; among strangers; and with death staring him in the face, it is natural to suppose that there would be a peculiar solemnity, tenderness, pathos, and ardour of affection, breathing through the entire epistle. Such is the fact; and in none of the writings of Paul are these qualities more apparent than in this letter to the Philippians. He expresses his grateful remembrance of all their kindness; he evinces a tender regard for their welfare; and he pours forth the full-flowing language of gratitude, and utters a father's feelings toward them by tender and kind admonitions. It is important to remember these circumstances in the interpretation of this epistle. It breathes the language of a father, rather than the authority of an apostle; the entreaties of a tender friend, rather than the commands of one in authority. It expresses the affections of a man who felt that he might be near death, and who tenderly loved them; and it will be, to all ages, a model of affectionate counsel and advice."

QUALITIES OF A CHURCH

Lesson 2: ELDERED (Phil. 1:1-2)

It is my view, and I believe it is the Bible's teaching, that there are multiple elders and that one of them normally is set to keep order, but all are equal in value to the church. They are primarily over the church's spiritual needs and the deacons are under the elder board and responsible for the physical ministry of the church, but may others also participate in the spiritual end of things.

If a church wants a full time paid pastor there seems to be latitude for that in Scripture, but he would be one of the multiple elder board, not over it, nor above it. If the multiple elder concept were to be used there would be less desire for a paid pastor. Splitting all of the spiritual work up among several allows a church to function without a paid person. This would be an advantage in many areas other than just the financial.

Young translates the two terms "overseers and ministrants." This seems to picture the thought that I have presented. The elders are overseers of the entire church while the deacons are ministers of the physical. The two offices are not more important than the other, they are co-responsible for the people.

We might take a moment to clarify. Most church leaders today are focused on keeping the church going, of making repairs, and making way for expansion of buildings, however they are to be over the spiritual needs of the church PEOPLE in the case of the elders and the physical needs of the church PEOPLE in the case of the deacons.

The over emphasis on buildings has taken the focus of church leaders from their proper goal - PEOPLE. Yes, we must take care of the buildings, but the people are the church; the buildings are only a tool of the church.

Philippians 1.1-2 Paul and Timothy, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons: 2 Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is of note that Paul does not make a point of his apostleship. He seems to write this letter in a different tone than others. This one seems to be on a friendlier level, to a group that knew him well, and that had accepted him fully as who and what he was - an apostle.

The term servant is the Greek word "doulos" which means someone that has given their will to another for service. This man is a bond slave, one that has no desire other than to serve the one they have committed to serve. Paul makes this statement of Timothy as well as himself. He must have known Timothy well in order to know of this commitment and know that it was real.

When we view a church, we can often pick out some that seem to have committed themselves to

the Lord in this manner, but until you get to know them you won't know for sure. Indeed, many pastors on the surface may seem to be a "doulos" but as you get under the surface you may find they are just like the average believer, out for money, gain and notoriety.

I recently saw a thread on an internet forum relating to pastoral pay packages. The attitude wasn't that of "I am serving God and He is the master, and He will provide." but the attitude that, "I am a professional, I should be compensated as a professional, I should be treated as a professional and I should be paid at least the average income of those I serve. Oh, did you catch that? They admit to the premise that I have stated. They serve the people and look to the people for their livelihood except that in my view the people do the giving and the amount, not the pastor the demanding of the amount.

This may relate to the problems that the church is facing these days; we have few that are serving Christ and many serving people and self. Paul and Timothy walked through life serving God and looking to Him for their subsistence. They weren't concerned about the politics of their "position" nor the "rights" that they had as an apostle and an apostolic representative, they were concerned with the rights of the lost to hear the Gospel, and they were concerned about the rights of believers to be taught the Word of God.

May pastors and missionaries begin to see the need for this "doulos" commitment as the norm for their field and get to the business of serving God in a manner in which they ought. Then when the example is set within the church we might see more believers seeing what they are supposed to be and begin to consider their position before God.

All of us should be on a "doulos" setting with our Lord and Savior. Paul mentions to Timothy in I Timothy 4.12 "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. "See also Phil. 3.17 "Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample." and II Thess. 3.9 "Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us."

Paul and Timothy are to be our guide in our relationship with Christ. They were doulos as we should be. It doesn't seem to be an option of life, but a natural progression of our relationship to Him.

Ah, a theological passage - Saints at Philippi with THE BISHOPS AND DEACONS. Note both words are in the plural. Bishops as in more than one and deacons as in more than one. Plural church leadership.

The word Bishop is the Greek word "episkopos" which can be translated elder, curator, superintendent or overseer. It would seem that this speaks to the thought of Elder as defined in I Timothy three and Titus. The overseer of the local assembly or overseers as the text puts it.

This term is used interchangeably with the term elder in two passages that we want to look at for a moment.

Titus 1.6-7 "6 If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. 7 For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre;"

Acts 20.17, 28 "17 And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church."

28 "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."

The use of the terms of the same position makes it clear they are the same. One probably relates to the office while the other to the work. The Titus text also is quite similar to I Timothy 3.1-7.

In Titus 1.7 "episkopos" is used of the "bishop" or leader of the church. In Acts 20.17 the term "presbuteros" is used of elder, but in the same context the term "episkopos" (overseer) is used of the same person.

Again, on an internet forum I was following a thread that discussed the fact that pastors and teachers weren't supposed to have to feed the flock, the people are to feed themselves in their family and personal devotions. Not sure what they would say about the Acts text that tells that the elders are to feed the flock. Well I do know, when I posted the passage with some thoughts relating to it the thread received no more posts. Guess the point was made.

Yes, believers are to feed themselves, but they are also to be fed from the pulpit and lectern. If the pastors and teachers aren't feeding their people why are they shedding forth with so much verbiage? What purpose can there be? None. Many of the classes/sermons I have heard in recent years feed no one but possibly the youngest babe in Christ.

Note that it was to all at the church not just the church leadership - Scripture is for all believers not as some suggest. Some suggest that only a special few can properly interpret Scripture. The Roman church for centuries forbid the common man to have the Scriptures. Today we have some Greek and Hebrew scholars that tell us that we cannot properly understand the Scriptures unless we properly understand the original languages. This is becoming the first steps toward the Roman stance of yester year.

2 Grace [be] unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and [from] the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul uses his usual greeting minus mercy. He uses grace mercy and peace in other books.

Why he would leave out mercy in this case might be a little stretch of some folks need for information, but it may relate to the time of writing - he may have used mercy in other books

knowing that there was need of God's mercy for the people involved and that he knew the Philippians did not need it at this point in time.

To think that he used these three words as a cliché is somewhat against his character. I would opt to think he used the words carefully for each situation.

APPLICATION:

1. The thought of bondservant is something that we need to deal with in the church today. How does a person that has sold themselves out to the Lord, then operate within the church? The church leaders tend to demand that those that minister in the church be subject to their beckon and call, and under their authority (read that as under their thumb).

How do the two aspects of ministry coexist? On the one hand we have a person that is sold out to do all that Christ asks them to do, and on the other hand we have a leadership that is responsible to oversee the goings on of the church. How does the person that feels that they are called to minister to recovering drug addicts of the church react/work when the leaders do not want a drug rehab program going on within their church? How does the man that feels he is called to teach relate to the church adequately when the leaders feel that he is not charismatic enough to teach?

Recently a good friend related to me that he felt that God wanted him to develop a curriculum to teach some basic doctrine in his church. He approached the church leaders and after several months of run around was told by the pastor that they thought the doctrine was a good idea, but that the pastor was going to teach it.

Where and how do we find the balance between God calling people to do things and a leadership that would rather do it themselves so they can have total control and maybe glory?

Is part of the problem not that our churches are so large that the leaders do not know the people well enough to trust them to minister adequately? Is part of the problem not that our church leaders are so fearful of losing their income that they don't want anyone doing anything because they might do it so well that the leaders job comes into jeopardy? I am sure that we could suggest a number of other possibilities as well.

Ought the local church not start to discuss this problem? Ought the local church leaders understand that every person in their church may be called of the Lord to that body to do a certain ministry? Ought the leaders know the people well enough to know what their spiritual gift is, to know them enough to know they are trustworthy? Seems the leaders ought to know their people on a very close basis, not the long distance, "We will minister on your behalf when someone dies basis."

2. Our text states "to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and

deacons." "With" is a preposition that is almost always translated with. Does the choice of that word indicate anything to you in the verse? What is the relationship between the people and the leadership? The people were "with" the leaders. It seems that there might be an emphasis here that depicts the leaders being located in a place and the people are WITH the leaders.

I don't want to make too much out of this but what might we think from this construction that Paul selected for this phrase?

a. Might we draw from this that the leaders are that which the church is based on. The people might be elsewhere, but the leaders are at that geographical point. This indicates the local church in a geographical place at the very least.

b. It might indicate that people may come and go, but leaders are more stable in location. This might be something to look for in your future church leaders. Look for men that are planning to be around to give a solid commitment to the church. Look for men that are stable, and not moving with the wind to find their thing.

c. It might indicate that people are more transient than the leaders which would require the leaders to plan on the mobility of the people. Churches around military bases and large educational institutions realize this fact. People are constantly being moved or going home for vacations etc. This must be factored into the planning of the church.

This will have an effect on manpower in the church, and it will make a difference in the funds available to the church. It may have a number of other effects on the church.

In the case of Philippi, I don't know that they were that transient, but knowing that there were slaves in most of the churches, maybe even military people it would be obvious that the leaders would have to make compensations.

3. Mention has been made of the relationship between Paul and Timothy. Consider Timothy knowing that Paul has included both as "servants." Paul placed Timothy on the same plain in addressing the letter to the folks at Philippi.

What an encouragement that must have been to Timothy.

Pastors, superintendents - really how much does it cost your ego to place those that work along side you on the same level - to call them coworkers? To show a mutual respect toward those that assist your ministry - or should it be more of a mutual ministry than looking at it as "yours?"

So many pastors view themselves as God's gift to the assembly. Yes, they are in the area of gifting, but they are not the high browed important people that many seem to think themselves to be.

God calls men to lead churches, not dictators to rule, nor potentates to subdue. The man of God that is placed over an assembly needs to remember his place in God's grand scheme of things. The pastor is a PART of the church to serve, not apart from the church to rule.

The same could be said in similar words to the people. Some congregations treat their pastor as someone that is there to serve them, not to assist them to serve the Lord.

4. The term is mentioned of ALL the saints. Not just the leaders, not just the rich, not just the workers, not just the financial supporters - ALL. This is of paramount importance to the running of the church.

So often there are different sections of the church. There might be the poor, the rich, and the leaders, or there may be the workers, the leaders and the rest. No matter how your church might be divided, it is wrong. We are one body in existence to serve Christ as He directs the body to serve.

The other side of that coin might run along the lines of ALL are to be involved in ALL the goings on of the church. ALL should be at Sunday school, ALL should be at prayer meeting, and ALL should be involved in all aspects of the church body.

5. Church leadership is important. In the book of Acts, Paul went out planting churches and returned to many of them to set up elders. It is assumed that the deacons were set in the very beginning, but that the spiritual leaders or elders were either developed, or more to the point noticed as the church went along. Leaders were taken from the body, not brought in from outside as we do today.

It would appear that when Paul returned to the churches that the people had observed the leaders that naturally appeared as the church went about its business. The men's leadership abilities would have been observed, as well as their spiritual qualifications.

Yes, a church can function under any form of church government, but what if it functioned under a Biblical form of government. A church where the leaders were gifted by the Spirit to do their work, a church where men live the Christian life as they should, a church with men that fit the Scriptural qualifications.

Today, most churches select their leaders by popularity, or availability, not due to any great spiritual qualifications. How sad does it get? A body of believers following men that may not even be qualified for the position they are filling.

6. Maybe we should discuss the elder and his work. Many longer works are available I am sure, but suffice it that we give a few paragraphs on the subject.

THE ELDERS MUST BE DESIROUS OF THE POSITION

I Timothy mentions that IF a man DESIRE the office of Bishop. Not that all men will desire it, not that all men even care a bout the office, but some WILL desire it. These are the guys you should want in your church leadership.

They must desire it as a furtherance of their service to the Lord, not furtherance of their societal position and stature. Years ago my brother was a contractor. He was raised in brand X church. Out of the blue the man decided he was going to join brand Z church which had a totally different stance than brand X.

I bluntly asked him why he was joining that church. A little hesitantly he said that since he was in business, and all the towns business people belonged at brand Z so he thought it would be good for business. Hey, how could I argue with that? (Not unlike a lot of believers today.)

The text implies that the man that desires and then there is an evaluation of him on the basis of this long list of qualifications. He wants the job and has set himself up for an evaluation by the church to a very high standard. This man REALLY must want the job.

The desire of the man should be evaluated as well. Just why does he desire it?

The elders must be qualified for the position. Timothy and Titus were both given specific qualifications for the man that would be an elder.

Often these are trotted out before calling a pastor, but never before electing church leadership. In addition there should be some qualities that you look for in your men. Spiritual correctness, Biblical correctness, and life correctness.

The elders must be gifted for the position. They are supposed to be apt to teach. This would indicate that they are gifted by the Spirit to do so. It is also indication that they will be doing some teaching in the church, not just heading up the softball team.

The elders must be circumspect in the position. There is no room for worldly living in the elders. They are to be the example to the flock; they are to be the walking illustration of a life committed to Christ.

The elders must be accountable in the position. If he fails in his position, then he should be confronted and corrected. This requires him to accept responsibility for his incorrect actions or attitude.

7. Both Matthew Henry and Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown mention the fact that pastors were not needed as long as the apostles were around and calling on the churches. That after the apostle's visits were becoming less frequent they started appointing elders.

I find this interesting though flawed. Paul is pictured in the book of acts of passing back among

his churches and appointing elders, nothing is said about apostolic visits other than his own, and there is no indication that the elders being appointed grew out of a lack of apostolic visits.

The thought may be correct, but it is from assumption, not fact or the Word.

I would question a churches ability to function without leadership for weeks at a time without some big difficulties. Most churches don't even function that well with leaders trying to keep a lid on it.

8. Since Paul was in prison at the time of writing, I found it of interest that a letter came this week from a man that I know in prison. He wrote originally in response to my theology. We have corresponded for a year or so now and it never ceases to strike me at the seriousness of this man with the life he leads before Christ and before man. He is leading people to the Lord within the walls of a secular state prison. The chapel program in the prison is totally dead and corrupt with every sort of ism gathering to "worship" together.

This man has convinced guards of their error in thinking about the word, he works with every sort of cult within the prison, and this is all on his own time. He works eight hours a day and is taking Bible college courses by distance learning.

He is more active in prison than most Christians are while free as a bird to serve their Lord.

It is so good to know there are some that take their Christianity seriously.

9. Timothy, Mark and Epapharus seem to be Paul's messengers through this time of his ministry. A couple of points to be made.

First that they were willing to minister in this "lower" position of messenger, and troubleshooter, rather than taking on a church and turning it into the first "Megachurch."

Secondly, can you imagine how good it felt for these men to know they were square in the middle of God's will for their life serving this man of God that was doing such great things for the church? They must have had a great joy, even though they were walking all those miles between destinations.

How do you accept your position in the church? Do you feel it is a joy to serve in that position or do you yearn for the upper seat? Please go before the Lord and seek His desire for your life, no matter what position you are in.

Once I heard a young pastor that was pastoring in a small church tell of his education. He could have been pastoring in a larger church but his calling was to the smaller churches of America. He stated that he was committed to the small church. You might understand my confusion in a few months when I heard that he has accepted the call to a large church nearby.

I am not sure where his commitment went, whether it was scared away by a desire to be bigger than before or if it was a definite leading of the Lord. The point. Be sure of your motivations when changing from one place of ministry to another. God is the guide, not our own desire for higher position.

10. Stedman raises a point that I have never heard of before. He states that Deacon is not an officer of the church but rather, a term that covers anyone that does work in the church. ""Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons" (or perhaps more accurately, with the pastors and workers, because deacons were not officers of the church but anyone who did anything in the church was a deacon, a worker.)"

I think church history would argue against him and most of the scholars of our day would chime in. I Timothy 3.10 seems to disagree with him as well. I am not sure what he based his comment on. "And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being [found] blameless."

The outworking of such a teaching would be either a multiple elder board over the church or if he believed in a single elder, a dictatorship with the pastor as the dictator.

11. Barnes makes the valid point that since Paul greeted two sets of officers, that this is Biblical proof positive that there should be multiple elders and multiple deacons. This is a truth that many churches have totally missed in their church government. Most hold that the single pastor is equal to the multiple elders, but that seems unbiblical to me.

He further notes that in his day there was a controversy about whether there was one ruling over the elders. Even today we have some that suggest that there are teaching elders and a ruling elder - usually a paid pastor.

Barnes suggests that if this was the case then Paul was slighting the ruling elder by not mentioning him by name.

The "ruling elder" is a figment of imagination. It might be that in some churches one man as moderator of the elders might be of use to getting things done in an orderly manner, but to give this man the rule over the board is absurd.

12. Just a little side light about letter writing. Constable relates that Paul used the normal introduction for his time period. The point I'd like to wonder about is whether the flowery extensive greetings of some letter writers of today are appropriate.

They aren't following the standard of our day. They aren't always appropriate to the recipient. They seem quite out of place in our present society, not to mention our Christian society.

Are they wrong? Probably not. Are they self serving? It seems so at times but that might be in the eyes of the beholder.

I have some people that use these long "wishes" in email. Now, email is known for its brevity, not its longevity. To use the long wish in snail mail may be acceptable, but seems very out of character for the email.

Often the impression is left that this person is being a little super spiritual as they run out the Lord, the Spirit and all the grace, joy and good wishes.

13. Gill makes a definite point that Paul was listed first for a reason. "The apostle sets his own name first, as being not only superior to Timothy in age, in office, and in character, but the sole writer of this epistle."

Not sure that there was quite that much thought in Paul's mind as he formed the thought in his mind, but surely all these things are true. Paul was all these things that Timothy was not, yet Paul chose to include Timothy in the introduction. He must have thought highly of Timothy. He also included him because the folks at the church knew him from past meetings.

This hobby horse may be getting a little too much riding, but the thought of a pastor giving anyone recognition in a church is rather rare. What harm is there in telling someone that they are doing a good job? What harm is there in giving recognition to work done in the Lord's name.

The pastor isn't the only person in the church that is accomplishing things - or at least shouldn't be. All are to be working toward the goal of good works within the church.

No, don't lay it on thick every time someone sweeps the floor, but some people sweep the floor in the church for years and never gain recognition for their efforts for the Lord. Not just sweeping floors, but all items that people do within the church. It only takes a few seconds to recognize people and their labors.

14. Gill mentions of the elders that their name comes from their "age, gravity, and seniority."

Let us consider this for a moment or two. How many elders fit this trio of qualities? Are they to be qualities that we should consider in selecting elders today?

To the first question, few, and to the second question a resounding yes.

Our society gives little credence to the old any more. In my teenage days it was required to honor the older folks for society, but today in my older years to honor the elderly is to show your utter stupidity. No one honors the old, the old are the feeble of our society and there is little use for them.

It should be submitted that the older generation has wisdom that is greatly needed in the church today.

Over and over young pastors come into a church and completely change everything with no concern given to anyone or anything. They give no ear to wise council from the older members - they are not interested in the old foggies thoughts.

Many churches have lost their entire older generation due to the radical, not needed changes of a young pastor that "will have his way." Sad it is to see the older generation written off as worthless.

One Governor had the utter ignorance to tell the seniors of his state that it was their duty to die and make way for the younger generation. This attitude is not verbalized often, but the thought is there in many things that the younger generation does.

15. Gill relates "These officers are mentioned by the apostle, not only to show his respect to them, but to observe to the members of this church, that they ought to esteem them highly for their works' sake; these being offices of great importance and usefulness to the church, which, by having such, was a truly organized church of Christ."

Again, the recognition of the leaders is not inappropriate. To acknowledge their contribution to the church is not wrong. On the other hand you can over do it in my opinion. On an internet forum I read a thread relating to pastor appreciation day. Once a year to show your appreciation to the pastor. Other than a single pastor being unbiblical, to show the "elders" your appreciation might be quite appropriate.

On the forum there was more than one pastor that voiced their desire for such things, while one related that his church gives him an appreciation day once a month. Surely there is some balance in between somewhere.

Give your church leadership due appreciation for their labors, but leaders return the due appreciation to your congregation as well.

Lesson 3

QUALITIES OF A CHURCH

ESTABLISHED (vs. 6)

(Phil. 1:3-11)

3 I thank my God upon every remembrance of you,

4 Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy,

5 For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now;

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

7 Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace.

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

9 And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment;

10 That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ;

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

3. I thank my God upon every remembrance of you,

Every time Paul thought of the folks at the church He took a moment to pray for them and thank God for them.

What an encouragement for the people to know someone was praying for them. When on deputation we were always encouraged greatly when we found out people were praying for us.

When I was doing meetings on the road, I seldom greeted people at the door with the pastor, usually opting to stand by the table with our information and prayer materials where I could speak with those that were interested.

One Sunday evening in mid Nebraska the pastor of a small church asked me to stand at the door with him. As the folks passed by, one elderly couple stopped quickly and the man opened his Bible to show me one of our first and oldest prayer cards. He shook my hand firmly and said "We pray for you every day." and they were off on out the door. I have no idea where they picked up the prayer card, only that they did and that God had given them a burden to spend some of their prayer time speaking to the Lord about our family.

How special the believers must have felt knowing that the apostle Paul was praying for them!

There is a possibility that he is thanking God for every one of their remembrances of Paul - such as the financial gifts that they gave - mentioned in chapter four. The term translated "you" can also be translated "your."

At any rate Paul is praying for them in their labors for the Lord.

Paul states "my God" a statement of great import. This was HIS God, not one of the gods of the gentiles around him, not the god Caesar, but MY God. Paul thanked the God among many gods of Paul's day. The Old Testament carries forth this concept as well. God does not bother trying to prove that there are no other gods around, He just declares that He is the TRUE AND ONLY GOD THAT IS ABOVE ALL the gods that man has invented. He is the One and Only God, but He allows man his little dreams of creating something big enough to worship.

I am often reminded of a passage in the Old Testament where God in all his splendorous sense of humor speaks of man's feeble attempts to create their own god. Ps. 115.4 "Their idols [are] silver and gold, the work of men's hands. 5 They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not: 6 They have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not: 7 They have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat. 8 They that make them are like unto them; [so is] every one that trusteth in them." Also Isa. 44.14 "He heweth him down cedars, and taketh the cypress and the oak, which he strengtheneth for himself among the trees of the forest: he planteth an ash, and the rain doth nourish [it]. 15 Then shall it be for a man to burn: for he will take thereof, and warm himself; yea, he kindleth [it], and baketh bread; yea, he maketh a god, and worshippeth [it]; he maketh it a graven image, and falleth down thereto. 16 He burneth part thereof in the fire; with part thereof he eateth flesh; he roasteth roast, and is satisfied: yea, he warmeth [himself], and saith, Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire: 17 And the residue thereof he maketh a god, [even] his graven image: he falleth down unto it, and worshippeth [it], and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me; for thou [art] my god."

4 Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy,

This verse and verse five lend weight to the thought of "your" in verse three.

Not only is he praying for them, but he is praying with joy, and making requests with joy.

Hummm, joy in prayer - not a common line of thought in many churches today. I don't think we should be disrespectful of the Lord, but to be happy to see God answering prayer and be happy to take requests before him is not wrong.

Might we dwell on this thought of a moment? The apostle Paul was praying for the believers with joy. Even though the apostle was in prison, even though he had many visitors, and even though he had many things to do, he took time to pray. He took time to pray specifically about a little church and he did it with joy. He wasn't begrudging of his time, he was happy spending

time in prayer for these folks.

Where is the emphasis on prayer today? Where are the prayer warriors of our generation?

Recently in the news a man with mental disorders entered a large church auditorium with a gas can spraying the gas around and lit it on fire. Only a couple of folks were injured, and their injuries were minor. The amazing fact was that there were people in the auditorium on a Wednesday evening praying. How many churches have to use their auditorium on Wednesday evening? This man evidently knew there was a good possibility of killing people in this church on Wednesday night.

There are many books written on prayer, but the Lord gave us one book to be our guide. Just take a concordance and look up the word prayer and jot down the attributes of the prayer warriors of the Word and allow them to teach you in your prayer life.

5 For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now;

The specific thought here would be their participation in giving to Paul's efforts, but may well relate to their eager efforts in other areas of getting the gospel out to the world.

The word translated fellowship is the same word for the believers relationship with other believers - that which is to bring spiritual growth and benefit. It has the thought of communion - close relationship - a little more than the news, weather, and sports. The same word is also used of the believers relationship to God - not a casual hi there, how are you --- I hope!

Fellowship is one of the prime items mentioned in the book of Acts in relation to the early church. It is listed along with fasting and prayer the heavy items of the Christian walk. There must be some special place for fellowship in the Christian life.

What sort of fellowship do you have in your church? Dinners, refreshments? Are these really the makeup of "fellowship?" If fellowship is related to our relationship to God and fellowship is related to fasting and prayer ought not there be something in the spiritual realm that is an integrated part of fellowship with one another?

Ought we not find out what that sort of fellowship is like? Ought we not find out what the Bible says about fellowship? When is the last time you have heard a sermon or class on fellowship and its "SPIRITUAL" applications to the body of Christ?

If you think fellowship is the news, weather and sports over a coffee and cookie or two you have the normal idea of fellowship, but you do not have the Biblical idea of fellowship.

Dare yourself to be challenged. Dare to study the word on your own and find out what it is supposed to be. Dare to bring what you find into your relationships with people at church. Dare

to find that special relationship with God. Dare to "FELLOWSHIP" with Him and with your fellow believers.

Many feel that Paul is speaking of the giving of the church to his ministry, and this may well be included in his thinking. II Corinthians 8.1 and following speak to the churches of the area and their giving spirit. He also mentions their gifts to him in the fourth chapter of Philippians.

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

Despite the naysayer, this is one of the glorious security passages that declare that God is in control of our salvation once received, not us! When we accept the work of Christ on the cross we end our responsibility for our salvation - it is His and not ours.

The verse is a promise that we will one day be a part of the day of the Lord and His glorification completed.

The context is of great importance. This is definitely relating to salvation and God's work in the believers. It might be suggested that it relates to the church and Paul establishing it, however this does not fit, in that the church no longer exists as an organization, only the people that the church produced. Paul is speaking to the people, not the organization.

Paul states that he is "confident" that God will complete the work begun. Barnes mentions of this confidence, "It means here that Paul was entirely convinced of the truth of what he said. It is the language of a man who had no doubt on the subject." Barnes continues by pointing out that Paul's confidence is based on the confidence that he had in the God that he served.

This game of salvation is occurring in God's ball park and we have no fear that the game is going His direction and will conclude as He has planned it.

7. Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace.

Now, just what does Paul mean by "ye all are partakers of my grace."?

a. In some way we can extend our excess grace to others? Indeed, the Roman church teaches this thought. All the saints that were really great had excess grace and it all goes into a large pool to be given to those less spiritual - and of course it is the church that controls the faucet.

b. The American Standard Version suggests another possible line of thought in its slightly different translation "ye all are partakers with me of grace." which indicates all believers partake of grace, Paul along with us.

Young's, the Literal Version and the Net Bible all follow this translation of the text while the Modern King James and Darby follow the King James. Jamieson, Fausset and Brown hold to this line of thought as well.

c. They partook of the Gospel that he graciously shared with them seems to be a possibility. He had gone to great lengths to travel here and there to share the Gospel and this was his gift to those that accepted the Gospel of Christ.

The Net Bible Clearly shows this to be the grace of God that they all were taking part in. "Partners together with me in the grace of God."

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

Paul declares his love for the believers and calls God as his witness. How about that for a witness - anyone going to argue with Him? Actually God is our best witness - He knows all, He knows all truth, and He knows all that is within us.

Calling Him to the witness stand is a little difficult I imagine, but the life of the person most likely will show forth through time the truth of the witness.

The term witness is the term we gain Martyr from. A martyr is one that witnesses of his faith through his death.

A good study might be the picture of God - Christ giving witness of his love by His death on the cross. He would be a great witness of Paul's love I would think.

The idea of bowels seems to relate to the inner being - we might call it the heart.

9. And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and [in] all judgment;

How do we grow our love in knowledge and all judgment?

Knowledge is easy enough, judgment however relates to moral, ethical knowledge. It relates to discernment.

It seems that Paul wants their love to be discerning and thoughtfully applied, that knowledge that the one loved or the item loved is worthy of our love.

It might indicate that the young believer is loving, but in too broad a sense - that the love should become more circumspect in finding objects.

Since love is something that we find to be active - doing things for the benefit of the one loved,

shouldn't we be selective in who/what we act for?

Some call all Christians to love one another - love the cultist - love the liberal - love the false teacher - Not so quickly - love one that is worthy - be discerning in your love.

Paul is praying toward this end - one must wonder where the Philippians love was being placed that Paul wanted them to refine their object of their love.

Should this not be the prayer of the pastor, the teacher, the parent - that their charges are finding the proper people/things to love?

The Bible is full of encouragement to love not this world, but to love the next - to love one another - to love Christ etc. These are objects/people that we as mature believers should love - not those things that tie us to the world and its system.

10 That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ;

The purpose of this redirection of love is that we might be without offence when we stand before the Lord.

Just imagine the business man that has committed his love to his business to the detriment of his wife, his children and his Savior as he stands before Christ in the final day.

What will he say, what will he feel, what will he do - maybe these are some of the tears that the Lord will wipe away. It will be a sad day for many believers.

We are to approve the good things; we are not to be an offence as we live this life.

Where does your love find its time spent? Where is your thought life when your mind has a few moments to idle onto desired things? Where is your material wealth spent? Where is your time spent?

What a valuable evaluation this would be for the believer - take some time to take stock of your life this week. Are you approving of the right and moral things of life? Are you giving offense with your life?

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

Being filled - abundantly - abundantly filled - don't spare the goodies, so to speak. We are to be filled, but the fruit is from Christ for God's glory. We produce the fruit, but it is because we open ourselves to Christ and allow Him to work His work in us. That produces the fruit.

It seems from this passage that we don't have to struggle to produce fruit to glorify God, but that we just allow it to happen. Our openness to Him is all that is needed for Him to use us for His purposes.

This may speak to the teaching that says we have an old sin nature within us that fights us at all times to keep us from doing right. It seems here that there is little struggle - we can be full of these fruits - only allowing Him to work to do it. If we were constantly struggling and only winning now and then it seems that it would be hard to be abundantly full of fruit.

APPLICATION:

1. Ray Stedman brings up a good point from the third verse. He gives emphasis to the fact that a believer will naturally love the brethren. He comments that now and then you run across someone that does not seem to want to be around Christians. "I know occasionally you meet people who because of difficulties they experience in Christian relationships want to go live their lives by themselves. They never want to come to church or have anything to do with other Christians. When I hear that I am immediately suspicious as to whether they are really Christians, because one of the first signs the scriptures tell us of new life in Christ is that we love the brethren. John says this is an unmistakable sign that we are born again, that we love the brethren, and if we choose to live apart from them something's wrong."

I tend to agree with his conclusion. There are many in our day that have removed themselves from their churches and do not attend anywhere regularly. I don't think this is what Mr. Stedman was talking about. He went to be with the Lord before the present church situation where we have many leaving the church due to their disgust with the lack of Godly preaching.

If you find someone that does not attend because they dislike believers, you probably have an example of what Mr. Stedman was speaking of. On the other hand if you run across someone that has no regular church, that is loving and compassionate to you, you probably have someone that is disgusted with the current church situation.

Many of my acquaintances have left the organized church and find they have little use for the organization probably because it is an organization rather than a body. Those few that are still attending church regularly do so with a real desire for something much better. They often are attending out of a sense of duty to the Lord.

I find myself, that most churches disgust me more than encourage or prepare me for ministry. They are so man centered and shallow, that I wonder why anyone finds value in their goings on.

Church in the book of acts was fasting, prayer, and fellowship while church in America is often entertainment, hype and shallowness of character and content.

You may also run into people that have been so wronged by people in the church that they have

isolated themselves to escape further pain and hurt from other believers.

2. Stedman further points out that Paul was thankful for ALL of the folks at the church, not the congregation, not the leaders, not the nice folks, but ALL believers.

This is another serious lesson for the church of our century. All are to be in your mind, the leaders, the people, the trouble makers, and the peaceful folks. All go together to make up the local body of Christ and all are necessary to the ongoing work of that body.

If you work through the troubles, you will most likely find out that the outcome is for the good, even though it was a real pain while you were going through it. Trouble often points up problems that need to be smoothed out or problems that folks have in their lives.

3. And even further Mr. Stedman observes from Paul's comments "And I am sure that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ." that Paul was able to overlook the now and again problems with people to that day when he knows they will be perfected in the Lord's image as the Lord would have them to be.

Pastor, when you see that pain in the neck coming down the hall, don't duck into the nursery to avoid them, look them square in the eye and remember God isn't done with them yet, and try to see what they might be rather than what they seem to be. God will perfect them in the manner that He wants for His purpose and pleasure.

Congregant, when the pastor is rubbing you the wrong way, remember that God is working on the pastor - and maybe you as well - and think of what will one day be in the pastor's life. You can overlook some defects now for the better person tomorrow.

Now if you have someone that is in their sixties or seventies and they are still rubbing you the wrong way, you might wonder if the Lord is able to be in the molding process with this person. After many years of walking with the Lord, there should be some change for the good in anyone's life.

4. Verse nine mentions "And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and [in] all judgment;"

Note their love is to increase or abound. The idea is to have and to have more until there is an over abundance, but this desire is qualified. Their love should abound in "knowledge and in all judgment."

The knowledge mentioned is a complete and detailed knowledge, while the judgment is a proper perception of things both by the observations of our external body, but by our intellect as well.

Now, when someone tells you the Bible tells us to love EVERYONE, remind them that it is to be

done in knowledge and judgment. Love is to extend from a very clear knowledge and moral judgment.

Many there are in the church today that love everyone equally, but without this moral knowledge and judgment. They are loving liberals, heretics and non believers as they are to love a moral upright believer. Not good to say the least.

When you extend your Christian love, you are to do so with some good judgment. A man came to our door wanting twenty dollars for gas to get to work. He promised to pay me back the next day. I am not sure that I used good moral judgment when I handed him a twenty. Sure and begora, the next day came and went without a return on my investment. Yep, I loved him but not with that knowledge and judgment that Paul was speaking about.

5. Love abounding might have its outworking in what you DO for others. When you know someone is in trouble or could use a hand, be sure your love abounds to include assisting them in what ever they have need.

Years ago we moved to a new town. We had visited a church there a number of times, but were not regular. We had loaded a U-Haul truck with some assistance from a couple of friends that had dropped by, but when it came to unloading in the new location we were on our own. I was about half way through unloading when I began to have blood/sugar problems, which I did not know about. I was becoming terribly tired and knew I could not continue though knowing that we had to turn the truck in first thing in the morning.

Finally in desperation I asked the wife to call the church and ask if there was someone that could give us a hand for a few minutes. The woman on the other end told my wife that they were having a banquet and that there was no one to help, but we might call the hospitality committee chairman and ask him.

After some time two very kind young men showed up and we were done in only a few minutes. What a God send for us and it only took a few minutes with the extra hands. These two young men had abounding love to one in need. These men come to mind often when I think of love for the brethren.

Let your actions be your Christian testimony before your fellow believers but taking action when there is a need.

6. Verse two mentions "Grace [be] unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and [from] the Lord Jesus Christ." What peace might we have without God? None is the true answer though many lost in America might suggest otherwise. The affluence of our country has allowed many to feel quite self sufficient and without need of anything outside of themselves. Ian Thomas taught about the Christ that the Bible sets forth as our need and our Savior. "He had to be what He was to do what He did, and He had to do what He did in order that we might have what He

is." (Quoted in a sermon by Ray Stedman.)

We are as we are only because of God's plan and Christ's submission to it.

7. Paul hadn't been with the folks at Philippi for several years, yet they were still on his prayer list. He had been speaking to God about these folks for years. That had to be an encouragement for them to understand.

I would encourage you to find a few people that you will commit to pray for daily. Even if you have no idea what they are doing day to day, just keep them before the Lord. He knows their needs even if you don't.

If you can get on their prayer letter list and find out what they are doing and what they have need of, all the better.

8. In verse six Paul tells them that God has begun a work in them and that He will accomplish that work. How does that relate to the down times of ministry, when nothing is going well, when you cannot get any thing going that is positive and when you feel like giving up?

It relates directly. HE began the work - or if He didn't He should have! If HE began the work then it is not up to you to feel good about how that work is going. He is the one that is responsible for the outcome, not you.

More than one church planter has become discouraged and wondered what he was doing wrong. Nothing, if they are praying regularly for the Lord's leading. Christ said HE would build HIS church, so if you are starting a church HE is building it NOT YOU. So relax and enjoy the ride that HE has provided for you. All is on HIS shoulders, not yours.

We often stumble at what we are not able to do when we ought to be kneeling and asking for assistance with what we are not able to do - that is what God is for! He is the only builder, we are only the assistants.

9. Verse ten mentions "That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ;

All the verbs are in the present tense. These are qualities that the believers were to have from that point forward till the Lord's coming. ALL THEIR LIVES would be the implication.

I recently received an email forwarded from someone else that had forwarded to someone else that had for..... you know what I mean. The note was completely inappropriate for a Christian to read completely through, much less pass on to another believer yet it had been forwarded by two other Christians prior that I knew of. "Approve things that are excellent" demands nothing less. Nothing base, nothing shady, nothing crude, nothing inappropriate fits into "things that are

excellent."

I would challenge each reader to stop and consider the television that they watch. Can you honestly say that all of it fits into "things that are excellent?" This is the standard for life, not when nobody is looking. A life of excellent things is the standard not met by most Christians today.

Where do we get off watching trash on the tube and going to church and affirming the book of Philippians? How can we kneel before the Father with a straight face and ask forgiveness for transgressions week after week, when we know we are an affront to His holiness when we sit in front of the tube watching and hearing the trash of this world?

A recent Evangelical big wig was recently exposed for his sexual perversions. He was married with children and admitted to sexual inappropriateness and being a liar. This was the pastor of a large church, and head of a large evangelical group.

Where was he when he read through Philippians? Where was He when the Spirit of God revealed that his life was to be in sync with "That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ?" How did he rationalize his sin away when he read verses like this? How did his mind work when he was giving invitations and admonitions in his church asking people to give up their sins when he knew full well he was going to hang on tight to his own?

How does a lost person hear of these sorts of things on the media and decide that he wants to become a Christian? How do believers that have been under this man's ministry react to such revelations?

And, don't be too hard on this one preacher, because there are many others that have been revealed for what they are and many others that have not been shown for their sinfulness.

The church members must decide as individuals to be honest in their Christian living, and churches as bodies need to hold their leaders to a very high standard.

The great sin that is revealed from time to time is glossed over most of the time, by the man having a tearful repentance and reinstatement immediately. This is sin in and of itself. The repentance does not wash away the addictions that are the cause of the sin. These men need to be sidetracked for many months if not years, until they can prove themselves to be free of their sin and reliable for ministry.

It was a great encouragement to me that the man described above was set aside by his church immediately. There is no place in ministry for a man that is fighting such sin in his life. Men that are found in sin need assistance and time to deal with their incorrect life.

If you are a church leader, open your own eyes to the sin in your secret life. Don't allow these sins to continue further. Ultimately they will be found out and your family will suffer along with you, as will the body of Christ. This goes equally well for church goers - all of us as believers are called to the same standard as the leadership and we all need to set aside that secret sin that we allow ourselves to enjoy.

I'd like to close with a quote from Mr. Stedman that sums up the Christian life.

"Furthermore, we will be sincere and blameless. This word "sincere" is most interesting. In the Latin it means "without wax" and in the Greek it means "sun tested". Both of these come from the same experience. In the ancient world oftentimes they made little images or pottery which would develop cracks. In order to pass these off as perfect, some of the merchants would fill the cracks with wax so the crack was not observable. There was a way of find out. They put the item out in the hot sun for awhile. If there was wax, the sun would melt it and the crack would become visible, so it was "sun tested". Paul is saying that the Christian life ought to be one without hypocrisy, without wax, so constantly exposed to the light that is in Jesus Christ that it is continually Son tested, This is where the Christian lives, in the light of the glory that streams from the face of the Father in heaven. If in our lives before Him we hide nothing we are then sincere, blameless, and as a result we are filled with the fruits of righteousness."

Lesson 4

QUALITIES OF A CHURCH

EVANGELIZING

(Phil. 1:12-18)

12 But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel;

13 So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places;

14 And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

15 Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will:

16 The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds:

17 But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defense of the gospel.

18 What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretense, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.

12. But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things [which happened] unto me rather unto the furtherance of the gospel;

The classic Old Testament reference that relates here has always been an amazement to me. Joseph was sold into slavery by his siblings - I had a hard time when my brother gave me a hard time – I had trouble not wanting full and complete retribution and RIGHT NOW - Joseph when faced with the situation of later helping his siblings and family, simply told them that it all was for the best – of course giving God the glory. (Genesis 50.20 "But as for you, ye thought evil against me; [but] God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as [it is] this day, to save much people alive. 21 Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them.")

Joseph that day set the standard for brotherly relationships on a very high plain, and we brothers in the flesh should take the same attitude with those problems that creep into family relationships. It ought to also set the standard for Christian brothers and their interpersonal relationships as well.

Paul wasn't worried about the problems in his life, he was just sitting back enjoying watching what God was doing with it all. "Furtherance of the gospel;" was the gain God was receiving from Paul's physical difficulties.

When things are going roughly and troubles are stacking up, remember that God gained much good from both Joseph's and Paul's hard times. What great things might be coming out of your hard times? Be sure to find Joseph's and Paul's attitude in life as soon as you can in your life.

No matter how bad it gets, no matter what comes along, it is for the best - in God's eyes.

Also take a moment to consider I Peter 3.14 "But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy [are ye]: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; 15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and [be] ready always to [give] an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:"

The phrase "have fallen out" is just a different way of saying "have turned out." as the Darby translation sets it forth. The word is normally translated "come." "Come unto the furtherance of the gospel;" would be the thought of the phrase.

13 So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other [places];

The term palace relates to the center of Roman army headquarters or the main hall. It also relates to the palace where the Roman officials resided and conducted business.

When the Roman's took over a country it was the custom to take over the main palace for the leaders to set up business. It is the Greek word praitorion.

The things that Paul was going through were bringing the Gospel unto the top places of government around him. How great is that? When is the last time you did anything that brought the good news to government officials near by? I trust that believers will soon begin living lives that will bring the good news to high officials.

This is certainly a need of our day. The ears of Washington are being bent by the homosexual activists, the ecological activists and all sorts of other activists, but where is the good news. They have all the bad news, it is time that they hear some good news for a change and I do mean the good news of Christ and salvation.

There seems to be some discussion as to what "palace" might mean. It is a general word relating to the leader's house whether the generals tent of an army or the main palace of a country. The latter probably meant here for in 4.22 we read "All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar's household." This indicates that the Gospel had gone even into the palace of Caesar.

14 And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

This is in stark contrast to the people around Paul in II Timothy when they were not willing to be counted with Paul in His bonds. (4.16 At my first answer no man stood with me, but all [men] forsook me: [I pray God] that it may not be laid to their charge.")

I don't say this in a derogatory way, but this might relate to mob rule in the positive. It seems we humans are followers - when either good or bad comes along.

In the mob there is usually a leader that is going astray and others begin to follow him. Here we see Paul's example is giving confidence to other believers to do that which they ought.

So it is in churches. When a church leader gets excited about something the congregation usually follows in the good.

Years ago we were in a church that was really financially behind. They were several months behind in their gifts to missionaries. The mood of the meeting seemed to be "let's just forget what we haven't done and commit ourselves to keeping up from this point forward.

There was one deacon that was really convinced that they should honor their commitment and pay the owed gifts as well as keep up. The problem was that they were several thousand behind in their bills/gifts.

Before the meeting was over the congregation was right behind the deacon calling and voting to make up the deficiency and to keep up from that point on.

The congregation, within a month, had raised enough funds to make up the problem, and to give the mission fund a two thousand dollar excess for future plans.

May we all be such influences on those that follow us rather than the often negative influence that we can be.

I want to read the next three verses together. Fifteen introduces two types of people he is relating to; one sort of preacher without integrity and another with integrity.

15 Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: 16 The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: 17 But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defense of the gospel.

15 Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will:

We see two types of men - those that preach Christ for the wrong purpose and those that preach Christ for the proper purpose.

Many preach Christ today - many may even preach a good Gospel, but they preach to cause envy and strife.

Does this mean that anyone that suggests separating from those that live counter to the word are preaching strife - no. They are preaching Biblical principles.

One that preaches envy and strife is one that preaches in reaction to their own envy and normally they cause strife with that preaching.

Any preaching that is not just straight preaching of Christ will normally cause strife sooner or later.

Just what might preaching due to envy mean? This might be illustrated by a pastor that sees a particular ministry growing quickly. Due to his envy there might be two courses of action. It might be bringing false accusation against the fast growing ministry, or beginning to preach for results to increase the focus upon him rather than upon Christ.

Another possible situation could be someone that lacks financial adequacy. He might start preaching on giving in the hope of further income to the church and consequently to himself. I have to wonder if the prosperity gospel people do not have a little of this in their preaching today.

These preach that God does not want anyone to be poor, but it seems in many of these churches the pastor's Mercedes Benzes are financed on the backs of poor people that are giving more than they can afford to give.

God does not want us to give to our detriment but to give of His due and of our love.

16 The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds:

It seems that some of those opposing Paul were trying to increase Paul's afflictions or troubles.

This gives insight into the preaching of envy specifically - it would seem that some were envious of Paul's ministry and wanted him out of the way - tends to back up the thought of our first illustration.

It is clear that both are preaching the Gospel, so both are believers. Any conclusion about the verse needs to have this as a basic understanding.

17 But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defense of the gospel.

On the other hand there are some that preach Christ out of a pure heart and they know that Paul's ministry is God's business not theirs.

Oh, how many times have I seen good men run off from churches because they are having a good ministry with people. Church leaders can fall into envy way too easily.

A pastor had a church with a large group of senior citizens in the congregation. He would ask young men to work with the people but as soon as the men built bridges to the seniors the pastor would become aggravated with the success and run the young men off.

This happened four times before the man finally was moved into a higher position within the

organization. This is typical if you haven't observed it yet. When someone becomes a problem they move them into higher positions. My first experience of this was when a pastor whose son was living in adultery and not willing to confront his son resigned from his church and was promptly hired as president of a local seminary.

Typical - if someone can't make it as a pastor move him into higher positions or have him teach in a college or seminary. Never mind the sin he is in, never mind the wrecked lives he leaves behind, never mind the split churches.

18 What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.

Some that were preaching Christ were doing it for wrong purposes or with wrong motives, yet Paul rejoiced because Christ was being preached.

Some might suggest that this is a passage that would teach that anyone preaching Christ should be a joy to us - even with false doctrine with it.

I don't think that would be supported here. I believe that Paul is talking about one that is presenting Christ correctly for the wrong purpose/motive. Not that they are teaching false doctrine with it.

One might wonder how you could preach Christ with a wrong purpose.

It is obvious this text relates to the previous verses (fifteen and following), but how were they preaching Christ - how could they present Christ correctly but with the wrong purpose/motive?

The word translated pretense relates to doing something for a pretended cause. Thus they might preach Christ, but not because they wanted to preach Christ but to gain some other goal.

This would require that they know how to preach Christ properly - at the very least the knowledge of the Gospel.

Is it possible that the men saw the great impact Paul was having on people and they wanted to do the same and started preaching Christ - not that they were previously? This would fit the pretending idea.

Or how about the possibility that they saw some of their students going to see Paul and getting excited about preaching Christ, so to maintain their students they started preaching to be like Paul.

Paul knew what they were doing, but didn't care, for Christ was being preached.

Not only will he rejoice, he will rejoice in the future as well. I have had things happen that were such a blessing at the time - and thinking back at a future date find the occurrence still a great blessing.

Now, think of someone preaching Christ in the hope of causing you trouble and God using it for His good purpose anyway - what a blessing to remember! In fact in my mind what a crack up! They are trying to to be trouble and God turns it into good. How revolting is that?

19. Jamieson, Faussett and Brown mention that the phrase "This shall turn out to my salvation," is a direct quote from Job 13.16 in the Septuagint which was a Greek translation of the Old Testament in Paul's time. They also mention "The Greek intimately joins the two nouns together, by having but one preposition and one article: "Through your prayer and (the consequent) supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ (obtained for me through your prayer)."

1. Pity these poor lost guards that were around Paul. They were a captive audience even though Paul was the captive. They were going to hear the word, like it or not.

2. I was wondering how Paul could be so cool about people using him some how as a pretense to preach Christ for a wrong motivation. How could he not speak out against their falsehood?

Well, the answer is most simple. It was all about Christ in his life. He served Christ, he lived for Christ, and he did all he did for Christ. He lived as if his entire purpose in life was Christ. They were preaching Christ, no matter if it was about him; it was Christ that was getting the glory. If Paul had allowed himself pride of life he most likely would have spoken out against their false motives.

Are there ways that we can do this in the church today? I firmly believe many churches have this as their mind set. They preach and witness to bring in numbers and dollars, rather than out of a genuine love for lost people. Christ sent us to disciple - nothing more, and nothing less. To disciple to gain numbers or dollars is a false purpose of witness even though it is a great result for God.

Someone going on calling because someone shamed them into it from the pulpit might be a similar situation. You aren't going because God burdened your heart for the lost, but because the pastor burdened your guilt for not going calling.

My, are we not full of trouble in the church today? God will gain the glory, but we will lose the reward and satisfaction of serving Him properly when we stand before Him.

3. In verse fourteen Paul says "more bold to speak the word without fear." If you have a translation other than the King James you probably see "speak the word of god" which is the way it appears in a number of texts, just not the texts that the King James was based on.

In my opinion, "of god" is the specific implication so I don't see a major problem either way. I trust the King James only brethren won't view this as glossing over an error in the manuscripts, but I see very little difference either way. I may well be corrected soon :-). Please be gentle.

4. Verse sixteen or seventeen, depending on which translation you have, mentions that the incorrect preachers were trying to cause Paul trouble in prison. The King James translates it as follows "supposing to add affliction to my bonds."

How might their incorrect attitudes/purposes have caused him problems in prison? By adding to the crowds coming to him? By causing confusion as to the Gospel?

Since Paul was satisfied that their Gospel was right on, that would not be the "affliction" in my mind.

Jamieson, Fausett, and Brown suggest: "Their thought was, that taking the opportunity of my being laid aside, they would exalt themselves by their Judaizing preaching, and depreciate me and my preaching, and so cause me trouble of spirit in my bonds; they thought that I, like themselves, sought my own glory, and so would be mortified at their success over mine."

I would suggest that this is a good possibility; however I would not think that these were Judaizers since Paul thought that their Gospel was Christ honoring.

They further suggest that the motivation was to draw attention away from Paul, now that he was in prison, to them as the reason that the Gospel was spreading as it was at the time. Again, this seems like a good possibility.

5. I am not one to look to rewards in heaven, but one must wonder. Since Paul had a proper attitude, and since the Gospel seemed to be progressing, even if it was through wrong motivation toward Paul, will Paul gain the reward? I rather expect this might well be the case.

Even if we don't gain a reward for having a proper attitude, we ought to have one.

Endeavor to see God's point of view rather than your own. It will help you not get upset with the wrongs of others. It might be good to review your own motivations in what you do as well. You might have some false motives as well.

6. We often think of Paul's house arrest as pretty plush for the day and indeed it was a lot better than the prison itself, however consider being chained to a man twenty-four hours a day. You sleep with the man, you eat with the man, you do everything with the man chained to you.

He listens to every word you say, notices every facial expression you make and is free to report such to his higher officials.

How many of us could allow our Christianity to be scrutinized that closely? How many of us would come up looking like a real Christian? How many of us could stand to be held to that high a standard?

We need to live as if we were chained to a guard. We need to be held to that standard because it is the standard for a Christian. We ought to live our lives as if every word were being recorded for our coming trial.

Why not put this situation to your television viewing. Would you like your guard and maybe the guard's bosses knowing what you watch on television? Would you be proud of your viewing habits or would you change them quickly?

7. We have the introduction of "envy" into ministry in verse fifteen. Might we say, "Pastoral Envy" or might we also suggest "Layman Envy?"

Seldom do we see this sort of thing in our pastors or congregations, after all who is going to advertise that they are envious of someone else, we all know we as individuals are the "greatest." Who is going to rise during prayer request time and ask for prayer to rid themselves of envy? Not many I am sure.

This is a problem not only in the pastors, but in all areas of Christian life. Envy between teachers, envy between leaders and envy between every other sort of classification in a church.

I have mentioned before a church that was extremely behind in their mission commitments and were struggling to pay other bills. It should be related that the missions committee brought forth ideas that raised the deficit plus extra. Shortly after the successful struggle toward financial sanity, it was rumored that some in the finance committee thought it should have been them that was running the campaign to catch up in missions giving.

WHO CARES WHO DOES WHAT? God gets the glory and that is the focus no matter who does what! Let us put that in a different light. "I want to glorify God more than you do!" "I want to gain the glory for glorifying God.?" No, we wouldn't make such statements, but isn't that what the outcome of envy is?

After all, if there is no envy, there is little care about who is doing what as long as everyone is doing for God. God should be our focus, yet envy concentrates our focus onto the material personal realm and how others view us.

Back to pastoral envy for a moment. One of the main causes of pastors having feelings of envy relate to numbers in their church. If you are in a small church that isn't going anywhere and you go to a conference and hear of other pastors seeing great growth you know the story.

Here is just a point of illustration. Many years ago a small church pastor in Idaho invited a small

boy to Sunday school. The boy came and heard the gospel. After understanding the gospel the boy accepted the Lord and began attending church on a regular basis.

This small church pastor could have focused on numbers, but rejected that idea and focused on souls. He became a great soul winner though I am sure you have never heard of him. The fact that you would not know him is proof that envy was not stirring him to self glory.

Shift ahead many years skipping the many trials and tribulations of life and today we find that the pastor is still winning souls, but a little slower now since he is in his 90's and using a walker. He still wins people to the Lord in the care home. The little boy is long grown and has started several churches including one fairly large one; he has started a mission to reach one of the many ethnic groups in our land and is busy in several other ministries including pastoring a church.

You see if your focus is on God He can use you in great ways, you don't have to pump yourself up, you don't have to toot your own horn you just need to be yourself - God designed you - you just need to do what God has for you to do - He is directing you - and let HIM GAIN THE GLORY and leave all that envy stuff to others that will spin and squirm to make themselves great.

Yes, the great preacher may be remembered from generation to generation and the plodder may fade from memory shortly after his death, but think of the eternal reality that is set into motion by each individual. Think of the eternal reward of the faithful servant in comparison to the self centered man that builds to see his name inflated.

It is a worn illustration, but it is God's. Would you rather watch wood, hay and stubble burning when you meet Christ or would you rather see the precious ones of life that you have assisted in their journey into Christ's presence?

Lesson 5

QUALITIES OF A CHURCH

EXAMPLED

(Phil. 1:19-26)

19 For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,

20 According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death.

21 For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

22 But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labor: yet what I shall choose I wot not.

23 For I am in a strait between two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better:

24 Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.

25 And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith;

26 That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again.

Seems that Paul is saying that if it weren't for God's plan for his life he'd rather be outa here! That should be the attitude of the believer today. We ought not have things in this life making us want to stay here.

If indeed we were storing up for the next life rather than this, if indeed we were concentrating on the next life rather than this, if indeed we were living in the next life rather than this, then we all would have Paul's attitude.

The sad part of Christianity today is the fact that most of us don't, we are so tied to this life we dare not think of the next.

19 For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,

Salvation is not only related in meaning to our eternal salvation, but can be used as it is here to be protected from enemies in this life.

Paul felt that these people that were trying to cause him trouble were actually going to help in his situation - however it seems it was going to depend on the believer's prayers and the working of the Spirit.

Again, this idea of the people preaching to cause trouble was actually doing good for God and

that with the prayers of the saints would even work for the good of Paul, the one for which they were trying to cause trouble.

It may have been that Paul saw them causing him trouble in the fact that it would further solidify his coming end. If this be true he would have been rejoicing that his enemies were causing him physical trouble. Could you rejoice knowing that someone was doing you injustice?

Paul said "I know" which is in the perfect tense. This was knowledge that looks into the future to a future completion of the facts known. He knows it with this strong a knowledge, yet he knows that it is dependent on their prayers and the Spirit's working. He knows not only what he knows of the situation, but he knows that their prayers will benefit the need and he knows that the Spirit needs to be, and will be working in the situation.

20 According to my earnest expectation and [my] hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but [that] with all boldness, as always, [so] now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether [it be] by life, or by death.

This first phrase "According to my earnest expectation and [my] hope" is part of verse nineteen. He knew so perfectly yet as we have seen it was based on prayer and the Spirit's work - now we are told that all this is according to his EXPECTATION AND HOPE.

He knew in a perfect sense what was an expectation and hope that was aided by prayer and the Holy Spirit.

Now illustrate that one for us. How did Paul get wrapped up in such detailed stuff?

This is his normal life. He had that sort of faith in the Lord's provision. These people were trying to trouble him, but he had such a faith in God and His wonderful care that he expected and had to the hope that the prayers of the saints and the work of the Spirit would provide his expected outcome.

Now, who in their right mind would try to hinder a man with that sort of an expectation and faith in God?

This verse adds weight to the previous thought - the preaching of others was going to assist Him to glorify Christ either way - through life or through death.

What a truth - wanting to know that Christ is lifted up whether you live or die. Most of us look at death as the most negative of occurrences in life, yet Paul could view it as a further way to uplift his Lord and Savior.

We ought to chew on that one for a long time until we can grasp the truth and then attempt to attain that mindset in the rest of this life.

Here are some points to ponder from Paul's statement.

"Expectation and [my] hope" The Christian life should be marked with an expectation and hope. We are not without hope and we should live in a manner that brings us to expect things from God. Not in the material realm, but in our spiritual lives. We ought to be assuming that God is going to be magnified in some manner by our continued existence or our death.

"In nothing I shall be ashamed" Uups. We are to live our lives in such a manner that when all is said and done, we are not going to have done ANYTHING that we would be ashamed of - nothing!

Can you sit there and know that you will not be ashamed over anything that you have done in this life when you stand before God to give answer to your answers?

This may be one of the advantages of being saved from a very young age. If you are living like a Christian from your childhood you will have less to be ashamed of, while if you have an early life of sin, the shame has had plenty of time to stack up against you.

I did not lead a horrible life as a teen aged person, but there are many things in those short years that I would like to go back and remedy. I know they are forgiven, but they are not things that I am proud to know are in my past. Having become a Christian in my late teens my life and ways had a serious turn around.

"With all boldness" pictures Paul with boldness. In Eph. 3.12 "In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him." Yet, in Eph. 6.18 he asks for boldness. "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; 19 And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, 20 For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak."

No contradiction, one is a boldness based his knowledge and the other is asking for a needed virtue for ministry.

"Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether [it be] by life, or by death." Do you have this attitude - that you want Christ to be magnified by either your life OR your death? We have no Biblical mandate to desire death, but at the same time we ought to be open to that possibility at any moment of our life and not be concerned that we might be taken from this life before we are finished playing with our toys.

21. For to me to live [is] Christ, and to die [is] gain.

Now, that verse has a little more meaning. Taking verses out of context to encourage others is great, but we tend to miss some of the blessing.

It is personal gain to die! Another truth all believers need to find as a reality in their lives.

Most feel buying the big house is gain. Getting a good job is a gain. Getting a new car is gain. Getting married is a gain. Getting to be the boss is a gain. Getting a summer home is a gain. Gaining large savings is a gain. Buying beautiful furniture and clothes is a gain.

Now, finish that list with "Dieing is a gain." and mean it.

That seems to be Paul's standard. He could say this because he knew what he said in verse twenty was true. "Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether [it be] by life, or by death." He knew that when he died CHRIST WOULD BE GLORIFIED. Magnified means to be made bigger, or shown to be great.

It is of note to me that the magnification of Christ is in the passive. Christ is not magnified by Himself, or what he did, nor was He to be magnified by what God or the Spirit were going to do. The magnification was due to the possible death of the apostle Paul.

In some manner, we as believers can magnify Christ by our deaths. Whether our spiritual walk is related or not is not clearly stated, but in the context I would assume that magnification came at least in part from the true spiritual life that Paul led before his death.

Barnes suggests some items that will cause heaven to be gain.

We will be freed from sin.

We will be freed from doubt. (We will be there, not wondering if we will.)

We will be freed from temptation.

We will be freed from our enemies.

We will be freed from suffering and sickness.

And most of all we will be freed from death.

See also Gal. 2.20 "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

22 But if I live in the flesh, this [is] the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not.

What does "wot mean?? The lexicon says to "to make known or declare" while most translations translate the word as choose. The Net Bible translates it this way. "I don't know which I prefer:" They reject the choice idea since if he has choice in death, it would be saying he had the choice of suicide.

If you add this to the meaning of the word "wot" you might see it as though Paul will not declare his choice.

How does that relate to the passage? It would seem he had a little struggle with continuing on in life and being fruitful or dieing and having gain - he did not know what he would choose if it were left up to him - not that it was.

23 For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better:

Barnes mentions that this phrase "strait betwixt two" comes from the thought of a ship anchored in a harbor where the wind is blowing in an attempt to tear the ship free from its anchor. This is a very strong phrase. Paul is really in a quandary over this realization.

Gill relates it to a similar situation in the Old Testament. In 2 Samuel 24:14 David is given the choice of fleeing before his enemies, famine or pestilence. ("And David said unto Gad, I am in a great strait:") Some might observe – that is a choice?

Not a "Do you want to eat at McDonald's or Burger King?" sort of question, but one that dealt with the stuff of life. Heavy questions that make one give serious value to life's options.

This verse seems to add to our thought relating to Paul's choice of life or death.

This verse solidifies his quandary - I want to die and be far better off and be with Christ, but on the other hand if I stay I can be fruitful here for the Lord.

He now lets the Philippians know that they aren't going to be given this choice - they are to live and be fruitful as he was being fruitful to the end.

We must note that this discussion is in the context of Paul sitting in captivity awaiting decision on whether he would live, die or spend the rest of his life in jail and that not because he had done anything wrong or illegal, but because he was preaching Christ.

He was speaking from personal, real and immediate knowledge of the contrasts.

24 Nevertheless to abide in the flesh [is] more needful for you.

There is a genuine purpose to our lives here on this earth. Paul makes it clear that there is a need for us to remain. Christ could take us home at the moment we are saved, but that is not the plan, nor would it be logical. God has decreed that man will be saved by the sharing of the Gospel by other men. If He took us out of this life immediately there would be no one to share the Gospel with anyone else.

We are an integrated part of his plan. We have no option for the easy life; we are to walk with Him all the days of our lives. We are to be living for HIS benefit not our own. We are to be living for His glory not our own. We are to be living for His desire not our own. Serving Christ

should be the highest priority of our lives. Serving Christ should take precedence over all else. Serving Christ should be our passion in all that we do.

25 And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith;

Oh, what a confidence - to know that you are going to be a joy to those you minister to. This is not a confidence many have in this life. Many are the ministers that never know if they are a joy or hindrance to their people.

Why is this?

1. People never tell their minister that they have been a joy to them. They assume they know.
2. They may not be a joy to those they minister to. Many are the pastor/teachers that bore their congregations/classes to tears with their drivel that comes from too little preparation and too little knowledge of their people.
3. People don't really allow a pastor/teacher to teach and minister as they desire thus there is little blessing on either part. This occurs when people will not listen to admonition from the pulpit/lectern. This occurs when the people will not fellowship with the pastor/teacher as a brother in Christ, but rather are standoffish as though fearful of learning something that would change their life.

26 That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again.

"Coming" seems to have a much larger foot print than the just plain meaning of the word. Constable quotes Beare as follows. "In Classical Greek it referred to the pomp and pageantry that accompanied the arrival of a king or governor in a city." I will stop the quote there since Beare goes on to suggest that Paul was looking to receive a king's welcome when he returned to Philippi. Not a conclusion I would reach.

However "coming" might suggest the joy with which Paul would return. This context is about Paul and his continuing to live for ministry. I doubt that he would suggest they roll out the red carpet for him when he arrived. More in keeping with the context would be the thought of his enjoyment of being back with them to continue to minister to them.

Again, this thought of joy over the ministry of one ministering. Every pastor and teacher should aspire to this standard - not just allowing the status quo to be their standard of operation. It takes real work to feed a flock - not just digging in the file cabinet for something that worked once, but the putting together of a good meal.

When I retired I started fixing supper while the wife was on the way home. To fix a meal can be

done in a few minutes with a freezer full of precooked meals and a microwave. To put together a real meal takes a lot of planning and preparation. The results are markedly different.

So pastor how many of your people count it a joy to come to church to hear your lessons and sermons? Are they listening intently or are they off in la la land trying to fill their mind full of something that is useful, such as wondering about the dinner in the oven, or planning what will be done Monday morning.

We attend a small church and I often look around at the folks. This is in part because I am finding nothing in the message, but I call it an educators desire to see how the crowd is reacting. People are gazing everywhere but at the pastor. At any given moment there are at least two asleep. Others are nudging the other to talk about something or other. In my wife's case it is usually something relating to the sermon and its illogic or lack of Scripture.

There is little joy in attending church anymore; probably that is why the bands, the new music, and all the trappings we see today have entered into the church.

1. I would suggest that the reader take some serious time and give it to thinking about the relationship Paul had with the believers to which he was writing. Compare that relationship to the relationship you have with your fellow church members.

If you are a pastor do you have this type of relationship with your church folk?

We don't know just how long Paul was there at Philippi, but it wasn't all that long. Probably in the months and yet, there was a close bond.

Today the average pastor only lasts around eighteen months in a church before he decides God is moving him on to another ministry. Now that isn't bad if you are an itinerant missionary or preacher, but for a church pastor it isn't very good.

It has often been said that a pastor cannot get to know his people in eighteen months. Yet Paul seemed to have built a strong bond with the folks in a very short time.

Maybe someone should answer how he did that and answer why the average pastor cannot. This would revolutionize the ministry of our day.

Granted, Paul probably led most of the people to the Lord himself, but this does not seem to account for the close relation completely.

In perusing my memory banks many pastors are found, but those that bring a fondness to mind are those that preached the Word of God in a way that it touched my life. They were the ones that taught from the Word and were able to show how the Word applied to my daily life.

Today, application has been reduced to a four letter word. When someone says “Where is the application?” many pastors say huuh? They have no concept of showing people they should change their lives. They have no concept of showing people how to change their lives. They have no concept of showing anything but fun, games and the fuzzy wuzzys.

The most recent message I suffered through covered three verses and it all related to three major points of theology that had been covered numerous times the previous weeks with the same glossing over of verses as is usual. How many times in a two month period do you have to explain how wonderful God's grace is? How many times in a two month period do you have to declare the goodness of God with tears to make the point?

Most people can grasp those concepts the first time, if not surely the second time, but the third, fourth and fifth time is overkill.

Teach the Word and allow the people to feed on it rather than jamming it down their throat. If the Holy Spirit cannot apply it to their lives, how can a pastor think that he can?

2. Paul related that to die is better, but there seems to be a balance a desire to live for the ministry that he was involved in. Yes, to die would be so much better, but the balance seems to be on the side of sticking around to minister as long as possible.

Some today seem as though they have given up on this life. True, with the pain, the problems and the lack of finances, it is tempting to look at life as the poorer of two choices, but Paul seems to tell us to see that life is the better for now, and to look unto the eternal state as your overall goal and gain.

If you find yourself looking forward to the eternal more than getting things done here, then you are probably lop sided in your emphasis. God does not want us to throw up our arms and holler come and get me Lord, He wants you to roll up your sleeves and get to work until He does come and get you.

3. "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

Let us try some different combinations to Paul's little phrase.

For to me to live is money.

For to me to live is houses.

For to me to live is a great job.

For to me to live is a fantastic spouse.

For to me to live is a large savings account.

For to me to live is a great education.

For to me to live is a summer home.

For to me to live is -- fill in the blank with your goal in life if it isn't Christ.

Let me ask, how are those working for you? Are they comparable to Paul's statement? Not hardly.

None of the above hold a candle to what we ought to be doing for God - living as Christ lived here on earth.

He is our greatest example. He stuck it out in this life until God called Him home and so we ought to be working for Him following His direction until the end, until death sends us on our way to those rewards that Scripture tells us about.

4. One might be struck by the tone of Paul's comments. They concentrate on the Spiritual rather than the physical. His concern is spiritual. He is not concerned about being chained to a guard, he is not concerned about being in prison, and he is not concerned about what is on for Sunday dinner. He is concerned with the spiritual value he has in this life, versus the spiritual value of being in the next.

Today in prayer times - I picked the word specifically "times" since few churches have prayer meetings any more. In our prayer times, if we even have those, it is the physical ailment of the day for the different ones that have physical ailments that ought to be mentioned in public, if not then an unspoken.

When is the last time you heard someone ask for boldness of speech to witness to a neighbor? When is the last time someone prayed that the pastor would have the spiritual integrity to preach as the Spirit leads, rather than avoiding some topics to keep the peace on the water? When is the last time someone asked for prayer about their besetting sin?

We need to get back to the spiritual needs of the church rather than feeding the physical side for comfort and fuzzy wuzzy value.

5. Paul was feeling that his gospel witness was moving others to do the same. Again, when is the last time you saw anyone in the church witnessing, much less witnessing to the point that others were being motivated to do the same?

It seems that a unified witness of people based on the leading and power of the Spirit results in others getting involved.

Years ago a man that I had never met moved in close by. He was in the habit of going into the downtown of our city to witness one or two nights a week. His constant and regular witness stirred others to consider their own introverted Christian life and moved them to become more vocal in their witness to others at work and their everyday life.

6. Constable observes, "Paul felt himself in a bind. If forced to choose life or death, he faced a hard decision. On the one hand he desired to depart this life and go to be with the Lord forever (2

Cor. 5:8)." The question might come to your mind, is the joy of your ministry equal to putting you in a bind if faced with this decision between death and life? Are you so confident in the quality and usefulness of your ministry to know that staying in this life would benefit God? I trust you can say yes with great confidence.

On the reality side of this is the fact that God is the one that values your service to him, and He is the one that decides whether you live or die, not you. Even though all of it is out of our hands, isn't it a little like us humans to want to be in on the decision making?

7. We have noted from this passage that some were doing good out of a poor motive. The results were good for God, but poor for the individual since they were building with wood, hay and stubble.

It might be submitted that it is hard to know where you are building with honest and pure motives, or with false and skewed motives. For the most part we probably know full well when we are doing either, however there are times when your motives might be a tad off and you may not realize it until after the fact.

How do we assure ourselves both in mind and soul that our motives are the correct motives? Let us consider this for a moment.

a. Continue in prayer with each decision. Give time in prayer before the decision asking for God to reveal any impure motives in your coming actions.

b. Do not make quick, off the cuff decisions if they can be avoided. If your gas gauge says empty, no don't put off getting gas so you can pray about it, but if a ministry change is possible take some time to determine if it is really of the Lord and not of your pride of life and want for bigger name and recognition.

c. Seek the counsel of wise men you know and ask them for insight into your motives. They may have observed something in you that you have missed.

d. Read the Word and understand the clear teachings of God. Many motivational items are addressed in the Word. If you see that you are tempted toward more recognition, then the Word speaks to the pride of life. Do not allow these things to color your decision making.

e. If you feel something in your prospective church is unfair or unethical, tell them so, don't just go along with it. Years ago I received an application from a church that I was not familiar with. One of the last questions was whether I would give them permission to do a credit check on me. I replied with a number of reasons why I thought their request to be unbiblical and unethical. I also told them I understood the reason for their request but that they should rely on their own minds, feelings and God's leading instead of a credit report.

f. Ask yourself why you are considering this decision. Why do you think you want to go positive or negative? Why do you think the decision has been set before you? Is it from God for your good, or is it from God for your testing?

g. If you make this decision will you be happy because you are bettering yourself, or because God will be glorified. Betterment isn't wrong, but it should not be the primary reason.

h. If you are financially tight, and you are offered a better level of pay, is it a decision of whether God wants you to live on what you have and allow Him to fill in the details, or whether this is a move God has orchestrated? When asked to interim pastor I met with the board and the subject of money came up. I told them it mattered very little what they would pay. I was there to minister to the people was my feeling. One of the men, a doctor, blurted out "Well then we won't pay you anything." I replied, "That would be fine with me."

The next Sunday they asked me to stay for the business meeting. I agreed not knowing the topic of the meeting. The reason for the meeting was to determine my level of pay. The result was that they were going to pay us \$1000 per month - two and a half times what we were getting in missionary support.

Talk about shock. I approached one of the deacons and asked him to cut the amount drastically, but they would not. They felt it was a fair amount for the work to be done.

We were so terribly blessed by their generosity in wanting to do this for us and the material benefits were unreal at the time.

I must admit however it wasn't long before I was very glad that this was God's provision and not from a decision I had made based on finances. I would have second guessed the decision the rest of my life had I allowed financial benefits into the picture.

8. Paul was getting old at this point in his life. It is clear that he is tired and pressed physically due to his "thorn in the flesh" and the fact that he is in prison wrongfully. He speaks of his possible coming death in a very calm matter of fact manner.

His philosophy at this point is death is okay, life is okay, but his focus was on ministry no matter which outcome was to occur.

As we age and face death as humans our focus often changes. Solomon with the riches of the world found that the riches weren't the important part of his life. Many when death is near find they change their priorities drastically.

Two points:

a. Why wait till death knocks to live your life properly? Why not get your priorities straight as a

young person as Paul did and minister your life away for the Lord.

b. Secondly, if you haven't set priorities in your life, take time to consider it. When death knocks the consideration begins in many peoples lives. Often they find themselves wanting before the Lord and in the following days attempt to make up for the deficit.

My dear father-in-law was brought up short in his life with terminal cancer. It wasn't but a few days before he was lamenting his lack of witness to his friends and relatives over the years. From that day forth everyone that entered his hospital room heard the Gospel, and they heard it at his funeral. He made the days God allowed him to have count for God, not for his position or future, just because he knew it was the proper thing to do for life, and in his death God would be honored.

Let us finish with a thought from Ray Stedman as he relates of a man that he once met briefly. "I remember when I traveled with Dr. Ironside we were together at Montrose Bible Conference in Pennsylvania and in one evening service a well-known gospel singer on the east coast sang very beautifully the song, "Homesick for Heaven". He sounded as though he was about to soar right off the platform right up into glory. After the service we were meeting together in what they call the "tuck shop" having a little refreshment. Several had ordered hamburgers, including the singer who was among us. He noticed the top of the catsup bottle had somehow been broken and there was ground glass at the top of the bottle. He had already taken a couple of bites out of his hamburger, and the thought occurred to him that perhaps he had unwittingly eaten some ground glass. They checked it out in a hurry to see whether any ground glass had gotten into the bottle and it didn't appear that it had. But he said, "you know, for a moment there I don't think I was quite as homesick for heaven as I thought I was.""

Lesson 6

QUALITIES OF A CHURCH

ENACTED

(Phil. 1:27–2:2)

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

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

29 For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;

30 Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me.

2.1 If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies,

2 Fulfill ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.

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

Our conversation has a real limit here - it should be becoming to the Gospel. That is the standard - anything less is not what we ought to be doing for our Lord. The reason in the text is so that Paul will hear a good report of them whether he is there or not. Be what you ought to be whether someone is watching or not might be the application of this.

Not only is their conversation to be correct they are to be of one spirit and one mind for the advancement of the Gospel.

The term translated "conversation" is a lot more than our word conversation. It relates to citizenship, it relates to being a citizen, it relates to behaving as a citizen, it relates to obeying the laws of citizenship and it relates to conducting one's self as a citizen.

In this context we are being admonished to be a citizen or part of God's family, to live like it, to obey the precepts laid down for such citizens and to live like the Christ that has brought us into this family for His honor and glory.

Does that give a little more meaning to this passage? It certainly should.

Now, how many churches do you know that are of one spirit and one mind about what they are going to do? Our purpose as a church is the Gospel outreach, not all the bickering that tends to go on in our churches and certainly not all the bickering about music and programs that so many churches are tied up in.

If we were concentrating on the edification of the saints and the evangelization of the lost there would be little time to do the rest of what we do.

Paul wants them to live properly whether he is present or absent. Parents would enjoy knowing their children and teenagers understood this principle. For that matter many husbands and wives would enjoy knowing their spouse understood the principle.

Live like you are a citizen of heaven whether anyone is watching or not. Do it at work, at play as well as at church where your conscience is -- not that your conscience resides at church but often that is the way we live our lives.

This would have had more import to the Philippian believers in that they were citizens of Rome, a government a long way from where they were. They would have had that concept of being a good citizen of a wide ranging empire, yet even though they were a part of that empire they were to consider the greater empire of God and their citizenship in heaven.

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

1. We are not to allow the enemy to terrify us. Isn't fear about the first result of opposition - what are they going to do to us? Our fear comes because we are worried about ourselves, and not looking to God for His protection.

Indeed, the Gospel will take care of itself and it is what man fears, not us personally. They fear the condemnation of the Gospel, and they fear the commitment they must make to the Gospel. Some lost people know up front that they will have to give up if they accept Christ.

I spent an hour or so with a man that rode a Harley. He was ruff, he was crude, and he was a lot intimidating. As we talked I found him to be seeking peace in his life and the Gospel seemed to be just what he needed. He didn't argue, he didn't protest, he just listened. When I was leaving the truck we were riding in his question was, if I do this will I have to give up my bike? He knew there was a need of commitment. I told him I did not know that there was no reason for me to think so but that it was between him and the Lord.

His final comment was that he had to find out if what I had said was true. In my mind he already knew, he just hadn't admitted it yet.

2. Terror is a token of the enemy's future. Not only is there the fear of facing the Gospel, but

there is a fear of facing God for not dealing with the Gospel.

I suspect that this fear of facing God is utmost in man's mind followed by the fear of the unknown conditions of hell.

I personally think that as part of the Gospel we need to let them know what they are facing as they choose hell for a final destination.

This isn't just a shallow fear but relates to the fear stirred up in a horse or animal that is startled. When out on my bike I often come up on cats. The bike is very quiet and they seldom hear me coming until I am within a foot swing of their heads - they normally are frightened greatly - they will make scratching noises on the pavement as their claws dig in for traction to get away from this huge machine and man that has come out of nowhere.

3. Terror is a token to us of salvation. Just how is this to be understood?

It seems that your not being terrified is the token spoken of - thus you not being frightened will be a sign of their destruction as well as a sign of your being saved or being one that trusts in Almighty God for keeping.

29 For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;

Even though you may suffer, there should be no fear. This is an integrated part of salvation - suffering for him.

The Greek word translated given is derived from the same word as grace. It is something given for the good of the recipient. Now, put that in your memory banks and chew on it awhile. We are to suffer because it is good for us, because God sees benefit in it for us.

I have a brief study from another book that relates well here so will insert it for your possible interest.

Let us call this study "Sufferology" just to get us thinking in the right direction.

Suffering seems to be an integrated part of the normal Christian life. We in America seem to be blessed with not having to suffer for Christ, though our brothers in other countries where Christians are persecuted feel the church in America would be strengthened with a little suffering.

James 5.10 mentions that the suffering of the prophets is an example for us as we go through suffering. "Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience."

II Cor. 1.5-7 is a key text in understanding what Paul suggests in Col. 1.24.

II Cor. 1.5-7 "For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ. 6 And whether we be afflicted, [it is] for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, [it is] for your consolation and salvation. 7 And our hope of you [is] stedfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so [shall ye be] also of the consolation."

Notice that the sufferings of Christ abound in us. In some way we are linked to the suffering that Christ went through. It may only be that we benefit from the suffering, though the passage indicates to me that we participate in some way.

The next verse links suffering of verse five with his own suffering to get the Gospel to others.

And finally in verse seven Paul indicates that those affected by the Gospel will also suffer - it is assumed in the same manner that Paul did.

Christ suffered to provide salvation to all mankind, Paul suffers with Christ to get the Gospel to others, and those Paul reaches will suffer to get the Gospel to others.

Romans 8.17-18 adds to this thought somewhat. "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with [him], that we may be also glorified together. 18 For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time [are] not worthy [to be compared] with the glory which shall be revealed in us."

Again, we see that Paul suffered with Christ in some manner. Since we know it was not on the cross the normal thought would be that all of Paul's suffering in his life was with Christ in the same work of redemption - Christ suffered to provide redemptions possibility and Paul as well as those that follow would also suffer in the sharing of that redemption to others (Similar to the Hebrews 11.26 passage).

Some other texts seem to back this up.

Phil. 3.10 mentions the fellowship of His suffering. "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;"

I Pet. 4.13 mentions that the suffering under persecution of Peter's readers was suffering with Christ. "But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy."

That believers will suffer is made clear in Phil. 1.29 "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;"

One final verse relates the same thought. II Tim. 3.12 "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."

Is this some mystical suffering that we must go through, no, most certainly not, it is merely saying that as Christ suffered, so we will suffer for the Gospel's sake.

His suffering thankfully provided salvation to all of mankind, but our suffering only provides those we meet the opportunity to receive that salvation.

It seems, based on sufferology he is just picturing what he is doing - suffering to take the Gospel to those that need it. He is doing all he is doing for them. Fill up what is lacking - Christ could not do this part of the work so Paul suffers to fill in what Christ could not do - evangelize.

All is done for the church - and he REJOICES to suffer.

Wow, to suffer with Christ in His work - what an honor! Suffering should be more palatable if we understand these truths.

Back to our Philippians text.

30 Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear [to be] in me.

It would seem that they had seen something in the actions of the apostle and now he was verbalizing it - maybe they sensed that he was under pressure of persecution and someone had questioned him or some of his fellow workers had asked concerning their observations and he was now explaining himself.

It is not uncommon to show outwardly when one is under intense pressure. Almost all people, even the most reserved will show outward signs of pressure if it is large enough. Well, except possibly airline pilots - they never show pressure it seems according to the movies anyway.

Actually in the context it seems better to say that his conflict is related to that conflict of the Christian living in the world, knowing he a citizen of the next. This is the context, and he is calling them to live as he has lived - as a citizen of the next world.

Philippians 2.1 If [there be] therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, 2 Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, [being] of one accord, of one mind.

What a call to body unity. He seems to want the folks to be of one mind and of one accord - all going the same direction as an overall goal in their corporate mind.

This does not require them to agree on every point of belief, nor on every point of running the

church - only the ultimate aim, purpose, or goal of the body - all working toward the same end.

Note that this would be a great joy to Paul. It might even be a joy to a pastor to see this sort of unity in his flock.

How can this sort of unity be built? There is only one way in my mind - ALL people being involved in the process of setting the ultimate goal of the body. Then and only then can you have complete unity of purpose.

All new members should be in agreement with this purpose if you are going to continue in the same unified manner. All new staff should most certainly be at peace with this same purpose.

This purpose is not a substitute for witnessing, worship or training - it is just the overall purpose of the body - how are they going to go about the witness, worship and training.

“Consolation” in verse one is a similar word to that of the word used of the Holy Spirit - one called along side.

It would seem that Paul is saying - if you have any relation with Christ. If we are believers we certainly do have this relationship to Him - He is one called along side to deal with our sin problem, and following salvation He is the one called along side for assistance in our life.

“Comfort of love” – is in short the thought that if the love comforts you.

“Fellowship of the Spirit” relates directly to the relation we have to Christ - both are there for our assistance - we have a close relation with them.

“Bowels of mercy” relates to heart felt mercy or the idea of sincere thought of mercy.

All five of these are related to the close relationship of the people in a church.

If these things are true then like mindedness should be the result. The back side of that is also true. If these close relationships aren't true in all believers in a body then there cannot be the like mindedness that Paul would count as joy.

Thus if you find a church where the people are at odds with one another look to these five relationships or lack thereof.

“Consolation in Christ” indicates ministry in Christ - ministry to others.

“Comfort of love” would be indicated by concern about other's lives as a result of love for them.

“Fellowship of the Spirit” is true fellowship - koinonia with the Spirit - that true fellowship

between believers not the news weather and sports of our day.

“Bowels” relates to inward affection toward an object.

“Mercies” relates to compassion or pity.

If these items are present and a body has a set plan or purpose then there will be a church that is moving forward for their Lord.

Now we see the hard part of this. Paul says "if" before all these points that are prerequisites of unity. Paul isn't suggesting if as in I don't know if this is true or not, you determine. This is what is called the third class condition -- "IF" and assumed so, or these things, I am assuming are true, so unity should be present in your body.

APPLICATION

1. This is the first indication of a problem with the church family at Philippi. Later in the book it is clear that unity wasn't one of their hallmarks. Phil. 4.2 "I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord. 3 And I intreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel...."

We are not told what the two were fighting about but it must have been rancorous to have drawn the attention of the apostle.

Can you imagine two women that are at total odds sitting in church listening to this book being read. A book from their beloved Paul, and he calls you down by name - how embarrassing does it get?

Stedman states that some have suggested these ladies names were really "Odious" and "Soon-touchy" but at any rate at that point of hearing their name in a letter from Paul I would hope that both wanted their names to be EMBARRASSED!

2. It is wrong to allow division to happen in a local church. There is no reason for it other than severe doctrinal difference or some major division between faith and practice.

When I was a child I had to go to Sunday school and church with my mother. It was not a church that preached the gospel so this account is a little more understandable, however even in a poor doctrine type church when division comes, Christ is the ultimate victim in the lost world's eyes.

The church was running smoothly until they called a new pastor. After a time there were some in the church that wanted to let him move on. Others thought he was doing well and wanted to keep him. As time went on the division grew. Ultimately those wanting to force the pastor out called another pastor. The two pastors tried to minister side by side, but the division came to a

head when one Sunday the church leaders called for a prayer session during the worship service. The prayer session was going strong at 1:30 when my mother told me to go home, then she arrived about an hour later.

The two groups could not resolve their differences and soon split. The group with the oldest pastor went out and built a new building. To the two groups I am sure it was over doctrinal differences.

The town was abuzz about the trouble for weeks and it was an insult to the God that the two groups supposedly served.

3. We spoke earlier about unity and that we should not split over minors, but only over majors. Take some time and consider what the Bible tells us to split over. What are some of the majors that ought to bring believers to split over?

a. Improper view of Christ's humanity and deity. (I Jo. 4.2 "Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: 3 And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that [spirit] of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.")

b. The Bible mentions divisive people. (Rom. 16.17 "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.")

c. The Lost. There is no reason to try to worship God with people that do not know Him.

Go ahead and think on this and there will be other reasons to separate from a doctrinally incorrect person.

Having said all of the above, might we consider what churches are splitting over today. Music. The pastor comes in and forces contemporary music on a group that feels it is wrong and feels that the pastor's tactics are unethical as well. Is this pastor not being divisive? Is a split not the best result so that the situation can be settled?

Beware your tactics, beware your situation, and beware your effect on a group.

Today we have people being shunned for not doing things our way. A couple decided to visit another church and that week received a very strong letter of rebuke from their church leadership for not being in their own church. The leaders thought that the couple had dishonored the church and that rebuke was needed. HUUUUUUHHHHHHH. Chapter and verse please for missing once!

4. Stedman suggests that the only fear that would come to the believer would be from deciding to compromise. If a person commits to serving Christ completely, there would be no fear, since the

person is relying on Christ for all, even strength to face death. However, step away from that commitment to Christ and fear will be upon you.

Fear can be faced if you look at the worst that can happen. Face that and all other situations are dealt with. The worst that can happen to you if you commit to Christ is death. Since we are moving on to a better place when we die, death should not be a fearful thing.

So, if you are trying to compromise in your dealings with Christ - don't. Ray Stedman gave an illustration of compromise. I think it pictures believers in compromise quite well.

"My little daughter, Laurie, is only one year and a half, but she is already trying to compromise. Yesterday I wanted to take her with me for a car ride. She was chewing on a greasy chicken bone she was holding and I tried to dispose of it before it was spread all over the upholstery in my new car. I said, "Laurie, throw the bone away." She looked at me rather puzzled. I repeated it and she knew what I meant. She went to the lawn and made gestures as though she was throwing it away, but held on to the bone. I reached down to take it from her and she snatched her hand away. I got the message; I realized that what she was saying was "Look, dad, I'm willing to go along with you and go as far as I can, You want me to throw the bone away and I'll act like I am, but I'm not going to let go of this bone. I want it, and if it will please you for me to look as though I'm throwing it away, I'll do that. I'll go as far as I can, but I'm not going to let go of the bone."

5. It has been mentioned that we are to live as good citizens of heaven. The back side of this truth is the truth that to be able to live properly as a good citizen of heaven, we need to know how to do so. We cannot live a life we know nothing about. This is why we need to be in the Word and listening to sermons, listening to lessons and reading books. To learn of the life in which we are to live, requires educating ourselves about that life.

Without this education we will be slothing along in a mediocre life that is not pleasing to the Lord. This cannot be good when we meet Him face to face.

He expects more of us, and should be able to count on us to give Him our best in this area of our spiritual life.

When you are in a Sunday school class, try to find new things that relate to your life. Do the same when in the worship service and Bible studies. As you read the Word ask the Lord to show you new things to relate to how you live before Him and before man.

As you walk through life, challenge yourself on different things you do in life. Are they really right for a Christian? Is this practice Biblical? Am I really doing this in the correct way?

6. Verse 29 mentions two items of interest. "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;"

First of all it is a given, a law, a set item of action for us to believe on Christ, but ALSO to SUFFER FOR HIS SAKE.

Ray Stedman uses the term "PRIVILEGE" in relation to our suffering for Christ. We should not shirk suffering, we should not feel that we are being put upon if we do suffer for Him. It is our lot as it was Paul's lot.

When suffering comes, accept it as something that you can do in a proper fashion for the honor and glory of God.

Not a concept that American Christians have really wrapped themselves around. Many believers in the world are suffering right now. They are walking through these hard times for their Lord, and we should not be surprised if we are not called upon to do the same one day.

The American scene is slowly but steadily turning from Christian to secular and the secular is flexing its muscles quite often today. We as believers are having more trouble in schools, in government and in jobs. Some municipalities are making laws that hinder Christian rights while favoring the secular person's rights.

Suffering will come unless things change, and we should walk through it for Him.

Barnes observes: "It is a privilege thus to suffer in the cause of Christ, because (1.) we then resemble the Lord Jesus, and are united with him in trials; (2.) because we have evidence that we are his, if trials come upon us in his cause; (3.) because we are engaged in a good cause, and the privilege of maintaining such a cause is worth much of suffering; and (4.) because it will be connected with a brighter crown and more exalted honour in heaven."

7. As in the previous point we are given the privilege of believing in Christ. How is this a privilege?

- a. Escape from Hell.
- b. Entrance into heaven.
- c. Free access to the throne of God in prayer.
- d. Free access to the throne of God in person when we are with Him.
- e. Freedom from our old nature.
- f. Freedom from besetting sin.
- g. Free of all that old stuff and all the free gifts of salvation.
- h. Frees our minds of the questions that bother the lost mind.
- g. Frees us from all worry of our future.

8. It is clear that the believers were either in or coming quickly to a time of great adversity. They seem ready for it as Paul was, there seemed little doubt in Paul's mind that all were prepared properly for what was coming.

Two questions:

- a. How do we know we are ready for adversity?
- b. Is the church as a whole in America ready for adversity?

a. How do we know we are ready for adversity?

- 1.) Have you ever faced harsh adversity?
- 2.) Do you know what harsh adversity is? It is not being late when the mall opens on Black Friday. It is not as many presume not having a new Lexus. It is not as others believe not having a huge home. It is nothing related to something that you do not have or cannot do.

It relates to things beyond your control that cause you harm either materially or physically. Have you ever lost your health? Have you been put in a place by your body and disease where you don't know if you will wake up in the morning?

It relates to the persecution of believers for their faith. It is being told you may go to prison for witnessing, it is being told you may go to prison for going to church and it may be for just telling someone that you are a Christian.

Today in several Muslim countries if anyone finds that you are a Christian you will be subject to death by anyone that knows of your spiritual condition. Oh, I know the Muslim religion is peaceful - it is peaceful as long as they are getting their own way and everyone else is going their way - if not look out for some real non-peaceful actions. Of course holy war is part of their peaceful nature so that isn't wrong either.

If you have faced these sorts of things, then you are probably ready, but if not you may not be properly prepared.

- 3.) What is your mindset? Are you focused on the next life? Are you laying up stores there? Are you focused on God's perfect will for your life? Or are you centered on your belongings, status and way of life?

If this world is your focus you are probably not ready for adversity.

b. Is the church as a whole in America ready for adversity?

In a word, in my opinion, the answer is NO. Most believers I know are totally focused on what their next purchase or acquisition is going to be. They are in church on Sunday to make themselves feel good rather than to meet with God on any meaningful level.

When a little adversity strikes we often bolt for the closet so that we can go incognito and continue on in what we are doing in the world.

We have churches that are tied up with keeping their own people above water mentally and physically, there is no time to prepare for adversity.

Pastors and teachers ought to be teaching the truths of Scripture so that people are ready to face what is surely to come in our secularized world. Christians are becoming the minority very quickly and with the majority bent on destruction, we are in for a battle royal just to exist.

Yes, God is in control, but he allows His people to face adversity to learn the principles of living that they ought to be living by now.

9. In verse twenty-seven it says "stand fast in one spirit." Stand fast has the thought of standing firmly in place. Not giving way to pressure from the front or the back or any side. It relates to the soldier that stands in place giving no ground no matter the pressure.

This might relate to the church body in a number of ways. One today is IRS and their constant threatening against the church. Since when does the church determine its stand on the basis of financial hard ship - well since the last few years churches have been bowing to the powers that be. Few have tested their rights in court, most just succumb to the powers because they don't want to pay taxes.

Let us stand against wrong and take the consequences. If we can't pay a few taxes while we do battle why bother keeping the doors open.

Part of the problem is in the context. In today's church we have no unity, we are splintered. There is no focus on God, thus we focus on our own needs and desires. This leads to a church splintered. If there was unity there would be a way that the church could stand, but splintered none are ready to stand because they know they will be very lonely in their stand.

Paul wants them striving together for the faith of the Gospel - striving TOGETHER. If church bodies were united they could stand against the wiles of the Devil instead of cowering in the shadows till he passes by.

10. Also in verse twenty-seven Paul uses the term "striving together" to describe the unity of action. The action is done together. The striving is an athletic term used of working together. We have all probably seen teamwork in action. The team that just clicks and can do no wrong because they are a team, a unit, not a bunch of individuals.

When I was in high school our football team clicked in this manner. They functioned as a unit and there was nothing any other team could do to stop them. They were un-scored upon till the last game when the opposition was able to squeak in one touchdown. Many were the excuses, one was mine, I attended the game, the first I had attended that season, I must have been the jinx! Well, all the reasons in the world were given, but the fact of a moment of disunity may have crept in, maybe a moment of pride and arrogance.

The point is not the one touchdown, but the point was the teamwork that allowed such a season to occur. Imagine a church body with such unity of purpose moving forward to spread the Word of God to the many lost around them.

11. In verse twenty-eight Paul uses a term translated "terrified" while Constable suggests another translation of "intimidated." It is a word that is not used elsewhere in the Bible. In classical Greek it is used of a shy horse that is startled by something unexpected and jerks back, or away from the object that caused its fright.

Paul wants them to stand squarely on the Word in a unified manner not allowing anything to startle or frighten them into disarray.

Let us go back to our IRS situation. Most churches fear the tax bill so submit willingly, while the Christian legal minds suggest we ought to take our stand against wrong. The IRS seems to be placing their own rules above the rights of the people - that should be seen as wrong, not allowed to pass for common place.

Stand against trouble, proclaim truth. The legal minds suggest instead of willingly submitting to the IRS that churches proclaim what is going on and draw attention to the wrong, rather than submit and allow wrong to move on to the next congregation.

12. Paul knows the Philippian believers are citizens of Rome, but reminds them that they are also citizens of Heaven and that they ought to steadfastly live like it. He, a prisoner of Rome, knows what he is talking about and is living the way he wants them to live. He is in prison and they are free so the implication is that it ought to be easier for them to live as they ought.

We are on the outside and often find it difficult to live as we ought. Consider yourself a prisoner in today's jail system and trying to live as a citizen of heaven. I was recently contacted by a believer in a prison in the east. He seems to be living a better Christian life than many on the outside. He is in the word, he is taking college classes, he is witnessing, and he is leading people to the Lord and in all this is taking a stand against the "Liberal" Chaplin and chapel services. He runs into all sorts of cults and defends the Word against their false teaching.

This man and a few standing with him are spreading true Christianity within the walls of the prison system. I do a lot of research online for him about different writers and isms of our day. He brings up two or three different cults or false teachers a letter and asks for further information so that he can confront fellow prisoners with the false teaching they are getting.

The majority of these cults and writers are unknown to me. They are seemingly having great gains within the prison system. They flood the institution with their false teaching via courses, books, radio and studies. What a testimony, in this cesspool of our society; this man and some of his friends are taking a united stand against falsehood. They are true citizens of heaven while in physical reality citizens of a state prison.

13. The Life Application Bible makes the following statement: "The Holy Spirit unites Christians into one spiritual group. If they can stand side by side in the Spirit, they can overcome small differences among individual members and work forcefully toward a common goal—to withstand external persecution."

What do you think of their statement? Do you see this in your church? Do you see this in the church universal? Do you see it in your own family?

I doubt many yes answers will result from the questions. However, I believe that if the Lord stirs in a little persecution we will see more and more unity in the Spirit.

There is little need for believers to be unified today. There are so many churches that if you disagree with the color of carpet that the church picks you can go down the street and find a church with the proper color. Put governmental or worldly persecution to our Christian society and I suspect that some radical changes will occur.

There seem to be some forces drawing different groups together for the common good. Abortion for example has drawn people from all sorts of groups to work against the common evil. We are seeing more and more cooperation in the area of politics as well.

If we see direct persecution of churches or individuals I trust that we will allow the Spirit to move us to set aside the small differences that separate us to bring us together to stand against the wrongs against us.

14. The Life Application Bible also lists some reasons why suffering is a positive thing for us. I would like to quote these four points and suggest that they are reasons that we should enjoy seeing suffering come our way.

"Suffering has these additional benefits: (1) It takes our eyes off of earthly comforts; (2) it weeds out superficial believers; (3) it strengthens the faith of those who endure; (4) it serves as an example to others who may follow us."

I would add that in number one, suffering often takes our eyes off of earthly things that we are so closely attached to. The focus comes to finding an answer to the suffering rather than how we are going to get more things.

The last reason has often been an encouragement to me as well as an example. When in hard times it has been an encouragement to me to know that thousands of believers have gone through similar and even worse troubles than I have been in. This gives me the knowledge that I too can make it through these hard times that are upon me.

It also should draw us up short to think of our own suffering in light of others suffering. When you think your suffering is all that you can handle, think of the thousands in the world that are in

deep starvation, or are being persecuted by the sword and gun. These sorts of problems are going on around the world at almost any given point in time.

We ought to understand that unless we are facing death as Paul was, we ought not feel that our suffering is oppressive. We should know that even if our suffering is unto death we are in a gaining position in life. Suffering is for our furtherance, not our detriment.

Let us close by reading a short comment from the Lord Himself about this very topic and give ourselves HIS perspective of suffering and persecution. John 15.18 "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. 19 If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. 20 Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also."

Lesson 7

QUALITIES OF A CHURCH

EFFACED

(Phil.2:3-11)

3 Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.

4 Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

9 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:

10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;

11 And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

3 [Let] nothing [be done] through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.

Okay, nothing resulting from neither strife nor anything resulting from vainglory is to be done - I take it, by individuals nor the church.

Strife is used by Aristotle to denote one that is seeking office through self seeking and unfair means. Now, we wouldn't have anything like this going on in the church would we?

The church is full of self serving people that seek their own gain - mark my words lest you be surprised. Many of these probably aren't actually believers. Recently I read an article that was saying preachers should not be preaching expositorially, but evangelistically. The premise was that most in the church are unsaved and that the sooner we get the membership saved the better.

Vainglory relates to self esteem or false pride. A vain opinion of one's self might relate. People that think they are all that and a whole lot more!

Lowness of mind has the idea of humbleness or a deep sense of one's littleness. Now, just how many believers do you know fit that description? We all think we are pretty important to God and His overall plan, but here Paul encourages the church to operate knowing its littleness - its smallness in the grand scheme of things.

"Each" relates to the individual, but has the connected thought of mutually - cooperation in the work.

In short we are to treat others as more important than ourselves. With this thought in mind how can we in a business meeting demean another's idea, how can we speak against the dictates of the Word?

With this thought in mind how can we in a personal relationships be upset with another for the way they are treating us?

BUT in lowliness of mind esteem others better than themselves. What would our business meetings be like in our churches, what would our fellowship times, what would our marriages be like if we applied this principle?

Intimidation is not a rule of order in business meetings, yet often leaders will stoop to it to gain what they want. Some will twist what others have said to suggest their thoughts are less worthy than they are. Some will use the repetition of their point with increasing forcefulness and volume to achieve what they desire in spite of growing opposition.

These are practices of the world, not of the church. If these practices are observed in the church people should mark that position being pushed as something to be suspicious of and something to be avoided. Not to speak of the one that is using such tactics.

The 2006 presidential elections in Mexico might be set forth as an example. The voters had cast their ballots, and the looser refused to concede and in fact tried everything to disrupt the acceptance of the duly elected candidate. When it came time for the swearing in of the winner, the failed candidate and his followers tried to disrupt the proceedings and to keep the man from his office. Certainly not the actions of an honorable man, but the actions of one that would be king due to his heightened view of his own importance to his country.

"Vainglory" is derived from false, vain or empty and doxa, the word for glory in the Bible. We sing the doxology in praise of God, yet this person sings his/her own praises before man, and usually for his own gain.

There are times in our lives that if we don't sing our own praises, no one else will either. It is rather natural to want to be admired, to be respected and to be looked up to, however the key seems to be humility and let all that other stuff acquire to the world, and allow your value to be in God's eyes. It is His opinion that we need to worry about in the long haul, not our fellow man's.

Let a quote from Barnes close the thought of this verse in a very powerful manner. "Let nothing be done through strife. With a spirit of contention. This command forbids us to do anything, or attempt anything, as the mere result of strife. This is not the principle from which we are to act, or by which we are to be governed. We are to form no plan, and aim at no object, which is to be

secured in this way. The command prohibits all attempts to secure anything over others by mere physical strength, or by superiority of intellect or numbers, or as the result of dark schemes and plans formed by rivalry, or by the indulgence of angry passions, or with the spirit of ambition. We are not to attempt to do anything merely by outstripping others, or by showing that we have more talent, courage, or zeal. What we do is to be by principle, and with a desire to maintain the truth, and to glorify God. And yet how often is this rule violated! How often do Christian denominations attempt to outstrip each other, and to see which shall be the greatest! How often do ministers preach with no better aim! "How often do we attempt to outdo others in dress, and in the splendour of furniture and equipage! How often, even in plans of benevolence, and in the cause of virtue and religion, is the secret aim to outdo others. This is all wrong. There is no holiness in such efforts. Never once did the Redeemer act from such a motive, and never once should this motive be allowed to influence us. The conduct of others may be allowed to show us what we can do, and ought to do; but it should not be our sole aim to outstrip them."

Rom. 12.3 relates to this discussion quite well also. "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith."

4 Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

I was told once that this was the life verse of a burglar. I don't think the verse speaks to material things in particular, but all things in general.

Don't consider your own life/things when you consider a relationship, consider the life/things of the other person - so in the church situation - consider the life/things of others before your own.

"Look" relates to more than the casual look of seeing a person's living room for the first time, but would go to the gaze of one that is coming toward envy or jealousy - one that is taken with the item to dwell upon it.

The term "things" relates to a person more than an item - Darby translated it own "qualities" rather than the idea of things - physical.

Might we say, don't consider yourself, but consider others. Can you think of any principles that Christ taught that might relate to this thought?

Love one another to the giving of your life for others might relate. We are to put others first in all that we do, we are to put others first in all we say, and we are to put others first in all that we possibly can. Our purpose in life is to put others first.

Now, if all goes according to this passage, if we do our part and all others do their part, then would not others put us first, and thus we all end up serving others in the church? Well, that is certainly the principle, but hardly the practice in most churches.

This is a great area to work on in your church. Put others first and hope the practice is catching like the flu, but don't hold your breath. The practice is incumbent on you now that you understand it, and it is not your place to worry about the other person. If you are a pastor or teacher put this one into action in your life, then begin to teach the principle to others.

For pastors and teachers that want to disciple others, this is one of the principles you need to put in your curriculum. This is probably one of the basics of any good disciple. Add humility from the previous verses and you have two powerful traits that should be a part of your disciple's life.

5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

Now that is a hard one to follow though no matter how hard it is Paul stated this and expected the folks to abide by his comment.

We are to have the mind of Christ when it relates to humility and how to live.

The term mind relates to opinion of one's self, but has a slight twist that fits well when applied to Christ. It relates to having an opinion of one's self that is modest even though a higher truth may apply - in short Christ could have had the mind that He was God which most likely would not have related well in modesty to a man. He had the mind that he was much less than He truly was - God.

He related to mankind as if he were a man. In short even though you have ten degrees, you should have the mind that you are much less. It matters little what education you have when you are teaching another believer the basics of the Christian life. Even the deep things of the Word can be communicated without the upper crust attitude that many give forth today.

This would assist in how big name preachers come across to the public. Many preachers push themselves as if they thought they were important - maybe they are, but they should not be the ones to say so. Indeed, if they apply this verse and have the mind of Christ they will never push themselves as being anything but a normal person.

Now, I wouldn't want to push this subject any further but in your mind how do the preachers and church leaders you know measure up to this verse? Be sure you do.

Years ago I was approached by a pastor with the possibility of becoming his assistant with the future possibility of taking his position as pastor in a large church. I was invited to teach one of the adult Sunday school classes. I was winding up the lesson after a great response from the class when the pastor walked into the room. All eyes became fixed on him as he stood in the back of the room. The class was gone, they might as well have walked out of the room. I finished the lesson, but there was no further response from the class and their attention was definitely on the pastor's response to me.

That sort of respect and attention might be admirable in the world system, but it seems pretty much misplaced in the Christian world. Honor and respect are not bad, but this man was near god status before his people. Later I found that they had his mother's Bible that she had read to their beloved pastor on her knee - it was in a glass case as if a shrine of sorts.

It was obvious to this person that there was no one on earth that would replace this man and have any sort of ministry to the people. Possibly fill in till someone else came along that they would relate to, but that first man would always be compared to the perfect mark and always come up short.

The man was a great preacher and good pastor, but had allowed others to elevate him much too high.

6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: 7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

These two verses illustrate the proof of Paul's statement and how it has been applied.

8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

I will refer the reader to the end of the study for a detailed look at verse seven and eight and all that men have implied from it in the past.

9 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:

This verse seems straight forward but at the same time there is a question - when did this happen?

"Wherefore" refers back to the previous context, thus one might suspect that the basis of the giving of the name was the time of the Kenosis - when Christ took upon Himself the form of man.

If you think about it, The Son had no real identity or reality to mankind before the incarnation. No one knew that there was a Son unless they realized some of the Old Testament passages were to be taken literally.

Passages like Isa. 9.6 "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." Psa. 2.7 "I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou [art] my Son; this day have I begotten thee." Prov. 30.4 "Who hath ascended

up into heaven, or descended? who hath gathered the wind in his fists? who hath bound the waters in a garment? who hath established all the ends of the earth? what [is] his name, and what [is] his son's name, if thou canst tell?"

We can know that Christ was the Angel of the Lord in the Old Testament by looking back in 20/20 hindsight, but the Old Testament saint had no such hindsight with which to gain this truth. However, after the incarnation the Son became known as Jesus the Christ and certainly this truth became reality.

10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of [things] in heaven, and [things] in earth, and [things] under the earth;

Again the question of when arises with this verse. The bowing is what is called an aorist tense which means it occurs at a particular point in time - one time is the emphasis of the tense. This has never happened - "every knee" nor will it happen until Christ is revealed for what He truly is before all mankind - I would assume this will be at the time of the judgment of all of lost mankind. Saved man has already bowed their knee to their Savior in the past, but no lost person has nor will until they are made to bow - made to bow by the knowledge that He indeed is King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

I personally feel that they will not be made to bow by God, but that they will automatically bow at the knowledge of Who He is - the Son of God.

11 And [that] every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ [is] Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Again, this will be the result of knowledge of who Christ is - God. The result - glory to God!

"Confess" can be translated confess openly. What a day that will be to see all of lost mankind confessing to the Son-ship of Christ in glorification to the Father.

At the same time this, to me, will be the saddest day of all time - all these lost souls of all time confessing that they have rejected the one true God and confessing that they deserve eternity in hell - and knowing that is their next destination - no choice - no second chance - no hope of anything but hell.

APPLICATION:

1. It was mentioned that vain glory activities have no place in the church. We probably would all agree that this is true, not to say that it is fact in our churches today. Have you wondered why we have so much trouble with these things in the church today? Why do we have pride and the like in our churches? Why do we have people pushing themselves into office by building themselves up?

It is hard not to succumb to such tactics when you are required to do so in the work a day world. To get gain in the world you have to be self serving, you have to push yourself above others and you have to make it a point to present yourself as better than all others. To gain a job in many places you have to be a super salesman selling yourself as the best of the best so that the possible employer thinks that they are getting the best possible person for the job.

Some would suggest that we should be that way in the world, just not bring it back into the church world with us. This is a noble purpose but is it really the Biblical position one should take? Is it really what we should do while in the world?

I would suggest a review of passages that relate to humility and see if they are for the church life or life in general. It should be suggested that Christ led a life of humility in and out of the temple. It is our purpose in life to live as Christ lived. If he was humble 24/7 then we should attempt to be humble 24/7.

This might cut against the grain of those working in the world and wanting to advance, but it is God's desire that we should seek, not our own.

No, you might not get that raise, you might not get that promotion, and as a result you might not get that new car, but you will have the satisfaction of knowing that you have God's favor in life.

It might be observed that a person living a humble life will have gain in the area of employment. Employers are not totally lacking in intelligence. Some of them actually watch and observe their employees and mark those that work hard for advancement and raises.

Do not feel you have to be like the world to operate in the world. You can be a true citizen of heaven and still function in the world. You may not get all the raises and advancements that others gain, but you will certainly gain those great advancements in the heavenly life to come.

2. The point of Paul bringing his discussion to the coming of God as man was to illustrate the humility principle. If Almighty God could take a step from the heavenlies and become lowly man, then why in the world can't you as a human stand to accept the humble position before some arrogant person that has lifted themselves above you - in their own minds?

In a Christian world where everyone is seeking degrees and the attention that degrees seem to bring, I have never made mention of my degrees, other than online in reference to the books. In my public/private life I never mention them and often people have no knowledge of them. In fact I had worked with one man for two years before he found out I had advanced degrees.

The other men that I worked with on a daily basis knew I had them but never made mention of them, nor took notice of them. They never gave indication that they knew they existed. One day a man holding a Doctorate came to the place of ministry and spoke. The entire group of men were calling him Dr. _____ and making over him as if he were something special direct from

God. It amused me greatly to see them abandon their usual reserved demeanor to join in the usual flutter and pitter patter of the educated.

There are two sides to humility. On the one hand a person that is famous or well educated is called to be humble, which many are, while those around them tend to leverage them out of their humility with their adoration and comments.

Folks, we all need to be humble and we all need to realize that those "famous" folks we happen to meet are called to the same humility - don't encourage them to step out of their humility to react to your over zealous fumbings of action and word. They are human and they are just like you.

I might mention that I have had the privilege of meeting a couple of high profile men of God and they seemed to be very humble men, just doing what God has called them to do. That is what we are all called to do - follow the direction of God in a humble and quiet manner.

In recent years there has been a rush to gain degrees by men that really have no need of them. Part of it is fueled by the churches that are requiring more and more education to tickle their ears, but part of it is men that have not come to realize humility isn't a four letter word. Many look to higher education for the purpose of increasing their visibility, status and pay package. This is not a good motivation for the man of God.

I might make note that I am a little mid-western town kid that God decided to use as He might. In all of my training and education I attempted to remain that little town type person. I am not what I have been trained to be, nor do I wish to become that; I desire to be what God made me and remain as I really am, rather than to take on a persona that will lead me to high position. That is not me, nor do I think God would have me lower myself to be such.

If we all – every preacher, every teacher, and every person in the congregation would simply be ourselves and put away all the airs, the church would function much more smoothly and be a much friendlier place for people to join.

3. There is much said about verse seven and just what it means. A good theology work or Barnes notes on this passage will give you more information if you are interested, or indeed my theology might confuse you adequately.

Basically I feel that Christ gave up the free use of some of his attributes when He became man. This is often said to be heresy, because He would cease to be God - not so, God can give up certain attributes for a time to accomplish certain things. After all, he being an eternal being gave up his operation in the eternal plain to limit Himself for a few millennia to work with man in time.

To give up use of His attributes did not make Him less than God, nor could he do anything that

would make Him less than God yet he came to earth as man to minister to man.

4. We have seen that every person of all ages that has rejected God will one day confess that Christ is Lord. Have you ever thought of the fallacy of these folks. They have said, no He isn't God and now they are saying yes He is. Will they not have a fearful realization of what they have lost for eternity when they see Christ? They could have done what they now will do, and been saved from what they will soon become. What a sad commentary on lost mankind. Now they won't but then they shall.

5. Gill goes to great length to state that this lowliness and esteeming others above yourself does not relate to money, education etc, but that it only relates to the fact that all are equal in grace, that Paul was relating to the fact that he was the chief of sinners. I assume because he stated such he was esteeming all above himself in Gill's mind, but I see nothing in the text to suggest Gill is correct. The text actually relates "things" as part of the line of thought.

"but in lowliness of mind, let each esteem other better than themselves; not as to the things of the world, in respect of which one man may be a better man than another, and he must know and think himself so; nor with respect to the endowments of the mind, and acquired abilities, which one man may have above another; and the difference being so great in some, it must be easily discerned, that one is more learned and knowing, in this or the other language, art, or science; but with regard to, grace, and to spiritual light, knowledge, and judgment: and where there is lowliness of mind, or true humility, a person will esteem himself in a state of grace, as the great apostle did, the chief of sinners, and less than the least of all saints; one in whom this grace reigns will pay a deference to the judgment of other saints, and will prefer their experience, light, and knowledge, to his own; and will readily give way, when he sees such that are of longer standing, of greater experience, and more solid judgment, as he has reason to think, than himself, are on the other side of the question; and so peace, love, and unity, are preserved. This grace of humility is an excellent ornament to a Christian, and wonderfully useful in Christian societies."

He is not incorrect in his thought that we are all the same in grace, nor is he incorrect in his application, but I find it difficult to accept that this is the only application, when the context does not limit it to such.

6. An obvious question should be in the readers mind when they think of all this unity, getting along and putting one another above themselves stuff. In a church meeting when there is difference of opinion and you are convinced that the opposition is unbiblical and that your position is Biblical, how do you relate these principles to life?

Do you put others before yourself and allow the unbiblical to go forward and watch the Biblical fall by the way? Do you become more and more vocal being sure that your principle carries the day? What might be some principles to live by in these cases?

a. Assure yourself from Scripture that your position is Biblical and not your opinion of what the

Bible teaches.

- b. Call the congregations attention to your texts and present your principles.
- c. Ask for Biblical references for the opposing position.
- d. Call the congregation to judge the situation from a Biblical standpoint.
- e. Trust that the congregation will follow the leading of the Spirit.

7. Constable relates some contrasts between the helper and servant. It relates well to our discussion of attitude and lifestyle of the true bond servant.

"CONTRASTS BETWEEN A HELPER AND A SERVANT

"A Helper

A Servant

"A helper helps others when it is convenient. A servant serves others even when it is inconvenient.

"A helper helps people that he or she likes. A servant serves even people that he or she dislikes.

"A helper helps when he or she enjoys the work. A servant serves even when he or she dislikes the work.

"A helper helps when the circumstances are convenient. A servant serves even when the circumstances are inconvenient.

"A helper helps with a view to obtaining personal satisfaction. A servant serves even when he or she receives no personal satisfaction.

"A helper helps with an attitude of assisting another. A servant serves with an attitude of enabling another."

Find which side you are on and either schedule some changes or rejoice in your commitment to the Lord.

8. So, how does it strike you that one of the most discussed theological passages of Scripture turns out to be simply an illustration given by the apostle to show how the Philippian believers should live? Oh that my illustrations were so grand.

Paul stirred the theologians of all time with a simple illustration of humility.

9. Humility is not putting yourself down. It is not building others up. It is being who you really are before God. There is no need to build up or put down, there is a need to be who we are, to be the children of God that He desires us to be.

Webster's 1828 dictionary mentions two definitions. "In ethics, freedom from pride and arrogance; humbleness of mind; a modest estimate of one's own worth. In theology, humility consists in lowliness of mind; a deep sense of one's own unworthiness in the sight of God, self-abasement, penitence for sin, and submission to the divine will."

I would suggest a combination of the two definitions. Might I suggest a modest estimate of one's own worth" and "a deep sense of one's own unworthiness in the sight of God. It is knowing who and what we are before God and having God's view of ourselves, not our own self inflated view.

We can't do anything without Him, but we can do anything with Him. Seems a great combination, and if we view ourselves in this light we will probably be in good shape both ethically and theologically.

10. Verse five is quite a mouthful. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus"

What was Christ's mind in relation to humility?

- a. He suffered the insults, tricks and insinuations of the Jews on a regular basis.
- b. He suffered the ineptitude of His disciples on a regular basis. He could have demanded their attention and commitment but He did no such thing. He waited for that to come from them.
- c. He suffered the trials of living on the road, sleeping where there was room to lay His head. Being God He could have gone back to heaven at night and gotten a good night's sleep, but lived as a man in all the ways man lives.
- d. He suffered the doubt of His followers, the lack of faith and all those hurtful items.

Yet in all of these and many more, He remained a humble servant of the Father even unto the humiliation of the trials and the cross.

And we get upset when someone says something hurtful or does something they ought not. We are to have the mind of Christ in all things in this life when it comes to others and their words/actions toward us.

OH HOW HARD it is to be humble! Yet this is the criteria by which God will view us. As we humble ourselves, God will lift us up.

12. It would seem that the context goes past being humble and goes on to God's rewarding Christ

for His work. So, it would seem, as we humble ourselves, one day God will lift us up to our due place before Him.

That is the day we should set our sights on, the day we should set our bank on - God's view of things not that deluded view of Mr. or Mrs. Snidely at the church. God will lift us up; we have no need to do so.

Someone is bound to ask how we can humble ourselves when all around are trying to shove us down by their remarks and actions.

Well, in simple terms, let them. When they get done pushing and shoving, you will be where they want you and they will be far above you. Humility is automatic. Well, maybe it isn't that easy, but that may relate to some of what you have to do.

Get alone with God and find out who you are before Him and the rest should take care of itself. As we have His view of us, then we will know who and what we are and humility should be just around the corner.

From MR. D'S NOTES ON THEOLOGY

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THE KENOSIS

KENOSIS, or as some call it, THE KENOTIC THEORY OF THE INCARNATION

Dr. Miller in his theology class notes calls the act of Christ in Philippians 2:7 as His self veiling. When Christ took upon Himself the form of man, He veiled or emptied Himself of His glory so that His true being could not be seen. 1

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

The idea of the Philippians text leaves five basic interpretations: (The titles of these theories come from A.B. Bruce. 2)

1. The "absolute metamorphic" view that Christ gave up attributes and that His divine consciousness was gone until in the temple at twelve when it began to come forth. Gess holds to

this thought.

2. The "absolute dualistic" theory - That Christ surrendered some of His attributes when He became man. Thiessen describes this position as follows: "They tell us that Christ emptied Himself of His relative attributes, - his omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence, - while retaining His immanent attributes ----His holiness, love, and truth." 3 He lists the following theologians in this tradition. Thomasius; Delitzsch; Forest; Crosby.

This, to most, would indicate that he was less than God if there were some attributes that were not there. Indeed, it seems unlikely that He would make Himself less than God and then assume His whole Godness at the ascension. To most it is inconceivable that He could become less than God for if He is less than God, then He is not God.

3. The "absolute semi-metamorphic" view - That Christ veiled His attributes. This would indicate that He hid them from other human beings. He used them but those around Him did not know He was using them. Walvoord mentions Ebrard's comment that states "that the divine properties were disguised and appeared as a mode of human existence. The mode of existence of Christ was changed from that of the form of God to the form of a Man, from the eternal manner of being to a temporal manner of being." 4

This seems to be a bit on the dishonest side, yet aside from this, it seems that He would not be a real example to us as a man that had a God side that was doing all those great things in secret.

4. That Christ laid aside some of His attributes. This seems to be very similar to number two above. If He indeed laid aside anything of His divine nature, He would seem to be less than divine. You cannot separate the divine attributes from the divine and have full divinity remaining.

5. That Christ voluntarily limited His use of His attributes. This position would submit to us that Christ remained completely divine and yet completely human. He, on His own, decided to limit the use of some of His divine attributes while here on earth so that He could become our example.

Theissen mentions that Strong held to this thought. "The humiliation consisted in the surrender of the independent exercise of the divine attributes...In the continuous surrender on the part of the God-man, so far as his human nature was concerned, of the exercise of those divine powers with which it was endowed by virtue of its union with the divine, etc." 5

One major thought to prove this position is that the Lord would have had to call down the angels to save Him. If he had all attributes available to him this would not have been necessary. See Mt 4:6 cf. Ps 91:11-12.

Theissen holds to the idea of the surrender of the independent exercise of the attributes. "...the

Scriptures teach, when taken as a whole, that Christ merely surrendered the independent exercise of some of His relative or transitive attributes." 6 Theissen has a good discussion on this topic.

Bancroft states, "The self-emptying (kenosis) of Christ, which was a voluntary act, consisted in the surrender of the independent exercise of the divine attributes." 7

Bancroft quotes E.Y. Mullins as he gives illustration of this self emptying. Mr. Mullins relates it to a teacher that knows all there is to know about mathematics yet to teach a pupil the teacher puts all his knowledge aside for a time to concentrate on the basics with the pupil. He also likens it to an owner of a chain of department stores that is beside the bed of his near dead son. The father has placed all things aside to concentrate on the son. In like manner Christ set all things aside except what He needed to finish the work of redemption.

Bancroft finishes by stating, "So it was with Christ, who freely and willingly surrendered the independent exercise of His attributes for the sake of and in the interest of His beloved." 8

I like his concluding statement but feel that the illustrations are poor. They speak of functions of the mind and have nothing to do with attributes.

This position of the voluntary setting aside of attributes, has some very nice characteristics.

- a. You have a divine person in the fullest sense of the word and He remains fully divine throughout eternity past, the incarnation, and eternity future. This fits best with the phrase that He is the "same yesterday, today and forever."
- b. You have a perfect example for man to follow in their spiritual life. He was a man of like nature that was tested and tempted in like manner as we. He was fully relying upon the Holy Spirit for His strength.
- c. You have the perfect union of both divine and human. He was just as much God as if He had never been man and He was just as much man as if He had never been God.

In Ryrie's A SURVEY OF BIBLE DOCTRINE he seems to tie the veiling and nonuse positions together. They are to me somewhat similar, yet different.

"The concept involves the VEILING [caps are my addition] of Christ's preincarnate glory (Jn. 17:5, the condescension of taking on Himself the likeness of sinful flesh (Ro. 8:3), and the voluntary nonuse of some of His attributes of deity during the time of His earthly life (Mt 24:36). His humanity was not a glorified humanity and was thus subject to temptation, weakness, pain and sorrow. Choosing not to use His divine attributes is quite different from saying that He gave them up. Nonuse does not mean subtraction." 9

There are other views that we might mention that might be slightly different from those given.

Anselm held that Christ acted as if he did not possess divine attributes. This would be similar to the veiled view I would think.

Walvoord seems to set forth a view that would be similar to the limiting of the attributes view however he maintains that Christ limited the use while still using them. The limitation would be in the idea that He used them at times and at times He limited them. Thiessen seems to follow this line of thinking as well. His view stated is, "...Christ surrendered no attribute of Deity, but that He did voluntarily restrict their independent use in keeping with His purpose of living among men and their limitations." 10 He maintains that Christ used the attributes at will; however never used those attributes in such a way as to make His life as man easier.

This would seem to say that Christ did some of the miracles in His own power and some of them in someone else's power. This is not the great example that the apostles were given, if He is doing the miracles on His own and not relying on the Holy Spirit.

The Synod of Antioch in 341 felt that this text meant that Christ emptied himself of "the being equal with God" yet held to the full deity of the Lord.

In the Philippians passage we read, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; And, being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Phil. 2:5-8

The form of God idea and the form of a servant idea must both carry the idea of complete God and complete servant. If there is "less than" in one then there would be "less than" in the other. Since He was fully a servant to become our example then He had to have been fully God.

The term translated "form" is the Greek word "morphe" which according to Lightfoot after a detailed study of the word in Philo and the New Testament is "that which is intrinsic and essential to the thing." Thus it shows that He was true and complete God while being true and complete servant. 11

The term emptied is something that is self imposed be it laying aside, veiling, or nonuse.

The same term is used in four other texts:

a. Rom. 4:14, "For if they who are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of no effect"

The faith is made void or "no good" and of "no value".

b. I Cor. 1:17, "For Christ sent me not to baptize but to preach the gospel; not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of christ should be made of no effect."

Again the similar idea of "no good" is seen.

c. I Cor. 9:15 also seems to show "no good" is the idea.

d. II Cor. 9:3 seems also to show the idea of "no good."

Let us apply that thought to Phil. 2:7. "But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men;" It seems that this text may not give credence to any setting aside, veiling, or nonuse of anything.

This idea of "no good" or void would give idea that He was setting aside all that it meant to be God in the idea of status and position to take on the place, or position, or the status of a servant.

Berkof in his systematic theology mentions of this term and these texts: "The term kenosis is derived from the main verb in Philippians 2:7, ekenosen. This is rendered in the American Revised Version 'emptied Himself'. Dr. Warfield calls this a mistranslation. The verb is found in only four other New Testament passages. . . .In all these it is used figuratively and means 'to make void', 'of no effect', 'of no account', 'of no reputation'. If we so understand the word here, it simply means that Christ made Himself of no account, of no reputation, did not assert His divine prerogative, but took the form of a servant." 12

This might imply that the passage has nothing to do with giving up, veiling, or nonuse. It would only mean that the text meant that He did not hold his deity as something to be held onto and took on the form of a servant.

I don't know if this is the message that Dr. Berkof was trying to relay. It would imply that He did not set forth his divine nature but that the emphasis was on the servant.

Ryrie takes this line of thinking in his Theology. In speaking of this passage he mentions, "And that passage does not discuss at all the question of how or how much Christ's glory was veiled. Nor does it say anything about the use or restriction of divine attributes. It does say that the emptying concerned becoming a man to be able to die. Thus the kenosis means leaving His preincarnate position and taking on a servant-humanity. . . .In the kenosis Christ emptied Himself of retaining and exploiting His status in the godhead and took on humanity in order to die." 13 (This by the way, seems to contradict what he held in SURVEY OF BIBLE DOCTRINES pp 57-59)

The idea of the Philippians text certainly to me, is as we have just seen. This does not negate our entire discussion. It just gives us a different light and slant to the thoughts.

The Philippians text is the idea that Christ was not holding to his status, or position, and was willing to change that status and position. In the process of this change there seems to have been some change in the use of His attributes.

That change seems best to be defined as a self-imposed limitation of His attributes. The attributes in question would be omnipresence, omniscience, and omnipotence.

Those that say that Christ did miracles under His own power list many references to prove their point. There is nothing in any of these references that I have considered that show definitely that His own Omnipotence, or other attributes were suddenly in use as Walvoord suggests.

Indeed, for Him to use the powers of God would detract from the promises of the disciples to be able to do miraculous things via the power of the Holy Spirit. They are given Christ as an example yet He can do miracles without the Holy Spirit. This is not a good example of what the disciples could do.

Also, it seems to be a detraction from the ministry of the Holy Spirit if one is to attribute some of the miracles of the Lord to His own divine nature. The Spirit ministered in and through Him as He does in and through us.

There might be another position that would give some food for thought. The idea that God was limited by the fact of His humanity. He could only see as far as normal man could see so there was nothing he could do other than get close enough to see what He wanted to see. He was limited in brain power and storage capacity so was not omniscient as such. He was in a body that knew fatigue so could do only so much. He was in a human form that was limited in physical strength so could not do superhuman things. Etc.

It seems to me that He voluntarily set aside some of these attributes so that He could be wholly an example to the apostles and us that follow. This principle is derived from logic and thought, rather than the Philippians text.

CONCLUSIONS:

1. If you hold to the position of Walvoord, or to the self-imposed nonuse of attributes you are on very good ground scripturally. Any other position will find problems. The idea of nonuse seems to have many things going for it.

Walvoord concludes his discussion with the following from Strong: "Our doctrine of Christ's humiliation will be better understood if we put it midway between two pairs of erroneous views, making it the third of five. The list would be as follows: (1) Gess: The Logos gave up all divine attributes; (2) Thomasius: The Logos gave up relative attributes only; (3) True View: The Logos gave up the independent exercise of divine attributes; (4) Old Orthodoxy: Christ gave up the use of divine attributes; (5) Anselm: Christ acted as if he did not possess divine attributes." 14

Strong uses the terms "gave up the independent exercise of" which indicates that He did not use them while Walvoord mentions the idea of use them but "restrict" the use of them. I'm not sure he isn't miss-using Strong in this quote.

Indeed, Strong makes the statement, "In the continuous surrender, on the part of the God-man, so far as his human nature was concerned, of the exercise of those divine powers with which it was endowed by virtue of its union with the divine, and in the voluntary acceptance, which followed upon this, of temptation, suffering, and death." He also mentions, "In the submission of the Logos to the control of the Holy Spirit...." 15

Strong is not clear to me just what he means, but it seems that he saw Christ as limiting use, as in, nonuse of the attributes.

2. The Philippians text really does not discuss the nonuse, veiling etc. of Christ's attributes. It deals with status or position.

3. View Christ as perfectly divine and perfectly man and you have the thought that you need. We have shown this in our studies on His deity and His humanity.

4. Because the Lord was relying on the Holy Spirit for all of His knowledge and miracles, then we truly have an example to follow.

If you do not feel that His relying on His own divine attributes at times detracts from His being an example to you then that position is quite good. The question is this, When did He rely on His own powers and when did He rely on the Spirit? Did He rely on His own divinity during the wilderness testing? And, we might add who is to determine when He was functioning in the divine and when He was functioning in the servant?

5. The Kenotic theology is barely based on scripture any way you view it. It is not good to build theology on one verse that is highly disputed. The idea is to try to explain how God and man can be one so very completely without a conflict of interest lawsuit.

6. We have noted that some authors contradict themselves at times in their different writings.

Let us think of this for a few moments. I do not say that I know what is going on in their lives. I think that we may draw some possible answers to these contradictions, and see that they are not necessarily sloppy writers or theologians.

a. They were trained by some very strong personalities. They may have soaked up their teacher's theology and bought everything that was handed them. They may in later life have taken time to study some of the recent church fathers and the Bible and realized that their teachers were not infallible. It is normal to do this, and I trust that you will realize that you may have done the same

thing yourself in reading this material, or maybe at your home church.

We need to check all we hear with the Scripture and see if it really fits. I had a Dallas man in one of the colleges that I attended, for a president. His messages were fantastic. I took notes plus more notes and loved his messages. I went back through his message notes one time and tried to relate what he said to the scripture passage and it just was not there. I finally over time threw most of his notes away because they were not really scriptural. Nothing erroneous but not based on the texts he used.

b. Some writers have had serious struggles through their years of preparation, and may not have had time to seriously check out their own thinking on all that they believe.

c. It is normal to change and redefine your thinking as you age and mature in the Lord. I would encourage you to be very patient with people that are teaching what you would term "false doctrine" until you have fully understood their thinking, and you have completely studied the text, or teaching on your own.

Many times I have felt that a persons teaching was incorrect until I took time to understand what they were saying, and took time to study the topic on my own.

In conclusion to our study of the Kenosis, Ryrie agrees with me in his "SURVEY OF BIBLE DOCTRINES" when he states, "What is included in a proper statement of the true doctrine of the kenosis? The concept involves the veiling of Christ's preincarnate glory (Jn 17:5), the condescension of taking on Himself the likeness of sinful flesh (Ro. 8:3), and the voluntary nonuse of some of His attributes of deity during the time of His earthly life (Mt 24:36). His humanity was not a glorified humanity and was thus subject to temptation, weakness, pain and sorrow. Choosing not to use His divine attributes is quite different from saying that He gave them up. Nonuse does not mean subtraction." 16

END NOTES:

1. Dr. Miller, Theology class notes, Western Baptist College
2. Walvoord, John F.; "JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD"; Copyright 1969; Moody Press; p 140 (Quoting A.B. Bruce in his "THE HUMILIATION OF CHRIST")
3. Henry C. Thiessen, "LECTURES IN SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY," Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1949, p 295
4. Taken from: "JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD"; Walvoord, John F.; Copyright 1969, Moody Bible Institute of Chicago; Moody Press. Used by permission. p 141
5. Thiessen, p 298

6. Thiessen, p 296
7. Taken from the book, ELEMENTAL THEOLOGY by Emery H. Bancroft. Copyright 1977 by Baptist Bible College. Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House. p 147
8. Taken from the book, ELEMENTAL THEOLOGY by Emery H. Bancroft. Copyright 1977 by Baptist Bible College. Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House. p 148
9. Taken from: "A SURVEY OF BIBLE DOCTRINE"; Ryrie, Charles C.; Copyright 1972, Moody Bible Institute of Chicago; Moody Press. Used by permission. p 59
10. Taken from: "JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD"; Walvoord, John F.; Copyright 1969, Moody Bible Institute of Chicago; Moody Press. Used by permission. p 144
11. Reprinted by permission: Ryrie, Charles C.; "BASIC THEOLOGY"; Wheaton: Victor Books, 1986, 1986, p 261
12. Berkhof finish and add him to book list.
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Lesson 8

QUALITIES OF A CHURCH

ENLIGHTENING

(Phil. 2:12-18)

12 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

14 Do all things without murmurings and disputings:

15 That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world;

16 Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither labored in vain.

17 Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all.

18 For the same cause also do ye joy, and rejoice with me.

12. Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

What a passage - you obeyed when I was with you which would be expected - when someone was watching - and more so when Paul was away from them - not necessarily to be expected.

Paul praises them for obedience when they probably didn't have anyone watching - how well do we do with that one - how obedient are we when we know no one is watching?

Work out your salvation - we know that we don't work for our salvation so we know this passage is speaking of something else.

What is Paul speaking about is the question. Some translations use the term cultivate rather than work which may relate to our question.

The term translated "own" can relate to plural and in the context here plural would fit well - he is telling the church to cultivate their salvation. Isn't that what we do when we come to church - when we come to Bible study - some of us cultivate more than others, but we all work at our believership if you will.

The word "work" is normally translated work, but has a little more to it than just working a job. It relates to an effort that fulfills or accomplishes something. Now "work" today relates to the same thing but most would relate it simply to the job and work, rather than to the accomplishment of that work. Indeed, many today would wonder if they are accomplishing anything in their jobs.

As a church body we are to labor toward accomplishing things in our corporate body. This might relate to the edification that Paul speaks of in Eph. 4 when he speaks of the leadership training the people to go out and do the work of the Lord.

If we aren't accomplishing something in our church why do we bother? Going to church week in and week out and never seeing anything change. Preaching and teaching that just reiterates all we've been hearing for years - what is accomplished from such work? Little I fear.

"Fear and trembling" is translated "awe and reverence" in the Net Bible. Their foot note states that Paul is drawing their attention to their attitude before God - they are to deal with their salvation as though they know that they are dealing with God and that they need to have a proper attitude about it.

13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of [his] good pleasure.

(Now that is a good Calvinist verse - something to beat the Armenian over the head with - something to prove their system correct.)

We are to cultivate with fear because it is God that works within us. He works in us to will and to do - according to His good pleasure.

Again, what does that mean?

"Worketh" is a word that is akin to our word energize - to work through - to show forth through. God energizes us to show Himself through us.

"To will" has the thought of to love - to desire to - purpose - to take delight in - seems to relate to God desiring to do the work that is mentioned.

"To do" relates to showing activity. God seems to work in us - to energize us - to show Himself forth through us.

This is why we should cultivate in fear - if we don't cultivate properly we hinder His working in and through us to show Himself to others through us.

Example: A believer that is not cultivating is not allowing God to work in and through them and is in effect hindering the work that God wants to do. Now, I would fear that situation - not that I would fear hell, but I would fear facing Him and finding He is displeased with me.

One that believes yet does not attend the services of the church, does not partake in the activities of the church, and does not participate in fellowship with the church or their Savior is one that is not cultivating and in effect is hindering God's purpose and will.

Now back to the Calvinist - not sure this is the passage for them - anyone twisting this to say that God is sovereign and doing whatever He wants in a person seems to be misunderstanding the passage. It seems to be a mutual working, He is doing the leading, empowering, and equipping, while we do the rest. If we are doing it His way then we worketh out our salvation properly or cultivate it correctly.

14. Do all things without murmurings and disputings:

Oh come on, doing things without disputing is bad enough but to ask us to do it without murmurings - that is too much to ask. Murmuring can be translated secret debate or secret displeasure. Hummm, seems to me that murmuring brings pleasure to the one doing it so this must mean that it is displeasure of the way others are doing things.

We had the privilege of going to orientation with a mission. Part of the orientation was labor - we were placed in physical cleaning, fixing and general displeasureable work to see how we worked with others.

We had a single man that was a total goof off - he would sit and talk while the rest of us were working hard. He would go from one group to another wasting time.

The group was becoming more and more frustrated with the kid but few were verbalizing their disgust. Most were trying to show their patience with him by not saying anything.

The amount of "murmuring" to themselves became quite evident one afternoon - someone started to tell him what they thought of his lazy attitude and before it was over almost everyone had chimed in with a few choice comments.

I often wondered if he wasn't a plant from the mission to see how we would handle the bum. He had been through orientation once before and had been asked back for a second time - this could have been a plant or it may have been they were working on his lazy streak.

Disputing also relates to that which goes on internally. It is talking to one's self as in a dispute.

Most people that know me know that I am a computer nut. When something new comes out you have my total interest. The fact that I am typing this on a portable folding keyboard with my pocket computer attached should confirm what I say.

When a new product comes on the market, one of the first things I do is dialog with myself. Do I need that new toy? Can I really use that toy? Can we afford to buy that toy? After I get that toy will I really use it? What will I do with that other toy that will be displaced by this new toy? Can I justify having two toys that serve the same general purpose? I carry on quite an internal dialog with myself. When frustrated with others, we often carry on this sort of dialog with ourselves, probably trying to justify our incorrect feelings toward the other party.

Paul tells us to do all things with out internal griping and moaning, and without internal arguments about the doing.

15 That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world;

We need to break this verse down into smaller bites. Paul did not operate in our modern day situation where we use sound bites - he used sound orations.

"That ye may be blameless" Blameless relates to without fault or deserving no censure. Not only are we to be without fault but we are to be without reason to censure - that last item may indicate that we should not even have a situation where someone might suggest we have a problem.

"And harmless" This word relates to purity as in wine or metal - something that has nothing mixed in - in this context you might say no mixture of evil.

Now, that is of note to the Christian of today. No mixture of evil - that eliminates the Sunday Christian that turns into a worldly Christian Monday morning. It eliminates the "occasional" lie; it eliminates the "occasional" whatever you might insert into the discussion.

"The sons of God" This normally would relate to a believer - one that is saved by the blood and indeed this is true, but the word relates to a relationship between the two - a personal relationship. One that is cultivated and meaningful to both parties.

Again this leaves out the Sunday Christian - one that attempts to be a son or daughter on Sundays but ignores the relationship other days of the week.

The word is used of the disciple's relationship to the teacher - a very close relationship that is nurtured. Does that sound like your relationship with God?

"Without rebuke" This would be one that cannot be censured - blameless. No one can point the finger of accusation at you might be the thought of the word.

In our day that is a ruff qualification. Almost anyone can point an accusing finger at anyone they want and the accusation normally sticks.

I wonder how this might relate to first impressions when we meet other people. Don't we often draw conclusions and stick with those conclusions until they are proven incorrect, rather than accept someone for who they are and see how time adds information to our perception?

When I returned to my home town after being away to the service for a few years I took a job with a department store in the service department. The town's folks had no idea what had transpired in my life in that five years - they just assumed I was the same as before - a hood -

someone that no one wanted to be around.

Many people called my employer and told him not to send me to their homes and that they would not allow me to enter if I were to be sent.

Two points - they assumed I was not responsible and secondly I could be rebuked - they had basis (from the past) to censure me.

I must admit I did not get too concerned with these people because I understood why they didn't want me around, though a second chance would have been nice.

"In the midst of a crooked and perverse nation" This is the Greek word "skolios" which I believe is the basis of the malady called scoliosis or curvature of the spine. This is the thought of the word - froward, crooked or curved.

"Perverse" is to be against the plans of God. These types of people are really going away from God and working against what He wants to do.

The tense is of interest - not only are they crooked and perverse but that is their ongoing character and it will not change - this is a perfect tense. It is something that is true now and will be into the future to a final end.

We don't need to worry about who our enemy is - the world is against all that God wants to do in and through you - now you know why you have a hard time being a witness in the work place, however the next phrase is the key - like it or not we are effective if we walk with Him.

"Among whom ye shine as lights in the world;" What a promise - be pure of spirit and you will be a light IN the world.

We are lights shining - why? We are to be a guide to those that seek safety - one that can guide others to the Savior. We are to be luminaries to draw attention, not to ourselves, but to the Lord our Savior.

16 Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.

They hold forth the word of life to the lost around them, to those that are away from God, to those that are against God.

Paul desires this of them so that he can know when he stands before the Lord that he has done a good job of discipling these people - that he has trained them to do the work of the Lord in a proper manner.

My, how this truth should resonate with pastors, teachers and missionaries. If they are not to feel their work and effort was not vain, they need to train their people to be lights in the world, not just like the world.

Personal opinion, many pastors are not accomplishing this in their churches. I have seen so many Christians that are not lights, but rather enablers of the lost to continue in their erroneous ways.

I have seen believers encouraging lost people in their sins, encouraging them to continue with things that they like to do no matter the rightness or wrongness. Woe unto these believers and woe to the pastors and teachers that have failed them.

The "word of life" is literally logos, the term used of Christ and "zoe" which is a general word for life itself. "Zoe" is life and when linked with "eternal" relates to eternal life. I suspect Paul was speaking in generalities, of life in general, though eternal life is most likely a portion of his thought. Not only are we to be sharing eternal life, but sharing the word that can change life in general. Have you seen many Christians that have not changed their entire physical lives when they become children of the King.

Christ and the Spirit change our entire beings, or ought to. The pastors and teachers should be attempting to share the Word in such a way that the believer can continue to mold and change their lives into what the Lord wants for them in this life. The Spirit can use the teaching of those in the church to minister to those that have need of change.

If a congregation is not getting fed from the pulpit and lectern, then there is little use in taking up the space and time. Either feed the flock or get out of the way and let someone else do your job.

17 Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all.

"I be offered" is the word "spendo" where we get our word spend. It has the idea of one being poured out for God's purpose - one that is sacrificed.

Service is a term that is used of one taking office to serve the public at one's own expense. It is also used of the relationship between husband and wife - one of self sacrificing service.

"Rejoice" is the joy one takes at seeing the other person's joy; that of giving to someone and seeing their joy over your gift.

It seems that Paul is very pleased with his service to the believers - he has offered himself to the Lord for His service and that service is bringing him to the end of having joy in seeing the believer's joy in the Lord over their salvation.

One must wonder how many in the congregation have ever considered this thought of self

sacrificing for God; that giving of themselves to the rest of the people as a service to God. How many real servants do we have in our churches? How many are giving of themselves to further the lives of others?

In our self centered world there is little self sacrificing going on. There are usually a few in every church that see the need and do their best to fill it, but find themselves totally exhausted in the attempt over time.

Many pastors on internet boards would say that they are self sacrificing. They are working their fingers to the bones for the church. Yet, when viewing their congregation they discount greatly those that work full time jobs, have families and all those related responsibilities and still find time to give of themselves to people and the church. Pastors often forget that they are paid to do the work that they are privileged to do, while those of his church do all they do on their own nickel.

I think many pastors fail to see the sacrifice that many of their people give for their Lord in light of why don't they do more? Yes, some pastors give of themselves as well, but many there are that stop at forty hours and do no more. In fact whether the forty was spent wisely in ministry could probably be questioned.

The larger point of course is that **WE ALL SHOULD BE SELF SACRIFICING** not just the pastor and not just a few of the people - **ALL!**

18 For the same cause also do ye joy, and rejoice with me.

This verse finishes his thought of joy in service. Not only does he have joy over their joy but they also have joy over his joy - one big happy family might be the thought.

Oh, the pastor leaving his church should have such joy and his people should have such joy. It is sad to see men leaving a group after pouring long hours and months into a group and having to leave in less than joyous circumstances.

I once spoke to a pastor that had just resigned and I asked him of his leaving. His feeling was that there would be no sorrow over it on the part of the church. His impression was that he was a total failure in his efforts with the people. He had assisted in building the church up numbers wise and seemed the type that would have done a good job of teaching the folks into maturity, yet he felt failure because the people had become unresponsive to his leading. His leaders would not follow, and indeed some were quite offensive to him.

This is not the situation that church people and pastors should allow to develop. Joy should be the hallmark of the church, not unhappiness. Not always the real situations in a local church this joy.

The specific context is the possible passing of the apostle from this life to the next. He calls upon them to "joy, and rejoice with me." He was going to be happy so they also should be happy. This is the Christian's view of death. It is a joy to go home to be with the Lord. It should be something of happiness to know a loved one is home with His Lord.

Recently a mountain climber was found dead in a snow cave after a week of people searching for him. His pastor was quite delicate as he related his thoughts, but quite definite in the proper attitude. He related that the man had gone to sleep on a mountain that God made, a mountain that the man loved to climb, and that he was now at home with the maker of the mountains. His thought was that how much better does it get for a believer to go to sleep doing what he loved to do where he loved to do it and waking up in the presence of the Lord and King he loved.

APPLICATION:

1. Ray Stedman relates that obey does not have the connotation of obeying laws, it relates rather to the idea of knowing the laws and staying within them. He relates it to the laws of electricity. We are to enjoy the electricity, but we do have a few rules of engagement. If we stay within these rules we enjoy the product.

Now maybe I am just dense but if I don't obey those rules of engagement with electricity I will look to be disengaged from this life. I don't know how you want to spin the idea of obey, but obey in this case means obey or else. He goes to great length to say that it does not mean as in obey or else, but even his illustrations suggest he is incorrect in his struggle to make obedience something better and more easy to accept than it is.

His efforts are to dispel the idea that Christianity is a series of laws to be obeyed. Well it is in one respect, but if we have the Spirit within we know the rules and seriously want to live within those rules. In the end this is what Stedman was trying to say, but I think his spin was lacking at best.

He wants to make Christianity look great to the lost by proving that it isn't a lot of does and don'ts, when in fact that is exactly what it is. The point is that if we are believers we know the limits and we live within them because we desire to please God, not that we are obeying a list of does and don'ts.

I am not sure why preachers want to evade what Christianity truly is by saying it isn't such. Any intelligent being reading the Word of God knows it is a long listing of things we are to do and a series of things that we are not to do. This seems to be a list of does and don'ts to me, but then what do I know. If they want to put a spin on that to make it more pleasing for the lost then that is up to them, but it seems to be dishonest to me. Either it is or it isn't a life of does and don'ts.

The problem isn't with the reality of Christianity it is the point of view. If you are lost, you will view it as does and don'ts and if you are a believer you will view it as the Christian life.

Illustrations can make it look like something it is not but again, I would suggest that doing that is dishonest.

His next sentence is "First of all he [Paul] points out the necessity for intelligent obedience." Humm, if it is about "intelligent obedience" is it not about does and don'ts? He goes into a long illustration of teaching his daughter to drive. How he must tell her what to push, what to pull, what to do at every point. She is relying on him for direction about how to drive. He uses this to illustrate the next verse and how the folks at the church at Philippi needed to live on their own one day and not rely on his direction. Again, is that not an illustration just ripe with does and don'ts?

To sum up all he wanted to say, he said this. "I remember hearing Dr. Norman Grubb say that in the Christian life everything is right unless I know it is wrong. The legalist says everything' is wrong unless I know it's right. But the Christian says everything's right unless the voice of the Spirit within, coupled with the Word without says it is wrong. So go ahead and live, knowing that Christ lives in us."

I think we agree, but instead of making the Word into something to kind of float through without seeing any does and don'ts I would choose to see the Word as it is, a guide to life. A guide that tells me not to do things, and a guide that tells me to do other things. This is reality and the lost can view it as they like. Their view is not through clear eyes.

I would also add quite quickly that everything is right IF THE BELIEVER is walking with God and the Spirit within is a positive voice. A believer that is not walking with God is one that has quieted the voice of the Spirit and probably is not seeking the Word's direction in life, thus not all is "RIGHT."

2. The phrase "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." seems to be a problem to many scholars as they rush to present their own theological views position on the text. Gill uses a lot of verbiage to declare that salvation is all of God and that it is none of man before he really gets to the point of the verse. His line of thought is that since his position is true, then this verse cannot mean something else.

He relates the entire thought to how we live our entire Christian life in relation to the command to witness and disciple.

I tend to agree with his position, but I trust I don't arrive at that position the way he did. He arrived at the ending point by declaring what the text isn't saying, and then concluding what it must be saying. This is not the best way to interpret Scripture to say the least.

Work, according to the lexicon, has the connotation of preparing to be adequate. This would indicate that this relates to the process of our deliverance, rather than the act that makes us delivered. We are saved by the work of Christ on the cross, while our preparedness for that

salvation is something that we can have a part in.

This is the crux of the Christian life. We are to carefully put one foot in front of the other throughout our Christian life in assuring our proper preparation for the end result. Didn't Paul speak of running the race properly, didn't he labor his entire life to please God? This ought to be the goal of all believers, to work toward a proper and respectable end to our journey toward our ultimate goal - salvation complete with Him in eternity.

This requires some things on our part.

- a. That we are maintaining a proper relation with Him so that we are aimed the right direction.
- b. That we are maintaining a proper attitude toward other believers so that we are assisted in our travel.
- c. That we are maintaining a proper desire toward Him so that we are always focused properly.
- d. That we are maintaining all aspects of our lives so that we are always positioned for that ultimate exit from this life so that we arrive in His presence in a properly packaged manner.

This seems to relate directly with verse fifteen's idea of being blameless.

3. How do we relate to our own generation? Are we light in darkness, or are we just part of the darkness? We are to be blameless - that will mark us in this life as light. It will cause our light to shine forth before our fellow man. We will not have a choice in the manner; we will stand out from the entire world. This isn't a bad thing folks. I get the feeling that to be a standout is a bad thing in our society.

We cannot oppose anything lest we stand in opposition to anything. We should not stand against abortion, it is their right. We should not stand against homosexuality; it is just how they were born. We should not stand against divorce, it is just the way it is - it just didn't work out.

In reality, if we stand against any of the items mentioned we will be automatically a shining light house in the mire of the world. Or should I say we will be a shining target to be aimed at by every detractor of our time. Oh well, that is what God wants so be it and praise Him for it.

4. Constable mentions "We obtain salvation by receiving it as a gift (Eph. 2:8), but having received it freely we have a responsibility to perfect it." No disagreement here, but he goes on to say that this is sanctification. Not sure there is agreement there however. I would suggest that it is much more than sanctification, it relates as well to our belief system. If our beliefs are askew, then how can our sanctification be correct? If we follow wrong teaching our sanctification may be based on poor if not erroneous principles, thus we might be walking in sin.

Preachers often scoff at theology, yet they know that theology is the basis of all proper living, and proper understanding of God and His desires for our lives. If our theology is on target, and if we desire to walk with God, then our living/sanctification will be on target as well.

I fear many a preacher/teacher desires that others live as they live, not necessarily as theology would dictate that they live. This is one of the causes of friction between pastors and congregations. If the pastor believes one thing and the congregation another, then the pastor is always trying to browbeat the congregation into submission to HIS belief system, not necessarily God's system.

We are each as individuals believer priests before God. We each have the Spirit of God living within for our guidance and teaching. If we then are in the Word, ought the Spirit not be teaching each of us? If this is the case then if the pastor teaches counter to the Spirit's teaching ought we not follow the Spirit? Of course we should. If the pastor teaches counter to the Spirit or the Word then he speaks falsely and ought to be rebuked for his false teaching - ya right - I can see that happening in the current clerical society of our day. You know, that society where the congregation can't possibly properly understand the Bible without years of Greek and Hebrew; that society where the preacher is the total authority within the church; that society where the leaders dictate the happenings of the church to the congregation for the carrying out; that society where the preacher is always right and the congregant is always wrong; that society where the preacher is the "Lord's anointed" and the congregant is the servant of same.

Preachers get over yourselves; you have no special keys to spiritual life. You have no special illumination to the Word. You have no special anointing to dictatorship. You have no special anything that raises you above your congregation. They can come before God in the same manner as you. They can be taught by the Spirit in the same manner as you. They can be guided into sanctified living in the same manner as you.

We are ONE body - all in the same boat - the boat where we need the Lord's help to navigate life's turbulent waters. The Word and the Spirit are our guide to working out our own salvation and that is why Paul said to do it with fear and trembling. We ALL are to do it very carefully as we walk toward eternity with Him.

If I see that the Word tells me one thing and the pastor/teacher is telling me another, it is up to me to follow what the Lord has revealed to me. It is also incumbent upon me to be sure that what I believe is truly correct.

Many pastors today demand obedience to all that they believe, otherwise the other person is somewhere on the continuum between just incorrect to heretic. Not a good method to guide a church. The little differences are of little importance, each should seek God's guidance on those things. Today's church is so totally splintered due to this nit picking of minor doctrines that little is being done.

Much of the church hopping we have going on today is due to this thought that PASTOR is correct. Anyone being found disagreeing with any point of PASTOR'S teaching is made to feel out of place if not totally uncomfortable.

Years ago we entered an Independent Baptist church for Sunday school and when the pastor got up for his thoughts he reeled of a long laundry list of things that you most certainly believe if you were a true believer. His list had many things that were a long way from salvific and the implication was that you were lost without these "key" doctrines. It was of interest that with each and every point he leaned forward and stared at us as if to say, if you don't hold these things you should leave now. We did since I didn't think that King James Only ism was salvific in nature as well as several other of his points.

In another church we had hardly seated ourselves when the pastor shoved a doctrinal statement into my hand with the statement, "This is what we believe." It was as if, we don't know why you are here, but this is what we believe and you are not welcome if you don't buy it all.

Yes, I might have read into the situations more than was meant, but why on earth would a pastor challenge a newcomer with minors when the point of all we do should be salvation for others? At least with the printed doctrinal statement we were kind of exposed to the gospel along with the odd doctrines that they held which were not winners or losers in the area of salvation.

The 2006 Barna reports state that the house church movement is growing drastically. Why? Because in those small groups people can find a few that agree with them to fellowship with rather than get into the Word to discover what the truth really is.

This isn't the whole reason for the drastic increase but it is one of the major ones I would think.

5. Paul may have been referring to the Old Testament drink/pour offering mentioned in Gen. 35.14 "And Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he talked with him, even a pillar of stone: and he poured a drink offering thereon, and he poured oil thereon." or in Ex. 29.40 "And with the one lamb a tenth deal of flour mingled with the fourth part of an hin of beaten oil; and the fourth part of an hin of wine for a drink offering. 41 And the other lamb thou shalt offer at even, and shalt do thereto according to the meat offering of the morning, and according to the drink offering thereof, for a sweet savour, an offering made by fire unto the LORD." However some authors suggest that since the Philippian believers probably weren't well versed in the Old Testament that he may have been using the picture of the pagan offerings poured out on idols.

Now, that might be, but let's think about it for a moment. Paul has taught these folks and taught them well. What was he teaching them? Was he teaching them the New Testament only? Not likely since some of it hadn't been written and none of it had been compiled into a Testament. He would have been teaching them the Old Testament and information that he had received from the Lord Himself.

It is most likely that they knew of the Old Testament sacrifices so would have immediately seen his words as relating to that offering to God.

6. The Life Application Bible mentions "Our life should be characterized by moral purity,

patience, and peacefulness, so that we will "shine brightly" in a dark and depraved world."

Do you believe this to be the truth?

Do you believe that you fulfill this truth?

Do you believe that your family fulfills this truth?

Do you believe that your church family fulfills this truth?

Does moral purity include watching perverse television/movies? Does it allow for taking in all of the swearing, crudeness and immorality?

Does moral purity include telling things that are not true to your fellow workers? Fellow believers?

Does moral purity include reading books that are full of the items mentioned under television?

Does moral purity include what you allow into your thought life?

Does patient include how you act in the long line at the checkout stand?

Does patience include how you act when you are being treated shabbily in the business place?

Does peacefulness allow for how you conduct your home life?

Does peacefulness allow for how you treat your coworkers?

Does peacefulness allow for how you tread your fellow believers at church?

If not then you are not the bright light that you should be in the world around you.

We are called to be the beacon to save souls from the rocks of destruction. The light house in days past was the only thing that kept ships from foundering on the rocks. If we are not the beacons that we should be, lost people will surely find destruction.

Can you imagine if someone gathered the people you work with and associate with during the week and asked them of your life would they suggest that you are a light in the dark?

Lesson 9

QUALITIES OF A CHURCH

EXPEDITED

(Phil. 2:19-30)

19 But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state.

20 For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state.

21 For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's.

22 But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel.

23 Him therefore I hope to send presently, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me.

24 But I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly.

25 Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labor, and fellow soldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants.

26 For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick.

27 For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.

28 I sent him therefore the more carefully, that, when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful.

29 Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation:

30 Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me.

19 But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state.

Again, we see the close relationship between the apostle and those he ministered to. He wants to know of their state or condition, so he is sending someone to find out how they are doing.

How often I have wondered how different people I have known are doing - what the Lord is using them to do. I have contacted many to try to find out how they are doing.

If the apostle was this interested, then how much more should a pastor be interested in his people. An interest of how God is blessing, an interest in how God is using, an interest in how God is testing - an interest to KNOW his people.

I recently read a thread on an internet forum for pastors. The question was raised whether other pastors would call at the home of people that had been visiting their church. The discussion strayed somewhat to the question of whether pastors visited anyone in their homes. The large

majority of pastors related that they never called on a home of a parishioner unless there was spiritual need as in a death or a birth.

I would question how a pastor can know their people as described without spending some one on one time with their folks. A pastor must know their people to encourage them in their gifts, to begin to use them in the church and to know if there are spiritual or physical needs.

I am not saying a pastor must visit every home, but another church leader that is reporting to the pastor is the minimum a pastor should allow in his ministry. Once a person is known there would not need to be a close contact schedule, but an update from time to time would be needed.

In my mind there is another application though the past is somewhat against it and many pastors would get nervous if you did it - the Sunday school teacher - especially the adult and teen teachers - how interested they should be.

I am suggesting maybe even calling on the members of your classes. Maybe take them to coffee, or just talk to one after class now and then in more than a "good morning" manner.

To know your people is to have the joy that Paul is talking about - it is also allowing the people to have this joy with you.

To know your people is to spend time with them. To know your people is to talk to them. To know your people is to listen to them. The latter requires less of the talking just in case you did not know.

Many a church leader is so bent on his own projects, goals and direction that they seldom notice the needs of the people.

It is of good note for a pastor to be closely aligned with the picture of the shepherd in Scripture. The shepherd's entire focus is on caring for the sheep - little else goes on in his mind - find new fields to graze - finding water - finding comfort and growth for the sheep. This would take away from much of the extraneous fluff of many pastorates.

20 For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state. 21 For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's.

Kind of relates to what was just said.

Wow what a remarkable statement from the apostle Paul. "No man likeminded" refers to Timothy - how would you like to be accounted likeminded with Paul? Some honor I should think.

Let's list some ways we should be likeminded with Paul.

1. A big-time concern for the folks at the church. Not a concern that their giving to him would stop, but a concern for their welfare. Normally if the congregation's welfare is in order their support of leadership is also sufficient.

Question. Should pastors ask for raises, should they tell the church what they are going to receive?

It seems that many today are in the gain mode rather than the service mode. They require certain things of a church before they will accept a call.

There is also a little responsibility on the churches part to see through the wants and requirements to the motivations beyond and act or not act accordingly.

A pastor I was associated with was disappointed that his church was not growing. All he could talk about was the fact that growth seemed impossible in his area. Without growth there was no reason for him to continue in the church - heaven forbid he take on the job of shepherd to care for the flock given him.

He ultimately got his big church - he accepted a call into it – he couldn't grow one so second best is to just move into one that someone else grew.

2. Ready, willing and able to do anything to see that the church will flourish.

3. Be willing to work so that the church is not burdened financially.

A pastor we knew years ago planted a church while working full time. Later in the churches life there was one point in which he was the only man in the church that was employed. The church met in his home, the church drew their spiritual life from his ministry, and many of the people ate from his labors. That is a burden for a people.

Barnes observes that this like-mindedness was probably relating to the deepness of concern that Timothy would show to the believers at Philippi. This is probably true, but the outworking of that concern and compassion might well become actions in any and more of the items already mentioned. Paul was convinced that Timothy would take on the task with the same concern and excitement as the apostle.

4. Supply only like minded men to assist a church. It is not uncommon today for leaders to recommend people that really are not likeminded with the doctrine of the group related. This is why churches are changing organizations and fellowships so often.

I would like to consider for a moment the fact that there was none other likeminded to send. This is one area where pastors tend to fall down - not of themselves - just that they have no one likeminded to fellowship with and to gain encouragement from.

This probably is true also of laypeople. They have no one likeminded to keep them on track in their day to day life.

We all need someone to compare ourselves to. Yes, Christ is our example and we need to watch Him, but it is good to have someone along side to bounce our ideas off of, to share our trials with and to get excited with.

This is just a personal note. I have seldom had this "one" that is likeminded and I have sorely missed it in my life. I have met a couple of men that were likeminded and we were quite meaningful to one another while we were able to stay together, however there has been no one on a long term ongoing basis.

If there is any way you can nurture one of these close relationships, you should do so and take the time to nurture the one that you find to come along side to be your "likeminded one."

22 But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel.

When growing up I would work with my father on Saturdays around the house. He always had a project of some sort. We built things, we ran cement sidewalks, cement steps, cement slabs for the trash cans etc. Since he was paralyzed from the waist down, I did most of the running and most of the heavy work.

We were inseparable on Saturdays - all because I wanted the normal twenty-five cents that I received at the end of the day - that was my fortune! Child abuse these days - to make a kid work all day for a quarter, but for me it was adequate to my financial needs - a box of popcorn, a candy bar and ticket to the local theater! (I had to weasel a penny out of someone to get it all since the flick was sixteen cents and the popcorn and bar were ten.)

This sort of service between Paul and Timothy was the proof of Timothy's worth to Paul and to the church.

Some today want to sit in a pew and be counted worthy of serving - not so - you must serve to gain the honor of being found worthy.

At the judgment seat of the lamb we will be held responsible for how we served, not how we held down a pew. (In case you did not know, the pews in most churches are screwed to the floors so they don't need you anyway.)

23 Him therefore I hope to send presently, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me.

His sending was dependant on how something would go with him. Of course we would like to know what. It is assumed that he was waiting to see if his trial went for or against him. If for, he

would be going to Philippi himself, but if against him, then Timothy would be sent.

The clear message is that Paul was dependant. IT ISN'T WRONG for a pastor to need help. Some act as though it is great sin to have assistance and on the backside of this is that some feel they are to do nothing - all is to be done by someone else.

We have noted before that we the people of the church - including the pastor - are unified. We are all to be working and ministering, not just the pastor, and not just the congregation - ALL is the Biblical view.

24 But I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly.

It is not wrong to make general plans for the future. Make them, but don't be devastated if they don't come to pass. Allow God His overriding will - follow His leading if it is counter to your proposed plan.

"Trust" has more than just the idea of trust, it also relates to something having convinced one to trust. It would seem that the Lord was that which had convinced him to "trust" in this coming trip. His faith in Christ was the basis for his trust. Not that this would guarantee his trip, but that the Lord was the basis of his decision making.

The use of this term would indicate that Paul had not only a desire, but a good feeling about his coming trip. Indeed, holding Timothy back would indicate he thought his chances were good before the court that would rule.

25 Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labour, and fellowsoldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants.

Evidently they had sent a messenger to Paul and Paul had drafted him into his service.

Note Paul's terminology - sounds like reluctance is all over every word. Sounds like a veiled request to keep Epaphroditus to me. If you study Philemon you will find Paul was very adept at "wording to persuade" a person to do as HE desired.

"Brother" is a general term for a blood brother, associate, fellow worker, or a brother in Christ. One other usage is of a believer that is related to another by a bond of affection - this seems a fitting usage here since Paul seems to be giving this man a high ranking.

Epaphroditus means lovely - as is usual, a fitting name for a man of this caliber.

"Companion in labor" Oh how many pastors would like to know what this means. They know not what it means to have a companion in labor - they have to do it all.

This is sad but often true - their congregations expect them to do everything in the church that needs doing.

This is an important concept - work always goes better, easier and quicker when there are two or more.

When working in retail I was told to move a cash register just before I was to leave for the day. It takes an hour or two at best - I asked if I could have someone stay to help.

When I found the answer was no I knew I was looking at about double the time.

To move a unit on the third floor you had to work with wiring in the ceiling of the second floor thus requiring many trips up and down the fifteen foot ladder due to there not being anyone below to assist.

That often elusive companion was sorely missed that day.

"Fellowsoldier" also calls to mind the extra help involved in the work at hand. It is much easier to go into battle with others at your side.

"Messenger" is the Greek word normally translated apostle - one that delivers a message - used of the Twelve specifically but in a general sense of other prominent workers.

Paul makes it clear that there is a direct tie between the church and the messenger - a tie of belonging to.

Epaphroditus is only mentioned again in 4.18 as having delivered something to Paul. The King James lists him as the penman of Philippians after 4.23 but the King James is the only version that uses this statement.

"Ministered" to Paul's needs or wants - the thought of ministering to one above as to a king - the emphasis is one being busy with the needs of another - an administrative assistant of the early church might be the thought - only without a pay package.

26 For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick.

The term for heaviness is one of three terms in Greek to describe depression, heaviness or distress. Of these three this one describes the deepest level of distress - this man was really down about the church knowing of his sickness.

It is nice to know that people are concerned about your welfare but it is added weight knowing others are concerned.

Maybe a good step would be for you not to show your concern as outwardly as some do. When in the hospital our pastor drove sixty miles each way to visit - that burdened me because I knew he was swamped with other things to do and anyone that has had an operation knows that company is not the highest of priorities on the patient's list of needs.

27 For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.

It would seem that Paul was quite close to him and knew of his importance to others as well - his concern is evident - he would have had double sadness if he had died. He would not only have been losing a good coworker, but he would have been losing a friend as well.

It would be great to know someone was going to miss you and/or your ministry.

28 I sent him therefore the more carefully, that, when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful.

Returning him was to bring relief to both parties.

29 Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation:

Paul requests they hold him in high esteem or regard. It is of note that Paul encourages people to regard other people than pastors with high regard. We must assume to praise another for their importance is not wrong but to be encouraged. Not all leaders agree with the apostle here - they get upset if someone other than themselves gains glory.

30 Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me.

Paul tells them that ministry was the cause of Epaphroditus sickness. When was the last time you ministered so vigorously that you became ill?

There seems to be a negative aspect to Paul's comment here. It seems the congregation had been remiss in some manner in their relation to Paul.

It is possible Epaphroditus was working to make money for the living costs of the pair as they ministered. Had the Philippians known of the need I would think that they would have cared for it. I do not think that Paul is being reproving here about how they cared for him since this letter was written, in part, to thank them for a gift.

APPLICATION:

1. Stedman likens this passage to the familiar verse John 1.1 "In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God." The only way God could communicate perfectly with man was to become incarnate, to become as we so that He could communicate with us on our level. He also relates this to our ability to communicate with the lost. Not that we need to become like the lost to communicate, but that as Christ lives in us we communicate with the lost through our living. God in a sense communicates with the lost via our lives and words.

That is a good application, but I am not sure his premise is quite valid in that God communicated quite well with the Old Testament saints, none of which knew Christ. God can communicate without becoming flesh - He did and often in the Old Testament.

This rather implies the application Stedman drew from his invalid observation was true. In the Old Testament the Lord communicated to the masses via a spokesman or spokesperson. He spoke directly to Adam, he spoke to Israel through Moses etc. He has never needed to become like us to communicate with us, only to save our worthless hides from hell.

2. Stedman relates of Timothy, "Timothy didn't go there to take a survey of the needs, or to analyze the problem and set up a program. He went with sympathy, to meet a genuine need. He didn't go as the Chairman of Christian Welfare. He went as a human being with a heart concern for their need. We need to get away from this kind of professional care of one another and discover again something of the selfless ministry of a Timothy."

I think that there is a valid point here. Many churches leave the concern and help to the concern and help committee - do not dare let that need stuff get out to the church body. We appoint and often pay people to show the body's concern for needs and to give assistance as the need arises.

This is not the New Testament church way. The needs were met by those finding the need. If they cannot fill the need then it is up to them to find someone that can. We had the joy of working with a man that felt this way. He even took it to the need of cleaning or repairing things around the facility. His concept is that if he saw a need it was his responsibility to take care of that need. If he walked into the library and found a mess he would automatically clean it up, if he found a broken door, he would get his tools and remedy the problem.

So in the church body, we ought to be living with this philosophy.

3. I had totally missed this passage in relation to the "gift of healing" that everyone tells us is still around. Here is Epahrodites sick near to death and Paul does not heal him. Is that not proof that Paul himself could not heal in his later ministry. Let us think about this for a moment.

In Acts we see that Paul certainly had the gift of healing: Acts 19.11 "And God wrought special

miracles by the hands of Paul: 12 So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them."

Yet he could not heal Timothy: I Timothy 5.23 "Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities."

Yet he could not heal Erastus: II Timothy 4.20 "Erastus abode at Corinth: but Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick."

Yet he could not heal Epahrodites: Phil. 2.27 "For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow."

It would seem quite evident that the gift of healing was a temporary gift for the validation of the Gospel, not the restoring to health of all mankind.

There is a secondary application in relation to the sickness mentioned. Often today when a believer is taken quite ill others wonder if there is sin in the life that has brought the chastening hand of God upon the person. There is no indication that sin was a part of this man's life and there is no reason to assume that there was. When someone falls ill it is best to allow the Spirit to convict the sick and/or dieing of their sin. Don't jump to conclusions that you ought not even be considering.

4. Barnes has an extensive list of review items from this passage that would cause one to seriously think their life through and to evaluate how they are doing before God.

5. One of the points of this passage that is often overlooked is the fact that Paul took unto himself men to be coworkers in the labors of the Gospel. He was not one to hold onto his position, he was one to share the load as well as the commendation.

He was willing to delegate his authority to men that he had discipled. How many pastors today are in the business of discipling? Some, but not nearly enough. This should be part of the man's ministry. Christ discipled, Paul discipled and I would guess that Timothy and others did the same at some point in their lives.

Pastor - teacher - pew sitter, find someone that you can take under your wing to teach, to admonish and to guide as you walk together along the way with God.

6. Stedman points out that Timothy and Epahrodites had different personalities, indeed he could have included Paul as well. Three varied personalities yet one bond in common. They had said goodbye to themselves as one writer put it. They no longer existed for themselves, but they existed to be extensions of the hand of God on earth - nothing but HIS good pleasure. Death did not bother them, trial did not bother them and pain did not bother them. They were working together to further the course of God among mankind.

7. In verse 19 we see "But I trust in the Lord Jesus" which is a phrase we might miss or skip over, but it is one of the hallmarks of the Christian faith. Of course we trust in Christ for our salvation, but do we really trust Him in other areas of our life. Do we trust Him about the time of our death? Do we trust Him about the time of our marriage, or if we are to be married? Do we trust Him about how we are going to pay the bills? (Do we seek his will in stacking up those bills?) Do we trust Him to wake up in the morning? Do we trust Him with our children and their safety? Do we trust Him for leading us to the church of His choice? Do we trust Him about our jobs? Do you get the picture, Paul was trusting Christ to allow him to send someone to them - that is kind of like trusting Him in our everyday life, in our planning, in our hope and in our thoughts.

He is the One that can lead and guide us, He is the One that can protect us, and He is the One that can teach us in the Word.

We should trust Christ in the same manner that the apostle did - in every matter.

8. Note should be taken that Paul is using the men around him. He knew these men were trained and ready to assist in the ministry. Why is it that so many pastors that have good men that are capable of teaching do not use these men to assist them in the ministry rather than complaining about having to do everything themselves?

There are many churches with men that have Bible college and seminary degrees that are sitting in the pew because they are not allowed to minister. Let us consider some reasons pastors would not use talented and gifted men to their fullest extent.

- a. The pastor doesn't know his people well enough to know the men are in the congregation.
- b. The pastor is too insecure to allow anyone to do anything in his church. This is the "I'd rather do it myself" syndrome.
- c. The pastor is too restrictive in his doctrine to allow for anyone teaching anything he does not totally agree with.
- d. The pastor -- you fill in the blank.

On the other hand, to give the pastors a break, there are men that are trained and gifted yet they do not want to minister in the church. We might look at some reasons why.

- a. They are totally burned out from some other ministry and they really need a break. Years ago when planting a church a family began to attend. It was evident soon that the man was well qualified to teach one of the classes that I was doing. I was working 45 hours a week and teaching five lessons a week so was looking for help.

I went to visit the man and soon asked if he would be interested. He looked me straight in the eye and said, no. He continued, "I would rather go out and slop those hogs than teach a Sunday school class." After I recovered my thoughts I asked what had happened in his life to bring him

to that point. He related a long litany of situations that would have lead most of us to rather slop hogs. He was totally exhausted and ready for some feeding.

b. Some are arrogant and don't want to be seen as a part of the pastor's ministry - it might detract from who and what they are. This occurs often in seminary surroundings. A lowly pastor is not one some professors would want to associate themselves with.

While on deputation I often opened up my session to questions. One time in one of these churches I opened it up and a man in the back began grilling me on what type of churches I was going to be planting. Specifically he wanted to know if I was going to be starting "BAPTIST" churches. I told them that I would be starting baptistic type churches though not with the term Baptist in the name.

The man started into quite a little hissy fit about they only supported Baptist missionaries starting only Baptist churches. Finally to move on I closed that portion with the comment, "In Ireland most Baptist churches are Amillennial and I would not want to have people associate me with that false doctrine. End of discussion.

Later I apologized to the pastor about the way I handled it. He told me that I had done well and that this was not an abnormal occurrence in his church. He related that he had a number of seminary professors that tried to run the church, but that they would not partake in the ministry of the church.

c. Some may just be too busy to be involved in their church. They are totally and over involved in their own ministry.

I have always tried to keep enough time to minister in the church where we attended. This is in keeping with the idea that we are in a church to minister. This ministry should be on top of the normal everyday, be it ministry or full time work to support your family.

d. There may be some history of the church that the person knows that makes them want to stay away from serious involvement.

Some pastors do not want help, and often run off help that they get. There was one church where the pastor had run off four or five men that had begun to have a ministry in the pastor's church. The man was too insecure to want anyone else having a ministry with HIS people.

e. Some might not feel that they would have a freedom to teach as their conscience dictated. Some pastors are quite clear on what they believe and what they think of people that disagree with them.

f. There are just some times in life that a person feels like sitting and being fed from the Word - for whatever reason. This ought to be understood and honored. They will come forward when

they are ready to minister.

9. Paul mentions "that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state." This man was in prison, was the spiritual father of a number of churches, and he wanted to know how the church at Philippi was doing. Gill goes into quite a detail about what he could have been wondering about their state, but ended correctly in the fact that he was wondering of their ecclesiastical state, rather than their physical, business or health state. Not that those items wouldn't have been of interest, but the important part being how was the church doing, are there problems, are there gains, are things going honorably. These are items that he as their spiritual father and mentor would have been wanting to understand so that he could write with corrections, admonitions or teaching as needed.

Now, pastor do you know your church that well? Do you know the state of your people? Do you know where they are in their walk toward maturity? Do you know their state in relation to walking in the Spirit?

Many are the pastors that enquire of all the states of a person except the spiritual. They wonder at the business, at the physical maladies, and of the financial ups and downs, but totally neglect the spiritual condition of the people.

Not always because of their own neglect, but often do to the closed attitude of the congregant. A friend that pastored a small church was called out due to the near fatal car crash involving one of the church teens. The next day it was disclosed that the booze involved came from the father's liquor cabinet in his home.

The pastor went to talk to his "deacon" about his use of alcohol and its availability to his daughter. He was promptly told to leave and that this was none of his business.

Sorry folks, but the testimony of a deacon is certainly the pastor's business, indeed the testimony of anyone in the church to the lost world is the pastor's business - in fact it is the entire church's business!

10. In verse twenty-nine Paul says, "Receive him therefore." He wanted to be sure that the Philippian believers were treating his messengers properly. Not only to listen to them and to accept their teaching, but to receive them into their homes. One of the qualifications for elder is hospitality.

In the early church men that went about preaching were always housed in the homes of believers. This was just part of the normal church life. I trust that when guest speakers and missionaries come through that they are housed in the homes of believers.

I am a quiet shy person by nature and just hate to have to carry the conversation when I am with strangers. I was on deputation for five years and had many of these situations thrust upon me

where I was spending time in other people's homes. It was uncomfortable, but some of the most blessed of times. To fellowship with believers that you have never met can be quite challenging to your own spiritual life and ought to be required in some manner for church members.

When missionaries come through get them into as many homes as you can. Let them be used of the Lord in this special way for the benefit of your church.

On the other hand, missionaries I trust that you will spend this special time in assisting what God might want to do in the people's lives. Don't worry about the down side of the situation, but concentrate on what the Lord might want you to do.

Now, this is free and does not relate. I have observed a number of things that can assist a missionary in this awkward situation.

a. Feed them well, but don't put pressure on to eat a lot. The pounds tend to be easy to pick up when you are spending lots of time behind the wheel and in the pew.

b. Give them their space, they need to pray, write home and relax. Give them opportunity for down time.

c. A room with a bathroom off the room is fantastic, but not required, but do relate any traffic needs that exist so he doesn't plan to use the clean up facilities at the wrong time.

d. Control your pet. Most people like animals, but not all do, and not all animal lovers want a permanent resident in their lap.

I visited a pastor that had a medium sized dog that just fell in love with me. My lap was the only place that existed in the world. He was bent on being my best bud. I would nudge him off but before I had readjusted myself he was up and in. I started sitting with my elbows raised so I could block his advances, but this dog must have been a quarter back in a former life as he could sneak in between my elbows in a moment.

Finally we settled our differences and he settled into my lap for the rest of the evening. I didn't mind a whole lot, but it wasn't all that comfortable.

e. Make arrangements beforehand with the missionary as to what will and will not be provided. Don't leave him wondering if he is welcome for meals, or whether he is to move on the next day. Let him know so that he can make his plans.

f. While on the subject, what do you think those missionaries do between Sunday and Wednesday meetings? Many sleep in their cars or drive long distances to return home. My trips took me 1200 miles from home for a month or so at a time. If it hadn't been for a friend that loaned me the church fellowship room between Sundays, I would have been living in my car

most of the time.

Seldom were any arrangements made for my nights. Usually a meal was provided if I was doing two meetings in the same church, but other than that I was on my own. When going to conferences, normally sleeping arrangements were made beforehand.

g. Just make your guests comfortable and try to understand how you might feel in their situation.

In closing, imagine how much influence this guest might be on your children. Don't allow your kids to sneak off to their rooms, expose them to the possibilities of serving God. Missionaries, don't ignore those kids either, they are believers that God might use you to influence.

11. Men! Take a serious look at this passage and the relationship between Paul and Timothy and Epahrodites. Do not let this get past you. No matter if you are a pastor or missionary or a Sunday school teacher or just someone sitting in the pew. This is a grand example of godly, manly relationships. Close, agreeable and supportive. If you don't have a relationship with another man that either equals or is on the way to equaling this type of relation, start looking for someone to built that sort of relation with.

Don't pick the pastor to build a relationship with but someone that is not as mature as you are and start building him up. Be sure you are building yourself up as you go or he will catch you and things will stagnate.

Open your eyes to the possibilities of a church full of men that are building one another up on a one to one basis. Somewhere along the way all will be built up and they will find others to disciple - uuuuuppps - there is that word the Lord used in the Great commission! We are supposed to be doing this as an integrated part of our lives, yet for the most part in America we leave the discipling up to the pastor - you know - the guy that knows you are supposed to be helping him do it and he spends his time trying to get you to do your job for the Lord.

How do we disciple another? Yep, this would probably go for women as well, they will just use slightly different methods to accomplish the purpose.

a. Pray that the Lord would lead you to someone that you could spend time with challenging and discipling.

b. Pray for quite awhile before making a choice. Allow God to make the choice. His vision of what he wants to accomplish through you is much clearer than yours.

c. Take a specific amount of time weekly to meet one on one to discuss a passage that you have studied. If you like set up a curriculum or listing of what you want to cover in your studies, what you want to accomplish with this friend - again use prayer as your guide.

I'm sure there are books on the subject if you really cannot figure out what to do. I think, however with the Spirit as your teacher and your guide you can do it without the book if you try. Just cover the basics of the faith that the other man does not know.

d. Seek to share your faults and problems with him so that he will feel free to do the same with you. You don't need to air a laundry list, just seek to minister in those areas where he has problems. Share Scripture with him that relates.

e. Encourage him in any way that you can. If he is down about his job see if you cannot find some silver linings to point out.

f. As time goes along, the Spirit will lead and guide you into other areas where you can support him. Make it a friendship if possible, but that is not the key. By friendship I don't mean that fuzzy wuzzy man thing that the media portrays, but that deep down eight year old buddy type thing. That thing where you would rather spend time with the buddy than eat brownies and ice cream - well maybe not that serious, but a serious friend.

If this happens as you disciple so much the better, but it is not necessary.

g. When you see some maturity in the one you are discipling, encourage him to start doing the same with someone else. II Timothy 2.2 is the plan. Pass on what you have learned to others that they might pass it on to others.

h. Try to bring these into the church but if they are members elsewhere that is no problem.

i. Take them deep into the word. Study some doctrine together, take a book of the Bible and study it a verse or two at a time. Make your time useful to both of you.

12. Constable states "Paul did not write these words to introduce Timothy to the Philippians. They knew him well. Probably he wanted this glowing testimonial to give his original readers confidence that Timothy had their best interests at heart."

Can you relate to that pastor? Missionary? Sunday school teacher? Your attitude should be to have the people you work with to know you have "their best interests at heart." Not trying to figure out how to get more money out of them, not how to get them to do the job you want them to do, not how you can give them a guilt trip so that they do something for you.

Their best interest should be your focus. Within that focus then attempt to move them toward serving GOD to better their spiritual life. As the congregation is blessed by God see to it that you are a guide to ever increasing THEIR interests, not your own.

People in the church, in the class or Bible study should feel comfortable as a believer, not feel like they are a tool to fulfill someone else's wants or needs.

13. In relation to the sickness of Paul's friend can you imagine his feelings knowing that in a former day they had taken napkins from his body to people with all sorts of illnesses and they were healed, yet now when someone that was of great importance to him was out of his power to help.

Tell me he didn't wonder at the sovereignty of God just a little bit. Tell me that he did not wish that God would overrule the natural consequences of sin just this once to help his friend. The point is that he did not dwell on any of these thoughts for long because surely had they been long on his mind, he would have mentioned something in this letter. Something of the frustration at not being able to help, something of the desire to have this man raised up as he had seen others raised from sick beds in the past.

He did not seem to dwell long on these items as we ought not. We will naturally question God at times as well as His ways, but don't dwell long at the trough of despair, stir yourself with the glories of God and His grace and focus upon Him, not your trials and troubles in this life.

14. One further application. Paul is in prison, yet these men were comfortable going in and out ministering to him. They seemingly had little problem with placing themselves in a tenuous situation. They didn't know how it was going to go with Paul for preaching Christ, and who is to know when the bad guys decide they needed to be in prison too?

By way of loose application, might we think of those men that minister to prisoners today. I went to minister in a county jail once years ago and I don't mean to tell you it was a totally pressure free experience. I was not comfortable with the thought of going into this place, I didn't feel real comfy with the security going in and coming out. There are people that do this on a daily basis to minister to men and women in prison today.

We should thank God for what these folks are doing. There are many being saved through these ministries. There are prisoners discipling other prisoners behind prison walls.

I have been blessed to correspond with a man in prison in the south for a year or two now. It is such a blessing to see him doing things inside four walls that believers are not doing on the outside. This man is talking to prisoners and guards alike. He has been educating himself in the Bible and as such has shared his knowledge with anyone that will take a moment to talk with him. He has led people to the Lord, then he has discipled them on a one on one basis unless they are from a different section of the prison. In those cases he introduces the new convert to someone he knows will disciple him.

He isn't proud of why he is there, but figures that God has a job for him to do while there. He requests Bible studies and printed material and shares it with anyone that is interested in it. While doing all this he is working on a degree by extension from a Bible college.

Each of us should be so involved in the lives of those we mix with on a daily basis.

15. In one of my first missions conferences in Bible College one of the old missionaries told of a young student that came to him and asked what the old man's mission's retirement plan was. The old man turned to the young man and stated, "Well, we've always allowed people to be buried just outside of the mission station."

At that time it was not an uncommon attitude among the older generation of missionaries. Indeed, as I considered the topic in my mind, I came to understand that this should be the attitude of any believer, not only the missionary.

Retirement plans are not a Biblical item of concern. Paul sets our example in this text. Both Paul and Epaphroditus had this attitude and all in our own day should consider it to be the Biblical standard.

A few years later in another missions conference I met a Conservative Baptist missionary. I was rather shocked to find out that he owned a home in the Denver area that he was planning to have paid off by the time he retired.

Now, where is the Biblical line that we should draw? Is it with Paul or is it with the worldly view of retirement? Ought we be putting away in this life for the day in which we set aside our ministry to rest upon our laurels?

Some principles:

- a. Allow God to lead each as individuals, but emphasis should be laid on seeking that leading by every believer whether minister or congregant.
- b. Consider this passage in particular. Consider other passages relating to laying up store - and where that store is to be laid.
- c. Consider other men of God and how they prepared for their elder years.
- d. Consider your responsibilities to your spouse and other members of your family if they are dependent upon you.
- e. Consider others in the Bible that walked with God. How did they prepare for retirement, or did they.
- f. Understand that retirement is something relatively new to our world. Not too many years ago you worked till you dropped dead or could not work any more.
- g. Find Scripture passages which would support "retirement" as we know it today.
- h. Take all of the above and pray and think over it for an extended period of time and see if the

Lord does not have some principles for you to follow.

I fear that the modern church has accepted as natural and normal the world's standard of living. We try to keep up with the lost Joneses, and we try to pattern our entire life including retirement after their pattern. We tend to look to retire and enjoy the rewards of life just like the lost do. Many pastors worry and sweat over their pay packages that are not sufficient to their plans and hopes for their own retirement.

With this being the case, why would the rest of the church be in the same boat? If the pastors are tied up in the way of the lost, they assume that it is right, thus they pass on that attitude if not "principle" of living from the pulpit. Thus we have congregations filled with people following the same pattern of life.

May each one of us take a seriously long look at the idea of retirement. In some cases physical limitations will require some to stop working, but for many there is really no need to do so.

Is it wrong to retire? Rather depends on what you find the Biblical principles teach. Please do this study for yourself and do not lean upon the wisdom or lack thereof of others.

A quick read of the following from my website might be of interest to you.

<http://www.mrdsnotes.com/topic/m00900.htm>

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TITLE: JOB ONE

READ: Matt. 6:21,24, & 33

At Ford, "Quality is job one!" In Christianity "Quality is also JOB ONE!"

JOB ONE IN THREE AREAS

- I. WE NEED A QUALITY BANKER
- II. WE NEED A QUALITY MASTER
- III. WE NEED A QUALITY DESIRE

I. YOUR BANKER

When I think of treasure I naturally think of my favorite comic book hero. When I was four and five I had a long sickness that caused me to be in bed for an extended period of time. Many of my folk's friends wanted to do something for me so many of them would bring me comic books.

The one's that I really liked and identified with were the Donald Duck comics. Not so much for

Donald but more for Uncle Scrooge than anything!

Uncle Scrooge was "IT" for me. We were poor and I really could identify with Scrooge's desire for money.

I can remember him having a diving board installed in one of his safes so that he could dive into and swim in his money.

I can remember him washing his money in large laundry machines.

I can remember him leading caravans of dump trucks full of money up to his large buildings built in the form of safes.

I can remember Uncle Scrooge opening one of his safe buildings and all of the money running out all over the ground.

I can remember Scrooge having to build new and better and bigger buildings to store his money in.

We have modern day counterparts to Scrooge today in our society.

I have read articles about the rich in our world today that tell of the warehouses that they build to house all of the articles that they no longer use. Jackie Onasis was supposed to have had a warehouse in Europe for just the clothing that she no longer used.

God says, (Matt. 6:21) "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

He isn't saying that if you have a bank account that your heart is in the bank - No, he is talking about our temporal values and allegiances.

If we are laying up treasures in heaven then our concentration will be in the heavenlies.

If we are laying up treasures here on earth then our concentration and priorities will also be here on earth.

Let's face it, if I were Uncle Scrooge I think I would be just as the comics portrayed him - swimming in money and constantly worried about someone making off with a truckload of it!

A friend in graduate school shared a story with me. He was in a business administration class. An alumni had been asked to share of his great financial success. He came to the class and introduced his success by telling of the roll of money he carried with him. Indeed, he took it out and showed it - then passed it around. He explained that it was all \$100 bills, and that money meant very little to him.

My friend said, however, that the man's eyes never left the roll of money as it went from student to student around the room.

Let's turn to Col. 3:1-4 for a moment or two.

"If ye, then, be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory."

Some items to notice:

1. THE FACTS: "If ye" is a Greek construction that has the idea in our language of "If and assumed so". If you are risen with Christ, and I assume that you are, then seek things which are above.
2. THE LOGIC: Seek things above! Why? That is where Christ our reason for existence resides!
3. THE POSITIVE: "Set your affection" above. If you really like something then be sure it is above. Your heart's desire should be above not here below.
4. THE NEGATIVE: Not here on earth.
5. THE REASON: You are dead!

Our life exists only in Christ. We have no existence here on earth. It is done and our residence is in heaven with God.

This is the Bible basis for the phrase - "you can't take it with you". My wife had an uncle that said that he was going to take it with him - he had an asbestos coffin!

6. THE REWARD: We will appear with Christ in glory.

a. TURN TO AND READ Rev. 19:11-16

b. In eternity we will reside with Him.

7. THE PREPARATION: "...Christ, who is our life...." We are to consider Christ as our entire life.

We are to be so committed to Him that we are always seeking to be more like Him and to be seeking to please Him.

II. YOUR MASTER

Now as I remember old Uncle Scrooge was in a real quandary at times with the safety of his money. He was constantly building new and better safes for his money.

He was constantly worrying about the thieves that were always trying to steal a truckload or two. His total concentration was on the safety of that money.

God says, "No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other, or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and money." Matt 6:24

We see the significance of the term "MASTER" do we not? God says that you cannot serve money and God, and He keynotes the principle with the fact that you will love one and HATE the other!

NOW

LET'S THINK ABOUT THAT FOR A MOMENT IN RELATIONSHIP TO OUR LIVES
TODAY IN AMERICA!

IF WE LOVE GOD WE WILL HATE MONEY!

IF WE LOVE MONEY WE WILL HATE GOD!

hate = 3404 = miseo = "to hate" - used of "malicious and unjustifiable feelings towards others"
(Vine)

This term is used in Jo. 15:18 where Jesus mentions, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you." This is a real dislike to say the least!

If we were to grasp that concept and really love God we would have a very different lifestyle in Christianity in this day in America!

The idea of the construction of the text is that we cannot of our own accord serve both God and money. There is a built in impossibility in the idea. THE ONE EXCLUDES THE OTHER!

Application: Don't try for you cannot do it!

III. YOUR DESIRE

Now back to Uncle Scrooge. His entire being was keyed to his money. Even his gifts to Huey, Duey and Louie were money! He had no other desire in life. He wanted money, money and more money!

Now we can't in all honesty say that this is our desire as believers. Our consuming desire isn't

usually to have and gain and hold money, HOWEVER at times in practical application and outward appearance it may well seem to the unsaved world around us that we are serving our desire for money.

We add unto our earthly possessions at a far greater rate than unto our heavenly rewards! DON'T WE!

Think about your thought life. How much time do you spend thinking of ways of using your money for the Lord's work as compared to how you are going to use your money for your own enjoyment.

Notice in Matt 6:33 that there are two things that we are to be seeking.

"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."

a. The kingdom of God. This is a reference to the Millennial kingdom that Christ wanted to set up for the Jews. We are to be seeking after that kingdom. For the church age believer the kingdom means that they are with the Lord already!

Our desire should be for His coming!

b. His righteousness.

Now just how do we interpret that phrase in present day America?

May I read parts of an article from Moody Monthly to show you how some Christians interpret this thought.

From Moody Monthly; July/August 1988

FOR STARTERS by Jerry B. Jenkins

SHINE ON

Item: A young man employed by a service company decided he'd rather watch the Chicago White Sox play than spend the rest of the day working.

He drove the company truck to the ball park then called his office and told his supervisor hat his early afternoon service call would take the rest of the day

Fact: The young man told me that story.

Item: A young reporter interviewed a famous personality at a downtown hotel. As the reporter was preparing to leave, the celebrity noticed his parking stub. "Let me have that stamped for you,

he said. Not understanding what he meant, the reporter followed him to the front desk, where the celebrity told the clerk, "I'm parked in the hotel lot. Can you validate this for free parking?"

"You're a guest here?" the clerk asked.

The man nodded and showed his mom key to prove it. The ticket was stamped. The reporter could have parked free.

But he chose to pay instead.

Fact: The reporter told me that story

Item: A woman enjoyed lunch with an older lady and split the bill.

"Here," the older one said, "you can have the receipt for your income taxes."

"What do you mean?"

"List this as a business lunch that you paid for. You've got the receipt."

Fact: The young woman told me that story

Item: A middle-aged man had recently moved to a big city He parked at an expired meter, reasoning, "Even if I get a ticket, I'm changing my license plates soon. They'll never track me down.'",

Fact The man told me that story

Item: A businessman was upset that this competition was underselling him by mail. When he received the competition's catalog, he mailed in every pre-paid business reply card and envelope they provided, but he ordered nothing. "They had to pay all that postage," he says with a smile.

Fact: The businessman himself told me that story

Item: A couple celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary Their son, a salesman, called in sick so he could attend the party

Fact: The couple told me that story clearly amused at their sons resourcefulness.

Item: A young woman working as a telephone installer frequently absconded phones left by customers who had moved.

She reported to her employer that the customers had taken the phones with them. She kept some

of the phones, gave others to friends, and sold the rest.

Fact: She herself told me that story

The saddest facts of all:

The white Sox fan is - and was at the time of his lie. - an active, church-going Christian who is involved in training youth.

The famous personality is - and was at the time of his lie - involved in full-time evangelism.

The older lady is - and was at the time of her recommended deception of the IRS - on the full-time staff of an evangelical church.

The middle-aged man is - and was at the time he parked illegally - a pastor.

The anniversary couple is - and was at the time that they took delight in their son's lie - active in Christian work.

The telephone installer is - and was at the time of her theft a professing Christian, active in her church.

"Therefore, my dear friends... become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe" (Phil. 2:12,15).

It seems that the Christian world is in a bit of a tizzy as to how they are to live before the lost!

We are to live as Christ lived! He is our example to go by!

His righteousness or righteous living is that which we are to seek in our own lives!

If we do this then He will add "all these things" to us.

WHAT A PROMISE! IF WE SEEK HIS COMING AND HIS WAY OF LIFE HE WILL GIVE US EVERYTHING WE WANT!

NO!

There is a negative and a positive side to this promise.

Negative: It is not stereos, clothes, cars, houses, horses, bank accounts etc.

Positive: It is the needs of life that is viewed in the context of the passage verse 25-32.

God does not promise the world but he promises to get us through the world!

YES, THAT PUN WAS INTENDED! HE DOES NOT PROMISE THE WORLD -- HE WANTS US TO SHUN THE THINGS OF THE WORLD NOT SEEK AFTER THEM!

CONCLUSION:

I am not asking that anyone change their attitude toward money. Just think about what we have talked about in this study and consider the things that God's Word has to say to you today. Let the Holy Spirit work in your mind and help you REALLY evaluate your priorities and commitments.

THEN CHANGE YOUR ATTITUDES TOWARD MONEY, TOWARD CHRIST, AND TOWARD LIFESTYLE - BECAUSE GOD CAUSED YOU TO HAVE A CHANGE OF HEART AND NOT BECAUSE I CAUSED YOU TO CHANGE YOUR MIND!

Let's turn to a familiar passage in I Jo. 2:15-17.

This is the Christian life in the negative nutshell. If we avoid these things then we will be on the right track to serving God.

The lust of the flesh.
The lust of the eye.
Pride of life.

Wrapped up in these three are all of the wrongs that man can get himself into.

As Dr. Stowell mentioned in one of his editorials, if the morals don't get you materialism will. I might add if these two don't get you your pride of life may well be winner!

As you enter into a certain situation or consideration and try to decide what to do run the situation or consideration through this frame of reference and see if the Lord doesn't give you some insight!

Some have said that we can be so heavenly minded that we are no earthly good.

The more I study the Word and see what God's desire is for us the more I think that this statement is false.

God wants us heavenly minded. Indeed, that is what will motivate us to do the witnessing and preaching and counseling that we need to be doing.

Those that say that we can be so heavenly minded that we are no earthly good are using the phrase to say that if we dwell on the heavenly we won't do the ministry. I think that this is incorrect. If we are concentrating on the heavenly then we will naturally do the ministry.

Those that are so heavenly minded that they are no earthly good are probably the phony believers - those that put on a facade of heavenliness and never get around to living out that heavenly attitude.

As we go out into the world may we keep the world at an arms length as far as it's influence upon us.

MAY OUR BANKER BE GOD!

MAY OUR MASTER BE GOD!

MAY OUR DESIRE BE GOD!

MAY "QUALITY BE JOB ONE" IN OUR LIVES!!

Just some side thoughts to the above:

To the poor these principles can be a blessing, because they have to live this way to a point, yet to some it is a curse because they rebel against God's position for them.

To the rich these principles can be a blessing because they may choose to live according to this life, yet if they want to live unto themselves it would be a curse to them.

SO, to each and every one of us no matter our financial statement, it is the attitude with which we approach things that will determine our joy or lack of peace in relation to living these principles.

Lesson 10
QUALITIES OF A CHURCH

ERRORLESS
(Phil. 3:1-11)

- 3.1 Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe.
- 2 Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision.
- 3 For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.
- 4 Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more:
- 5 Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee;
- 6 Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.
- 7 But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.
- 8 Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ,
- 9 And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:
- 10 That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;
- 11 If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

Philippians 3

1. Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed [is] not grievous, but for you [it is] safe.

What does it mean to rejoice in the Lord? A phrase that is tossed around a lot in Christian circles and we all know that it is a quick enjoinder to be happy and confident in the Lord, but what does it mean - where does the thought come from?

It relates to a greeting or can indicate great joy. It is in the present tense imperative which indicates a command or something that Paul wanted them to do - not just a friendly greeting in the handshake time at church - something that we are to be doing in our lives as part of our lives.

“Be glad” is another way it is often translated in the New Testament. Be glad in the Lord.

Show joy in the God you serve might be a good way to put it. Be joyful in your everyday life,

because of your God.

This might indicate why believers aren't joyful in this life - their Lord isn't Christ but rather material things and they don't have enough of them so they are never happy in their god material things.

He seems to be preparing to repeat something he has said to them before. The term "grievous" can be translated sluggish or slow - he isn't slow in his speech, he is confident it is something he wants to repeat to them. For them it is safe or certain information and it will cause them to be safe and certain.

2 Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision.

Beware is the term - beware of the following items Paul says and he emphasizes each item.

Beware is a term that relates to using the eye and/or the mind to become knowledgeable or informed of something. It is also a verb in the present tense - a command to continually beware of something.

Many people have good head knowledge of spiritual dangers, but the problem is they don't compare everything that confronts them with their knowledge to see if they should get involved. Many are the times over the years that I have pointed out the wrongness of a teaching or activity, only to be told "I knew that, I just had never thought about it."

Think folks! This is a battle we are in and we are often allowing the enemy to win because we do not take time to apply the truth that we know from the Word.

"Dogs" can mean an animal or can be a metaphor of a man with an impure mind or an impudent man. Impudent means according to Webster "Shameless; wanting modesty; bold with contempt of others; saucy." Beware the person that is shameless, beware the person that has no modesty, and beware the man that has contempt for others. This is the "dog" that Paul had in mind.

Since the term "workers" is used in the next warning this most likely is to be taken as a metaphor. Paul is picturing the false teacher as a dog, something to beware of, to be on your guard about.

Barnes mentions, "The Jews called the heathen dogs, and the Mohammedans call Jews and Christians by the same name. The term dog also is used to denote a person that is shameless, impudent, malignant, snarling, dissatisfied, and contentious, and is evidently so employed here."

"Evil worker" simply is someone that works at evil - indeed "worker" often refers to a worker for hire. This is someone that makes evil their occupation - someone that lives to be evil. The idea seems to be, in my mind at least, someone that is on the side of evil that REALLY works at evil.

Not just a lost person, but a lost person that really works at living an evil life. Not just a saved person that is not walking with God, but someone that really works at staying away from God and someone that really works at the ways of the Devil.

"Concision" means to "cut up" or mutilate - it would seem from the next verse that Paul is contrasting the concision to the righteous living people - those that are doing right rather than these that mutilate what is right.

Many there are today that mutilate that which God would have us do in our churches. Many would have us introduce into the spiritual realm things which are definitely aimed at the physical enjoyment area rather than furtherance of our spiritual lives.

Many there are today that mutilate that which God would have us do in our personal lives. Many would have us introduce worldliness into our lives for the sake of a brief experience of fun, of excitement rather than experiencing a close walk with the Lord.

Beware the person that causes division in the church, beware the person that causes division in the fellowship group – just beware of anyone that causes division anywhere in the church.

Beware is the word - how can one beware if they are not in the practice of evaluating those around them as to their correctness. Again, we see that those that tell us not to judge are incorrect. We are to compare the works and beliefs of others against the truth of the Word lest we become one of the dogs, of the concision - one that corrupts the Lord's work.

3 For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

"We are the circumcision" identifies the believer as different from the concision of the previous verse. The two words are related, one relating to mutilation and the other to setting apart to God.

Concision is from two words, one to cut and the other is down. Concision would be one that is cutting down that which is good it would seem, or more specifically cutting down God. Circumcision is made of two words the last of which is the same as before - to cut. In the area of circumcision the word is used of cutting away that which is wrong or evil.

You see a contrast, one is cutting down God to make Him less and the other is cutting away of sin to make Him more.

Col. 2.11 speaks to this spiritual circumcision. "In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ:"

As the dogs are against God, so we as believers must be the opposite and be pure - ready for

God's use.

Barnes suggests that this cutting of the concision is cutting themselves off from Christ - a very true evaluation. This is also in contrast to the circumcision, the cutting off from the Devil and his ways.

One old version translates concision "the men of the circumcision" indicating these were Jewish Christ rejecters - they were of those that worked against the apostles and Christ.

ISBE says of the two words and most likely correctly from what I have seen, "A term by which Paul contemptuously designates the merely fleshly circumcision upon which the Judaizers insisted as being necessary for Gentile converts (Phi. 3:2), as distinguished from peritome, the true circumcision."

Robertson mentions the verb form of concision is always used in the LXX of mutilations in the Old Testament.

We "worship God in the spirit" - the word worship relates to service for hire. Now, we probably wouldn't want to apply that to our relationship to God would we. We are to serve Him as one that is hired - doing what He desires us to do would be the thought. Not a pleasant prospect for many believers today.

The word can relate to the priest that goes about his duties as priest. Hummm, we are each believer priests - might well relate to our every day life with the Lord - serve Him in spirit.

The term spirit speaks to the spiritual side of our being, that part that pays attention to God. We serve Him in the spirit - we serve Him with our inner man.

It is of interest to me that many there are today that worship in the body rather than in the spirit. They serve God with their body but not their spirit - they get themselves all worked up in the physical and get excited and fulfilled in the physical but leave the spiritual to atrophy.

We "rejoice in Christ Jesus" or boast in Christ Jesus, or give glory to Christ Jesus - we are to offer Him the glory due him in our everyday life. We serve Him spiritually and we should declare him verbally - declare Him our Savior, our Supporter, and our Supreme.

We "have no confidence in the flesh" is simply saying that we don't place our confidence in what we can do in and of ourselves.

Confidence is simply the idea of being persuaded that something is correct. We are not persuaded that we can in and of ourselves do things that need to be done. Yes, we can preach and minister, but if we attempt to do it without the Lord we will quite possibly fail.

How does this relate to the pastors you have met that are going to build "their" church, that are going to bring hundreds into "their church" etc. They may be successful, but they may also be a failure in their "success" which they have accomplished in their flesh.

I once sat in a pastor's office and as he looked out the window he declared, "This is my little corner of the world. This is MY church." My heart sank to think of the man's arrogance and pride. He split the church within months and was later forced to leave that church.

4. Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more:

Paul continues his line of thought relating to confidence in the flesh - in what you are and what you can accomplish - with the thought that if there is anyone that should be able to do something in the flesh successfully it should be him - a man above most men in background and education.

He lists his background as a Jew, as a leader and as a zealot for the Lord - if anyone could accomplish something it should be him, but he counts all that he was able to accomplish before Christ as loss.

Many there are that trust in their background or their education to produce "fruit" for the Lord, but it would seem from this statement of Paul's that all that will be loss unless Christ is in the mix.

5 Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, [of] the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee;

He was about as classy a Jew as you could find - he was subjected to the law, he was born into the right family and he was in the right group - what more could you want.

In today's context a man that was made to go to church from birth, was raised in a preacher's family, went to Dallas Seminary and became a leader in the "in" movement. Paul says even this kind of man cannot do anything for the Lord in the flesh!

Sorry if I burst any bubbles! No matter how educated, no matter how well raised, no matter how high up you might think you are you are creating loss if you are operating in the flesh.

6 Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

He states that he was zealous in his persecution of the church and he was blameless - what more could you want in a perfect Jew, yet even he cannot accomplish anything in the flesh.

It might be noted that he is listing his persecution of the church as a positive in his Jewishness.

One might wonder where in the Old Testament there is indication that he should have been out persecuting the ungodly (Christians).

I would assume that he would base this on the fact that the Israelites were to clean the pagans out of the land before they settled into possessing the land. He was operating in the land of the Jews to rid it of these new pagans.

7 But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.

It would seem that Paul may have some amount of pride in who and what he was before he met the Lord yet he knows it was all in the flesh, nothing having been done that would be a credit to his account.

I John speaks to this concept of who and what you are - or more specifically what you think you are. I John 2.15 "Love not the world, neither the things [that are] in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that [is] in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. 17 And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

No clearer statement is needed - the flesh will pass away, but the spiritual end of things will continue on with God. Our labor for and by God is the only labor that will last.

No matter how hard we struggle, work, moan and groan to build a church or a ministry, all will pass away that is built by our own power and might - only that which God was involved in will survive into God's Kingdom for eternity.

So, why do so many struggle for numbers, for programs, for whatever pastors are struggling for these days? If they would sit back, relax and allow God to build His church His way all would survive into the afterlife. It seems like such a simple plan to me, but man tends to make everything complicated.

8 Yea doubtless, and I count all things [but] loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them [but] dung, that I may win Christ,

Paul tells it like it is - give up everything you have and serve Christ - all will be gone, but it would all have been worthless anyway so there was no real loss to the one living for God.

Specifically he was speaking of who he was as a Jew, but the application is clear that as we give up what is ours, be it position or material things, we will become much better off in the spiritual realm as we seek to serve God.

I throw all pennies into a jar and when the grandkids come I give them to the kids - pennies are a total loss to me, they are a waste of my time - they are loss to me - worthless and I don't even miss them!

Dung is rather clear, but the thought is anything that is waste, that is cast off, that is worthless, that is detestable. Not only is it worthless, but it is detestable as well. Now in our modern day he is saying that our neat car is detestable, our new flat-screen television is a waste, and that our new computer is something that should be cast off. Does that make it more real for you now? I trust that we will learn this concept of Paul's to our own betterment in eternity.

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

He seems to define what he has been saying - he wants the righteousness brought to him by Christ's work on the cross through faith rather than his own righteousness earned by works under the law.

We know that lost people can live very moral and good lives, but we also know that without Christ they are still lost. No works of good or righteousness will gain any person heavenly standing with God -- yet so many attempt to do just this.

My father told me on his death bed that he had tried to do good all his life and hoped that he had done enough good to make it into heaven. Of course I encouraged him to trust in the works of Christ rather than his own, but only Christ knows if that change of mind ever happened.

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

“That I may know him.” In a sense the following phrases in the verse define this knowing.

How can we know Christ?

a. Reading the Word. The Old Testament offers a lot of insight into the Lord through prophecy, through knowledge of the Angel of the Lord, which was Christ pre-incarnate, and through general knowledge of God.

He is to be known certainly in the Gospels which are an account of His life and work. Also the epistles define Him and His work doctrinally.

b. We can know Him by prayer, by considering our knowledge of Him and using that knowledge in prayer.

c. We can know Him by learning of Him in the church meetings - worship services, Bible

studies, and Sunday school classes.

We can know Him by keeping company with Him. As we walk through life, if we know He is along side it will limit our sinful ways.

“That I may know the power of his resurrection.” Power is the word "dunimas" which gives us the word dynamite. There are several aspects to this word that seem to relate here.

a. Power that is inherent due to the nature of the thing - here a person. This is directly related to the next point. Christ's nature dictates His power.

b. That which a person puts forth. Being God, Christ is power - He is all powerful.

c. Power for miracles. Certainly this power was evident in the life of Christ while He was here on earth.

One only has to read the Gospels to find miracle after miracle that was done by the Lord via the power of the Holy Spirit.

d. Moral power or excellence of soul. Just remind yourself of the cleansing of the temple - this one occasion is a display of Christ's moral power and the work of the cross gives testimony of his excellence of soul.

e. Power that is derived by wealth. Though Christ did not display this wealth, He certainly knew of it - He knew the offer of the Devil to give Him the kingdom's of the world was a false promise - the Kingdom's were already His to command.

There is no power superior to that of Almighty God.

f. Power that is derived by numbers. This relates to the next point also - power in armies.

The shear numbers of Christ's angelic army as well as His army of brothers/sisters will one day be seen by all existing beings and that power will be staggering - this Power of Christ will cause all to know that He truly is Lord of All.

g. Power existing in or upon armies.

“That I may know the fellowship of his sufferings.” In other books Paul is clear that he felt his own personal suffering was due to his relationship to Christ and that it was a suffering that all believers are to expect if they walk with him.

“Being made conformable unto his death.” This means that we are going to be conformed or given the same form as - we will die as He did, though without the sting of sin.

This may be partly where the thought that we die with Him comes from. We are conformed to His death, thus the preceding can be true.

11 If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

Paul's whole life was an effort to be worthy of all that Christ had done for him so many years earlier.

The resurrection of the dead is the goal of every one of us - it is based squarely on the resurrection of Christ. If He didn't then we won't.

The phrase "might attain" is an aorist tense thus a one time occurrence - he isn't straining to attain and keep over and over again, but to attain once and for all. Some might suggest that he was working for what he perceived to be on again/off again but that cannot be the interpretation here.

APPLICATION:

1. In verses two and three Paul mentions repeating himself. We might assume that he speaks of his warnings of those that are teaching incorrectly, but still are giving the gospel (1.14ff). Barnes assumes a little more and states "He warns them against the Jewish teachers who urged the necessity of complying with the Mosaic laws, and who appear to have boasted of their being Jews, and to have regarded themselves as the favourites of God on that account, Php 3:2,3."

I don't know that we can understand this much from the information given, but Barnes could well be correct. In light of Paul's use of the concision/circumcision we might think that he may have been taking a verbal jab at them if Barnes is correct and they were Judaizers.

Just imagine being one that thinks circumcision is required for salvation and Paul saying, you are the concision - the mutilators while we are the circumcision. I suspect that they received the point given. And then to make the point even stronger Paul tells them that he has given all that circumcision stuff up as worthless and offensive.

2. Verse two mentions we are to beware of the dogs. This had a much more terse meaning and implication to the Jew in that the Old Testament Jew held someone that was contemptible and filthy as a dog - someone that you came at with a stave to keep it away.

Dogs were also used as watch dogs in that day. They would be chained to the door way to protect. Years ago we had a little neighborhood mechanic that I took our car to from time to time. One morning early I was to drop the car off before opening and drop the keys through the mail slot in the door. The slot was down low, about a foot from the ground. I had to kneel down to slide the keys into the slot and as I did there was a loud crash on the door from the inside. I looked up and was face to face with a big Doberman with his pearly whites out for inspection. I had not heard a thing, just the crash as he slid into the door.

This is more the thought of Paul when he uses the term.

Today we conjure up in our minds this fluffy white ball of fur that sits in a tea cup or maybe as that big lumbering and loveable lab that licks our face. We like dogs, we pamper dogs, we treat dogs as if they were our direct offspring. The Jews saw dogs as the scum of society, something despicable.

No, don't treat false teachers as you treat Muffy when you get home from a shopping trip, treat them as what they are - offensive, dangerous and to be avoided.

Christ used the same term in Matt. 7.6 "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you."

3. We might speak of zeal for a moment. Zeal is a four letter word, but it is not a four letter word if you get my drift. It is not a dirty word. Zeal is a proper element in the Christian life, not something to be shunned as the plague.

Zeal is doing something with the excitement with which it ought to be done. It is doing something the best way that you can, it is doing it with pleasure and accuracy.

Take a concordance and just look through the Word of God and see how the term is used. It should be pointed out that you can be zealous for the wrong cause as Paul was before his conversion. However, his zeal for God did not change, it just was redirected to the proper aim.

I have a study on zeal on my website if you want to dig deeper. (<http://www.mrdsnotes.com>)

4. Relating to "fellowship of his suffering" in verse ten Barnes comments quite adequately "And the fellowship of his sufferings. That I may participate in the same kind of sufferings that he endured; that is, that I may in all things be identified with him. Paul wished to be just like his Saviour. He felt that it was an honour to live as he did; to evince the spirit that he did, and to suffer in the same manner. All that Christ did and suffered was glorious in his view, and he wished in all things to resemble him. He did not desire merely to share his honours and triumphs in heaven, but, regarding his whole work as glorious, he wished to be wholly conformed to that, and, as far as possible, to be just like Christ. Many are willing to reign with Christ, but they would not be willing to suffer with him; many would be willing to wear a crown of glory like him, but not the crown of thorns; many would be willing to put on the robes of splendour which will be worn in heaven, but not the scarlet robe of contempt and mockery. They would desire to share the glories and triumphs of redemption, but not its poverty, contempt, and persecution. This was not the feeling of Paul. He wished in all things to be just like Christ, and hence he counted it an honour to be permitted to suffer as he did."

5. In verse one Paul mentions, "To write the same things to you." It has been mentioned that he was repeating something within the letter. This is possible or there are other possibilities as well.

Some suggest that he was repeating something he had taught them while with them. Others suggest that he is repeating something he had written to them in another letter in the past or possibly that it was something to another church that they might have read.

All are possibilities, but it seems consistent to relate the phrase back to prior information within this letter.

No matter which of the possibles you like best, you need to admit that he was using a good teaching principle. Repetition is always good. Some wise person in ages past suggested you tell em what yer gonna tell em, then you tell em what you want tu tell em, then you tell em what yu just told em.

This is a good teaching principle. This is not to say that you need to repeat a teaching 2523 times in a two year period. I've heard some preachers that just repeat their rhetoric over and over, just interjecting a new verse or new illustration from time to time and change the order of their sound bites.

It is as though they memorized their 3001 sound bites in Bible college or seminary and have been repeating them in assorted orders ever since. This isn't preaching the Word of God from the pulpit, it is boredom on a stick. If you ever look around a congregation and see the glazed looks on all the faces you may know what is going on.

6. It has been said more than a multitude of times that you shouldn't be negative in your preaching and teaching. This may be true, but there **MUST** be some negativity if we are going to **WARN** the sheep about the wolves.

I have been in churches for two or three years and never hear anything negative about the isms of the day. Do you suppose this is why the Mormon cult is pretty much accepted as mainline Christian today by many Christians? If you don't know a group is doctrinally unsound, how will you know? Most pastors/teachers either assume their students are getting the needed information on their own, or they just don't care about the sheep.

When the Moonies were just getting underway, I was teaching what they were about, what they were teaching, and why their doctrine should be rejected. I have never heard anyone preach against any of the mainline cults in churches I have attended. It has been noted that many Christians are being sucked into the cults - need we wonder why? No, the sheep have not been warned of the isms of our age and so they fall into their clutches due to the failure of their shepherd.

Reports state that the majority of new Mormons are "Christians" of one sort or another. This is not the model that Paul sets forth. All through his epistles he is warning others of the false teachers of their own day. He did not pull punches, he named them for what they were - **DOGS**. How dare we do less? Yep, he were one negative apostle! **THANKS Paul!**

7. We saw that Paul was quite open about his past and was in other portions of the Word as well. He made no attempt to hide his pre-salvation life. He readily acknowledged his former life and the fact that he had made a total change in direction.

Why is it so hard for Christians to admit that they are wrong? Why is it that some will lie to the end to prove themselves right, when they probably know they are not? Why are Christians so reticent to simply admit that they are wrong on a topic and move to the proper position?

I have seen people argued into the ground on different topics over the years and they will make no attempt to admit they might be wrong, indeed they will usually begin attacking their opponent personally to draw attention away from their failing.

With all the controversy over doctrine that has occurred over the centuries you would think that we would have come to the realization that we ought to leave ourselves some leeway to admit wrong beliefs when necessary.

We all have changed positions from time to time if we are honest about our Bible study. None of us can know everything there is to know of the Word, so why would we not think that we might have wrong ideas about it now and then and want to correct our belief system when necessary?

A few thoughts might be appropriate here.

a. If a church leadership finds that their pastor has shifted a little in his theology it is a trip to his next church for him. If a major shift is present, yes a trip might be appropriate, but for changing smaller doctrines, why not allow for a difference of opinion instead of making him keep his thoughts secret.

b. When a pastor/teacher finds that a student disagrees with him on a point, why do most blast the incorrect thinker into the neighboring church - there are differences and we need to acknowledge those differences.

Years ago I had the privilege of assisting in a small church with a friend. He was pastor and I assisted and taught Sunday school. We knew we had differences and did not choose to force them. When we preached or taught in an area of difference we usually gave both positions and reasons for and against both and moved on. These were no areas where anything major was involved and we made a fairly good team over the months.

c. Some pastors tend to have a set number of doctrines that must be followed or you are not as spiritual as they. This leads church members to either not talk about some beliefs or else find another church.

We really need to get over ourselves and realize there are differences of opinion and that we were not declared the authority by God. Allow for the small differences and get along would be the

implication.

8. The LIFE APPLICATION BIBLE observed of the Judaizers that they required Gentiles to become Jews (Circumcision) before they could become Christians. That is rather easy to see from their point of view. If they had not been taught properly, it might be an easy conclusion to jump to.

The question might come to mind, do we in 2007 require people to become Baptists or Presbyterians, or some other denomination before they become Christian? It has been observed many times that many in our churches are not Christians. Is this not indication that we are indeed requiring adherence to our own set of doctrines before they become Christians?

A Baptist Bible college president many years ago observed in a chapel session that Baptists do not believe in baptismal regeneration, but that many of the churches practiced it. Often the emphasis on baptism hides the simple gospel of Christ that we are called to preach.

May we be very careful to require the gospel response before we require the denominational response lest we become as the Judaizers in method.

We met a Jewish woman that had some serious health issues. She had become a Christian via a Baptist minister some months before. She was having some real spiritual struggles and had many questions. She finally became entangled in the Charismatic movement and went off into the sunset seeking "THE BAPTISM" and we just kept answering her questions from the Word.

One evening she called and was so excited. She wanted us to drive down and let her tell us the big news. We loaded the kids into the car and drove down assuming we were about to find out that she had gotten the baptism.

When we arrived she was so excited she was bouncing off the walls. "I got save last night!" was her big news, rather than the "baptism." We asked what had happened and she said that she had been searching for something and thought it was the baptism but instead she needed Christ.

She was not overly appreciative of the Baptist minister that had talked to her about the gospel. She said that she didn't really understand what Christ was all about, that she had never really understood Christ and her need for salvation.

He had made her a Baptist but had failed in the important part, making her a Christian.

May we be very clear in our presentation of the Gospel! It is the only message that can save and we need to deliver it clearly so that people understand it is about Christ, not our particular version of Christianity.

9. One might wonder at Paul's use of the term circumcision when speaking of New Testament

believers and contrasting it to the Jews of the Old economy living in his day. Is he saying that we are the true circumcision, those that are circumcised of the heart? Many commentaries state this. They were Jews according to the old ways but we are the true circumcision.

If that is what he was saying and it seems clear that it was, then does it not follow that the Old Testament saint had some serious deficiencies in the spiritual realm. Not that they were not going to be finally saved by God, but that they were not there yet, that they needed that saving knowledge of Christ. Or was Paul speaking to their lostness because they were counting on salvation due to their works of the law? It is most likely the later, but there is a truth that the Old Testament saint may have been lacking in a spiritual manner as well. They did not receive the Holy Spirit, the Spirit did not indwell them, and they were not ushered into heaven upon death - they were sent to Abraham's bosom. (Luke 16)

If this is true, then the theory I suggest in one of my books might well have basis right here. That thought that the Old Testament saints were not regenerated upon belief, that they could only be regenerated after the work of Christ on the cross. Those Old Testament saints that were dead at the resurrection were finally completed in their salvation while living Jews were required to make that decision about Christ. Many of the Jews of Christ's time were Jews in name only, not really following the Law.

It seems this passage may be indication of this line of thinking.

10. This passage and related passages of Paul's past and conversion might be handy to read to a Jewish person that was considering Christ. If this man, a Jew from every angle, accepted Christ then there might be reason to give serious consideration to Christ's claims. Other passages listed by Life Application Bible "No Judaizer could boast of traveling hundreds of miles in order to find Christians, bring them back in chains to Jerusalem, and cast a vote for their deaths (Ac 9:1-2; 22:3-5; 26:9-11). No Judaizer had stood by holding the coats of those who stoned an early Christian leader (Ac 7:59- 8:1). Paul persecuted the church because he thought that Christianity was heretical and blasphemous. Jesus did not meet the expectations of what the Messiah would be like, so Paul and many Jews with him had assumed that Jesus' claims were false—and therefore wicked (Ac 26:9)."

11. Almost all commentaries suggest that these dogs were Judaizers and they may have been, however I am somewhat doubtful in that the Judaizers were preaching a gospel of "become a Jew then you can become a Christian" which is not a valid gospel.

It is possible that these dogs and the mutilators were a different group than those that Paul spoke of earlier in the book that were preaching the Gospel for a wrong motive.

Lesson 11
QUALITIES OF A CHURCH

EXPECTING
(Phil. 3:12-21)

We have just seen Paul mention that he wanted to be a part of the OUT-RESURRECTION, or a resurrection out of the dead according to Constable. He will go on to develop that thought in this section where he works and looks toward that day when he will receive his upward call home. (The NASB backs up this line of thought as well.)

12 Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. 13 Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, 14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. 15 Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. 16 Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing. 17 Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an example. 18 (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: 19 Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.) 20 For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: 21 Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

12 Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.

Not that he had to strive to gain that which he already had, but that he might reach that ultimate goal of this life - death.

Paul uses interesting language here. He follows that he may apprehend - something he can do - that "if that I may apprehend that for which" he can't do anything, this is something done from without. He strives to attain that which Christ has provided. It is something done by Christ that will benefit Paul. "Apprehend" means to take or take for oneself.

The American Standard Version states it this way: "Not that I have already obtained, or am already made perfect: but I press on, if so be that I may lay hold on that for which also I was laid hold on by Christ Jesus." He is striving to take that which Christ attained for him - the resurrection of the dead. Christ in His work on the cross obtained for us the resurrection of the dead.

Now that is a theological thought to be sure. Did he obtain the resurrection for only believers, or for all mankind? Since we all will be raised, lost and believing, it is obvious he obtained it for all. If for all, wouldn't it have been better that the lost were left in the grave? Yes, but that would have thwarted God's justice - they would have escaped all retribution that was due them.

Christ laid hold on Paul to save him from this life, and Paul is striving toward that end. This ought to revolutionize our thinking on death. Christ did what He did that we might die and be with Him. We ought to strive toward that end, not the ends we seem to strive for.

Not that we walk in front of trucks to gain this end, but that we work our entire lives as if we are working toward that end. Death is our ultimate goal in this life so that we can begin our new life with Him that provided the way.

He is not yet there or perfect, but he is attempting to attain that point in his life - his death.

13 Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but [this] one thing [I do], forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,

He has set the future resurrection as his mark to attain. He has set all else aside so that he might concentrate on that mark in his life. How often do we strain so toward the end? Don't we tend to concentrate on the steps toward the end. I want to get a neat car, a grand house and fill it with goodies so that I can have a life of ease till I die?

Paul on the other hand laid aside all desire for a car, a house, a bunch of toys, a position, and aimed toward the only thing in this life really worth aiming toward - death (well and the resurrection :-)

14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

The term "high" actually relates to upward rather than just high. It is a call that will move one upward, rather than a call from on high. He works toward that time when God calls him home.

Something else of note, the upward call is what the mark is, it is what the prize is - not some grand reward that the apostle is trying to gain - he desires only to be with God. The Net Bible shows this thought of upward. "with this goal in mind, I strive toward the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."

The interesting part of the Net Bible's translation is that it seems to treat the first part of the verse as rather bland and unimportant, when it actually is a very strong word that Paul used. "Press" is a word that is usually translated "persecute" and in a number of places is translated some form of follow. The Lexicon relates it to following after to persecute.

Now does that sound like Paul or not. He followed Christians to persecute them and now he

follows the mark with that same total zeal and fervor. He is hot on the mark's case, he is hot on the trail, and he is going to nail it.

How many of us are that excited about being called home? How many of us press or look to the end while serving in a total and complete manner the Lord that will one day call us home? Indeed, how many of us view the mark, the goal of our life as being our death?

Personally I don't think I have ever heard this text preached or taught within this context. It is usually the doing well looking toward a goal and that goal never being death.

Oh, yes there I go again being negative. Using the term death, that terribly negative term that shows negativity. The term upward call is much more positive and should be used instead of the truth, the real meaning of what Paul was referring to.

Of course he is looking to the resurrection, a much more positive term, but it is death that gains us that resurrection, we cannot be resurrected until we are buried and that takes death normally.

The point is not negative terms, nor positive terms, it is moving with all zeal toward the end of being with Christ. That should be the believer's goal, and it should be our focus, not all the things of this world.

15. Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.

Now didn't Paul just say he wasn't perfect in verse twelve? And now he indicates he is perfect. So which is it? It seems that in the previous verse he is not perfect or complete, but in this case he is running the race in a perfect or complete manner. He is doing everything just right and adhering to all the rules and regulations in a complete manner but he is not yet complete.

I watched a show on the Discovery channel about China. They interviewed an eleven year old girl that was in the Chinese Olympic program. She was living in a boarding school so that she could concentrate totally on her training. She was adhering to all the rules, she was doing all the exercises, and she was doing all of the things required to become perfect. She was obeying and following completely so that she could be complete for the games.

She did not know if she would compete in the Olympics, but that was her total focus in life. Unlike her tenuousness in being one day complete, Paul knew that he was hot on the track of that completeness in his life when the Lord would call him home.

There are two important concepts here. One is the thought that many of us should be perfect or mature, and secondly that all that are competing completely should be looking forward to that upward call. Finally that if we aren't both mature and looking for the upward call then the Lord will reveal it to us.

Maturity: Most of us know that this word “perfect” relates to complete or mature. It is used of an adult that is mature, or of being ready to run as a machine that has all parts in place and ready for full and complete operation.

The indication is that if we are mature, we will also be looking forward to our call home.

Isn't that what the mature Christian is - ready for whatever God brings his way, even death or the rapture? If we aren't ready for Him then we are not complete in Him.

By way of application if you see a believer that is caught up in seeking the world and what it has to offer, you can know that believer is not mature.

Anticipating the upward call: This happening will be at the rapture or at the point of death for the believer. I trust that we are all ready for that day and indeed, as Paul, looking forward to it.

"Revelation" the word here is related to revelation - "apokalupto" - it relates to laying open to view or revealing.

This is important in that many preachers and believers feel it is their sworn duty to tell other believers that their lives are not up to standards. They will go in as if they are God Himself to reveal to them that they have deficiencies in their spiritual lives.

It seems to me that God tells us here via Paul that He is capable of telling a believer that he is not up to standard. The Holy Spirit can definitely tell a person directly, without the use of a human being, that there is improvement to be made.

It amazes me how limited God is in some peoples minds. On internet forums it is comical to see how people strain to win others to the Lord. They will go to any and every length to explain each and every question to strong arm a person into the Lord's kingdom. It is God the Holy Spirit that does the work in the lost person's life, not a preacher or anyone else that is twisting an arm.

The same thought is here - if God cannot tell an erring child there is an error, how in the world can a human being think they can. Here is a clue folks - God is all powerful - if he can't do it how come you think you can? Is that really humility that we have been talking about? Is that even somewhat realistic? No.

Yes, witness, yes preach the Word, but let God do his own work in people's lives. He can do His own work much better than we can.

16 Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.

The phrase "let us mind" is the same Greek word as the two terms in verse fifteen, "mind."

Basically it seems to me that Paul wants all that are mature to be walking and talking like it, rather than giving false assent to same.

17. Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.

Follow - together: Not only follow, but do it as a unit - do it as a congregation - be united in your life, be united in your goal, be united in your example to the world.

Follow me: Use Paul as your example. Let us consider a few of Paul's characteristics - those things we ought to follow.

A man totally committed to getting the Gospel out to all that would listen.

A man totally committed to suffering for his Lord if that is what it took to accomplish the work of the Gospel.

A man totally void of personal gain or honor.

A man of sound doctrine.

A man that would not compromise his doctrine to accomplish a task.

The Net Bible states it this way. "Be imitators of me, brothers and sisters, and watch carefully those who are living this way, just as you have us as an example."

Paul is the example: Wow, Paul knew his life was worthy of asking others to follow it as a good example.

Pastors are not apostles, but are their lives not to be examples for the congregation? Their lives should teach the people how to live. Their rhetoric should teach the people how to live. A responsibility many pastors do not heed I fear in our day. Many are the pastors that bow to public opinion for their guide to life rather than the Word of God.

Watch others that follow Paul's example. All of us in a congregation ought to be examples for the kids and young people to pattern their lives after. How can this be done in one or two hours on Sunday? It cannot. We as a church body ought to be mixing our selves together often so that the younger can see how it is supposed to be done. They cannot pick it up by watching television, they cannot pick it up watching movies, they cannot pick it up going to raves and parties, nor can they pick it up in a vacuum. We must be together as congregations.

In light of this, how do most congregations do church? Kids go out to Jr. church or whatever babysitting program is available, teens are often split off for their thing and the adults worship

together. So how are the young people and kids going to learn about worship and the Word? They probably will not.

Or in many congregations we are splitting elders off for their "traditional" service and the younger off to their "contemporary" service. The wisdom of the elders will rub off on the youngers how?

One could say it is the Devil's "divide and conquer" mode of operation. Keep the older wise folks away from the younger so there is no pollution. The elder folks have lived through the trials of the Devil and have gained experience from it, but we do not dare let them pass that wisdom on to the next version of the church.

I was privileged to speak in a little church in Colorado many years ago that followed a peculiar form of worship. The adults sat in a large square of chairs; the children sat in front of their parents and were not allowed the usual bag of toys and eatables. They were allowed to read in a Bible story book or just listen to the adults.

The children from small to preteen were attentive to the singing and devotional thoughts some of the men shared, and some did read from Bible story books, but even they listened and observed much of the service. Toward the end the books went away and the group observed the Lord's Table together.

This group knew that children can meet with God, that they can behave, and that they could go for an hour without food, drink or toys. None got up in the middle of the service to go to the restroom either. After the worship part of the service the kids split off for a teaching time and the adults had a message/lesson from the Word of God.

We know we are to disciple people, so why is it so often that we forget to do that for our children in our churches. Why are we not sharing the wonders of worship with our teens? Why are we blocking the next generation of church goers from a meaningful relationship with their God?

Last night I went to the website of a large church in our area and the information read more like a community center for recreation than it did for a church. The "come as you are" section read as if they were discouraging wearing anything but casual. The section on what kind of music they used was so general you knew exactly what they meant - anything goes as long as it sounds like music.

Their staff pictures reminded me of an "on the street reporter" on a Saturday afternoon at the beach. With all this I want to say. We can see what our next generation is going to think about worship. They are being disciplined into the current fad of "contemporary" and will most likely carry it forth to their own families. Paul is our example, we are our children's example. I trust you consider your example-ship carefully.

18 (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, [that they are] the enemies of the cross of Christ:

Paul not only has told them repeatedly about these false ones, but he has warned of them and encourages the folks to mark them - might even indicate a need to remove yourself from their influence.

Today we have movements within Christianity that are false - even some that call themselves evangelical - Paul says mark them and avoid them.

It has always cracked me up to hear sound pastors soundly denounce the charismatic movement, but the same men have accepted the Charismatic's method of worship, their music, their methods and their laid back mode of "worship."

Due to the next verse we should view these people as people that are going to be humiliated and destroyed. The question is, are they destroyed eternally or just in this life.

Let's look at the text to see if we can determine whether these are lost people or believers gone astray.

In verse eighteen they are called the enemies of the cross - those that lead away from the cross - those that are preaching a different Gospel. In verse eighteen they are also seen as people that Paul is weeping for - this might indicate that he had a close relationship with them at one time - believers that had gone astray.

In verse nineteen the word "destruction" can relate to either physical destruction or eternal destruction.

Earlier in the chapter Paul is speaking of seeking the resurrection - this might well indicate he is speaking of those that lead others away from that goal - people that are themselves going to lose that glorious blessing.

19 Whose end [is] destruction, whose God [is their] belly, and [whose] glory [is] in their shame, who mind earthly things.)

Their end is destruction: This would seem to indicate something serious don't you think? They will end and that end will be destructive to them - not much left to the imagination is there?

In my declining years I think all too often of my coming end, of my future with Christ and wonder how in the world a lost person can contemplate such things without having serious worry if not dread of their coming unknown end and/or afterlife. There must be many millions in the world that fear death completely and utterly, due to this not knowing of their end/afterlife.

Then there is the "Rest of the Story" as the famous radio columnist called his program - we have the information that these poor souls yearn for and so often we do little to see to their needs.

Worship their belly: Their god is their belly - they worship their belly. The term translated belly has three main thoughts. It can relate to the womb - the place of conception and the place of growth of the fetus, it can relate to the lower bowel of the human stomach - the place of waste and it can relate to the seat of emotion and thought.

This could relate to the love of eating, the love of sexual pleasure or the love of self - emotions, decisions etc. It is this final thought that seems to fit this text best.

Their destruction seems to arise out of the three items of self that are listed in the verse.

Their glory is their shame: "Glory" is the Greek word "doxa" which relates to bringing glory to God - it is an honoring God for Who and What He is, thus their self glorification is actually a shame unto them. Imagine that highly lifted nose of the socialite sniffing the idea of this passage - that uplifted nose is only a sign of the person's shame.

They mind earthly things: They are involved in worldly matters with their minds - they dwell on the things of this world and in this context they do it to their own detriment. This is not speaking to the believer specifically, but relates quite well - anyone that dwells on the worldly in excess is bringing detriment to themselves. This is a serious thing to consider in a world that is consumed with the things of this world.

The self glorification and minding of earthly things may be further proof that the belly in this context is speaking to the seat of thought and emotion. Their being mindful of themselves and this life is their destruction and shame.

And Paul immediately relates this same thought to the reader - our minds ought to be in the heavenlies not on things of this life. Our concentration should be with Christ, not the Devil and his.

20 For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:

Not only should our conversation be on the heavenlies, our looking ought to be on the Savior that will be the culmination of our seeking and watching.

The word translated conversation relates to a constitution that rules a commonwealth - thus our conversation or that which rules and governs how we act ought to be in the heavenlies not in worldly things.

When we go to work in the morning we should be governed by spiritual things - we should be

concentrating on being the best believer we can. We should be governed by that which is right and true - that which Christ would have us live by.

When we are at home we should be governed by the same, and when we are at church we should be directed by the same, and when we are at play we are to be living by the same principles.

This does not allow for that believer that prays so saintly in the sanctuary and then goes out that afternoon to belittle, demean and browbeat his competitors on the church softball league ball field.

I am sure most of the readers can think of their own illustrations to this point.

21 Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

"Who" relates to the Savior mentioned earlier, will change our vile body - how can something so wonderful as the human body be vile? How can something so complicated be vile, how can something that can bring such joy to oneself and others be vile, how can something that God made be called vile. This is something we need to look into.

The term vile means lowliness or littleness, thus not the dirty, nasty, and disgusting body that "vile" relates to. Christ will - sometime future - transform our lowly bodies. The thought of lowliness relates to what we will be after the transformation - it will be much preferred.

The "when" of this transformation seems to be indicated in the act of subduing all things to Himself. He one day will subdue all things - the heavens and the earth and all things within - including Satan and his helpers - ALL things will be brought under His control for His glory and enjoyment.

APPLICATION:

1. The emphasis of this text seems to be the idea of how we give emphasis to our lives. How do we live our life at work, how we live our life at church and how we live our life at home. All should be the same, all should be equal, and all should be an honor to Christ.

Never should our lifestyle on the ball field differ from that life in the worship service. Never should our way of living in the home differ from that life we live at prayer meeting. Never should Christ ever observe us living in any other way than in a manner consistent with the living of Paul - total zeal toward the things of the Lord, always ready to be called home, and always ready to give answer to how we live.

I once knew a leader that was quite saintly in the time of Bible study and singing, but put him on the ball field and he was the Lord's iron. He was totally bereft of any calmness, of any

sportsmanship or of any compromise. He was God's gift to that ball field at that time to sharpen those around him. He was never wrong, he was never out of line, and he seldom had his anger under control, yet he felt he was helping grow those around him to maturity. According to this passage, he was out of line to be of any other character than what he was in Bible study and singing times.

Yes, we are a tripartite being, but that does not mean that we are one sort of person at church, one type of person at work, and another type of person at home. We are three, body, soul and spirit, but we are also unity in how we live our life.

2. The Net Bible suggests that in verse seventeen when Paul states "Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample" that another reading might be along the lines of "Be fellow imitators with me of Christ." This is probably a little closer to the truth. Yes, imitate Paul or other founded leaders, but our example is really to be Christ. As leaders imitate Christ, imitate them.

3. Call me ignorant, call me shallow spiritually, or call me what ever you will, but I have never "gotten" this terminology of Paul's when he says, "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." It has always bothered me that Paul's terminology of a race and the prize does not fit. There is only one winner in a race, there is only one first prize so how is his terminology fit for this passage in which he calls all believers to the proper life. We can't all get the first prize.

He is speaking of the culmination of this race we are in - the call home, not the prize not the winning of a race, but the upward call to meet Christ either via death or meeting Him in the air. He presses toward that moment when he knows his race on earth is done, when he can be with God on His turf.

The upward call is the prize he sought so diligently. We are all in a race in this life, and we all should be striving for that upward call rather than dwelling on things of this life. This is a race where we are running alone; there is only a well sought win, or a poor finish by default. Only the individual will have to answer for how they have run the race. Whether a well run race or a poorly run race, both will find that call from their Lord, but Paul makes it quite clear that he is going to run with all his heart, no matter what comes down the track at him.

4. I suspect some would assume from previous comments about the upward call that Paul was working at this time on the upward call focus, and he most certainly was, however this isn't just an end of life sprint for the finish that we are talking about. This is a life long goal and focus for our lives. It is running toward that upward call from the first moments of your time in the family of God.

Salvation is only the beginning of life with God, and it is the beginning of our race toward that upward call. When God reaches down and plucks us from the mire and washes us off it isn't so

we can go back into the muck for a few dozen years, then all of a sudden at the end of life take a shower and get ready for the trip home.

We are to set our focus on Heaven; we are to work toward that focus all our life with all that is within us. That upward call is a pleasant end to a long life of toil for our Lord in His fields of harvest.

If you are in later life and need to gain this focus, then get to it, but if you are in any other area of life, gain the proper focus for your life and move on as though you will never lose that focus until God makes it a reality in your life by calling you home or calling you to join the Lord in the air.

5. Verse 21 mentions "Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body." There are two items here that need to be covered. "Our vile body" is the first and the second is that it will be changed into a fashion such as Christ's.

Vile is a word that depicts some of the worst of worst in our society. If you see the drunk on skid row or the prostitute, they are vile. If you see the rotting of food or the rottenness of gangrene, they are vile. However the word translated vile has more the thought of lowness, or humility. You might recall earlier that we saw Christ became man and this was a humbling or lowering of Himself to the plain of man.

This is pointed out in that many go with the "today's" definition of vile and relate it to the fact that we still have the old nature in our lives and they often relate this to the battle that we wage daily. This battle will one day be over or so they say, and we will have peace finally and completely since we are rid of that old nature, those sinful ways. Amazing what some proper interpretation does to old wives tales.

We are lowly humans; we are of low estate as the grand scheme of God is related. This lowly body will be fashioned to be like that body of Christ when He was resurrected. This is one of the main passages that teaches that our body will be like His. "Fashioned like unto his glorious body" is the terminology that Paul uses. God is going to be in the business of changing our flesh and bones into a body that is much more suited to the heavenly scene.

6. In later life I have noted that I have fought some battles that at the time seemed to be paramount, but from hind sight many years later, those problems don't seem as radically terrible. Not that they weren't false doctrine, but that they didn't cause the decline and fall of Christianity as some of us thought at the time.

In light of Paul's rather often if not constant warning about false teachers I have come to realize that I was right to have fought those battles. We must keep our guard up against deception and false teachers.

Again in retrospect I have to wonder if some of these isms that some of us were decrying would have become much stronger than they did if there had not been the warning cry. I think this may well be the case.

At the same time I wonder if Mormonism and some of our current isms had caused men to willingly sound the warning cry against these movements if the movements wouldn't have disappeared into the background instead of coming forth into "Christianity" as part of the main stream as they are viewed today.

I seldom hear a warning against false teaching, I seldom hear a pastor or teacher disclose the error of these modern movements and I seldom hear of these isms in the same context as "false teachers."

Maybe some time considering why there are no warning cries today would be appropriate.

a. If you are building a huge church you do not want to alienate anyone, so you don't give "warnings" and you don't call others "false teachers" and you don't rock your boat lest some get off and go to a bigger boat where the ride is calmer.

b. If you suspect you have false teachers in your midst, does the financial bottom line allow for the curling of someone's toenails? We seldom feel free today to talk negatively about anyone.

c. In our climate where the government is close to calling any disparaging words against others as a "hate crime" we really must be careful - or should we? Maybe we ought to be like the Australian pastors that faced trial for preaching against homosexuality.

All this is coming to pass in the name of political correctness which actually is nonsense on a stick. When you cannot call a football team Indians so you do not insult anyone, you probably shouldn't call a team the Pirates so you do not insult someone's ancestors.

d. In a church climate where fluff and suds is the desired menu why would any thinking pastor/teacher want to not give forth with that smooth, feel good stuff and refuse to upset a church goer.

e. And to trace this back a little further one must wonder just how much study a man does when he puts out the fluff and stuff. It does not take long to put together a message full of feel good stuff that you saw on Oprah and mix in a tad of something you read in your favorite magazine. Just pick a verse for a jumping off point and you have your Sunday message done.

If you are not in the Word you will become dull to the drone of the world and start accepting the drone's mish mash of muck. Add a bit of complacency and you have fluff and stuff adequate to the most non-discerning congregation of our day.

f. It takes work to keep up with what is going on in the world. When you see an ism, you need to go to work digging and finding out what they teach and how to combat this false teaching. The congregation's need is to be warned of the wolves that would eat them alive. The congregations need to know what these wolves teach, and they need to know what the Truth of the Word of God teaches about the wolf's teaching.

Instead of preachers out teaching against all these isms we have movie stars and media portraying them as main stream if not fantastic religious movements that are doing such great good for our world.

If you do not think the church is being affected by the false teaching of our day, indeed the poor teaching of the church of our day go to an internet forum and read awhile. You will see that the Word of God is dismissed out of hand, if it is indeed even raised to answer a question.

There is no standard in our Christian world other than the one the individual sets for themselves. Divorce is up to the individual as is remarriage, premarital sex is not to be condemned because it is only an unfortunate mistake or poor judgment. We all know that the Old Testament was for a different time and different day so do not bother bringing up any passage from there, and because the Old Testament is gone and the New Testament does not state in five places, thou shalt not, then it must be okay.

Responsibility? What is that? I doubt that many Christians really believe that they have a higher authority. If they do I'm sure they feel they can talk that authority out of being upset because it felt so good at the time that it really could not have been wrong.

7. When we went off to Bible College one of the first couples we met was young as we, and had two children. They had the same philosophy of life as we - we are going to serve God to the best of our ability and we are going to not get entangled in this life, but work for the next.

He introduced me to a term that has been a watchword for us our entire life - "PILGRIM" - no he was not John Wayne, but he was a man that was "Passin through this life." This concept was fostered in the school that I attended and was viewed as an acceptable goal in the spiritual life. I think this is the attitude that Paul is putting forth in this passage and I believe that he is setting it forth as appropriate for each and every believer.

I trust that you will consider the claims of Paul and consider the position you might take before your Lord from this point forward. This isn't the norm; the norm is doing your own thing and get as many toys as possible. Paul had a different idea and I firmly believe that Paul is correct.

8. Constable quotes Hawthorne in relation to the Judaizer line of thought. ""Jews expect perfection now by keeping the Law; Christians yearn for the future at which time perfection will be achieved.""

On the surface this is a good description, however in the details it should give you some thought of problem. I suspect that the Jewish "perfection" was a lot less than perfection, and I would also suspect that the last section relating to Christians could well be taken as an excuse for not being perfect here in this life.

All Christians except a few abhor the teaching that we should be perfect in this life or even that we could be. Since Christ was tested in all ways as we and He lived this life perfectly while relying on the Holy Spirit, and since we are to be like Him, perfection seems to be a lot closer possibility than most admit.

If we are a "New Creation" and we are, and if we are indwelt, led and taught by the Spirit of God and we are, then we ought to be capable of saying no to sin - and we are, but we don't always do it. This is the problem, we don't and it is often due to the teaching that we have had over too many years that we cannot be perfect, that we "struggle," that we "fight," and that we often fall. Often temptation results in our following all those wrong concepts. If we have to fight against sinning, and we have the out that we often fall, then why wouldn't we fall for the wrong teaching that we have had.

On the other hand if we were taught that we are the new creation that we are, that we have the power of the Spirit to say no, and that we have the victory, we can choose not to take that fall that is so easy for others. We must realize that we have the standard of perfection in the Lord and He is our example - ought we not be choosing not to fall?

That thought of "choice" should be of interest as well. Sin is a conscious choice of the mind, not the ultimate defeat of the Devil in a wrestling match. When sin enters our life it is a choice to say no to the leading and teaching of the Spirit and saying yes to selfish desire. Nothing else - simple choice to thumb your nose at God.

Perfection? Probably not since we like what we like and serve ourselves from time to time, but mark it well that it is your choice and not some invisible battle deep within yourself between what you used to be and what you are now.

It is a total crack up to me to hear the people talk of the old nature vs. the new nature struggle within us all that we fight constantly. What they are saying in effect is that Almighty God, wanted to help us poor lost folks but couldn't really get the job done. He only was able to take part of that old nature away and to give us a little bit of a new nature. The rest of the battle is up to us to fight. He gave us some help, but couldn't really give us a real "NEW" nature.

My Bible tells me that I am a new creation, not partially newly created. Yes, we look to eternity for our completely perfect being, but here and now we could be much more pure if we simply had the mind for it and set aside the selfish part of our life and decided to live for Him.

9. A moment of consideration of the body both here and there would be of interest to some.

HERE

THERE

a. fleshly	spiritual
b. limited	free
c. linked to Adam's fall	linked to Christ's resurrection
d. self-centered	Christ-centered
e. troubled by health	trouble free
f. dieing	ever lasting
g. waiting	arrived
h. burdened	unfettered
i. anticipating	satisfied

Let us close with a thought from Barne's Notes keeping in mind that Paul's goal was the upward call, not the rewards or crowns that might come to pass when he arrives. "This one thing I do. Paul had one great aim and purpose of life. He did not attempt to mingle the world and religion, and to gain both. He did not seek to obtain wealth and salvation too; or honour here and the crown of glory hereafter; but he had one object, one aim, one great purpose of soul. To this singleness of purpose he owed his extraordinary attainments in piety, and his uncommon success as a minister. A man will accomplish little who allows his mind to be distracted by a multiplicity of objects. A Christian will accomplish nothing who has not a single great aim and purpose of soul. That purpose should be to secure the prize, and to renounce everything that would be in the way to its attainment. Let us, then, so live that we may be able to say, that there is one great object which we always have in view, and that we mean to avoid everything which would interfere with that."

Lessons 12

QUALITIES OF A CHURCH

EXEMPLARY

(Phil. 4:1-9)

4.1 Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved.

2 I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord.

3 And I entreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellow laborers, whose names are in the book of life.

4 Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice.

5 Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.

6 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

8 Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

9 Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.

Philippians 4.1. Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, [my] dearly beloved.

So, based on all that Paul has said, we are to stand fast in the Lord.

Note that he calls them "dearly beloved" twice. This seems to be a very special group of people to Paul. It would be of interest to know why they were so special to him.

He goes on to tell them that he longs to be with them and he considers them to be his joy and crown. This is a verse which pictures one of the crowns of the New Testament - crowns that we as believers can gain by our works for the Lord. This would be the crown of soul winning.

The term stand fast is also used in 1.27 "Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;" It relates to continuing in that which you are engaged. They are to stand fast in their walk and their conversation with the next life rather than this life.

The term can relate to stand firm, persevere and persist. This isn't something you do on Sunday

but not Monday and other days of the week. It is a way of life; it is that which rules your life. This is actually sort of a double statement. We are to stand firm in our conversation - persist in your persistence to live Godly might be the thought.

2 I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord.

Euodias means "fragrant" and Syntyche means "with fate" and both are being besought to be in agreement with one another. It would seem that they were having a difference of opinion on something and Paul was encouraging them to settle it and come to agreement in the Lord. (Constable states, "Euodia ("Success") and Syntyche ("Lucky")" but does not say what he bases this on. The definitions I listed are from the lexicon.)

It is of note that Paul besought both individually - almost as if they are to set aside their differences and just be of one mind. It would also indicate he was not taking sides nor suggesting one is more correct than the other.

This might bring up the question of how we get along within the church. When there are differences, how do we handle them? If sin is involved then the church discipline passages would kick in, however if it is just a difference of opinion then individuals need to work things out.

This is in my mind one of the greatest reasons for having set and achievable goals for the church body. This sets the congregation on the same track, and they most likely will be of one mind heading toward that goal.

The goal needs to be owned by the congregation, not just the pastor or the board. If all are agreed, then they will naturally settle their differences of opinion. If there are differences, then there is giving room for those involved to accept either course because they are both aimed at the goal.

Just an example: If the pastor has not set a church wide goal that aims the church in a set direction and he decides the church needs to expand or find a new building without getting the congregation on board, he will be sure to either run some off or fail in his endeavor.

Jameson Faucet and Brown suggest that the two women were deaconesses, but we have no indication of this other than the fact that Paul would not have bothered himself with minor differences between church ladies. The fact that it was made public would show that the dispute was public and in need of solution.

Stedman assumes that the following verse relates to the two women in verse 2. Paul seems to be asking others in the congregation to assist the pair in finding common ground. Often when there is difficulty there is little listening going on and when a third party enters in and allows both to verbalize their position, common ground can be found, indeed the common ground often

becomes quite plainly revealed.

I have for a few years watched our local city council meetings. On many occasions the city staff has laid out their opinion and I find it well thought out and very nicely packaged. The problem comes when the opposition comes to give testimony and all the loop holes, the poorly thought out assumptions etc. come to light. Normally there is a completely apposed pair of positions, but normally as the council works through all the information they find what is more sane and equitable for all concerned.

If you fall into difficulty with others, be sure to listen and then ask them to listen to you and common ground will probably become evident.

3 And I intreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and [with] other my fellowlabourers, whose names [are] in the book of life.

There are two important truths in this passage. First that those that labor together are as oxen in a yoke two beings pulling together going the same direction sharing the load and most importantly we are directed by another - the Lord. Secondly there is the truth that we are all on one plain - all saved and heaven bound, not in tiers of importance. Paul called them fellow laborers, yokefellow and indicated that all were assisting one another.

The term yokefellow is also translated marriage, thus we know it to be a close relationship of co-laboring toward a common goal. Some suggest that the term translated "yokefellow" could be a proper name, but there is no way of knowing either way.

Anyone that has seen an old western movie with a wagon train probably knows what a yoke of oxen looks like - it is two oxen tied together quite firmly by a yoke - if they don't pull together, they increase their work greatly.

The term translated "help" is much more than just giving a hand now and then. It is in the present tense and it can be used of taking another prisoner - this is taking hold of that one you want to help and make their work your own - kind of like the yokefellow - pulling together.

Clement means mild or merciful. He was a coworker of Paul's and tradition believes him to be the bishop of Rome at the end of the first century.

The least one can come away with from this verse with is that we are to work together - even closely together toward that common goal of ministry. How often in a local church can a person become that involved - involved enough to be accepted by those that run the church - those that need coworkers but don't want them - why share the glory.

If we could gain that level of thought that makes us all on the same level and all going toward the

same goal, we might find that the newcomers can be accepted easily into the group to assist with the work that is need to be done.

How often I have seen church buildings filled with people that are gifted by the Holy Spirit to minister in the church - sitting service after service doing nothing and getting very bored with church at the same time.

People are leaving the church in large numbers, and I believe this is one of the main reasons - needing to minister, and not being allowed to by a stiff hierarchy that must control all aspects of their domain.

4 Rejoice in the Lord always: [and] again I say, Rejoice.

We seem to be in a list of things Paul wants the people to include in their lives. Rejoice amidst helping one another and moderation - maybe he wanted to be sure that the moderation was directly associated to the helping - I can envision some making that observation even though it is not the thought of the passage.

Paul says rejoice and then in the last of the verse he says he will say rejoice - future. The ASV and Darby translations follow this future tense. "Rejoice in the Lord always: again I will say, Rejoice." (ASV)

5 Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord [is] at hand.

Dare we relate this to having a good testimony before your fellow man? I think that is the exact point of this verse.

ALL men should know by their knowledge of us that we are moderate or gentle as the word is sometimes translated. "Seemly" is also another possible translation of the word - you live your life in a proper manner.

This thought of - at all times - being a proper Christian is somewhat cumbersome for the believer, but it is something that is needed. At any point in time we want to be perceived as one to be listened too whether we dispense the Gospel or wise council. If you are less than proper then others may not give your words credence.

6 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

I recently was in a Sunday school class where the pastor made the statement several times that if you request it God will do it. He also made the statement that if you don't request it God will not do it.

Now, I would consider those statements at best misleading and at worst false doctrine. The man did not qualify his statements, only elaborated and emphasized them. The listener would have the distinct impression that if he asked for a million dollars for a new church building that God was bound by a promise to deliver it - and in the context it seemed near if not immediately.

The pastor did not allow God the privilege to say no or to say wait when we prayed, only yes and provision were allowed God.

Anyone that has prayed much in their life knows that the answer is often wait and not all that seldom, no. There was no allowance for praying within God's will - only ask and He must do - don't ask and He won't do.

This is totally limiting a sovereign God to the dictates of man - not a God I would care to be in charge of my salvation.

This verse does tell us to make our requests known - this is important - but it is not a guarantee of positive answers only.

Note the stark contrast of wanting nothing but in ALL things pray - from one end of the spectrum to the other. We are seemingly to request those things we need - now we might say want since that is the word that is used - but I don't think that is quite the meaning of the passage.

We are to be careful for nothing - not worried about anything might be the thought of it - if there is a need or concern then pray about it - not that God will automatically remove that which you are anxious over, but you will have the peace of God in the situation.

The term prayer and the term supplication are of interest. The term supplication has to do with making request for needs while the term translated prayer is actually related to a specific place - a place of prayer. It is translated synagogue as well as a place outside the city - some place special where you can meet with God and make your requests known.

This is one of the good points about the Sunday school lesson that I recently mentioned - the pastor was quite emphatic that we need to pray and that we need a specific place to pray - a place that will not find you constantly distracted from your purpose.

Barnes points out another aspect of the word translated "supplication." "The word rendered supplication is a stronger term than the former. It is the mode of prayer peculiarly which arises from the sense of need, or want" Others relate the idea of repetition as well. If you are in great need the repetition will come very naturally most likely.

Note that thanksgiving is to be an integrated part of this activity. All too often we make our requests at church, we make our requests known to God and never bother to give thanks for the answered prayer. The term translated thanksgiving is related to Eucharist - the bread of the

Roman Catholic Church - it relates to thanksgiving rather than any meaning that the Roman church has given it.

7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

The term translated "all" here is the same word translated everything in the previous verse. Nothing left out - all of it!

Peace is quite rightly translated - it can relate to the absence of being at war - safety from trouble - at rest with all things. Of course this sort of peace can only come from giving your mind to God for quieting.

Now, you don't suspect that the passage on prayer is related to this peace from God? Since this verse follows right next to the previous passage on prayer we might make that conclusion - as we pray we can know the peace of God in all things.

Heart is the Greek word "kardia" - heart - the pumper of blood and in the usage of the Mid-east the seat of emotion and intelligence. God will keep our hearts and minds at peace through Christ.

I assume that "through Christ Jesus" relates to the fact that in Him we have access to the Father. By Him we have son-ship and qualification to make requests. By Him we have assurance that God will answer.

8 Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things [are] honest, whatsoever things [are] just, whatsoever things [are] pure, whatsoever things [are] lovely, whatsoever things [are] of good report; if [there be] any virtue, and if [there be] any praise, think on these things.

Oh, wow, how does that ever relate to the church of our day? In every way - we need to put all of those things back into the church - truth, honesty, justness, purity, lovely things, good things, virtue, and praise. Well one out of nine is good - right - we have praise teams don't we? Not that Paul was talking about such things.

In truth I could illustrate the need of all of these in the churches I have visited in recent days. These are things that are of no value to most believers today.

Honesty is something of the past even for many believers. The white lie is a part of everyday life and living in general.

Let's take a look at these qualities:

Truth: This word relates to truth as well as to speaking and loving truth. Maybe having truth as a

way of life - not giving way to falsehood under any circumstance, even when it hurts you greatly.

Years ago we found we had unknowingly misreported some withholding as income tax withholding when it should have been Social Security withholding. We went to an accountant and found that we would owe over a thousand dollars due to the mistake - we were also told by the accountant that we would be totally foolish to report it as there is no way anyone could find the mistake.

It seemed to me that God already knew about it and that He would have us correct it.

Honesty: This kind of looks like a close relative to the truth issue above. The word relates to veneration for honorable character - having a character so honest that one is uplifted for it - a reasonable character trait for any believer, not just a few.

Justness: This indicates someone that keeps the commandments or keeps the laws of the land. Someone that has respect for the law and follows it.

Purity: Purity relates to without sin or immaculate. Hum, a strange word to use in relation to believers today - well Paul didn't know what kind of a world we would live in so he couldn't really mean this - it is probably cultural -- that might be suggested as a foolish ploy to relieve one's self from the clear teaching of the Word.

Purity is what the church isn't necessarily about these days. The divorce rate among believers is the same as, if not higher than the world. God hates divorce, yet believers cling to it as a right of the believer - it is sin and nothing less. In my mind remarriage is willfully walking into a continuing life of sin.

Recently I heard of a video series that was supposed to help people live in the blended family situation - it was basically saying, how can we live in sin and make the repercussions pleasant. It seems to me that chastisement is supposed to be unpleasant, not pleasurable.

Even if you take a lesser stand on remarriage you must admit that leaving a life long relationship for any other reason than death is asking God to bless something less than He desires for your life - not always pleasant.

Lovely things: Things which are acceptable and pleasing. Good works, praise for God, loving one another and that sort of thing would easily fit into this category, as opposed to back biting, gossip, etc.

Report of good things: Simply things you do, or the way you live which results in good reports from others outside the person's immediate circle would be my idea of the word.

Years ago I had lunch after a Sunday morning deputation meeting with a bachelor that lived with

his single sisters. They were quite involved in their church as well as many other churches and organizations in the area. As we talked we found that we had many acquaintances in common. It was such a blessing to hear good reports from the man about these saints that God had allowed me to meet over the years. The man had good report of all we spoke of and the testimony of all those people was a tremendous encouragement to me personally.

Virtue: Moral goodness or excellence. This can relate to thought and/or actions. Acting and thinking on a high moral plain - keeping your activities and thoughts on a plain where you would not be embarrassed to have your spouse or pastor or God look in and see where you are.

Praise: Giving of accepting thought - praising God for Who and What He is - this could relate to praise of others as well. Not necessarily the giving of praise to and about one's self.

The term "think" relates to considering the facts as opposed to suppositions, and making a rational evaluation of those facts. It relates to careful consideration rather than a quick once over of thought that results in little thought and/or action based on the thought.

CONSIDER these things carefully as opposed to all the other trash in the world. Just how does this relate to the believer sitting at home watching television - just how much thinking on a high moral plain can be done while absorbing the trash of the world from that machine. There is little on the television that relates to this list of virtuous things that we are to be contemplating.

Just take a week and list all of the television programs you watched that related great moral truths that you can find in this list:

TRUTH
HONESTY
JUSTNESS
PURITY
LOVE
GOOD REPORT OF THINGS
VIRTUE
PRAISE

If you do find something with some truth you will usually find that it is obscured by the lack of virtue and purity.

9 Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.

Again, we see Paul setting himself as an example to the believers of how to live. And so should the life of the pastor and missionary and teacher be - an example to all that see them and hear them - someone to be able to pattern your life after.

Paul gives four levels of information - that which is heard, that which is received and that which is learned.

Seen: This has to do with those things which we perceive with the senses, especially sight.

Heard: This word simply means you are hearing and considering something. Comprehension and understanding seem to be a part of the meaning of the word.

Received: This term relates to taking to one's self - something that is accepted into one's being.

Learned: This term has the thought of adding to ones knowledge some new information.

The blaring fact is that they have not applied what they had received from him to their lives or he wouldn't ask them to do so. How often in our churches the pastors/teachers lay out truth upon truth while the congregation does nothing with the information. Not to say that the pastors/teachers shouldn't be doing the same themselves - it is apparent at times that they do not listen to themselves.

Here Paul tells them that not only the peace of God mentioned in verse seven will be with them, but also the God of peace will also be with them. What a promise - to be able to know the peace of the God of peace in your own life. Not that all of us seem to get to that point in our lives.

APPLICTAION:

1. Some suggest Paul confuses the reader by suggesting in chapter three to run a race and here to stand firm. Personally it seems rather like a straw man to bring it up. Paul would not try to confuse people that he was trying to teach, thus it shouldn't be too difficult to see the difference between standing firm in your faith while working your very best in your life to please your Lord. Standing firm can only assist the believer in the running of the race.

2. There is question as to who the person is that Paul speaks about in verse 3. Barnes states "And I intreat thee also, true yokefellow. It is not known to whom the apostle refers here. No name is mentioned, and conjecture is useless. All that is known is, that it was some one whom Paul regarded as associated with himself in labour, and one who was so prominent at Philippi that it would be understood who was referred to, without more particularly mentioning him." He goes on to say that it is presumed that it is one of the bishops at the church of Philippi and this would be a good assumption.

Stedman suggests that verse 3 is a parenthesis to the body of the letter, indeed maybe a comment he made to Epaphroditus, the one that was going to deliver the letter. Paul often dictated his letters to others to write down. This comment may have been made to Epaphroditus and the writer of the letter missed that Paul was changing to another thought in mid stream.

As you read verses 2-4 this line of thinking fits well. Another clear comment of the apostles valuing those around him while instructing them in what he wishes them to do.

3. Verses 6 and 7 just cry forth for a discussion of "WORRY." "6 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Our age is full of it, our society is often debilitated due to the worry. Our nation is deep in personal debt and folks are constantly worried about how they will survive what they have gotten themselves into.

If people aren't worried about debt they are worried about money, if not money they worry about not being married, if not about money, debt, and marriage it is something else. It is as if we cannot survive a day without worrying our selves through it.

This passage might well show that worry is sin. If we are to have peace in our life, then to have turmoil from worry must be incorrect - sin.

Christians often worry about many things. The pastor might worry over how the church will pay for the new building, or whether he offended Mrs. Jones with his comment Sunday morning. The Deacon might worry about whether this new pastor the church has called is really God's choice for the church.

The members have their own set of worries at home and at work. Not that the pastor and deacon do not have those worries as well. When we are told we are not to worry, then we face what Stedman relates some of his folks told him. "I've joined the new Don't Worry Club, and now I hold my breath. I'm so scared I'm going to worry that I'm worried half to death." The key is in that prayer and supplication just in case you missed it.

The point is that all of us should concentrate on these two verses until we learn to leave the worry up to God if there is anything to worry about - which I rather doubt there is. If He is not in full control then we gotta worry! Actually that is the basis of our peace - He is in control and there is no need to worry for there is nothing that can go wrong.

I've always liked the comment of someone on television many years ago. The comment went along this line. "I know that worry helps - look at all those bad things that did not happen because I worried about them."

We must learn to face life with the "He is in control" mindset and live our lives in peace. A few years ago my wife was not feeling well. She had a terrible headache that was in its fifth day. She was on the couch so I stood over her and asked how she was doing. She looked up at me and one of her eyes was off in a different direction. Off to the emergency room. While we were waiting for some tests we realized this could be a stroke and knowing her grandmother and mother both died of strokes, that certainly crossed my mind. The next thing that crossed my mind was that

since our health insurance was through her job that if she was laid up we were without health insurance.

Now I am not one to brag that I have never worried. I have worried my life away due to my not realizing who is in control. However at this moment the realization confronted me - there is nothing I can do at this point, there is nothing I can do to bring about a good diagnosis, there is absolutely nothing I can do except pray. As I sat quietly doing what I could feel a real peace came over me and I can say that I was not worried. I knew that He was able to bring all this to a good end for His glory and that I was along for the ride.

Within a few days the wife was up and good as new. It was a problem of some blood vessels leaking and the leak fixed itself as the doctor thought it would. Humm wonder if he does pipe leaks?

Christian leave the worry and confess your sin and join into the peace that God offers.

4. Barnes states boldly that "The word life here refers to eternal life;" and indeed it does, but not because of any hidden meaning of the word. The word means simply life, the context determines what kind of life. Here it is evident that we are speaking of the "book of life" and we know that relates to eternal life.

I once heard a preacher make great emphasis that "zoe" the Greek word meant eternal life and contrasted it with another word that was used of physical life. He made great pains numerous times to show that "zoe" was always related to eternal life, when in fact it is not. The word also can relate to the simple life of animals and humans in this life. Viewing of the context is critical in making statements about the meaning of words. (See Luke 1.75; Luke 12.15; Romans 8.38; I Cor. 3.22; I Cor. 15.19; and others.)

5. Verse five states, "Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord [is] at hand." Let your moderation be known, why? Because the Lord is at hand. Often I have heard that we should not try to motivate people by fear, by making them consider consequences etc. This passage pictures clearly that we ought to motivate in light of consequences. Paul tells them to do something because the Lord is at hand.

Now, whether he meant at hand as in right with us at all times, which He is, or whether he was speaking of the Lord's coming it mattereth not on this point. He is at hand so act as you ought to act as a good believer is the clear picture.

To tell someone of the Gospel without telling them of the consequences of a negative decision is not the Gospel. The Gospel is the good news that God has provided a way out of hell and punishment.

To evangelize without telling the person about the whole story, is giving only a part of the story

and a polluted Gospel.

Moderation is to be shown to ALL men. Not just the church members on Sunday, but to your family, to your friends, and to your coworkers. Well also to anyone else that you might meet.

It is moderation of eating, of talking, of sleeping, of anything that you engage in while in your waking hours.

6. As to the Lord being at hand Barnes relates, "... to keep before their minds a lively impression of an event which ought, by its anticipation, to produce an important effect. Whether, by this phrase, they commonly understood the coming of the Lord to destroy Jerusalem, or to remove them by death, or to judge the world, or to reign personally on the earth, it is impossible now to determine, and is not very material to a proper understanding of its use here."

The term translated "is at hand" was used by the Jews of making a proselyte or to "make nigh" while the word is used a number of different ways relating to closeness at hand. I would assume that it was speaking of the coming of the Lord, but the "always with us" idea should also move us to proper living.

7. Some time dwelling on the admonition to think "on these things" (vs. 8) would be good for any believer. We have mentioned that it is hard to figure how someone watching an "R" rated movie can really think of Godly things. The same thing goes with much of the music available in the world today. Can you dwell on "these things" when sitting in a group gossiping about someone else? Can you dwell on "these things" when you are daydreaming about whatever it is that you daydream about? Can you dwell on "these things" when you are with your friends? Can you dwell on "these things" when you are -- whatever it is that you do with your time in this life.

Paul set the standard - to think on Godly things, if you aren't then you are far from where you should be in your life. Sitting in church is a time to think on "these things" rather than all the other stuff we tend to allow our minds to wonder into.

Some might wonder if we can think on "these things" when we are in church these days. Is the song time something that draws your attention to God and His desires for your life? Does the message draw you to think and consider God's Word in a meaningful way? If not you might should speak to the pastor and see if some changes might be made.

It always amazes me that we sing a couple of songs and start to settle our hearts on the Lord and what do we do - LET'S STAND AND GREET ONE ANOTHER! Ya, right there went the concentration of God and it turns our attention right back where it ought not be - on self. May we start to consider what we are doing in our churches today. It is a time for God not man, yet we seem to dwell heavily upon man.

8. In the area of the conflict between the two women Constable quotes Howard Hendricks. He

called verses 2-6 "a five-part recipe for conflict resolution: (1) 'Rejoice in the Lord,' that is, get beyond yourselves and look to the Lord. (2) 'Let your gentleness be evident to all.' In other words speak with kindness to each other. (3) 'Do not be anxious.' Relax, and give it all to God. (4) 'Be thankful.' The simple act of expressing gratitude for our blessings takes the heat out of infection. (5) Present your requests to God. Prayer realigns us and restores peace . . ." Howard G. Hendricks, *Color Outside the Lines: A Revolutionary Approach to Creative Leadership*.

- a. concentrate on God not yourself
- b. be kind and gentle to all
- c. do not worry about the situation
- d. be thankful for your life
- e. pray about the situation

Imagine a church full of folks operating under these principles and what they could do for their God.

9. I have recently been watching some video analysis of the rock band ABBA. The purpose was to evaluate and analyze the bands progression through time. On the surface those doing the analysis seem to be quite knowledgeable in their field of music, but I am not sure how adequate their knowledge of the band members minds might be.

The folks on the video tended to speak for the members of ABBA and what they were thinking when they were making their music. This may or may not be true, but the crux of the work was that the group was so very talented, and so very adequate to the task that they set themselves to do.

The Abba group is brought up to relate that these four and possibly more had a total focus on what they wanted to do. They knew what they wanted, they loved doing what they did and they never left that focus in all of their doing. They did not fight among themselves, at least to the detriment of the group, and they always moved forward to accomplish their desire.

If churches would only gain this type of focus! We know we are gifted by God to do His work, and we know we are directed by God to do His work, but all too often we are sidetracked by conflict or by personal wants.

A church focused on God and His desire for their body can accomplish mighty things. Abba at one time was bringing in more money than the Swedish motor company Volvo. They truly accomplished that which they desired to do.

May we each as believers evaluate how we are fitting into the overall work of our local church. May we also be instrumental in motivating our local church to gain a focus on what God might want the body to do. It isn't a pastor's dream for a building, for a large number that should motivate, but the congregation's directive from Almighty God.

Lessons 13

QUALITIES OF A CHURCH

ENDORISING

(Phil. 4:10-23)

10 But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity.

11 Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.

12 I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

13 I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

14 Notwithstanding ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction.

15 Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only.

16 For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity.

17 Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account.

18 But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God.

19 But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

20 Now unto God and our Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.

21 Salute every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren which are with me greet you.

22 All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar's household.

23 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

10. But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity.

"Care of me" seems to relate to their thinking of him and his needs. The passage is clear that their thought translated into actions. I fear many of us think of ministering to the needs of others, but at times never come to the action stage of concern.

"Careful" is the same word in the original language - the thought of thinking. It seems that they were thinking of him but lacked opportunity in some way - possibly they had no resources or no messenger to take the gift to him.

There have been times in our life that I have met missionaries and wished that we could share with them, but could not. There were other times when we have seen a need and had the money to share with folks.

Years ago a couple came with their five children to our church for the day. The schedule was

such that they did not get to eat before the evening service. They had a four hour drive home and I knew that the church would give them a check. I had talked with the man earlier and knew that they were in a very tight financial state at the time.

With some money in my pocket and a super market across the church parking lot, how better to minister than to buy some snackys, sandwich makings, and some soft drinks. As the couple was leaving I stepped to their van with the sacks and seven faces lit up with glee over our little gift.

Please take those little opportunities to share with others that have a need. It can only bless everyone involved.

11 Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, [therewith] to be content.

Not that he had any particular need, but he had learned to live within his means, whatever they might be. What a unique thought - oh that our government would learn that truth, or for that matter our churches and our families.

Living above our means is the norm in Christian circles as well as in the world. I don't know how many churches have gotten themselves into trouble by transferring funds from one account to another to make ends meet.

We should be content to live on little or a lot, whatever God brings our way. I remember many years of lean living - days when we counted our pennies to be sure we could go buy a little medicine - other days when there weren't any pennies to spare to buy cold meds. Did we live through it? Of course we did, God is able to provide for our well being with or without adequate money.

The word content has the thought of being independent of external circumstance - no matter what is going on financially we are to be content - to be satisfied with what we have been given.

This is not necessarily easy for the person that is in the want stage of things and easier for those in the fullness stage of things. I struggled with this a little one Sunday after being asked to dinner at one of the church members homes. We walked into the home that was huge by our standards. They had a monstrous living room, a grand dinning room and we had dinner in the dinning area off the kitchen which put our humble abode to smallness and insignificance.

As we were seated, I couldn't believe how grand this place was, but the Lord soon had me realizing that He had blessed these folks in His own specific way and that he had placed us in His own specific place in life to serve him as He wanted, not as we would have liked.

We enjoyed greatly the time with those folks and even the memory brings great feelings of a rich and diverse God that deals with His people in different ways.

We can look to some of the Old Testament men and their movement from slave to political leader - all at God's desire and direction.

12 I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

Paul goes on to explain in more detail - he even relates it to hunger versus fullness. Whatever the situation, we are to be comfortable with the Lord as our sustainer.

The difference between abound and suffer can be a split second - any turn of events can move us from one to the other. The key is to cope with the change of events as God would have us deal with it.

While teaching we were living on missionary support. Our level of support was \$400 per month but we seldom quite gained the total level. We were living on \$350 or so per month while paying for our transportation to churches on weekends to fill pulpits etc.

We were comfortable living this way and with the free housing that the school provided we were able to get along.

This situation however changed with the turn of a vote at a church meeting where we were interim pastor for a time. The church voted to pay us \$1000 per month for our commitment to them. That was almost a threefold increase in our income with the raising of a few hands. We truly went from want to abundance - what a blessing this was to us personally, and it seemed that the congregation was blessed spiritually from having done it.

13 I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

With the strength of Christ we can do all things - anything - whatever God might ask of us. We can face poverty with all its problems, we can face riches with all their particular problems, we can face times of joy and we can face times of sadness, if we rely on Christ for His strength.

14 Notwithstanding ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction.

Paul commends the people for becoming involved in his affliction or pressing down - trials might be the thought of the passage. They partook or shared in his affliction - they had given to help or assist him through his ruff times.

What a blessing for a congregation to be allowed to assist ministers/missionaries that are in need of assistance. Oh, how many churches are so tied to their bills and salaries so closely that they can't participate in the assisting of those outside their congregation that are in need.

Missionaries desiring to go to the mission field are road blocked at times due to the churches

being so indebted to their programs and salaries that they can't assist these workers of the Lord to get to the field.

We see in the Old Testament prophets that nations will be judged for how they treated Israel, and I wonder if God won't hold church bodies responsible for how they treated His messengers to the world.

15 Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only.

Paul begins to relate the importance of their giving, not only for him, but for them - it is important for us as believers to be givers as unto the Lord.

The term communicated here is the Greek term “koinoneo” or fellowship. No church had fellowshiped with Paul through giving. Now, that is a neat concept - that special offering for the missionary is a way to fellowship with that person or family - you don't need to eat with them, or talk with them but give to them, not that eating and talking wouldn't be good!

It seems that when he says the beginning of the Gospel that he was speaking of the beginning of the work at the Philippian church. He left their company and went to Macedonia.

16 For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity.

It is the thought that they immediately gave to his ministry. They didn't wait for other churches to decide to give, they were led of the Lord and they acted immediately on their leading.

17 Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account.

The word translated desire has the idea of requesting or going after - much like many preachers - trying to get people to give - a wrong concept - the giving should be on the peoples part not due to arm twisting.

We have been privileged to be part of two churches where offerings have never been taken, they have boxes or baskets at the door and people give as unto the Lord as the Lord leads them to give. Neither church has had serious financial difficulties.

The term abound might be translated super abound - it is abounding in an abundance. Paul's desire for them is that they be over abundant in their good works.

The word translated account is the term “logos” or word - he desires that when they are spoken of they will be seen in a very good light.

Here we see that there is an accounting of our giving. Kind of a play on words don't you think?

18 But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things [which were sent] from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God.

Giving is a sweet smell to God, it is a sacrifice, it is acceptable and it is well pleasing to God - hummmm must be something we ought to do out of our love for God rather than out of guilt from the pastor or missionary.

He seems to be overjoyed as well as sufficiently provided for by the gifts of the people. What a blessing to Paul and a blessing to the people at the same time.

Epaphroditus means lovely; quite fitting due to his ministry to Paul via the people.

19 But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

What a great promise - He will provide your needs - not wants, but needs (Not that He may not provide your wants at times either.) Matthew six always comes to mind when I read of needs - He promises to provide needs - in the context of care of the birds of nature - supply of food and living necessities - not necessarily a three story freshly painted bird house.

20. Now unto God and our Father [be] glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Let me start at the end with "amen" a word that means firm, or final, or so be it. Way too many years ago when I was in Bible College I was attending an independent Baptist college - one where the custom was to say amen if you agreed with the speaker.

We had a number of married students that sat in the same area toward the rear of the student body - they would chime in as if on queue with a hearty amen when the president of the school would say something agreeable. He often called them his amen row.

One day the president was preaching a sermon that was no where near his normal message - one in which he was somewhat off base - his amen row was being utterly silent. Finally at one point he asked where his amen row was - they remained silent - I trust he rethought that message before he gave it again.

The point? When something is sure and firm we often, either to ourselves or out loud, affirm it with an amen - so be it!

To God the Father be glory forever - giving of glory - this is the word "doxa," where we get our word doxology from. It is also translated Glorious, honor, praise, dignity and worship according to Thayer.

21 Salute every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren which are with me greet you.

The word greet and salute are the same Greek word - a general term of greeting - it can mean drawing one to yourself - thus most likely it means a little more than a "hi" when you meet another believer.

Years ago we attended a church that was built so that you could walk in a circle around the building through the halls. I used to amuse myself each Sunday morning walking this circle several times greeting each and every individual I met on the walk. I would receive back a like greeting from most all that I met. The next Sunday I would walk my circuit several times without greeting anyone - you know the result – no one spoke to me.

This is not the type of greeting we should give one another as believers. I might speak out of place one more time - just how sincere are the hellos during the greeting time at your church - for that matter, how insincere are they perceived by the guests that noted a great unfriendliness of the church until the greeting time when people are made to greet you?

22 All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar's household.

Okay, about the only thing we can determine here is that Paul was a very effective evangelist - he had been very busy while on Caesar's property. Again the word translated salute is the same word used in the previous verse of "salute" and "greet."

23 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ [be] with you all. Amen.

Again, Paul prays that grace would be upon the people he was addressing.

Might I suggest that you consider how you view and treat not only the saints that you know and relate to weekly, but how you view and treat outsiders that happen into you church.

We are Christ's emissary - His representative here on earth - we ought to act like it and have the love and compassion that He had for the stranger as well as the brother or sister.

APPLICATION:

1. The obvious application of Paul's being satisfied with what God placed in his possession is for all of us to find a point of satisfaction in what He gives us. He could fill all our bank accounts and give us all huge homes with three cars, but we would never learn to rely on Him if He did.

He can give to us as we have need so that we can learn to trust in Him for our financial need. In Bible College we lived in campus housing surrounded by faculty and their nicely furnished homes with their nice cars parked out front. We lived in our little apartment with hand-me-down furniture and old car that burned five quarts of oil going home for a visit - that was each way. It had so many repaired rust spots that I bought a few cans of spray paint and gave it a new coat.

He could have given us a better car, he could have seen to a good raise at work, he could have opened up better housing, but we could never have learned the joy of living on little.

Our neighbors were good friends that were in about the same position as we. One evening we were sharing our mutual situation and our neighbor's wife shared with us her experience from that morning. She related that her purse was a total mess and had been for months. She was actually convicted with the condition of it and that she was so slothful as to not take care of it. That morning her husband had gone to work with no money. The milk was near gone and only enough for the day. They did not know where the money for milk would come from.

During the morning her thoughts toward the Lord ran along the line of the fact that they couldn't even afford milk for their kids. Conviction about the purse started motivating her and finally she dumped out the purse to clean it. As she dug and organized she kept running across coins. She was laying them aside and by the time she finished caring for her conviction she counted the coins and sure enough there was just enough to buy a gallon of milk.

What joy both of them had as they shared this story and how much joy it gave to us in hearing it - even now near forty years later a spirit of joy is upon me having recounted God's goodness and greatness. He does provide as we have need, not as we have wants.

If you are in deep need, take time to consider the joy that you are missing if you are concentrating on the need and not on the watching for how God will deal with it.

Consider well the joy of the recipient as well as the giver. The giver often knows as much joy in knowing that God has used them to bless others.

2. Might we dwell on the situation that Paul was in and relate it to his call and ministry? He is sitting in prison, chained to guards 24/7 instead of out traveling the highways and byways of the world. His calling is as an apostle, his ministry is sharing Christ with everyone he could yet, and here he sits in prison unable to do his calling or his ministry.

Well, not quite so. He is writing one of the churches as an apostle and he has witnessed so hard that even the Caesar's palace has some converts. Doesn't seem his calling nor ministry are really hindered all that much.

Might this not be great application for some of God's people in our day? Many are the couples I have met that were called to the mission field, yet God did not allow them to raise up their support to gain that end. Even the apostle Paul was held from doing his best in his calling and ministry, yet he is still doing what he can. He still has the peace and joy of the Lord even when I am sure he had a little frustration relating to his situation.

When God calls you to do something but circumstances will not allow that, consider doing the same ministry where you are. Many today are finding they can work within their calling right

where they are at. We know of some missionaries that ministered in Spain for many years, yet found themselves called to minister here in the states. Considering the millions of Spanish people in America they started a Spanish speaking church on the East coast.

When a pastor is no longer considered able to minister due to age, there are always other ways to minister. A dear old pastor I met briefly found himself in a retirement center due to his wife needing more care than he could give. A pastor he continued to be by sharing Christ in the home and leading services on Sunday.

Don't throw up your arms in despair, look around you and find what you can do where you are and get busy. Your seeming inactivity may be an appointed place of God and you wouldn't want to miss an opportunity to labor in His fields.

I must admit a little bit of personal prodding in this area. I have pastored, copastored, and filled in where there was a need all my life yet in old age - well ancient in our societies view (67 but totally worthless in societal consideration) - I find that no one wants to allow me to minister in churches that have need, nor even to fill pulpit. This may relate as much to age as to conservativeness, not many pastors would want an old conservative preaching to their progressive contemporary flocks.

At any rate, I found that my spare time was filled with wondering when God was going to start using me. One day reality struck - you have lots of time, you have always said that if you could choose your own job it would be to study the Word and do research for someone else. Humm, stupid, ya got the time, ya got da ability, and ya got the website that people from all the world visit - get ta work!!

I'm not sure just how much I am assisting others with the writing and research that I do, but it is what God has called me to do in this time of my life and that is what I attempt to do.

3. Paul did not always make tents for a living, but he was not above serving the Lord by doing so. He lived on what he had and when there was need he would make tents. The Philippian church had sent a monetary gift to him and he was quite thankful, but not dependant upon their giving.

Many there are in our day in ministries that would never poke their fingers with a needle making tents, they are called to preach and they are to be supported by their calling church. I might say "Ya, right show that one to us from Scripture." but I won't. The attitude is that they are called of God and they are to be supported at least as nicely as the average of their congregation.

Pastor, don't allow monetary things get in your way of ministry. God promises to provide our needs not our guaranteed income.

Years ago I met a pastor that was planting a church in central Oregon. The church was meeting in their home at the time that we ministered there. A year or two later the economy in that town went very bad and all the church folks were unemployed. The pastor was the only one that was

working. He continued to minister in this situation through some very short times financially, but the church survived and was stronger for the experience.

God teaches us through hard times and they are lessons that we need to learn so that we can minister to and encourage others later on.

4. Verse eleven mentions Paul being satisfied. Stedman relates a little personal testimony in one of his sermons that sums up the thought. "Verse 11, by the way, has always been a great comfort to me, especially when I moved from the beautiful "Territory of Hawaii" (as it was then) to the State of Texas. I sometimes longed there in the prairie heat of Texas for those cool beaches of Hawaii. I looked back on them with great longing until one day I read in this verse, "I have learned in whatever State I am to be content", and realized it was even possible to be content in the State of Texas. Of course the state Paul is speaking of here is the condition in life in which he finds himself."

I have been in a lot of "Texas" type situations and contentment was not one of the hallmarks of my life at those times. Sad to say, the numerous "Texas" situations is probably due to my lack of contentment - remember - God teaches us through situations of life. Thankfully, I think I have learned the lesson of contentment even though my "Texas" is called "Oregon." Yes, even a conservative can be content in one of the most liberal and wet states in the union (Not that the liberalness doesn't drive me a little crazy at times :-).

Stedman continues his thought: "I don't know how you would define contentment if you had the opportunity, but I suspect that most of us would come up with some variation of the idea that contentment is having everything you want. I don't think that is the true definition. You perhaps remember the story of the Quaker who put a sign on his house one day that said, "I will give this house to any man who can prove to me that he is content." After a bit someone came knocking at the door and said he saw the sign out front and wanted to claim the house. He said he was perfectly content. The Quaker asked what he meant. He said, "I have everything I want, all the money I need, everything in life that could satisfy. I am perfectly content."

"The Quaker said, "Friend, if thee is so content what does thee want with my house?" That's a revelation of how subtly these desires for more can creep into our thinking.

"Contentment is not having all that you want. True contentment is wanting only what you have. This is what Paul had learned. He had learned that God had created man to love people and use things." and I might add it is not to use people and love things!

5. Stedman relates that Paul was satisfied with whatever God brought his way. Famine was not fun, nor was luxury; both were God's choice for him at that time. This must be our own attitude toward poorness or richness. Richness can be just as trying as poverty, though many of us would like that sort of trial for awhile - but we would soon learn that money is not the satisfaction of life.

This all boils down to the fact that we are the center of the universe and all the universe should bow to our desires, rather than having the attitude that God is the center of our universe and that it is He that sets the plan in motion not us. Our peace and contentment must be centered in His will and not our own.

6. It is of note that Paul tells us in the context of being content with lots or little he states unequivocally "I have learned" to be content. It isn't a normal item that we have inherently built in, but it is something that we must learn. Now if it is a learned item, might we be able to assist young children and youth or even adults to "learn" this lesson before God brings trial upon them. Not that we want to beat God out of his teaching, but we might well assist some to learn without the benefit of trial. The same goes for anger and many of the other traits that man seems to find no problem exhibiting. We as pastors and teachers and parents should assist our children in learning these lessons before the Lord takes charge to do the same.

It may be that they will not listen to us, but I would guess that if they reject our teaching and encounter God's methods that they might be much more open to the Lord's working in their life.

7. The contented mind is not only a more peaceful way of life, but it gives us much more time to concentrate on doing the Lord's business. If we are in turmoil over finances or other problems, we usually take a lot of mind time mulling over the needs and the problems, whereby if we were content with what we have, our minds would be open to thinking of better ways of doing God's work.

Imagine the church leadership that is up in a tizzy about the low giving and the huge mortgage payment at the end of the month. Contentment would lead to good leadership work within the church, however lack of contentment would bring on a multitude of worry and fret that will do no good.

It is most likely that Paul's learning to be content and to rely upon the Lord for his needs were a large part of why he was so at peace in the situation that he was in - in prison chained to guards. As we learn the smaller lessons, we will gain contentment with the larger problems that we come to face in life. Point? Learn the lesson of contentment quickly so that you do not have to face the big problems without that contentment that only God can give.

8. Paul gives time to the church at Philippi and its giving to him. It is a great picture of the sharing of some folks with another in need. It should give us ideas about how we might be able to share with others that have a need. This does not need to be out of our extravagance, but out of our desire to share.

Many years ago we were in a Montgomery ward closeout store in the Denver area. This was the store where all the surplus and unsellables ended up. We often ran across bargains that assisted us in doing for our family on a very limited budget.

One afternoon I was wandering around and ran across a stack of new study Bibles that had been imprinted with names, but the names were incorrect so they were returned. The store had imprinted a very nice gold design over the incorrect name and they were selling them for a fraction of the new price. We happened to have a little extra that day so we bought six of the Bibles - all that we had money for. That was one for each of the five of us in the family and one left over as a spare. How excited we were to all have a new study Bible. Most of us were on the last months of usability on our old Bibles so what a joy for us.

I put the extra Bible away and thought to myself that a need would come along. A few weeks later I was standing in the church foyer and in walked a young couple. The woman was carrying a tattered Bible that had a make shift paper cover on it held by masking tape. Immediately I sensed a very good place for our extra Bible - guess it was not really extra in God's mind. The couple turned out to be missionaries to South America and were there to present their ministry that morning. That night we shared our EXTRA Bible with her and the joy was evident in her face.

The joy of giving can be had no matter your financial position and your contentment with what you have can be a peaceful time of life. The woman was quite content to use her tattered and worn Bible, but God can supply our every need.

Now, I don't share this as a shining lesson in how to be content on my part because the extra Bible was probably purchased as a need to feed the greed since I am a consummate shopper of bargains, but the Lord used my misdirection to his great gain in spite of my failings in my early Christian life.

9. Paul states of the giving of the Philippians that it was fruit to their account. He was joyful over their assistance, but his greater joy was that they had learned to share with others in the ministry.

Pastor, I trust that you will learn this lesson. Do not hover over the offering to see how much you have to spend, but hover over it in the joy of knowing your people are learning to give to their Lord's ministry through their church.

Giving should always be received as the outpouring of the people's hearts to their Lord, not the needed funds to adequately fund the salary and needs of people. It is God that supplies the need, remember?

10. In verse 19 Constable comments that God is the all sufficient One that will supply all your need, but not your all your greed. What an important part of theology that certainly contradicts the "God wants every believer to be rich." crowd.

Matthew six is quite strong passage in the fact that he takes care of the needs of the birds, but I have yet to see a bird wearing a fur coat, or a diamond bracelet, nor do I see them living in seven bedroom houses with attached five car garage.

11. Some commentaries take great length to say that we can accomplish great things in Christ, but on the other hand, we can waste a lot of time waiting for Him to do it. There is a balance between sitting and waiting for Christ to move mountains and our grabbing a shovel and digging in. If we are not using the talents, the gifts and the brains He gave us to do what He has called us to do, He will not be doing great things through us.

Paul knew this. He went on his treks across history but allowed Christ to fill in all the details. Paul did the preaching where he ended up whether in a city or a prison and God gave the increase.

Do not mistake resting in Christ for the recliner in front of the television set. I think that many today are very mixed up in this area.

12. In verse 14 Paul mentions, "ye did communicate with my affliction." The Life Application Bible points out that this is a much more intimate phrase than the English indicates. It relates to the Philippian Christians relating closely with his situation and his needs as he was about sharing the Gospel with the lost. They were feeling his need and wanted to assist in that ministry by assisting him in a physical way.

This is the basis of much missionary support in our churches today. The congregation is touched by the need of a people, as well as the missionary's burden to reach that people. The congregation makes a decision to enter into a partnership with this missionary to reach the people. They become an integrated part of the ministry of the man to the people. There is indication that the congregation will have part in the fruit and reward of this ministry.

This is the reason pastors that you need to have missionaries in your churches speaking of those lost people, and telling your people of the burden they have to reach these potential children of God. If the congregation does not hear, they will not be burdened.

I fear this is exactly why many missionaries find it hard to schedule meetings. Pastors are too worried about the churches bottom line to allow other possible infringements upon the church's income. I must remind the reader of an old tried and worn phrase, "I have never seen a mission minded church with financial troubles." Never! Not that there might not be some, but of all the churches I have visited and heard of - this is a true statement.

Most mission minded pastors know of the excitement and vitality that comes with having missionaries in and out of the church. They know the challenge that outside speakers can be for their congregations and they know the life that missions seems to bring to the church body. At the least it gives you something to pray about besides Aunt Tillie's big toe.

As I read and study this book of Paul's it is obvious that most any pastor would love to minister to a group of people such as the Philippians. They were a mixed bag of folks that were working well together and they were open to the Lord's leading to share financially with Paul. There was seemingly fair unity in the group and they were busy about the Lord's work.

May the churches of America find a pattern in this book that would change the way they try to do church.