

Epistle to the Philippians

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(1985 Study)

The following notes on the Epistle to the Philippians were compiled from a Bible study led by Bro. Frank Shallieu in 1985. They should be utilized with the following understanding:

1. Each paragraph preceded by “**Comment**” or “**Q**” (an abbreviation for “**Question**”) was introduced by someone other than Bro. Frank.
2. The original study did not follow a prepared text but was extemporaneous in nature.
3. Although the transcriber tried to faithfully, with the Lord’s help, set forth the thoughts that were presented in the study, the notes are not a verbatim rendering and, therefore, should be considered in that context.
4. Finally, Bro. Frank did not review the notes for possible errors that may have inadvertently entered the text.

With this disclaimer in mind, may the notes be a blessing as a useful study guide.

EPISTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS

(Study led by Bro. Frank Shallieu in 1985)

Phil. 1:1 Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:

Paul wrote the Epistle to the Philippians while he was under house arrest in Rome. The epistle was from both Paul and Timothy, for Timothy was with him when the letter was written to the elders, the deacons, and the rest of the church at Philippi. A chief city of Macedonia, Philippi was a stopping-off point in the land route to Athens, Corinth, and Rome. This land route was especially used at certain times of the year when the sea route was treacherous.

Philippi was an *established* ecclesia with bishops (elders) and deacons (plural). By including them in the salutation, Paul showed that he knew them *personally*. There were several reasons for this personal touch, as follows:

1. The brethren in this class were sympathetic to Paul in all his needs. They sent financial help, as well as spiritual assistance, and cooperated with Paul in connection with his ministry.
2. Although a little inland, Philippi was one of the first landing points when Paul left Troas in Asia Minor. Upon arriving, he had a notable experience. On the sabbath day, he went down by the riverside “where prayer was wont to be made” and witnessed to the women assembled there. Among the women was Lydia of Thyatira, who became the first Gentile convert in Europe as a result of Paul’s preaching (Acts 16:11-15). She consecrated quickly.
3. Paul and Silas were imprisoned for casting a demon out of a woman who brought much money to her masters by soothsaying. The incident with the Philippian jailer followed. Paul and Silas were beaten with many stripes and then thrown in prison without due cause. While in pain, Paul and Silas prayed and sang aloud at midnight. Of course the other prisoners heard them and noticed this *unusual rejoicing* attitude. (Paul and Silas rejoiced at being persecuted for *righteousness*’ sake. The normal attitude would have been anger and cursing, so the prisoners noted the unusual behavior.) *Suddenly* an earthquake opened *all* cell doors and loosed *all* prisoner bands. However, none of the prisoners left their cells, for they were too startled that God had answered the prayers. Then Paul took command. The jailer feared for his life if any prisoners escaped, but all were there. In gratitude and humility, the jailer asked Paul, “What must I do to be saved?” and then bathed Paul’s and Silas’s wounds. Meanwhile, the other prisoners were *afraid* to leave lest perhaps they would be struck dead, and the jailer was able to go and relock the cell doors. Subsequently the jailer and all his household were converted. Paul always had fond memories of this incident, which is recorded in Acts 16:16-40.

The Philippian class prospered and was very zealous with regard to Paul’s missionary activities there. Probably the jailer had had previous feelings toward God, and this whole scenario with Paul’s arrest was enacted for his benefit. What a startling example of one being called!

Phil. 1:2 Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Verse 2 was a characteristic greeting of the Apostle Paul: “Grace and peace from the Father and the Lord Jesus.”

Phil. 1:3 I thank my God upon every remembrance of you,

“I thank my God upon every remembrance [mention] of you.” Whenever Paul heard a testimony about the Philippian class, he always thanked God.

Phil. 1:4 Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy,

Phil. 1:5 For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now;

Paul was not saying that he mentioned the Philippian brethren in every prayer he uttered. The thought was that in every prayer which had them in mind, he included the fellowship aspect. In other words, "Always in every prayer of mine for you all, I joyfully pray for your enlargement and even stronger establishment in the Lord."

In other epistles, Paul anguished in prayer, even with tears, because of problems in the ecclesia. The contrast here is that his prayers for the Philippians were *joyful*. There is very little reprimand in this epistle; the letter is *gentle*.

Phil. 1:6 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:

"Being confident ... that he [God] which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ [that is, from 1878 on]." The "day of Jesus Christ" is that part of the Second Advent in which the sleeping saints and those who subsequently make their calling and election sure *personally* see Christ and get their commendation (see Phil. 1:10; 2:16). They could then all rejoice together at having won the battle of life. Paul looked forward to this joyful reunion and was hopeful that several from the class at Philippi would be there. He prayed that the fellowship begun back there might continue until death so that the joyous reunion would take place at the Second Advent at the appointed time prior to the establishment of the Kingdom on earth.

Phil. 1:7 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 defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace.

"Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all." It was appropriate for Paul to think of the Philippian brethren in the confident, favorable manner just expressed.

The Philippians partook of Paul's bonds by being so sympathetic. Not only did they spiritually identify with him, but also when any of the brethren went that way, for Philippi was a natural stopping place by the land route, the traveler would bring greetings from the ecclesia to Paul. Thus on occasion, individuals went to see Paul. An example will come up later on in the epistle.

"I have you in my heart" should be "Ye have me in your heart" (see King James margin and *Diaglott*). It was right for Paul to think so kindly and confidently of the Philippian brethren because *they* had him in *their* heart. Paul was saying, "It is proper for me to remember you, since you are in constant remembrance of me."

Phil. 1:8 For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ.

The "bowels" are the seat of emotion, compassion, sympathy, etc. This expression is a deeper term than the "heart" because the whole constitution is affected. Fear and strong emotions affect the bowels adversely, but these were "bowels" of *mercy* from the standpoint of a Christian and his spiritual welfare. If Jesus were "physically" present with the Philippians, he would be solicitous for their welfare. Paul also felt this interest based on their deeds and attitudes. Just as Jesus would have bowels of mercy for them, so Paul had a similar gratitude of remembrance and a desire for them to make their calling and election sure.

“For God is my record [witness]” is an *emphatic* statement. We should be mighty sure a statement is accurate if this phrase is attached. It is easy to be generous with the lips, and much more difficult to be so with deeds, but *both* lips and deeds are commendable.

Phil. 1:9 And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment;

Phil. 1:10 That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ;

Notice, Paul did not just say “that your love may abound yet more” but “*more and more.*” He prayed that their love would *continue* to abound “in knowledge and in all judgment” so that they might “approve things that are excellent.”

The *Diaglott* uses the word “perception” instead of “judgment”: “that your love may yet abound more and more in knowledge, and in all perception, in order that you may examine the differences of things.” In other words, in order to know and approve the things that are “excellent,” we must be able to recognize the things that are not so excellent. We need discrimination of mind so that we can judge between that which is profitable and that which is unprofitable. We need the ability to discern principles, which guide us in perception, and this ability comes to us through knowledge and understanding. We need much more than just emotional love; we need to have an *instructed* Godlike love. Verses 9 and 10 are excellent proof texts of the necessity for knowledge and judgment (or perception) with love, for they go hand in hand.

Phil. 1:11 Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

Paul was certainly wishing the Philippians well—and doing so in an elaborate manner! There was not much reproof at all. Paul was *happy* with the state of development they had shown thus far, even though there was always room for improvement. He was saying, “May this love, knowledge, perception, and the fruits of righteousness grow even deeper and expand more and more until death. Then in the day of Christ, you will hear, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant’” (Matt. 25:23).

The various circumstances, problems, and levels of spiritual development brought out by the different epistles are interesting. We would all hope to be in an ecclesia arrangement where this kind of “Philippian” commendation could be written. The epistles to the early churches contained *general* admonitions and encouragement that were applicable to *everyone* in every class, but certain epistles also had *specific* admonitions for a *specific* problem in a particular ecclesia. The value of studying all of the epistles is that they will fit the “man of God” in whatever situation he finds himself; he will be edified by reading them all.

Phil. 1:12 But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel;

Paul’s house arrest resulted in “the furtherance of the gospel.” All of the Roman soldiers knew he was there because of his suffering for Christ. Not only could he witness in that circumstance, but his *example* under Nero’s rule gave strength to other brethren. And while there, Paul had the opportunity (and time) to write many epistles to the brethren. Although he was chained to a soldier with each changing of the guard, he had liberties while under house arrest. He could still give discourses and write. Moreover, the soldiers thus received an indirect witness as well, and word spread of the gospel message. Some right in “Caesar’s [Nero’s] household” became

Christians (Phil 4:22). What zeal Paul had!

Phil. 1:13 So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places;

Paul was conspicuous and well situated in his house arrest, and he capitalized on this providence.

Phil. 1:14 And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

Paul's example led other brethren to speak boldly "without fear." The *Diaglott* uses the wording "the greater number of the brethren"; that is, the greater number waxed more confident because of Paul's bonds.

Phil. 1:15 Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will:

Phil. 1:16 The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds:

Phil. 1:17 But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel.

How startling that some brethren preached Christ out of envy and strife! They were actually *jealous* that Paul was on a crest of popularity, even though he was under house arrest. True brethren, the majority, preached Christ boldly from the heart with sincerity and goodwill, but a minority element caused a lot of trouble, "supposing to add affliction to my [Paul's] bonds." Although the majority in most classes genuinely sympathized with and supported Paul, an underlying minority opposition caused trouble as, for example, in Corinth. The problems arose from two elements: (1) *Jews who became Christians* felt that the Law had to be strictly obeyed. However, the Christian is under grace, for otherwise, all would be condemned. The *principles* of the Law must be obeyed but not the letter, for the letter of the Law killeth (2 Cor. 3:6). (2) *Jews outside the Church* (those who remained Jews and did not convert) also opposed Paul, some even plotting his murder. Some feigned sympathy with Paul and the Christian cause but were actually conniving situations that would cause the death sentence to come upon him.

Verses 16 and 17 are an elaboration or explanation of verse 15. Some preached Christ out of goodwill; others preached out of contention, supposing to add affliction to Paul's bonds. However, Paul viewed the persecution as increased *glory*. He had the proper viewpoint.

Q: How could the unconverted Jews who wanted to kill Paul "preach Christ"?

A: They could feign an interest and then, by being in the audience, make harmful suggestions. It would be a "setup" situation. The Scriptures allow for both an *outside* and an *inside* Jewish element to preach out of envy, strife, and/or insincerity.

The influence of Paul's courageous preaching emboldened others to speak about Christ, including some with envy and malicious intent, but nevertheless, all of the preaching was popularizing the name of Jesus. "Who is Christ?" the public would ask. "What is this religion all about?" Those who preached out of envy were inside the Church. Those outside preached with malice. Christians who were envious were aspiring to positions of leadership and hence manifested a Nicolaitan disposition, trying to minimize Paul and magnify themselves. The principle was the same when the Roman Catholic Church condemned Martin Luther's writings.

Some of the people were curious to find out what was being condemned. The gospel was a new message in a foreign capital in a heathen part of the world, and word spread about the

unusual prisoner Jesus from the little land of Israel, a presumptuous nation, a thorn in the flesh, that dared to oppose the Roman legions. And later Paul was imprisoned by the cruel emperor Nero. For a relatively unknown person to be brought to Rome for trial before the emperor indicated he must be someone of importance or else very notorious. Thus Paul, too, aroused curiosity.

The same principle was seen in Moses' day. Two who were preaching in the camp were brought to his attention as being unauthorized to preach (Num. 11:26-29). However, Moses, who had no envy, replied, "I would to God that *everyone* would preach." Moses had the opposite (and correct) viewpoint.

Phil. 1:18 What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.

Paul rejoiced *however* Christ was preached—in pretense or in truth.

Phil. 1:19 For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,

Phil. 1:20 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.

"For I know that this shall turn to my salvation ... according to my earnest *expectation* and my hope [confidence], that in nothing I shall be ashamed." How would the preaching turn to Paul's salvation? (1) If Paul's bonds were added to by this envious and malicious element and he faithfully endured, he would be laying up treasure in heaven. (2) If by faithfully declaring the gospel, he gave strength to the sincere brethren, that also would be accredited to his eventual reward.

"Through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ." The brethren at Philippi prayed earnestly for Paul, and he was showing his appreciation. He wanted the Holy Spirit as it was *exercised* in Jesus. Jesus accepted and submitted to his sufferings for truth, and Paul wanted (and had) this same attitude. He desired to be prepared for whatever experiences lay ahead—and to act in the way most pleasing to the Father.

Some misinterpret verses 19 and 20 by saying that Paul felt a sense of weakness and need for the prayers of the brethren so that he would have sufficient strength and courage. This is not what Paul was asking for, because he had an *earnest expectation*, a *real hope*, not an "if" or a "maybe" situation. Hope is *faith that is strong*; it is not a weakness that asks for strength. Paul was asking that he would preach in the same *spirit* that Jesus had, and not just speak boldly like a warrior. Paul saw soldiers going by all around him, but he wanted to preach with the sandals of *peace*. He wanted to be strong and staunch in the truth but in a Christlike manner, not in strife or vainglory or for the wrong motive. He asked for the prayers of the Philippian brethren along this line. Since he was the most conspicuous representative of Christ in all Italy at that time, he wanted to speak and act wisely and lovingly and manifest the spirit that Christ had manifested. Otherwise, all his boldness would amount to nothing. "Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing" (1 Cor. 13:3). Giving one's body to be burned is good *if* it is done in love, for that would mean one has died for the Lord.

Paul was not at all fearful, and he brought that fact out very emphatically later on in this epistle. He was not wavering, yet one could be unwavering and not make the Little Flock. Paul was more concerned with being faithful in properly discharging his duty so that Christ would be

“magnified” in his body *whether he lived or died*. He did not care if he lived or died, but he wanted to do either in the *right spirit*.

Phil. 1:21 For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

The thought is, “For me to live is Christ, and to die is *more* Christ.”

Phil. 1:22 But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not.

Phil. 1:23 For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better:

Phil. 1:24 Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.

Phil. 1:25 And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith;

Verses 22-25 give us an insight into Paul’s hope for the immediate future, for his expectation of whether to live or die. He now felt that he would live, that somehow God would deliver him out of his imprisonment. His judgment was just about due at the end of his two-year house arrest. The Roman government would make a decision. Either he would be exonerated and immediately set free, or he would be executed. The decision moment was at hand, and Paul felt he would be set free—in spite of those who were trying to add to his bonds. He would be exonerated for the sake of the brethren, for their “furtherance and joy of faith.”

The word “depart” in verse 23 means “return” in the Greek, as the Pastor showed. Otherwise, this verse would be a contradiction, implying that the minute the Christian dies, he is with Jesus.

In the *Diaglott*, “depart” is translated “loose again.” A footnote reads as follows:

“To *anulusai*, the *loosing again* or the *returning*, being what Paul earnestly desired, could not be *death* or *dissolution*, as implied by the word *depart* in the common version, because it seemed a matter of indifference to him, which of the two—*life* or *death*—he should choose; but he longed for the *anulusai*, which was a *third thing*, and very much to be preferred to either of the other *two things* alluded to. The word *anulusai* occurs in Luke 12:36, and is there rendered *return*;—‘Be you like men waiting for their master, when he will *return*,’ &c. Jesus had taught his disciples that he would come again, or *return*, John 14:3,18; thus, also, the angels said to them at his ascension, Acts 1:11. Paul believed this doctrine and taught it to others, and was looking for and waiting for the Savior from heaven, Phil. 3:20; 1 Thess. 1:10; 4:16,17, when his mortal body would put on immortality, and so he would ‘ever be *with the Lord*.’”

If we do not see the “returning” as a *third thing*, there would seem to be a contradiction. Note, too, that Paul spoke of dying as “gain,” as being superior to living, for when a Christian dies, he seals his testimony and thus the verdict. However, to come back, or return, with the Lord at his Second Advent in glory and honor and in a position to bless others would be the best of all. Paul tried to bless people with his mouth, his logic, and his thinking, but to return with the Lord would mean he could perform deeds with that work.

Thus there were three conditions, but only two possibilities *immediately* faced Paul: to live or to die. The three conditions were as follows:

1. To live is profitable (to live is Christ).
2. To die is gain.
3. To come back with Christ at the Second Advent is *more* gain (“far better”).

Phil. 1:26 That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again.

Phil. 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;

“Only let your conversation [conduct] be as it becometh the gospel of Christ.” The conduct of the Philippians was not to be predicated on whether Paul was actually present with them. He was saying that the Philippians should be faithful regardless of his presence or absence.

Even this thought was gently stated compared to other epistles. Later we will find out there was a little problem with two personalities in the class but not problems like those in the other letters, such as strong admonitions against immorality and being fettered to the Law (Phil. 4:2).

Philippi was Paul’s first church in the new continent. He had a vision to “come over into Macedonia, and help us” (Acts 16:9). When he obeyed and went to Macedonia, Philippi was the first church to be established. Paul spoke endearingly of this church, and in fact, it was probably his “favorite ecclesia,” if we can use such a term.

The gospel was a *new* message going to a *new* area. If the gospel had been in Philippi for centuries, Paul’s advice would have been along other lines than “stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.”

What is the thought of “with one mind”? There can be differences of opinion and personality, but one doctrine should be espoused amidst an alien territory; that is, there should be unity in expressing the doctrine to others. Certainly differences should not be brought to the attention of the public. There should be unity, not a dissembling nature, and “one mind” on the *fundamental* truths. With regard to “striving *together* for the faith of the gospel,” a marginal reference is Jude 3, which tells us to “earnestly contend for *the* faith [the fundamentals] which was once delivered unto the saints.”

While the Philippians had not yet been confronted with the problem of the Judaizing element coming in, Paul indicated later in the epistle that he felt the influence was quite near, that it was approaching (Phil. 3:2). He *forewarned* the class so that they would properly deal with the problem.

Phil. 1:28 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.

Verse 28 shows how *confident* Paul was. For him to give such advice to the Philippians means he was not the least bit terrified by his adversaries.

If physical persecution and house-to-house hunting for Christians were prevalent today as in past centuries, many would be terror-stricken. A number of Christians were even thrown to the lions. But Paul urged the Philippians to be like him—the more he suffered, the more it resulted in *gain* for him, for he was laying up treasures in heaven (Matt. 6:20). However, they were to be sure that the suffering was for *right-doing*, for preaching the gospel properly, etc. The Christian is to sing and rejoice when persecuted for righteousness’ or Christ’s sake. “Rejoice, and be *exceeding glad* ... for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you”

(Matt. 5:12). Persecution should be viewed as an *honor*, for it is a privilege to suffer for Jesus.

To be “*terrified*” is an “evident token of perdition.” If we are charged with guilt, and we act and look guilty even though innocent, we encourage the ones judging us to be harsh and feel vindicated. To act shaky when accused of being of the Adversary only gives credence to the decision of guilt. However, if we are bold and courageous, if we manifest a proper spirit and no terror, and if we meet the experience in a relatively calm manner, then at least *some* thinking people will be rightly exercised by witnessing our experiences. The faith structure of the individual receiving the experience must be sound so that others will witness it and want to investigate the situation.

To the contrary, cowardice and faltering actions do not inspire the public to look into the matter. Instead people would feel we have already condemned ourselves. In the persecution at the end of the age, some of the Great Company class, under pressure in the beginning, will falter. Later on, they will get more sanity regarding the proper attitude and be strengthened to be faithful. Thus some of the brethren will be terrified in the future, at least momentarily.

Both with the Jews and with some heathen religions, the thought was that a person’s God would make him prosper if he obeyed and would make him suffer if he disobeyed. The Christian had to view suffering differently—as necessary, as a privilege, and as a sign God was dealing with him.

The intent of the “adversaries” was to obliterate the Christians, just as Jesus’ ignominious crucifixion was supposed to end the matter. His shame was supposed to not only shut up his mouth but stop his followers as well. The destruction, or “perdition,” was intended to silence them, but in reality, the persecution only enhanced God’s plan. The death of Jesus was a necessary part of the *salvation* process.

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;

Phil. 1:30 Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me.

The Philippians were not to be surprised if they ended up with the same experience Paul had. What they saw him suffer, they should also expect to endure.

Phil. 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,

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

Verses 1 and 2 suggest there was some contention in the class, even though the letter as a whole is peaceful and gentle with little criticism. Philippians 4:2 alludes to the problem: “I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord.” Paul was urging two sisters in the class to be of the same mind. Philippians 2:2 is an admonition to the whole class to be “of one accord, of one mind.” Paul was trying to reconcile some friction that existed in the class. Evidently, these two sisters were outstanding in activity and in espousing the doctrine of Christ. Notice that Paul did not criticize the nature of the doctrine itself.

To be “*likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind*” does not refer to doctrine. On the one hand, verse 2 should not be used to justify all being alike when there are serious doctrinal differences and violations of principle. On the other hand, if there is reasonable doctrinal harmony and just a conflict of personality, mannerism, technique, etc.,

there should be like-mindedness—in fact, it should be striven for.

Verse 2 and certain Psalms are *incorrectly* used to justify harmony *regardless, no matter what*, but there are exceptions. Principle should not be compromised. Certain doctrinal differences are permissible, but differences on fundamentals would properly prevent like-mindedness and/or working together.

Phil. 2:3 Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.

For the word “strife,” the *Diaglott* translation has “party-spirit.” It would be interesting to know what the two women, Euodias and Syntyche, were engaged in, but the Scriptures do not elaborate on the nature of the difference. However, we can assume it was not based on a serious doctrinal deviation. Sometimes differences arise over *how* something is to be done.

In fact, verse 3 *could not pertain to doctrine*, for it would be hypocritical to esteem another Christian as better than ourselves because he held a doctrinal view we considered to be *wrong*. And the more serious the error, the worse it would be to esteem the proponent as better. Rather, the verse pertains to mannerism, method, etc.—to being engaged in the Lord’s service. There was a serious enough difference along this line in the Philippian church to divide the class, some being sympathetic to Euodias and some to Syntyche. As long as principle was not involved, the class should have cooperated to further the cause of Christ, looking *outward from self* to the Lord’s cause.

If two brethren have two different methods of service, they can *both* be active and yet be harmonious. A problem occurs when one individual or both individuals want to force the issue in a particular direction. If both suggestions are good, let those who wish to, pursue whichever method they choose. Of course reconciling to one method would probably be the most desirable, but if this cannot be worked out, both methods should be allowed, although *not in a party spirit*. The class should recognize that both brethren are sincerely trying to serve the Lord. The caution is not to devour one another.

Phil. 2:4 Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

Paul wrote from Rome where he was under house arrest. He had observed the characteristic of many brethren to mind the things of their *own* and not be particularly concerned with the things of *others*. “Look not every man on his own things [only], but every man also on the things of others.” Brethren were to watch out not only for their own highest spiritual interests but also for the best spiritual interests of others—and hence be “likeminded.” The interests, rights, abilities, talents, and spiritual welfare of others are to be considered.

Phil. 2:5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

In changing the subject here, Paul set an example of how we should be like Jesus.

Comment: A good *Reprint* article is No. 5810, “A Little Talk by the Way.”

Phil. 2:6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

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:

Phil. 2:8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

The King James and modern translations give the wrong thought in verse 6 by making it Trinitarian. The Revised Standard Version is good for verses 5 and 6: “Have this mind among yourselves, which you have in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped.” Verse 6 is also rendered properly in the *Diaglott*: “who, though being in God’s form, yet did not meditate a usurpation to be like God.” And the *Diaglott* footnote for “robbery” in verse 6 is excellent:

“*Harpagmon* being a word of very rare occurrence, a great variety of translations have been given. The following may serve as examples:—‘who—did not think it a matter to be earnestly desired’—*Clarke*. ‘Did not earnestly affect’—*Cyprian*. ‘Did not think of eagerly retaining’—*Wakefield*. ‘Did not regard—as an object of solicitous desire’—*Stuart*. ‘Thought not—a thing to be seized’—*Sharpe*. ‘Did not eagerly grasp’—*Kneeland*. ‘Did not violently strive’—*Dickinson*. ‘Did not meditate a usurpation’—*Turnbull*.”

It was Satan, not Jesus, who tried to usurp power and be equal to God. Jesus is the example of what *to do*. Satan is the example of what *not to do*. The angels were all made in the *likeness* of God and were “sons,” whereas the word “form” seems to imply the same body. Instead the thought is that Jesus is a *spirit being*, as are all of the angels and Jehovah Himself. However, there are degrees of spirit life, and only God had the divine nature at that time. Jesus was in a form of God but on a lower or much more subordinate plane. The modern translations try to prohibit such a realization by putting Jesus, before he came down here, on the *same* level as the Father.

Comment: The context explains verse 6. We were just told to esteem others better than ourselves, and Jesus is the prime example of this humility. If he had tried to be equal with God and had usurped his Father’s power, that action would jar with the whole lesson of humility.

Comment: Modern translations give the thought that Jesus was equal with God and just submitted to the arrangement out of humility. Then, strangely, Trinitarians accept the Scripture that God highly exalted Jesus (Phil. 2:9). If Jesus were God, how could God do this to Himself—and especially when both were supposed to have equal power?

Isaiah 14:13,14 reads, “For thou [Satan] hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds: I will be like the most High.” Right away this text about Satan’s ambitions exposes a wrong principle, and of course Jesus would not have entertained such thoughts.

Originally, Satan had great power and beauty to even presume to do such a thing. The Prophet Ezekiel pictured him as an anointed covering cherub and as having jewels for a covering (Ezek. 28:12-15). He also had honors, distinctions, and liberties to walk up and down among the stars of God; that is, he had the liberties and capabilities of roaming through God’s universe. Humans are limited to the earth, to what is physical, but Satan was up high and could come down to lower levels. We can sometimes go down to the level of insects in the sense of observing, studying, seeing, and magnifying them, but we cannot go above ourselves. Satan was strong, beautiful, and brilliant before he fell. His problem was that he lacked proper meekness and perspective in regard to God. It was *wrong* for him to presume to do something without first checking with the Father.

Satan dishonored God by presumptuously wanting to be a god to the human race and thus not fitting in with the Father’s plans. No matter what the motive, one would have to be *invited* to play such a prominent role in the divine plan. Jesus took not this honor on himself but *was called*, as was Aaron (Heb. 5:4). Aaron *was made* high priest—he did not assume or meditate that

position. The Adversary, however, had plans for capturing the human family. He befriended Adam and Eve as a patron, asking, “Did God say to you that if you partook of the tree, you would die?” Next Satan implied that God was lying. In making this suggestion, Satan, who felt he could not die, was acting *apart* from God without checking. Then he added, “Ye shall not surely die” (Gen. 3:4). To prove his statement, he caused the serpent to eat fruit from the forbidden tree. Not only did the serpent not die, but it was the wisest creature in the Garden of Eden. Through Satan’s manipulation, Eve succumbed. By saying that if Adam and Eve ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they would become like gods, Satan made God’s motive appear impure when the prohibition against eating was given.

The situation with the two sisters in the Philippian church who had a difference of opinion on how to do something was similar. Instead of thinking out their *own* methods and techniques, they should have checked with the Apostle Paul. By seeking his advice and consideration, they would have solved their dilemma, but instead they acted out of vainglory.

Satan did not want to be *above* God, for he could see that God had certain prerogatives and powers no other being possessed, but he wanted to be an emperor *like* God and have a universe of his own. That type of meditation, without authentic encouragement, was a real dishonor to God.

Comment: The two sisters may have been involved only in cooking, serving, and providing lodging for the brethren, yet differences arose, just as they do with us. For example, “Who will put up Bro. A tonight?”

Reply: Bringing in Jesus helps us to see his submissiveness to the Father. If the two sisters had similarly been submissive to the Apostle Paul’s advice, there would not have been a party spirit, and the good of the truth and the brotherhood would have been served.

The careful wording Paul used (for example, Jesus “made himself of no reputation”) suggests that some in the class—at least the two sisters—were acting out of strife and vainglory. It is also possible these two were affecting the whole ecclesia with their differences. If the problem was not settled, there might be a split that was unwarranted.

Therefore, the admonition to be “of one mind” was not along doctrinal lines but pertained to the *modus operandi*, the manner in which certain things were being pursued (verse 2). It is wrong to use this text for doctrinal matters.

Verse 7 states that Jesus was made “in the likeness of men.” Romans 8:3 says he was made “in the likeness of sinful flesh”—not that he was sinful but that he had the likeness of human beings down here on planet Earth, which is benighted with sin and the curse of death.

When was Jesus “found in fashion as a man” (verse 8)? This experience occurred at Jordan when he presented himself for baptism. At that time, the heavens “were opened unto him,” and the memory of his preexistence with the Father came to him (Matt. 3:16). He fled into the wilderness to meditate on these thoughts that flooded his mind. Surely as a little infant, he did not know about his preexistence. Some feel he would have known at age 12 when he went to the Temple and said, “I must be about my Father’s business,” but being very advanced for his age, he was inquiring about the circumstances of Messiah (Luke 2:49). Many would have told him what the angels said to the shepherds at the time of his birth—that he was the Savior (Messiah). He also would have known about the three wise men who came and gave their treasures, which he, Mary, and Joseph lived off until they could return to Israel.

At the Temple at age 12, Jesus would have inquired, “What about the Savior? What is his mission?” Also, he could read the Old Testament prophecies. However, he did not know about

his preexistence until Jordan. He would have heard about Simeon, who was at the Temple when Mary and Joseph brought him as a babe. Although an old man, Simeon was promised he would not die until he had seen the child who would be the ultimate Savior of the world (Luke 2:25-35). All of these unusual experiences Jesus would have known about at age 12 but not about his preexistence. Incidentally, the narration of some of the events used the word “son,” so it was logical, even at age 12, for Jesus to address Jehovah as “Father” (Isa. 9:6).

At consecration at age 30, Jesus was found “as a man”; that is, his mind was unlocked with regard to his previous existence. With these thoughts flooding his mind, he “became obedient unto death.” Before his consecration, Jesus did not know what to be obedient to. After Jordan, he knew he had to obey unto death, unto crucifixion. In other words, Jesus found *himself* at Jordan. (Verse 8 does not say that others found him.)

Hebrews 5:8,9 reads, “Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.” In other words, Jesus received instructions before he came here, but in carrying out the instructions, he learned certain lessons that perfected him. He came “to give his life a ransom for many,” but his experience down here prepared him in other ways to be that Savior (Matt. 20:28). That the experience would qualify him to be a better High Priest, he did not realize previously. He came to do his Father’s will—period! For example, he was not rationalizing, “Why did I have to be born a little baby?” He just obeyed and learned as he went along. “I thank thee, O Father, ... because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes” (Matt. 11:25). Jesus had not realized before that God generally chose those with very little education and poor backgrounds to be destined as future kings and priests. He made this statement with spontaneity, for it was a *new* insight. Thus here is an example of how Jesus had to learn after his consecration, when he was an adult.

Phil. 2:9 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:

Because Jesus humbled himself and was obedient, God highly exalted him. It is understood that the Father is excepted in this statement, as in 1 Corinthians 15:27, which is a good text to show that the Father and the Son are not coequal. And verse 9 here in Philippians is just common sense, for He who exalted Jesus to such a high position had to possess still superior powers in order to accomplish the exaltation.

Paul started this second chapter by urging the Philippians to all be of one mind. Then he introduced Jesus as the best example of like-mindedness. He traced Jesus’ attitude as a way of telling the brethren in Philippi that their attitudes should be similar. He ended up by saying the Father has decreed that Jesus is to be honored. In the present life, the Philippians were to be like Jesus *before* his exaltation. After his exaltation, every knee will bow to Jesus, but before that, he had a different spirit, a spirit of humility. The point was, now that Jesus had been exalted, *he* should also be exalted in *their* efforts. Then whatever the class did would honor the name of *Christ*. Jesus is preeminent, and all else should be subservient to that cause. As far as possible, the brethren were to serve with *one* mind and *unity* of spirit in honor of *Jesus* (rather than to serve individual personalities in the class). The danger there was a party spirit.

However, we are to judge actions and personalities. Back there some were masquerading falsely as apostles, and it was necessary to exercise judgment. The brethren could *honor Christ* by seeing *who had the mind of Christ*. God does use leaders in certain works, but we are to follow “leaders” only as we observe that they are following the Lord. Even with Paul, the brethren were to follow him only to the degree that he followed the *Master*. We cooperate with others in proportion as we see they have the mind of *Christ*, and not on a personality or accomplishment basis. Some people are brilliant and have done great works, but we must make sure they

comport with the Word.

Phil. 2:10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;

Phil. 2:11 And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

In verse 10, the supplied word “things,” used three times, is misleading. The *Diaglott* translation has “those,” which is a better rendering. “In order that in the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those beneath.”

“Under the earth” refers to the grave condition. Those in the grave *must come forth* in order to bow the knee. This phrase does not prove there is life after death now, for the fulfillment of the verse is future. At present, not all on earth are bowing to Jesus, let alone those sleeping in death.

Notice that the confessing of Jesus as Lord is to the *Father’s* glory; that is, we honor the Father by honoring the Son. Jesus is the best *conceptual* image we have of God. He is like God being manifest in the flesh. He is the best example we could have of what God is like. However, the Father would have to be far superior because he *brought forth* the Son.

One day the veil cast over the minds of the human race will be broken, and all will understand the relationship of Father and Son. It must be a terrific veil because all are blinded with few exceptions. For us to understand is *miraculous*.

Phil. 2:12 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.

Phil. 2:13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

A transposition gives the correct thought: “Wherefore ... as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but work out your own salvation with fear and trembling much more now in my absence, for it is *God* who worketh in you.” In other words, when Paul was in Philippi, the brethren diligently hearkened, and he could see their responsiveness. Now, in his absence, he desired that they continue in obedience. He wanted them to realize that although he was absent, *God* was present with them. Their diligence to serve God should persist whether or not Paul was physically there. They should serve not only with fear and trembling lest they lose their crown but also as if being in the presence of God. “Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it” (Heb. 4:1).

Comment: If Jesus feared and trembled in Gethsemane lest he had displeased the Father, then we who are so imperfect should feel that way even more.

Paul started this chapter urging the brethren to be of one mind and spirit and to esteem others better than self and to be lowly in mind. That thought, coupled with this verse, indicates some of the brethren in Philippi were quite confident. Instead there should have been a spirit of less confidence and a desire to be more submissive and meek.

The word translated “presence” in verse 12 is the Greek *parousia*. This usage in context is an excellent example of why it is correct to say the “*presence* of the Lord,” as opposed to his “return.” *Parousia* means “being present.” The fact that the *opposite* meaning is given here further qualifies *parousia*; namely, “presence” and “absence” are opposites, and the two words occur in the same verse.

“For it is *God* who works in us both to will and to do His good pleasure” (verse 13 paraphrase). The Philippians were not to be dependent on Paul or on any other personality for salvation because *God* was present with them and worked in them.

Phil. 2:14 Do all things without murmurings and disputings:

Verse 14, which is another clue as to the condition in the Philippian church, suggests that murmurings and disputations were taking place. For example, if there were two prominent personalities in the class and the class was split as far as some following one individual and the rest following the other, the two sides murmured against each other on certain issues.

However, this condition was evidently not very serious. It was just that Paul saw an incipient danger which, if pursued, could lead to a disastrous situation. Remember, Paul spoke of this class *very favorably*. We are exaggerating the situation in order to find out what the problem was. Otherwise, Paul would not have said, “Being confident ... that he [God] which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Phil. 1:6). Paul had great hopes for this ecclesia. Nevertheless, anyone, no matter how well or long he has run, can still go astray if warning signals are not heeded. Through the example especially of the two sisters, Paul seized the opportunity to give the entire class a lesson in unity and not murmuring.

By nature, some are extraverts and some are intraverts, but Paul’s message applied to all of the brethren. *All* were to meditate on these things, not just the two sisters. Paul did not want the brethren to take sides.

In considering others, we should first consider their *good* points so that we get a more balanced and rational perspective. We should not hastily enter into disputation, for doing so will harm others, as well as self. Paul followed this procedure in his epistles by first commending the class and then giving lessons and admonitions.

Phil. 2:15 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;

Why did Paul bring in this thought? The behavior of the Philippian brethren as a group was to be radically different from what was being done in the world as far as everyday life was concerned; namely, they were to shine like stars in the world. Therefore, if disputations and murmurings arose and the public knew about them, reproach would be brought on the name of Christ. The exception would be where *principle* was involved, for that would be a *justifiable* cause. Even the public can usually understand a clear-cut principle.

The consecrated are observed by the world, and sometimes a rebuke is issued: “But you are a Christian. You should not do that.” Such statements can shock us into realizing we have done wrong—as with Balaam’s ass. Balaam was on his way to get a reward, and the ass stopped in its tracks when it saw an invisible angel. Hence sometimes “dumb animals,” spiritually speaking, can warn the consecrated. They can also be a help under certain circumstances—consider the ravens who brought food to Elijah. However, sometimes those of the world, plus many of the consecrated, do not understand a proper stand. That is especially true with regard to the ecumenical spirit. All “Christians” should *not* unite and forget their doctrinal differences. The phrase used frequently today to urge members to remain in their congregations is, “There is no such thing as a perfect church.” The members are urged to stay within their situation regardless of what develops.

We are to shine as “lights” (as the *sun* and the *moon*) in the world. A footnote in the *Diaglott* reads, “*Phosteeres* is the name given to the sun and the moon in the Septuagint, Gen. 1:16.” That

is a *powerful* shining in contrast to the darkness of the world in sin and degradation. We stand out by not entering into the excesses of the world.

Phil. 2:16 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.

Paul wanted the Philippians to win the prize with him so that he might “rejoice in the day of Christ”—not just because he had run the course faithfully but because his laborers had also gained the chief prize. His joy would be increased to find them in the Little Flock too.

“Holding forth the word of life” is a phrase we use in connection with the Table of Shewbread (Exod. 25:30).

Phil. 2:17 Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all.

Phil. 2:18 For the same cause also do ye joy, and rejoice with me.

Paul was joyfully laying down his life for the brethren. Should the verdict be death to him as a Roman prisoner, he would rejoice that he had the privilege to die on behalf of Christ and his cause and the brethren. And conversely, the brethren should be happy if he made his calling and election sure. Stated another way, the brethren were to rejoice if Paul died for the cause of Christ. If he was rejoicing, they should rejoice with him.

Phil. 2:19 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.

Phil. 2:20 For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state.

Phil. 2:21 For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ’s.

Verse 19 shows the affection that Paul had for the Philippian brethren. Trusting they were prospering spiritually, he would be of “good comfort” when he learned of their state.

Paul commended Timothy very highly because he and Paul seemed to be the only two brethren who considered others and the cause of Christ rather than self. This condemnation was strong, especially since, generally speaking, this condition existed when the Apostle Paul himself was on the scene. The question would be, Was Paul referring to the general condition in *all* of the churches, or was he saying that among the brethren there with him in *Rome*, this was the situation?

Paul sent this Epistle to the Philippians by the hand of Epaphroditus, who had come from Philippi with a contribution or some other kind of help for Paul. Timothy was there in Rome with Paul, who intended to send him to the Philippians a little later (Phil. 1:1 and verse 19). Also, there was an ecclesia at Rome. From certain statements in the Second Epistle to Timothy, we know that conditions were not too good at this time. For example, “*only* Luke is with me” and “at my first answer *no man* stood with me” (2 Tim. 4:11,16).

Of the brethren there in Rome, only Timothy had a proper concern for the church at Philippi—perhaps because of a previous personal attachment Timothy had for the Philippian brethren. (At one point, Paul left Timothy behind in Troas, and Timothy may have spent time in Philippi.) At any rate, Paul was certainly giving Timothy a high recommendation, even likening him to his own *son* (verse 22).

However, even though Paul's strong statement in verses 20 and 21 seems to refer to just the Rome area, this tendency did exist elsewhere, as is stated in 2 Timothy 1:15, "All they which are in Asia be turned away from me." There was a great falling away by *classes* as regards their affection for Paul and the ministry he had performed on their behalf. Classes turned away from him, but individuals were another matter. That has probably been the history of the Church down through the age.

With regard to verse 21, some brethren would have had commitments and thus not been free to render certain kinds of service. Family and marital obligations or health could have been factors, but such restraints are not necessarily an indication of one's spiritual condition. However, Paul was not referring to mere obligations and earthly mortgages here. He was issuing a condemnation: "All seek their *own*, not the things which are Jesus Christ's." Whoever the "all" are, Timothy was the exception. Generally speaking, the proper type of dedication was lacking.

Incidentally, when Paul sent Timothy to Corinth, he was not too well received. Paul sent his best man, but the Corinthian brethren did not think too highly of Timothy. One reason was his youth, but in addition, he was not as fluent as Titus. When Titus was sent subsequently, the Corinthians highly esteemed him. Personality was a factor—and wrongly so.

Because of various commitments, some brethren might not have been able to go to Philippi, yet they could have been equally concerned if they had a sincere prayer interest for their brethren. However, Paul was saying there was not this kind of interest.

Phil. 2:22 But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel.

Recognizing Paul's superiority as an apostle and also as an older brother, Timothy served as a son assisting his father. Paul possessed age, maturity, and authority.

In what way did the Philippians "know the proof of him"; that is, in what way did they know that Timothy was like a son to Paul? Paul called Timothy "son" twice in the two epistles addressed to him: "my own *son* in the faith" (1 Tim. 1:2) and "my dearly beloved *son*" (2 Tim. 1:2). In addition, Paul called him "my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord" (1 Cor. 4:17). When Paul was executed, Timothy was left as the elder at Ephesus, probably the largest church, until the Apostle John came a little while later.

Phil. 2:23 Him therefore I hope to send presently, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me.

Paul planned to send Timothy to Philippi shortly.

Phil. 2:24 But I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly.

Paul hoped to be released from house arrest before long and also go to Philippi.

Phil. 2:25 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.

Phil. 2:26 For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick.

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.

Originally, Epaphroditus had come from Philippi with a gift (money, clothing, or something else), which was customary for the Philippians to do (Phil. 4:18). Although he encountered much difficulty in the journey to Paul, he was determined to complete the mission. He pressed on even with a sickness that continued unto Rome. And when he got there, it was no small task to find Paul in such a big city. Epaphroditus could easily have given up and gone back home, but he persisted despite what would have seemed like a legitimate excuse. He did contact Paul, and then the sickness was “nigh unto death.” Moreover, Epaphroditus got homesick in a way. Not only was he concerned for the Philippians because they were concerned for him, but also he desired to be back there. Family could have been a factor too, but the Scriptures do not say. Because of the diligence of Epaphroditus, Paul likened him to a “fellovsoldier,” a “companion in labour,” “my brother” (personalized), and the Philippians’ “messenger.”

The life of Epaphroditus was spared partly so that he could be a blessing to Paul. If he had died there in Rome, Paul would have had additional grief. Paul appreciated all that Epaphroditus had done on behalf of the Philippians and wanted him to be able to get back home.

The expression “sorrow upon sorrow” shows that Paul had some sorrow of which we are not informed. In the first chapter and early in this second chapter, Paul emphasized a joyful aspect. He told the Philippians not to sorrow because of his sufferings, for it was his privilege and joy to suffer for Christ. He was ready to die. Here, however, he admitted to some sorrow. Part of the sorrow could have been the lack of cooperation among the brethren, which led him to say, “All seek their own, and not the things of Jesus” (verse 21 paraphrase). Paul was not referring to his physical discomfiture, for that was accruing to his credit in the Kingdom.

Phil. 2:28 I sent him therefore the more carefully, that, when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful.

Phil. 2:29 Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation:

Phil. 2:30 Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me.

It is significant that Paul told the Philippians, “When Epaphroditus arrives with my message, render him honor and esteem.” Paul’s saying this suggests that Epaphroditus may not have been esteemed for doctrinal reasons, but he was willing to be sent as a messenger and in this role showed admirable qualities of character that the brethren should recognize. In other words, Epaphroditus was *more* than a messenger. Paul was saying, “When Epaphroditus returns to you, give him respect based on my testimony.” He deserved such esteem and probably had not received it previously.

The ending of verse 30 is misleading terminology in the King James Version: “to supply your lack of service toward me [personally].” The Living Bible has, “For he risked his life for the work of Christ and was at the point of death while trying to do for me the things you couldn’t do because you were far away.” Phillips Modern English reads, “For his loyalty to Christ brought him very near death—he risked his life to do for me in person what distance prevented you from doing.” The Revised Standard states, “For he nearly died for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete your service to me.” These translations give the proper thought, for earlier Paul had commended the Philippians. They were the one class that repeatedly remembered him in various circumstances.

Epaphroditus supplied the Philippians’ incapability to perform because of distance. They could not render personal service, so they sent him with the gift. As a *practice*, the Philippians

remembered Paul and helped him.

Phil. 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.

Phil. 3:2 Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision.

Phil. 3:3 For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

What was Paul saying with the statement “To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe”? What were the “same things”? He was referring to what follows, which is the same type of advice he wrote to some of the other churches. Paul was warning the Philippians as a safeguard. These issues (dogs, evil workers, and the concision) were not a problem yet, but they would be if the ecclesia was not on guard. If the problem had already arisen in Philippi as a big sore, it would have been grievous for Paul to write.

Paul was warning of a situation that could very well arise. In fact, it was only a matter of time until the class had the experience of the Judaizing element coming in and introducing the teaching that the Christian has to obey the Law. Paul had *repeatedly* discussed these issues with others, especially the concision, or Judaizing influence. Now he was warning the Philippians as a *precautionary* measure.

Also, Paul was writing this warning in case it was not the Lord’s will for him to go to Philippi in person. However, by Divine Providence, the letter was incorporated into Holy Writ so that it would be written to posterity, not just to the Philippians.

“Beware of dogs.” “Dogs” were those who had the tendency to bite and devour. Generally speaking, dogs were despised anciently because they were considered lazy scavengers. If meat was thrown, they greedily gobbled it as fast as they could—with neither “manners” nor regard for the others to receive a portion. With the Christian, one aspect would be to receive the truth and use it for selfish ulterior motives. *Self*-preservation was the controlling element of their thinking, not respect and consideration for the spiritual welfare of others. “All seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ’s” is the dog spirit of devouring (Phil. 2:21).

“Beware of evil workers.” Such individuals would routinely and habitually undermine and undercut by insinuating and twisting matters. Paul cautioned the Philippians to continually keep alert lest this intrusion take place in the ecclesia. If such a threat arose, it was to be handled immediately, nipped in the bud. Indifference and continued toleration could eventually contaminate all in the class. “Dogs” and “evil workers” were *individuals*, but the next category, the “concision,” was a *class*.

“Beware of the concision.” “Concision” refers to circumcision, hence converted Jews. These Jews ostensibly accepted Jesus but felt the Christian also had to obey the Law. This problem had already entered some of the other churches, such as Galatia. “Concision” meant “cutting,” hence a division. The Judaizing Christians claimed one had to be circumcised. For a Christian to agree to circumcision just because he felt one had to also obey the Law would be equivalent to the Gentiles back there who mutilated and cut their flesh as part of their religious beliefs. Because they believed that suffering and flagellation expiated sin, they *self*-inflicted injury. People in the East also had the belief that punishing oneself made the individual a holy person.

On the other hand, mortification of the flesh can be beneficial, but love must be attained too—*Christlike* love. Paul said, “If we give our body to be burned, and have not love, it profits us nothing” (1 Cor. 13:3 paraphrase). Any type of mortification must be governed and

accompanied by God's Spirit, love, and instruction in order to be acceptable. Paul certainly deprived himself but in an orderly, reasonable, and fashionable manner.

Paul was saying in effect, "Beware of those who advocate for the Christian mandatory circumcision and the observance of holy days, sabbaths, and the Law of Moses, in addition to believing in Jesus." Mixing the Law with Christianity would completely negate the gospel.

Comment: Reprint No. 1670, "The Concision and the Circumcision," is a good article.

"We ... worship God in the spirit"; that is, "We do not worship by these outward, visible signs." "We are the circumcision [of the heart]." The "circumcision" is a *spiritual* enactment and cutting off. The Revised Standard has, "Look out for the dogs, look out for the evil-workers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh. For we are the true circumcision, who worship God in spirit, and glory in Christ Jesus, and put no confidence in the flesh." The Jerusalem Bible reads, "Watch out for the cutters. We are the real people of the circumcision." Moreover, in Galatians 5:2, Paul admonished, "If ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing."

"We ... have no confidence in the [works of the] flesh." Paul then took the other side of the issue in succeeding verses. The Judaizing problem did not yet exist in Philippi, but it would, so he warned *in advance* with regard to the nature of the faultfinders' arguments. In Corinth and Galatia, the problem had already occurred, and Paul knew that when this element entered Philippi, they would use a certain type of argument. Hence he used the strategy of telling about his own background (verses 4-6) so that the Philippians would be prepared to combat the soon-to-come false reasoning. Paul was giving them a rebuttal in advance.

Phil. 3:4 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:

Phil. 3:5 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;

Phil. 3:6 Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

Paul gave his credentials, which were even greater than those of the Judaizing element. He was saying in effect, "If anyone should have confidence in the flesh, it should be I, the Apostle Paul, but I have given all this up" (see verse 7). If there were any merit in having confidence in the flesh, then Paul, having gone through the gamut of experience, would be the first to so advise others to follow a similar path. But having all these credentials, he abnegated them.

Notice that both of Paul's parents were Jews. Also, he had the education and training of a Pharisee. Not merely was he a Jew according to the flesh, but he had been educated as a Jew. If anyone should feel worthy because of the Law, it should have been Paul, but he had no confidence in the flesh. And the others should not have had any confidence either. Dedication and the spirit are what count.

Therefore, Paul's background served a good purpose, even though he had done things under the Law he was ashamed of in later life. Because he had persecuted Christians earlier, he could, after his conversion, give a very strong personal testimony. Paul could take individual Christian Jews aside and talk to them from a personal standpoint. Why, he had even been "brought up ... at the feet of Gamaliel," the most learned Pharisee in all Israel (Acts 22:3). Paul's reference to his background was not pride but just common sense. He was not bragging.

Phil. 3:7 But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.

Paul followed the Law better than anyone else. He was zealous for the Law and even persecuted others for it—something the Judaizing element had not done. They did persecute with the tongue, but Paul had remanded Christians to prison and death, for example, Stephen.

Phil. 3:8 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,

Phil. 3:9 And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:

Paul had “suffered the loss of all things [his background],” but he counted these as “dung.” Had he not suffered the loss, he would have been very comfortable in life and highly esteemed, for he was a person of some repute previously and maybe even of material wealth. (He was a Roman citizen, and this citizenship could be purchased for a great price.) Then, too, Paul’s house arrest in Rome suggests he was not an ordinary prisoner. In fact, he was personally conducted to Rome for an audience with the emperor, not just tried in a local court. The Romans certainly did not respect Paul for his religion, so what did they respect him for? He was not only a Roman citizen but one of unusual standing.

Both of Paul’s parents were Jews, but he was “freeborn” because of certain circumstances in his background. Apparently, his parents had bought his freedom. Because he had Roman citizenship, he could appeal to have his case heard before Caesar. Incidentally, anyone born in Ephesus was automatically freeborn. For rendering the emperor some service (such as sending a contingent of soldiers), certain towns were granted special privileges. Therefore, aliens could be considered freeborn Roman citizens for various reasons.

Paul had sacrificed his past. “*I have suffered* the loss of all things.” It is significant that he was not just talking about what he was willing to do but that he had *already made* the sacrifice. He counted this loss “but dung” that he could “win Christ.” What a statement!

Phil. 3:10 That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;

Phil. 3:11 If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

Phil. 3:12 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.

The new doctrine of Christ was not empty words; it was a doctrine of *suffering*. “If we suffer [with him], we shall also reign with him” (2 Tim. 2:12). The Christian *has to suffer* in some way, for the calling is one of suffering. Some felt the suffering consisted of such things as denying oneself a meal because it was a holy day; that is, they considered suffering to be the denial of certain liberties on certain occasions such as the sabbath. This would be a *ceremonial* type of sacrifice, but “cross-bearing” is *activity* in which we bring upon ourselves problems because of our faithfulness to Jesus—being ostracized, maligned, considered a devil, etc.

In his Epistle to the Romans, Paul said, “The things I would do, I cannot do, and the things I do not want to do, I find I do. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me out of this bondage?” (Rom. 7:15,24 paraphrase). Then he gave the answer: By *grace* and by faith and action in Christ, the deeds of the Law are circumvented, and God’s approval is obtained.

The Song of Solomon mentions the other daughters (Song 1:5,6). The one who is yearning for

Christ feels a lack of fellowship with the others because they have something against her. This estrangement is a part of the suffering. We expect to be misunderstood by the world, but it hurts even more when the brethren misunderstand and/or misrepresent us.

Verses 10-14 are excellent to refute the thought of “once in grace, always in grace.” Verse 12 is especially good. With all that Paul did and was, he still said he had not yet secured his crown but was working at it, pressing “toward the mark for the prize of the high calling.” Some of the other translations read as follows:

“Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brethren, I do not consider that I have made it my own” (Revised Standard).

“Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus” (New International).

“Not that I have already received it, or been already perfected; but I pursue, if indeed I may lay hold on that for which also I was laid hold on by Christ” (*Diaglott*).

Being a Christian is like running a race for the prize. “Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain” (1 Cor. 9:24). A runner must give his “all” to win a race, and so must we.

Phil. 3:13 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,

“Brethren, I count not [yet] myself to have apprehended [attained].” Paul was not boasting as one who had put off the armor, for he was still in the battle (1 Kings 20:11). Only at the *end* of his life did he say, “I have fought a good fight [of faith], I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day” (2 Tim. 4:7,8). Probably Paul expected to be released from house arrest and thus to be of more service to the brethren. No doubt at his second arrest, the one where he was put in the dungeon, it was obvious that his life was about to terminate. As long as Paul would be released from house arrest, he knew there were still risks in the situations he would meet. It was in Paul’s nature to *stretch* (“reach”) himself forth—almost beyond endurance at times, both physically and mentally.

“Forgetting those things which are behind.” We should keep pressing on and not let past sufferings, trials, and experiences discourage or distract us from the goal. “This is the will of God [for you], even your sanctification” (1 Thess. 4:3). Sanctification is a process involving many factors. We should not dwell on past laurels either, thinking we have achieved a great deal. Thus we are not to dwell on past successes or failures but just *keep pressing on*. We must *keep going*, as in a race, and not stop to see where the other runners are or where we are.

Phil. 3:14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

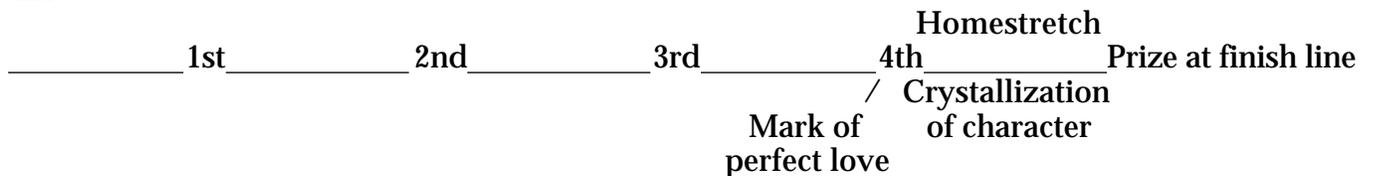
By this time, Paul had already reached the mark of perfect love. Hence he was pressing on toward the *finish line* of the race course. In other words, the “mark” in verse 14 is *more* than the mark of perfect love. Paul had a maturity of character and development in which he had already, some time ago, reached the mark of perfect love. Therefore, the mark toward which

he was stretching and reaching was the finish line. In some illustrations, one reaches the mark of perfect love and *stands* at the mark, but in this illustration of a race, one does not “stand” until he crosses the finish line. The “mark” here is the line at the end of the course that must be crossed at death in order to gain the prize. Stated another way, the mark of perfect love is like the fourth quarter at the beginning of the homestretch, for there are other things to do after attaining the mark of perfect love.

“Mark” is rendered “line” or “goal” in other translations. When we reach the mark of perfect love, that is one goal, but we must *stand* at that mark for a *period of time* and be tested in order to develop a character *crystallized* in Christlikeness. We should try to reach the mark of perfect love as early as possible in our Christian walk. However, from that point, there is still a risk because a *crystallized* character is another matter. A crystallized character means one has reached the mark of perfect love and *stood* there for a while through trials and afflictions. An analogy would be a clay pot with a design on it that is put in the furnace to be hardened and finished for approval or disapproval.

In 1 Corinthians 9:24, already quoted, Paul used the illustration of the Christian in a race, and he mentioned a *single* prize instead of a collective one. Each Christian must so run as to obtain the one prize. Of course there are 144,000 prizes, but we should each run as if there is only one. We are to run with our all and with a singleness of purpose and mind. Things that happened in the past, whether positive or negative, should only be used to spur us on to reach the goal.

If we think of the mark of perfect love as being the fourth quarter sectional mark, then both thoughts can be harmonized. One reaches the first quarter mark, the second, and then the third. The final, or fourth, quarter mark is the critical period. It can be called the mark of perfect love, but crystallization is needed—a standing at the mark to firm up. Both thoughts are then harmonized—of a finish line being attained and of the fourth quarter mark as the line before that.



Other pictures talk about “standing fast.” Here, in verses 13 and 14, the thought is to *keep pressing on* and not stop or stand still. It is a real *straining forward*, with self-examination and scrutiny of our conduct, our doctrine, and our walk in the narrow way. Notice that God is the One who calls us, for it is the “high calling of *God* in Christ Jesus.”

Phil. 3:15 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.

“Let us therefore, as many as be perfect [mature], be thus minded.” In a fuller sense, we could even say, “Let us therefore, as many as have reached the mark of perfect love, be thus minded.” That mark would not be the end of our course, for we would still need to be proven. Paul was saying to those who had attained a certain state, “Do not relax. Be diligent. Keep stretching forth. Be thus minded.”

Then Paul made another comment that is very interesting. “And if in any thing ye be *otherwise* minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.” This statement is a *guarantee* to any of the consecrated who start to slip backwards that there will be little nudges to their conscience—by a Scripture, comments of brethren, a trial, or some other means. We must keep trying to press toward the mark of the prize, or our slacking off will be revealed to us by a prick of the conscience. The danger of being “otherwise minded,” of being distracted, will be called to our

attention in some way.

Jesus stated the maxim “They shall be all taught of God” (John 6:45). God will deal with the called class *unless* an individual deals himself out. Paul asked a rhetorical question in Romans 8:35, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” Only self!

Chastening experiences especially occur in *earlier* quarter marks. Those who have attained to as much perfection as is possible in their vessel must still be crystallized, or cemented, in that condition to prove they are steadfast and immovable. However, those who are “otherwise minded” need chastening experiences.

One who is mature (“perfect”) can still need polishing on certain points, whether in doctrine or in Christian walk. In whatever thing we are “otherwise minded,” God will reveal the need for correction to us in one way or another.

Phil. 3:16 Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.

However much progress we have made, wherever we are in the race course, we should keep the same standards, goal, and principles and not let anyone persuade us otherwise. The Philippians, whom Paul commended highly for their dedication, enthusiasm, and zeal for the truth, were sympathetic to his teachings, as manifested several times by their financial assistance and encouragement to him. The fact they were so interested in his welfare suggests that they were quite well advanced in understanding and were familiar with his teachings. However, a clue earlier in the epistle indicates Paul felt there was a danger of some coming into the church and drawing brethren away from these teachings and diverting their energies in unprofitable channels that could be detrimental to making their calling and election sure.

As a class, the Philippians had attained a certain level of understanding, although, of course, there were differences in individuals. For others to come in and tamper with that understanding would wreak havoc. Paul had personally known some of the “enemies of the cross of Christ” (verse 18). Not only had they fallen away, but they were *opposers*.

Phil. 3:17 Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an example.

“Brethren, be followers together [joint-imitators—*Diaglott*] of me, and mark [watch] them which walk so as ye have us for an example [pattern].” We are to observe the words and deeds of our brethren and see who most closely follows the pattern set forth by Jesus. To the extent this pattern is followed, we should follow them.

Phil. 3:18 (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:

Notice that there were *many* enemies of Christ. Hence it is possible to come to a mark, or condition, and fall back. We must resolve *not* to fall back. In a race, one may not feel he has the resources to finish with an extra burst of speed, but the important thing is not to slow up.

Paul’s heart condition was *right*. While he deemed it necessary to warn the Philippians in regard to the enemies of Christ, he did this sorrowfully—he wept. Knowing that some of those who formerly consecrated were now enemies brought heaviness of heart. Verse 18 harmonizes with Paul’s statement that the class should have been mourning over the one who had strayed into fornication (1 Cor. 5:2). And it was even sadder for Paul because he had *personally* been involved in the conversion of many of these enemies. Now he was emotionally involved.

Phil. 3:19 Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.)

In this very sobering verse, Paul gave four characteristics of these “enemies,” as follows:

1. “Whose god is their belly.” The word “God,” from the Greek *theos*, should be lowercase here. The god of these enemies was the *flesh*; they had too much of a liking for and a seeking after *natural* things.
2. “Whose end is destruction [Second Death, perdition].” The same Greek word, *apoleia*, was used regarding Judas and the beast that goes into everlasting destruction (John 17:12; Rev. 17:8,11).
3. “Whose glory is their shame.” These individuals promoted self instead of the cause of Christ.
4. “Who mind earthly things.” This characteristic encompasses the other thoughts. In other words, the enemies gratified the flesh and self.

Romans 16:17,18 is similar: “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.” This text defines the “belly” as pertaining to doctrine. In other words, they slanted the doctrine to glorify and honor *self*.

In the clause “whose god is their belly,” the word “their” is supplied and should be omitted: “whose god is belly.” Doctrines can be advanced that are pleasurable to the flesh. There can be a mutual admiration society on the wrong basis. The *Diaglott* rendering is better—“whose god is *the stomach*”—for wrong doctrines cater to the flesh of *others* as well as self.

Phil. 3:20 For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:

“For our conversation [conduct, citizenship, community, polity] is in heaven.” Our whole life (whether the sharing together and feeding is on *doctrinal* thoughts or deals with our *daily walk*) is part of “conduct” in a larger sense.

Christians have looked with eager anticipation for Jesus to come from heaven. He would come at a specific time, as shown by Acts 3:21, “Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.” Approximately one third of the New Testament is either directly or indirectly prophetic and hinges on the Second Advent, Jesus’ return. The early Church looked forward to this time, expecting to go home. Jesus would not come back in the flesh, but Christians were to long for this time.

Phil. 3:21 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.

The collective “body” (singular) will be changed and presented without spot or wrinkle as a chaste virgin. Jesus’ divine power and capability are such that he can resurrect the saints to spirit nature. The words “fashioned” and “working” suggest the process of conforming or transforming. The Holy Spirit of God and/or Jesus makes this change possible.

Phil. 4:1 Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved.

Notice the affectionate, tender terms Paul used for the Philippian brethren: “dearly beloved” (used twice) and “longed for.” These expressions were not only unusual but also more affectionate than those he wrote to the other churches. Paul’s regard for the Philippians was additionally confirmed by the expression “My joy and [my] crown”; that is, the ecclesia at Philippi was the crowning feature of his ministry and thus was probably his favorite church. Elsewhere he said of the churches in Asia Minor, “All they which are in Asia be turned away from me” (2 Tim. 1:15). Although that was a general statement, it shows that Paul did not have the “joy and crown” feeling toward the other churches in that area.

Phil. 4:2 I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord.

These two sisters were singled out by name. Evidently, there was some sort of friction or misunderstanding between the two. Paul urged them to “be of the same mind,” so evidently, the difference was not a serious doctrinal dispute. Probably it had to do with either personality or method and procedure (how to do something). Although not serious yet, the problem could become so if not resolved.

For the second time in this epistle, Paul said to be of one (“the same”) mind (Phil. 2:2). Earlier Paul urged the class as a whole to be of one mind. Now he got more specific and named the two sisters. Vainglory and self-interest should not be motives of the new creature.

Phil. 4:3 And I entreat 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.

Verse 3 provides an interesting insight. The pronoun “thee” refers to “true yokefellow,” which was the proper name of a person in the ecclesia. The name in the Greek, *Syzygus*, means “co-yoked” (“yokefellow” or “companion”). Paul commended this individual as being true (or loyal), faithful, and trustworthy. To illustrate: this person would be like someone named John Carpenter, who was an excellent carpenter.

Paul entreated this particular brother to help the two sisters to “be of the same mind in the Lord.” How interesting that Paul singled out an individual in the class to moderate the situation! But why him? Perhaps he had more common sense and was more levelheaded than some of the others and had demonstrated loyalty. Probably he was an individual *both* sisters respected and looked up to. Selecting such a one showed wisdom, for the dispute could not be resolved if the individual had taken sides with one of the sisters. The brother would have to be impartial.

Paul could have omitted the names of the two sisters, but he chose instead to have them recorded in history. At the same time, however, he moderated the criticism by saying they had “laboured” with him in the gospel. Paul’s course was admirable in that he mentioned the good points as well. We, too, should follow this policy unless, of course, the individuals become enemies of the truth.

Paul also named Clement as one who labored with him. No doubt Clement was an outstanding laborer among the other brethren. Therefore, Paul named two women and two men in the class: Euodias, Syntyche, Yokefellow (*Syzygus*), and Clement. And there were other “fellowlabourers” in the class.

Why did Paul say, “Whose names are in the book of life”? He considered all of the brethren in

the class in an honorable sense, including Euodias and Syntyche. The nature of Paul's criticism was to moderate the situation lest it develop into a more hazardous condition later on.

The "book of life" is a very large, thick book with many, many pages. The names of all mankind, when they come forth from the womb and are born alive, are entered in the book of life, which has various categories. Different destinations of great honor, less honor, etc., will eventually be either achieved or not achieved. Not only are there various levels of life (divine, spirit, human), but there are gradations of honor within a level or category. Every person who was ever born must hear about Jesus, either in this life or the next, and will have an *opportunity* to get life, for Jesus tasted death "for every man" (Heb. 2:9). When a person consecrates in the Gospel Age, his name is transferred to the divine nature (Little Flock) chapter. It can be left there, transferred to the Great Company chapter, or blotted out (Second Death).

Paul viewed all of the Philippian brethren favorably in that their names were still in the book of life. He recognized them as *true* brethren, *true* fellow laborers, and *true* yokefellows but was giving advice especially to help the two sisters. Probably Clement was mentioned by name because he was prominent. No doubt the named brethren were of *special* help when Paul visited their locale—Clement, Yokefellow, and Epaphroditus (verse 18).

The *absence of serious problems* in this epistle is very apparent. In the epistles to the Corinthians and the Galatians, for example, Paul exposed a dangerous element that was causing severe problems. The Philippian class was Paul's "crown and joy," and he hoped it would remain such.

Phil. 4:4 Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice.

Why did Paul say, "Rejoice *in the Lord* always: and again I say, Rejoice"? If the problem between the two sisters got aggravated and perpetuated, it would affect some of the rejoicing aspect of serving the Lord.

The emphasis in verse 4 should be on the phrase "in the Lord." Paul was telling the brethren to look *above* the problem. We are *all* serving the Lord. If we can view matters in this higher sublime light, many differences will disappear. We should constantly rejoice *in the Lord*—*always*—but a factional dispute interrupts the rejoicing.

We use this verse frequently, signing it in letters and cards, etc. That is all right, but in the setting here, its intended use was quite different.

"In the Lord" is the key phrase because we cannot always rejoice, but we can always rejoice *in the Lord*. For example, "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby" (Heb. 12:11). And Paul criticized the Corinthian class for not mourning, for it was wrong for them to rejoice under their circumstances (1 Cor. 5:2). Therefore, verse 4 has a particular application *in* context. Taken *out* of context, it is still a good Scripture, however.

Phil. 4:5 Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.

"Let your moderation be known unto all men." These words were very meaningful to the situation with the two sisters. "Moderation," which means reasonableness, yielding, and pliability, is to be followed where *no principle* is involved. Compromise was proper for the difference that existed in the Philippian ecclesia.

"The Lord is at hand [near]"; that is, everything we do is observed by the Lord. (Incidentally, this statement is not stressing the nearness in time of the Lord's return.) Keeping in mind that the Lord is present in the sense of observing what is going on will help us to be reasonable. He

is not so far away that he is unaware of what is happening. We will be more circumspect if we remember the Lord is viewing all matters. Verse 5 fits in nicely with verse 4: “Rejoice in the Lord. He is near—he is aware of what is going on.”

Taken out of context, an application of “moderation” is sometimes said to mean, “Avoid extremes in lifestyles.” Moderation of behavior or action is also a good principle. “Moderation” has been defined as “sweet reasonableness where principles are not involved.” It is nice to know what Paul had in mind when he wrote the Epistle to the Philippians, but from there, we can branch out into other avenues of our experience or the experiences of others to draw additional lessons.

Phil. 4:6 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

“Be careful for nothing.” “Do not be overanxious” is the thought. We should be circumspect and careful in some matters but not “full of care.”

This advice fit the Philippian situation, for if they got involved in a difference of opinion that did not center around a serious doctrine or a Christian principle, they were not to become overanxious about the difference. Paul was telling them not to let the situation disturb or distract them inordinately from rejoicing in the Lord and thus cause them to make immoderate statements about others.

“But in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.” Not only individually but as a class, this difference should have been taken to the Lord in prayer; then harmony would be restored. Prayer is important and helpful in times of crisis, large or small, so that good will result from every experience.

“Supplication,” an earnest pleading, is more intense prayer over a matter that is somber and serious. When Jesus supplicated in the Garden of Gethsemane, even his posture was affected, for he prostrated himself on the ground. Prayer and supplication are in order in proportion as we see an inherent danger that might develop as a result of a continuing situation.

Prayer and supplication should be made “with thanksgiving,” but how? (1) We should remember past and current blessings and overrulings. (2) We should remember good qualities about other brethren (such as with these two sisters). (3) We should be thankful that we can come to the Lord in prayer and leave our burdens with him. And (4) we should be thankful, come what may. There is a hymn, “Send sorrow; send pain. Sweet are thy messengers, and sweet their refrain.” These sentiments are scriptural because in the Song of Solomon, the Bride class says, “Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out” (Song 4:16). In other words, *mixed* experiences, the bitter and the sweet, are necessary to develop the Christian so that mind and heart can be exercised. Trials develop the new creature, even if they are distressing. Therefore, we should rejoice in the Lord, for afterward comes the peaceable fruit of righteousness. Divisions *must occur* so that those who are approved of God might be made manifest. “Divisions” can be a complete rupture or merely a difference of opinion and/or action; that is, problems are necessary to give us an opportunity to apply the lessons and principles in God’s Word. If everyone involved entered the experience with prayer, supplication, and thanksgiving, probably half of the problems would be alleviated right away.

We should be thankful for our trials of faith. Peter said that the *trial* of our faith is much more precious than gold that perishes (1 Pet. 1:7). If faithfully reacted to, the trial becomes a proof of our faith. The trial, or experience, is valuable, even though it may be heart-rending.

Comment: We should not be overanxious about anything. In *everything*, we are to go to the Lord in prayer.

Reply: There is a good example in the Old Testament of being overanxious. When the Ark of the Covenant was being transported, Uzzah was fearful that it would fall on the ground. When he put out his hand to steady the Ark, he was smitten dead (2 Sam. 6:1-7). There are different laws, and some are higher than others. The higher law takes precedent over the lower one. The lower law would say that Uzzah did right to steady the Ark. Ostensibly, he was just being solicitous for the Lord's cause and Ark and trying to be helpful. However, there are things we cannot be overanxious about but must trust God and His providence—that it will work out for good to those who love Him and respond to His leadings (Rom. 8:28).

When a major decision faces us, there can be a degree of anxiety (but not overanxiety) in trying to determine the Lord's will—that is, until some assurance comes. Concern is proper but not overconcern. We can be anxious to the extent of prayer and supplication. Proper concern urges us to this action, whereas overconcern leads to distraction and inaction. Proper concern spurs us on to prayer and leaving things in the Lord's hands.

Phil. 4:7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

“The peace of God, which passeth all [human, worldly] understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Verse 7 is a natural outgrowth of verse 6. When we go to the Lord in prayer and leave everything in His hands, His peace will come to us. The peace the Christian has the world lacks and cannot understand.

The peace of God will “keep [guard, or be a sentinel over] your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” If we comply with the admonition regarding prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, the peace of God will act as a guard, or sentinel, to challenge every hostile thought threatening to disturb our heart and mind. Hence the peace of God protects our heart and mind lest we become discouraged or despondent, forsake the way, etc.

Phil. 4:8 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.

What our mind feeds on has a lot to do with the outcome of our destiny. The new creature is what he allows to be entertained in his mind, what he allows to be resident there. This advice is a *general* rule, for sometimes we must consider unpleasant things because they are based on principles that are violated. However, we cannot make a steady diet of what is unpleasant, or we will become hypercritical.

In verse 8, Paul was presenting a *standard* for living. He did not say we can never think on something that involves dishonesty or impurity, but if these things occur in the Church, they must be considered from a detached standpoint, for we are not to feed on them. The Song of Solomon says the little ones feed upon the lilies (Song 2:16). “Lilies” are emblematic of all these qualities: the true, the honest, the just, the pure, the beautiful or lovely, and the good reports. Lilies are even a symbol of the resurrection.

It is true that we experience low periods—even the Apostle Paul did—but not to the point of utter despair. He felt his low periods were necessary so that he could counsel others. “Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God” (2 Cor. 1:4).

“True” is the first prerequisite mentioned. Although the other qualities are not in either an ascending or a descending order, whether a matter is true should be the first determinant. The basis, or premise, in both doctrine and conduct must be true in order to merit consideration.

For the end of verse 8, the *Diaglott* has, “*Attentively* consider these things.” This listing is not all we should think on, but primarily and generally these qualities should apply.

We need a balanced spiritual diet. For example, we may get involved in a doctrinal dispute where we have to maintain the standard of truth, but if we *live* in an atmosphere of constant controversy and trouble and thus do not feed on the more wholesome thoughts, we will be adversely affected.

If an elder is always criticizing others, if his message is not constructive and wholesome but is *always faultfinding*, that situation is dangerous. We must feed on the pure, honest, lovely, etc., thoughts in order to be properly grounded in the faith. Our time should not be taken up inordinately in one direction. Our attentive consideration should be on the weightier matters of the Law. “You ... have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone” (Matt. 23:23).

Phil. 4:9 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.

We follow Paul to the extent that he followed Jesus. What is the distinction between “learned” and “received”? Paul was the teacher. When he was in their midst, the Philippians became familiar with his thinking and teaching, but *accepting* these “things” was a separate matter. To “learn” and then “receive” *in this context* means they found Paul’s teaching to be scriptural. Therefore, they accepted his advice as part of their faith.

In another context, the thought of “receiving” could be different. For example, the Bereans were considered more noble than those of Thessalonica because they “received” (listened carefully to) what Paul said and then searched the Scriptures daily to see whether it was so; that is, they received the truth with an open mind and then proved it by the Scriptures (Acts 17:11). Here Paul said the Philippians “learned” (*understood* what he was teaching) and then “received” (*accepted*) it.

Paul taught the Philippians by both doctrine and example (by his life and/or behavior). They “heard” doctrine and instruction, and then “saw,” or observed, his manner of life. The next step was to “receive” (accept) both the doctrine and Paul’s example, and then to “do,” or *practice*, these things (that is, they *continued* to do them).

If they practiced “those things,” then “the God of peace” would be with them. In verse 7, Paul spoke of “the peace of God”; now he referred to “the God of peace.”

A recent discourse discussed the *wrong* kind of peace, the peace of *complacency*. The peace of God can be described as a clear “conscience void of offence toward God” (Acts 24:16). If the conscience is not clear, then God has aught against the individual, and the peace is marred to a greater or lesser degree. But if we try to do God’s will to the best of our ability, we know God is dealing with us, and we have inner peace and His mercy and grace. In proportion as one offends, the offense is a rupture of the peace.

“Peace” can be viewed either from the standpoint of how *God* thinks of us or from our standpoint as the *recipient* of peace. Both standpoints are important, for we want to have His peace, and we want Him to be peaceful with us. Stated another way, we want to be at peace

with Him, and we want Him to be at peace with us.

Jesus gave a lesson to the apostles with regard to washing their feet. What they saw him do, they were to likewise do. Jesus said, “If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them” (John 13:17). In other words, their peace would be fulfilled by doing what Jesus did, and at the same time, God would be pleased. It works *both* ways.

Phil. 4:10 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.

The Philippians had helped Paul several times in the past. Then came a cessation in assistance. Now that they were again helping, Paul rejoiced—not so much for his own sake but because it was adding fruit to their character (Phil. 4:17).

But why was there a temporary halt in assistance? The Philippians did not know where Paul was. Then Epaphroditus made a special effort to find Paul. He methodically visited and searched the prisons in Rome until he found Paul. Of course when Epaphroditus inquired at the prisons, it was obvious he was sympathetic to Christianity. Thus he exposed himself to danger, risking his own life.

The account in Acts 24:24-27 reveals the reason why Felix kept asking Paul to come back. He was interested not in the truth but in Paul’s *money*. He evidently knew that Paul had come into a lot of money. (Paul inherited a large sum from his family. Earlier, however, he had to work with his own hands to support himself.) In Rome, Paul was put under house arrest, a courtesy extended to very few prisoners. Most were put in the dungeon and could not have visitors.

Notice that the Philippians were “careful” about giving money to Paul, even though they lacked opportunity. “Careful” has the thought of “mindful” or “concerned.” In other words, they continuously kept him in mind, but he did not need anything under his present circumstance, for he had board and keep while under “house arrest.” Now they had sent a messenger to tell Paul of their love and concern for him, and they also sent a gift of some kind.

Phil. 4:11 Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.

Phil. 4:12 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 was not complaining, for he was “content” even under these circumstances. He was a living example that “godliness with contentment is great gain” (1 Tim. 6:6).

Paul “*learned*” in whatever state he was in to be content—in other words, this attitude did not come automatically. A number of experiences taught him this attitude. The *Diaglott* translation reads, “I have been disciplined, both to be well fed and to suffer hunger,” and the interlinear has, “I have been initiated [through humbling experiences].” We are not to conclude that Paul was insensitive to his needs and experiences, for he was not a stoic, but he disciplined himself to take them properly.

Paul had all *extremes* of experience. The harsh experiences are listed in 2 Corinthians 11:23-28. Despite these hardships, contentment was Paul’s *normal attitude*. Although he also had moments of depression, he never felt *utterly* cast down or forsaken (2 Cor. 4:8,9).

Even Jesus, the perfect one, experienced depression, for example, when he was in the Garden of Gethsemane and on the Cross (Matt. 26:36,37; 27:46). It is a *wrong* premise to say that a

faithful, loyal Christian never has a low period. But the *way of life*, the general attitude, should be one of contentment, peace, and joy. Otherwise, the Christian is living below his privileges. Incidentally, Paul was in his sixties now. He called himself “aged” in Philemon 9.

Phil. 4:13 I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

Paul could endure all the hard experiences and persecutions through the strength he received from Christ.

Phil. 4:14 Notwithstanding ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction.

Paul’s “affliction” included the *whole gamut* of his experiences. The Philippian brethren had always communicated with him as much as they could when opportunity afforded, and Paul commended them for this attitude. For “that ye did communicate with my affliction,” the *Diaglott* interlinear has “having *jointly sympathized* with me in the affliction.” Currently, while under house arrest, Paul received concern from them. Earlier, as needed, he received money. Now he was happy that the ties of communication had been restored and that they would know of each other’s welfare. Epaphroditus would take word back to Philippi.

Phil. 4:15 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 was not saying that no church *ever* communicated with him, but in the missionary journey where he had a dream and went over to Macedonia and on from there, only the church at Philippi was “giving and receiving.” What does “receiving” mean? The Philippians readily received Paul’s advice and the wonderful truths he declared, hearkening to the instruction. Paul had to write to the Corinthians more than once on the same issue, but the Philippian brethren were submissive and responsive. Also, they received a blessing from their giving to Paul. Their hearts, characters, and attitudes were all blessed by the giving. The principle is that the Lord does not need our money, but we need to give it to Him.

There is a fullness of meaning here because the Philippians’ giving was not just along monetary lines. It included sympathy, interest, love, and concern, plus money. In return, they got Paul’s sympathy, interest, love, and concern. He remembered them in prayer and wrote a letter to express his feelings. On the other hand, if he labored in that area for a year and then left without manifesting any further interest, the communication would have deadened both ways. Thus the giving and the receiving were a *two-way* rapport.

The Philippian brethren were laying up treasure in heaven by their love and concern for Paul. They were storing up “credit” with God for the day of the Lord’s appearance. Their consistency of giving was not equaled by any other church. The others gave only sporadically if at all.

Paul labored over the Philippian brethren like a mother, and seeing their development gave him great satisfaction. He especially appreciated them because they seemed to respond more than any other ecclesia. They were his “joy and crown” (Phil. 4:1).

Phil. 4:16 For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity.

Why did Paul use the word “even”? The brethren in Thessalonica should have been taking care of Paul, but instead the *Philippian* brethren showed the concern. They responded naturally from the *heart* because of the many spiritual blessings they had received. Even though a little distance away, the Philippians were longing and pining for Paul.

Phil. 4:17 Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account.

Paul desired *fruit* that would abound to the *Philippians'* account. Their love and concern for Paul were laying up treasure in their account, for God and Jesus were taking cognizance of their attitude. "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Rom. 14:12). "For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ" (Rom. 14:10). We will receive a grade as determined in God's sight. There are gradations in glory and honor, but of course the first and most important factor is *acceptance*.

Phil. 4:18 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.

The sacrifice of the Philippians ascended up like the smoke of the court sacrifice. Epaphroditus was the messenger who came from Philippi to search out Paul while he was under house arrest in Rome. In the process, Epaphroditus became ill "nigh unto death" (Phil. 2:27). Consequently, there was a delay—a *long* passage of time—before the Philippians got a response.

The "things" Epaphroditus brought were the love, concern, and affection of the Philippian brethren, plus information on how the Lord was dealing with them. Paul welcomed this information.

Phil. 4:19 But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

The brethren had supplied Paul's need, and *his* God would supply all *their* need. All spiritual necessities will be supplied in the present life.

There are actually two thoughts here, and both are helpful. (1) Both God and Jesus are capable of supplying the Christian's need in the *present* life. (2) While the Christian may not prosper in this life in a way that is evident, he will be showered with blessings when he receives his change and is glorified in the *next* life.

Phil. 4:20 Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Paul emphasized the *Father*. Glory be to *Him* throughout eternity, "for ever and ever" (Greek *aionion aionion*).

Phil. 4:21 Salute every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren which are with me greet you.

Verse 21 is like saying, "Send my love to all the brethren there." None were to be left out. Paul's advice, admonition, and encouragement were intended for *all*, for he was concerned that each one would prosper spiritually.

Phil. 4:22 All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar's household.

Why did Paul insert the word "chiefly"? (1) He was calling attention to how the gospel was furthered even into Caesar's household (Phil. 1:12,13). (2) Probably the brethren in Caesar's household met with Paul more often than the other Roman brethren because of being so close to him. (3) And most importantly, Paul's missionary journey had started in Philippi. Paul would have told the brethren of Caesar's household how, in vision, a man in Macedonia had beckoned him to come over, but when he went to Philippi, he was imprisoned. Although Paul and Silas were put in a dungeon, they sang hymns. Suddenly an earthquake miraculously opened the doors of the dungeon. The jailer's life would have been at stake if any of the

prisoners had escaped. However, all stayed there (as if in shock), and the jailer was able to lock them up again. The point is that the whole jail aspect of Paul's experience in Philippi, with the miraculous deliverance which resulted in the conversion of the jailer and his household, produced an affinity and bond with the brethren of Caesar's household in Rome, where Paul was again in prison. Just as the Philippian jailer and his household had been converted, so some in Caesar's household became Christians. The settings were somewhat similar.

Phil. 4:23 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

* * * * *

Addendum on Epaphroditus

Another individual in the New Testament has a name identical in meaning to Epaphroditus, although it is restructured Epaphras (Col. 1:7; 4:12; Philem. 23). It is very likely these two were the same individual, as circumstances of their backgrounds seem to bear out. The Epistle to the Colossians tells where he came from originally, and the Epistle to the Philippians just revealed that he was sent as a messenger from Philippi to Paul. He longed to return to Philippi after delivering the message, but he was sick. Two others—Onesimus and Onesiphorus—could also have been the same individual.

In both cases, the names are in different epistles. Paul dictated to various helpers, so depending on who wrote a particular epistle, the names were spelled differently (Latin, Hebrew, or Greek forms). Unless we realize that the same individuals are referred to, we lose the concept of the close-knit society back there.

The Concision and the Circumcision

(Reprint No. 1670)

“Beware of the concision. For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.”—Phil. 3:2,3

The Lord and the Apostles take special care to point out to the church the serious significance of her present position, upon which the weighty considerations of her eternal welfare depend. They mark out the specially perilous times, and forewarn us what to expect in the way of persecution and fiery trials of faith and patience, and then minister to us beforehand all the words of counsel, warning, encouragement, hope and promise that are necessary to enable us to war a good warfare and lay hold upon eternal life.

But while the Lord promises grace sufficient for every time of need, he never encourages any to rest supinely upon his promises: the exhortations are always to activity, alertness and indomitable energy and perseverance. While he says: “I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go,” he also adds, “Be not as the horse or as the mule, which have no understanding, whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle.” (Psa. 32:8,9) In this intelligent and proper attitude he would have us beware—be cautious, careful and watchful—against all the deceptions and dangers that beset our way; because we have a wily adversary who is the leader of the hosts of darkness against the Lord and against his anointed—“For we wrestle not against [mere] flesh and blood [the visible tools of the adversary], but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places [under the power and control of the prince of this world, Satan].” The exhortations to beware of dangers are quite numerous—“Beware of [evil] men” (Matt. 10:17); “Beware of the *leaven* [the false doctrine] of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees” (Matt. 16:6,12); “Beware of *covetousness*” (Luke 12:15); “Beware lest any man spoil you through *philosophy and vain deceit*” (Col. 2:8); “Beware lest ye also, being *led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness*” (2 Pet. 3:17); and, in the words of the above text, “Beware of *dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision,*” etc.

While the wholesome dread of all these should be ever before our minds and keep us continually on guard against sudden attacks of the enemy, the Apostle in our text calls special attention to three things against which he would have us on guard. In the Scriptures, dogs are generally used as symbols of evil, the reference being, not to our domesticated and often noble animal, but to such as are more common in eastern countries, which are indeed disgusting creatures—lazy, filthy, greedy, snapping, snarling, treacherous and generally pestiferous—apt symbols of a dangerous and wicked class of people. Beware, then, of all such dispositions, no matter by what name they disguise themselves. If any man be an idler—delinquent in his own duties, but busy in those of other men; if he be filthy, breeding spiritual contagion wherever he goes; if he be greedy—self-seeking; if his disposition be to snap and snarl, to bite and devour, or to treacherously lie in wait to deceive—beware of that man. He is not fit company for a child of God: his influence is contaminating. “Evil communications corrupt good manners.”

And “give not that which is holy [the truth] unto the [such] dogs; neither cast ye your pearls before swine [the two being classed together], lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.” (Matt. 7:6) “Light [truth] is sown for the *righteous,*” and not for those of the dog and swine disposition. When, therefore, we find any such, we are to beware of them—be cautious and on guard against their contaminating influence. The only preaching proper for such is, “Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out;” and “Flee from the wrath to come;” for “God will bring every work into judgment with every secret thing.” “He will reward righteousness and punish iniquity.”

Beware of evil workers: of those who go about to do evil, who have no bridle on their tongue, but who are given to evil speaking and evil surmising, which are improper. Indeed, evil

surmising and evil speaking have become so common that very many professed children of God seem to think nothing of it; and little by little the habit grows, crowding out all spirituality; and thereby many are defiled and great reproach is brought upon the cause of Christ. Beware of all such evil workers: shun them as you would a pestilence; for it is a moral pestilence, most ruinous and fatal in its character. Our communications with such should be only to the extent of reproving, and, if that should fail, of exposing the evil work. The spirit that leads to slander is a murderous spirit, and should be recognized and dealt with accordingly.

“Beware of the concision,” says the Apostle—of those not fully and truly consecrated to God; but who stir up strife and factions in the church; “for we are of the circumcision”—whose circumcision is in the heart. Yes, let us beware of all such; for the influence of the semi-worldly mind is often more subtle, and therefore more dangerous, than that which makes no profession or effort toward godliness. The works of the flesh are covetousness and ambition—for money, fame or any or all of the desires common to the natural man. But the works of the truly and fully circumcised heart are the opposite of all these: they are faith, love, joy, peace, heavenly hopes and aspirations, and the daily crucifying of the flesh.

No natural man of the fallen race ever had a fully circumcised heart. And such as have it are dead to the world. Its hopes, aims and ambitions are crucified to them, and they are alive toward God. Anyone who has the realization of such a condition of heart has in this fact a blessed evidence of his acceptance with God and of his heirship of all the exceeding great and precious promises—if so be that he so *continue*, faithful even unto death.

But let all such beware of the concision, the spirit of strife and division; for in the fiery trials of this evil day all such will surely fall, and only such as worship God in spirit and in truth can stand. Already the test of endurance is proving a severe test for some; and it will surely be yet more severe. “Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.” There is no assurance whatever that any will be able to stand in this evil day who have not devoted themselves fully and unreservedly to the Lord. But those who have done so, and who are still faithful to their covenant, have cause to rejoice in Christ Jesus, whose grace is sufficient for them....

“No Confidence in the Flesh”

Like the Apostle, we are to have “no confidence in the flesh”—in any works of the flesh or advantages of fleshly inheritance. Our confidence rests in God, who accepts us through the merit of his beloved Son.

A very false construction, often put upon these words of the Apostle, infers from these words that he did not trust himself or anyone else; that he put no confidence in any human being; that he was always ready to be suspicious.

That this is a wrong view of the Apostle’s words is very clear: (1) from the fact that in his various epistles he repeatedly expresses confidence in himself and in other believers, and (2) from the context of this passage. The following verses (4-9) show that the Apostle meant that his confidence toward God was not based upon his being a circumcised Hebrew, nor on his zeal for God and his law, etc. These things in which he did have confidence, once, he now counts as loss and dross. He no longer has confidence therein, but rejects them as so much “loss” and “dross” and “dung.” His confidence now is based upon faith in Christ’s great sacrifice, and a full consecration to his service.—Verses 10-14.

Let us be like-minded, and have great confidence in God and Christ and in all who have their word and spirit; and let us put no confidence in works of the flesh—in anything that we or others have done or can do aside from the salvation which God has provided in Christ Jesus, “through faith in his blood.”

A Little Talk by the Way (Reprint No. 5810)

“Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.”—Philippians 2:2-5

The church at Philippi, as is well known, was the first Ecclesia established in Europe. It had a very small and humble beginning. Philippi was one of the principal cities of Macedonia. (Acts 16:9-14,20,21) In seeking an opportunity for service for the Lord in this place, the Apostle went on the Sabbath day down to a river bank, where a few women habitually resorted for prayer; and he spoke to them the Word of God. Dr. McLaren, commenting upon the small beginning of the church at Philippi, says: “Not blowing of trumpets, not beating of drums of any sort; a few women and some worn-out travelers talking together by the banks of the rushing river. How scornfully the great folk of Philippi would have smiled, if they had been told that the chief title of their city to be remembered at all would be the presence in it of that one insignificant Jew, and his letter to the church founded on that morning!”

The general character of the Philippian church is revealed in St. Paul’s Epistle, written to them at a later period. We find in it nothing like correction or reproof, as we note in most of the Epistles written by the Apostle to other churches. His Philippian letter is a particularly beautiful and loving one, and indicates a very close bond of sympathy between him and this church. On four different occasions that are recorded, this church rendered practical sympathy and service to St. Paul, by financial assistance, as well as by word of comfort and cheer. Twice he received gifts from them for his support while he was at Thessalonica. Again, while he was at Corinth, they ministered to him. When he was a prisoner at Rome this loving church did not forget the Apostle. It was their messenger Epaphroditus, who brought to him the last touching memorial of their love.

Epaphroditus, it will be remembered, was the brother who was brought “nigh unto death,” for the Gospel’s sake—because of his faithful service in the assistance of the Apostle in the work of the Lord when there seemed little help coming from other sources. Upon his recovery from this severe illness, the Apostle Paul sent by him to the church at Philippi this beautiful letter known to us as the Epistle to the Philippians. See Philippians 2:25-28; 4:14-19; 2 Corinthians 11:9.

The Apostle’s Loving Counsel

The other churches may possibly have ministered to the Apostle also; and we know that this was true in the case of certain individuals, among whom were Aquila and Priscilla. But we have no record of any church that ministered to St. Paul as did the church at Philippi. Apparently other churches missed a great opportunity. We may be sure that while the Apostle urged the churches to contribute to the relief of the poor saints at Jerusalem, etc., he made no request for personal assistance, however much he may have been in need, or however much he might have appreciated any small manifestation of their love for him and the cause of the Lord whom he served.

The lesson respecting love and humility which we find in the passage of Scripture under consideration does not intimate that these graces were lacking among the Philippians; but it indicates that the Apostle recognized the great importance of these fruits of the Spirit, and the need of their continual cultivation, in order to a continued growth in the likeness of Christ. The opening words of the chapter are an exhortation to brotherly love and affection among themselves. He says, “If there be any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any bowels and mercies.” The bowels were formerly considered the seat of the tender emotions, pity, compassion of heart. It would seem that the Apostle would put the church at Philippi to the test, would let them answer as to whether these graces appertain to all who are new

creatures in Christ—as if he would say, “If you have found these blessed fruits to be a part of the character-likeness of Christ, let these be more and more developed in you all.”

Then, as though they had assented to this proposition, had conceded that there is comfort, love, fellowship, sympathy, consolation, in Christ toward one another, he adds: You can fill my joy to the full by being thus minded toward each other, by having love one toward the other, by having one mind, or purpose, or will, as a church—the Lord’s will. How grand an expression this is! His joy would be full; not by knowing of their mere professions, but by knowing that they loved, sympathized with, and consoled one another, that they had the proper fellowship as members of the body of Christ. These things filled his joy more full than anything else that he could know concerning them. And he knew that these conditions would be most pleasing in the sight of their Lord and Master. The Apostle John emphasizes the same thought saying, “He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?”—1 John 4:20.

Looking on the Things of Others

To this end—that such spirit of perfect unity and fellowship might obtain amongst the disciples at Philippi—the Apostle exhorts that each one cultivate the grace of humility; that in every matter each shall take heed that “nothing be done through strife or vainglory,” that self-laudation and strivings for preeminence be thoroughly put away as the greatest enemies to the Spirit of the Lord and to the attainment of his blessing. He urged that each should have that lowliness of mind which could see the good qualities and talents of the fellow members of the body; and that they should appreciate these qualities as, in some respects at least, superior to their own.

Lowliness of mind does not necessarily signify an ignorance of any talents or graces which we may ourselves possess; but so long as the church is in the present imperfect, or tabernacle, condition, we may never expect to find all the abilities, all the talents, all the graces of the holy Spirit in their highest development, in any one person. So, then, each may, if he be lowly of mind, see in others of the brethren certain desirable qualities or graces superior to his own; and these he should delight to recognize and to esteem their possessors accordingly.

For each to look merely on his own things, his own interest or welfare or comfort, or his own talents, and to ignore or forget the interests and comfort or talents of others, would be a manifestation of selfishness and a dearth of the Spirit of Christ, which is a spirit of love, consideration and generosity. In proportion as we are filled with the holy Spirit of love, we shall find ourselves interested in the welfare and happiness of others. This was the mind, the disposition, which was in our dear Redeemer when he walked the earth, a disposition which he so wonderfully manifested; and we are sure that he has not since changed. And if we would be like him we must develop in our characters these traits. If we are to be ultimately of the bride class in glory, we must become copies of “God’s dear Son.”

The Apostle Paul not only holds up the Lord Jesus before us as the great example of proper humility, self-abnegation and love, of a forgetfulness of self in the interests of others, but he also holds up before our vision the result, the reward, of our Lord. He reminds us of the high exaltation of the Master by the Father, that we also may be encouraged, and may realize that, if we are faithful in following the footsteps of our Redeemer, in sacrificing the advantages of the present, in crucifying self, in laboring as far as we are able in the fruits of the holy Spirit, we may expect also to be glorified with him, to share his name and his throne of glory and his great work throughout the eternal future, as his body, his bride, his joint-heir.

A Closing Word of Exhortation

In verses 12-17, following our text, the Apostle pays a beautiful tribute to the church at Philippi, and expresses his great love for them. How he reveals his confidence in their loyalty! And how

glad he was to pour out his own life on their behalf (see margin v. 17) that they might attain unto the fullness of the likeness of Christ! He lovingly exhorts, "Do all things without murmurings and disputings." In following the Master in the narrow way, we are not to murmur as we go, finding fault with its difficulties and its narrowness; nor are we to dispute respecting it, nor to seek to have any other way than that which divine providence marks out before us. On the contrary, we are to realize and believe that the Lord knows exactly what experiences are necessary to our development in the school of Christ; that he is supervising our experiences for our highest good and his glory; that he is not forgetful of his promises to those who are his, but will, as he has promised, cause "all things [that come to us in the line of faithfulness] to work together for good" to us. And even our blunders or stumblings, if properly received, will be overruled for our blessing.

We are glad to see this disposition of trust and loyalty in so many of the Lord's dear saints. Thus following the Master, dearly beloved, we shall "be sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom we shine as lights in the world, holding forth the Word of life." Thus shall those who are over you in the Lord "rejoice in the day of Christ [when our 'change' shall come] that we have not run in vain, neither labored in vain."