

# *Living* **VICTORIOUSLY**

**When Winning It All Isn't Enough**

**A Devotional Study of Philippians**

**J. Allen Blair**



# *Living* VICTORIOUSLY

**When Winning It All Isn't Enough**

## **Books by J. Allen Blair**

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*Living Victoriously—When Winning It All Isn't Enough*  
A Devotional Study of Philippians

*Living Peacefully—When the World Won't Leave You Alone*  
A Devotional Study of 1 Peter



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**When Winning It All Isn't Enough**

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**A Devotional Study of Philippians**

**J. Allen Blair**



Grand Rapids, MI 49501

*Living Victoriously—When Winning It All Isn't Enough*  
*A Devotional Study of Philippians* by J. Allen Blair.

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Cover Photograph: © Superstock, Inc.

Cover Design: Don Ellens

**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Blair, J. Allen

[Living victoriously]

Living victoriously, when winning it all isn't enough: a devotional study of Philippians / J. Allen Blair.

p. cm.

Originally published: Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1956.

1. Bible. N.T. Philippians—Meditations. I. Title.

BS2705.4.B55 1994 227'.607—dc20 93-41448

CIP

ISBN 0-8254-2184-5 (paperback)

1 2 3 4 5 Printing / Year 98 97 96 95 94

*Printed in the United States of America*

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## INTRODUCTION

Paul, in writing to the young preacher Timothy, confirmed the truth that all Scripture is given and inspired by God. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (II Timothy 3:16,17). Certainly no sincere believer in our Lord Jesus Christ would deny the fact of the inspiration of God's Word. For this reason we study the entire Bible, including all sixty-six books, believing and endeavoring to practice their teachings.

Followers of Christ will admit, however, there are certain choice portions in the Word to which they frequently slip away for comfort, encouragement and inspiration. They study and believe the whole Bible, but often find rest and consolation in particular passages. For many, Philippians is one of the "choice morsels" to which the believer frequently resorts. The very thought of this Epistle seems to remind us of our Lord's words recorded in Mark 6:31: "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while."

Philippians is specifically a believer's book. In this aspect, it is very practical. Most of us are deluged by problems and adversity. There is the constant desire to talk with someone who understands. Paul, the writer of this Epistle, is the one. As you read of the flagellations he suffered for the cause of Christ, you will readily recognize him as a man who knows how to face troubles. "Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings

## *Living Victoriously*

often, in cold and nakedness " (II Corinthians 11:24-27).

As he writes the Epistle to the church at Philippi, Paul is in prison shackled to a 'round-the-clock guard with martyrdom threatening. Though defeated from the worldly standpoint, he writes as a victor. His radiant testimony virtually shouts "Hallelujah" to every troubled soul. He speaks repeatedly of joy, grace and peace. As he points us to higher ground, there is not the slightest tinge of defeat, but rather confidence and assurance.

He who loses himself to the dynamics of this Epistle, will emerge more than a conqueror through Christ. Read it! Study it! Let the Spirit of God indelibly write it upon your heart. You will then be well along the way to happy, fruitful, victorious living.

*J. Allen Blair*

## DEDICATION

*To my faithful and loving wife who has  
been a continuous source of comfort and  
inspiration in the service of Christ.*





# *Living Victoriously*



## Chapter I

### THE BELIEVER'S ASSURANCE

#### Philippians 1:1-8

**KEY VERSE:** "*He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.*" (Verse 6)

The Epistle begins with the statement, "Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ" (verse 1). The Apostle's profound humility is readily sensed in these words. He was a veteran missionary statesman while Timothy was just a novice beginning to preach. Yet Paul shows no distinction whatsoever. The young and less qualified Timothy is placed on the same level and recognized in the same way by his more experienced superior.

Paul declares that they are both "servants of Jesus Christ." The word "servant" suggests complete self-effacement. Paul speaks not of the man — it is only Christ. He was always extremely careful to guard against the exaltation of self. The Saviour must receive all the honor. "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Galatians 6:14). So his self-chosen title is "a servant of Jesus Christ."

The word "servant" means *one bound to another*. The connotation of this word differs from our common usage of the term. We think of a servant as one who is bound by compulsion to obey his master. The servitude expressed here is a voluntary act of complete surrender to one's master on the grounds of love. "The love of Christ constraineth us" (II Corinthians 5:14). The love motive should impel every true believer to commit himself to a life of servitude to Christ. Because of God's grace in

implanting new life in the believer's heart, the follower of Christ should be willing to surrender all his rights and privileges to the Father's will. He should say as did David in Psalm 40:8, "I delight to do thy will, O God." The happiest person in the world is the one who in the true sense of the word is "a servant of Jesus Christ." With complete surrender of everything to Him, all fears and anxieties will vanish.

It was Hudson Taylor who said, "Let us give up our work, our thought, our plans, our selves, our lives, our loved ones, our influence, our ALL, right into God's hand; and then, when we have given all over to Him, there will be nothing left for us to be troubled about or to make trouble about."

Paul addresses his letter "to all the saints in Christ Jesus." Who is a saint? The Bible speaks with clarity and lucidity on this subject. A saint is one who is IN Christ Jesus. Anyone is a saint who has apprehended Christ as his eternal Lord. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are IN Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1). "If any man be IN Christ, he is a new creature" (II Corinthians 5:17). A church cannot declare one to be a saint. Nor are we saints because we are saintly. Saintliness has to do with our communion with God. The fact of becoming a saint concerns our union with Him. There must be union before there can be communion. Only through a miracle of regeneration effected by the Holy Spirit when one accepts Christ as Lord, can one enter into this new life experience. Have you invited Christ into your life? If you have, you are a saint, and as a result eternal life is yours. If you have not, you are condemned to eternal separation from God until you believe on Jesus Christ for salvation.

Some there are who tell us such a view of salvation is narrow-minded. They suggest broadmindedness with extreme enthusiasm. These mistaken friends have overlooked a fact of tremendous importance. Broadmindedness has to do with the dimension of width. There are other dimensions to be considered. Serious thought must be given to the dimensions of height and depth. If only width is considered, there will be no spiritual roots. The

dimensions of height and depth are vitally necessary. There must of necessity be the upper reach enabling us to look away from the earth to get hold of the heavenly. At the same time, striking downward in the dimension of depth will provide a secure foundation as we become rooted and grounded in the love of Christ. "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God" (Ephesians 3:17-19). "Saints IN Christ Jesus" demands height and depth as well as breadth.

Being IN Christ Jesus, the believer is in a position to enjoy the next accumulated blessing. "GRACE be unto you, and PEACE, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ" (verse 2). What is grace? There immediately comes to mind a most familiar definition. "Grace is the unmerited favor of God." But grace is more than that. Grace is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself!

Thrice Paul had prayed for deliverance from his thorn in the flesh. In II Corinthians 12:9 we have our Lord's reply, "My grace is sufficient for thee." Paul is quick to rejoin, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me." Without question, Paul recognizes grace as the Lord Jesus Christ. We also read in John 1:17, "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by JESUS CHRIST." The living Christ is the personification of grace.

Now we ask, What is peace? Peace is also Christ. He said, "These things have I spoken unto you that in ME ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). We might just as well read the last statement, "Christ our peace has overcome the world." Turning to Ephesians 2:13,14, we see the believer's former state and present possession. "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our PEACE." Look at this marvelous

relationship. In a world of tribulation, the believer is indwelt and surrounded by grace and peace.

Since grace is Christ and peace is Christ, what have we to fear? This is the **BELIEVER'S ASSURANCE**. It is this assurance which provides tranquility and serenity regardless of circumstances. But even in the light of this truth, God's people permit themselves to be overwhelmed by the cares of this life. Frequently we encourage our fears by looking for trouble, rather than trusting God for grace and peace as revealed in Christ.

While Carlyle lived in London, his sleep was frequently disturbed by a crowing rooster which belonged to his neighbor. Carlyle spoke to his neighbor about it, but the neighbor said, "He only crows three or four times during the night."

"That may be," replied Carlyle, "but if you only knew how I suffer waiting for him to crow!"

Most of us are like that. Failing to trust in Christ who longs to sustain us by His grace and peace, we anticipate trouble. How we need to recognize our assurance in the Lord Jesus, and worry no more.

The Apostle proceeds to give thanks with joy for the fellowship which the Philippian Church has enjoyed in the Gospel from its inception. Thanksgiving could not always be offered for other churches. The Corinthian Church was in constant turmoil because of severe factions and divisions. The Galatian Church was plagued and crippled by legalism in its worst form. The Ephesian believers had grown cold and had left their initial enthusiasm and love. But the Philippian believers were worthy of special praise. Of course, they were far from being faultless, but they were achieving for Christ, regardless of the obstacles. Paul praises them for their "fellowship in the Gospel."

The word "fellowship" means two things: *partnership* and *participation*. Paul was the missionary on the field while the Philippians at home were having fellowship in the Gospel by fulfilling their partnership in his ministry and faithfully participating in his support.

Every home church has a partnership with its missionaries on the field. Those at home have a ministry to per-

form vitally related to the work of the missionary. This is a God-established partnership. There are two sides to it. Every believer is called to missionary service. Some are called to the front lines, while others are called to remain at home to care for the supply lines. We must determine whether the Lord wants us on the front line or on the supply line. The responsibility is equally important. Because of this partnership, every true servant of Christ has a mission to fulfill in spreading the Gospel.

Those at home should discharge their partnership duties in several ways. Prayer must be at the head of the list. Stated periods should be reserved to pray for the needs of missionaries. "The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (James 5:16). The "much" of this verse is not being evidenced because those on the supply lines are not agonizing in prayer. How few of our Christians spend as much as five minutes a day for missionaries! Doors have closed and are closing in foreign fields because God's people at home have not shared this burden. We have a partnership responsibility. Much prayer is of extreme importance.

Years ago a young missionary couple were honored at a farewell service by their home church prior to leaving for Africa. The young husband said, "My wife and I have a strange dread in going. We feel as if we are going down into a pit. We are willing to take the risk and go, if you, our home circle, will promise to **HOLD THE ROPES.**" One and all promised.

Less than two years had passed when the wife and the little baby God had given succumbed to a dreaded fever. The husband, too, became ill. He was forced to return home. Arriving during the prayer meeting hour, he went directly to the church. He listened to the prayers after which the surprised pastor welcomed him and invited him to say a few words. The people were filled with remorse as he said, "I am your missionary. My wife and child are buried in Africa, and I have come home to die. This evening I listened anxiously as you prayed, for some mention of your missionary — to see if you were keeping your promise — but in vain! You prayed

for everything connected with yourselves and your home church, but you forgot your missionary. I see now why I am a failure as a missionary. It is because *you failed to Hold the Ropes!*"

In addition to prayer, there should be sacrificial giving. Personal comforts should be forgotten. This is no time to think of our own convenience. The world is on fire! Sin is rampant! The forces of evil are unleashed! What is the answer? The Gospel is the only answer. The Word must be sent to every corner of the world. Only through sacrificial giving can this ever be accomplished. God says, "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him" (I Corinthians 16:2). And in Matthew 6:19-21 we read, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: . . . For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

Where is your treasure? For whom are you living? Christ — or self? If you are a Christian, you are in a partnership with the missionaries. Therefore you should be actively engaged in the work of missions.

Paul expresses his unwavering confidence in the power of God to continue the good work in the Philippian believers as he says in verse 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." The Philippian Church had been faithful in fulfilling her obligation as a missionary church. Paul assures them such a church will be prospered and blessed until Christ returns. The power of God will be mightily manifested in the missionary church. The mission of the church is missions! Missions is not elective in God's university of grace, but required. Only as a church spreads the Gospel can there be any degree of spiritual success.

This verse suggests also the believer's assurance of salvation as taught in so many portions of God's Word. He who is the Author of our salvation will also keep us saved. No believer should ever fear falling away and being lost again. Salvation is of God, not of ourselves. He began a good work in us, and He will continue that work until



our Saviour appears for His bride, the Church. God declares in John 10:28 and 29, "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all, and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." "Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it" (I Thessalonians 5:24). Paul assures us in Romans 8:38 and 39 that nothing can sever our union with Christ. "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

If there has been a genuine heart experience relating us to Christ through the Holy Spirit, this salvation can never be lost. Of course, if you have had only a mental or surface experience, when the winds of doubt and fear blow, all will be lost. But if you are rooted and grounded in Christ, you may be certain that your salvation is eternally secure in Him.

In verse 7 we read, "Because I have you in my heart." This could be better translated, "Because *you* have *me* in *your* heart!" The believer's partnership with the missionary is still in Paul's mind. He is grateful to the Philippians because they have not forgotten him. They proved this by their actions. So often believers have the missionary in the mind but not in the heart. Rarely do they write a letter to the missionary. One of the most poignant longings in the heart of a missionary on the field is to receive letters from home. Thousands of miles from civilization and friends, he eagerly looks for mail.

It is also obvious that those who have missionaries in the mind only, give little thought to the missionaries' children. Many of these children rarely see a white child. Natives are their only playmates. They have few toys. What a thrill to the parents when a thoughtful gift for the children is sent from the friends at home.

Those who have missionaries in the heart will take a practical interest in them. When they return home on furlough, those who have had them in mind only will find

it inconvenient to offer hospitality. It might upset the schedule or routine. There are many who talk about missionaries and missions, and yet do not open their homes to those on furlough. If you do not grasp the opportunities to grace your home with the fellowship of missionaries, you will miss many blessings God longs to give.

A man and wife who had a large family were most gracious in opening their modest home to missionaries who came to their church. Frequently, they sacrificed some of the better foods during the week so they could generously entertain missionaries on Sunday. In later years, their savings were as meager as in their more youthful years. Today, however, every one of their children is happily married and faithfully serving the Lord. Without reservation, the parents are certain the influence of missionaries in the home was largely responsible for the splendid spiritual advancement and development of their children.

In contrast, another family comes to mind. Their home was always neat, orderly, and artistically furnished. They talked about missions at the church but never took a constructive part in supporting or entertaining the missionaries. Where are their children today? They are married, prosperous, successful in business; but not one of them has a desire to live for the Lord Jesus or to attend church. If only parents could realize the importance of getting the missionary in the heart instead of in the mind, they would have less grief in future years.

Notice also in verse 7, Paul says, "Ye all are partakers of my grace." Because of their faithfulness at home in participating with their missionary in the great opportunity of preaching Christ, they became the recipients of the same blessings Paul enjoyed right out on the front lines. Obedience to God's will always results in His blessing. "Honor the Lord with thy substance and with the firstfruits of thine increase. So shall thy barns be filled with plenty and thy presses shall burst out with new wine" (Proverbs 3:9, 10). It is impossible to get ahead of God. Our slightest effort in service is always superseded by His abundant grace.

Paul concludes this portion by stating his heartfelt affection for the Philippian saints. "How greatly I long after you all" (verse 8). The Apostle was naturally attracted to them because they did not merely talk about evangelism, they acted! They faithfully heeded James' advice, "Be ye doers of the word and not hearers only" (James 1:22). "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man *say* he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him? Even so, faith, *if it have not works*, is dead, being alone" (James 2:14, 17).

May God burden each one of us for world-wide evangelism. Join hands with those who have gone forth to proclaim the Living Word throughout the world. Enter into your partnership with diligence. "The fields are white unto harvest." Let us get our eyes on the fields, not on the barns. And as believers in Christ, assured of our eternal salvation, let us invest everything we possess in fulfilling the Saviour's commission to reach the lost with the Gospel.

## Chapter II

### THE BELIEVER'S ADVANCEMENT

#### Philippians 1:9-18

KEY VERSE: "*And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment.*" (Verse 9)

After commending those in the church at Philippi for their faithfulness in the fellowship of the Gospel, Paul encourages them not to rest on past laurels, but to continue to go forward. So often we are reminded in the Scriptures that blessing in the Christian experience is enjoyed only as we advance and mature in the faith. In I Peter 2:2 we are told to "desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may *grow* thereby." In II Peter 3:18 God says, "But *grow* in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

When Paul wrote his first Epistle to the Corinthian believers, it was necessary for him to rebuke them for their failure to grow and progress in spiritual things. "And I brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?" (I Corinthians 3:1-3) Growth in grace is absolutely essential to spiritual advancement. Without it, the slow but sure diminution of vision will be the sad result.

The entire portion of Scripture before us sets forth the keynote of advancement. Notice how prevalent this tenor seems to be. "Abound yet more and more" (verse 9).

"Approve things that are excellent" (verse 10). "Being filled with the fruits of righteousness" (verse 11). "Un-to the furtherance of the gospel." (verse 12). "Much more bold" (verse 14). "Set for the defense of the gospel" (verse 17).

In verse 9 Paul prays that the love of the Philippian saints "may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment." No believer has yet exhausted the fullness of the reservoir of God's love. There is always ample room for expansion and growth. Because of this, Paul urges them to be plentiful in it and to saturate themselves with it.

Of course, the love about which the apostle speaks is not mere Hollywood sensationalism or romantic emotionalism, but exotic love that cannot possibly be generated in the human heart. It can only be received by the new birth as a gift of the Holy Spirit. "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost" (Romans 5:5). This love is entirely foreign to those without Christ. But when Christ is received, it is this love which immediately establishes a sonship relation with the Father. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God" (I John 3:1). As the believer gravitates closer to Christ and becomes more fully committed to this love, it becomes more and more understandable and wonderful.

The believer is "to abound yet more and more" in the "knowledge" and "judgment" of God's love. The word "knowledge" as used in this verse has to do with knowing what God's Word teaches about love, while the word "judgment" refers to the ability to apply this knowledge. The believer must have a knowledge of what God teaches in the Bible about love, but mere theoretical knowledge unapplied is valueless. There must be the constant emphasis of the principle of love if evidence of discipleship is to be given. "By this shall men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35). "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" (I

John 4:20) The extent to which the love of God daily works out of us into the lives of others will evidence the depth of our own personal experience of God's love.

If the love of God abounds in us, it will not be too difficult to take the next step forward. "Approve things that are excellent" (verse 10). This means to set our affections on the higher things of life. It begins by abounding in the love of God. Those abounding in God's love will be fertile soil for the approving process. To "approve things that are excellent," makes possible the deepening of our spiritual roots. Right choice marks the difference between carnality and spirituality.

Paul in writing to the Colossians said, "If ye then be risen with Christ, *seek* those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. *Set* your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:1-3). To approve the excellent things is to "set your affections on things above." This is to love the things Christ loves and to do the things Christ desires us to do.

The constant choosing of the "higher things" in the strength of God's love will enable us to be "sincere and without offense until the day of Christ." The word "sincere" suggests a pure or tested character. The "day of Christ" can only refer to the personal return of Christ. Those who expectantly watch for the return of their Lord will be constrained to purity. When the doctrine of the return of Christ is wholeheartedly believed, it will result in surrendered living, with the affections centered on the higher things. "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:11-13).

One reason there is so much worldliness and ungodliness in so many churches is that people are not living in anticipation of the Second Coming. How we need to search our own hearts daily before God, to see if our in-

terests and ambitions are really focused upon "The things that are excellent."

A foreigner came to a Christian lady's home asking for old newspapers and magazines. After granting the man's request, she talked with him and learned that he had only been in this country a few years. She was surprised at the ability with which he spoke the English language, and inquired as to the means of his progress. He attributed it to the reading and study of the magazines he was able to collect.

"By the way," he said, "I found this the other day," as he pulled from his pocket a copy of the New Testament. "Lady," he asked, "are there any people who really live according to the things that are taught in this Book?"

What a searching question!

So often Christians blame the world for all the godlessness. But are not Christians to blame for much of it? Parents say, "I wonder why it is my children do not seem to have greater concern for the things of Christ?" Should the children receive all the blame? Usually a frank analysis on the part of the parents will reveal numerous inconsistencies. A Sunday School teacher says, "I just can't seem to win my boys and girls to Christ. The more I teach, the more hopeless the task appears. What is wrong with my class?" Is the class to be blamed altogether? Often the root of the difficulty lies in the unsundered heart of the teacher who has failed to approve the things that are excellent.

Paul proceeds to inform us that if the believer is **ABOUNDING** in love, he will **APPROVE** things that are excellent, and the Spirit-desired result will be **FRUIT**! "Being filled with the fruits of righteousness," (verse 11) or better translated, "the fruits which righteousness produces." A life fully committed to Christ, normally produces fruit. The Lord Jesus made this so clear in John 15:5, 8: — "I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing . . . Herein is my father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples."

To "abide in Christ" is to abound in love and to approve things that are excellent. Only those who pay the price of abiding will know the blessedness of fruitbearing. Fellowship with the Lord Jesus always produces results. This is the promise of God's Word. In most of our churches, there is so little accomplished for Christ, because there is so little abiding in Him. There is so much that needs to be done for God in these days. But let us remember, nothing can be done unless we are abiding in Christ.

A maid approached her employer requesting an advance of one week's salary. He overlooked it, but again she asked. He questioned her insistence. "Well," she replied, "our preacher is leaving the church this Sunday, and the congregation wants to give him a little *momentum*." One of the great needs in the church today is action for the Lord. Our greatest need, however, is time spent in His presence "abounding and approving." Action will follow, and then we shall see the fruit.

Epaphroditus brought word to Paul from the Philippians about their deep concern. Because of his incarceration, they feared the Apostle was severed from all possibility of witnessing. Paul informs them that just the opposite was true. "The things which happened unto me have fallen out (resulted in) rather unto the furtherance of the gospel" (verse 12).

The word "happened" is an insertion by the translator. It could just as well be left out; for nothing ever "happens." All things are providential through God's directive or permissive will. Even persecution is purposeful in advancing the Gospel. Persecution never silences God's testimony. It is as the scattering of the embers which causes the fire to spread even more. "Blessed are ye," Jesus said, "when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you" (Matthew 5:11, 12). No believer should ever be discouraged or deterred because of criticism or persecution. This should act as a stimulus, encouraging us to advance for Christ.



Paul proceeds to tell us of the two-fold effect of his imprisonment. First, "So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places" (verse 13). Twenty-four hours a day the Apostle was chained to a guard. Every change of shifts presented a new sentinel. Never before did Paul have his congregation chained to him! What an opportunity and privilege God had given. The Apostle took advantage of the occasion. It was impossible for the guard to escape Paul's witness. Hour after hour, the guard had no alternative but to listen to God's servant tell of salvation through the Lord Jesus. Before long, the entire personnel of the palace was talking about the Gospel.

How mighty is the hand of God! His ways cannot be understood, but it is certain He makes no mistakes. Sometimes God allows his servants to be placed in hospitals, sanitoriums, and state hospitals so He might have a Gospel witness there. How important that we recognize these so-called disappointments as opportunities, and glorify Christ. Be bold! Stand true at any cost as did Paul, the faithful, stalwart, invulnerable hero of the faith. He had written to the Corinthians and enjoined them, "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong" (I Corinthians 16:13). Indeed, he was the very epitome of this exhortation. Every word of this verse was evidenced by his fearlessness.

The other result of Paul's imprisonment was a stimulus to faithfulness on the part of some of the more timorous Roman Christians. "The saints at Rome were much more bold to speak the Word without fear" (verse 14). Because of the oppression and persecution in Rome, many of the believers, daunted by fear, did not only witness for Christ. But observing Paul's courage, during his imprisonment, their whole attitude changed. They reasoned that if Paul, endangered by possible death, could stand true and magnify the name of his Lord, why should not they with the same unflinching courage proclaim the truth of the Gospel? Immediately, they began to witness for the Saviour.

Unfortunately, there are many silent witnesses in the body of Christ today. They are like those of whom Jesus

spoke in John 12, verses 42 and 43, "Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God." Many there are who believe on Christ, but for fear of what people may say or think, do not confess Him. Jesus said in Matthew 10:32, 33, "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven." A silent witness is no witness at all! Faithfulness in witnessing is so important.

While living in New York, I recall poster ads appearing in the subway trains, sponsored by Calvert Whiskey. On these posters, outstanding business men were pictured with their names underneath. The heading at the top of each poster was, "I Am Satisfied With Calvert." All over that great metropolitan area, men were giving testimony to the fact that they were taking their stand for Calvert Whiskey. Upon seeing those posters, the thought came to me, How many Christian business men would be willing to have their likenesses and names placed on a similar poster with a heading at the top, "I Am Satisfied With Calvary!" or "I am Satisfied With Christ"? So often the world possesses more boldness for its unbelief than Christians do for their belief. May God give us the grace and courage to speak the Word without fear.

Paul goes on to tell that his troubles were not simply outside the camp, but inside as well. Some of those who professed to follow Christ were causing him difficulty. He writes, "Some indeed preach Christ of envy and strife, and some also of good will. The one preach Christ of contention" (verses 15, 16). A Christ of "envy" or a Christ of "contention" presents a lop-sided Gospel. Whenever the Gospel is diluted with anything, it loses its power. Evidently, Paul has in mind here the Judaizers in the church at Rome who were trying to bind the burden of the Mosaic Law on the new converts. The Gospel of Christ has no strings attached.

Paul declares in verse 17 that he is "set for the defense of the gospel." He describes this gospel in I Corinthians 15:3, 4. "Christ died for our sins, according to the scrip-

tures, and that he was buried, and that he arose again the third day according to the scriptures." In II Timothy 4:1-4, he further wrote, "I charge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables."

The Apostle stresses the extreme importance of preaching the unadulterated Word of God without any additions or subtractions. God promises blessing and fruitfulness only as His Word is proclaimed. "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it" (Isaiah 55:11). Let us not preach a Christ of contention. We are to contend for the Gospel, but never to be contentious. Let us preach the Christ of the Word of God, the Christ of love who came to seek and to save sinners.

Paul was indeed well-advanced in Christian grace, for notice his attitude toward the situation described in verse 18. "What then?" or "What difference does it make?" "Christ is preached." It is as though he said, "They cannot limit God, even though they preach their Christ of contention. God promises to honor His Word." Paul realized that Jesus had said in John 12:32, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." He knew that if Christ were exalted, souls would be saved. The Lord draws men and women to Himself in spite of the weaknesses and inconsistencies of His instruments. It is the object, not the instrument that effects the result.

Regardless of circumstances, Paul can rejoice! "I therein rejoice and will rejoice." His life in jeopardy with impending martyrdom, criticised by other Christians, he can praise God. How do you explain this? There is only one answer. He was sold out to the Lord! Christ was everything to him. We note this in I Corinthians 2:1, 2. "And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with ex-

cellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, *save Jesus Christ*, and him crucified." When we come to the place of full and absolute commitment to Christ, we are enabled by the Spirit of God to face any situation with rejoicing in our hearts. This equanimity and felicity comes only from the hand of our God as we fully submit to Him.

Believer in Christ, have you committed everything to the Lord Jesus? Are you advancing in your Christian experience? Are you "abounding" in God's love? Are you "approving" the higher things? Is the "fruit" of the Spirit obvious? If you cannot answer in the affirmative, ask God through the Holy Spirit to do a real work in your heart as you just now surrender your all to Christ.

## Chapter III

### THE BELIEVER'S ASSIGNMENT

#### Philippians 1:19-30

**KEY VERSE:** "*Christ shall be magnified in my body whether it be by life or by death.*" (Verse 20)

We have observed Paul's faithful stand under the fire of persecution. Because he stood true to Christ during his incarceration, two beneficial results were effected: First, the Gospel was proclaimed in places where it had never been heard before. Second, many of the weaker brethren who feared to confess Christ, upon seeing Paul's courage began to testify faithfully to the fact that they were followers of the Lord Jesus. Paul's unshakable stand for Christ could be summed up in his words as found in verse 17 — "I am set for the defense of the gospel." Nothing could shake this man's faith, for he was "rooted and grounded" in Christ.

"I know that this shall turn to my salvation," Paul says in verse 19. To what does "this" refer? It seems reasonable that it can only refer to the Apostle's faithful stand for Christ, the fact that he was "set for the defense of the gospel," and always unflinchingly ready to magnify Christ. "Salvation" as used here does not mean soul salvation but rather *spiritual well-being*. Paul is certain if he continues to remain true to his Lord, all will be well. Without question, he will continue to enjoy the blessing of God on his ministry.

The Apostle further reminds the Philippians in this verse of the need for their prayer help if he is to continue faithful. He says it is "through your prayer." This is so very important. If missionaries and preachers are to be

diligent in giving forth the Gospel, they must be upheld by loyal saints through the ministry of intercession.

*The missionaries need your prayers,  
The preachers need them too;  
Without the help of praying saints  
There's not much they can do.  
The teachers cannot teach the Word,  
They need help day by day.  
So hold them up before the throne  
And get behind and pray.*

— AUTHOR UNKNOWN

Paul was a great believer in prayer. He had put the words of our Lord to the test many times — “And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive” (Matthew 21:22). “Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive that your joy may be full” (John 16:24). Paul knew how to capitalize on these precious promises.

You will recall it was during Paul's first visit to Philippi that he displayed his complete and unwavering confidence in prayer. Paul and Silas had been thrust into prison because of their valiant stand for Christ, but their faith was not to be daunted. “At midnight Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them. And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed” (Acts 16:25,26). When one sees miraculous answers to prayer such as this, how can he help but believe? Yet you and I have the privilege in our day of seeing even more than this. If only we would give time to this needy ministry of intercession, we should see obstacles as stone walls crumbling before our eyes.

Paul also tells us that not only is prayer essential for an effective Gospel witness, but in addition to this, there must be a “supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.” Usually where

there is much prayer, there will be an overflowing "supply of the Spirit." Without Holy Spirit power, little or nothing will be accomplished for the Lord. He who desires to be used of God must be fully committed to the working of the Spirit, for it is "not by might nor by power but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts" (Zechariah 4:6). If we are to accomplish anything for the glory of the Lord Jesus, it can only be by the working of the Holy Spirit within us.

In verse 20, the Apostle gives us another secret of usefulness. "According to my earnest expectation." The words "earnest expectation" come from a Greek word made up of three words: *Head*, *Away*, and *Watch*. It suggests one with head erect whose attention is turned from all other objects about him as he steadfastly focusses his eyes on one particular object. The object on which Paul's eyes were fixed was Christ! There is no question about this as he further states in this verse, "Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death." All around him there were disturbing and distressing circumstances, but his eyes are turned upward to Christ. He looks above the circumstances. This is the only way to live.

Paul says in this verse "that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that *with all boldness*" he desires to magnify Christ. In writing to the Ephesian Christians, he requested prayer for this same purpose. "Praying always . . . for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel" (Ephesians 6:19). Several years before, he had written to the Christians at Rome, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Romans 1:16). Probably when the Christians read that statement, they thought it was a simple matter for Paul to write such things, being miles away, but what would he do if he were subjected to the oppression of the iron heel of Rome? Would he be so bold? They had a chance to see what he would do during his imprisonment in their

own city. He was as fearless as ever. What a living example he was to every believer for holy boldness.

It is this courage all of us so greatly need; for Jesus said in Mark 8:38, "Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." Truly this is the believer's assignment. Nothing should supersede this. "Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death." It is the duty and obligation of every believer to magnify Christ's Name at any cost. Few Christians recognize this important assignment God has given them. It is realized only in a life of absolute surrender to Christ.

So many refuse to surrender to Christ for fear of what they might have to give up. It should be understood that surrender is not subtraction but addition. It is not giving up, but receiving. As spring dispels the cold winds of winter, one notices here and there a few old leaves from fall clinging to the barren branches. These leaves did not relinquish their hold to be whisked away by the demanding wind as did their many neighbors. They held tenaciously in spite of zero blasts from the north. Even the ice and sleet could not tear them from their moorings. As spring advances, however, something happens. Those shrivelled leaves can hold no longer; for from December twenty-first on, God adds a few miracle-effecting moments of sunlight to each day, forcing new life to surge upward through the trunk and out through the branches until the last stubborn leaf is severed from the tree! But that is not subtraction. It is addition! New life replaces the old.

So it is with the believer in Christ. As he commits himself fully to Christ in unconditional surrender, the Holy Spirit surges into every phase of his being and crowds out all that is displeasing to God. The old habits, desires, and lusts give way to the warmth of God's love as experienced in a life of complete yieldedness. Jesus said in Matthew 6:33, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteous-



ness." Here we have the invitation to full surrender to Christ with the promise that if we yield, "all these things shall be added unto you." It is addition; not subtraction! Have you come to the place where you have declared that Christ shall be magnified in your body, "whether it be by life or by death"? If not, bow before your Lord without delay, and let Him perform a work of grace in your heart.

Because Paul has come to this place of full commitment, he can say in verse 21, "For to me to live is Christ." And the result? "To die is gain." The unbelieving soul who has never trusted in the Saviour for salvation can only say, "For to me to live is lust. For to me to live is pleasure. For to me to live is money." But what follows? For such, death brings no gain, but rather eternal perdition. God declares in Psalm 9:17, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that *forget* God." Judgment is certain for those who have rejected Christ and have ignored His claims. "It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment." (Hebrews 9:27).

Carnal Christians, on the other hand, know nothing of the blessedness of saying, "For to me to live is Christ." They are defeated Christians who know nothing of victorious living through the Lord Jesus. Thus they are constrained to say, "For to me to live is Christ *and* pleasure," or "Christ *and* lust." They believe in Christ but want to follow the ways of the world. They are saved and can claim the promise "to die is gain," but there will be no reward, for they are "saved so as by fire."

Paul was fully committed to Christ and could say without reservation, "To die is gain." What gain it will be! How wonderful is the assurance of the glory of Heaven. "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (II Corinthians 5:1). There are no uncertainties about the future. There need be no doubts in our minds. Paul said, "We know" — not we hope or we suppose. Only the sincere believer in Christ has

this marvelous assurance. It is this certainty which removes all fear of death.

Death for the true Christian should hold no anxiety. Why do Christians pray that they might not die? Is there anything wrong or horrible about death as some may imagine? We picture death as coming to destroy. God says it is coming to save. We think of it as losing. God declares that it is gaining. We think of it as ending. The Bible teaches that it is beginning. We think of it as going away. Without question, it is arriving. We think of it as parting. The Word teaches that it is a meeting. What a wonderful "gain" this will be for God's people.

Paul is not certain, however, that he is going to die at present. He seems confident that he will live. If he does, he wants to live with a purpose. In verse 22 he says, "This is the fruit of my labour" — which means, "I must bring forth fruit. I must labour to the end to produce for God." Really this is why Christians are in the world. We are saved to be fruitful. We are Christians to do something. We have a life with design and that, to serve God. Paul wrote in I Corinthians 4:2, "Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful." As believers in the Lord Jesus, we are exhorted to be faithful in sacrificial service for the Lord. Paul also wrote to the Corinthians in his first Epistle, chapter 15, verse 58, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." We are to abound in good works for God.

Paul realized that soon he would be claiming his eternal reward in the presence of Christ; but as long as he had breath, he longed faithfully to magnify Christ in service. God says, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them" (Revelation 14:13). The "rest" will come. Today, we must work.

Paul goes on to say in this same verse, "Yet what I shall choose I wot not." If God wanted him in heaven, he would be happy to go. If the Lord desired him to stay and work, he was perfectly willing. Paul realized that the control of death was in the hands of his Heavenly Father. Consequently, he rested in God's marvelous providence. He knew Christ won the victory over death and that no believer dies until God's appointed time. You will remember Satan sought to destroy Job, but God told him, "Behold, all that he (Job) hath is in thy (Satan's) power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand" (Job. 1:12). Satan was not permitted to touch Job's life, because the life of the believer belongs to God. The death of a saint is an event of importance in the eyes of the Lord. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints" (Psalm 116:15).

Paul tells us that he was confronted by two pulls, the upward and the downward. "I am in a strait betwixt two" (verse 23). The pull is strong in both directions. He desires to go and be with Christ and yet at the same time, he is willing to stay here and be a faithful servant. He confesses that the stronger pull is upward. His desire is "to depart and be with Christ; which is far better." Death to Paul is far better than life. How can this be? Simply because when the believer departs, he goes to be "with Christ." This is the same assurance Jesus gave the dying thief on the cross: "Today thou shalt be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). Paradise is far better than anything we have ever seen or heard. Language cannot describe what God has reserved for his people. What a comforting hope in the hour of death to know that we go to that which is "far better."

Edith Cavell, the famous English nurse of the first world war, has a monument over her grave in London which gives her name, the place and date of her death. Underneath, there is one word: "DAWN." What an expression this is of God's truth! What may be sunset to the loved ones here, is dawn for the one who goes to be with Christ, "which is far better."

When Susannah Wesley, the mother of John and Charles, was dying, she said to her children gathered about the bed, "When I am gone, sing to God a hymn of praise." Can the believer sing at the threshold of death? Certainly! For those in Christ, death is not a dark, mysterious and hopeless enigma. It is going where Christ is. What a blessed reunion this is for all who have faithfully trusted the Saviour in this life.

"Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you," Paul tells the Philippians (verse 24). It would not be feasible for all Christians to die and go to glory. God's work must continue in this world. The Gospel must be proclaimed. Future blessing demands present faithfulness. "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him" (Psalm 126:6). If there is no bearing of the seed, there will be no sheaves. "Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days" (Ecclesiastes 11:1). If there is no distribution of the bread, there will be no finding. Christians have their assignment from God. We must do the work Christ has outlined for us. Jesus said, "Occupy till I come" (Luke 19:13). Till we meet Him, we are to be busy with His work.

To this end Paul says, "I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith" (verse 25). His constant concern is for a life of fruitfulness. He longs to further the Gospel among the Philippian people as well as among all others to whom God permits him to minister.

In verses 26 and 27, Paul expresses his desire to visit the Philippian Christians again. "That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again." He is not certain what the future has in store. His trial before the emperor has not yet come to an issue, and he is not sure what Caesar will do. But whatever the outcome, the Apostle is concerned that the Philippian believers stand true to Christ. "Let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ." The word "conversation"

here could better be translated *behaviour* or *manner of life*.

Christian living is so important. Paul placed a strong emphasis on holy living. If one accepts the truth of the Gospel, belief should result in life. Creed is important; but creed should normally produce conduct. Doctrine is vitally essential; but doctrine should find its outlet in duty. Thus the Apostle, inspired by the Holy Spirit, informs us that the Believer's Assignment consists not only of magnifying Christ in service, but in life. "For we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10). "This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men" (Titus 3:8).

One cannot magnify Christ in sacrificial service and holy living without meeting opposition. But Paul says in verse 28, "Do not be terrified (or intimidated) by your adversaries." Do not fear. Do not waver. Stand firm for Christ. "He that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord" (James 1:6,7). A man who hasn't learned to stand firm for Christ, will never conquer for Christ. Be faithful in the face of opposition and persecution.

We are reminded in verse 29 that we must expect suffering and opposition. "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake." Being Christians does not mean we are excluded from anxiety and hardship. "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you" (I Peter 4:12). The believer should not be disturbed and bewildered because of trials. All affliction is for the glory of God. Face it as such.

Believers as well as unbelievers, must suffer. At times, believers suffer even more. In Christ, however, we have the certainty that in the midst of all suffering, God has

given us the Burden-Bearer of whom the unsaved know nothing. We have His comforting words in Hebrews 2:18, — “For in that he (Christ) himself hath suffered being tested, he is able to succour (help) them that are tested.” Christ, our Burden-Bearer, removes the weight and the sorrow of the suffering and gives us His joy and peace.

Paul closes the chapter by mentioning his own sufferings, but he does not complain. He wholly trusts in the promises of God. In verse 30, he reminds the Philippians of his imprisonment in Philippi which they had seen, and now his present incarceration of which they had heard. He is schooled in suffering; yet he never murmurs. Regardless of the trial, he endures for the glory of Christ. He could say, “Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death.” He knew the secret of leaning on the everlasting arms.

Have you learned this secret? If not, turn to our blessed Lord now. Yield completely to His will for your life and say, “Lord Jesus, I want to magnify You in my body by life or by death.” This is the key to happy and fruitful living. This is the **BELIEVER’S ASSIGNMENT**.

## Chapter IV

### THE BELIEVER'S ASPIRATION

#### Philippians 2:1-11

**KEY VERSE:** *"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."* (Verse 5)

The Philippian Church was one of vision and concern in the church's foremost task of disseminating the Gospel. Indeed it was a progressive church, but to be sure, it was not a perfect church. There are no perfect churches. Epaphroditus had brought word to Paul that provoked real concern. Enmity and disharmony had broken the serenity of spirit in the Philippian congregation. It was not nearly so serious as the condition at Corinth, but it was bad enough.

Under the circumstances, trouble of some kind was to be expected among the Philippians. Whenever a church is advancing in the fulfillment of its obligation to proclaim Christ, you may be sure Satan will be at work. He never disturbs a sleeping church. The members of such an assembly are no problem to him. But when God's people are wide-awake and busy for the Lord, Satan and his emissaries will be there to impede and thwart progress.

We are warned in I Peter 5:8 and 9, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world." Because of the cunning and subtle methods used by our enemy, we must keep constant guard. The nearer one gets to the center of God's will, the more destructive will be the devil's machinations. Christians must be vig-

ilant. The tempter follows us from conversion to the grave; and the closer we get to the Living Christ, the hotter the battle will become.

Satan's presence is not easily detected. Frequently he appears as Paul described in II Corinthians 11:14 as "an angel of light." On other occasions, he assumes the role of an angel of darkness. He may appear in a garment of piety or in a robe of wickedness. We must be prepared. So God tells us in Ephesians 6:10-12, "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

One of the surest methods of defense in combating the enemy, is the attack of prayer. How important that each church member, Sunday School teacher, and church officer realize this and be present at every prayer service to perform his duty before God in an all-out effort to subdue the enemy. The church with no prayer meeting, or the church with a tottering prayer meeting, becomes an easy target for Satan. Perhaps the Philippian Church had neglected prayer. Whatever the reason for their impotence, Satan had asserted himself and was busily engaged in sowing the seeds of discontent and discord.

The first word of chapter two should read *since* rather than "if." Paul did not wish to express a supposition or a condition, but a fact. An even better translation would be, *in view of the fact*. Thus he says, "In view of the fact that we have consolation (encouragement) in Christ." How immeasurably precious is the encouragement that the Lord Jesus provides for His own. Hundreds of verses in the Bible clearly delineate His encouragement so graciously given to those who trust Him. Look at John 14:27: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." In all the tomes of literature to be found on the shelves of our greatest libraries, where could one find such words of encouragement as these? Though disconsolate and distressed, if one is in



Christ, there is always heartening strength to face trial.

Paul further says, "Since there is comfort of love." He is speaking of God's love implanted by the Holy Spirit. "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost" (Romans 5:5). This is perfect love. That is why it gives us comfort. "Perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment" (I John 4:18). Without fear of the future, the believer can face the problems of life with assurance that he is garrisoned and sheltered by God's wonderful love.

The Apostle next emphasizes the fact of the presence of the Holy Spirit in the believer. "Since there is fellowship of the Spirit." The moment one receives Christ as Lord, the Holy Spirit comes to indwell him. This is an eternal fellowship, for the Spirit will never depart. "The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Romans 8:16). If prone to doubt our salvation, the Holy Spirit assures us we belong to God. What a marvelous fellowship this is!

The inspired writer continues, "Since there are bowels of mercies," or literally, *tender mercies and compassions*. For a most humbling experience, one need only kneel before God and quietly consider our Saviour's tender mercies and compassion in suffering and dying on the Cross for our sinfulness. In addition to this, think of His compassion for the lost. "But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd" (Matthew 9:36). Our Lord's compassion knows no limits.

"Fulfill ye my joy that ye be likeminded." That is, "You will make me happy, if you do the same thing." In other words Paul is saying, "If you will duplicate these virtues in your life, you will make me very happy." Provide encouragement for others as you are encouraged by Christ. Reveal God's love to others even as Christ loved you. Strive to establish unity and harmony among the brethren comparable to the fellowship made possible through the fellowship of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Be constrained by the same tender mercies and compassion to reach the lost that prompted Christ to leave Heaven's

glory for earth's shame and die for our sins. Paul says, "If you will do this, you will make me happy."

"Having the same love, being of one accord and of one mind" (verse 2). What does the Apostle mean, "one mind"? Is it imperative that all Christians think identically? Not only would this be impractical, but impossible. Our God is a God of variety. He created all things different. There are no two blades of grass, no two leaves, no two flowers, no two individuals, alike. You could never hope to find two minds that would agree perfectly. How then can we be "of one accord and of one mind"? Paul is thinking of a church that has become infected with schism and division. The only solution for such a condition is to be of "one mind" in regard to the cardinal principles taught in the Word of God. There can be no disagreement concerning Christ the Son of God, born of a virgin, who died for the sins of mankind. There is no room for liberality of thought as to the efficacy of our Lord's blood to atone for sin, the bodily resurrection of Christ from the dead and His second coming. As to these verities, there must be "one accord and one mind."

So often disharmony appears in our congregations when agreement is sought on the minor things. How frequently this is but a wedge which Satan uses to split a church. The minor things that have little or no bearing on the basic truth of Scripture demand tolerance but not unanimous acceptance. A good rule to follow is: Major on the major and minor on the minor. Difficulty arises when we begin to major on the minor. It is then that we become Pharisaical. Jesus said in Matthew 23:24, "Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel." Do not be deceived into undue concern about the minor. Rather, overlook the things of secondary importance and stand together with the saints on the major truth of the Word of the Living God.

One day William Hunt, the renowned artist, took a class of pupils out to a picturesque countryside. As the sun was setting, it provided a glow of exquisite beauty. Mr. Hunt urged his pupils to seize the opportunity to capture it on canvas. After some time, he noticed one student working with painstaking concentration on the detail of

the shingles of a nearby barn. "If you spend so much time painting the shingles on that barn, you'll never get to the remarkable sunset," said Mr. Hunt. How many there are in our churches who are painting shingles when they need to get their eyes on the basic truths as committed to us in the Scriptures.

Perhaps it may seem that being of "one accord and one mind" is easier said than done. How can it be accomplished? Paul tells us in the same verse that it is by "having the same love." He proffers the love way. It might be added, there is no other way; for God's only remedy for a divisive spirit is LOVE. "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God" (I John 4:7). Somewhere I heard a motto that has proved a tremendous inspiration to me: "In essentials, Unity; In non-essentials, Liberty; In differences, Love; In ALL THINGS — CHRIST." If God's people were to practice this, we should know, beyond a shadow of a doubt, what it means to be of "one accord and of one mind."

Three of the believer's worst sins are mentioned in verses 3 and 4. "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." The most severe and most violent of the three sins is "strife." This word means a *factious* or *devisive spirit*. Such a spirit is diametrically opposed to God's desire for an assembly of believers. We read in Psalm 133:1, "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!"

The second sin is that of "vainglory" which is better translated *empty pride*. God hates pride. "A man's pride shall bring him low" (Proverbs 29:23). "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall" (Proverbs 16:18). Pride is dangerous, for usually it evolves into a factious spirit undermining the testimony of an entire congregation. The Holy Spirit through Paul gives us a sure cure for these two evils. "In lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves" (verse 3).

Coming to the root of the two sins mentioned, we are reminded of our most destructive enemy — SELF. "Look not every man on *his own things*." Here is the deplorable sin that produces so much misery among the Lord's people, the venomous and pernicious sin of Selfishness. Whether you realize it or not, this is our most noxious sin.

When Sam Jones was asked what Hell is like, he said, "Hell is selfishness on fire!" Selfishness is the besetting sin that continually mars the testimony of even the most ardent and zealous believers. Jesus realized this when he said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matthew 16:24). The Cross of Christ is the sternest rebuke to man's selfishness the world has ever known.

Is it possible, you ask, to get the victory? Absolutely! Paul obtained victory through Christ. Had he not received victory over self, there never would have been any Epistles such as Philippians, Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians, or any other of his writings. The name of this invulnerable apostle would long ago have gone into oblivion. We have at least thirteen inspired letters from his pen because Paul attained to victory over self through Christ. Listen to his own testimony: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20)

How willing and ready some Christians are to attack the social evils which so greatly jeopardize the character and welfare of our country. They courageously speak out against liquor and beer and other means Satan is using to undermine the spiritual foundations of our Nation. But though they are bold in their proclamation against sin, so often they fail to grapple with the most serious problem of all — SELF. They refuse to come face to face with this destructive sin.

On August 15, 1860, Longfellow wrote in his diary, "John Ward of Cambridge preached a good sermon to-day. I applied it to myself." How we need to apply the Word of God to ourselves and get the victory through

Christ. Let us stop pointing in every direction but inward.

Again Paul recommends a positive approach to the problem. "Let every man look on the things of others." This is so essential, for in our treatment of others, we reveal our attitude toward Christ. This is what Jesus said in Matthew 24:40: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." Self can only be subdued as we live for others.

Paul declared in Galatians 6:10, "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." Charity begins at home! Of all people, Christians should be the most thoughtful and considerate in their attitude toward other Christians. Wherever we go, how obvious is the need of love among God's people.

Paul has painted our portrait as it should be. He pictures us without any touching up. We are just about ready to quit. Our unworthiness overwhelms us. He might have tried to offer encouragement by pointing to Peter, James, or even himself. But no — other humans are just as weak as we. He points us upward, and in verses 5-11, turns our eyes to Christ our Supreme Example, the **BELIEVER'S ASPIRATION**. If you seriously want victory over self, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (verse 5). Christ is our example. So often we fail because we claim other Christians as our pattern. Look not to men. Look to Christ! The Psalmist said, "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man" (Psalm 118:8). Remember, the Believer's Aspiration is Christ! If you want real and positive victory, look to Him. If you want to exemplify the teachings of the Word of God, follow Christ. He is our pattern.

The Lord Jesus is able to give lasting victory because He is God. "Who being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God" (verse 6). We read His own statement in John 10:30: "I and my Father are one." Because of His deity, the truth presented in the next few verses becomes even more profound. "He made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in

fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (vss. 7, 8). Here is the most solemn example of humility ever given to the world. The Lord desires that every believer be a possessor of this same humility. That is what is meant by "the mind of Christ" in verse 5. It is really a mind of humility.

Now what do we mean by humility? There are some who think if they are modest and quiet, or unassertive and sheepish, they are humble. Does humility mean timidity? Not necessarily! Think for a moment of our Lord. Consider the scourging and the routing of the avaricious thieves in the temple. Recall the pointed and condemning statements He made to the pietistical and pharisaical religious leaders of His day. One may be humble and yet strongly outspoken and bold in the face of ungodliness and corruption. Though stern and resolute, Jesus exercised righteous indignation on occasion, but never without true humility. Matthew records His words (11:29) — "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am *meek and lowly in heart*." The meaning of "meek" as used here is interesting. It comes from a word denoting the taming of a wild animal. It has to do with the breaking or domestication of a ferocious beast. As applied to humans it means *disciplined*.

A truly humble person is one disciplined to the will of God. Our Lord had as the theme of His every activity, "Not my will but thine be done." He was wholly and completely disciplined to the will of the Father. In the overthrow of the money changers in the temple and in the rebuking of hypocrites on other occasions, He was not cruel and harsh, but rather meek and humble, exercising holy discipline for righteousness' sake, the result of complete surrender to the will of the Father.

Our Lord's humility and voluntary submission to the will of the Father was the underlying principle of His sacrifice on the Cross. Of His own volition, he laid down His life for our sins. "No man taketh it from me, But I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father" (John 10:18). Christ exemplified

His humility by obedience. This is the test of sincere humility. True humility as applied to the believer is permitting the Lord Jesus to break us of our own selfish desires, producing unconditional and sacrificial surrender to God's will for our lives regardless of the cost.

Voluntary humiliation will always be followed by exaltation. God tells us in Luke 14:11, "For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." The Lord Jesus humbled Himself; the result — "God hath highly exalted him, and has given him a name (literally, *The Name*) which is above every name" (verse 9). Christ's name is more than "a" name. It is *the Name*. It is the name of salvation, the only name that can save. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

To this Name God declares in verses 10 and 11, that "Every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." This will be completely fulfilled when Christ returns to set up His millennial kingdom, In the Age of Grace in which we are now living, God's compassionate offer of salvation may be spurned and refused, but when Christ returns, all will be compelled to bow and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

It is possible, dear reader, that you have never acknowledged Him as your Lord. Delay no longer. Receive Him into your life now. If on the other hand, you are a believer, may I ask whether you have fully entered into his Lordship? Is He everything to you? Is Christ truly your **ASPIRATION**? Have you committed your life completely to Him? He longs that you enjoy His best. Do not be satisfied with anything else. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." Humble yourself in His sight and He will lift you up.

## Chapter V

### THE BELIEVER'S APPLICATION

#### Philippians 2:12-18

**KEY VERSE:** "*Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.*" (Verse 12)

Paul has been emphasizing the importance of true humility which can only be realized by complete consecration and unconditional surrender to the will of God. Impressing us with this need, he pointed us to the Living Christ, our Supreme Example. From the Throne to the Cross and from the Cross to the Throne, Christ was wholly obedient to the Father's will. We can only learn the lesson of humility through obedience by looking to the Lord Jesus, the **BELIEVER'S ASPIRATION**.

If Christ is our **ASPIRATION**, there must be the **APPLICATION** of this truth. It is this theme the Apostle pursues in the verses we are about to consider.

Paul reminds the Philippians that when he resided with them, there was no disharmony or faction, but after his departure this condition changed. Now he constrains them to practice even deeper love toward each other during his absence. "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence" (verse 12). He then gave a command that has provoked much misunderstanding and uncertainty for some: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (verse 12). Paul has been accused, by those who hastily remove the verse from its context, of teaching salvation by works. By carefully reading the text, however, it will be noted that he does not say, "work for your own salvation," but rather, "*work out your own salvation.*" That is, bring it to its ultimate conclusion.



Furthermore, we might ask, "To whom is the Epistle written?" The opening verse supplies the answer — "To all the *saints* in Christ Jesus." The letter is addressed to the saved; not the unsaved; saints, not sinners; believers, not unbelievers. Paul never tells unbelievers to work out their own salvation for they have nothing to work out. But to the saints in Christ Jesus he says, "work out your own salvation." In other words, this means if you have received Christ into your heart, reveal Him in your life. Let Him work out of your hands, your feet, your eyes, — your entire being. Reveal the living Christ to a world which knows Him not.

This verse is not speaking about justification, but rather, sanctification. This is the APPLICATION of Christ, our ASPIRATION. This is the conduct that follows the creed, the life that follows the belief, the duty that follows the doctrine. Jesus said in John 12:26, "If any man serve me, let him follow me." It is impossible to follow Christ without letting our salvation "work out."

Paul said in Galatians 5:25, "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." The walk of the believer is so important. There are many who profess Christ, but never seem to reveal Christ in their walk. Their salvation never seems to "work out" of them in holy and useful living. God informs us in Micah 6:8, that "the walk" is of extreme importance. "What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" All who have been truly saved through Christ and have experienced the new life He gives will be dynamic influences for the Lord Jesus twenty-four hours a day as they permit this wonderful life to "work out" as an influence to others.

A little boy returned home one evening from a revival meeting where he had accepted Christ for salvation. With jubilation he said to his sister, "I have a new heart." She replied, "Is that so? Let me see it!" This is precisely what the world is asking of those who claim to be reborn by the Spirit of God. We say we have a new heart in Christ, but the world asks to see the new heart. Being a Christian is more than preaching and shouting praises to God, it is

action! Thus Paul tells us to "work out" the salvation which we have received through Christ.

Dr. Gust F. Johnson had been invited to preach by a dear Christian brother in his church in Texas. As Dr. Johnson delivered his message, there was an enthusiastic response with a constant chorus of Amens! Hallelujahs! This continued so long as he held forth some of the precious truths of God's Word. But suddenly he spoke about sins such as lying, cheating and stealing. Dr. Johnson relates that he never saw a service transformed so quickly into a dignified and solemn Sunday morning service. At the close of the worship hour, his pastor friend came to him and said, "Doctor Johnson, you surely poured cold water on this service."

Most of us are guilty of being more interested in hearing the Word than we are in letting it "work out" of us. We must not only believe the Bible, but we must apply it and live it. To apply it is to let it effect its ultimate conclusion in our lives to the end that Christ will be honored twenty-four hours a day.

Paul adds, "work out your own salvation with *fear and trembling*." This does not mean *fright* or *terror* but *humility* and *vigilance*. Not only is Satan extremely clever, but also dangerously subtle. Believers must guard unremittingly against attack. Full and complete commitment to Christ is our only hope. The flesh will fail; but Christ will prevail. God warns, "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (I Corinthians 10:12). Jesus said, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matthew 26:41). No believer can possibly live the Christian life in his own strength. Only as Christ lives through us can we know real victory. There must be the moment by moment commitment to Him who "is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think."

Paul further enlarges upon this important truth by saying, "It is God which worketh in you" (verse 13). A better translation would be: "It is God *energizing* you." The strength to "work out our own salvation" comes from the Lord. We are weak, but He is strong. We fail so frequently because we lean on talent and ability rather than

on Christ. To be sure saved flesh is of no more value to God than unsaved flesh. It must be Christ working through us. "Christ in you, the hope of Glory" (Colossians 1:27). Years ago, David expressed this same fact which we so greatly need to realize. "Our help is in the name of the Lord who made heaven and earth" (Psalm 124:8).

A man went to Mr. Spurgeon one time and said, "You require too much of flesh and blood!" "I require nothing of flesh and blood," replied Mr. Spurgeon, "I am preaching to people who have the Holy Spirit indwelling them, and that is different." And so it is. It is the Spirit who enables us to live for Christ. "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63).

Now we ask, for what purpose does God energize the believer? "To do His good pleasure" (vs. 13). What is God's good pleasure? What is it that He desires more than anything else in the world? The Scriptures are clear on this subject. "For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and come unto the knowledge of the truth" (I Timothy 2: 3, 4). God's paramount desire is that the unsaved turn to Christ for salvation. We are told in the catechism that "man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever." This can only be realized as men and women come to Christ. God is concerned that all come to Him. "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (II Peter 3:9). God energizes every believer with the power of the Holy Spirit for the specific purpose of leading others to Christ. "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me" (Acts 1:8).

In continuing the "working out" process, we are exhorted to "Do all things without murmurings and disputings" (verse 14). The "murmurings" refer to the undercurrent or undertone often heard in whisperings and gossip so prevalent in many congregations. This develops into the more serious malady known as "disputings" — or more literally translated — *open debates*. The "mur-

murings" have only a small beginning when a little gossip is passed around under cover. This does not seem to be very serious at first, but the gossip smoulders and then spreads like wildfire. Soon the entire situation is out of control. The result — the congregation is affected by open debate. Often it is divided, and there may even be a church split. God forbid! Paul says, "do all things without the undercurrent." Put it away. Let the Christ give us victory over our gossiping tongues. Do not be guilty of this destructive and diabolical sin. Accept all things from the Lord, remembering He is the Judge.

Paul could say in spite of the flagellations and impugnings he suffered, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content" (Philippians 4:11). Never did he grumble or complain. He was not guilty of the undertones. He knew the glorious secret of praising God for all things. "In *everything* give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (I Thessalonians 5:18). God desires that His people offer praise rather than complaints. "Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness and for his wonderful works to the children of men!" (Psalm 107:8) "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me" (Psalm 50:23). Let us learn to praise and thank God for all He does for us.

Alexander Whyte called on an elderly lady who did nothing but complain during his visit. He spoke not one word but patiently listened to her grievances. After about twenty minutes, he stood, bid her farewell, and said kindly, "And mind ye, forget not all His benefits."

It takes little thought to join the ranks of the complainers. Grumbling produces no happiness. Learn to praise God for all things, whatever they may be, "without murmurings and disputings."

Paul goes on to say in verse 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." A clearer rendering is, "that ye may *become* blameless." No one is blameless in this life. We are, however, in the process of being made blameless and some day, when we meet Christ, we shall

be spotlessly pure and without sin, for we shall be like Him.

"Harmless" means *unalloyed*, without the admixture of the sinful deficiencies that mark the unsaved. We are to live "without rebuke." This means that by God's grace believers shall live such holy lives that the world may not point its finger at thoughtless inconsistencies. We are to live above censorship, beyond reproach "in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation," that loves darkness rather than light. Though we live in a sex-mad world where men lie, cheat and steal, and where there is little regard for righteousness and true holiness, Christians are to stand true regardless of surroundings.

We are to "shine as lights in the world." The word lights is literally *luminaries*. It is the same word used of the stars in the sky. Paul is saying, "As the stars give forth the glory of the heavenly light, so believers are to reflect the light of Christ in the midst of the corruption and darkness of sin." Though we live in a generation daily crucifying the Saviour, believers are to witness and shine brightly for Him who gave His All for us. We read in Daniel 12:3, "And they that be wise shall *shine* as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." Jesus said in Matthew 5:16, "Let your light so *shine* before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." "Ye are a chosen generation," Peter tells us, "a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of the darkness into his marvellous light" (I Peter 2:9). We are called out of darkness that we may reflect and reveal The Light of the World, Christ Jesus.

"I am the light of the world," Jesus declared. But He also said, "Ye are the light of the world." He is the True Light. We are the Light-reflectors. Sometimes reflectors become soiled and dull so that they feebly reflect light. Sin dims the believer's light and prevents the reflection of the Light of God's glory through us. Keep in mind we can shine only as we permit Him to shine through us. Only as we yield completely to Him are we enabled to put away

the sins which prevent us from becoming blameless and unalloyed in the midst of this Godless generation in which we live.

Paul not only believed he was to shine as a star, but that he was to speak as a man. He says in verse 16, "Holding forth the word of life." This means to hold it forth as an offer. We are not accountable for whether or not others accept the offer of the Gospel as revealed in the Word of Life, but we are duty-bound to present it to them. The obligation is incumbent upon every Christian to offer the Word to those who have never heard.

Some Christians never speak a word for Christ to anyone. How they fail their blessed Lord by selfish silence! The Lord expects you to speak for Him by giving out Gospel tracts and witnessing here and there as the Holy Spirit leads. How are the lost going to know of the True Light, if we neglect to tell them? God enjoins us in Psalm 96:3 to "Declare his glory among the heathen, and his wonders among all the people." We are to leave no corner of the earth untouched. The whole world is our field. Everyone must hear the Good News. Time is speeding by! We must act quickly. "Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear" (I Peter 3:15). Be prepared at all times to hold forth the Word of Life. It contains the only living message that can transform lives.

The Bible is the "ingrafted Word." We are to receive it. It is also the "faithful Word." Therefore we should hold it fast. It is "The Word of Truth." Therefore, we must "rightly divide" it. It is "The Word of Life." For this reason, we are commanded to hold it forth. How many opportunities there are on every hand to tell the wonderful story of salvation to others; but few of us seem to care about giving the message to the unsaved.

One warm summer's day, when our first daughter was very small, I took her on the boardwalk in Atlantic City. After awhile, we noticed about a block ahead of us, a large flock of pigeons fluttering and flying around several people who were standing with their arms outstretched. As we drew nearer, we saw that the pigeons were extremely

tame and would eat from the hands of those who offered food. When we arrived, some of the birds flew to us, but as we extended our empty hands, they soon left, for we had no food to offer.

How Christians need to realize that all around us there are lost souls, hungry and destitute without spiritual food. Too often we face them empty-handed, failing to speak a word for the Lord Jesus. Friends, neighbors, and even dearest loved ones, have never heard the Gospel. Yet many believers fail to make the slightest effort to tell them about Christ. We are to be "holding forth the Word of Life." Let us not be empty-handed.

Paul goes on to say, "That I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain" (verse 16). Above all things he desired to be faithful to his responsibility of holding forth the Word of Life. "Labour" expresses the thought of *exhaustive labour* with a willingness to die if need be, in order to faithfully proclaim the Word.

With a clear conscience free from the blood of all men, Paul could approach his heavenly reward saying, "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, 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: and not to me only, but unto all of them also that love his appearing" (II Timothy 4:6-8). How wonderful it would be if every Christian would discharge his witness and stewardship obligations as did this hero of the faith.

The Apostle closes this portion of the epistle by saying, "Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all" (verse 17). The word "offered" refers to the *drink offering* of the Levitical Sacrifices. As the drink offering was poured out on the altar of God, so Paul recognized the possibility of being "poured out" as a sacrifice for God. Doubtless he had in mind possible martyrdom which appeared to be drawing nearer. Though the doom of the executioner's block seemed imminent, he could still praise God. He says, "I joy, and rejoice," and urges them to do the same in verse

18 as he says, "For the same cause also, do ye joy and rejoice with me." He shows them the truth of verse 14 in living form. "Do all things without murmurings and disputings," even if it means death.

What a challenge the Holy Spirit gives us through God's servant in these verses. May we pause for a moment to take inventory? Are you allowing the Lord Jesus Christ to work out the glorious salvation of God through you? Are there hindrances stemming the tide? Ask the Lord to remove them all so you can labour exhaustively for Him, holding forth the Word of Life to others.

Souls are lost, hopelessly lost. They must hear the message that alone can save — the Good News of God. Christian, hold back nothing from your Saviour who for you gave All. If the Lord Jesus is our **ASPIRATION**, let us make the **APPLICATION** by letting our salvation work out of us in fruitfulness. May we invest every gracious gift He has bestowed, to reach perishing souls with the Word of Life.



## Chapter VI

### THE BELIEVER'S AMBITION

Philippians 2:19-30

**KEY VERSE:** *"But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel." (Verse 22)*

In the opening verses of the second chapter of Philippians, the Apostle exhorts the believer to humility and unselfishness. In elucidating on the subject, he points us to our Supreme Example, Christ Jesus. If we are to learn anything about humility and unselfishness, we must look to Christ. As Paul said, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." The mind of Christ is only experienced through complete obedience to God's will. Having the mind of Christ will result in holy and useful living. "Work out your own salvation," Paul declares. Let the world see what Christ has done for you. If your experience is real and vital, it must find its outlet in fruitful living and service.

In the remaining verses of the chapter, Paul characterizes two of his companions and faithful laborers in the Gospel as human examples of humility and unselfishness. What he has been telling us about humility is not beyond our grasp. It is practical and workable.

We read in verse 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." Paul had a pastor's heart. He was anxious and concerned and earnestly desired to know the spiritual condition of the saints at Philippi. Since he could not go to them, he knew of no one better qualified to send to inquire of their welfare than young Timothy, his faithful co-worker. In fact he

says of him, "I have no man like-minded" (verse 20). "Likeminded" is a most descriptive word. It means *holy zeal* or *concern*. What Paul actually said was that among all his Christian associates and friends, he knew of no one with the same holy zeal and concern for the things of the Lord Jesus Christ as Timothy. What a commendation! He must have possessed a most unusual character. It must have been consoling for Paul to have such an able servant upon whom he could so wholly depend and rely.

Paul further states that Timothy "will naturally care for your state." "Naturally" as used here means *sincerely*. This gives us another insight into the life of this noble young man. Not only was he marked by a holy zeal and concern for the things of God, but he was sincerely devoid of sham or hypocrisy.

The late Dr. Harry A. Ironside has pointed out that the Anglicized Latin word "sincere" means literally *without wax*, used to translate a Greek word meaning *sun-tested*. Craftsmen in ancient times often made objects from a very costly porcelain which brought a high market price. During the firing process, because of its fragile delicacy, the porcelain sometimes cracked. A dishonest merchant might attempt to deceive an inexperienced buyer by skillfully filling the crack with a pearly white wax not discernible to the unwary eye. If the vessel were held up to the sunlight, however, it could be sun-tested. The penetrating rays disclosed the tell-tale seam.

Timothy was without wax! There was nothing of sham or hypocrisy in him. God is looking for consecrated men and women of this calibre today. Whenever I think of this young herald of the Cross, I Corinthians 10:31 comes to mind: "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." These words describe Timothy well. He sought to do everything "to the glory of God." What about us? Are we sincere and without wax in our every attitude toward Christ? Can you think of anything withholding God's mighty power from you? Claim victory at once through the Lord Jesus.

What is it that impedes this life of victory and blessing in so many Christians? The answer is given in verse 21. "For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus

Christ's." As opposed to sacrifice, one of the enslaving sins of believers today is selfishness. It is your sin. It is my sin. Selfishness has mastered us! Selflessness is our greatest need.

We are told that the basic law of life is self-preservation. One need not go far to see this law at work. We care for our family, our business, our needs. The Lord Jesus did not teach that the basic law of life is self-preservation. He informed us that the basic law of life is self-sacrifice. "Verily, verily I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but *if it die*, it bringeth forth much fruit" (John 12:24). "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it" (Matthew 16:25)

Self-preservation? Ah, no! The Lord Jesus revealed that the basic principle of happy and fruitful living is self-sacrifice. Christians, we need to beware of the sin of selfishness which has ensnared the saved and the unsaved alike. Each of us is tempted to put his own desires, ambitions, plans and program ahead of God. This tragic sin is sapping the joy and blessing of usefulness from us.

Selfishness is worldliness in its worst and final form. How often Christians say they have given up the world for Christ. Have they? Merely putting a few negatives in one's vocabulary or life is not giving up the world. You say, "I do not do this or that. I no longer go here or there." Perhaps it would be more true to say you have given up some of the worldly attractions for Christ. But have you actually given up the world?

What is worldliness? I believe it is summed up in this verse. Here is the crux of the matter, the root of it all: "For all seek their own, not the things of Christ." God says in I John 2:15-17, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever." "The world passeth away." Yes, some day

the selfish lust in our corrupt hearts will pass away. We shall desire one thing above all else: To give the Lord Jesus the first and rightful place of Lordship in our hearts. Why wait? This should be the BELIEVER'S AMBITION now. Timothy found the secret of blessing. So can you — IF like Timothy you will pay the price of complete surrender. The Lord longs to give the victory, but to become effective, it must be accepted.

In testimony meetings we so glibly quote Romans 12: 1,2. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." What is it to present your body a living sacrifice? Paul is drawing the analogy from the Old Testament. He has in mind a lamb placed upon the sacrificial altar to be consumed by the holy fires as a sweet savour to our God of mercy and grace. Imagine someone bringing a sacrificial lamb to be consumed, and after it was placed on the altar, deciding he wanted the animal back. Such a thing was never known. Yet that is the way many Christians present themselves to God. Their dedication to Him is not complete. They yield to Him today, but later live selfishly as they please, ignoring God's claims on them as living sacrifices.

We cry out in desperation, "Lord, I surrender all!" Soon after, we are back in the old ways, following the paths of selfishness, living under the autocracy of the flesh, disregarding God's plan. We say we have presented ourselves as living sacrifices. If so, we cannot present ourselves to God today and withdraw ourselves from Him tomorrow. If you put yourself on the altar for Christ, there you must stay! A sacrifice is something fully committed to God. It can never be reclaimed. It belongs to Him to be used as He desires. It is a living sacrifice for Him. Be honest with God: Either you have or you have not committed your life to Jesus Christ. If you have, then you are seeking the things of Christ and not your

own. If you have not, you are still seeking your own things and not the things which are Jesus Christ's.

Paul continues, "But ye know the proof of him, that as a son with the Father he hath served with me in the Gospel" (verse 22). The word "proof" could be translated *tested*. Paul put Timothy to the test and found he measured up perfectly. Already Paul has declared that Timothy was sun-tested. We might even say he was SON-Tested. The Apostle had an excellent opportunity, during the years of their friendship, to hold this young man before the light of the Son of the Living God. He stood the test!

How do we know this? Paul tells us. "He hath served with me in the gospel." One who is a living sacrifice for God will be serving in the Gospel. Lazy, fruitless professors of Christ do not stand the test. An eager desire to spread the Gospel is a sure proof that one's confession of faith is genuine. Are we serving in the Gospel? Are we sacrificing time, talents and money to propagate the Gospel of Christ in every corner of the earth that the lost may be saved? Hold yourself up today to the light of God's love and grace. Do the ugly flaws of selfishness cast their accusing shadows, or are you SON-Tested?

A missionary tells of a Christian leper woman whose sole means of livelihood from childhood had been pottery-making. But the slow passage of corroding years had left her with only cumbersome stumps where there were once nimble fingers to shape the clay. Yet she never gave up! Rather, she worked in a mission hospital helping patients to pass the time by teaching them the art of pottery-making. She was heard to say many times, "I will do the best I can with what I have!" What a difference it would make in God's program if every Christian would render this same kind of sacrificial service. How faithful we must be in "serving in the Gospel"!

But let us never forget the order. Sacrificial offering precedes sacrificial service. We must first lay ourselves on the altar for Christ. So many Christians are not serving because they have not given themselves to God. They continue to love their own things more than they love Christ. God says, "Let us not be weary in well doing: for

in due season we shall reap, if we faint not" (Galatians 6:9). And in Ecclesiastes 9:10, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." Let the Holy Spirit burn these words into your heart. What are you doing for the Lord? Most of us could do more. Pray about it! Act upon it! Let us be doers for God and not hearers only.

"Him therefore I hope to send presently, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me. But I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly" (verses 23, 24). Paul was desirous of sending Timothy to the saints at Philippi with some report of his own welfare. Up to the present, however, he had no further word concerning his possible liberation, as he was still awaiting trial. Looking into the future, he hoped it might even be possible to make a visit to the Philippians again. But for the moment, plans seemed uncertain.

We next learn about Epaphroditus, another faithful servant of the Lord. We know nothing more about him than what is written here. This is enough, however, to convince us that like Timothy he, too, had but one ambition in life — to sacrifice for Christ!

"Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother." First, Paul claims him as a "brother" in Christ. To be a brother in Christ, one must be reborn by the Holy Spirit. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). Epaphroditus had experienced the new birth. So must anyone who desires to become a brother in Christ. Of necessity, there must be a new birth. Christ must be invited into the life to effect a complete transformation.

Furthermore, Paul calls this devoted servant a "companion." This actually means *friend*. Isn't it wonderful to have friends? If you have one friend in this world, you are a wealthy person. A friend is one who will stand by you regardless of the cost or need. We hastily say, "I have many friends!" Do we? Perhaps we have numerous acquaintances; but friends are scarce. Paul found in this humble servant a real friend and companion. Epaphroditus was willing to suffer with Paul, disregarding his own comfort to prove his friendship. True friends are coveted possessions.

Describing the fearlessness of Epaphroditus, Paul calls him a "soldier." He was more than willing as a stalwart witness for Christ to "endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." He faithfully took his stand against the opposition, trusting in the all-conquering power of Christ. He was no quitter! He was a soldier!

Finally, Paul says he was a "messenger" or literally, *ambassador*. He realized he was in this world to bear the message of the Good News of Salvation to everyone he could possibly reach. A Brother. — A Friend. — A Soldier. — An Ambassador! Well might the Apostle Paul be thankful for him!

In verse 26 you will readily recognize something else about Epaphroditus. "For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick." Here was a man with a big heart. Do you sense the fervent and passionate concern in the words, "He longed after you all." This man was overflowing with a tender yearning to care for the needs of others. It is believed that Epaphroditus was a church officer at Philippi. How encouraging to see a church officer with such a conscientious concern for the needs of the people he served. It requires no effort to be an officer in title only; but Epaphroditus accepted his responsibility seriously, as an assignment from the Lord Himself. At the very roots of his heart was a concern for others which was nourished by a close walk with the Lord Jesus. How greatly the Lord's people need this sympathetic love for the souls of those who know not Christ! To grow cold to the ministry of soul winning is all too easy. It is possible to become so burdened with activities for Christ that our foremost calling to be witnesses for Him is overlooked. We need to pray daily that God will warm our hearts and increase our vision so that we may speak boldly to souls about the Lord Jesus.

Like Timothy, there is one word which seems to describe Epaphroditus perfectly — sacrifice. It was the thought of sacrifice that prompted each of these men to such inexhaustible ambition for the Lord. Christians, we need to learn what true sacrifice means. It stems from laying self on the altar for Christ. All else will follow:

— Time, Talents, Money. Yes, even Precious Loved Ones will be laid on the altar of sacrifice, once self is offered there!

A wealthy man stood on a wharf watching a mammoth vessel in the harbor as she made ready to put out to sea. A friend saw him and after they had exchanged greetings, asked why he was at the wharf. He replied, "There's \$10,000 worth of equipment I'm sending to a hospital in China on that ship!" There was silence for a moment. "I, too, am sending a gift to China on that ship," said the friend. "My only daughter is going as a missionary." The wealthy man placed a gentle hand on his friend's shoulder and said, "I thought I had sacrificed!"

Oh, how few Christian parents have laid their sons or daughters on the altar for the Gospel ministry. There would be more young people answering the challenge to serve, if more Christian parents would be willing to surrender everything to Christ.

Occasionally parents believe they have sacrificed all, but when the test comes their conviction proves to have been purely superficial. One Sunday morning in a worship service, God spoke to a young lady, the daughter of splendid Christian parents. After a little hesitation, she responded to the invitation to surrender her life to service on the foreign field. Joyously, she told her parents of the decision, but found a cold and unsympathetic response. Until then, these parents had boasted of complete sacrifice to the Lord, but when God laid His hand on their daughter, there was resentment and opposition. God's Word says, "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me" (Matthew 10:37). Yes, sacrifice goes very deep!

Christian parents should do all they can to guide their children to go into the Lord's service. We encourage them to go into law. We set before them the opportunities of the medical field. We emphasize the advantages of being established in business. But how many of us pray daily and with sincere hearts that God will thrust them into His service? Truly, "the fields are white unto harvest," and the need as far-reaching as the ends of the



earth. Parents, do we dare withhold from the Lord that fullest measure of sacrifice? Oh, let us give all to Him who gave His only Son for us!

What is it costing you to live for Christ? Someone has well said, "A religion that costs nothing, is good for nothing." In II Samuel 24:24, we read, "Neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing." Are you always receiving — rarely giving? Do you present only the dregs to the Lord? Have you considered the tremendous price He paid for your salvation? God says, "Ye as living stones, are built up into a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up sacrifices ACCEPTABLE to God through Christ our Saviour." God requires acceptable sacrifices; nothing less. We must give our best to Him.

Paul further tells us that Epaphroditus "was sick nigh unto death, but God had mercy on him" (verse 2). To be "nigh" unto death is to be *next door* to death. Epaphroditus had come close to the end of his earthly journey, "But God had mercy on him." His mercy is ever at work in the life of the believer. "O, give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endureth forever" (Psalm 107:1). "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed because his compassions fail not" (Lamentations 3:22). How abundantly He pours His grace and love upon us, undeserving as we are.

"I sent him therefore the more carefully," Paul says, "that, when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful. Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation." In this last clause Paul is suggesting that they "Hold him up as a prized possession." There is the intimation here that something went amiss between the Philippian saints and Epaphroditus. Paul urges them to appreciate this beloved saint without delay. How many of us have recognized friendships with some of God's choice servants in the light of their true value, only when it was too late!

If for no other reason, Epaphroditus should have been respected "because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death" (verse 30). We have met those who were nigh unto death because of overwork in the shop or office.

We have known of physical wrecks because of greed and covetousness. We have seen many brought to the final payment of that last death-wage because of sin. But we have seen few who have even touched the shores of death because of complete sacrifice of self in serving Christ. Yet untold thousands pawn their very lives into the devil's service until their sin-wracked minds and bodies pack every hospital and mental institution in our country. What pitiful sacrifices to sin!

Believer in Christ, let us withhold nothing from our wonderful Christ! Let us pray God to give us consecrated AM-BITION to follow all the way, to serve Him only, and to lay self upon the altar of sacrifice in the fullest measure of devotion.

## Chapter VII

### THE BELIEVER'S APPROXIMATION

#### Philippians 3:1-9

**KEY VERSE:** *"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."*  
(Verse 8)

In the closing verses of chapter two, Paul highly commended his two friends Timothy and Epaphroditus. But coming to the middle of the Epistle, we shall notice that he turns from commendation to condemnation and sternly rebukes his foes.

There were in the church of Philippi two dangerous enemies disrupting the unity of the believers. Though both of these enemies professed faith in Jesus Christ, they were guilty of serious error. One of the groups was the Judaizers, who were guilty of intermingling the Mosaic Law with the message of grace. They claimed that strict adherence to the Law was absolutely essential for salvation. In addition to this error, there were other professing believers living in gross wickedness and paganism, claiming their licentious freedom on the grounds of Christian liberty. In the passage for our present study, Paul confines his warnings to the first of these evil workers — the Judaizers.

He begins by saying, "Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord." In his use of the word "finally" Paul is not suggesting that he is concluding the Epistle, but means, *as for the rest*. There is a transition of thought to another subject.

Paul begins his new subject by saying "Rejoice." Someone has well called the Epistle to the Philippians, "The Epistle of Joy." It is certainly that, for time and time again, Paul exhorts us to "Rejoice!" Regardless of what God permits to come our way in His gracious providence, Paul declares — "Rejoice!" In Christ we do not live under circumstances, but far above them. Consequently, we can rejoice regardless of surroundings.

Paul further tells us we are to rejoice "in the Lord." We are not to rejoice in ourselves, for we have nothing in the flesh in which to rejoice. We are not to rejoice in friends, for they may prove untrue. We are to rejoice "in the Lord." If Christ is the Lord of your life, you are complete in Him. You are substantially equipped to face any problem or perplexity that may come your way. You are His child. You belong to Him. Because of this immutable fact, you may rest in His plan and program for your life, realizing that nothing can come to you apart from His marvelous grace as revealed in His holy will. This is the eternal truth the Holy Spirit portrays in Romans 8:28. "*We know* that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." Why do we worry so? Why do we fret? Why do we revolt against the wonderful and unfailing plan of Almighty God for our lives? "Rejoice in the Lord!"

Do you have peace in your life? You should, for the Lord will never fail you. His mighty arm cannot be stayed. But you may say, "I just cannot understand why I have to suffer the way I do. I cannot understand why God permits such trials to come to *my* family. I cannot understand why *my* son had to get in with the wrong crowd and backslide." Just a moment! You cannot understand! Whoever said you are to understand these things? Nowhere in the Bible does the Lord even intimate that we are to understand them. On the other hand, scores of Bible verses are emphatic in assuring us there are many, many things we shall never understand in this life. The day will come when we shall understand, but right now this is not a matter with which the believer is to concern himself. Do not try to analyze things. Leave them with

the One who will never fail you. "Rejoice in the Lord!" "In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (I Thessalonians 5:18). Learn how to praise God and rejoice in Him. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8 and 9). Understand? No — God does not tell us everything. He thinks differently than we. Because of this, we should not attempt to fathom His actions. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever" (Romans 11:33, 34, 36). "To Him are *all things!*" Do not try to understand it. Do not probe into God's mysteries. Take Him at His Word. If only we could learn this secret. This is what God wants for every one of His children. Are you really trusting the Lord Jesus as you should, or are you looking to your frail and puny self to surmount the multitudinous obstacles Satan casts before you? Look no longer to self. Look to Christ! "Rejoice in the Lord!"

A missionary out in Persia worked hard and long serving Christ on a certain Lord's Day. She was weary, but trusting Him for strength, she went to her evening Bible class. As she sat on the floor oriental fashion with the native women, it seemed as though her back would break. At that very moment, one of the native Christian women nearest her seemed to sense her exhaustion and quietly moved so as to sit with her back against that of the missionary. "You're tired, Dear," she said, "Lean on me. And if you love me, lean hard!" Our ever-living and ever-loving Lord tells us the same thing.

Most of us are tired and weary from the burdens and anxieties that weigh heavily upon us, but God constrains us to lean hard on Him. If we do not love Him, we shall not lean very hard. But if we really love Him, we shall lean hard.

Paul goes on to say, "To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous (irksome), but for you it is safe" (verse 1). What does he mean, "the same things"? That which he tells us repeatedly in this Epistle: "Rejoice in the Lord." To Paul this theme never becomes tiresome or irksome. This was one of the most pronounced characteristics of his dynamic Christian life. Though he was confronted with major problems and sorely tested and tempted, yet his eyes were fixed upward. He forever "rejoiced in the Lord." It is so important that we "rejoice *in the Lord*" and not merely in individuals. We have a certain sense of security because certain individuals are near, but what will happen if they are removed? Paul doesn't say to rejoice in individuals, but rather in just one individual. Paul's life was built around one personality. Remember what he said in the first chapter of the Epistle, verse 21: "For to me to live is CHRIST." The person of Jesus Christ was Paul's answer to every heart-ache and hardship. To make the Lord Jesus the center of everything in one's life is the only way to be happy. Real felicity and peace are found in the Saviour. "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (I Corinthians 3:11) If you are built upon this Foundation, you are on solid ground. You should, like Paul, "Rejoice in the Lord."

Before discussing the problem of the Judaizers, Paul is concerned that the Philippians occupy themselves with Christ as Lord, for if He becomes everything to them, the chicanery of Satan can be met with the assurance of victory. With this groundwork laid, the Apostle continues by saying in verse 2, "Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision." This is indeed strong language. Does this suggest that Paul was a Jew Hater? Decidedly not! Paul loved the Jewish people. We might add, anyone who is truly reborn by God's Spirit and claims to be a Christian will have the same compassion for the Jew. Like Paul, every sincere believer in the Lord Jesus will have heartfelt affection and respect for our Jewish friends. Paul loved his own countrymen. He honored and revered them. In Romans chapter 9, verses 1-3, notice his adoration and

concern for his own people — Israel. "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for *my brethren*, my kinsmen according to the flesh." The Apostle was willing even to go to perdition, if in exchange for this sacrifice, God would save the Jews. Paul loved the Jewish people and daily besought the Lord for their eternal salvation.

In this passage, Paul is not speaking about Jews as such, but rather Jewish Christians — those who had made a profession of Christ but proposed an admixture of legalism and grace. To try to intersperse law with grace is not only a contradiction to Scripture truth, but an absurd impossibility. It is just as ridiculous as trying to mix oil with water. This cannot be.

Of course, we must never lose sight of the fact that the Law has a definite place in the economy of God. Some Christians erroneously speak of the Law as though it were a mistake or a slip in the Lord's program. The Law has a most profound purpose, but it was never intended that it should be a part of or supersede the message of Grace.

With strong language, Paul warns, "Beware of dogs." As a dog tears and devours, so he cautions the true believers that the Judaizers in the Philippian Church were seeking to destroy the message of God's Grace. "Beware of the evil workers, beware of the concision." The word "concision" is really *mutilation*. With their legalism, they were mutilating the Gospel.

Having the legalists in mind, Paul goes on to describe what true circumcision is under Grace. It is the using of the knife on the heart rather than on the flesh. It is spiritual rather than physical. You will note from verse 3, three things are said about spiritual circumcision: "For we are the circumcision: (1) which worship God in the spirit, (2) which rejoice in Christ Jesus, (3) which have no confidence in the flesh." Let us consider these in their order.

Paul claimed that circumcision under grace involved worshipping God in the spirit. The Lord Jesus said, "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers

shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him" (John 4:23). What did Jesus mean "worship the Father in spirit"? Simply this — anyone who is to worship God, must be reborn by the Spirit of God. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God" (John 3:3). No one can effectually call on the Father's Name or have access to Him unless he has been divinely quickened and made the recipient of a new nature by the Holy Spirit. This quickening is experienced immediately when Jesus Christ is received as Lord. "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing" (John 6:63). We also read in Romans 8:9, "But ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Those who have not been born from above, have no right or privilege to call on the name of the Father in prayer. Only as new life is received through the birth from above can communion with the Father at the Throne of God be enjoyed. "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying Abba, Father" (Galatians 4:6). Unless the spirit indwells us, the Apostle tells us we cannot even pray to our Father in Heaven. But whoever receives Christ for salvation, has the assurance from the Bible that the Holy Spirit makes his dwelling place in him and immediately communion with the Father is an eternal privilege.

Paul further states that in spiritual circumcision, we are to "rejoice in Christ Jesus." Our complete system of doctrine and practice is centered in Christ rather than in ceremony. "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love" (Galatians 5:6). It is the soul of man with which our Lord is primarily concerned. The subjective salvation experience is all that matters, not the worthless objective formalities and appearances.

The Apostle then says, we "have no confidence in the flesh." That was one of the predominate weaknesses of Judaism. It was a religion of the flesh emphasizing what man did rather than what God has done. Paul repeatedly confessed that he had nothing in the flesh in which to



glory. "For I know that in me (that is, my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing" (Romans 7:18). There is not one good thing in any of us! There is nothing in us God wants or can use! This is difficult to accept, isn't it? We chafe under such thoughts. No matter how deep we go in the things of God, we like to feel there is just a little something that is valuable in the old nature. How often we have acted as though God should be thankful we are Christians. We have even considered ourselves assets to Him because of our talents and abilities! Perish such a thought! God places no higher value on saved flesh than unsaved. It is wholly worthless to Him. He does not want you but "Christ in you, the Hope of Glory." Only to the extent to which you are yielded to the Lord Jesus can He use you. Paul says, "I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Romans 7:21, 24) In verse 25 we have the only possible answer to this question. "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 7:25). Christ is the victor who alone can enable us to conquer the flesh.

One of the most destructive errors of the Judaizers was their dependence in the flesh. Paul attacks this evil by saying, "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" (verse 4). He proceeds to list some of the prerogatives that were his as a Jew. If a salvation were to be received through the accomplishments of the flesh, Paul could certainly qualify. The Judaizers boasted in many things, but these were nothing compared to the Apostle's Jewish heritage.

In verses 5 and 6, Paul lists seven advantages that were his as a Jew. (1) "Circumcised the eighth day." A convert to Judaism was circumcised in maturity. The Israelites were circumcised in the thirteenth year. But Paul was a true, full-blooded Jew circumcised at birth. (2) "Of the stock of Israel." He was able to trace his lineage all the way back to Jacob who had prevailed with God and become Israel. Jacob was honored and revered by all the Jews for it was to him the Jewish people owed their origin. (3) "Of the Tribe of Benjamin." Benjamin was the

only tribe to remain faithful to Judah after the division of the kingdom, and also after the exile when Judah provided the foundation for the reestablished nation. (4) "A Hebrew of the Hebrews." He was a Hebrew as opposed to being a foreigner. He was also a descendant of Hebrew parentage, both of his parents being Jewish. (5) "As touching the law, a Pharisee." The Pharisees were the strong defenders and the best qualified expositors of the Mosaic Law. They were recognized as the conservative party among the Jews. (6) "Concerning zeal, persecuting the church." This was looked upon as an honor for Jews. You will remember at the time of his conversion he was on the way to persecute the believers at Damascus. Before he was saved, he stood at the stoning of Stephen, with great pride and pomp observing the death of the first Christian martyr. (7) "As touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless." This of course refers to the ceremonial and moral righteousness which is claimed by the Mosaic Law. It has nothing to do with inner righteousness. When he came face to face with Christ, he recognized that he was completely devoid of any righteousness. But as to the keeping of the ceremonial and the moral law, Paul was without fault — blameless.

Could any Jew boast of more than this? Indeed not. Paul has silenced his enemy. What does the Apostle do with all these advantages? "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ" (verse 7). Compared to the joy of following Christ, all these things became mere nothingness to the Apostle. It should be noted that the action of verse 7 was instantaneous. He *counted* these things loss. This has to do with Paul's salvation. The moment he received Christ into his heart, there was an immediate break with the past life. He became the recipient of a new nature and from that time lived a new life.

In Acts, chapter 9, Paul tells us about this transforming experience. While on the road to Damascus, furious with hatred, on his way to persecute more Christians, he fell to the ground blind as the result of a great light which shined about him. Startled by the words, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" he cried out, "Who art thou, Lord?"

"I am Jesus whom thou persecutest," was the reply. In humility, with complete self-abandonment, Paul cried out to God, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" It is at this moment I believe Paul was soundly converted and counted all things but loss for Christ. What makes me think this? Without the Lord Jesus in the heart, man is naturally selfish and lives for himself. He does all things for himself, disregarding the claims of the Lord on his soul. When Christ is welcomed into the heart, there will naturally follow a new attitude toward God — "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" When anyone says this to the Lord Jesus Christ, you may rest assured he has been soundly converted.

Of course, it is possible to go through the conversion experience in the head but not in the heart. The fruit will be the proof of the genuineness. God told Paul to "arise and go." He obeyed immediately! Never afterward do we have any recorded instance of his failure to do faithfully what the Lord Jesus told him. He certainly evidenced one of the most important fruits of salvation — OBEDIENCE. In the church of Christ today, we have many folks who say they are Christians, but yet they fail so miserably to do what the Lord has commanded. They proudly assert they are believers, but appearances make it dubious. The Bible teaches when a man comes to Christ and is transformed by the Spirit of God, his attitude, ambitions and actions are directed by this question of inestimable importance — "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

Could it be that you have not enjoyed this miraculous transformation received by believing on the Lord Jesus? Remember there is only one way to have this experience. "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth forever" (I Peter 1:23). "Being born again" — That's it! Immediately, like Paul, you may know the reality of this if you are willing to receive the Lord Jesus as God's sacrifice for your sins. Paul said in Acts 16:31, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." If you believe on Christ now, you will be able to say with mean-

ing and assurance, "But what things were gain to me those I counted loss for Christ."

Coming to verse 8, we find the progressive experience which follows the crisis experience. Verse 7 has to do with justification — being declared free from the penalty and bondage of sin; while verse 8 concerns the believer's sanctification — the process of being more and more conformed to the image of Christ. "Yea doubtless, and I count (I am counting) 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 (am counting) them as refuse, that I may win Christ." Though all things are immediately *counted* loss at conversion, the process of *counting* all things as loss continues until we meet Christ either through death or when He returns. We shall then be perfected.

The last statement of verse 8, "That I may win Christ," has to do with our sanctification. Paul is not inferring anticipation of ultimate salvation. He knows he is saved! He longs to know Christ intimately in fellowship and experience. He well knew that even though one is saved and has the assurance of salvation, there is a need for a continual housecleaning until we are ushered into the visible presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. In this process, little sins in our lives become more obvious and obnoxious. As we study God's Word, the Holy Spirit holds before our eyes certain weaknesses we do not even realize we have. In the strength of the Lord, we are enabled to put off the works of darkness and to become more and more like the Lord Jesus Himself.

Washington came to Brandywine Creek with his army during the Revolutionary War. They had just crossed the bridge when one of the soldiers asked, "General, shall we burn the bridge, or leave it there lest the enemy drive us back and we shall want to use it in retreat?" Looking at him sternly, Washington gave this memorable reply: "Burn the bridge! It is victory or death!"

How essential that Christians burn all the bridges behind them. Many have come to Christ for salvation. They have experienced verse 7; but they are not advancing in the things of the Lord by coming into the realization of

verse 8. By God's grace, let us burn the bridges! Get rid of every trace of the old life that we might win Christ! He longs to become everything to us. This is a work He desires to perform in us daily, but there must be the will to yield all to Him.

Because Paul had come to the place of unreserved surrender to Christ, he was no longer a proud, self-righteous religionist, but a humble saint of God. He could say, "Not having *mine own righteousness*, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." He had lost sight of his mere superficial, human righteousness, and was now the happy possessor of Christ's righteousness. Apart from the redemption wrought by Christ, there is no other way to receive the righteousness of God. "For God hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (II Corinthians 5:21).

Have you received His righteousness? Have you counted all things but loss for Him? If not, invite the Lord Jesus to come into your heart right now. If you have received Him, are you letting Him fill you with Himself? Are you becoming more and more like Him? Do not be satisfied with anything less than the best. Accept all God has provided for you in His Beloved Son.

## Chapter VIII

### THE BELIEVER'S ATTAINMENT

#### Philippians 3:10-16

**KEY VERSE:** *"I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."*  
(Verse 14)

Paul has been considering his past and recalling some of the advantages and prerogatives that were his as a Jew. In contrast, he realizes his high privilege and tremendous opportunity of serving the risen Christ and makes the unwavering declaration, "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. 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.**" This was indeed a monumental decision. Every believer should make the same decision. If only we would take the time to approximate the few paltry earthly advantages that seem to entice and envelop us all, and compare them with the fruitfulness and blessing of a life completely given over to Christ, we would recognize the Apostle's decision as the only satisfactory one to make.

Coming to verses 10 through 16 of Chapter 3, we notice that Paul enlarges upon his decision of verse 8. The importance of attainment for Christ is stressed. In this passage, Paul leads us into the Holy of Holies of the Epistle. Step by step, he has been leading us closer and closer to this grand pinnacle. We now find ourselves standing on holy ground as we hear the Apostle cry out, "That I may know Him." Nothing else in life should have precedence over this — the **BELIEVER'S ATTAINMENT**. So far

as Paul was concerned, everything took a place of secondary importance to Christ. He earnestly desired to know Christ experimentally. All believers naturally know Christ, but not all know Him experimentally. Many there are who go through the same routine week after week of attending church Sunday morning, singing, listening to a sermon and then without change, they continue merrily and unconcerned on the same old path. These good folks believe on Christ. They are saved; but even they are aware of the fact that there is something decidedly lacking in their lives. They are spiritually cold. They are like buckets half-filled, trying to splash over the side. The old life with all its former lust holds more attraction than the things of Christ. Can we place our finger on the difficulty? I believe so! Though these friends have professed Christ as Saviour, they have never recognized Him as Lord. When one knows Christ experimentally, spiritual roots will be deepened, enabling the hungry and thirsty soul to draw upon Him for nutrition and sustenance rather than upon the world with its sinful pleasures. There must be a constant and daily drinking from the well-springs of Christ. To overflow with God's goodness, we must first of all be filled with Him.

Suppose twenty-five years ago you made a deposit of one hundred dollars in the bank. Ever since, you have been drawing twenty-five dollars a month on that account. "Oh, but that would be impossible," you say. "The account would have been overdrawn years ago!" Precisely so! This is why many Christians, spiritually speaking, are operating in the red. Years ago they received the Lord Jesus into their hearts. They were soundly saved. But all these years, they have been drawing on a beginner's experience. They have known Christ nominally, but have not come to know Him experimentally. Instead of rising in the morning and getting into the Scriptures for a new deposit for their soul's resources, they hurriedly eat breakfast and rush to work, totally unprepared to face the problems of the day. Little or no time is spent in prayer to solicit God's guidance and leadership. They are too busy to spend time with Him. He is crowded out of their lives. To be sure this is why they suffer so many defeats. Consequent-

ly, tragedies and failures overwhelm them. No Christian can live the Christian life in such a superficial way. For blessing, it is essential to go all the way with God and know our blessed Lord experimentally.

How may we know Christ experimentally? Paul tells us that there are three essentials. First, we must know "The power of His (Christ's) resurrection." It is this miraculous power which is wholly capable of removing all obstacles. Resurrection power is never defeated by barriers of any kind. When is it experienced? Only when the believer comes to the place of absolute and complete submission to the will of God for his life. Only as we sincerely cry out, "That I may know Him," can we ever understand the effectiveness of this unlimited and all-conquering power. Absolute obedience to God's will for our lives is a requisite for this experience. Immediately, with complete submission to Christ, comes the fullness of the Spirit and the fullness of His power. "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you" (Acts 1:8).

What does the Church of Christ need today more than this power? We are living in an age when the strongest voice or the loudest appeal seems to dominate. All of advertising seems to be based upon this same principle of high pressure. The purchaser may not have enough money. He may not even think he needs a particular article, but because of high pressure salesmanship or advertising, he feels constrained to buy. In fact, he almost says to himself, "I would be a fool not to buy." Regrettably, this same tool has been incorporated into the program of the church. We are looking to human personalities to carry us ahead. The preacher must be forceful and have a winning personality. The music must be of the finest. It must sweep the people into ecstasy. We are ever working for a strong program to draw the people in. We are told we must compete with programs on television that cost thousands of dollars to prepare. So, this same high-pressuring spirit, the dynamic of a materialistic age, has been well integrated into our churches. But the Bible tells us of only one dynamic, the solitary power that can alone attract and draw men and women to redemption, the Holy



Spirit. He is the Power. Let us fall on our faces humbly before Him. He is our only hope. "For if my people which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land" (II Chronicles 7:14). Have you come to this place of surrender in your life, Christian? If not, come now!

To know Christ experimentally, Paul tells us, we must also know the fellowship of our Lord's suffering. "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the *fellowship of his suffering*." Complete submission to Christ does not exclude suffering. It does, however, provide the impregnable foundation essential to endure the storms of suffering. The unsundered heart cannot rest, but rather revolts against the trials of life. Those who know Christ experimentally realize that "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow his steps" (I Peter 2:21). In the first chapter of Philipians we read, "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for his sake" (verse 29). Oftentimes, it appears that the closer we get to the Lord Jesus, the greater the suffering becomes. This is normal. Indeed suffering of every possible form was His lot on this earth. Should the servant expect any less than His Master?

Let the world laugh and jeer at your testimony for Christ. Let people call you a fanatic. What is this compared with our future glory in Christ? Do not be afraid to suffer for Him who was crucified for you. Some day when death strikes, those who ridicule faithful believers, will leave their reward; but the follower of Christ will go to his. Our reward is being kept safely in reserve for us. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:32)

Paul further states that if we are to know Christ experimentally, we must be "made conformable unto his death." I do not believe the Apostle has physical death in mind here. You will recall from chapter 2, verse 8, that we are told that our Lord "humbled Himself and became

obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross." It is this complete, voluntary humiliation of self that coincides with the "being made comformable unto His death." To live victoriously, there must be a daily reckoning of one's self to be crucified with Christ. Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians (15:31) wrote, "I die daily." I am sure not a day dawned without the Apostle falling on his face before God, searching out his own heart in the light of God's holiness, and completely dying to his own plans and desires.

Too many of God's people overlook the importance of the fact that the price of usefulness for the Lord is crucifixion. There are no short cuts. This is God's way. Only as we come to the place of complete self-abandonment by laying aside our wants and desires, can we possibly know the power of victorious living and service.

In Galatians 2:20, Paul exclaimed, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; *yet not I*, but CHRIST LIVETH IN ME." For Paul to be crucified with Christ meant that surrounding temptations no longer appealed to him. Satan came and desired the Apostle's lips to speak bitter and harsh words. Paul replied, "I am crucified with Christ." Satan desired his hands to do the work of evil. Again the unwavering reply — "I am crucified with Christ." Satan desired Paul's eyes to look upon things displeasing to Christ; his ears, to listen to unchaste words. Yea, he wanted the whole man for his wicked plans, but Paul had died. He was insensible to the tempter's selfish appeals.

Years ago, John Knox cried aloud to God, "Give me Scotland or I'll die!" The Lord replied, "Die, and I will give you Scotland." John Knox died completely to his own wants and wishes and was made conformable unto Christ's death. The result — God gave him Scotland. The Lord put His hand on this servant in a way never known before. This same experience is for all believers. God plays no favorites.

Have you come to the place of being made conformable unto Christ's death? Have you surrendered EVERYTHING to Him? Withhold from the Lord no longer. Bow your head now and say, "Dear Lord, this is it — Every-

thing goes for Christ." If you do this, what will be the result? Look at the next verse.

"If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead" (verse 11). In Christ, there can be no crucifixion without resurrection. If you are willing to be crucified, you may be sure He will effect a resurrection. The Apostle is here speaking about a spiritual resurrection. The word "attain" means *to arrive at*. There are no "ifs" in Paul's mind relative to the future resurrection of believers who have died in the Lord. "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (I Thessalonians 4:16, 17).

Our Saviour had taught two resurrections in John 5:28, 29. "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." Christ speaks of the resurrection of life which will take place when He comes for His own as described in the Thessalonian passage, and the resurrection of the wicked which will eventuate just prior to the Great White Throne Judgment. These two resurrections will be separated by approximately one thousand years.

Paul in Philippians 3:11 is not speaking about the resurrection of life, but rather of a spiritual resurrection. He is absolutely certain he will participate in the resurrection of life as will all true believers. But having spoken about crucifixion in the believer as a requisite for power and usefulness, he describes the result of this crucifixion. There comes a life of power and usefulness never before known. Paul confesses his own lack of this experience as he writes this Epistle. What he has to say suggests that he has not come into the fullness of resurrection living as yet, but he longs for that experience. "If by any means I might attain the resurrection of the dead."

Paul also describes this important experience of self-crucifixion and spiritual resurrection in Roman's 6:1-4. "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that as many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, *even so we also should walk in newness of life*" (verses 1-4).

How few of God's children have experienced the "walking in newness of life" about which Paul speaks. They are defeated because they have never accepted victory over temptation which Christ longs to give. They are walking in the old ways of the flesh, reborn, but not made conformable unto His death, and not "walking in the newness of life." They have little of joy or blessing in their Christian experience. In fact in many instances, being a Christian is a burden rather than a blessing. Why should this be? God never intended such a life of bitter defeat. Hear His voice now. Heed His Word immediately. "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be *dead* indeed unto sin, but *alive* unto God" (Romans 6:11). Here is the only answer to happy living for the believer — Crucifixion and Resurrection.

Now he says in verse 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" (verse 12). Paul realized that he was not perfect, nor would he be, until the resurrection of the body when the Lord Jesus returns to catch up all believers to be with Him. Only then would he be glorified and made like unto Christ. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (I John 3:3). Paul did not claim sinless perfection, but he was doing his best to go all the way with God. It was as though he said, "I am not perfect yet, but I am certainly trying and aiming in that direction." The words "I follow after" really mean *to pursue*. It suggests the picture of a runner pressing

toward a goal. Every muscle and every nerve in his body is straining as he strives to reach the goal. Paul, like all humans, was far from being perfect, but he was sacrificing everything to run toward the goal of perfection.

A literal rendering of "apprehend" is *to lay hold of*. Paul desires to lay hold of that for which Christ has laid hold of him. On the Damascus highway, the Lord Jesus laid hold of Paul. For what purpose? Just to be comfortable and happy so he might enjoy his Christianity? I find no intimation of such an answer anywhere in the Bible. God lays hold of all believers for two purposes — holiness and usefulness. Neither of these objectives could ever be accomplished apart from full surrender to Christ. That is why Paul first speaks of knowing Christ to the extent that he will be made conformable unto his death. We shall then, and only then, be in a position to live holy and useful lives for Christ. We are told in I Thessalonians 4:7, "God hath not called us to uncleanness, but unto holiness." The Lord has laid His hand on every believer for this purpose. We are no longer our own to live as we please. We are His to please Him.

In addition to the call to holy living, we see also that God has called the believer to usefulness. "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain" (John 15:16). What can be said about one who professes to follow Christ and never serves Christ? Certainly he has overlooked something of extreme importance. We are saved to serve.

Is your life really counting for Christ? Are you permitting the Holy Spirit to work through you in a life of holiness and usefulness? So often in sincerity we pray, "Lord, use me." Surely behind such a prayer is a right motive; yet what we really should pray is, "Lord, make me usable." Holiness and usefulness go hand in hand. No one can serve the Lord effectively without a consecrated life to back it up. Paul emphasized these two truths so strongly in II Timothy 2:21. "If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work."

"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, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (verses 13 and 14). There are three things that should be noted from these verses. First, the Fixed Purpose. "This one thing I do." What was Paul's fixed purpose in life? What did he desire more than anything else in the world? "That I may know Him." Paul lived for no other reason. Secondly, note the Fixed Attitude: "forgetting those things which are behind." How much difficulty "those things" have caused us! I mean the things we should have forsaken for Christ when we were saved. Some of us still cling to them. Paul was probably referring to the things he listed in verses 5 and 6 which he had declared to be but loss for Christ. Perhaps there were other things. Anything that did not draw him closer to Christ had to be forsaken and left behind. As the runner strips himself of all the dead weights, so the Apostle cast aside all that might keep him from a life of holiness. Likewise, the Lord urges us to "lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:1,2). As we look unto Jesus the object of our faith, we should in God's strength throw aside all that hinders our progress for Him. As we strip ourselves of the things that hinder Christian growth, we should substitute other things that will be useful in spiritual advancement. We read in Hebrews 6:9, "Beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and *things that accompany salvation.*"

God tells us the true believer will be just as definitely marked by the addition of certain things as well as by the subtraction of others. In our churches we see some who profess to be saved, yet they do not seem to exhibit "the things that accompany salvation." The old life appears to be carried over into the new experience. They claim to be Christians, but where are "the things that accompany

salvation"? What are these things? The card table? The cocktail? Profanity? Worldliness? Are these "the things that accompany salvation"? Definitely not! There should be Bible reading, prayer, soul-winning, separated living, church attendance, prayer meeting and many other things that please Christ. God longs to see these in the believer's program.

Paul not only had a Fixed Purpose and a Fixed Attitude, but a Fixed Goal. "Reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." What higher goal could one have in life? This should be the believer's AT-TAINMENT. In all things follow Christ!

The Apostle gives a personal word of exhortation. "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect be thus minded: and if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you." In verse 12, the word "perfect" means perfection, but here the word used means *maturity*. If one is to become a full-grown believer in Christ, he must "be thus minded." He should follow after the same principles Paul has set forth in this passage of Scripture. Paul is assuring them that His teaching is sound. It seems as though there were some in the Philippian Church who were embracing the doctrine of sinless perfection. Paul refused to argue with them on the subject, but he said. "If in everything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you." In other words, if they were earnest in knowing the truth, God would make it plain to them. The Lord is never silent to the obedient and sincere heart. "If any man will *do his will* he shall *know*" (John 7:17). Divine truth is always made understandable to the obedient heart.

"Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing" (verse 16). What Paul is actually saying is, "Let us act upon these things." We have known them for a long time. But that isn't enough. Knowing them doesn't accomplish anything! The Apostle is urging us to do something about them. We read in James 4:17, "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." We

read also, "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God " (I Peter 4:17). Let us have action! Commit all to Christ that our highest ATTAINMENT in life may be "To know Him." Say with an honest heart,

*King of my life, I crown Thee now.  
Thine shall the glory be,  
Lest I forget Thy thorn-crowned brow,  
Lead me to Calvary.*



## Chapter IX

### THE BELIEVER'S ANTICIPATION

#### Philippians 3:17-21

**KEY VERSE:** *"For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ."* (Verse 20)

In the opening verses of chapter three, Paul cautioned the Philippians to beware of the subtle teachings of the Legalists. Even now we must keep constant guard against this enemy, for there has never been a time when the church of Christ has not been harassed with legalism. It is not unusual to find professed followers of the Lord Jesus who boldly proclaim that salvation by grace is not sufficient; something else must be added. God in His Word, however, declares that the Gospel is faith in Christ plus nothing. "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:26).

As we come to the closing verses of chapter three, Paul reproves the Libertines, another enemy of the Gospel of grace. These suave opponents of the truth were a constant cause of grief to the Philippian Church. The Libertines made a nominal profession of faith like the Judaizers, but contradicted the truth by advocating the deceitful fabrications that though saved, the believer could continue to enjoy the lusts and sinful pleasures of the flesh. The exponents of this subverting philosophy lived in gross wickedness and paganism, disregarding the righteous demands of the new life in Christ.

Paul begins his refutation of this teaching in verse 17 by saying, "Brethren, be followers of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an example." In solicit-

ing the Philippians to follow him, he is not placing himself on a high pedestal as the final example; but rather, he is encouraging them to follow the principles he has already laid down in this chapter. The bosom concern of his heart was laid bare before us in the deep-rooted ambition expressed in these soul-stirring statements we have already studied. "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ" (verse 7). "That I may win Christ" (verse 9). "That I may know him" (verse 10). "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (verse 14). In the same manner in which Paul has sacrificed everything to follow Christ, he beseeches his beloved friends in the Philippian Church to follow him in coming to that same decision of wholly following the Lord Jesus. This was expressed with even greater clarity in his first Epistle to the Corinthians. "Be ye followers of me, *even as I also am of Christ*" (I Corinthians 11:1). At no time in his ministry did the Apostle suggest that believers should be made the supreme example and objective for holy living. His constant plea was to make Christ the pattern and exemplification of the Christian life. How necessary and important this is! Christians frequently stumble and fall because they follow other Christians rather than the Lord Jesus.

A young woman with some ambition as a painter submitted specimens of her skill to a successful artist. "Don't copy copies," he said. "You have copied this landscape from a picture that was an imperfect copy with the result that all the errors are reproduced and magnified. Go out into nature and paint directly from the landscape; or if you must copy, choose a masterpiece. Anything else is not worthwhile."

As followers of the Lord Jesus, we must not content ourselves to fashion our lives after humans who at best are only poor imitations of the Altogether Lovely One. God says in Psalm 118:8, "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in men." If we are men-followers, we shall be greatly disappointed and discouraged. If we follow Christ, there will be no occasion for stumbling. He who is the spotless and sinless Lamb of God, is our perfect example. The Bible declares, "He knew no sin" (II

Corinthians 5:21). "He did no sin" (I Peter 2:22). "In Him is no sin" (I John 3:5).

On the other hand, the fact that we are imperfect does not absolve us from our responsibility of being good examples for Christ. Though it is dangerous to follow humans, yet the Word of God teaches that it is obligatory to wholly follow our Lord in holy living. In I Peter 1:15 and 16 we read, "But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation (behaviour); because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy." Paul wrote to his close associate Timothy, "Be thou an example of the believers in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (I Timothy 4:12). Let us not think we can be examples for Christ in our own strength. Only through the energy of the Holy Spirit can the Christian exemplify the holiness of our Lord Jesus in righteousness. Zeal and determination are no substitutes for the working of the Holy Spirit. But before the Spirit can lead us into holiness, there must be willingness. Submit your will to His control and victory will be yours.

The people of the world are looking for something to satisfy their troubled minds. Their only hope is Christ. Yet unless He is presented to the unsaved attractively through sanctified saints of God, those who need Him will never find Him. Paul wrote in II Corinthians 3:2, "Ye are our epistle written in our hearts known and read of all men."

There are no Bibles like human Bibles. We have pulpit Bibles, teachers' Bibles, children's Bibles and many others; there are red leather, black leather and brown leather Bibles. But there is only one Bible the unsaved are taking time to read and that is the old shoe-leather Bible characterized in your life and mine. If our unsaved neighbors and friends do not see the Lord Jesus Christ in us, in all probability they will never see Him. What do they read when they look at your life? What do they see? Paul could say, "Ye have us for an example." Are you an example to the God of grace and glory who has sacrificed everything for you?

## WHAT IS THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO YOU?

*I'd rather see a sermon than hear one any day,  
I'd rather one would walk with me than merely tell the  
way.*

*The eye's a better pupil and more willing than the ear;  
Fine counsel is confusing; but example's always clear.  
The best of all the preachers are the men who live their  
creeds,*

*For to see good put in action is what everybody needs.  
I soon can learn to do it, if you'll let me see it done.  
I can watch your hands in action, but your tongue too  
fast may run.*

*The lectures you deliver may be wise and true,  
But I'd rather get my lessons by observing what you do.  
I may not understand the high advice you give,  
But there's no misunderstanding how you act and how  
you live.*

— AUTHOR UNKNOWN

The visible church is still spotted with Libertines who give little attention and care to their walk. It is not enough to make a profession of faith in Christ; the Bible declares we are to walk like Christ. "He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked" (I John 2:6). D. L. Moody put it this way: "A holy life will produce the deepest impression. Lighthouses blow no horns. They only shine!" We have been saved from the darkness that we might let our light shine for the Lord. Our Saviour died not only that we might be saved, but that we might live for the Lord. Christ "gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Titus 2:14).

It was the inconsistent living of the Libertines at Philippi which caused the Apostle so much grief and anxiety. In verse 18 he writes, "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." Undoubtedly, Paul spent hours in agonizing prayer, with the tears of concern streaming down his cheeks over this distressing

and grievous situation. Probably the fact that disturbed him most was that these deluded souls were not saved. Paul says in verses 18 and 19, "They are the enemies of the cross of Christ, Whose end is destruction." Such terms could never describe a born-again believer.

What was the real fallacy displayed by these evil doers? Though they declared their allegiance to Christ, yet, because of their insincerity, they did not become the recipients of a new nature. God says in Ephesians 4:24, "That ye put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." You will note in this verse that Paul speaks about true holiness. Many clean-living and moral people possess a superficial holiness which is not "true holiness." They glory in the flesh; but "true holiness" makes its boast in Christ. "True holiness" begins with a new nature, received when one is soundly converted by a heart acceptance of Christ. The natural result will not be sin and licentiousness, but righteousness and holiness.

A man in West Palm Beach, Florida, owned a cat. At least it looked like a cat when viewed from the front, but from the rear it appeared to be a rabbit. Its head, forelegs and shoulders were those of a cat, but just below the shoulder joint, it became a rabbit. The hind legs were like those of a rabbit and operated rabbit fashion. Even the fur was only cat fur about half-way. The rest of the animal was covered with rabbit fur. The tail was nothing but a boneless tuft of black fur. At a loss as to what it should be called, the owner named it a "cabbit." Though this may be an oddity to most of us, yet our churches have been marked by another kind of double-appearing creature for years. There are some who appear to be Christians on Sunday as they sit in their pew, but during the rest of the week, it is extremely difficult to distinguish them from the devil himself. Christians on Sunday, but devils on Monday! What shall we name them? How about "Chrevils"? They profess Christ, but appear as devils. Paul declares they are "the enemies of the Cross of Christ." "If we *say* that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not tell the truth: But if we

walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (I John 1:6,7). It is not enough to make a mere mental affirmation in the acceptance of Christ as Saviour. There must be repentance and a resolute turning from sin unto God. The Bible teaches, to receive Christ is to follow Christ, and he who follows Christ will live for Christ. He who lives for Christ will forsake sin and walk with Christ.

Paul further tells us as he continues the subject in verse 19, the chief concern of those of whom he is writing is for this world and its lusts. "Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things." This is a give-away. Their interests betray their lip service to Christ. "They mind earthly things." They have no desire for spiritual values. They live for this world. God says in I John 2:15, "Love not the world neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the father is not in him." The worldly-minded have little time or thought for God.

Paul further describes the Libertines by saying, "Whose God is their belly." Evidently they were tainted with the Epicurean philosophy which asserted that the highest aim of man was the satisfaction of the physical appetites. Consequently, they live for themselves rather than for God. They were not interested in spiritual verities. Their lives also evidenced the fact that they were concerned about self-gratification rather than self-sacrifice. The problem Paul was facing was not false doctrine like that of the Judaizers, but rather, false living. Yet the error is equally as serious. Too often this fact is overlooked. It is not only important to have a church that is sound in faith. It must be equally sound in living.

When interrogated as to the grounds for such inconsistencies, the argument presented by the adherents to this error was that of Christian liberty. Christian liberty is a greatly misunderstood subject. Our liberty in Christ is made possible by God's marvelous grace. It should never lead to sin but rather from sin. Paul declared in his letter to the Galatians, "For, brethren, ye have been called

unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh" (Galatians 5:13). These words were a stern rebuke to the Satanic philosophy that had seized upon the Philippian Church. Under grace, the Christian is permitted to do anything he wants to do, but if committed to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, he will desire to do only what God wants. In doing what God wants, he will be extremely considerate of the weaker brother. Our habits must be examined with this thought in mind. A practice which may not be harmful to the more spiritual believer, may prove disastrous to the spiritually immature. That is why Paul said, "All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient. All things are lawful for me but all things edify not" (I Corinthians 10:23). We must constantly realize that wherever we go or whatever we do, we are being watched. The imminent danger of causing others to stumble is ever present.

The story is related of a small boy balancing perilously on the iron banister of a viaduct spanning some railroad tracks. He called banteringly to his two companions who were nearby. "Look at me! Look at me! Don't you wish you could do this?" Addressing the older boy, he shouted: "I'll bet you wouldn't dare try!" "I could do it if I wanted to," was the reply, "but I won't, because my little brother is with me." He was a wise lad. How important that God's people be just as discerning. All about us there are Christian brothers, in addition to multitudes of unsaved people, watching us. If we are careless and thoughtless in our actions for Christ, we shall be guilty of driving men and women away from the Saviour rather than attracting them to Him.

In contrast to the hypocrite whom Paul has described, he now says of the true believer in verse 20, "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ." The word "conversation" as used here is really *citizenship*. "Our citizenship is in heaven." Though we are an earthly people, our predominate and absorbing interests should be heavenly. One who professes Christ but does not possess Him will center his affection on the things of this earth. Eternal verities will have little value or importance.

God speaks quite frankly to the worldling in James 4:4. "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." Worldliness is an abomination to God. The true believer should not look to the world with its superficial pleasures for satisfaction, but should be looking upward for the return of his Lord who will bring eternal satisfaction. The Christian should live and work with the great expectancy of the Second Coming. This is the **BELIEVER'S ANTICIPATION**. As each day dawns and each night darkens, we should be looking to the Heavens for the fulfillment of the Blessed Hope.

Though perplexed by discouragements and trials, we may look above these fleeting sufferings and anticipate the visible return of our wonderful Lord. We are encouraged to greater expectancy every time we read James 5:8: "Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh." With this flame of hope burning in our hearts, we are inspired to keep pressing on, with the assurance that God's Word is true. "For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come and will not tarry" (Hebrews 10:37).

Perhaps you have wondered why Paul turns point-blank from rebuking the hypocrite to the theme of the Second Coming of Christ. Simply because one that is truly saved will not only be looking for the Second Coming of his Lord, but he will be living in the light of the Second Coming. The Bible teaches that "the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." (Titus 2:11-13). Holy living and watchful expecting go hand in hand. One of the reasons there is so much worldliness and ungodliness in our churches today is that the doctrine of the Second Coming of Christ has been overlooked and ignored in so many pulpits. Those who are looking for their Lord to return will be living in anticipation of this glorious event. Someone has said we are to



"live as if Christ died yesterday, rose this morning and is coming back tomorrow."

Do we really believe that Christ may return to catch us up into the clouds to meet Him in the air? If we do, this will be reflected in the way we live and work for God. The true follower of Christ will not settle down comfortably in his present surroundings, but will live and labor faithfully until Christ returns.

As a small boy, I was always intrigued by the lamplighter. We still had gas lights along the main thoroughfares of our city. Each evening I would wait up to watch the lamplighter perform his routine task as he rode on his bicycle carrying his long pole. Approaching the lamps, he would reach up with his long pole, touch a little lever and the light would slowly flicker on. For several blocks I watched him but after a while, he was completely obscured by the darkness of the evening. As I continued looking, however, I could still see the lamps lighting one by one every few seconds for many blocks along the way. Though the lamplighter was not visible because of the darkness, I knew where he was by his light. Christians should be distinguished by their light. God is not concerned that people look to us to praise and honor us, but He does desire that we shine brightly for Him. "Let your light so shine that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

In the last verse of the chapter, Paul tells of the wonderful and miraculous transformation that will eventuate at the Second Coming. "Who (Christ) 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" (verse 21). No Christian has ever been able to live a life of perfection. Even though we are redeemed by Christ's blood and indwelt by the Holy Spirit, we are still plagued by the old nature. Though we may hate sin and Satan, we still yield to the lusts of the flesh. But in this verse Paul tells us the day is coming when these bodies of humiliation will become perfect bodies like unto Christ's body of glorification. At the return of Christ, every believer will be like Christ. What a marvelous ANTICIPATION is ours!

In writing to the Corinthians Paul said, "Behold I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be *changed*, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and *we shall be changed*. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality" (I Corinthians 15:51-53). What a thrilling hope! From the Word of God we are assured that some day we shall be like the Lord Jesus Himself. Then we shall never again be defeated by temptations, distressed by worries, distraught by fear, or defeated by sin. We shall be like Christ!

There may not be much spiritual beauty in us as God's people now, but some day we shall overflow with the beauty of holiness as revealed in the Lord Jesus. Just as a rosebud does not appear extremely attractive or beautiful in that form, yet when warmed by the sun and bathed by the dew, it bursts into colorful beauty and delicate fragrance. So it is with the follower of Jesus Christ. Today he is marked by the ugliness of the sins of the old nature, but when the trumpet call of our Saviour shall sound, he shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air and be transformed immediately into Christ's glorious likeness.

Can you say that the Believer's ANTICIPATION is your "blessed hope"? Is your profession of Jesus Christ real? Or is it possible that you are like those who caused the Apostle untold anxiety by making an empty profession of Christ without a sincere commitment of their lives to God? There is no satisfaction or happiness in such empty sham. If this is your deplorable state, I beseech you to turn to Christ now and receive Him as your very own. Take Him at His Word. Hear and heed His voice as He says in John 6:37, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." The door to God's marvelous grace and salvation is open to you today. If you enter by faith, your soul will rejoice in the Believer's ANTICIPATION — the return of Christ.

## Chapter X

### THE BELIEVER'S ADORNMENT

#### Philippians 4:1-7

**KEY VERSE:** *"Be careful (anxious) for nothing: but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."* (Verse 6)

The keynote that seems to be so obvious in chapter three of Paul's Epistle to the Philippians, is the emphasis he gives to victorious living which can only be experienced through complete and absolute surrender to Christ. With this high and noble life in mind, our attention is now directed to some of the practical aspects that result from the entire abandonment of self to God's will.

In the opening verse of chapter four, Paul not only expresses gratitude for the believers at Philippi, but exhorts them to steadfastness. "Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved." The believers to whom the Apostle writes were his "joy and crown." The word used for "crown" has reference to the victor's wreath that was placed upon the head of the winner of the athletic games. Paul realizes that no greater prize can be his in life than that of seeing men and women come to Christ under his ministry. Indeed, soul-winning is an incomparable privilege God has committed to all Christians. Every convert added to the great host of believers is another prize that will remain for all eternity. This truth is so forcibly emphasized in Proverbs 11:30: "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise." Anyone who gives himself to the task of

winning the lost to Christ will never regret the hours invested in this productive ministry.

What an overwhelming joy it will be to see those in heaven we have had the opportunity of pointing to Christ. God says in Psalm 126:6, "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." How embarrassing and disappointing it will be for those who have never even attempted to lead lost souls to Christ. These Christians have not only failed their Lord, but some day must stand before Him empty-handed. What a calamity! This was not true of Paul. The Philippian Church had its inception when the jailor and his family were converted. Later many others came to know the Saviour. These redeemed saints were more valuable to Paul than anything in life. They were his "joy and crown"!

After giving this word of thanksgiving, the Apostle emphasizes the importance of a resolute stand for Christ. The literal rendering of "stand fast in the Lord" is "stand firm in the Lord." In this statement, Paul has in mind several unhappy situations. In the light of the two errors he has already discussed in the previous chapter — that of the Legalists and the Libertines, he entreats the Philippians not to waver or succumb to these errors but to stand firm in Christ.

At the same time, Paul is mindful of another difficulty that had arisen. Two of the more gifted and influential Christian women of the congregation were at variance with each other. Paul writes in verse 2, "I beseech Euodias and beseech Syntyche that they be of the same mind in the Lord." Euodias means *prosperous journey* and Syntyche means *pleasant acquaintance*. Their names suggest they were both extremely capable with a recognizable degree of ability. From Paul's admonition we realize a clash of some kind had ensued, harmony had been disrupted, and these two church workers had begun to pull in different directions. Because both were gifted, it has been conjectured that possibly jealousy was the cause of the rift.

Jealousy has brought immeasurable misery and unhappiness to many of God's people. There are some sins

that work like mold on the soul and others which are as destructive as dry rot, but the Word of God tells us that jealousy is "as cruel as the grave" and thus corrodes the soul like acid. It destroys the beauty of our souls just as the grave destroys the beauty of our bodies. Some believers are jealous because another Christian has more talents than they. God needs divers stations of ability and gifts in His work. All are essential. No one believer is more important than another.

Andrew Carnegie, the famous steel magnate, was once asked by a reporter which he considered the most important — capital, labor or the farmer. Whereupon Mr. Carnegie replied with a laugh, "Which would you say is the most important leg of a three-legged stool?"

In Christian work, God needs those from every class. At no time must the church be marked by social distinctions. In Ephesians 4:13, Paul gave instruction which, if followed, would destroy the barrier of jealousy that for ages past has hindered the unrestricted working of the Holy Spirit. "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Christians are not to be jealous of one another. They are to love one another! "Be kindly affectioned one to another" (Romans 12:10).

The best cure for jealousy is to pray daily for the one you detest and dislike. Jesus said in Matthew 5:44, "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you." When you awake in the morning, get on your knees and ask God to bless the particular individual who seems to agitate you. You will be surprised how easy it will be to love rather than to hate.

Paul wisely sensed that this situation needed the intervention of help from sympathetic and spiritual saints. So in verse 3 he writes, "And I intreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellow

labourers, whose names are in the book of life." Who this yokefellow was, we are not certain, though undoubtedly, he must have been a consecrated servant of Christ, possessing an abounding gift of love. He must have been the kind of a man who radiated the love of Christ constantly. How our churches need men and women overflowing in God's love. There are so many who are divisive. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 5:9, "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God." This does not mean one is a child of God because he is a peacemaker, but rather one who is truly saved and committed fully to Christ will so exemplify the love of God that those all around will say with certainty, "He is a child of God." "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35).

How greatly we need peacemakers, as opposed to trouble-makers. How does one become a peacemaker? There is only one way — complete submission to the Lord Jesus. Before Paul writes about Euodias and Syntyche in chapter four, he gives us the answer to the problem in chapter three. Hate can be subdued by forsaking all to follow Christ. A completely yielded life will be a loving life. In Matthew 22:37-39 our Lord stated this same truth. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." The second commandment can never be realized until the first is acted upon. It is impossible to love our neighbor until we fully love our Saviour.

In verse 4, the Apostle beseeches God's people to be a happy people. "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice." He is really saying, "Be glad in the Lord." Christians, of all people, should be genial and cheerful. Undoubtedly gloom had fallen on the entire Philippian congregation because of the disagreement between Euodias and Syntyche. The believers were dejected, downcast and pessimistic. Paul writes to them in their down-in-the-mouth condition: "Be glad in the Lord." When one loses the joy of his salvation, he becomes a spiritual pauper.

Enmity and malicious hate can rob us of joy. Only as we stay close to Christ can we know real victory.

When Haydn, the great composer, was asked on one occasion why his sacred compositions had such a glad ring, he answered, "I cannot compose anything without it. I translate into music the state of my very heart. When I think of the grace of God in Jesus Christ, my heart is so full of joy that the notes fairly dance and leap from my pen." David said in Psalm 16:11, "Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fullness of joy; and at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore."

If the believer is walking in fellowship with the Lord, joy will be one of the fruits of this relationship. So often infelicity is the result of a broken communion with God. Certainly, there could be no happiness for Euodias and Syntyche so long as they were at enmity with each other. When Christians are factious and fellowship is disturbed between them, they sever fellowship with the Lord. Before harmony with Him can be restored, there must be concord and agreement among His people. Confession to God has no merit until we apologize to our injured brother.

Let nothing keep you from the joy of the Lord! Let the joy of Christ radiate from your countenance. Perhaps we can learn a lesson from the little four-year-old boy who noticed a deep scowl that was on his father's face. "Daddy," he asked, "aren't you happy this morning?" "Why, of course I am, Son." "Well then, hadn't you better tell your face?"

It has been said, "If a man cannot smile, he is built wrong. If he can smile and won't, keep away from him!" God has an important place in His program for happy Christians. "Be glad in the Lord always."

In verse 5 we read, "Let your forbearing spirit be known to everyone — the Lord is near." Rather than meanness and unkindness, Christians should evidence gentleness, consideration and respect for others. Euodias and Syntyche were hindering the working of God's Spirit at Philippi. Contentious saints always stem progress. God does not stand idly by, however, nor does He divorce Himself from such matters. Paul says, "The Lord is at

hand." This does not refer to the Second Coming of Christ, but rather means that if there is belligerency among Christians, the Lord will intervene. He sees this wretched condition and if restitution is not made, He will judge.

Paul next exhorts us to get our minds off the petty griefs that cause so much misery in life and to commit our cares to the Lord. "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." "Be careful for nothing" could be better translated, "be anxious about nothing" or "do not worry about anything." How many of us toss and turn in our beds at night because of the pernicious sin of worry. Believer in Christ, God's Word to you is "Do not worry about anything." You reply, "I know that. I have tried not to worry. Repeatedly, I have done my best to overcome this sin, but every effort seems fruitless." The question is, have you tried the right way? Have you made fair trial of the only way? If you have received the Lord Jesus Christ into your heart for salvation, God has given the answer in this verse: "But in *everything* by PRAYER and SUPPLICATION with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." Prayer and supplication suggests believing prayer. This is the BELIEVER'S ADORNMENT. How empty and shallow our experience in Christ will be if we are not adorned by believing prayer.

Many believers allow themselves to be adorned by the cares, disappointments and griefs of this world which disturb and destroy true happiness and equanimity. God says, "In everything by prayer let your requests be made known unto God." This is the only way to overcome worry. God has given us a wonderful promise in Psalm 34:15, "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous and his ears are open unto their cry." Why worry when you can pray? Worry is carrying tomorrow's load with today's strength. The Lord Jesus laid down a principle we should never forget in Matthew 6:34, "Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Trust God for TODAY! Do not doubt Him for a moment! Rely on Him for EVERYTHING. Say with the Psalm-



ist, "What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee" (Psalm 56:3).

I once called on a saint of God who was going through troubled waters. Her burdens and problems were many, but she completely relied on the Lord. As we discussed her particular problem, she told me she would often awake during the night. But she said, "Whenever I do, I just take a sleeping pill." This seemed to me a poor gesture for such mature faith. Then she smiled and said, "Of course, my sleeping pill is Psalm 121. "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord which made heaven and earth," etc. When she awakened during the night, she quoted that Psalm over and over until the Lord again touched her eyelids with sleep. How wonderful to know with every adversity of life we can look to Him who is beyond the hills, the Creator of the hills, with the assurance that His strong arm will not fail. His abundant sufficiency is ours for the asking if only in everything with believing prayer we will call upon His Name.

The Lord says, "In EVERYTHING by Prayer and Supplication with Thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." Some use prayer as just a kind of emergency measure and utilize it only when some trial of life overwhelms them.

While riding in a subway in New York City one day, a middle-aged man sitting beside me opened a conversation. He unburdened his problems, telling me how he had been to many places in New York searching in vain for employment. He lamented the fact that he must face his wife again without a job. I listened attentively to his long tale of woe until he finished, and then I asked, "Have you ever tried prayer?" "Oh no!" he replied, "things haven't gotten that bad yet!" Many have this same perverted view of prayer. God says we are to pray in EVERYTHING.

When we pray, we must believe. We should never doubt the mighty power of our God. "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us. And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the

petitions that we desired of him " (I John 5:14, 15).

D. L. Moody used to say, "Talk about the power of Caesar and Napoleon. It is nothing to the power of a man who is in communion with God Almighty!" Christian, are you utilizing this power which is yours in Christ Jesus? Do you in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God? If so, you have found the most important antidote for worry. "He who worries, does not pray. He who prays, does not worry!" Are you spending enough time on your knees daily to sustain your soul amidst the turmoil of life? Do you believingly look to God daily in the joyous fellowship of communion expecting Him to do all things? Adorn yourself with this blessed privilege. You may be surrounded with sorrows, confronted with obstacles, overrun with problems, but if you know the secret of believing prayer, your soul will be flooded with the joy of the Lord.

If you are diligent and faithful in prayer, you will be capitalizing on the promise of the next verse. "And the peace of God which passeth all understanding, shall keep (guard) your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." So few of God's people have experienced this peace. They talk about it and sing about it; but they never seem to experience it! Jesus said in John 16:33: "These things have I spoken unto you that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

It is not necessary to elaborate upon the phrase "in the world ye shall have tribulation." Each of us has experienced the meaning of these words; for the world seems to present sorrow after sorrow. But look at the remainder of the verse. "I have overcome the world." In Jesus Christ every believer is enabled to live above circumstances. It is essentially erroneous for us to be defeated and discouraged, for God's grace is always sufficient. Christ is the believer's Peace. In the face of every test you have the person of the Lord Jesus to sustain you. He knows your affliction and hardship. He who knows is certainly able to undertake. Why go about loaded and bogged down with cares? It is so much simpler to take our Lord at His

Word. Commit your problems to Him. Accept His perfect peace. Then blessing will be yours. Even though the severest tragedy may be your lot, you will be able to say with David, "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning" (Psalm 30:5).

Someone tells of naturalists in the highlands of Scotland who wanted to secure some rare flowers growing in a dangerous gorge. They found a lad and offered him a good sum of money if he would permit them to put a rope around him, let him down to pick the flowers, and then pull him up again to the top of the cliff. The boy looked at the money, then at the steep precipice. Finally with a smile he said, "I will, if you'll let my father hold the rope!" This boy trusted in his earthly father; but far more you and I can trust in our Heavenly Father. If you know Christ as your Lord, be assured there is nothing He cannot or will not do for you. Realize it! With the adornment of prayer comes the provision of peace which banishes worry and care.

May I ask before we close this portion of our study, do you know this wonderful peace through Jesus Christ? Have you experienced it? Are you daily enjoying it? Possibly, you know it in theory. It may be that you have read books about it and have heard sermons describing it, but somehow it just does not seem to be a part of your life. Could it be that you have not received Christ as your Lord? As long as you neglect Him, perfect peace will never be a part of your life. Humbly bow before the Saviour this very moment and invite Him to come into your heart.

If you have trusted Him, perhaps you are disturbed and distressed because you have not committed everything to Him. It is necessary that you yield your life fully to Him if you are to know His abundant peace. Isaiah said many years ago, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee because he trusteth in thee" (Isaiah 26:3). To trust in God implies a full commitment to Him. This is the truth Paul has been trying to impress upon us throughout this Epistle. Blessing and fruitfulness

come only through complete submission to God's will. Christian, are you withholding from Him? Are you living for yourself? Give yourself completely to Him and experience the wonderful peace He longs to give.

## Chapter XI

### THE BELIEVER'S ACCOMPLISHMENT

#### Philippians 4:8-13

KEY VERSE: "*I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*" (Verse 13)

We have just considered prayer as the believer's adornment. The believer in Christ who would find release from anxiety must be consistent in his prayer life. Prayer is a sure cure for worry. When Christians are faithful in committing their cares to God through prayer, the immediate result will be "the peace of God which passeth all understanding." So many of God's people are confused and perplexed because they do not capitalize on this prescription God has given as a means for happiness and tranquillity. "Don't worry about one thing," the Apostle declares, "but in everything with prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."

As we turn our attention to verses 8 through 13, you will observe that the Apostle continues his practical exhortations. Paul has already told us that if we commit our cares to God through believing prayer, the peace of God will "guard" our minds. A troubled mind is a convenient depository for the seeds of doubt, despair and wickedness. So in verse 8, Paul delineates the importance of clean and noble thinking. Six important virtues are listed which should guide us in our thinking.

The Apostle begins by saying, "Whatsoever things are true." This refers not only to the Christian's veracity but to every phase of his conduct. "Whatsoever things are honest" or *honorable*. We are to give thought to the venerable and respected things of life. "Whatsoever things

are just." The word used here means *righteous* and suggests fair and equitable dealings with others. Righteous thoughts will produce creditable social attitudes. "Whatsoever things are pure." This has to do with wholesomeness of character. The need for decency in our generation is stupendous. Even professed followers of Christ in many ways have fallen a prey to much of the obscene and suggestive conversation and dress of our day. The Apostle urges us to think on the things that are pure. Then he says, "Whatsoever things are lovely," or *amiable*. Love should always be the undergirding force of all our relationships in Christ. A Christian without love is like a ship without a rudder. "Whatsoever things are of good report." This has to do with anything that is good to speak about. "If there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, THINK ON THESE THINGS."

In this verse, Paul's Spirit-directed arrow strikes at the center of much of the low living in Christendom. Care must be given to consecrated thoughts. Impure thinking produces inconsistent living. He who lacks virtue in his thinking cannot help but to act indecently and indecorously. We read in Proverbs 23:7, "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he." Holy living follows sanctified thinking. The Lord Jesus emphasized the importance of sterling thinking as He said in Matthew 5:28, "But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." How important it is that God's people not only act as Christians, but even more, think as Christians. The Psalmist could say, "I hate vain thoughts" (Psalm 119:113). Only Christ can give such victory. How we need to pray, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psalm 139:23, 24).

Recognizing there can be no righteous activity unless prompted by holy thinking, the Apostle proceeds to speak about the believer's actions. "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" (verse 9). Not only did the Apostle teach the truth to the Philip-

pians; he epitomized his teachings by his Godly example. Preaching and teaching is valueless unless supported by an exemplary life. "Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel" (I Corinthians 9:14).

Paul next expresses his gratitude for the precious gift of love the saints at Philippi had sent. "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" (verse 10). At no time were the Philippians disinterested or unconcerned about Paul, but for some reason during recent months, it had not been possible to send support. Possibly there was no messenger to carry the gift. More probable was the possibility that the division and dissension in the congregation had prevented it.

In spite of surrounding conditions, Paul would not be defeated. In verse 11 he declares — "Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." Even though financial aid appeared to be curtailed, the Apostle refused to complain or worry about it. His confidence in his all-sufficient God was unwavering. How do you account for such unreserved reliance on the Lord? The answer is found in three little words in this verse: "I have learned." These words carry the thought of entering into a new condition. There was a period in Paul's life when he was not content under all circumstances and conditions. The time when he was the least content was when he had the most, that is, from the worldly standpoint. He had been reared in the lap of luxury, but his was void of satisfaction. This is understandable to all who have wholly yielded to the Lord Jesus. Only the spiritual man has lasting calmness and serenity. Carnal Christians have not yet "learned." Nor will they, until there is complete submission to Christ.

"I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound," the Apostle declares. "Everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need" (verse 12). The words "I am instructed" literally mean, *I have learned the secret*. This has to do with something hitherto obscure but

now revealed. Through full commitment to the Lord Jesus, Paul had learned the secret of contentment. How we need to learn this lesson! There are so many restless, upset, complaining Christians who are disturbed by discontent. Someone has said there are three besetting sins that ensnare many of God's people: "to whine, to pine, and to recline."

The Lord has provided every advantage for our contentment in Christ, but we find it easier to grumble and complain. We fume and fret about the noise the children make in the home rather than give thanks to God that they are healthy and happy. We mutter about the inadequacy of the house we live in while thousands do not even have a house. We grumble about all the work we must do, while our hospitals are overcrowded with people who cannot work: many who will never work again. We complain about driving the old car when millions in the world have no food to eat. We bewail the cold spiritual condition of our churches without ever attempting to do anything to warm it up. We complain about souls not being saved; yet seldom bring neighbors or strangers to church. We talk of the tremendous need of reaching the lost in the lands beyond, and yet we give a pitiful pittance to missions. We murmur about our present generation of young people, and yet in our own homes, we fail to present the beauty of Christ. Why all this complaining? Why do Christians grumble so? Carnality! Unsurrendered living! What is the result? Discontentment! Do you want to know the secret Paul learned? Then give yourself fully to God! This is the only way to get it. For when Paul speaks about contentment, he also stresses Godliness. "Godliness with contentment is great gain" (I Timothy 6:6). If you fully surrender to the Lord Jesus, you will find Him to be your sufficiency. You will need no more. He will be your all in all. The lust for "things" will disappear. You will find contentment in Him.

Some years ago, some little children in the poorer section of the city were having a good time playing make believe by riding on an old log in the yard. A man who was passing observed their enjoyment and said to them, "Good morning! That's rather slow riding! Wouldn't you like a horse and



buggy?" "Yes sir!" answered one of them, "but we haven't any, so we are getting the most fun we can out of what we have."

That is what Paul is teaching in this text: getting the most fun we can out of what we have. This is what God wants for you — contentment in Christ, doing all things through Christ, believing Christ, resting in Christ.

Is this your state today? Do you have real security in Him? Do you look to Him for all things? Is He the center of attraction in your life? Is everything established and built upon Him? David knew this secret. He could say in Psalm 48:14, "This God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death." David wholly followed Him. He was completely surrendered to God's will.

Unsaved people are deluded into thinking contentment in life is dependent on material possessions and advantages. Such a thought is contrary to the teaching of the Scriptures, "For a little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked" (Psalm 37:16). Thousands of unsaved men and women are burning out their lives to earn the next dollar which they hope will bring the contentment sought year after year. Each dollar seems to lead a merry chase after another; but not one brings contentment.

A little boy who lived out in the country had never seen a circus. On learning that one was coming to a nearby town, his father gave him money to go see it. When the boy reached the county seat, the circus parade was moving down the main street. He was thrilled as he stood and watched the amazing sight. The circus band, the glittering cages, the wild animals and the acrobats indelibly impressed the lad from the farm. Then came the clowns, jesting and cavorting as they amused their audience. Suddenly one skipped over to the little boy, and after performing some of his antics, extended his hand to his admirer. The lad slowly handed the money his father had given him to the clown, for he thought, "This must be the circus." After the parade was over, he went home. It was months later before he discovered that he had not

seen the circus, but only the parade. This is indeed a picture of the man or woman who has never received Christ as Lord. Through the glitter and the glamour of THINGS in this world, they miss the MAIN THING: The peace and contentment one receives when united to God through Jesus Christ.

We now come to the verse that is the key to victorious Christian living. "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (vs. 13). Paul does not foolishly say, "I can do all things," for he knew such boasting would be vain and empty. All things are accomplished through CHRIST. This is the believer's ACCOMPLISHMENT. He can achieve nothing of himself. Only through the strength of the indwelling Saviour can he glorify the Lord. Paul expressed this same truth in II Corinthians 3:5. "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God."

The mighty working power of God in the believer enabling him to do all things, is daily experienced by complete reliance on the promises of God's Word. "For we walk by faith, not by sight" (II Corinthians 5:7). To "do all things through Christ" is to trust Christ for ALL things. He who trusts the Lord Jesus for today, will not worry about tomorrow. Paul knew God could not fail him. With child-like faith he constantly looked to the Saviour and trusted Him for every need. Paul was certain that whatever the test, God would provide wisdom and guidance. "For the Lord giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding" (Proverbs 2:6). He longs for the believer to call on Him for this divine wisdom. If he does, God promises it in abundance, to meet the need. "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him" (James 1:5). This wisdom will never leave us in obscurity and darkness, for God tells us in James 3:17, "the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy."

Daily, Paul went to his knees and claimed this wisdom from above. By faith he took hold of the unlimited re-

sources of God. Though the outlook was bad on many occasions, the uplook was always good. Because Christ was his strength, he could resign the future to God. Too often we trust God for today but worry about tomorrow. Cannot He who provides for the present undertake for the future?

A preacher arrived to conduct a series of meetings in a country church. After his first service, his hosts took him to their home and later showed him to his room. When he awakened the next morning, he noticed something most peculiar. Scratched on the window-pane were the words, "This is the day." "What could this mean?" he thought. "Could it be that this was some unusual or memorable day?" His curiosity prodded him until at breakfast he asked the meaning of the strange phrase scratched on the glass. His hostess smiled and explained that for many years, though she had been a Christian, her life had been filled with anxious care. Because of worry, she had known little joy or happiness. She had always lived in the future hoping for a brighter, better day which never came. Possibly when the children were educated, the mortgage paid and other needs met, peace would come. Then one morning while she was having her devotions, she read in the Word of God: "THIS IS THE DAY which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in IT" (Psalm 118:24). Like a light shining from the heavens above, those words illuminated her heart and mind. She had always anticipated contentment in Christ, but had never known it. For the first time, she realized that God's marvelous peace was to be claimed; that the present was for her. The future belongs to Him. As a lasting reminder of this glorious truth, she had scratched it on the windowpane, that each morning thereafter as she awakened she might see: "THIS IS THE DAY." — Not tomorrow, but today she should trust God for everything and rejoice and be glad in it. This is what Paul meant when he said, "I can do all things through Christ." He well realized that the Lord would provide for every detail if only he would fully trust the Saviour. He took God at His Word like Abraham of old who staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and

being fully persuaded that what he had promised, he was able also to perform" (Romans 4:20, 21).

The Word of God is inexhaustible in its promises for you and me. We need only claim them, accept them by faith and trust the Lord for the need of the hour. God guarantees to us that He will do ALL THINGS. "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you" (Matthew 17:20). Do you see it? NOTHING shall be impossible unto you. You can do all things. But remember, — it is THROUGH CHRIST! Again we should be aware of the fact which Paul has constantly held before us in this wonderful Epistle, that such accomplishment through Christ is experienced only by complete yieldedness to Him. This alone is the path to a life of power and victory.

J. M. Turner was one of the greatest of English artists during the first half of the nineteenth century. One day a lady who was admiring a picture of his in the studio said, "Mr. Turner, I cannot see in nature what you put into your picture." "Don't you wish you could, Madam?" was the searching reply.

Only to the eye of the skilled artist does the glory of nature reveal itself. Only to the eye of the yielded saint who walks by faith does the Lord Jesus manifest Himself. As we commit ALL things to Him, then and only then, can we know the blessing, fruitfulness and happiness which He desires to shower upon us. Believer, trust God! Rest in His promises. Take hope and courage in His power. Get your eyes off yourself and realize that in yourself you can do nothing; that in Christ you can do ALL THINGS. Years ago, Jeremiah said, "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jeremiah 10:23).

If you are willing to give Christ first place in your life, you can be sure God will take care of you under all circumstances. Sadness and sorrow may come, but peace and contentment will flood your heart. Then you may say with the Apostle, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." You will neither falter nor fall. With the same fearlessness David possessed, you

will say, "God is our refuge and strength, and a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea" (Psalm 46: 1,2). Hope will rout discouragement. The Lord Jesus will make His all-sufficiency real, and God's glorious promise of achieving and conquering grace will be experienced. "God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound unto every good work" (II Corinthians 9:8).

Read again the four short chapters of Philippians. You will notice one grand theme which runs throughout and presents the Master Key for happy and fruitful Christian living. In the first chapter Paul says, "For to me to live is CHRIST." In the second chapter: "Let this mind be in you which was also in CHRIST JESUS." In the third chapter, "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in CHRIST." In the fourth chapter: "I can do all things through CHRIST!" How clear this is! If the Lord Jesus becomes the object and goal of everything you do, say, or think, you will dwell in the shelter of happiness and contentment. But apart from this life of victory, the joy God intends for all born-again believers will never be yours.

Do you know the Lord Jesus as your all in all? Is He everything to you? Or are there hindrances that must be cast aside to enable Him to gain complete control of every desire and activity? Submit fully to Him! Yield completely to Him! Hold nothing back. Say in the words of that grand old hymn,

*All to Jesus I surrender,  
All to Him I freely give;  
I will ever love and trust Him,  
In His presence daily live.*

*I surrender all, I surrender all,  
All to Thee, my blessed Saviour  
I surrender all!*

## Chapter XII

### THE BELIEVER'S ABUNDANCE

#### Philippians 4:14-23

**KEY VERSE:** "*But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.*" (Verse 19)

The Philippians had sent a gift to Paul as an indication of their interest and concern in his ministry. With deep gratitude, the Apostle expressed his appreciation for their thoughtfulness. He then proceeded to tell them of God's abundant faithfulness in providing strength and help for every occasion. The pinnacle of this thought was reached in verse 13. "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Here is the believer's ACCOMPLISHMENT. All things are possible through Christ.

For fear the Philippians might not understand, and think Paul grateful to God only for the gift and not to them, he reiterates his thanks. It was important that they see that though the Lord provides bountifully for the trusting saint, believers have an important part to perform in the transaction. So we read in verse 14, "Notwithstanding, ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction." "Ye have well done" could be paraphrased, *You have done a beautiful thing.* The Apostle was sincerely appreciative for the assistance that came from this faithful congregation. They were indeed good stewards.

It is important to remind ourselves frequently that though God does supply the believer's needs, He works through human instrumentalities. Oftentimes, when our necessities are not provided, it is because someone has failed to respond to the leading of the Lord. Much of our

negligence in reaching the world for Christ can be attributed to the fact that Christians have not obeyed God's Word in fulfilling their stewardship obligations. The Lord never intended that His program be hindered by lack of funds. Disobedient saints are to be blamed.

When Livingstone went to Africa, a Scotch woman who had saved thirty pounds came and presented the money to him. "I want you to save yourself needless toil and exposure," she said, "by hiring a competent servant who will go with you wherever you go and share your sacrifices and dangers." With the money, Livingstone hired his faithful servant Sebantino. Later, in the heart of Africa, a lion threw Livingstone down and crushed the bones of his left arm, but Sebantino saved the missionary at the risk of his own life. What if that gift had not been made? Suppose this dear saint who gave the gift had not acted upon the leading of the Lord? What tragedies have resulted because God's people have not heeded the Lord's voice in the matter of giving.

Paul goes on to say in verse 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." Approximately ten years had elapsed since Paul departed from Macedonia. During all that long interim, not a single church had participated in his support other than the church at Philippi. For this reason, he frequently found it necessary to resort to tent-making to earn enough funds to continue his missionary itinerary. This consumed valuable time that might well have been invested in spreading the Gospel. We cannot even conjecture what Paul might have accomplished had the churches stood behind him as they should have in caring for his support.

In verse 16 he says, "For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity." The phrase "even in Thessalonica" gives an interesting insight into the situation. The church at Thessalonica was an extremely wealthy church, but seemingly they had not yet experienced the blessing of supporting missionaries. This church was typical of many in our own generation. Though they are wealthy and active, they are devoid of vision.

Wherever we look in our own country, churches may be seen, many of them possessing beautiful, well-equipped buildings; but the tragedy of it is they have lost sight of the supreme obligation, that of reaching the world for Jesus Christ.

Can it not be said that many Christians in our land are guilty of the same sin that thwarted the spiritual advancement of the people of Malachi's day? The prophet, as a mighty voice for the Lord cried out, "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse; for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation" (Malachi 3:8,9). Many believers are stealing God's tithe. The accusation is just as applicable now as when Malachi gave it. God is being robbed! Sadly enough, this evil is being committed by His own people. What is the result? The dissemination of the Gospel is being severely curtailed and hampered. In addition to that, believers are losing the provision of the promise. For God says in Malachi 3:10, "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." Here is a most extraordinary promise, but before it can be received, the conditions of the tithing must be met. Do not be a Thessalonican in your giving, but a Philippian. Faithfully stand behind God's servants and support the entire program of the church of Christ.

The new minister had just delivered his first sermon in a certain church. As one of the members was leaving she remarked to the usher, "I have nothing but praise for the new minister." The usher retorted, "So I observed while passing the offering plate this morning!" God's work will not flourish on praise alone. There must be sacrifice. He who gives sacrificially will reap the promised blessing.

Paul is not selfish in what he has to say about giving. He never asked for himself. On so many occasions we have been chagrined upon hearing Christian workers who talk about faith but go about as mendicants begging for gifts for their own personal interests. God forbid that



we should ever ask any man for anything. God has our interests at heart. He will undertake. Paul portrays this in verse 17 — “Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account.” He wants the Philippians to see that he is not speaking about giving in this text for personal profit or gain, but rather, for their own interest. The word “fruit” has to do with *spiritual blessing*. When one gives to the Lord’s work, he makes an eternal investment and receives a dividend of immediate spiritual blessing. The greater the sacrifice, the greater the blessing. Without sacrifice, there can be no real blessing. We read in Proverbs 13:7, “There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing. There is that maketh himself poor yet hath great riches.” The “great riches” God’s servant enjoys are not only material but even more important, they are spiritual. Though he may be poor in temporal things as a result of his sacrificing for God, yet the Lord will provide for his needs and he will be rich in the things of Christ. Many there are in our churches who are rich in the temporal things, but poor in spiritual things because they never come into this wonderful secret.

Realize that 30% of our church memberships carry 90% of the churches’ financial load. 70% carry only 10% of the load. What is the result? There can be only one result — low spirituality among 70% of the people of our congregations! For the Word of God says, “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Matthew 6:21). If you are not making a worthwhile and proportionate financial investment in the things of God, you will have little interest in the things of Christ. Giving and spirituality are inseparably allied. Wherever believers fail in their stewardship responsibilities, there will be cold hearts with little hold on God. A living faith will be manifested in generous giving.

A meeting of ministers and laymen was held to discuss church problems. The subject of stewardship was discussed with divers opinions being expressed. Some were of the opinion that giving was not of extreme importance in one’s personal relationship to Christ. At the height of the discussion, a layman stood and said, “Gentlemen, I

want to tell you about my son. When he was born into this world, he cost us money — a doctor bill and a hospital bill. Throughout his childhood days, we continually spent money on him. We fed and clothed him and provided things for his amusement essential in the growth of a young child. Throughout his high school days, he was of even greater expense to us. He needed money for dates, clothes, and many other things. But shortly after graduation from high school, our boy became seriously ill and God saw fit to take him. Now he doesn't cost us a cent." He paused and then said, "Gentlemen, if your faith is not costing you anything, you may be sure it is dead." He was absolutely correct! With depth of spirituality, there will be sacrificial giving.

Paul goes on to say in verse 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, well pleasing to God." The Philippians must have been generous givers. Paul suggests this in his statement as he says, "I have all and abound: I am full." They were indeed like the cheerful givers of whom Paul wrote in his second Epistle to the Corinthians, "But this I say, He which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver" (II Corinthians 9:6,7). A "cheerful giver" is one who gives unstintingly out of a heart overflowing in love for the Lord Jesus. As the result of his liberality, he reaps the benefit of the promised blessing.

Paul states that their offering was "a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God." Many offerings are presented to God that are neither "acceptable" nor "well-pleasing" because they are not according to Scriptural standards. An offering comprises anything above the tithe. Offerings less than the tithe cannot be classified as acceptable gifts. The saints at Philippi practiced sacrificial giving and gave "acceptable" and "well-pleasing" offerings to God. Only as this principle is applied in our personal lives will we ever know real spiritual fruitfulness. We must put God first in all monetary matters. Paul wrote to the church at

Corinth, "Upon the *first* day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him" (I Corinthians 16:2). God will honor a faithful steward.

Can we say in the meaningful words of Dr. A. C. Dickson,

*A faithful steward would I be  
And gather money all for Thee  
To use it for the Christ I love  
And thus grow rich in heaven above.*

It is so important that believers be storing up treasures in Heaven. So many live for the comforts of this world, overlooking the fact that the temporal things will soon pass away. We are deceived by a false prosperity which has as its end the accumulation for one's self. The believer's interest should be others. God measures our gift, not on the basis of what we give, but on what we keep for ourselves. In the final analysis, we really save only that which is given to Him. It was Martin Luther who declared, "I have held many things in my hand, and I have lost them all. But whatever I placed in God's hand, that I still possess."

Are you presenting offerings acceptable to God? Are they as a sweet savour to Him? Do you honor Him with sacrificial offerings that please Him? Christian, realize the seriousness of the ministry of stewardship which God has committed unto us. Do you want the blessing of God upon your service for Christ? Do you want the full enjoyment of the things of the Lord in your life? It will come only as you participate in the sharing of that which God has so graciously entrusted unto you.

We come now to a verse that is familiar to all of us. Undoubtedly you have quoted it many, many times. It suggests to me the believer's ABUNDANCE. "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (verse 19).

I am going to shock you when I tell you many Christians are quoting this verse who have no Scriptural right to it whatsoever. They erroneously take the verse from its context and try to claim the promise without meeting the condition. The principle involved in verse 18 must be

acted upon first if the truth of verse 19 is to be enjoyed. Most of God's promises are conditional. Most of us are ready and willing to accept the blessing but overlook our obligation to fulfill the conditions. Consequently, the promise never becomes a possession. For whom does the Lord guarantee to supply every need? Verse 18 gives the answer: for those who are presenting offerings to God that are sacrifices "acceptable" and "well-pleasing." These are they who have met the terms of God's Word concerning the tithe and have gone on even beyond the tenth. The law demanded the tithe. Believers under grace should far exceed this standard. Those who are giving in this manner are the ones who may claim the abundant provision of verse 19. For them the Lord promises to supply EVERY need.

This same principle is taught repeatedly throughout the Word of God. "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again" (Luke 6:38). God tells us before we receive we must "give." The promise depends on the condition. "Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine" (Proverbs 3:9, 10). If we meet the condition: "Honour the Lord with thy substance," we then have a right to capitalize on the promise, "Thy barns shall be filled with plenty." If you are honouring the Lord with your gifts as God has instructed in His Word, then this marvelous provision will be yours: "God shall supply all your need." No matter what the emergency may be, we may go to our knees and take hold of this wonderful promise by faith.

Notice, "God will supply all your need *according to* His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." It does not say He will supply *out of* His riches, but "*according to*" His riches. What comprises God's riches? He tells us in Psalm 50, verses 10 and 12, "For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills . . . for the world is

mine, and the fulness thereof." The world is His! There is nothing God does not possess. His capital is unlimited. He will never know depression or bankruptcy. "According to" this inexhaustible treasury, He promises to supply your every need. It is indeed wonderful to be personally united to such a One, upon whom we may rely to undertake for every need.

A great sorrow came into the life of Dr. Wilbur Chapman which occasioned a trip to the far west. One of his elders, a banker, came to see him and upon leaving, slipped a folded paper into Dr. Chapman's hand. Dr. Chapman looked at it and found it to be a check made out in his name, signed by the banker, but where there should have been figures, it was blank. "Do you mean you are giving me a signed check to be filled out as I please?" Dr. Chapman asked. "That's it," the banker said. "I did not know how much you might need, and I want you to draw any amount to meet your wants." Dr. Chapman later related that while he did not use the check, it gave him a comfortable feeling to know that he had millions at his disposal.

God has given every obedient follower a signed blank check in Philippians 4:19. His resources are unlimited and the more we draw, the better He likes it. If you are walking with God, if your life is in the hands of Christ, and if you are faithfully doing what God would have you do in this ministry of stewardship, then use the signed blank check God has committed unto you. David knew the secret of it. All through his life, he implicitly trusted the Lord. As an elderly man, he could say in Psalm 37:25, "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread." God undertook! He will always undertake! For His word to his obedient children is this: "My God shall supply *all* your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

Paul closes the Epistle with a series of salutations and a benediction. "Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen. Salute every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren which are with me greet you. All the

saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar's household " (vss. 20-22). We cannot pass over this statement regarding Caesar's household. What the Apostle says here portrays in a wonderful way the mighty power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. You will remember in the first chapter of Philippians Paul said in verse 13, "So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace and in all other places." God in his inerrant providence put Paul in the Roman prison. The capital city, the dwelling of Nero himself, was the center of unbelief and hatred toward the Gospel. In the very place where the Gospel had been despised most, the emperor's household, God's grace worked in the hearts of many because of Paul's unflinching testimony. "Where sin abounded, grace doth much more abound " (Romans 5:20).

The Gospel as revealed in God's Word will never suffer defeat. All one need do is give forth the Word and results will follow. "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it " (Isaiah 55:11). Through the Holy Spirit, God's Word will always effect its intended purpose. "For the word of God is quick, and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit, and the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart " (Hebrews 4:12). When this blessed Gospel message as contained in the Word of God is preached in the energy of the Holy Spirit, you may be assured souls will be saved. As the Lord brought men to Himself in the stronghold of Satan at Rome where Paul was a prisoner, so He can crush even the most adamant hearts in our day with the Gospel.

Prime Minister Jan Christian Smuts was correct when he said, "I don't know of anything the world needs more today than the message of the Gospel. The world has no need of a new order or a new plan, but only of an honest, courageous application of the historic Christian idea." "Heaven and earth shall pass away," God tells us, "but my words shall not pass away " (Mark 13:31). We have a potent message to proclaim. God is looking for men and

women who will give themselves unreservedly to the task of spreading His Word. This is the believer's immediate responsibility.

A little fellow in a certain hospital had a piece of bone removed from his arm. He made a splendid recovery and was just about to be released. He asked if he might see the doctor just once more before he left the hospital. The doctor came in and the little fellow looked up and said, "My mother will never hear the last about you!" He was so thrilled at what the doctor had done for him.

If we Christians fully realize what our Saviour has done for us, we shall say to Him, "My friends will never hear the last about You!" God gave Paul fruit in Rome because he was not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ. God will bless your soul winning efforts, Christian, if you will be faithful in telling others about the Lord Jesus.

The Epistle closes with the benediction: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen." We said in chapter one that "grace" is Christ. If you have the Lord Jesus in your heart, you may be assured that you have the Grace of God in your heart. It may be that God's grace is not effecting its greatest work because you are not wholly yielded to Him. As we come to the end of this heart-warming Epistle, may we make a full and unreserved commitment to the Lord Jesus, giving Him not just "a place" in our lives, nor even "a place of prominence" but "a place of pre-eminence," that we may say triumphantly, "For to me to live IS CHRIST."



















# Living VICTORIOUSLY

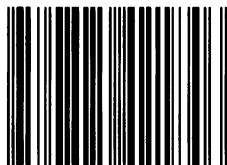
*Everyone loves a winner.* Our only problem is figuring out what it means "to win" and what is worth winning in the first place. The apostle Paul's letter to the Philippian Christians is filled with the zest, the motivation, the celebration of a winner even though Paul himself was imprisoned, facing the prospect of a death sentence. Dr. J. Allen Blair's concise and challenging devotional commentary helps us discover the real meaning and reason for winning. In our most difficult defeats, we can live as victors through Christ.

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ISBN 0-8254-2184-5



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