

The Book of Philippians

Introduction

The name of the city of Philippi was originally “Krinides” (lit. “springs”). It stood about 10 miles inland from the Aegean Sea in the Roman province of Macedonia. In 356 B.C. Philip II, King of Macedonia and father of Alexander the Great, renamed the town after himself and enlarged it.

It was the only Roman colony in the area. By 31 B.C., the citizens enjoyed autonomous government, immunity from taxes, and treatment as if they lived in Italy. Luke described it as a “leading city of the district of



Macedonia” (Acts 16:12). The main highway going from Rome to the east ran through Philippi and brought much commerce and many travelers to the city.

The story of the gospel coming to Philippi is found in Acts 16. It was the first town in which Paul preached after he crossed the Aegean Sea from Troas and entered Europe. The first converts were Lydia, a Gentile businesswoman from Thyatira (in Asia Minor) and the Philippian jailer. Paul ended up in prison when he first evangelized Philippi. Yet, in prison, Paul and Silas sang praises to God. The Philippian Christians sent financial support to Paul in Thessalonica more than once (Phil 4:15-16).

Author

Paul claimed to have written it (Phil 1:1), and the references to his acquaintances, events in his life, and his way of thinking all point to him as the writer.

Date Written

The date when it was written, and Paul’s location when he wrote it, are debated.

Purpose

Of all Paul’s epistles, Philippians is the most consistently positive and personal. It reflects a joyful spirit. Paul did not rebuke the believers nor did he refer to any major problems. His warnings are of a precautionary nature. His occupation with Jesus Christ also stands out. In a total of 104 verses, 51 are references to the Lord’s name. The gospels reveal Jesus’ words

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and works, but this epistle reveals His mind. The mind of Christ is the key to this epistle. He said, *“Have this mind in you”* (2:5). We are to orient our lives with Christ at the center. Life is whatever we put at the center of living. For Paul, it was, *“For me, to live is Christ...”* (1:21).

Commentary

I. Encouragement for Living the Christian Life (1:1-30)

A. Paul’s praise of the saints at Philippi (1:1-8)

1. Introduction (1:1-2)

1:1—Paul—Paul is his Gentile name (Saul was his Hebrew name). As an apostle to the Gentiles, he used his Gentile name (Gal 2:7-8). Here, he did not mention his apostleship, in contrast to Galatians, where he deals with issues and stresses his authority.

—**and Timothy**—he was not a co-author (in view of the singular pronouns), but he was well-known to the Philippians. He was with Paul when he first brought the gospel to them (Acts 16:1-12), as well as other occasions (Acts 19:22; 20:3-6).

—**bond-servants of Christ Jesus**—one who chooses to be a life-time slave (Ex 21:5-6; Deut 15:16-17). It stresses the strong commitment of the Christian to his or her Lord.

—**To all the saints** [“set apart ones”] **in Christ Jesus**. Humans are divided into two groups: “the saints and the ain’ts.”

—**who are in Philippi**—Paul was addressing all the believers in this city.

—**including the overseers and deacons**—Paul is the only apostle to use these titles for leadership, and he only describes them in 3 books: deacons are used here and in 1 Timothy 3, and overseers in Titus 1:5-7. Notice they are a plurality of leadership. These are descriptive (if we have them, this is what they should be like) rather than prescriptive (we “must” have them). No evidence exists for a single leader as the “head” of the assembly.

1:2—Grace [gift or favor of God] **to you and peace** [*shalom*] **from God our** [all the saints] **Father and the Lord Jesus Christ**—the gift of God is peace with Him.

2. Praise for their constant witness (1:3-6)

1:3—I thank my God—his prayer starts with thanksgiving to his God. We stand alone before God in prayer. It’s Him and you.

—**in all**—even through Paul’s imprisonment, he was able to give thanks, for example, because the jailor and his family became believers (Acts 16:31-34).

—**my remembrance of you**—*eucharisteo*—the word for Communion, in which believers thank God in remembrance of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross.

AN APPLICATION—Hundreds, even thousands, of miles and many years can separate us from other believers, but still we remember them and pray for them. There is no time and distance when it comes to remembering to pray for (a living, not dead) someone.

1:4—always offering prayer with joy—Jesus said to the Twelve: *“These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full”* (John 15:11). For Paul, to remember was to pray, and to pray was to remember.

AN APPLICATION—Paul’s hardships made him better, not bitter. Nehemiah wrote (8:10), *“...for the joy of the Lord is your strength.”* The psalmist wrote, *“O come, let us sing for joy to the Lord, let us shout joyfully to the rock of our salvation”* (Psalm 95:1). Jeremiah wrote, *“And Your words became for me a joy and the delight of my heart; For I have been called by Your name, O Lord God of hosts”* (15:16). We have reason to be joyful people.

—*in my every prayer for you all*—joy spread throughout his prayers even while he prayed for their needs. Twice in this verse he mentions his prayer for them.

1:5—*in view of your participation* [*koinonia*—fellowship, partnership] *in the gospel from the first day until now*—they not only received the gospel themselves, but were financially helping Paul to make Jesus known to others (4:16).

1:6—*For I am confident* [certain, convinced] *of this very thing*—
—*that He* [God] *who began a good work in you*—our past position of salvation
—*will perfect it*—to accomplish, to bring about our present sanctification, maturity in our spiritual life
—*until the day of Christ Jesus*—future glorification (1 Thess 4:17; 5:2, 4; 2 Thess 1:10)

AN APPLICATION—Salvation is God’s work, not man’s. Our getting to heaven safely does not depend on us, or on our ability to hold on and to persevere faithfully to the end of our lives. The Lord will see to it that we reach heaven safely in spite of our failures and shortcomings. Peter wrote a similar thing: “*the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen, and establish you*” (1 Pet 5:10). This is a promise from God. He saved you, and He will bring you to maturity in Him, and bring you to heaven.

3. Praise for their concern for the gospel (1:7)

1:7—*For it is only right*—is more than just appropriateness. It means moral and spiritual rightness—not merely what is expected but what is required before God and other believers.
—*for me to feel* [“think”] *this way about you all*—“Feel” is a unique Greek word in the NT, and Paul uses it 23 of the 26 times. And 10 of those are in Philippians (1:7; 2:2 (2x), 5; 3:15 (2x), 19; 4:2, 10 (2x)). It includes both feeling and thought, emotions and mind-set.
—*because I have you in my heart*—his affection for them, the Greek can also be read, “since you have me in your heart.” It’s a mutual affection.
—*since both in my imprisonment*—even when it might have been dangerous to identify themselves openly with Paul, they came to his assistance with their gifts.
—*and in the defense* [from attacks] *and confirmation* [proclaiming its message] *of the gospel*—in Paul’s view, all believers were sharers with him because the outcome could ultimately affect them all.
—*you all* [all the believers in Philippi] *are partakers* [“participation” of verse 5] *of grace* [God’s favor, gift]—they were also sharers of God’s grace [salvation]
—*with me*—“together” with Paul

4. Praise shown by his love for them (1:8)

1:8—*For God is my witness*—the believers could not know Paul’s heart, but God knew it perfectly.
—*how I long for you all*—deep desire
—*with the affection of Christ Jesus*—Paul’s affection [deep feeling] was not merely human interest or attraction. It originated with Jesus Christ Himself, “...*who gave Himself as a ransom for all...*” (1 Tim 2:6).

B. Paul’s prayer for the saints at Philippi (1:9-11)

1. Prayer for love (1:9-10)

1:9—*And this I pray*—we, too, can pray for this

—**that your love**—*agape*, the action of “giving” without any expectation of return, not affection. Affection [*phileo*] means there is something in the other person that results in your positive feelings toward them (Titus 3:15). *Agape* love originates in you, giving to the other person regardless of their position to you. “For God so loved the world that He gave...” (John 3:16). You cannot out-give God. *Agape* is a characteristic of God.

—**abound still more and more**—“more than enough, richly,” Paul uses this 26 of the 39 times it appears in the NT. Our church age is marked by an overflowing and rich abundance of good things (such as hope, knowledge, zeal, wisdom, etc.).

—**in real knowledge**—Possibly it refers to knowledge of the person or situation to which you are considering giving. Is it a true need (Titus 3:14)? Or it could be referring to knowledge of the Word of God as the motivation of *agape*. The more you know the Word, the more *agape*.

—**and all discernment**—Gk. “to have the capacity to perceive clearly and hence to understand the real nature of something.” The more “real knowledge” you have, the more you will be able to discern. Your heavenly rewards depend on doing what is good and acceptable in God’s eyes (1 Cor 3:11-15). Pray for that discernment. Practice discernment.

AN APPLICATION—Even *agape* love should be conditioned on knowledge and discernment. Analyze their response—some received love might be seen as agreement with a false belief and actually result in a person feeling approved in their false belief.

1:10—**so that**—prayer, *agape*, real knowledge, all discernment—so that...purpose statement

—**you may approve**—to examine by testing, to determine genuineness [like the man who bought five pair of oxen and was on way to test them—Luke 14:19]

—**the things that are excellent**—Gk. “to be of considerable value, to have worth” (see Matt 6:26, “are you not more valuable than these birds?”)

—**in order to be sincere**—without hidden motives, sifting out the bad motives

AN APPLICATION—“More often than not...an errant child rebels because of the hypocrisy of his parents, knowing that the faith they profess—regardless of how genuine and sincere it may appear to others in the church and community—is not manifested in their private lives.

Although that does not excuse the sins of such children, it does make their parents share in the guilt.” (MacArthur, *Philippians*)

—**and blameless**—To do all one can to give glory to God and to live honorably before Him and others (Acts 23:1; 24:16; 2 Cor 1:12; 2 Tim 1:3). Sin usually happens in stages: first, tolerating something sinful, taking no strong stand against it; then accommodating it a little more each time until it ceases to be an issue; and finally and inevitably, participating in it, embracing it as part of a ‘normal’ lifestyle.

—**until the day of Christ**—when we stand before Christ at the Bema (NOT for condemnation, as Jesus already paid for our sin—Rom 8:1) but to give account of our deeds after salvation (1 Cor 3:11-15; 2 Cor 5:10).

AN APPLICATION—Some things are clearly good or bad. But many things are not so readily visible. The effect of your influence on others should be considered, but also the effect on oneself. Perhaps you should not only ask “Is it harmful?” but “Is it helpful?” (Rom 14:12; 1 Cor 10:23).

2. Prayer for the fruit of righteousness (1:11)

1:11—**having been filled**—believers are indwelt with the Holy Spirit, but we are commanded to be filled, that is, controlled, by the Holy Spirit (Eph 3:19; 5:18).

—**with the fruit of righteousness**—*agape*, real knowledge, discernment, proving what is excellent, sincere, and blameless—all are the fruit of the righteous life we have in Jesus Christ. Paul’s prayer that we abound still more.....

—**which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God**—produced through the Holy Spirit sent by Christ (Gal 5:22). Praise and glory belongs not to believers but to God, who redeemed us through Jesus Christ and gave us His Spirit to produce the fruit of belief.

AN APPLICATION—Paul has them in his mind (vv. 3-6), in his heart (vv. 7-8), and in his prayers (vv. 9-11).

C. Paul’s presentation of himself to the saints (1:12-30)

1. Committed testimony (1:12-18)

1:12—*Now I want you to know, brethren*—the facts concerning the occasion of writing this letter—maybe they had misinformation about Paul, so Paul wants them to know the facts.

—**that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress** [Gk moving ahead against obstacles] **of the gospel**—Rather than stopping the gospel message because of his circumstances, it was being advanced. Paul looked at his trials as opportunities to be obedient to God, to give witness of the gospel. Obstacles were an unavoidable element of ministry. Paul would agree with what Joseph said, “...as for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good” (Gen 50:20).

AN APPLICATION—“The same God who used Moses’ rod, Gideon’s pitchers, and David’s sling, used Paul’s chains.” [Constable, *Philippians*]

To Unbelievers:

1:13—**so that my imprisonment in [the cause of] Christ**—Paul was imprisoned in Caesarea by the Jews (Acts 24:27) and in Rome by the Romans, not for any crime he committed but just because he was a Christian.

—**has become well known**—known outside of his prison to the pagan unbelievers

—**throughout the whole praetorian guard**—“palace guard,” it was used in the Gospels for Pilate’s headquarters in Jerusalem (Matt 27:27). In Acts 23:35 it was used of the Roman governor’s headquarters at Caesarea. But **and to everyone else** indicates the praetorian guards themselves, rather than to a specific place. While in Rome, he resided in his own rented facility (Acts 28:30), and he was guarded by the praetorian guard all the time, usually chained at the wrist to a soldier. For two years, many visited him “*in his own rented quarters, [where he] was welcoming all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered*” (Acts 28:30-31).

AN APPLICATION—Paul’s testimony went beyond giving the Gospel message. These guards saw his attitude, his wisdom, his genuineness, his humility, his genuine care for them. For example, in Philippi, ...*they threw them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in stocks. But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.... The jailor asked them, “What must I do to be saved?” They said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved...”* (Acts 16:24-31).

To Believers:

1:14—**and that most of the brethren trusting in the Lord**—the second place his imprisonment was known was to the Christians in various places throughout the Roman world. —**because of my imprisonment**—those who heard about Paul and his attitude toward his imprisonment

—**have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear**—rather than “hiding” their belief because of possible persecution, they became bold in sharing their faith. His strength became their strength. Courage is contagious.

AN APPLICATION—Other believers, as well as your family, are watching you also. You are being observed 24/7. How do you respond to situations? How do you treat others? What time do you spend in the Word and prayer?

Motives:

1:15—Some, to be sure—Gk. two or more items which are related and thematically parallel, such as —‘some...others.’

—**are preaching Christ even from envy and strife**—These were probably not Judaizers (who he refers to in 3:1-16) because these were preaching Christ and not another gospel (Gal 1:6). So the message was right but they promoted themselves and seemed to be jealous of Paul and considered him to be a threat to their own prominence and influence among the believers.

—**but some also from good will**—but some were proclaiming Christ, joining with him in speaking the Word of God, for the progress of the Gospel.

1:16—the latter do it out of love [agape], knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel—they took their stand with Paul, eager to proclaim the Gospel, while Paul was in prison. They knew Paul was not in prison for some failure but because of success, Paul was at the center of God’s will, appointed by God for the defense of the gospel.

1:17—the former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition rather than from pure motives—looking out for their own interests regardless of the consequences to others. Though it does not imply that they did not believe their message, but that their message was a cover for other, less-worthy purposes.

—**thinking to cause me distress in my imprisonment**—the problem was not their message but the personal issue they had with Paul. Perhaps they wanted to take advantage of Paul’s imprisonment to gain their own popularity. Attacks from unbelievers are expected, but to be spoken against by another believer is unexpected. How Paul knew this is not revealed to us.

Conclusion:

1:18—What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense [to pretend] or in truth—Christ is proclaimed; and in this I rejoice [continual present tense]—The gospel was so important to Paul that he could set aside any personal grievances. He does not go on the defensive, but just gives a correct account of the situation.

AN APPLICATION—These were not false teachers, with a different message. Their message about Christ was true. But it was their motivations—ambition, envy, jealousy, strife, competition that was the problem. Paul writing this shows that such people with wrong motives do exist within Christianity, and it should not take us by surprise. Paul was not approving of them as proclaimers. The “how” of preaching is not the object of Paul’s joy but the “fact” of the preaching is. The power of the gospel does not depend on the character of the preacher. [On the other hand, sometimes what the proclaimer does speaks louder than what they say.]

2. Settled convictions (1:19-26)

¶ **Yes, and I will rejoice**—future tense, happiness, gladness

1:19—for I know—Paul’s confidence

—**that this will turn out for my deliverance** [Gk. *soterian*, “salvation”]—what deliverance did he have in mind? In 2:24 he anticipates coming to Philippi, being delivered out of prison. However, the immediate next verses seem to be the completion of the good work of sanctification God had already begun in him. Whether by life or death, his situation was temporary.

—**through your prayers**—“*the effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much*” (James 5:16). Paul prayed diligently and also encouraged other believers to pray diligently, “*Now I urge you, brethren...to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me*” (Rom 15:30). Nothing is more encouraging to those in ministry than to know that fellow believers are holding them up before the Lord in prayer.

—**and the provision** [full, bountiful, sufficient supply of what is needed, the enablement] **of the Spirit of Jesus Christ**—He provides guidance, source of power, spiritual fruit...

1:20—according to my earnest expectation—a unique word, it describes straining one’s neck to catch a glimpse of something that is ahead (used only here and in Romans 8:19).

—**and hope**—to look forward with confidence to that which is good and beneficial. Put together it would read, “*my eager hopeful expectation*”

—**that I will not be put to shame in anything**—Paul’s imprisonment or upcoming trial would not be a cause of personal embarrassment or a threat to his life but a welcomed opportunity to proclaim the gospel (such as his testimony to the governor Felix in Acts 24).

—**but that with all boldness**—courage, confidence

—**Christ will even now, as always** [including the tough situations]—Paul also wrote the believer’s body is “*a temple of the Holy Spirit...*” (1 Cor 6:19), “*a living and holy sacrifice acceptable to God*” (Rom 12:1).

—**be exalted in my body**—[rather than “I exalt” Christ]—that Christ would be held in high honor, to praise the greatness of Christ. Paul is not relying on his own courage but on the action of the Holy Spirit who would produce this result in response to the prayers of Paul and the Philippian believers.

—**whether by life or by death**—either way, God’s will would be done, His plan fully accomplished

AN APPLICATION—Paul admits that being married means that our interests are divided (1 Cor 7:33-35). Paul, being unmarried, was able to devote more of his time and energy to ministry. However, he also wrote, *Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord...*” (Col 3:23), whether it’s marriage, raising children, cleaning the house, going to work... We each have different abilities, situations, opportunities, friends, families—we are unique, but we are also the same in that whatever we do, wherever we go, it is “*as for the Lord.*”

1:21—For to me—Paul’s faith is not shaken, regardless of the circumstances

—**to live is Christ and to die is gain**—there is no verb. It reads: “*to live Christ, to die gain.*” Not only would Paul’s state after death bring the gain of being with Christ, but the act itself of dying at the hands of Rome would be an added witness to the gospel, and would confirm Paul’s faith. The last thing he wrote was, “*I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing*” (2 Tim 4:7-8).

1:22—But if I am to live on in the flesh—to go on living

—**this will mean fruitful labor for me**—God would continue to use him as He had in the past
—**and I do not know which to choose**—but, of course, the decision was not his to make

1:23—But I am hard-pressed from both directions—to be alive on the earth with believers or to be alive in heaven with Christ
—**having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better**—for him personally to be with Christ instead of in this world, with its shipwrecks, beatings, ...

1:24—yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake—the Philippian believers (and us) need Paul's teaching. This age of grace is new. ...*the stewardship of God's grace was given to me for you; that by revelation there was made known to me...of which I was made a minister...* (Eph 3:1-11). The church itself was built on the teaching and writing of the apostles, especially Paul (Eph 2:20). We need to know Philipians, Ephesians, Romans...

1:25—Convinced of this—that if he is released from prison, it will be the progress and joy of the Philippian believers.

—**I know that I will remain and continue with you all**—He does not have a revelation or infallible knowledge. But he is convinced on what seems to be probable in light of all the factors. The case against him was not strong (Acts 23:29; 25:25; 26:31, 32).

—**for your progress** [to advance]—Paul wanted them to grow, ...**that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment** (v. 8). Being a Christian is not a stagnant thing. You will either progress or you will drift away [“...we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it” (Heb 2:1). “Be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error...and fall from your own steadfastness, but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior... (2 Pet 3:17-18).]

AN APPLICATION—Our love should progress towards those who have real knowledge of the Word and discernment, but we are not to grow in love towards those who do not walk in the truth of the Scriptures (2 John 10-11). There is the danger that what you tolerate you will eventually accept—see 1:9. There is also the testimony to other believers (especially your family) who are watching you—1 Cor 5:6.

—**and joy in the faith**—Jesus said, “These things I have spoken to you that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full” (John 15:11). Paul mentions **joy** seven times in Philipians. How to define joy? Peace, happiness, hope...

1:26—so that your [proud confidence] in me—to express a high degree of something being exceptionally noteworthy

—**may abound in Christ Jesus**—Paul was not the end product, Jesus was. Paul's coming to the Philipians would mean that Jesus would be glorified

—**through my coming to you again**—his ministry among them would enable them to understand even more the riches they have in Jesus Christ.

AN APPLICATION—Having the stewardship of our age of grace given to Paul by revelation, he did not shy away from that. He was bringing God's Word to the believers in this new age. So his coming would result in further knowledge and joy in the Lord.

3. Solemn exhortations (1:27-30)

1:27—Only [above all] **conduct yourselves**—a political word: lit. “live as citizens” [Paul used his Roman citizenship to bring about his release from imprisonment there (Acts 16:36-40)]. Believers are citizens of a heavenly realm of God.

—**in a [manner worthy]** [of comparable value] **of the gospel of Christ**—Eph 4:1; Col 1:10; 1 Thess 2:12; 4:1; Titus 2:10; *holy conduct and godliness...diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless, and blameless* (2 Pet 3:11, 14).

—**so that whether I come and see you or remain absent**—accountability was not to Paul but to Jesus Christ

—**I will hear of you**—four characteristics of the believers:

—**that you are** (1) [**standing firm**]—it has a positive and a negative. Positive in standing for God, truth, and righteousness. Negative in standing against Satan, lies, and sin.

—(2) **in one spirit, with one mind** [*psuche*, soul/personality—intellect, emotion, and will]—it would not be appropriate to be referring to the Holy Spirit (as some say), but rather Paul is speaking of the human spirit, that the believers experience a unity and harmony, *being of the same mind...united in spirit, intent on one purpose...* (2:1-2).

—(3) **striving together** [Gk. *sunathleo*, from which we get “athlete”]—rather than individuals, however, we are a “team.” Picture a tug-of-war team, pulling together.

—**for the faith of the gospel**—reminding us again of the “*real knowledge and all discernment*” of verse 9. Too many today are striving together for a false gospel, a false knowledge that the Bible does not teach.

1:28—**in no way** [or *any way*] **alarmed** [only used here in the NT. Gk. “intimidated,” not “terrified” as KJV says] **by your opponents** [those who disapprove and actively try to prevent]

—**which is**—it proves to you (the believer) that they are not believers

—**a sign** [evidence] **of destruction for them**—think of the ark Noah, “*in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world*” (Heb 11:7)

—**but** [a sign] **of salvation for you**—when you stand firm and strive for the faith of the gospel

—**and that too, from God**—both the destruction of the unbeliever and the salvation of the believer are from God.

[This is a very complex verse to translate. There are at least four ideas. In addition to the one just stated, another example would be, “...For although they see your loyalty to the truth as inevitably leading to your persecution and death, you see it as leading through persecution to the salvation of your souls.”]

AN APPLICATION—The most dangerous (or influential) opponents can be false teachers within Christian circles. Paul told the Ephesian believers: “...*savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be on the alert...*” (Acts 20:29-31). In 1 Corinthians 3:10-11, Paul wrote that our foundation is Jesus Christ, but then he warns, “*each man must be careful how he builds on it.*” If it is the wrong thing, it will be like straw and burned up at the Bema. But if it is according to God’s Word, it will be like gold and silver and rewarded at the Bema.

1:29—**For to you it has been granted** [*charizo*, to give, a gift, favor] **for Christ’s sake, not only to believe in Him, but also** (4) **to suffer for His sake**—Paul reminded Timothy, “*all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted*” (2 Tim 3:12; see also Matt 10:22, 24-25; John 16:2-3). God uses suffering to mold His children into those who would bring glory to His Son. Even Jesus, *Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered* (Heb 5:8). Suffering can make you better or it can make you bitter.

1:30—**experiencing the same conflict** [from the opponents] **which you saw in me, and now hear to be in me**—it has always been so. Jesus said they hated Him and they will hate you (John 15:18). Hebrews 11 traces the intense suffering of the patriarchs and prophets throughout the OT, *men of whom the world was not worthy* (v. 38). Martyrdom among

believers has been throughout the Old Testament, the church age, and will continue in the tribulation (Acts 7:54-60; Rev 6:9-11; 20:4).

II. Examples for Living the Christian Life (2:1-30)

A. The Son of God whose attitude the believers is to share (2:1-18)

1. The declaration (2:1)

2:1—*Therefore*, in addition to *conduct...worthy of the gospel of Christ* (1:27)

—*if* [Gk. “since,” certainty] **there is any encouragement** [*paraklesis*, coming alongside someone to give comfort, counsel—such as the Good Samaritan. Jesus referred to the Holy Spirit as “another helper [*parakleton*]” in John 14:16] **in Christ**—The personal example of Jesus while on earth, as well as His teachings and those of the apostles, encourage us to have that one united purpose to glorify God in everything and in our relationships. Believers are all equally “in Christ.” No one is more a believer than another believer.

—*if* [Gk. “since”] **there is any consolation** [“encouragement”] **of love** [*agape*]*—giving to one another is an encouragement to unity*

—*if* [Gk. “since”] **there is any fellowship** [close association] **of the Spirit**—All believers have the same Spirit, no one has more or less than another believer

—*if* [Gk. “since”] **any affection** [tenderness, emotions] **and compassion** [sympathy, mercy]*—as believers, we have an affection toward other believers—we are sisters and brothers in Christ.*

2. The exhortations (2:2-4)

2:2—*make my joy complete*—to cause to happen, to fulfill Paul’s joy

—*by being of the same mind*—to think the same thing, to have the attitude Jesus had (v. 5).

Paul gives practical advice in 4:8, ... *dwell on these things...control what you think about.*

—*maintaining* [to hold on to] **the same love** [*agape*]*—an act of the will, giving, not based on a preference or attraction. It’s a conscious choice, so it can be commanded.*

—**united** [harmonious] **in spirit**— “one-souled,” used only here in the NT, it must be grounded in the objective, author’s-intended meaning, truth of God’s Word. [No two Christians, no matter their level of maturity, will understand everything exactly alike. We’re all learning. However, we must discern whether it is appropriate to associate or disassociate with a believer who is promoting something you do not think is “true knowledge” from the Scriptures—2 John 9-10], such as a different or distorted Gospel, for example (Gal 1:6-9).

—**intent on one purpose**—thinking one thing, synonymous with having “the same mind.” Paul addressed this in 1 Corinthians 1:10-17, where the believers were divided in following different teachers. He corrects this in 3:1-9. The point is not to divide over personalities but to unite over our common belief in the Word and Jesus.

AN APPLICATION—We can see this happens “naturally.” Cults are made up of people who have the same mind. And within Christianity are different groups with the same mind—for example, Covenants and Dispensationalists. You need to decide with whom you will be of “the same mind.” Being committed to the Word of God, that is the litmus test... “*handling accurately the word of truth*” (2 Tim 2:15). Our eternal salvation depends on a correct understanding and our sanctification (and rewards—1 Cor 3:11-15) depends on a correct understanding. There are “gold” things and “straw” things— “*But let each man be careful how he builds...*” (v. 10).

AN APPLICATION—These four principles overlap with the same basic idea expressed in a little bit different way. Those who understand the Bible the same way (literally) will have one mind and purpose. As soon as one leaves the literal Bible, all kinds of problems arise. John

Walvoord once said in a debate with a Covenant, “prophecy is not the issue—it’s how you interpret the Bible. If you interpret it literally, we’ll agree on prophecy.”

2:3—[**Do**—not in Greek] **nothing from selfishness**—“selfish ambition,” the same word Paul used in 1:17. It is the root of every other sin. It is far beyond action. Selfishness is also to be totally excluded from the innermost thoughts of the heart.

AN APPLICATION—“**Selfishness** is a consuming and destructive sin. The first and inevitable casualty is the person who manifests it, even if no one else is harmed. Because this sin, like every other, begins in a sinful heart, anyone can commit it—regardless of whether there is an opportunity for it to be outwardly expressed. Even when not outwardly manifested, **selfishness** breeds anger, resentment, and jealousy. No[t] even the most doctrinally sound and spiritually mature, is immune from the threat of this sin, and nothing can more quickly divide and weaken.... Selfish ambition is often clothed in pious rhetoric by those who are convinced of their own superior abilities in promoting the cause of Christ.” [MacArthur, *Philippians*]

—**or empty conceit**—is the cause of their selfish ambition. *Kenodoxia* appears only here in the NT. *Kenos* [empty] *doxia* [glory]. It seeks personal glory and acclaim. Paul also wrote, “*For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself*” (Gal 6:3).

—**but** [in contrast] **with humility of mind**—Humility is not thinking of yourself less—it is thinking less of yourself. When something happens or is said—what is your first thought? Is it “I...”?

—**regard one another as more important than yourselves**—consideration for others must precede concern for ourselves

2:4—**do not merely look out for your own personal [interests]**—your own personal affairs should not be totally ignored. We have responsibilities to our spouse (Eph 5:22-32), our children (Eph 6:1-4), our parents (1 Tim 5:3-8), and ourselves (Heb 5:11–6:2; 1 Pet 2:1-2)

—**but also for the [interests] of others**—others must also be part of our concern. The Good Samaritan is our example (Luke 10:30-37). **Others** are individual people who are in our path, not social changes. There is no knowledge or guarantee that social changes actually help people or not.

3. The humiliation of Christ (2:5-8)

This paragraph is the most important one in the epistle and one of outstanding Christology.

2:5—**Have this attitude** [to think in a particular manner] **in yourselves**—Before you do anything, you think it. Jesus said, “*The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart*” (Luke 6:45). See Philippians 4:8.

—**which was also in Christ Jesus**—Jesus does not ask us to do something He hasn’t already done. He knows what it feels like. He knows what it costs. It is a glimpse into the heart of Jesus when He was in heaven before He came to earth.

AN APPLICATION—Paul was not describing the incarnation to reveal theology. He is presenting Christ Jesus as the supreme, unparalleled example of humility, as the strongest motive to believers’ humility. He starts with the attitude inside a person.

2:6—**who, although He exist[ed]** [Gk “to be, to be identical with,” is in the present tense in the Gk text, which points to the Lord’s continuing existence with the full nature of God,

although here Paul is describing a past event. Jesus did not give up or lay aside that nature when He became man. He is always 100% God—before, during, and after His incarnation.] —**in the form** [Gk. *morphe*, nature or character—English “metamorphoses” is when one changes the very nature of what they are, such as a worm to a butterfly—but Jesus *is morphe*, NOT *metamorphe*] **of God**—This is among the strongest expressions of Christ’s deity in the NT. Jesus never changed at all from the character of God.

—**did not regard** [Gk. “to hold a view”] **equality** [Gk. “equal in quality or characteristics”] **with God a thing to be grasped** [Gk. “to rob, to forcefully seize, to take something away from someone else”]—He did not have to take ‘equality with God’ because it was already *always* His, as was His relationship of the Son to the Father.

2:7—but emptied [Gk. *kenow*, divesting of His self-interests but not of His deity] **Himself**—it was God’s will for Him to do it, but it was His choice to do it in obedience to the Father.

—**taking** [Gk. *labon*, not an exchange [metamorphe] but adding on something] **the form** [Gk. nature or character] **of a bond-servant**—there is a contrast in terms here. Jesus did not “take” God (what was already His), but He “took” the form of the bond-servant. A bond-servant had nothing of their own. Even foxes have holes, and birds have nests, but Jesus had nowhere to lay His head (Matt 8:20; Luke 9:58). At His death on the cross, there was only the garment He had been wearing for the guards to divide up (Matt 27:35).

—**and being made** [Gk. “to acquire”] **in the likeness** [“similar”] **of men**—His humanity was genuine, yet He was different from all other humans because He was sinless.

—Jesus chose to not use His divine attributes (or His outward appearance of deity) to avoid ordinary human limitations for His own comfort, such as being born a baby (Luke 2:7), walking (Matt 4:18), being hungry (Matt 4:2), sleeping (Matt 8:24), eating (Matt 11:19), “*being deeply moved within*” (John 11:38), weeping (John 11:35), having close loving friendships (John 11:5; 13:23), grieving when they would not believe (Mark 10:21; Matt 23:37; Luke 13:34), bleeding (John 19:34), and dying (John 19:30, 33), which demonstrated His 100% humanity [but without a sin nature]. Also, He did not come as the pre-Fall man. He suffered the frailties, limitations, problems, and suffering that were the consequences of the curse of Genesis 3. Isaiah prophesied: *He was despised and forsaken of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief...*” (Isaiah 53:3). He did, however, use His divine attributes in performing miracles for others, which demonstrated His 100% deity (John 5:36; 10:25, 38; 14:11).

2:8—Being found in appearance as a man—Another aspect of His humanity—there were no visual clues in His “appearance” that He was either sinless or divine. “*He has no stately form or majesty that we should look upon Him, nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him*” (Isaiah 53:2). [Does that mean He wasn’t like a blue-eyed handsome actor?]

—**He humbled Himself**—Jesus humbled Himself as He wants you to humble yourself. Jesus did it (1) by becoming a man and (2) by being obedient to the point of death on the cross. [We might also say He lived a humble life, without any of the luxuries He could have had—no home, no bed on which to lay His head, no clothes but the garment He wore...].

—**by becoming obedient to the point of death** (Isaiah 53:12; Heb 5:8). There were many ways to be killed at that time: beheaded as John the Baptist was (Matt 14:10), stoned (Matt 21:35), or hanged as Judas was (Matt 27:5).

—**even death on a cross**—*hanging on a tree* was a sign to the Jews that the person was under “the curse of God” (Deut 21:23; Gal 3:13). “*...for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame...*” (Heb 12:2).

AN APPLICATION—Jesus said, “*If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny [Gk. “to refuse to give thought to or express concern for, to say ‘No’ to oneself] himself, and take up his cross [one’s life situation, personality] and follow Me*” (Matt 16:24). This is being humble, and it

will mean something different for each person—when you are young, when you are old. If you are a male, if you are a female, if you own a home, if you have no home, if you have a family, if you have no family, if you are healthy, if you are not healthy, if you have a talent, if you have no talent, if you have a different talent.....

4. The exaltation of Christ (2:9-11)

2:9—For this reason also—because of the humility of Jesus in becoming a man and dying on the cross, there are now people who are believers, who love God.

—**God highly exalted** [Gk. *hyperypsosen*, “super-exalted”] **Him**,—Jesus had prayed before His crucifixion, “*Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was*” (John 17:1, 5), a glory we see in Revelation 1:12-18. This refers to His resurrection, ascension, and glorification at the Father’s right hand (Acts 2:33; Heb 1:3). He is super-exalted now, though, because there is *...a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, “Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God...the voice of a great multitude and like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, saying, ‘Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him...’”* (Rev 19:1-7).

—**and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name**—not merely a title, but it refers to the position and dignity and honor of the person.

2:10—so that at the name of Jesus (1) **EVERY KNEE WILL BOW**—this takes us into the future of every created being: human and angelic (including demons) [Isaiah 45:23; Rom 14:11; Rev 5:13]. The One who was completely obedient, will now be completely obeyed and worshipped.

—**of those who are in heaven**—i.e. believers who have died or were Raptured and angels

— **and on earth**—those living on the earth

—**and under the earth**—those in Hades, awaiting the Great White Throne Judgment (Rev 20:11-15), where Jesus is the Judge, demons, too.

AN APPLICATION—interpretations differ as to what is meant by those in heaven, on earth, and under the earth. But the point is that all of creation will bow to the Lordship of Christ. “On earth” would seem to mean the Millennium, but the judgment of the end times seems a better fit. Those “on earth” would be those who survive alive the whole Millennium.

2:11—and that (2) **every tongue will confess**—to express openly, to acknowledge publicly Jesus in His full deity, far superior to His humble state while on earth (Rev 1:12-18).

—**that Jesus Christ is Lord**—one who exercises supernatural authority over everyone (angelic and human)—not only those for salvation but also those with resentment and despair. For example, during the bowl judgments of the tribulation, the unbelievers “*blasphemed the name of God who has the power over these plagues; and they did not repent, so as to give him glory*” (Rev 16:9). They acknowledge His power but with resentment and blasphemy.

—**to the glory of God the Father**—When creation gives glory to Jesus in His deity, glory is also given to the Father. It is God who is *highly exulting Him* [Jesus]. In His High Priestly prayer, Jesus said, “*Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You...I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do. Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was*” (John 17:1, 4–5; John 13:31-32; 14:13; Rom 9:5; 11:36; 16:27).

See Appendix 1 on page 34.

5. The exhortations continued (2:12-18)

2:12—So then [*“therefore”*], based on what Paul has just written, to draw a conclusion from the preceding statement, here referring to the example of Jesus Christ. *“The one who says he abides in [Christ] ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked”* (1 John 2:6).

—**my beloved**—believers, a word of comfort and encouragement

—**just as you have always obeyed**—previously, they heard and submitted to what was heard

—**not as in my presence only**—of course, when Paul was with them, that was an external motivation, such as when the parent is in the room of the child, they are more likely to behave

—**but now much more in my absence**—but Paul is not now with them. That is not a reason to stop obeying the Word. God is still present with them as the Holy Spirit living in them.

—**work out** [lit. keep on working out] **your salvation**—First, notice Paul did not say “work for your salvation” but to “work out” the salvation already given them. The subject is obedience (sanctification). They obeyed when Paul was there, but now, in his absence, they need to continue to obey. It is the choices you make.

—**with fear and trembling**—It seems this refers to the awareness of one’s own spiritual weakness and the power of temptation. We should not have an attitude of pride, that those are no problem for you. Humility recognizes the power of sin and temptation in our life. Paul’s presence helped the believers to obey, but now he is gone, it is the believer’s own responsibility. For example, a parent may help a child learn to ride a bike. The parent runs alongside, guaranteeing they won’t fall. But then the parent leaves, and they are riding all by themselves—with fear and trembling—because they know the consequences if they fall!!!

2:13—for it is God who is at work in you—Same word “work” as in verse 12. God is working in you, which is better than what Paul can do present with them. You are not alone. God is in you and “works” through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, using the Word of God, inside of you. True change can only happen in your mind/heart. *“...be transformed by the renewing of your mind”* (Rom 12:1). Jesus said, *“For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart”* (Matt 12:34).

—**both to will** [to desire] **and to work** [actually do] [Gk. *energein*, from which we get “energy”]

—**for His good pleasure**—God’s will for believers is that what they think and do and desire are all for what is pleasing to Him. The purpose of everything, in the whole Bible, is to bring glory to God.

AN APPLICATION—God is already at work in your mind/heart. At salvation, He gave you His a new nature and the Holy Spirit. He has given us His Word. *...His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him...* (2 Pet 1:3). But our sanctification depends on our choices to obey. God cannot give us more than everything we need. There is not more Holy Spirit. There is not more Bible. There is not more salvation.....In the rest of the book, Paul will give us practical things we can do in obedience to God, for His good pleasure.

2:14—Do [present tense, continually] **all things**—WOW! Notice he does not say “some things.” Most of us can learn to grumble and argue less than we do now, but such things are to be totally absent from our lives!! It’s a daily [maybe moment-by-moment] spiritual warfare. Remember, Paul wrote, *our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but...against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness...*(Eph 6:12).

—**without grumbling**—complaining, whining, finding fault, griping

—**or disputing**—arguing

AN APPLICATION—One way to help with this is to become a more thankful person. In 4:8, Paul said is “*if there anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.*” Someone once said, “I can’t keep a bird from landing on my head, but I can keep it from building a nest.” Change what your mind dwells on.

2:15—so that—for the purpose

—**you will prove yourselves**—show yourself to be

—**to be blameless and innocent**—it means to not be mixed with anything that is defiling

—**children of God**—We are in God’s family. For example, if you were to marry a king, you would have to change everything you do, your whole lifestyle. We are the bride of Christ...

—**above reproach**—without fault, undiluted—of course, this does not mean we never sin

AN APPLICATION—A literal translation of these three words would be: “blameless,” “flawless,” and “faultless,” maintaining the same sound at the end of each word without attempting to highlight their special nuances. This is done in an effort to preserve the rhetoric of the apostle, who begins each word with the same sound [*a*—meaning “not”]: *amemptoi, akepasoi, amoma* [WBS-NT]. No-blame, No-flaw, No-fault. Believers need to be guarded and keep ourselves from everything that is twisted and perverted, that is not in line with the truth of Jesus Christ in His Word.

—**in the midst of a crooked** [winding, with no end in sight] **and perverse** [to mislead, to turn away] **generation**—we live in the world of unbelievers, heading nowhere except away from God. We have to associate with them because we live in the world (1 Cor 5:10). But rather than their darkness tainting us, we are to be the lights to them.

—**among whom you appear as light** [bearers] **in the world**—(Matt 5:4; John 8:12). Sin and uncleanness dulls the light. Then the light cannot be clearly seen.

2:16—holding fast [“to hold firmly to a particular belief,” “to continue to strongly believe” or “to not give up at all to believe”] **the word of life**—Some think this is “holding ‘out’ the word of life,” that is, evangelistic because he just said believers are a light in the world. But “out” is not in the text, and the whole context of this paragraph is their sanctification, God working in them, especially when Paul was absent. It seems more likely that Paul means for them to hold firmly to the Word that he’s taught them, even though he is absent from them. [See also 1 Cor 11:2; 15:2; 1 Thess 5:21; 1 Tim 1:19; 3:9; 2 Tim 1:13.]

AN APPLICATION—Paul wrote that we believers have “*a foundation...which is Jesus Christ.*” But then he warns, “*each man must be careful how he builds on it*” (1 Cor 3:10-15). What you believe and do will be tested at the Bema judgment of Christ. If it is not of Christ and His Word, it will be like straw that is burned up. But Paul is entreating us to hold firmly to God’s Word.

—**so that in the day of Christ I will have reason to glory**—here Paul shifts the basis of his appeal from the example of Jesus (vv. 3-15) to himself. It seems like Paul himself will glory in heaven when he sees those who have remained faithful to God’s Word.

—**because I did not run** [to make progress (verb)] **in vain** (empty) **nor toil** [to be tired as a result of hard or difficult endeavor] **in vain** (empty). Paul poured out his soul and did everything he could to encourage these believers and to teach them to follow God’s Word. It will be worth all the hard work, even giving his life, for the maturing of the believers.

2:17—But even if I am being poured out as a drink offering—1:21-22, whether in service to God in life or death, Paul compared it to an OT sacrifice to God (Num 15:1-10; 28:4-7). In the

OT, after the priest offered a lamb or bull as a burnt offering, he poured wine beside the altar, the last act in the sacrificial ceremony.

—**upon the sacrifice and service of your faith**—Paul used the same metaphor in 2 Timothy 4:6. It seems that Paul being poured out combines with the sacrifice and service of the faith of the Philippians, to make a complete sacrifice to God.

—**I rejoice** [a word or its form used 16 times in Philippians] **and share my joy with you all**—Paul rejoices at being poured out.

2:18—You too, I urge you, rejoice in the same way and share your joy with me—Paul urges the believers to rejoice in their own sacrifice and service of their faith, together with Paul.

B. The servants of God whose manner of life the believer is to follow (2:19-30)

1. Timothy and Paul (2:19-24)

2:19—But I hope in the Lord Jesus—i.e., subject to the will of God

—**to send Timothy to you shortly** [soon]—being mentioned in the third person, shows he was not a co-writer of the letter (1:1). Paul led Timothy to Christ (1 Cor 4:18; 1 Tim 1:2, 18), probably on his first missionary journey (Acts 14:6-23), when Paul went through Timothy's hometown of Lystra. Both his mother and grandmother were believers (2 Tim 1:5).

—**so that I also may be encouraged when I learn of your condition**—Timothy would then return to Paul with the news of the condition of the Philippian believers

2:20—For I have no one else of kindred spirit—growing up in a Christian home, traveling with Paul for some ten years, Timothy was of the same mind as Paul. He would not communicate anything different than Paul would. Paul trusted him.

—**who will genuinely** [really] **be concerned for your welfare**—Timothy was not unknown to the Philippians believers. He was with Paul when he brought the gospel to Philippi (Acts 16:10)

2:21—For they all seek after their own interests—probably meaning those who were near where Paul was but unable or not willing to go to Philippi. Perhaps he was referring to those he spoke of earlier in 1:14-18. Because this is the inspired Word of God, He knows their motivations, so even though we don't know who they are or specifically why they would not go, God knows and wrote it was because they were seeking their own interests.

—**not those of Christ Jesus**—this is a startling statement—"But without more information a satisfactory explanation seems impossible." [WBC-NT]

2:22—But you know of his proven worth—the believers knew Timothy to be a man of God. His worth has been proven to them, implied "by testing."

—**that he served with me in the furtherance of the gospel like a child serving his father**—for over ten years. Though not an apostle like Paul was, he was "second-in-command." He came with the authority of Paul.

2:23—Therefore I hope to send him immediately, as soon as I see how things go with me—Perhaps Paul was imprisoned, and he was waiting to see if he would be released or not, so he could not come as soon as Timothy could. But when Paul would find out how his own situation was doing, then he would send Timothy as quickly as he could.

2:24—and I trust in the Lord that I myself also will be coming shortly—Paul's desire was to visit the Philippian believers. But there must be time for Timothy to go there and return (to Rome?) back to Paul.

2. Epaphroditus and Paul (2:25-30)

2:25—But I thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus—he is only mentioned here and in 4:18 [not to be confused with Epaphras of Colosse (Col 1:7; 4:12), though the names are similar]. Paul wanted to come, but could not. So he was hoping to send Timothy soon, but he also could not. So in the interim, Paul sent Epaphroditus right away and with this letter, explaining why neither he nor Timothy were coming soon, but Epaphroditus did come.

—**my** (1) **brother and** (2) **fellow worker and** (3) **fellow soldier**—a fellow believer, also helping in ministry with Paul.

—**who is also your messenger and minister to my need**—sent from the Philippian believers to Paul (4:18), **having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent** (probably money). Evidently, he could travel back to Philippi even before Timothy got there.

2:26—because he was longing for you all—like Paul was, a word also used in 1 Peter 2:2 of a newborn baby “longing” for milk.

— **and was distressed** [a word only used elsewhere in the NT referring to Christ’s agony in the garden on the night of His arrest (Matt 26:37-38)]

—**because you had heard that he was sick**—There is no indication that Paul had the ability to heal him or even tried to heal him. Evidently, the apostles could not just do miracles when they wanted to. They were done only when God wanted them done.

AN APPLICATION—Also, at this point in the early years of the church, miracles had almost ceased. “After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles...Heb 2:2-3; see also 2 Tim 4:20). As writing the Scriptures were coming to an end, so were the miracles. God then testified to people through the written Word.

2:27—For indeed he was sick to the point of death—we don’t know exactly what the sickness was or what caused it, but it was very serious, even life-threatening

—**but God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, so that I would not have sorrow upon sorrow**—

- Paul is already sorrowful he could not come immediately to Philippi
- Then he has sorrow over the sickness of Epaphroditus, especially because he was a fellow worker with Paul in ministry (v. 25)
- Then Paul had distress knowing how worried the believers in Philippi were
- And so he is thankful for God’s mercy in healing Epaphroditus, and saving Paul from even more sorrow if Epaphroditus would have died.

2:28—Therefore I have sent him—Paul is responsible for sending him back to Philippi, obviously, with this letter and instructions to the believers there.

—**all the more eagerly**—Gk. “more hastily.” The believers had sent Epaphroditus not only with a gift (probably of money) but also to be a helper to Paul (v. 25). But now, because of the Philippians hearing he was sick and may die, Paul wanted him to get back to Philippi as soon as possible, to relieve their distress, and for them to see he was now healed.

—**so that when you see him again you may rejoice**—so instead of distress, they could rejoice at his healing

—**and I may be less concerned about you**—then Paul would also be less concerned for them, too.

2:29—Receive him then in the Lord with all joy, and hold men like him in high regard—

Some may have thought Epaphroditus failed in his mission to help Paul (or else Paul would not have had to write this instruction). But not so. He was, in fact, to be received and honored.

2:30—(1) because he came close to death for the work of Christ—we don't know what that was. Perhaps he had been beaten or imprisoned.

—risking his life—Gk. “to willingly and daringly expose oneself to danger,” a self-denying sacrifice to accomplish the work of Christ. He gave all he could.

—(2) to complete what was deficient in your service to me—Paul is not saying they did not do enough, but rather their service to Paul was complete because they sent the gift and Epaphroditus himself to help Paul. They gave all they could. They cared enough to send their best.

III. Exhortations for Living the Christian Life (3:1-21)

A. Believers are to have no confidence in the flesh (3:1-14)

1. The exhortation introduced (3:1)

3:1—Finally—can mean he is drawing to a close, but some 40% of the letter is still remaining. So also the Gk. definition of “furthermore” or “in addition” is better.

—my brethren, rejoice in the Lord—rejoicing is not determined by where you are or who you are with. You rejoice *in the Lord*, who you are in Christ. Paul is now going to write about the dangers of the false teaching—but starts with “rejoicing,” to remember who you are in the Lord.

—To write the same things again—possibly referring to 1:27-30, where he wrote more generally about their opponents

—is no trouble to me—in fact, it is a happy task for him, and he starts it with “rejoice”

—and it is a safeguard for you—security, safety from danger. [It's like tying a double knot on your shoe laces.]

2. The example to be avoided (3:2-3)

3:2—(1) Beware—Gk. “to notice carefully,” “watch out,” “to be ready to learn about future dangers, with the implication of preparedness to respond appropriately.”

—of the dogs—Gk. *kunarion*, was used of evidently domesticated pet dogs (Matt 15:26-27). But here is Gk. *kuon*, dogs who were wild scavengers (Matt 7:6), who attack, mutilate, and kill.

—(2) beware of the evil workers—these Jews were involved in external, ritualistic, ceremonial religions they created out of the Law (called Rabbinic Judaism), practiced by the Pharisees. They were evil because they turned people away from Christ and toward laws.

—(3) beware of the false circumcision—Gk. *katatome*, “those who practice mutilation” (as a hyperbole for circumcision).

AN APPLICATION—For those who insist on Christians being circumcised, it is nothing more than a “mutilation” of the flesh. God gave it value in the Law, but Christians are no longer under the Law. So now it has no spiritual value, it's simply a cut.

3:3—for we are the true circumcision—Gk. *peritome*, to cut off the foreskin of the male genital organ. Even under the Law, physical circumcision was only a sign of the covenant of the heart. Deuteronomy 30:6 reads, *And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, ...to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.*” Any external ritual or ceremony means nothing if there is no heart belief. We are those—

—(1) who worship in the Spirit of God—not by human traditions or rituals or songs, it is spiritual, it is the Holy Spirit indwelling believers, in our hearts, who gives us our spiritual life.

—(2) **and glory in Christ Jesus**—our hope is in Christ alone, He paid for our sins on the cross. There is salvation in no one or nothing else. Jesus is the One who makes us acceptable to God.

—(3) **and put no confidence in the flesh**—to be certain, to be convinced, that physical things and our sin nature are not a source of righteousness—actually, anything outside of Jesus Christ.

AN APPLICATION—It seems like this is the “litmus” indicative test, as it were. Does the person describe the spiritual (not the mystical) or do they only see physical things? True believers worship in the Spirit of God and understand salvation is only through the blood of Jesus.

3. The example to be followed (3:4-14)

3:4—although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh—Paul is reviewing the things in which he could have placed confidence if he had wanted to. It seems the Judaizers were claiming a righteousness based on keeping their laws, which they thought they did.

— **If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more**—in fact, these ARE the things he put confidence in before he became a believer in Christ. He had a flawless external record of legalistic righteousness in Judaism.

3:5—Things Paul had by birth, apart from his choice:

(1) **circumcised the eighth day**—he was not a proselyte (one who converts to Judaism, usually as an adult) but a pure-blooded Jew, from birth

(2) **of the nation of Israel**—he could trace his heritage back to Abraham, being circumcised in accord with the instruction given to Abraham, the first “Jew” (Gen 17:12; Lev 12:3). The blood of Jacob (re-named Israel) flowed in him.

(3) **of the tribe of Benjamin**—the tribe of Israel’s first king—Saul. This tribe was joined to the Southern Kingdom of Judah, who returned from the Babylonian Captivity (remember, the northern 10 tribes did not return to the Land). In fact, Paul’s parents gave him the name “Saul.” Other distinctions of this tribe: Benjamin was the only son of Jacob actually born in the Land. He was also the child of Jacob’s favorite wife Rachel. The feast of Purim (in Esther) commemorated the national deliverance by Mordecai, a Benjaminite. Although certainly the tribe of Benjamin did some awful things during the time of the Judges, Paul’s point here is to stress that he is a genuine Jew.

(4) **a Hebrew of Hebrews**—i.e., both his parents were Hebrews, and he knew and spoke Hebrew, even though he had been born in the Diaspora (Acts 6:1; 22:2, 3).

Privileges he voluntarily chose to have:

(5) **as to the Law, a Pharisee**—this was the most strict sect among the Jews. They even had their own regulations which were considered equal to the Law. Paul had studied under Gamaliel, the Pharisees’ most celebrated teacher (Acts 22:3; 5:34).

3:6—(6) **as to zeal** [Gk. “devotion”], **a persecutor of the church**—he imprisoned believers in Jesus, he even participated in Stephen’s martyrdom (Acts 8:1).

(7) **as to the righteousness which is in the Law**—i.e., legalistic righteousness

(8) **found blameless**—at least in his own eyes.

If any of the Judaizers claimed they were superior in either heritage or practices, Paul wanted it known that he could “out-Jew” them. But he says these things did not give him confidence before God. They were inadequate to provide the righteousness God requires.

3:7—But whatever things were gain [profit, beneficial, assets] **to me**—such as his Jewish credentials just mentioned
—**those things I have counted** [considered, regarded] **as loss**—to forfeit, to give up as a necessary consequence of something else, in his thinking, i.e., he gave up considering them to be valuable
—**for the sake of Christ**—understanding the truth that having Christ as his Savior far surpassed anything he had in Judaism.

AN APPLICATION—What the world considers religious assets are actually hindrances or liabilities in God’s sight. The more good works a person has, the more they understand to be true that the works are what causes God to accept them. But the works give a false hope of salvation. Also, they are liabilities because the idea of works has to be “unlearned.” Very difficult for them to realize.

3:8—More than that—more than just Paul’s Jewish advantages
—**I count** [Gk present tense, “continue” to count] **all things to be loss**—not just the good works he thought counted for righteousness, but everything that might be a rival for his total trust in Christ.

AN APPLICATION—For many people it is some form of good works, but what about feelings and experiences or spiritualizing or allegorizing the Bible that actually stand in the way of the true knowledge of Christ from the Scriptures. Yet many Christians cling to those, much as others cling to good works.

—**in view of the** [**surpassing value** (one word)]—something of incomparable worth. For Paul, it was his superior Jewish credentials, yet knowing Christ is so far beyond that, it’s not even a comparable value—it’s surpassing. It’s the idea of an eclipse, which overshadows the sun.
—**of knowing** [not a verb but a form of the noun “to know,” indicating a personal involvement]
—**Christ** [Messiah] **Jesus** [Savior] **my Lord** [Sovereign King over all creation]—for Paul, his growing relationship, his increasing comprehension of Christ, was his goal, and that was so valuable, everything else was “dung”
—**for whom I have suffered** [“forfeit”] **the loss of all things**—he is not saying that he is suffering because of his loss. It’s like giving up a bike because one got a car.
—**and count** [consider] **them but rubbish** [lit. “food scraps, or dung, excrement”]— “I just flushed it down” [Constable, *Philippians*]
—**so that I may gain Christ**—to increase (opposite of “lose”).

AN APPLICATION—Of course, Paul is not talking about salvation. He’s talking about the spiritual life, what he is trying to communicate to these Philippian believers. Our salvation is complete in Christ, but knowing Christ will be continued on for eternity. Even Paul was still reaching toward that end (vv. 12-13).

3:9—and may be found in Him—Paul uses this phrase over 75 times in his epistles. It may even have an eschatological aspect—when Christ returns and at the judgment, Paul does not want to stand in his own righteousness but to wants to be found in Christ, as a source of righteousness (2 Cor 5:21).

—**not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law**—i.e., good works, even if they are the works of the OT Mosaic Law. *...by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin* (Rom 3:20). The Law was never

given as a works' righteousness—the Jews made it into that. He thought Judaism gave him light, but when he saw the Light of Christ, he saw himself as utterly sinful.
—**but that which is through faith in Christ**—provided by God, received by man
—**the righteousness which comes from God**—Because there are no works that can make us righteous, that righteousness has to come from God Himself, it originates with God.
—**on the basis of faith**—the two are mutually exclusive. Works—then no faith. Faith—then no works. God's initiative must be met with a human response—of faith, i.e., trusting what you understand to be true. In 2 Corinthians 5:21, Paul wrote, "*He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*"

AN APPLICATION—It's sort of like having a heart that will not give you life, no matter what you eat or exercise, etc. But you understand that a heart transplant from another will give you life. So you by faith receive that new heart.

3:10—that I may know Him—Paul already knew Christ as his Savior, but now he wanted to have an ever deeper knowledge of His Savior, resuming the thought of verse 8.
—**and the power of His resurrection**—Supernatural power of the resurrected Christ. It revealed His absolute power over both the physical and spiritual realms. That power saved Paul and now it will overcome obstacles in life. There is no power in keeping the Law.
—**and the fellowship of His sufferings**—as believers, we may share the suffering of inward denying ourselves, or outward hostility because of our allegiance to Christ (John 16:33). Think of what He suffered just in becoming a human. Even as a baby, they tried to kill Him.
—**being conformed to His death**—complete identification with Christ to such an extent it is a death of the former life, what you valued, etc. (Rom 6:4-11).

3:11—in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead—This is a unique phrase in Scripture. It literally reads "the out-resurrection from among the corpses." Perhaps he is referring to the Rapture, when believers will be taken out alive from among the rest of the dead corpses (1 Thess 4:14-17).

3:12—Not that I have already obtained it—implying completion
—**or have already become perfect**—fulfillment, to finish, to end, maturity. Paul had already been a believer for about 30 years, and he had grown so much, but we continue to grow until our last breath on earth (in fact, our last breath may be one of our most mature moments).
—**but I press on**—with intensity of effort, to pursue. Never think we have reached a plateau in our spiritual growth beyond which we cannot climb. There is no plateau!!!
—**so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus**—Paul was pursuing that spiritual maturity for which Christ saved him

3:13—Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet—Paul did not consider himself as having attained ultimate conformity to Christ yet.....
—**but one thing I do**—not the only thing, but one of the things he does
—**forgetting what lies behind**—The memory of what is behind could paralyze one with guilt and despair or it could impede one with pride. To forget is such that whether good or bad, it will have no negative bearing on one's present spiritual growth or conduct. It's like being in a race. You don't keep looking back, you...
—**and reaching forward to what lies ahead**—the prize, the goal (v. 14)

3:14—I press on toward the goal [attention on the race being run] **for the prize** [the glory that follows] **of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus**—you grow and mature by looking forward toward the prize, forgetting what lies behind. At the end of his life, Paul wrote, "*I have*

fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day” (2 Tim 4:7-8).

An Application—The goal or prize of the spiritual life is “upward,” it is better, not only in this life but in the life to come. There is more joy, more peace, more hope, etc. Peter wrote that this spiritual life takes diligence, faith, moral excellence, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and agape love (2 Peter 1:5-7). Press on.....

B. Believers are to have a walk that pleases God (3:15-21)

1. A walk of maturity (3:15-16)

3:15—Let us—Paul is including himself here, as a believer seeking to mature in Christ —**therefore**—forgetting what lies behind and pressing toward what lies ahead —**as many as are perfect** [lit. “adult,” i.e. maturing as believers]. But don’t think you are now mature (as an end product). Maturity in Christ is your whole life and will continue into eternity, as we learn more and grow more in our understanding and love of Jesus, the eternal God. —**have this attitude**—a desire to be mature in Christ, set your mind on it, thoughtful planning, continually think like this. Maturity is not an event or a goal. It is a continual process. You might be mature in one area, but totally not in another area. ...*press on to maturity...* (Heb 6:1). —**and if in anything you have a different attitude**—some come to Christ by faith for salvation, but have no attitude for maturity. They define their Christian life as “Christian” laws, rather than a transformed mind (Rom 12:1-2). —**God will reveal that also to you**—through our study of the Bible. Peter wrote, “*like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the Word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation*” (1 Pet 2:2). We can maybe change what a person does, but we cannot change their attitude. Only God, who lives inside of them, can do that.

AN APPLICATION—We need to set our minds on, continually think, about maturing in Christ. What we read today in the Bible. What we listen to, Who we talk to. This maturity needs to be our attitude. Think about growing. One cannot mature by keeping laws, even religious laws. We either obey the law or not. We either drive 70 mph or not. There is no maturity to be had. “Hearing God...” also does not involve maturity. You either hear it or not (they say).

3:16—however—“one more thing”

—**let us keep living by that same standard** [“live up to”] **to which we have attained**—i.e., the righteousness of Jesus. We don’t have full understanding of all we have in Jesus Christ, but right now, be faithful to as much of God’s truth we do understand we have in Christ.

2. A walk of watchfulness (3:17-19)

3:17—Brethren—reminding us Paul is writing to believers

—**join in following my example**—lit. “be fellow imitators with me.” Paul was not perfect. But his life on the pages of the Bible gives us examples of how to handle trials and diversities in our own lives. Only Christ is the perfect standard, model, and pattern for believers to follow. But Christ never pursued perfection. He has always been perfect.

—**and observe** [“to watch,” “to take careful notice of”] **those who walk according to the pattern**—i.e., of pursuing Christlikeness

—**you have in us**—Paul, probably Timothy, and maybe Epaphroditus

AN APPLICATION—Christian influence is always seen in the lives of people—including ours. Whether believers or unbelievers, people are watching you, and you are watching others. For

example, we need to influence believers when we can about the author's intended meaning of the Scripture. The Bible is always under attack—even from Christians!! Peter wrote, "... *some things [of Paul's epistles] hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction (sanctification)*" (2 Peter 3:16).

3:18—For many walk—live their lives—Jesus said, "*for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and are many who enter through it*" (Matt 5:13). We will be in a minority. Get used to it. Even a literal author-intended meaning of the Bible will be a minority within Christianity.

—**of whom I often told you**—probably on his visits to Philippi

—**and now tell you even weeping**—this is the only time Paul speaks of weeping in the present tense. Paul was disturbed over the influence these false teachers would have with the Philippian believers.

—**that they are enemies of the cross of Christ**—by promoting a works-righteousness.

AN APPLICATION—Sadly, because of apathy toward the truth and shallow biblical knowledge, "believers" today lack discernment. It is astonishing and disturbing to see the things Christians believe and the people they follow!! One man said to me, "I know the Bible says this is wrong, but I listened to a woman preacher on TV, and she was soooo good, and the place was packed!!" He was willing to listen to her, even after admitting the Bible said it was wrong!!!

3:19—whose end is destruction—it could mean destruction even in this life, as many lifestyles end in suicides or overdoses. Or it could mean eternal destruction.

—**whose god is their appetite**—they live to satisfy the lusts of their flesh (Rom 16:18; 1 Cor 6:13; Jude 11).

—**and whose glory is in their shame**—they take pride in things that should cause them shame (such as adultery or fornication or greed)

—**who set their minds on earthly things**—physical things, the present enjoyments of life

3. A walk completed (3:20-21)

3:20—For our—emphatic, to stress the distinction between true believers, whose essential relationships belong in heaven

—**citizenship is in heaven**—most of us have traveled outside the country of our birth. Holding on to our passport is crucial. It proves where our citizenship is. It is the place where our names are recorded on the register of citizenship (Luke 10:20; cf. Phil. 4:3; Heb. 12:23; Rev. 13:8; 21:27). Where we go when we are headed home.

AN APPLICATION—Due to our new spiritual birth, our citizenship is spiritual, in heaven. We talk about the Bible, the throne of God, other believers who have gone before us—being with Jesus. These are things of our true spiritual home.

—**from which also we eagerly wait**—"eagerly wait for," is used six times by Paul of the eight times it appears in the NT (Rom 8:19, 23, 25; 1 Cor 1:7; Gal 5:5; Phil 3:20). The underlying motivation for Christlikeness is the return of Jesus, who will transform us.

—**for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ**—we don't wait for an event. We wait for a person—our Savior. Jesus promised, "*I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also*" (John 14:3).

3:21—who will transform [*metamorphe*, to change from one form to another] **the body of our humble state** [low earthly physical status] **into conformity** [similar in form] **with the body of His glory**—Paul described it this way:

“But someone will say, ‘How are the dead raised? And with what kind of body do they come?’ You fool! That which you sow does not come to life unless it dies; and that which you sow, you do not sow the body which is to be, but a bare grain, perhaps of wheat or of something else. But God gives it a body just as He wished, and to each of the seeds a body of its own. All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one flesh of men, and another flesh of beasts, and another flesh of birds, and another of fish. There are also heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is one, and the glory of the earthly is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable body, it is raised an imperishable body; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. So also it is written, ‘The first man, Adam, became a living soul.’ The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual. The first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven. As is the earthy, so also are those who are earthy; and as is the heavenly, so also are those who are heavenly. Just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we will also bear the image of the heavenly” (1 Cor 15:35-49).

—**by the exertion** [to be engaged in some activity or function, with the focus upon the energy or force involved] **of the power that He has**—the power of His Word that created the world (John 1:1-3), and will destroy this earth (2 Pet 3:5-7).

—**even to subject all things to Himself**—to bring everything under His control (Col 1:16-20)

AN APPLICATION—We begin with a physical body, and have a born-again spiritual body, but we will be transformed, *raised an imperishable body...raised in glory...raised in power*, into a resurrected eternal body, like Christ’s resurrected body. That’s our eternal body.

IV. Enablement for Living the Christian Life (4:1-23)

A. Christ at the center (4:1-7)

1. Standing fast in Him (4:1-3)

4:1—Therefore, my beloved brethren—Paul called them “brethren” four times (1:12; 3:1, 17; 4:8), “beloved” twice (2:12 and here), and “beloved brethren” once (here). The church age is one of believers who are part of a body, a family, with Christ as the Head (Eph 1:22-23) [not a nation, as Israel in the OT, and not an institution]

—**whom I long to see**, an expression that does not appear anywhere else in the New Testament. Paul’s yearning affection is to be with the Philippian believers in person.

—**my joy** [today] **and crown** [wreath of victory, future reward of being with them in heaven],

—**in this way**—the next verses which describe the way believers can stand firm in the Lord

—**stand firm** [one word—continue to stand, imperative verb] **in the Lord**—1 Cor 15:58; 16:13; Gal 5:1; Eph 6:11, 13, 14; Col 2:5; 1 Thess 3:8; 2 Thess 2:15; 1 Pet 5:12; 2 Pet 3:16-17. Be sure to be standing firm in the true knowledge of Jesus. There are many antichrists to persuade us to follow a Jesus that is not described in the Bible.

AN APPLICATION—Do we change what the Bible says about Jesus to conform to what we think He should be like or want Him to be like, or do we change what we think He is like to conform to what the Scriptures actually say is true knowledge of Him?

—**my beloved**—the adjective form of *agape*, the deepest and strongest Greek word for “love.”

AN APPLICATION—to “stand firm” is strong, fixed, unmoveable, remain effective. *“Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might...stand firm against the schemes of the devil...take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day...stand firm...stand firm therefore...”* (Eph 6:10-14). Paul will next describe ways to stand firm.

4:2—*I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche*—by addressing them individually, he put the responsibility on both of them, it emphasizes his “urging” over each of them
—**to live in harmony** [a particular attitude] **in the Lord**—these women were part of the body of believers there in Philippi, they were not outsiders, and their issue was not doctrinal or Paul would be addressing that, but their personality disharmony was having an effect on the other believers. Paul had earlier hinted of discord among the Philippians in his exhortation to *“do all things without grumbling or disputing”* (2:14). They were contentious rather than content. Peter also wrote, *“All of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit”* (1 Pet 3:8). Selfish pride is often the source of disharmony. Where there is disharmony, believers are not standing firm. They can find themselves associating with a person instead of Christ as the Head. Causing divisions.

AN APPLICATION—As believers, we can have personal preferences (Rom 14), but do not judge others by your preferences and do not think you are righteous because you keep your own preferences. The body is made up of different parts. Each part has its unique function (1 Cor 12:14-24). Appreciate that in others. [And Christ is the only Head!]

4:3—*Indeed* [“yes, yes it is true,” strong affirmation] ***true companion***—Gk. *Syzygus* (“yokefellow”—the picture of two oxen pulling the same load). This is likely a proper name of a man Paul is addressing.

—***I ask you also to help these women***—The construction of “I ask,” followed by a finite verb (an imperative “help”), where the infinitive introduces a direct quotation, as would have been expected, intensifies the sense of urgency: “Help them! You must! It is an order, even though I ask you!” [WBC—NT].

—***who have shared my struggle in the cause of the gospel***—these women were not to be degraded because of their disagreements. But Paul held them in high esteem as his co-workers for the gospel there in Philippi.

—***together with Clement also***—nothing is known of Clement except he is a fellow worker for the gospel there in Philippi

—***and the rest of my fellow workers***—in fact, all the believers in Philippi were fellow workers for the gospel

AN APPLICATION—Euodia and Syntyche reveal that even the most mature, faithful, and committed people can become so selfish as to be embroiled in controversy if they are not diligent to walk humbly with their God (Micah 6:8). What kind of controversies are quite common among believers?

—***whose names are in the book of life***—It doesn’t matter if their names are not in Philippians. What is important is that their names are in the book of life (Ex 32:32; Ps 69:28; Dan 12:1; Mal 3:16–17; Luke 10:20; Heb 12:12; Rev 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12, 15; 21:27; 22:19). Their names were written there in eternity past (Matt 25:34; Eph 1:4; 2 Tim 1:9).

Five brief exhortations for Christian living:

2. Rejoicing in Him (4:4)

(1) **4:4—Rejoice**—“How can people be commanded to produce an emotion? But joy is not a feeling; it is the deep-down confidence that God is in control of everything for the believer’s good and His own glory, and thus all is well no matter what the circumstances” [MacArthur, *Philippians*]

—**in the Lord**—those who know great truths about God find it easy to rejoice. But those who know little about God, find it hard to rejoice. Spiritual stability is directly related to how a person thinks about God. Tozer wrote, “What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.” [A. W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*]

—**always**—“rejoice” is a present imperative, a continual, habitual practice

—**again I will say, rejoice!** Paul wrote, “*For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain*” (Phil 1:21)

AN APPLICATION—For sure, circumstances, such as general wickedness, sorrow, misery, sickness, death, are all usually not reasons for joy. Also, people are generally not a reliable source of joy, since they change, hurt, and disappoint. Only God can be a source of continual rejoicing. He is the Living God. He is in control. When faced with the invasion of the Babylonians, Habakkuk wrote, “*...In my place I tremble. Because I must wait quietly for the day of distress, For the people to arise who will invade us. Though the fig tree should not blossom And there be no fruit on the vines, Though the yield of the olive should fail And the fields produce no food, Though the flock should be cut off from the fold And there be no cattle in the stalls, Yet I will exult in the LORD, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation. The Lord GOD is my strength, And He has made my feet like hinds’ feet, And makes me walk on my high places*” (Habakkuk 3:16-19). What could you say or do to express that joy to others?

3. Living in the light of His presence (4:5-7)

(2) **4:5—Let your gentle** [forebearing, non-retaliatory] **spirit**—Joy is primarily on the inside, not necessarily observed by others, but forbearance is primarily seen on the outside. No single English word is adequate. Involved is the willingness to yield one’s personal rights and to show consideration and gentleness to others.

AN APPLICATION—Paul describes this so well in his “love” chapter of 1 Corinthians 13:4-7—*Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.*”

—**be known** [“evident”] **to all men**—not just to family, friends, or believers, but to **all men**. It is not conditioned on the person, but on your attitude and actions, irrespective of the other person. [Of course, truth must not be sacrificed.]

—**The Lord is near**—“near,” can refer both to space and time. It may mean that the Lord is close, present, and hence aware of a person’s conduct, concerned about a person’s attitude, available to come to a person’s aid. OR it may mean that Jesus as the Judge is near, and He will bring justice. OR it may be referring to the Rapture, and His reward will be with Him. For sure, our focus should be on the eternal, rather than anything we may have to bear in this life.

(3) **4:6—Be anxious** [worry] **for nothing**—Peter wrote, “*casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you*” (1 Peter 5:7). Notice this is a promise for individual believers in

Christ. [The Old Testament contained covenants God made with the nation Israel, but there is no nation in our age. Only individual promises.]

—**but in everything**—notice the preposition “in” not “for.” In every situation, we can go to God in prayer and give our worry to Him. He does not say to be thankful “for” everything.

—**by prayer**—when worry comes, go to God in prayer—maybe over and over. This is our general communication with God (not His with us—that is in the pages of Scripture).

—**and supplication**—requests

—**with thanksgiving**—for past gifts of God’s grace and mercy

—**let your requests be made known to God.** “People become worried, anxious, and fearful because they do not trust in God’s wisdom, power, or goodness. They fear that God is not wise enough, strong enough, or good enough to prevent disaster. It may be that this sinful doubt is because their knowledge of Him is faulty, or that sin in their lives has crippled their faith” (MacArthur, *Philippians*)

4:7—And the peace of God—Isaiah wrote, “*The steadfast of mind You will keep in perfect peace, because he trusts in You*” (Isa 26:3). Jesus said, “*Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful*” (John 14:27).

AN APPLICATION—This verse does not promise peace as the indicator of God’s will when we are praying about what we should do. Paul did not say here that if we need to make a decision, God will make His will known to us by giving us peace about the right choice. The promise of this verse is that if we pray, rather than worry (v. 6), God will give us peace. Anxiety brings no peace, but praying does [Constable, *Philippians*] If not for peace, for what should we pray when we want God’s will when we need to make a decision? [James 1:5]

—**which surpasses all comprehension**—It transcends human intellectual powers, human analysis, human insights, and human understanding. It is superior to human scheming, human devices, and human solutions, since its source is the God whose judgments are unsearchable and whose ways are unfathomable (Rom. 11:33) [MacArthur, *Philippians*]

—**will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus**—it’s not peace about the situation but peace about the anxiety.

AN APPLICATION—Sometimes our anxieties are like fortresses—they just won’t leave our minds. But Paul wrote, “*For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ* (2 Cor 10:3-5). Destroying speculations/worries can seem like fortresses, but God specializes in the destruction of those fortresses. It surpasses all comprehension. How often should we pray about an anxiety? Seventy times seven?

B. God’s presence with believers (4:8-9)

1. Thinking worthy thoughts (4:8)

(4) **4:8—Finally, brethren**—Paul’s conclusion on spiritual stability. He sums up what he has already said as well as showing us how to implement those things.

—**whatever is true**—The Word of God is what is **true**. Jesus said to the Father, “*Your word is truth*” (John 17:17). The Bible is true because the “God of truth” (Ps 31:5; Isa 65:16; Eph 4:21) inspired it. Thinking on **whatever is true** means reading, analyzing, and meditating on the Word of God. Paul wrote, “*Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the*

renewing of your mind” (Rom 12:2). Jesus said, “God is Spirit; and they who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24).

“Faith, according to our Lord’s teaching in this paragraph, is primarily thinking; and the whole trouble with a man of little faith is that he does not think. He allows circumstances to bludgeon him. That is the real difficulty in life. Life comes to us with a club in its hand and strikes us upon the head, and we become incapable of thought, helpless and defeated. The way to avoid that, according to our Lord, is to think. We must spend more time in studying our Lord’s lessons in observation and deduction. The Bible is full of logic, and we must never think of faith as something purely mystical. We do not just sit down in an armchair and expect marvelous things to happen to us. That is not Christian faith. Christian faith is essentially thinking. . . . The trouble with most people, however, is that they will not think. Instead of doing this, they sit down and ask, What is going to happen to me? What can I do? That is the absence of thought; it is surrender, it is defeat. Our Lord, here, is urging us to think, and to think in a Christian manner. That is the very essence of faith. Faith, if you like, can be defined like this: It is a man insisting upon thinking when everything seems determined to bludgeon and knock him down in an intellectual sense. The trouble with the person of little faith is that, instead of controlling his own thought, his thought is being controlled by something else, and, as we put it, he goes round and round in circles. That is the essence of worry. . . . That is not thought; that is the absence of thought, a failure to think.” [Studies in the Sermon on the Mount, D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971, 2:129–30]

AN APPLICATION—How could we apply “thinking” to our reading of Scripture?

The remaining seven virtuous categories of thought are all based on the truth of God’s Word.

—**whatever** [plural, suggesting that several things could be included under each heading]

—**is honorable**—of good character, worthy of respect

—**whatever is right**—conforming to God’s standards

—**whatever is pure**—not mixed with moral impurity, or religious impurity, true knowledge of God and Scripture [...*constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine* (1 Tim 4:6)]

—**whatever is lovely**—used only here in the NT, promotes peace rather than conflict, i.e., gracious speech

—**whatever is of good repute**—used only here in the NT, what is positive and constructive rather than negative and destructive

—**if**—a marker of contrast by designating an exception. Paul forces the reader to exercise their own discernment and thinking and then choose what to dwell on in our thoughts.

—**there is any excellence**—outstanding goodness

—**and if**—a marker of contrast by designating an exception. Paul forces the reader to exercise their own discernment and thinking and then choose what to dwell on in our thoughts.

—**anything worthy of praise**—to speak of the excellence of a person, object, or event

—**dwell on these things**—Focus your mind on these things [Gk word “dwell” used by Paul 34 of the 40 times it appears in the NT]. Spiritual stability is a result of how a person thinks.

People’s lives are a product of their thoughts. “*For as he thinks within himself, so he is*” (Prov 23:7). Jesus said, “*That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man*” (Mark 7:20-23). “*Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life*” (Prov 4:23).

“The focus today is on emotion and pragmatism, and the importance of serious thinking about biblical truth is downplayed. People no longer ask “Is it true?” but “Does it work?” and “How will it make me feel?” Those latter two questions serve as a working definition of truth in our society that rejects the concept of absolute divine truth. Truth is whatever works and produces positive emotions. Sadly, such pragmatism and emotionalism has crept even into theology. The church is often more concerned about whether something will be divisive or offensive than whether it is biblically true” [MacArthur, “*Philippians*”]

AN APPLICATION—The greatest area of sin in the believer’s life is not the area of actions but the area of thoughts. Each of these descriptions are decisions we make in our thoughts. Some say you cannot control what you think about. Things just pop into your mind. What can we do to control our thinking?

2. Doing worthy deeds (4:9)

(5) **4:9**—*The things you have learned* [“disciple”]—Paul as their teacher—but they didn’t just listen or agree, they learned it, with the purpose of putting it into practice.

—**and received**—Paul said of the Thessalonian believers: “*For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe*” (1 Thess. 2:13).

—**and heard and seen in me**—Paul as their example in speech and conduct, what kind of person Paul was, how he faced the trials in his own life. What others saw and heard from Paul as well as what the Philippian believers saw and heard.

—**practice these things**—what you believe in verse 8 in your heart will flow into what you practice in verse 9. Like a doctor “practices” medicine, so believers “practice” these things.

—**and the God of peace will be with you**—in verse 7 he said God’s peace would be with them, but now he says that God Himself, who gives peace, will be with them.

AN APPLICATION—The church was “*built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone*” (Eph 2:20). The apostles were the writers of this new age of grace, which had been given to them by revelation from God (Eph 3:3-5), but it was also modeled by them. They were living now as Christians, not as Jews. What did that look like? Paul said to practice what they heard and saw in him.

C. God’s supply of human needs (4:10-20)

1. The lesson of contentment (4:10-13)

4:10—**But** [not a contrast but introducing a new idea] ***I rejoiced in the Lord*** [not at the particular generosity of the Philippians, but it is his first inclination, as in the book 16 times he rejoices in the Lord]

—**greatly** [“immensely,” not found elsewhere in NT]—as he has commanded us to do (4:4). Paul saw everything as connected to the Lord Jesus.

—**that** [because] **now at last** [after an extended period of time] ***you have revived*** [used of plants blossoming in the spring] ***your concern*** [“thoughtful care”] **for me**—not for the gift itself but because it was evidence of their love for him, sent with Epaphroditus (v. 18) to Rome. Paul wasn’t complaining that they had done nothing for a while, but rather it’s like he is rejoicing over the signs of spring after a hard winter.

—**indeed, you were concerned before**—they had supported him in his ministries to Thessalonica and Berea (Acts 17:1-13) and Athens and Corinth (Acts 17:14–18:18). He knew they were concerned before, but for whatever reason,....

—**but you lacked opportunity**—maybe they did not even know where he was at the time, or they may not have had a reliable way to send the money or the weather kept them from traveling. The believers were not to blame but rather the circumstances (opportunities) were beyond their control.

4:11—Not that I speak from want—not because he needed their money, but based on what he had learned.

—**for I have learned**—not only do others learn from what they see in Paul (v. 10), but Paul himself was learning. He was not automatically content in all circumstances. But he learned to be.

—**to be content**—[a Greek word used only here in the NT] being content has to be learned. It is not automatic to anyone. It is to be satisfied with a certain level, not wishing for more. [It almost seems easier to understand “discontent”—unhappiness, envy, frustration, irritation, annoyance, unsatisfied, resentment...]

—**in whatever circumstances I am**—not because he was self-sufficient but because Christ was the One who strengthened him to get thru the circumstances (v. 13).

AN APPLICATION—Paul is not talking here about being spiritually content. His whole book has been about moving toward maturity, and away from false teaching. In this particular paragraph, though, he is specifically talking about physical circumstances.

AN APPLICATION—Those who live for themselves will never be content because for them contentment is only when their circumstances are exactly as they want them to be—and that will never happen!!!

AN APPLICATION—It seems that “need” has become the number one value in our culture creating discontent. The goal of life for people becomes getting their needs met. Then there is a blurring of the distinction between needs and wants. In practice, virtually everything has become a “need.” Even churches often build their ministries around people’s “felt needs.”

4:12—I know—he knows because he has learned (v. 11)

—**how to get along with humble means**—i.e., in poverty, with very little material things (physically, on this earth, not spiritual needs)

—**and I also know** [has learned] **how to live in prosperity**—to have more than one needs (physically, on this earth, not spiritual needs)

—**in any and every circumstance**—read 2 Corinthians 11:23-33. There is no indication that he preferred one state over the other.

—**I have learned** [again (as in v. 11)—it was not an automatic response, it was a learned response (to gain an understanding of, to comprehend, to grasp)

—**the secret**—the contentment in all these circumstances was something he learned as he properly responded to those circumstances]

—**of being filled**—this is used of satisfying the needs of a hungry crowd (Matt 14:20) and birds gorging themselves on the dead unbelievers at the Second Coming (Rev 19:21)

—**and going hungry**—opposite of “filled” is an absence of food, and the resulting hunger

—**both of having abundance and suffering need**—both poverty and wealth bring their own temptations and discontent.

AN APPLICATION—Almost always, we look at the person who has more abundance than us and desire what they have, creating our discontent. Rarely do we look at the person who has less than us (oddly enough, that does not usually result in contentment either).

AN APPLICATION—“John Wesley is reported to have said that he did not know which dishonored God the most—to doubt His love and care, or to curse and swear. Yet every saint would shrink from the latter with abhorrence, while many of us have no sense of the wrong we do when we fret and worry.” [Ironsides, *Notes on Philippians*, p. 100]

4:13—*I can do all things* [not “all things” absolutely, but the abundance and suffering needs he’s been talking about] —***through Him who strengthens me***—often this verse is used out of its context. But verses 11-12 are the context. Paul has learned contentment, in whatever circumstances, thru Christ who strengthens him. His source was Christ. His reliance was upon the strength that Christ supplied, not on the circumstances themselves or even on his abilities.

2. The blessing of giving and receiving (4:14-20)

4:14—***Nevertheless***—[except, but, contrast] If the letter had ended with v. 13, they could have concluded that Paul neither needed nor appreciated their gift for him.

—***you have done well to share*** [lit. “having become partners with”] ***with me in my affliction***—Paul was truly grateful for their gift, which acknowledged Paul’s affliction, and actually shared in his affliction with him by helping him.

AN APPLICATION—It reminds me of what David did. After a battle, he said, “*for as his share is who goes down to the battle, so shall his share be who stays by the baggage; they shall share alike*” (1 Sam 30:24). That’s how I looked at those who made it possible for us to minister in other towns, states, and countries over the years. We shared in the ministry together.

4:15-16—***You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I left Macedonia***—maybe ten years earlier

—***no church*** [Gk. *ekklesia*, called-out ones] ***shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone***—

—***for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs***—the next town he visited after leaving Philippi (Acts 17:1). Their generosity (as well as Paul’s hard work) allowed him to minister free of charge in Thessalonica (1 Thess 2:9; 2 Thess 3:8) and in Corinth (Acts 18:5; 2 Cor 11:8).

4:17—***Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account***—it was not only a personal benefit to Paul but it was a spiritual benefit to them.

4:18—***But I have received everything in full***—like a receipt

—***and have an abundance***—“to overflow” or “to have more than enough”

—***I am [amply supplied]***—Gk. one word—to be filled up completely

—***having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent***—it sounds like Paul was overwhelmed by their generosity that was brought to him by Epaphroditus

—***a fragrant aroma***—see Genesis 8:20-21; Exodus 29:18; Leviticus 1:9, 13, 17; Numbers 15:3—drawing on Old Testament sacrifice descriptions

—***an acceptable sacrifice***—see Leviticus 19:5; 22:29; Isaiah 56:7

—***well-pleasing to God***—see Psalm 51:19

4:19—***And my God will supply all your needs***—the same word for “needs” in verse 16, describing physical needs. “*Every good thing bestowed and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights...*” (James 1:17). God is the source of the supply.

—**according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus**—not “out of” His riches, but “according to” His riches. Lit. “God will meet every need you have in a glorious manner.” Something Paul himself could not do for them, or for himself. When needs are supplied, it causes us to give glory to God—when we are healed from a sickness, when we have physical needs, etc.

4:20—Now to our God and Father be the glory forever and ever. Amen—the *sine quo non* of dispensationalism—that all things are done for the purpose of giving glory to God (not for the salvation of man, except as that gives glory to God). *Amen* is agreement.

D. Conclusion (4:21-23)

4:21—Greet every saint in Christ Jesus—a saint is someone who is “in Christ Jesus,” who is both the source and the focus of Paul and the Philippian believers.

—**The brethren who are with me greet you**—Paul’s ministry associates, like Timothy

4:22—All the saints greet you [Rom 16:1-15], the believers there in Rome

—**especially those of Caesar’s household**—probably because of his contacts while under house arrest, with soldiers guarding him (Acts 28:16).

4:23—The grace—gift of God’s favor that comes through a relationship with Jesus Christ

—**of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit** [also in Philemon 25; similar to Gal 6:18]. He is the theme of this epistle, being mentioned almost 40 times in 4 chapters.

APPENDIX 1—

“The Incarnation of God the Son”

There are several aspects of the incarnation of God the Son that merit clarification.

First, God the Son existed throughout eternity. The incarnation was not the beginning of His existence (John 1:1-3; Col. 1:15-17).

Second, when the Son became incarnate He took upon Himself full humanity. He became a man in every essential respect. Specifically, He didn't just take a human body, but He also took a human personality (emotions, intellect, and will), soul (the capacity to interact with other humans), and spirit (the capacity to interact with God). He was fully human in the non-material aspects of humanity, not just the material (physical) aspects. Every human being, including Jesus Christ, possesses both material (physical) characteristics and immaterial (spiritual) characteristics. Both are essential to humanity.

Third, the incarnation does not mean Jesus took a sinful human nature when He became a man. Sin is not an essential part of being human. God created man without sin, and then Adam and Eve chose to sin. Sin has affected all human beings since the Fall, but being sinful is not an essential part of being human. Sin is, in a sense, foreign to humanity. It's a stain that has discolored every aspect of every person (total depravity). That Jesus was not sinful is clear from two facts:

First, He committed no sins (1 Pet. 2:22). This includes thoughts as well as actions, omissions as well as commissions, little sins as well as big sins. In no way did Jesus ever deviate from God's will for human beings.

Second, He did not inherit a sinful nature from His human father, as all other human beings do, since He was conceived by the Holy Spirit (Matt. 1:23; Luke 1:35). The virgin birth of Jesus guarantees His sinless human nature.

Fourth, whereas Jesus assumed a human body and a human nature at His birth, He has never and will never cease to be fully human as well as fully divine. When Jesus Christ returns to the earth at His Second Coming, He will have a human body and a human nature, as He did when He ascended into heaven (Acts 1:11). One day we will see Jesus as His disciples saw Him. And He will remain that way throughout eternity. Today there is a "Man" in heaven for us.

Fifth, the body that Jesus was born with is not the same kind of body that He arose from the dead with. He was born with a mortal body (i.e., one that could die), but He was raised with an immortal body (i.e., one that cannot and will never die). There are sufficient similarities between these bodies such that His disciples recognized Jesus after His resurrection, but there were some dissimilarities such that they had trouble, occasionally, recognizing Him.

Sixth, in the Incarnation, Jesus did not cease to be fully God. What Jesus "emptied Himself" of when He became a human (Phil. 2:7) was not His deity. It was the glory that He had enjoyed with the Father and the Spirit before the Incarnation. Rather than retaining this glory, the Son of God assumed the limitations of humanity (sin apart). Furthermore, He became a servant among humans, which extended to dying for the sins of humanity in the most horribly agonizing and humiliating way possible (i.e., by crucifixion).

Seventh, during Jesus earthly ministry, He sometimes demonstrated the qualities of full humanity, and sometimes the qualities of full deity. For example:

As a man Jesus . . .	As God Jesus . . .
Became weary.	Invited the weary to find rest in Him.
Became hungry.	Presented Himself as the bread of life.
Became thirsty.	Claimed to be the water of life.
Suffered great agony.	Was impervious to suffering and healed the afflictions of others.
Grew in favor with God and man.	Is the same yesterday, today, and forever.
Experienced temptation.	Could not experience temptation.
Said He didn't know some things.	Is omniscient.
Was present in only one place at a time.	Is omnipresent.
Operated in the power of the Holy Spirit.	Operated in His own power and authority.
Said the Father was greater than He.	Claimed that He and the Father are equal.
Prayed.	Received and answered the prayers of others.
Wept at the tomb of the dead.	Raised the dead.
Asked who people said He was.	Knew what people were thinking.
Asked why God had forsaken Him.	Claimed that God was always with Him.
Died.	Is eternal and gives eternal life to those who trust Him.
Was God's ideal man.	Is man's ideal God.

These are some of the paradoxes involved in the dual divine-human natures of Christ following His incarnation. It's because of these paradoxes that we sometimes have difficulty understanding the accounts of Jesus' words and works in the Gospels. He was like no other person, not because He was not fully human, but because He was also fully God.

As God, the incarnate Christ reveals God and deserves our worship and service. As Man, He reveals what God intended humans to be, and He provides the perfect example of how we should live as human beings.

[2017 Edition Dr. Constable's *Notes on Philipians*, p. 89]

APPENDIX 2— **“A Carrot, An Egg, and A Cup of Coffee”**

A young woman went to her mother and told her about her life, and how things were so hard for her. She did not know how she was going to make it, and wanted to give up. She was tired of fighting and struggling. It seemed that whenever one problem was solved, a new one arose.

Her mother took her to the kitchen. She filled three pots with water and placed each on a high fire. Soon the pots came to boil. In the first she placed carrots, in the second she placed eggs, and in the last she placed ground coffee beans. She let them sit and boil, without saying a word.

In about twenty minutes she turned off the burners. She took the carrots out and placed them in a bowl. She pulled the eggs out and placed them in a bowl. Then she ladled the coffee out into a bowl. Turning to her daughter, she asked, “Tell me, what do you see?” “Carrots, eggs, and coffee,” she replied.

Her mother brought her closer, and asked her to feel the carrots. She did, and noted that they were soft. The mother then asked the daughter to take an egg and break it. After pulling off the shell, she observed the hard-boiled egg. Finally, the mother asked the daughter to sip the coffee. The daughter smiled as she tasted its rich flavor.

The daughter then asked, “What does it mean, mother?”

Her mother explained that each of these objects had faced the same adversity: boiling water. But each reacted differently. The carrot went in strong, hard, and unrelenting. However, after being subjected to the boiling water, it softened and became weak.

The egg had been fragile. Its thin outer shell had protected its liquid interior, but after sitting in the boiling water, its inside became hardened.

The ground coffee beans were unique, however. After they were in the boiling water, they had changed the water. “Which are you?” the mother asked her daughter. “When adversity knocks on your door, how do you respond? Are you a carrot, an egg, or a coffee bean?”

Which of these three am I (reader)? Am I the carrot, that seems strong, but with pain and adversity do I wilt and become soft and lose my strength? Am I the egg, that starts with a malleable heart, but changes with the heat? Did I have a fluid spirit, but after a death, a

breakup, a financial hardship or some other trial, have I become hardened and stiff? Does my shell look the same, but on the inside am I bitter and tough, with a stiff spirit and a hard heart?

Or am I like the coffee bean? The coffee bean actually changes the hot water, the very circumstance that brings the pain. When the water containing the coffee beans gets hot, it becomes coffee, and releases its fragrance and flavor. If you are like the coffee bean, when things are at their worst, you improve your influence and change the situation around you. When the hour is the darkest, and the trials are their greatest, do you have a positive effect on those around you? How do you handle adversity?

Are you a carrot, an egg, or a coffee bean? [2017 Edition Dr. Constable's *Notes on Philippians*, p. 91]