

Philippians

INTRODUCTION

The Church at Philippi appears to have been one of the purest of the Apostolic age, and beyond any other called out the Apostle's thankfulness and commendation.

The occasion of the Epistle seems to have been the return of Epaphroditus, who had brought a gift from Paul's friends in Philippi, but had been seized by a dangerous illness. Paul was a prisoner in his own hired house in Rome and was anticipating his trial before the emperor.

There is nothing controversial in this letter. The peace of God keeps the Apostle's mind and heart, and out of it pours a tide of deep and tender love. The hope of being alive at Christ's coming is still his guiding star. His citizenship is in heaven, and all that he has forfeited of earthly wealth and joy is more than compensated for by what he has found in Christ.

(Through the Bible Day by Day, F. B. Meyer)

Philippians 1:1-11

The first chapter of Philippians gives us a portrait of the apostle's own heart and character. It is drawn by his own hand. Yet he is free from egotism, and even unconscious of himself while so fully unfolding his inmost heart. It is possible for us to reveal ourselves in perfect transparency, and yet have no thought of ourselves at all, even as a little child most completely reveals itself and yet most completely forgets itself. A letter has this advantage over a sermon, in that it lets out the heart of the writer, and the teachings of the New Testament are not sermons or homilies, but letters of affection.

The first trait that strikes us in this sketch is the affectionateness of Paul's spirit. Sanctification does not take out of our hearts the spirit of tenderness and love. It purifies and intensifies every heartstring. "I have you in my heart" (1:7), he says, and "God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus" (1:8).

The very cords of his sensitive being were alive with tender yearning; for these beloved friends are children in the Lord. The nearer we get to Christ the nearer we get to Christian people, and the tenderer is every holy tie. And so in that exquisite picture of consecration that he has given us in the 12th chapter of Romans we find such passages as this, "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love" (12:10, KJV). And here we find him saying a little later, "If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose" (Philippians 2:1-2).

(The Christ in the Bible Commentary, A. B. Simpson)

Having the heart of Christ and His compassion transforms all human relationships; places love on a supernatural plane; enables us to love the unlovely, the unthankful and the indifferent; and impels us to prayer. (John Walvoord) **Since Saul (Paul's name prior to his conversion to Christ) was far from having this kind of love when we first meet him in the book of Acts, state here the dynamics you have discovered that changed him so utterly from that original dedicated hater of Christ and Christians.**

How do the words of Philippians 1:6 speak to you?

Philippians 1:12-14

Then there is the spirit of victorious faith over difficulties and trials. His (Paul's) was no soft, effeminate character languidly developed by easy, sentimental associations, but it was disciplined in the sturdy conflict of adversity and suffering. As he wrote these exquisite lines of courage, thankfulness and love, he was himself a prisoner in the Roman barracks, sleeping every night between two soldiers, and waiting to be brought before a cruel and wicked judge to be tried for his life. Yet he is so afraid that they (the Philippians) may be discouraged by his difficulties that he hastens to have them understand that "what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel" (1:12), and that his very bonds and afflictions have really led to more glorious results for the Master's cause. The soldiers that have been chained to him have been converted through his influence, and the brethren that were timid before have been encouraged by his brave example to give a bolder testimony for Christ. None of his trials move him or even depress him for a moment, but he rises supreme above them all in the singleness of his desire to glorify his Master. Brave, glorious spirit, undaunted, unintimidated, not discouraged by the persecutions of earth or the hate of hell, shining like a glowing star the brighter for the darkness around him, blooming like a sweet rose amid glaciers of the Alps, "sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything" (2 Corinthians 6:10).

(The Christ in the Bible Commentary, A. B. Simpson)

How can this kind of boldness and fearlessness be achieved in the lives of present-day Christians?

Gen. 18:23-32 Ex. 33:12-17 Prov. 14:26-27 Prov. 28:1 Prov. 30:5 1 Cor. 15:58 Eph. 2:10,18 Eph. 3:12
Heb. 4:16 Heb. 10:19-23 Heb. 13:6 Jas. 1:1-5 1 John 2:28 1 John 3:21 1 John 4:17

Philippians 1:15-18

Next there is victory over people. More trying even than circumstances, are human hearts, natures out of sympathy with us, souls that seem especially adjusted to irritate, lacerate and rasp our most sensitive feelings.

Paul speaks of some who "preach Christ out of envy and rivalry" (Philippians 1:15), and, under the very guise of goodness and service, aim only to humiliate and injure him. It is very hard to rise superior to people who misrepresent our best endeavors, oppose us in our holiest efforts and in the very name of religion are but emissaries of hate and evil. But Paul could stand even this so long as they preached Christ. Though it were for "contention," and in "pretense," he could

say, "The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice" (1:18). If the Master was glorified, if the truth was spread, if the gospel was made known, that was his one concern and his supreme satisfaction. Surely this is the nature larger, nobler than all the petty jealousies and rivalries of sects and parties. The thought may well cover with a blush of shame many who have used even their Christian work as a means of self-glorification or the gratification of bigotry, prejudice and controversy.

(The Christ in the Bible Commentary, A. B. Simpson)

Here Paul does not criticize a group who were preaching Christ, though they may have preached with the wrong motive. However, in chapter 3 he does have scathing remarks for those who were preaching the Gospel wrongfully. **What is the difference between the two—could there be inconsistency?**

Philippians 1:19-26

Next, Paul's devotion to Christ stands out. The secret of all this was his single-hearted devotion to Jesus Christ. The one thing he cared for, lived for, and was willing to die for, was that "Christ shall be magnified in my body whether it be by life, or by death" (1:20, KJV), and the one illustrious sentence in which he emblazons it forth like a passion sign of love is this immortal epigram, "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain" (1:21). This is the secret of every glorious soul and every earnest life: intense, fervid devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ. It was the one ambition of Paul's life, and like a great volcanic torrent it swept away everything in its current, transfused everything into its own burning flame, and made him the bond slave of Jesus Christ. "For Christ's love compels us" (2 Corinthians 5:14). It was not living for Christ, but it was living for Christ alone.

Paul displayed a holy indifference. His supreme motive of love to Christ raised him above every selfish preference and enabled him to care little for gain or loss, life or death for their own sakes. When he stopped to think whether he preferred to live or die, he was at a loss to determine. Personally he preferred to go and be with Christ, and yet when he thought of his work and his brethren he longed to remain with them. He was in that state of mind where the world could neither attract him nor distract him. Like General Gordon, when the Mahdi threatened him with death, he smiled in his face and said, "You could not do me a greater favor than thus quickly to introduce me into the presence of my best Friend, and the enjoyment of highest reward." Such men have nothing to lose, nothing to gain, nothing to fear. Life has found a perfect equilibrium by being poised from the center and fixed forever on its true axis in devotion to Christ alone.

Paul had a sublime confidence. His very indifference gave him faith. Because he did not care for life for its own sake, he knew that he should live, and was able to claim it, not for himself, but for Christ and for others; and so he could add, "Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith" (Philippians 1:25).

The way to have faith for healing is to give up your life for Christ, and then take it back from Christ for Christ. While we want even life for its own sake, we shall not be able to believe for it; but when it ceases to be our own and becomes a consecrated trust for Him, then we can say with him, "I know that I will remain, and I will continue" (1:25) until our life work is done.

(The Christ in the Bible Commentary, A. B. Simpson)

Those who live out their lives as a godly life, as Paul did, see what God is like. His desire was to magnify Christ either by his life or by his martyrdom. Paul could look beyond death and see Eternity. There is absolutely no comparison between life in this world, and the God-expanse of Eternity. **How can this desire be realized more in a true Christian's life?**

Rom. 8:28-39 Rom. 12:1,2 Rom. 12:17-21 Eph. 4:23,24 Titus 2:7,8 1 John 4:17-18 1 John 5:3-4

Philippians 1:27-30

Notice that remarkable expression, "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ ... to suffer," v. 29. This is an added honor conferred on us by our Lord. The King gives us the opportunity of lying in the stocks with Him, of standing at the same pillory, and of being crucified on the same Calvary. But those who have drunk of His cup shall share His throne. When earth and sky shall pass away, His fellow-sufferers shall be His chosen bodyguard and attendants in a world where all shall love and honor Him.

(Through the Bible Day by Day, F. B. Meyer)

How does our suffering honor Him? Are we the more willing to suffer for Him because He first suffered for us? Can we be more of a blessing and help to others going through great trials if we too have known some of that experience? At what point in the suffering does the grace (from God) come?

Philippians 2:1-8

Christ is more than a Pattern to us, more than a bright and glorious Example. He becomes the Power to reproduce that pattern and to transfer to our lives that example. Our text does not bind us to imitate Christ or have a mind like Him, but to have the *same* mind in us which was also in Christ Jesus. This is the deepest truth of all Christian experience. It is Christ Himself who comes to imitate Himself in us and reproduce His own life in the lives of His followers. This is the mystery of the gospel. This is the secret of the Lord. This is the power that sanctifies, that fills, that keeps the consecrated heart. This is the only way that we can be like Christ. And so we change the little song:

Give me a heart like Thine;
By Thy wonderful power,
By Thy grace every hour
Give me a heart like Thine.

to:

Give me Thy heart in mine;
By Thy wonderful power,
By Thy grace every hour
Give me Thy heart in mine.

The word "let" expresses the whole idea of the divine life. It is not our doing but His. We do not accomplish it, but we let Him live out His life within us. It is the "expulsive power of a new affection." It is the divine transcending the human. It is the "I no longer live, but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20). Even the teachers of holiness are in danger of substituting holiness for Him, a clean heart for the divine nature. The mystery of godliness is "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27).

The end of all experience is union with God. God has made everything for Himself, and the heart never rests till it receives Him and draws all its life from Him. Just as the flower needs the sunshine, and all its exquisite tints are but the outshining of the light that has first shone in, so the graces of the Christian life are but the reflection of the Christ who dwells within. Redemption is not the restoration of fallen man, but the new creation of a redeemed family under the headship of the second Adam on an infinitely higher plane than even unfallen humanity could ever have reached alone. "As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the man from heaven, so also are those who are of heaven" (1 Corinthians 15:48). We are first born of the Christ, then united to Him, just as Eve was formed out of her husband, and then wedded to Him. The redeemed soul is formed out of the Savior, and then united to Him in an everlasting bond of love and unity, more intimate than any human relationship can ever express.

It is not by a figure that Christ lives in us, in the sense of His truth, the ideas which He has inculcated in the gospel, or the influences which He brings to bear upon us. The message of godliness is nothing less than this: that the very person of Jesus is revealed to and formed in the sanctified soul, and our whole Christian life henceforth is a putting on of Christ and taking from Him moment by moment each grace that we need to live it out, so that it is literally true that "in him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28).

Do we want humility? We receive the spirit of humility from Him, and let the same mind be in us which was also in Him. Do we want love? We open our hearts for a baptism of His love and it flows into us and lives through us.

Do we want patience, courage, wisdom, anything? We simply put on the Lord Jesus, and "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5).

Does this destroy our individuality and make each of us simply an automation without will or responsibility? Certainly not. So perfect is the divine adjustment to our human nature, so delicately does God recognize in us the power of choice and the right of personal liberty, that He will not come until we invite Him, and He will not act except as we cooperate by constant yielding and receiving. The slightest hesitation on our part to follow will check His grace. He will not force Himself into our life, but He will meet the surrendered will and fill the heart that opens all its being to receive Him. Just as the flower is made to receive the sun and only reaches its individuality when filled with sunshine; just as the soil needs the rain and the seed, and only accomplishes the purpose of its being when it receives the seed and absorbs the rain; so the human heart is made for Christ and it is incomplete until it receives Him. He is the complement of its being, and it unfolds and blossoms into all its predestined powers when quickened by His life, and inspired by His presence, and planted and watered by His indwelling life and love.

The 15th chapter of the Gospel of John is perhaps the most perfect unfolding of this message of the abiding life. The three keynotes are "in him," "in us," and "abide." We are not to struggle. We are not to try. We are not to do. We are not to be. We are simply to let Him be and so abide that His life shall flow through us as the sap flows through the branches of the vine, and the rich clusters hang without an effort through the spontaneous life which flows through all the beautiful

organism of the plant.

The word "mind" (Philippians 2:5, KJV) here employed suggests that this is not only a spiritual experience but that it is also designed for our intellectual life, for our mental being, for our thoughts, affections, emotions and all the sensibilities of the soul as well as the spirit. Indeed, we have learned that it includes the body too, and there is no power of our redeemed humanity which this blessed Christ cannot fill, and of which He is not fitted to be the fountain of life, and the source of all our power, and the supply of all our need.

What an exquisite simplicity this gives to Christian life. It takes all the complications out of it. It is not a thousand things we have to do, but one. We are occupied with Him, and He takes care of us. We are not watching ourselves and keeping ourselves in constant strain, but we are sweetly abiding in Him. And just as the water flows from the fountain into all the pipes, just as the law of gravitation goes out from the sun to the smallest world that circles in its orbit around that central sun, so while we are attached to Him and in touch with Him it is true every moment, "Because I live, you also will live" (John 14:19). Thus we find such expressions as this, especially in the writings of Paul and John: "I can do everything through him who gives me strength" (Philippians 4:13). "No one who lives in him keeps on sinning" (1 John 3:6). "From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another" (John 1:16). "The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20).

In conclusion let us behold the divine Pattern in all its beauty and completeness, until it humbles us in the dust with the sense of our own failure. Then let us turn to the divine Original, and opening our hearts, receive Him with loving surrender and constant dependence. Thus shall this "mind be in [us] which was also in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5, KJV).

(The Christ in the Bible Commentary, A. B. Simpson)

In order to grasp more fully the glory and wonder of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, as given to us so fully by the Apostle Paul, note the extreme contrast between Him and Lucifer (who became Satan):

Jesus Christ

Lucifer (Satan)

Did not think of Himself; He thought only of others

He could not keep His privileges for Himself; He had to use them for others

Jesus said, "Thy will be done ..."

Lucifer said, "I will!"

Jesus was the Creator

Not satisfied to be a creature; he wanted to be the Creator

Jesus was glad to lay His life down for all who would believe

He was not satisfied being close to the throne of God; he desired to be on the throne of God!

Jesus desired nothing for Himself but that He might glorify His Father and bring many sons to Glory

Lucifer deliberately grasped after something that was beyond his reach, and as a result, plunged the whole human race into sin death

Others is the key word in the vocabulary of the Christian who exercises a submissive mind and heart. We certainly expect unsaved people to be selfish and grasping, but we do not expect this of Christians who have experienced the love of Christ and the fellowship of the Spirit. God does teach us how to live with "one another"—we are to prefer one another (Rom. 12:10). **Here, along with this verse, please look up the following, and prayerfully commit to these practices in your own Christian life: Edify one another (1 Thes 5:11); bear each other's burdens (Gal 6:2). We should not judge one another (Rom 14:13) but rather admonish one another (Rom 15:14).** Remember, Jesus not only taught these principles, but He became their Servant and example.

Philippians 2:9-16

It is impossible for us to sincerely pray, "Thy will be done" until our own will has, by the power of the Holy Spirit, been brought into complete subjection to God. Just so long as there is a secret (but real) preference in my heart, my judgment will be biased. While my heart is really set upon the attainment of a certain object, then I only mock God when I ask Him to make His way plain; and I am sure to misinterpret all His providences, twisting them to fit my own desire. If an obstacle is in my path, I then regard it as a "testing of faith"; if a barrier is removed, I at once jump to the conclusion that God is undertaking for me, when instead He may be testing, on the eve of giving me up to my own "heart's lust" (see Psalm 81:12).

This point is of supreme importance for those who desire their steps to be truly ordered of the Lord. We cannot discern His best for us while the heart has its own preference. Thus it is imperative to ask God to empty our hearts of all personal preferences, to remove any secret, set desire of our own. But often it is not easy to take this attitude before God, the more so if we are not in the habit of seeking grace to mortify the flesh. By nature each of us wants his own way and chafes against every curb placed upon us. Just as a photographic plate must be blank if it is to receive a picture upon it, so our hearts must be free from personal bias if God is to work in us "both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13).

(Gleanings In The Godhead, A. W. Pink)

If the flesh and the spirit are having a constant struggle in your life can you honestly say "Have Thine own way, Lord"? If we are having this problem what can we do about it?

Ezra 8:21 Job 28:28 Ps. 37:5 Isa. 66:2 Acts 13:3 Col. 4:2 Jam. 1:5-6

Philippians 2:17-30

The relation of Timothy to Paul was filial. "To Timothy, my true son in the faith" (1 Timothy 1:2) was Paul's usual salutation to his beloved disciple. Converted to God through the ministry of Paul, adopted by him from the beginning of his Christian life as his disciple companion and helper, and associated with him till the very close of the apostle's career in the most intimate and confidential relations, he could say of him, "I have no one else like him, who takes a genuine interest in your welfare. For everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel" (Philippians 2:20-22).

Timothy was an unselfish and disinterested helper and fellow-worker. Paul had found few such helpers. Even in apostolic days men used the Christian ministry to further selfish ends. "For everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 2:21). "I have no one else like him, who takes a genuine interest in your welfare" (2:20). But here was one truehearted shepherd who only desired the good of the flock and the things that would please the Chief Shepherd. It was more than human friendship; it was more than loyalty to a leader; it was more than zeal for a cause—it was a love for souls that "takes a genuine interest in your welfare" (2:20). It was the heart of the Master in the minister, pitying, sympathizing, entering into the very needs and conditions of the flock and caring for them even as Christ would care. Without this there can be no true service. "What I want is not your possessions but you" (2 Corinthians 12:14), the truehearted apostle could say. And so every true minister of Christ should be filled with the unselfish love, the disinterested aim, the shepherd heart—the very affection of Jesus Christ—toward the people for whom we stand in the Master's name. All others are but hirelings. These only are the true undershepherds of the sheep.

The story of Epaphroditus is unique. He belonged to the church in Philippi, and was sent to Rome by the Philippian church while Paul was there in prison. He was probably one of the elders or pastors of the Philippian church. Hearing of the apostle's sufferings, he made strenuous exertions to find him out and minister to him, and through his violent over-exertions, he became ill himself, dangerously ill. But so unselfish was he that he took special pains to conceal the knowledge of his sickness from his friends in Philippi lest they should be anxious about him. And when at length he found that they had heard the tidings he was "distressed" (Phil. 2:26) because they had heard that he had been sick. At length, however, God graciously restored him to health and spared the apostle the bitter sorrow which his death would have caused him, and Paul now sends him back to the Philippians as the bearer of this epistle and commends him to their confidence and love as one who "for the work of Christ, risking his life to make up for the help you could not give me" (2:30).

(The Christ in the Bible Commentary, A. B. Simpson)

The natural man in us has a tendency to look out for ourselves and not for the things of God. Not only do we need God working mightily in our lives, but we have to be committed in order to be empowered to serve Him. **How committed were Paul, Timothy and Epaphroditus?**

Phil. 3:2-10 2 Tim. 3:10-12

Today, also, God is raising up true servants of God, men and women who have caught that "high vision" and are allowing

God to fully use their life to bring many others to Him. **Can you name a few and speak briefly of his/her service to the Lord?**

The Devil is always busy. Latimer, who lit the evangelical candle in England, said 400 years ago to the bishops of England, "I would ask you a strong question. Who is the most diligent prelate in all England, that passes all the rest in doing his office?" And he added, "I will tell you. It is the Devil. He orders his business. Therefore, you prelates, learn of the Devil to be diligent in your office. If you will not learn of God, for shame, learn of the Devil!" A lazy, non-committed Christian is a terrible anomaly. He needs a fire lighted under him. The fire that comes from seeing Christ (1 Pet. 5:8).

Philippians 3:1-7

There is such a thing as natural virtue. There are moral differences in human nature, and God does not disparage or deprecate whatever goodness still remains after the wreck of the fall. Paul acknowledges that even he had been possessed of many qualities of virtue and morality. If any man had cause to have confidence in himself, surely he had. He gives a list of his virtues, and moral and religious advantages. He was strictly orthodox, born of Hebrew blood, circumcised according to the rigid ritual of Judaism, a "Hebrew of the Hebrews," a Pharisee of the Pharisees, blameless so far as outward righteousness was concerned, and intensely earnest so far as religious zeal could go. Yet all this he renounces and disclaims with one emphatic sentence, "But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ" (Philippians 3:7).

In order to receive the righteousness of Christ we must renounce all our own righteousness. The surrender which Christianity demands is not the abandoning of evil, but the renouncing of even that which is good for the sake of God's better and best. All his own righteousness and all his own rights Paul gladly surrendered. He had counted them loss. He had suffered their loss and then he had not allowed one lingering regret, one reluctant thought, but counted them all refuse, not worthy to speak about in comparison with the excellence of the knowledge and the glory of the righteousness of his precious Lord. He had accepted a new righteousness by faith from Christ, and it was all divine. He does not mean by this merely his justification from past sin through the imputed righteousness of Christ; but he means that he had accepted from his Lord an interior, intrinsic and personal righteousness, that his inward character and whole nature henceforth were not the result of self-culture but the infusion of the very life and spirit of his blessed Master.

(The Christ in the Bible Commentary, A. B. Simpson)

Paul had all the qualifications for becoming a great spiritual leader, but he counted it all loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. Paul knew that any confidence he had in the flesh would jeopardize his relationship with God and also taint his testimony. "Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord ..." (3:8) **The following question requires complete honesty and candor: How do you personally count (or regard) achievements in your present life, such as knowledge, possessions, wit, wisdom, education, success, etc. that have been accomplished heretofore in your own strength?**

1 Cor. 10:17-18 Gal. 3:2-5 Gal. 4:7-9 Eph. 2:8-10,12

Philippians 3:8-10

There is a deeper place of surrender than the renunciation of our righteousness. "I want to know Christ ... and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings" (3:10). Merely to die to our sinfulness or our righteousness is but a preliminary of holy character. The essence of it is to enter into the most profound and perfect union with the Lord Jesus even to the extent of longing to be made partakers of His very sufferings.

I once knew a Christian friend who offered this singular prayer for a loved one, and I know nothing that ever impressed me more. "Lord," she said, "I ask Thee that Thou wilt lay on me all the burdens, sufferings, trials and needs of my friend. I do not ask to share the joys, but I do ask if there be pain, pressure, danger, that I can bear, to lay it upon me in sympathy fellowship, prayer, and the power to lift and help so that the life for which I suffer may be the more free to serve and work for Thee."

Love always longs to bear another's pain, and so the heart of the apostle intensely longed to share the sufferings of Christ. There is a sense in which this may be done if we live near enough to His heart.

There are some sufferings which we cannot call the sufferings of Christ. They are our own. The sufferings which we bring upon ourselves by sin or folly we have no right to call His sufferings. The sufferings that come to us even through sickness we may lay on Him, for he has already borne them, and He does not ask us to bear them again if we are walking in His will and trusting in His Word. The reproaches and persecutions, as we call them, which we bring upon ourselves by indiscretion or wrongdoing, these are not the sufferings of Christ, although He lovingly helps us in the trials which we needlessly endure.

Then He had sufferings which we cannot share. His vicarious suffering as our Substitute and Sacrifice for sin, we can never endure and never need to. Once for all He has appeared to "do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Hebrews 9:26), and "no sacrifice for sins is left" (10:26).

But there are sufferings which we may share with Him. There was His voluntary self-sacrifice for the world's salvation into which we may enter as we give ourselves for others and sacrifice the pleasures of the world that we may walk with Him. There is again the misunderstanding and loneliness, persecution and distress which will come to all who live godly in Christ Jesus in every age, and which we may joyfully accept, counting it a privilege that we are esteemed worthy to suffer for the name of Jesus. And deeper than all, there is the spirit of sympathy with the suffering around us, the tempted and tried, the sorrows and even the sins of a lost world. This is the deepest element in the priesthood of Christ which His disciples may share. "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses" (Heb. 4:15). The Christlike life will enter with Him into His deep sense of the needs of others, into the ministry of prayer and agony for the sins and sorrows of men and into His deepest thoughts and tenderest solicitude for the lost world. Paul tells us in his epistles of the burdens, care and griefs that came upon him constantly for the cause of His Master and the condition of his brethren.

Now in his letter to the Colossians he tells us, "Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church" (1:24). That is to say, Christ has left certain sufferings for His body, the Church, to finish, and Paul rejoiced in being partaker of these sufferings. Writing to the Philippians he says of this very thing, "But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. So you too should be glad and rejoice with me" (2:17). It was his joy and glory to be a living sacrifice for his beloved brethren, and he expected them to respond in the same spirit, "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2). And accordingly in one of his letters to the Corinthians, he exclaims, "Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn? Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches" (2 Corinthians 11:29, 28).

(The Christ in the Bible Commentary, A. B. Simpson)

Phil 3:8-10 says, "that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith; that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death."

From the Quest Study Bible, let us look at this same Scripture (Phil. 3:8-11): "What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. I want to know Christ and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead." **After prayerfully reading and comparing these awe-inspiring and powerful Scriptures, please comment as best you can on the depth of spiritual commitment in Paul's heart, and speak to that which impresses you greatly, if it does. Could anyone aspire more highly (spiritually) than did Paul? What particularly challenges our own hearts as we live in times similar, yet different, from that in which he lived?**

Rom. 11:29-36 Rom. 12:1-2 Eph. 1:13-14 Matt. 20:21-22 2 Tim. 2:11-13

In chapter 11 of Hebrews, known as the Faith Chapter, we are told about numerous saints of the Old Testament who are being cited now for their great faith (11 of whom are named). Though all were sinners in their lives, yet here God remembers none of their sins. However, in speaking of New Testament saints (which includes ourselves), we all find it difficult to actually know that our sins are forgiven and that we can be thankful they no longer exist. **Yet, in what ways are we able to forget (or put aside) the wrongdoings of our past? And enjoy His peace?**

Ps. 32:2 Ps. 51:7-9,12,17 Ps. 71:16 Ps. 103:3,12 Isa. 38:17 Isa. 43:25 Rom. 4:3 Rom. 8:1,30,31,33,34 Col. 2:11-15 Heb. 9:26-27

Philippians 3:11-21

Paul tells us to live our lives as if we were in a race. We are not to be weighted down by our present or past burdens, and we are not to be troubled or burdened for that which lies ahead. A good example of the race we are to run comes from a supposed comment made by the winner of a Boston Marathon in the United States. The last part of that race included a steep incline called "Heartbreak Hill". When this particular runner finished the race, a reporter asked how she managed to endure "Heartbreak Hill". Her response was, "What hill"?

How are we able to forget those things we have done in the past?

Ps. 32:2 Ps. 51:7-9, 12, 17 Ps. 71:16 Ps. 103:3, 12 Isa. 38:17 Isa. 43:25 Rom.4:3
Rom.8:1, 30, 31, 33, 34 Col. 2:13-14 Heb. 9:26

How do you look at the hills and mountains (trials and tribulations) as you run the race of life?

Job 1:20-22 Job 2:10 Acts 16:22-25 Rom. 8:35 Eph. 3:10-13 Heb. 12:6-8 Rev. 3:19

What does "I press toward the goal" (Phil. 3:14) mean to you?

Philippians 4:1-7

"And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (4:7). Peace is the most precious of all the gifts and graces of the Spirit; so precious indeed is peace that it was the one legacy left us by our departing Lord. "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid" (John 14:27). Joy may be more exciting, but peace is more sustaining. Joy may be the wine of life, but peace is its refreshing water and its daily bread.

It is the "peace of God." It is not peace with God, which comes to us with forgiveness and salvation, but is the very peace of God Himself—His own calm, restful heart possessing ours, and filling us with His divine stillness.

It is a "peace of God, which transcends all understanding" (Philippians 4:7). There is no rational explanation of it. It does not come to us by reasoning things out, and seeing our way clear, but it is often most profound when all the circumstances of our life are perplexing and distressing. It contradicts all conditions and constantly proves its heavenly origin and its supernatural birth. It is indeed the peace of God, and as wonderful as was His own calm, tranquil spirit when standing on the threshold of the garden and the cross.

(The Christ in the Bible Commentary, A. B. Simpson)

Is it a sin to have anxiety about something? (Referring to worldly cares here, for there are natural and spiritual concerns).

Matt. 6:25-34 Matt. 13:7, 22 Luke 12:11-12 Luke 12:23-25 Luke 14:18-20 Luke 21:34 1 Cor. 7:32
2 Tim. 2:4

How will anxiety affect one's peace with God?

Prov. 3:17, 24, 26 Isa. 26:3,12 2 Cor. 13:11 2 Tim. 2:22 Heb. 3:14-19 Heb. 4:12-13

Philippians 4:8-9

The human mind will always set itself on something and Paul wished to be quite sure that the Philippians would set their minds on the right things. This is something of the utmost importance, because it is a law of life that, if a man thinks of something often enough, he will come to the stage when he cannot stop thinking about it. His thoughts will be quite literally in a groove out of which he cannot jerk them. It is, therefore, of the first importance that a man should set his thoughts upon the fine things and here Paul makes a list of them.

There are the things which are *true*. Many things in this world are deceptive and illusory, promising what they can never perform, offering a specious peace and happiness which they can never supply. A man should always set his thoughts on the things which will not let him down.

(The Letters to the Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians, William Barclay)

We are still in our human bodies that can be tempted by evil, or ungodly thoughts. Only Christ, the sinless One, was exempt from these. According to James 1:13-15 our own desires draw us away and tempt us, as they do have deceptive allure. **Do we sin when we are first tempted and drawn away by our evil desires or does it become a sin only if we yield ourselves to the temptation? If we refuse God's grace to overcome the temptation, can it become a fully imbedded sin? Who is the Helper whom Jesus sent to us who warns us, and gives us the ability to refuse?**

Prov. 14:12 Prov. 15:7, 14, 22, 24, 26, 29 Prov. 16:9, 22, 25 Prov. 17:12 Jer. 17:9-10 John 16:7-9 1 John 1:9

Philippians 4:10-14

"I can do everything through Him who gives me strength" (Philippians 4:13). The literal translation of this verse adds much force to it. "I am strong for everything in *the endynamiting Christ*." The Greek root of this last phrase has acquired a peculiar significance. Dynamite denotes the most powerful of material forces. The apostle means that he has found a

power outside of himself and beyond his own power, the infinite power of Christ, and that he has come into connection with this power in such a way that it has become available for his every need, and while in touch with it, he is strong for everything and for all things.

Let us carefully note that this power is all centered in a Person, namely, the living Christ. And it is only while one is in this Christ, abiding in Him, depending upon Him, drawing his life from Him, that he has the command of this all-sufficient strength. It is not merely through the Christ, but it is in the Christ; that is, in actual union with Him, that the strength comes. It is not that so much power is communicated to him to be at his own control and disposal as a dynamo or battery might be, but that the power remains in the person of Christ, and is shared by the believer only while he is in direct union and communion with the Lord Himself.

This, then, was Paul's mighty secret, that God had united him with the Lord Jesus as the living source of all possible blessing, strength and sufficiency, and that it was his privilege to draw from Him moment by moment the supply for all his needs, just as the human system derives life from the oxygen we breathe through the inhalation of air into our lungs.

The human mind has always been straining after some closer union with the divine powers, and ancient art is just an attempt to bring the gods down in the likeness of men through the sculpture, paintings and mythologies of ancient Greece. But all this was cold and unsatisfying, the out-reaching of an arm too short to reach the heavenly help for which human hearts are fainting. Paul, however, had found the secret. Not a god in marble, in poetry or in the legendary stories of ancient mythology, but a God in human flesh, a God who had lived our life with all its trials and experiences, and who, now exalted to a spiritual and heavenly manhood, still comes to dwell in human hearts and relive His life in our actual experiences from day to day. It is not merely occasional help, but His constant life and presence. There is no part of our existence which He cannot touch. There is no place in our varied experience where He cannot meet us. His humanity is as broad as ours, and His presence and touch as real and tender as in the old Galilean days. This is the secret of all-sufficiency—the friendship of Jesus, the indwelling life of Christ, our union heart to heart with One who, as no other friend could possibly do, lives out His very life in ours. Beloved, have you learned this secret? To distrust yourself and fully trust Him? To cease from your own works and let Him work in you to will and to do of His good pleasure?

(The Christ in the Bible Commentary, A. B. Simpson)

Paul knew how to roll with the punches that happened in his life, and to be content in whatever state he was in. (2 Cor. 4:7-15; 2 Cor. 12:7-9) **Repeat from memory some verses that give you encouragement during rough times. Here is one to start with: Isa. 41:10. Do you find, like Isa. 26:3 tells us, as we get to know Him better and concentrate on His Word, then when trouble comes, we can have His inner peace and strength?**

James Whitcomb Riley was known to have said, "When God sorts out the weather and sends rain, why rain's my choice." **Can you tie in this statement with Philippians 4:11-12 and Hebrews 10:5-7?**

Philippians 4:15-23

His (Paul's) contemplation of their gift and thoughtfulness brings forth from his overflowing heart a statement of the fullness of his joy: "But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God" (v. 18). By this he means that he not only has supply of his temporal things, but that his heart and life are full of joy; his cup was overflowing. He describes their gift as a sweet-smelling sacrifice, such as the incense offered in the temple to the Lord (cf. 2 Cor. 2:15,16; Eph. 5:2). It is also declared to be an acceptable sacrifice, as in Romans 12:1, and well pleasing to God, as in Hebrews 13:16 (cf. 1 Pet. 2:5). The Word of God puts a high premium on thoughtful, loving gifts, especially when directed to those who are serving the Lord so well and suffering for Christ's sake. One's stewardship in temporal things is often a barometer of his spiritual condition, and thoughtfulness in sharing with others and relieving their needs is a part of having the mind of Christ who gave so freely to us.

His discussion of giving and receiving temporal things as an expression of love and thoughtfulness of God now brings Paul to the great statement, "But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (v. 19). Muller comments, "My God"—words vibrating with the ring of a personal testimony and confession of faith—"will supply every need of yours," will make provision in His fatherly love and care for all needs material and spiritual, for time and eternity, according to the richness and fullness of His divine providence.

In a sense, every gift is an act of faith because, in many cases, justification could be found for retaining the gift for the selfish benefit of the donor. However, having shared with Paul and thus depriving themselves of what benefit their offering might have been to themselves, they also placed themselves in a faith relationship to God where they could in a special sense depend upon God's supply of their own needs. This would be in keeping with the riches to be found in the glory in Christ Jesus, that is, according to the infinite resources of God. Muller believes the expression "in glory" should be taken with the words "shall supply," hence, "God will supply in glory, in a glorious manner."

Although there is a seeming ellipsis in thought, what Paul is implying is that their need was not simply in the temporal

realm, but also in the spiritual realm; and that God's total care of them would be in keeping with His infinite glory in heaven. His supply would be in view of their eternal benefit rather than simply their temporal needs.

Accordingly, God might permit suffering if suffering were what they needed. Or, God might permit lack of temporal things if this would be to their spiritual benefit. In all their circumstances, however, they could be assured that God was working actively on their part to provide triumph over anxiety. God was not lacking in power, but was infinitely wise in all His supply of their needs.

(Philippians Triumph in Christ, John F. Walvoord)

If there was no doubt in any of our hearts regarding the veracity of Philippians 4:19, "But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus," would anxiety be as evident in God's church as it is today? Why is it, in your thinking, that many fail to walk in this continuum of peace?