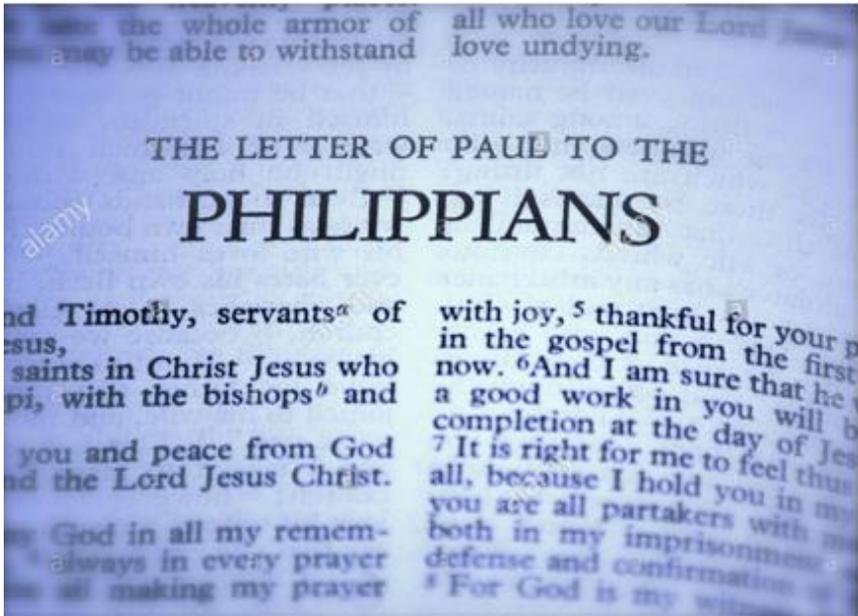


August 2018 Bible Reading Plan

Paul's Letter to the Philippians



Philippians 1:18b-25

Yes, and I will rejoice, ¹⁹ for I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your ²prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, ²⁰ according to my earnest expectation and hope, that I will not be put to shame in anything, but *that* with all boldness, Christ will even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. ²¹ For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. ²² But if *I am* to live *on* in the flesh, this *will mean* fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. ²³ But I am hard-pressed from both *directions*, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for *that* is very much better; ²⁴ yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake. ²⁵ Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith...

August 2018 Bible Reading Plan

Philippians



Pastor Chad plans to preach through Paul's Letter to the Philippians, a great Letter, rich with teaching to feed our souls! Philippians contains what I personally believe is perhaps the most concise and profound statement ever made about the Christian life. We'll explore that.

We are going to spend August working through Philippians. Pastor Chad will be preaching through Philippians for much longer than a month. The Bible Reading Plan will not be coordinated directly with his preaching, but hopefully will get us to delve into the book and spend some time meditating and praying through it. The church of Philippi was a very special church to Paul, and he shares some personal things that are rich and will encourage us to diligently pursue growth as disciples of Christ. It will encourage us to "delight ourselves in Christ," in keeping with one of the characteristics of a disciple, as Pastor Chad told us the last Sunday of June.

Bill Tyson

Read Philippians 1:1-2.

There are two things I want us to note about Paul’s address to the church: 1) is his reference “to all the saints.” It could as easily be translated “to all the holy ones.” The root meaning of “holy” has to do with being separated unto the Lord from that which is common. So Paul is recognizing immediately that he is writing to those who have been set apart as the Lord’s. 2) The second thing for us to note is that this greeting is unique among Paul’s letters in its specific mention of “the overseers and deacons.” Let’s look at that.

Read 1 Timothy 3:1-15.

1. What did you notice about 1 Timothy 3:1-15 that relates to this address in Philippians? _____

The Greek word for “overseer” is the word ἐπίσκοπος transliterated, episkopos, from which “Episcopal” comes. It is sometimes translated “bishops.” However, “bishops” in the Roman Catholic or Episcopal churches are one man overseeing a particular area. That is not the case in the New Testament. Let’s look at this matter briefly. Turn over further in your NT to Titus.

Read Titus 1:5-9.

2. Who are these qualifications for? Pay attention to the passage, especially verses 5 & 7 as you answer that. _____

Did you notice the plural “elders in every church” in vs 5? Vs 7 is singular, but only because it is speaking of each one who is to be appointed as one of the elders.

Turn to and read Acts 14:23, and then Acts 20:17 & 28.

3. How many “elders” did Paul appoint in every church according to Acts 14:23? _____
4. What did you notice about Acts 20:17 & 28? _____

I think it would not be wide of the mark to say that the word “elder” – presbuteros – describes the *office* of elder, and the word “overseer” describes the *function* of elders. But if you noticed in the passage above, they are the same people – not one man over a church, but “elders” or “overseers,” the same people, only described from two different perspectives.

1 Timothy 2:12 and 5:17 describe the *functions* of the office of elder or overseer – *to rule* over the church, and *to teach* the church. That is why in the qualifications in 1 Timothy 3:2 we find “apt to teach” and “managing his own household well.” But it is always *multiple* elders or overseers (as here in Philippians 1:1).

For your Meditation and Prayer: In light of 1 Timothy 3:14-15, would you think that Paul expected elders/overseers and deacons in every church? Presbyterians have always believed the Scriptures taught a particular form of government, namely, rule by elders/overseers, rather than leaving it to man’s inventions. So make it a matter of prayer to pray for the Lord to continue to raise up men to serve as elders at WPC.

Read Philippians 1:3-8.

1. Although our circumstances are quite different than Paul’s, what can we learn from these verses with regard to our prayer life? _____

2. Do you remember pastor Chad’s emphasis on “true disciples love the church”? Paul loves this church! Why? _____

3. Why do you think Paul can express the confidence he does in 1:6 that the work that God had begun in the Philippian Christians would be brought to completion at the day of Jesus Christ? _____

4. What do you think he means by “the day of Jesus Christ”? _____

In the back of your Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms is a “Scripture Index,” which can often be of help to you as you read the Scriptures. Many times you may find particular verses quoted in the footnotes under the Confession or Catechisms, and often their exposition can help you understand the broader teaching of Scripture that helps interpret a particular text. In this case, Phil 1:6 is listed as footnoted in Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF 17.1a) and Westminster Shorter Catechism (WSC 36i). WCF 17.1 They, whom God hath accepted in His Beloved, effectually called and sanctified by His Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace; **but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved.** WSC 36 What are the benefits which in this life do accompany or flow from justification, adoption, and sanctification? A. The benefits which in this life do accompany or flow from justification, adoption, and sanctification, are, assurance of God's love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, increase of grace, **and perseverance therein to the end.** The portions in **bold print** are footnoted to Philippians 1:6, and it seems rightly. If you want to see a similar emphasis on the certain connection of the beginning and end of God’s work in those who come to faith, read John 6:37-40, 44-45.

For your Meditation and Prayer: I want to remind you again of the rich treasure you have in the Westminster Standards, and encourage you to continue to use them, or to begin doing so if you haven’t. Meditate on the statements from the Confession and Shorter Catechism above, and give thanks to the Lord if he has begun and good work in you, that he will be faithful to see it through to the end.

Read Philippians 1:9-11.

One of the things most of us could benefit from immensely is the study of the prayers we find in Paul’s letters. Here we find him sharing with the Philippian church what he prays on their behalf. It is often quite different from what we tend to pray in prayer meetings, where we pray over health issues and other things people may be going through at the moment – which is not wrong. We are to cast all our cares upon the Lord, because he cares for us. But sometimes we neglect things needed more critically in the long hall.

1. What can we learn from Paul’s prayer for the Philippian Christians to inform our own prayers for WPC or any other church of which we might be a part (for those who use this BRP elsewhere)? _____

2. What can you discern about the nature of true love from 1:9-10? _____

Peter T. O’Brien, a very fine commentator, commented: “But the Philippians who were in Christ were to make such choices of what was vital ... on the basis of an ever increasing love – a love that penetrated more deeply into the knowledge of God and the treasures of Christ, and imparted to the Christian a keener and more delicate moral sense for specific situations.” (*Commentary on Philippians* in the New International Greek Testament Commentary series, p 78).

3. Why was it important that “knowledge and all discernment” accompany love abounding more and more? _____

4. What do you think “the fruit of righteousness” might look like in one’s character if it comes through Jesus Christ? _____

5. What is the ultimate end that Paul is aiming at? _____

For your Meditation and Prayer: Reflect on those verses, and let your prayer be informed by Paul’s praying for the church. Pray for your pastor and Sunday School teachers that they will aid us in growing to know the Lord and his will, and that the Holy Spirit will cause our love for one another to increase more and more, informed by our knowledge of God through Jesus.

Read Philippians 1:12-18.

1. Why do you think Paul is intent that the Philippian Christians understand that what has happened to him in his imprisonment had served to advance the gospel?

Paul’s statement pertains to the present effect it had had towards others being emboldened to preach the gospel. Do you think we might have struggled to understand why in the world God would allow his premier church planter to be locked in a prison? Paul says it had led to others stepping forward and preaching the gospel more boldly. But there is another way it might have “served to advance the gospel” beyond what Paul knew: the Letters to the Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, and Philemon were all written from that prison stint and have impacted no telling how many people since his time!

2. What can you learn about God’s providence through all Paul faced?

3. From these verses, and looking back a page to Ephesians 6:18-20, what was Paul’s chief personal concern in prison? Would that be ours? yours? _____

4. Paul is a model for us, not in terms of his specific calling – various ones of us have different callings – but in terms of his heart and attitudes, the way he handled trials, the perspectives he had on life, etc. Phil 1:18 presents a tremendous example: what is it? _____

For your Meditation and Prayer: This, and the next passage we will look at, challenge me to my very core! Frankly, sitting here at the moment working on this passage is almost overwhelming. Paul’s selflessness is incredible! and exposes how self-oriented I still am. Let me encourage you to spend some time today and tomorrow reflecting on Paul’s selflessness and how challenging that is to many of us. How easily are we hurt and take offense by what someone else says, or does, or doesn’t do? Where was Paul’s focus? Where was Christ’s? Where would we be if they had taken offense from others’ treatment of them? Pray that the Lord will help you think through that in reference to your own life.

The passage before us today is one of the greatest passages in the New Testament, in my opinion. We will spend several days on it in various ways.

Read Philippians 1:18b-26 – 18b begins with “Yes, and I will rejoice, for ...”

1. In this passage Paul declares the central passion and purpose of his life. What do you think it is? _____

2. What is your central passion and purpose in life – honestly? This is a question for you to ask yourself, as must I. And this entire section challenges us to the very core of our being. It is so countercultural! And we are so impacted by our culture! So write out your answer prayerfully, or, if you are doing this study with someone else, stop and write out your reflections about your own heart separately, unless you are willing to share your thoughts with another. _____

3. What does verse 19 teach us about spiritual maturity? _____

4. Paul is imprisoned as he writes, had been in prison before, and will be in prison again leading to his death by execution. What is his perspective on death? _____

5. Has the gospel impacted you so that you share his perspective? Explain: _____

6. Positively, what is Paul’s purpose in life? _____

For your Meditation and Prayer: Reflect on this passage and pray through it, asking the Lord to use it in your life.

Read Philippians 1:21 five times.

We have come to what I personally believe is the most comprehensive and profound statement ever made about the Christian life! That is a huge claim! but I will stand behind it. We are going to devote today and tomorrow to exploring this one verse – in fact, exploring the first ½ of this verse. So buckle down, this is huge! So let me see if I can at least point you in the right direction.

1. What does “For to me to live is Christ” mean in light of Phil 1:20, the immediate context? _____

2. What does “For to me to live is Christ” mean in light of Philippians 1:22? _____

3. What does “For to me to live is Christ” mean in light of Philippians 1:23? _____

4. What does “For to me to live is Christ” mean in light of Philippians 2:3-11? _____

5. What does “For to me to live is Christ” mean in light of Philippians 3:3 & 9? _____

6. What does “For to me to live is Christ” mean in light of Philippians 3:7-8 & 10? _____

7. What does “For to me to live is Christ” mean in light of Philippians 3:20-21? _____

For your Meditation and Prayer: Don’t read this if you haven’t done the exercise above! You need to do that first or you will likely take little away, because your only serious thoughts will be hearing mine. If you got the point of what I was leading you to see in the above, it unfolds like this: 1) that Paul’s purpose was to honor Christ in all things; 2) that it meant opportunity to bear fruit for Christ; 3) that it meant the desire and prospect of living with Christ forever; 4) that it meant Christ was his great example; 5) that it meant all his confidence rested in Christ and his righteousness; 6) that it meant he treasured knowing Christ above all else in life; and 7) that it meant he lived in the certain hope of a new body like Christ’s in a new world.

Read Philippians 1:21 five times again to begin.

Today we are going to look back one book to Ephesians, because more than virtually any other it illustrates what “For me to live is Christ” means, and why I say it is the most comprehensive and profound statement ever made about the Christian life. To do this properly would actually require us to read the entire book of Ephesians with specific instructions about what to look for. I doubt that most of you can or would do that, so bear with my own comments about the book today, and then perhaps you can take some time on a Sunday afternoon to read through the book yourself in light of what I share – that would be the best way.

This is what I want you to see: all of God the Father’s purposes for us are centered *in Christ*, both in terms of our salvation from before the creation of the world to ages to come, and in terms of living out the Christian life. So look at it with me: Ephesians . . .

- 1:3 – every spiritual blessing is given us “**in Christ**”
- 1:4 – we were chosen “**in him**” before the foundation of the world
- 1:5 – we were predestined for adoption as sons “**through Jesus Christ**”
- 1:6 – we are blessed with God’s glorious grace “**in the Beloved,**” i.e. his Son
- 1:7 – “**in him**” [Jesus, the beloved Son] we have redemption, the forgiveness of our sins
- 1:9 – God the Father’s purpose is set forth “**in Christ**”
- 1:10 – and that purpose is to unite all things “**in him**”
- 1:11 – “**In him**” [Christ] we have obtained an inheritance
- 1:12 – we have put our hope “**in Christ**”
- 1:13 – “**In him**” the Ephesian Christians were sealed with the Holy Spirit
- 1:15 – their faith is “**in the Lord Jesus**”
- 1:17 – Paul prays that God the Father will give the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge **of him** [Christ]
- 1:19-22 – God exercised the same power in us who were dead in sins as he did when he raised **Christ** from the dead, and made him head over all things to the Church
- 2:5 – God made us alive “together **with Christ**”
- 2:6 – so that we are seated **with him** in the heavenly places “**in Christ Jesus**”
- 2:7 – so that in the coming ages he might show he immeasurable riches of his kindness toward us “**in Christ Jesus**”
- 2:8 – it is understood that we are saved by faith **in Christ**
- 2:10 – We are his workmanship, created **in Christ Jesus** for good works . . .
- 2:12-13 – we were once separated from Christ, but now “**in Christ Jesus**” have been brought near [i.e., into relationship with God] **by the blood of Christ**
- 2:14 – For **he himself** [Christ] is our peace
- 2:15 – he is creating “**in himself**” one new man [i.e., one new redeemed humanity]
- 2:16 – we are reconciled to God “**through the Cross**” of **Christ**
- 2:17 – **Christ came preaching** “peace” [i.e., reconciliation with God and one another] to Jew and ultimately Gentile
- 2:18 – “**through him**” [Christ] we have access in one Spirit to the Father
- 2:20-21 – **Christ** is the cornerstone of the Church, “in whom” the whole structure

is being built into a holy temple **“in the Lord”**

2:22 – **“In him”** you are also being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit

3:1 – Paul is a prisoner **“for Christ”**

3:4 – he has been given insight into the **“mystery of Christ”** [i.e. God’s purpose that was unfolding in Paul’s day **in Christ**]

3:6 – which purpose is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and members of the same body and partakers of the same promise **“in Christ Jesus”** through the gospel

3:8 – it had been given to Paul to preach the unsearchable riches **of Christ**

3:11 – God’s eternal purpose was being realized in Paul’s day **“in Christ Jesus” the Lord**

3:14-21 – Paul prays that God the Father may give power by the Spirit that **Christ** may dwell in their hearts through faith...that they might “know the **love of Christ** that surpasses knowledge...and glory might be to the Father in the church and **“in Christ Jesus”**...

4:5 – we have **“one Lord”**

4:7 – grace is given to each one of us according to the measure of **Christ’s** gift

4:11-12 – **Christ** gave leaders to the church to build up the body of **Christ**

4:13 – the goal is to attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of **Christ**

4:15 – **Christ** is the head of the body from which we grow by his supplies

4:20-24 – we have learned the truth that is **in Jesus** so we will be remade into the likeness of God in righteousness and holiness of the truth

4:32 – we are to forgive one another as God **“in Christ”** forgave us

5:2 – we are to walk in love, as **Christ** loved us and gave himself up for us...

5:5 – Paul warns of sins that show one does not have an inheritance in the kingdom **of Christ** and God

5:14 – speaks of **“Christ will shine on you”**

5:19-20 – we are to address one another in songs, making melody to the **“Lord”** [likely referring to Christ], giving thanks to God the Father **“in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ”**

5:21 – we are to submit to one another out of reverence for **Christ**

5:22ff – wives are to submit to their husbands **“as to the Lord”** [i.e., Christ], for **Christ** is the head of the church, and as the church submits to **Christ**, so wives should submit to their husbands

5:25ff – Husbands are to love their wives **“as Christ** loved the church and gave **himself** up for it . . .”

6:1-4 – Children are to obey their parents **“in the Lord”** [Christ], and fathers are to bring up their children **“in the discipline & instruction of the Lord** [Christ]

6:5-9 – Bondservants are to obey their earthly masters **“as you would Christ,”** and to render service **“as to the Lord”** [Christ] who will reward them, and masters are to treat their bondservants well, knowing they have a **Master in heaven** who shows no partiality

6:23-24 – note the closing references to **Christ**

Does that make you aware of how extensive **“For me to live is Christ”** is? Make that the focus of your prayer today, perhaps praying back through some of these.

Read Philippians 1:19-26.

Paul seems to be contemplating the possibilities of life or death, even though it appears he expects to be released, and he expresses in vs 23 that he is hard pressed between life or death. But in verse 23b he says that it is his desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better.

1. If it is far better, then why is he hard pressed between the two? Hasn't he made clear his preference? Why do you think he was hard pressed between the two? _____

2. Have you ever wished you could die? Why? I have, but if I'm honest, I'd have to say that it was so much because I wanted to be with Christ, as that I wanted to be done with something on earth, something I was tired of or frustrated with, etc. What about you? _____

3. There are at least two reasons in this reading why Paul is "hard pressed between the two." Look at that again and see if you need to revise your answer to # 1, or add to it. _____

4. How might our focus yesterday inform what Paul means and includes in what he says here in 1:25 & 26. _____

5. Read Paul's charge to Timothy, which was part of Pastor David Gilbert's charge to pastor Chad on June 10 – 2 Timothy 3:16-4:5. Many preachers in our day would see a contradiction between Philippians 1:25-26 and 2 Timothy 3:16-4:5. Why? and would you agree or disagree? And how would you explain your response? _____

For your Meditation and Prayer: Pray for the same passion for the honor of Christ that Paul reflects in this passage. Pray carefully, but boldly.

Read Philippians 1:27-30.

- 1. How much do you value the gospel? _____

- 2. What does it mean to live “worthy” of something? _____

- 3. How do these verses indicate that we live worthy of the gospel? _____

- 4. What sorts of things violate living worthy of the gospel? _____

- 5. Does verse 29 strike you as an odd way to say what it does – it has been *granted to you*, that for the sake of Christ you should . . . suffer for his sake” – as though it was a privilege? Why do you think Paul says it that way? _____

Read Acts 5:41, and enough of the context to understand what was happening.

- 6. Do you think we would view things that way? Why, or why not? _____

Read Ephesians 2:8-10, and Philippians 1:29.

- 7. What similarity do you see between the two passages? _____

For your Meditation and Prayer: It is worth our reflecting on whether if we were to suffer for our commitment to the gospel, we would regard it an honor to do so, or whether we would be tempted to grumble at God for allowing such in our lives. Further, whether we so value the gospel that we are eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace as a reflection of the value we place on the gospel of Jesus Christ (Phil 1:27 & Eph 4:1-3). One of the chief ways we violate that is with our tongues in things we say about other believers, which is a fairly common occurrence even among those of us who know better, and ought to act better. We often harm relationships by giving others a perspective towards another person that is very one-sided, and overlooks all the good things the Lord had done and is doing in that person’s life. Pray about that, for yourself and for all of us.

Read Philippians 1:27-2:11.

I had you read yesterday’s passage again because the theme of maintaining peace and unity and love continues.

1. Note the connection between 1:27 and 2:1-2. We noted the strong exhortation of 1:27, to bring together the worth of the gospel and maintaining one spirit and one mind. How does Paul emphasize the same in 2:1-2? _____

Phil 2:3-4 tells us how to maintain the same mind, the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. If you have used the Bible Reading Plan in the past, you would have come across an explanation of the structure of verses 3 & 4 before. It is important for understanding the terms used. It is very easy to read “selfish ambition” and “conceit,” and think: “I don’t regard myself as *ambitious* in any wrong way, or particularly *conceited*. But it is not as blatant as it may appear by those terms. So let’s look at it carefully.

The structure is an ABBA pattern, meaning that the 1st and 4th parts go together, and the 2nd and 3rd go together. In this case, (1) “selfish ambition” is defined by its contrast in (4) “Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.” (2) “conceit” is defined by its contrast in (3) “but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.” When seen in that light, those terms are not so blatant as they might appear. If we get in an argument with our wives or another church member, *our* interest and the importance of *our* view seems “right” to us, and we often argue for it, or become resentful if we give in and flee the conflict. That can be applied in a lot of ways, where our views and desires and perspectives seem more important than those of others who disagree or want to do things differently, or many other things.

2. What happens when our interests are more important to us than others, and our views or ways or priorities more important than theirs? _____

3. Describe a time when you and someone else were at odds, and those dynamics were in play so that it didn’t go down well in the end. _____

4. Can you think of a time when had you taken into account another’s interests and together sought a creative solution that would have served you both well, it might have gone quite differently? Or, a time when you stood your ground over

some matter because it seemed so important to you, and later you realized how trivial it was compared to the damage done your relationship with someone else?

Look at where the passage in Philippians 2 goes immediately after vs 3-4, as Paul says “*Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,*” and then proceeds to set forth Jesus’ attitude as he laid aside his glory as the eternal Son of God, and humbled himself to become a man, putting our eternal interests ahead of his own for a time, counting us more important than himself in some respects, and stooped from the highest heaven to the lowest humiliation upon the Cross, bearing the sins of those who had sinned against him, and suffering the wrath due our sins. Do you see what Paul has done? He has used the greatest truths of the gospel message to emphasize the importance of our practicing what he has said in vs 2-4!

5. Can you think of anything he could have put forth that would have been more powerful or persuasive than that illustration? _____

6. How should we respond in light of those truths? How much do you value those truths at the very heart of the gospel? Are there things you need to confess, relationships you need to try to restore? If so, write down what you need to do, and a commitment to do so: _____

For your Meditation and Prayer: Reflect on the following verses from a modern translation that catches the sense of Philippians 2:3-9 well:

³ Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. ⁴ Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. ⁵ Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,

⁶ who, though he was in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God
as something to be exploited,

⁷ but emptied himself,
taking the form of a slave,
being born in human likeness.

And being found in human form,
⁸ he humbled himself
and became obedient to the point of death—

even death on a cross.

Pray for such a mind as his!

Read Philippians 2:3-11 again.

1. Read John 1:1-18 and 17:1-5. How do those relate to Philippians 2:6-11?

2. What is the significance of the word "Therefore" in Phil 2:9?

Philippians 2:10-11 alludes to Isaiah 45:23, which is speaking of Yahweh, that special covenant name of God translated by LORD in small capitals. Throughout Isaiah 40-46, Yahweh affirms that he is God and there is no other, and he will not give his glory to another (42:8; 45:21-23). Isa 45:21 says:

Is. 45:21 Declare and set forth your case;
Indeed, let them consult together.
Who has announced this from of old?
Who has long since declared it?
Is it not I, the LORD?
And there is no other God besides Me,
A righteous God and a Savior;
There is none except Me.
22 "Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth;
For I am God, and there is no other.
23 "I have sworn by Myself,
The word has gone forth from My mouth in righteousness
And will not turn back,
That to Me every knee will bow,
every tongue will swear allegiance.

3. What is the significance of those words being applied to Jesus? Who does that mean that he is, especially in light of Yahweh's declaration in Isa 42:8 that he will not give his glory to another, meaning to another god. Remember John 1:1-2.

For your Meditation and Prayer: Reflect on Isaiah 45:21-23, and on what it means for Jesus as the God-man to be designated "Lord," which is the Old Testament translation for "Yahweh." What does it mean "to Me every knee will bow"? Question: are you pursuing a "passion for the preeminence of Christ in all of [your] life"?

Read Philippians 2:9-13.

1. What is the significance of the word “Therefore” in Phil 2:12, and how does it support what Paul urges in vs 12-13? _____

2. “Work out your own salvation” can’t mean to work to save oneself, especially in light of 3:3-9, which we’ll look at later. So what do you think it means? _____

You might compare Ephesians 2:8-10.

3. Do you see the concept of “with fear and trembling” mentioned very often in our modern American “Christian” culture? Why? What do you think Paul means? _____

4. What do you learn about obedience from vs 13? _____

5. How do you determine what is God’s “good pleasure”? _____

For your Meditation and Prayer: Vs 13 of our reading today is an encouragement for us to pray that God will in fact work in us both to will and to do or work for his good pleasure. At the same time, it is an encouragement for us to continue to spend time in the Word of God. How else will we know his “good pleasure,” unless he has told us? If you want to see that very clearly depicted, take some time and read through Psalm 119.

Read Philippians 2:12-16.

1. Remember the “grumblings” of the people of Israel in the wilderness? Every time they were displeased with something, they grumbled and complained, rather than trusting the Lord and seeking his counsel. Do we do the same? When are we prone to grumble and complain? _____

The second word used here, translated “disputing” in the ESV, is defined by one of the Greek Lexicons (BDAG) as a “verbal exchange that takes place when conflicting ideas are expressed, *dispute, argument.*” Is that likely to be compatible with Phil 1:27-2:3? Grumbling doesn’t express the sort of spirit that would allow for a good sort of exchange of conflicting ideas, where trust and respect use such to make good decisions. Instead it tends to lead to arguments and bitter feelings, to counting one’s own opinions better than everyone else’s, and to looking only to one’s own interests and not to those of others (contra 2:3-4).

2. What impact does that have on the “world,” meaning those outside of Christ? _____

3. What does Paul desire for the church in Philippi instead of the sort of impact grumbling and arguments have? _____

In Exodus 16 the Greek Old Testament uses the word for “grumbling” found here in this passage, when the people are without food in the wilderness. They grumble against Moses and Aaron, but Moses tells them that their grumblings are not against them so much as against the Lord. The Lord provided manna for them to eat. In Numbers 20, the word is not used, but the people complain against Moses because they don’t have water. Moses is told to speak to the rock and it will bring forth water. But he is so fed up with their disputing and griping that he strikes the rock, and is consequently forbidden by God to go into the land of Canaan. *See Psalm 106:32-33.*

4. What ought the people to have done when they had no food or water? What ought the congregation of WPC to do when there is some need or lack that needs to be addressed? _____

5. Paul encourages the congregation to “hold fast to the word of life.” How important is that in this context? Explain: _____

For your Meditation and Prayer: Pray for God to work in us that we might will and do of his good pleasure, contrary to the spirit Paul is addressing in vss 14ff.

Read Philippians 2:17-18 and 2 Timothy 4:6-8, 16-18.

1. Did you notice the tie between these two passages? What do both refer to with respect to Paul’s life? _____

2. Do you detect any sorrow or regret in Paul’s speaking of being poured out like a drink offering to the Lord in either passage? _____

3. What does that say about Paul’s perspective upon his own life? _____

In Philippians 2:17-18 the “Even if ...” reflects only the possibilities that his imprisonment might lead to his death. In 2 Timothy his death is imminent. Some time has passed between two imprisonments, but Paul knows “the time of [his] departure has come” (2 Tim 4:6).

4. In 2 Tim 4:7-8 Paul speaks of “the Lord, the righteous judge” and “that Day,” meaning the day when Christ will sit as the final Judge, and speaks of it with anticipation without fear. How is he able to do so? Hint: Phil 3:9 _____

Although Paul was not converted until after Christ’s resurrection, during Jesus’ ministry, he had told his disciples what they would face later when they preached the gospel: *Luke 21:16 But you will be betrayed even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death,¹⁷ and you will be hated by all because of My name.¹⁸ Yet not a hair of your head will perish.¹⁹ By your endurance you will gain your ^lives.* It is a strange statement to say: “they will put some of you to death” but “not a hair of your head will perish”!

5. How does 2 Timothy 4:16-18 shed light on that statement? _____

For your Meditation and Prayer: It is worth meditating on Paul’s statements regarding his death and the passages above. Death is inevitable unless Christ should return in our lifetime. Many choose to just not think about it, which sometimes means they are unprepared for it. Paul’s perspective was very positive, even as he faced the prospect of execution. Still, in both Philippians and 2 Timothy 4, the latter of which was likely the last thing he wrote that has survived and was intended by the Spirit to be part of Scripture, both are very positive and instructive for us. Philippians 3:9 tells us how he can anticipate facing the Lord, the righteous Judge, without fear. Paul’s endurance in the fight gave him the expectation of a crown of righteousness, which should encourage us to serve well.

Read Philippians 2:19-24, Acts 16:1-5, 2 Timothy 1:5-7 and 3:15-17.

Timothy grew up in a mixed family with respect to faith, apparently. Paul mentions the faith of his mother and grandmother, but not his father, who was a Greek. It was his mother and grandmother who taught him the Old Testament. Timothy was likely converted through Paul’s ministry, and Paul specifically picks him up to travel with him. As Paul writes from prison, apparently Timothy is with him, though not imprisoned himself. Paul plans to send him to Philippi as soon as it is determined what will happen to Paul (Phil 2:23).

Timothy may have been somewhat timid by personality, or so John Stott contended in his exposition of 2 Timothy 1:5-7. But his character was of the highest quality.

1. What was it that characterized Timothy that Paul so admired, something that marked Paul’s life as well? _____

2. Were you reminded somewhat in Paul’s description of Timothy’s character of Phil 2:4? There is a slight difference in Paul’s description of Timothy and his exhortation to the Philippians in 2:4, but in the scheme of things, they amount to about the same thing in light of Paul’s testimony about Christ in 2:5-8. Think on those verses. Do you see the connection? Explain: _____

3. When one reads the qualifications for elder in 1 Timothy 3:1ff, as we did August 1, what stands out about those qualifications? What are they mostly concerned with? _____

4. If Timothy is of a more timid temperament, why do you think Paul would entrust so much responsibility to him? After all, Paul wrote two letters to this one man, rich letters, letters that seem to indicate Paul is passing the torch in some measure to Timothy. _____

For your Meditation and Prayer: Reflect on Timothy’s character as described by Paul, and pray both for yourself and for God to raise up others of similar character from our church.

Read Philippians 2:25-30 and 4:18.

I believe these are the only references to Epaphroditus. He was a messenger from the church of Philippi to Paul, bringing him a gift. But Epaphroditus became ill, and nearly died.

1. Note the way Paul describes Epaphroditus in Phil 2:25. What does his description imply about Epaphroditus? _____

2. Paul healed many people in the course of his ministry, but does 2:27 sound as though Paul could heal at will? Explain: _____

3. Compare verse 27b with 1 Thessalonians 4:13. Taking them together, what does it tell us about Christian experience and the death of someone we love?

Read 2 Timothy 4:20 regarding Trophimus. Trophimus was from Ephesus, and accompanied Paul in some measure. He is mentioned in Acts 20:4 along with some others of Paul’s companions. But we also find him with Paul in Jerusalem according to Acts 21:29, which actually became the occasion for Paul’s arrest and eventual transfer to Rome for trial.

4. Did 2 Timothy 4:20 lead you to believe Paul could heal at will? Explain: _____

I mention Epaphroditus and Trophimus with respect to the issue of healing because in my mind they make it clear that Paul could not heal at will, but only at those times and for those purposes that the Lord chose. I think that is important because of the claims of some that if you have enough faith, God will heal. 2 Timothy is Paul’s last letter, and he is evidently in fullness of faith!

For your Meditation and Prayer: It is good for us to pray for those who have loved ones who are sick, sometimes unto death – to pray for them and their loved one, to weep with those who weep. We can pray with them, and when a person who died was evidently a believer, to reflect that in our prayers to give hope to comfort in sorrow. Perhaps to privately pray for those who lose unbelievers, for that sometimes is harder on Christians than non-Christians, because we know there is not the same hope to comfort in the loss.

Read Philippians 3:1-3.

Paul now focuses the Philippian Christians upon Christ as he says: "Rejoice in the Lord," no doubt meaning Jesus as Lord. He has already given ample reason to rejoice in the Lord, but will do even more in this chapter.

Paul first gives a warning 3 times over, and then a contrasting affirmation about the Church. Verse 2 cautions the church to look out for the dogs, the evildoers, and for those who mutilate the flesh. It is the last of the three that gives a clue as to who he has in view. He is speaking of those who want to impose circumcision on Gentiles as necessary for salvation. The irony is that the Jews regarded the Gentiles as "dogs," unclean. We tend to think of our domesticated dogs, pets that we love. But dogs in that day often ran wild and fed off of trash and such, and were regarded as unclean. And since the Jews regarded the Gentiles as "unclean," they sometimes referred to them as dogs. You can see this in Jesus' interaction with a Canaanite woman in Matthew 15:21-28.

Here, Paul turns the tables and refers to the Jews or Judaizers-who-demand-circumcision as dogs, unclean, because depending on some work they perform to be right with God. They are "evildoers" because they lead people astray when they try to win them over to be circumcised. They mutilate the flesh, he says.

In contrast, Paul says in vs 3 – "we are the circumcision," not because they have been circumcised in their flesh, but because of what follows that is the result of the "circumcision of the heart" by the Spirit. So let's look at verse 3.

1. **Read Romans 2:17-29**, where Paul addresses Jews and the pride and self-confidence some reflect. What is Paul saying in vss 25-29 in your own words:

2. How does that relate to Phil 1:3 – "we are the circumcision"?

3. Paul then specifies three things about the Philippian believers as the true people of God:

Rather than external worship, they _____

Rather than glorying in themselves, they _____

Rather than confidence in their works, they _____

Deuteronomy 30:6 had said to the people of Israel: *Moreover the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live.* Throughout the Old Testament the people of Israel often departed from the Lord and began to depend on external acts of worship. The prophets spoke of their having “uncircumcised hearts,” even though physically they had been circumcised. That is what Paul has picked up in Romans 2 that we read above. Circumcision of the heart was essentially what we call regeneration, or Ezekiel called taking out the heart of stone and putting in a heart of flesh, alive to God.

If worship is seen more broadly than formal worship, rather, as the life-service rendered to God, then Deut 30:6 would indicate that rather than external worship, the Spirit circumcised the heart in regeneration so that a person served the Lord (worshipped) out of love by the Spirit, rather than merely externally.

4. What happens to one’s focus – the direction of it – when one loves another?

5. So, if by regeneration by the Spirit a person loved the Lord (Jesus), how would that fit Phil 3:3? Compare 2 Corinthians 4:1-6. _____

6. And if one saw the glory of Christ in what he had accomplished by his death and resurrection, and also his own sinful self, would his confidence remain in himself or in Christ? _____

For your Meditation and Prayer: Paul’s warnings to the Philippian Christians are warnings for us against any mere external service of the Lord not fueled by love for him, and against any pride or self-dependence on our works or character. We need to ask if we serve the Lord out of love, and do we glory in Christ and depend on him wholly for our standing with God. Our eyes – the eyes of our hearts ought to be directed away from ourselves to him. And if they are, then it should help in creating in us a passion for the preeminence of Christ in all of life, that is, that we would acknowledge and welcome his Lordship over every area of our lives. That is a growing process, and not one finished in this life, but it should be a process actively at work and pursued. It is what we ought to pray for, that we might more and more live to please him. Make that a matter of prayer. Thank him, and glory in what he had done for you and for all of his people.

Read Philippians 3:3-11.

Paul had just affirmed in vs 3 that he and the Philippian Christians “put no confidence in the flesh,” that is, in anything they have done or their “pedigree.” Having said that, Paul makes the point in vs 4 that if anyone thought he had reason for confidence in the flesh, Paul himself did.

1. Paul then proceeded to indicate by his own personal life what “confidence in the flesh” would mean? What sort of things do the 7 items he lists cover? _____

2. At verse 7 there is a huge shift. What do you think Paul means that “whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ”? _____

3. Vs 8 has the same verb as verse 7. But there is a difference? What do you observe about the main verb in vs 7 and in vs 8? _____

4. When do you think vs 7 took place? _____

5. What is the tense of vs 8? _____

Probably about 26 years separates verse 7 and verse 8, from Paul’s conversion to his imprisonment in Rome and writing of Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians and Philemon. During that 26 or so years he had conducted the missionary journeys we read about in Acts.

Read 2 Corinthians 11:21b-33, which only describes a portion of what Paul had experienced during that time – 26 or so years of persecution and hardships.

6. What does all that communicate about the value Paul placed on knowing Christ in vss 8ff? _____

7. Do you think we would value him so highly as to suffer all of that? Do our efforts to know Christ more intimately with all the freedoms we have bear evidence that we place a high value on knowing him? _____

What do you do that reflects that? If you are using this BRP, I hope that is one evidence, as long as we use it rightly.

8. Phil 3:9 is the counterpart to vs 3’s “confidence in the flesh.” Where does Paul’s confidence rest? He affirms that though as a Pharisee and righteousness

under the law he appeared blameless, nevertheless, he does not wish to be found with a righteousness of his own that comes from the Law. So, what righteousness does he want to have, if not his own? _____

On whose righteousness do you depend? _____

Phil 3:10-11 says a lot, but determining precisely what Paul means is a little difficult. It is clear that he is focusing his ultimate desire to fully know Christ fully participate in the benefits of Christ's suffering, death, and resurrection. It appears to me that it reflects the fact that although when united to Christ we experience a once-for-all death to sin's dominion over us, and a once-for-all resurrection to newness of life, nevertheless, there is a continuous application in the little-by-little putting to death of the sin in our life and growing conformity to the image of Christ (as in Ephesians 4:20ff and Colossians 3:1-17), a process that will not be complete until the final resurrection. Paul's sharing in the sufferings of Christ and becoming like him in his death, involved the conflict of suffering for Christ in conflict with this fallen world, both within himself in the battle with sin, and outside himself in conflict with those hostile to Christ and the gospel. Full conformity with Christ in his death would be total obedience, as Christ was obedient even unto death, the death on the Cross, where the struggle of Gethsemane led to the full willingness of Christ to go to the Cross – "nevertheless your will be done." Paul's statement "that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead," or, as some translations have it "if somehow I may attain...", doesn't express uncertainty about whether he will attain such, but by what means he will die leading to and necessitating his resurrection. In Philippians he had made it clear that being put to death was a possibility, even though he expected his imprisonment would lead to release this time.

For your Meditation and Prayer: This very personal statement on Paul's part challenges us to reflect and ask of ourselves if we desire to know Christ personally as passionately as Paul. I imagine most of us would say we don't, which is good reason for us to pray earnestly for such a passion. Make that a matter of reflection and prayer.

Read Philippians 3:7-16.

Today we will look at verse 12 of his passage. It appears that false teachers have been speaking of how one achieves perfection in this life, perhaps through circumcision in part. Paul wants to make it clear that he does not agree with perfection gained prior to the resurrection, and here in verse 12 he states his own position, that he has *not* already obtained his goal stated in the previous verses, “but,” he say, “I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.”

The verb for “press on” is often translated “to persecute.” The basic meaning is *to move rapidly and decisively toward an objective, hasten, run, press on*, which can, of course, mean pursuing someone in persecution, but here is pressing on toward the goal that Paul has mentioned, and will mention in vs 14.

1. What is “irony”? If you don’t know, look it up: _____

I have spoken before of the “irony” of the Cross, which is especially evident in the mockery the chief priest and elders expressed towards Jesus while he hung on the Cross: “He saved others; he cannot save himself.”

2. What is the irony of that statement? _____

3. Now, what is the irony behind the word “**διώκω**,” which is the Greek word Paul uses for “press on” in vs 12? (Hint: It is used in Acts 9:4; 22:4,7) _____

4. What is most striking about Paul’s motivation for “pressing on”? _____

5. What was Paul doing when Jesus “made [Paul] his own”? **Read Acts 9:1-22.** _____

6. **Read Galatians 1:11-17.** If Paul had chosen to turn his life around, that would have been amazing. But he knew there was far more to it. Why was that even more amazing? _____

For your Meditation and Prayer: Two questions: 1) To what degree do you “press on toward ‘perfection’”? 2) Is “perfection” – in Paul’s terms – your objective, one that you seriously pursue, and if so, or if not, why? Make those a matter of reflection and prayer.

Read Philippians 3:12-16.

1. Why do you think Paul reaffirms that he has not made what he desires his own yet? _____

Does Paul’s “one thing I do” catch your attention? It ought to get our attention immediately. Here is a great man of God, who is about to zero in on something absolutely critical to his life-purpose and endeavor.

2. Paul uses the image of a track runner in verse 13 especially, but carrying over into verse 14? What does that image portray to your mind? _____

A case can be made that there is more to running a race than just getting out there and doing it, of course. A track runner, or virtually any athlete, trains for the race.

3. But when the time of the race comes, what characterizes the athlete? _____

4. What do you think Paul means when he says, “forgetting what lies behind”? What sort of things might that include? _____

5. What would be the effect of a track runner not “forgetting,” or of his looking back to see how far he had run, etc.? _____

6. What picture does “*straining forward* to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal” portray for you? _____

7. How would you apply what he is saying to your own life? Would it challenge you to make some changes in how you approach your Christian life? _____

For your Meditation and Prayer: Reflect on what you need to do to play the part of a Christian track runner, so to speak, in your pursuit of the prize . . . Pray.

Read Philippians 3:15-4:1.

1. What evidence do you see in the text that indicates Paul does not think what he does, and his approach, is limited to pastors, or leaders, but is applicable to all?

2. What do you think an “enemy of the Cross of Christ” would look like, in terms of a description? Would they necessarily proclaim themselves “enemies” of the Cross, or might it be more subtle than that? _____

3. Verse 19 describes their end and certain characteristics of them. What does it mean to set one’s mind on earthly things? If vs 20 is in contrast with that, what would be different between one who recognized he was part of a heavenly commonwealth and one who was of an earthly one? _____

4. The word “citizenship” in the ESV (vs 20) probably should be “commonwealth,” a realm rather than “citizenship,” although it would mean our “citizenship” was there, rather than here. What impact would the different focus have upon those who regard their commonwealth as above versus of the earth?

Read Romans 8:22-25.

5. Again, what is the difference between a heavenly, future-oriented focus and an earthly now-oriented focus? _____

For your Meditation and Prayer: Where is your focus day by day? How ought a heavenly focus to influence your daily life? Is there a danger of being so “heavenly-minded” as to be of no earthly good, as some claim? Who is best qualified to be of some earthly good? Think on these things, and ask the Lord for wisdom.

Read Philippians 4:1-3.

Verse 1 goes with chapter 3’s emphasis, but let’s look at it another way. Go back and read Phil 1:27ff. The same word is used for “stand firm” in 4:1 and in 1:27.

1. How do these two ladies relate to 1:27f? _____

2. What is the place of “conflict mediation”? _____

3. Why is “conflict mediation” sometimes necessary? _____

4. How would you have felt if you had been one of these women in the church at Philippi, and the church received a letter from Paul to be read out loud, and the reader came to 4:2-3 and you heard your name called? How do you think you would you have responded? _____

5. What often gets in the way of our maintaining peace within the church? _____

6. Paul is accused of being a woman-hater or chauvinist because of passages like Ephesian 5:22ff and 1 Timothy 2:11-15. How does this passage square with that accusation? _____

7. What does this passage reveal about folks who are genuine, devoted Christians? _____

For your Meditation and Prayer: In years past I have emphasized the Peacemaker material quite a bit. I want to encourage you to review materials you might have, and if you don’t have Ken Sande’s *The Peacemaker*, or of the abbreviated *Resolving Everyday Conflict*, to obtain one and study it. It is critically important as 1:27ff & 4:2-3 make evident. Pray for relational peace in the church.

Read Philippians 4:4-7.

1. Verse 4 repeats what Paul said back in 3:1, and he repeats it twice, so that a great deal of emphasis is upon it. What does it mean to rejoice in the Lord?

Verse 5 may be something of the result of having just spoken of the conflict between Euodia and Syntyche, although they may not be related. It is vitally important, however, with respect to peace. The word used for “reasonableness” in the ESV is based on a word meaning *not insisting on every right of letter of law or custom, yielding, gentle, kind, courteous, tolerant*. It occurs in James 3:17, as part of 3:13-18, a passage we have gone to in the Session repeatedly as James describes the wisdom that is from above.

2. Read James 3:13-18. What characterizes the wisdom from above as over against that which is earthly? _____

“The Lord is at hand” may speak of his nearness in presence, or the imminence of his return, the latter in the sense that it could happen at virtually any time without prior warning. It may serve to emphasize the verses that follow, although it is difficult to tell precisely what Paul had in mind with respect to other items in the context.

3. Paul addresses anxiety or worry very directly. What happens to us when we begin to worry about something? **Turn to and read Matthew 6:24-25**. What does the word “Therefore” in vs 25 imply about the effect of worry in our lives?

Verse 31 identified the problem as lack of faith in the Lord and his promises.

4. How are we to deal with “worry” in our lives? _____

5. Why do you think the promise in vs 7 speaks of “guarding” our hearts, using a military word? _____

6. What is the purpose and place of “thanksgiving”? _____

Years ago, when I preached through the Sermon on the Mount, and the above Matthew 6 passage as well, I became aware that there was a great practical and illuminating passage in Matt 6:24-34. Connective words are very important when interpreting passages. Reading Matthew 6:24 set the stage – “No one can serve two masters ... You cannot serve God and money.”

The “Therefore” of vs 25 renders a significant insight into the *effect* of worry. Jesus categorically states that one cannot serve two masters, and cannot serve God and money. “Therefore,” he says, and he sets forth an application: “Do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink...”

7. So, what happens to us when we do become anxious or worry about those things, or other things as well? _____

For your Meditation and Prayer: There is a place for legitimate concerns, and the same word used in these passages for anxiety or worry can be used in that manner, but much anxiety and worry reflects a failure to trust the Lord, and that is sin. Worry is sometimes one of the sins that flies under the radar – we don’t always think of it as sin. But it often is, just as the people of Israel failed to trust the promises of God concerning his taking them into the promised land, so every time they were short on food or water, they grumbled and complained and threatened to return to Egypt, rather than trusting God to provide and making it a matter of prayer. We sometimes do the same, and we need to address that issue. Philippians 4:6-7 tells us how to do it, and “thanksgiving” is a critical part of it, because it can reorient our focus to God’s promises to provide and be with us in trouble. Reflect on whether you worry, and how you worry, and confess it if you do, and practice Philippians 4:6-7. “The Lord is at hand.”

Read Philippians 4:8-9.

Worry tends to be negative, to say the least, so Paul now turns to a positive statement, promising “practice these things and the God of peace will be with you” (vs 9).

If you have the book *The Peacemaker*, by Ken Sande, 3rd edition, I encourage you to turn to pages 82-90 for an application of this entire passage in Philippians 4:2-9. He applies the whole to the conflict between Euodia and Syntyche, unlike many commentaries that don’t see a connection. If he is not correct, he certainly has done a good job of application.

1. When you worry and yield to anxiety, do you find your thoughts becoming negative, often like a downward spiral? One thought leads to another. Do “what if’s” begin to dominate your thinking? Do you become *enslaved* to what you are worrying about? What do you need to do to address the situation? _____

2. How could Paul’s counsel in vs 8 begin to turn things around? _____

3. Is it natural for you to do what Paul says in vs 8? Why do you think Paul included verse 9? _____

4. When you get into a conflict with someone over something, what happens to your thought processes about that person? _____

Ministers often have a way of gravitating towards people with whom they agree, and gatherings of such groups, whether on internet or in person, often become rather negative in what they have to say about others with whom they disagree. It is easy for them to fuel the fires of self-justification and other-vilification. It is sad when we do that, because it does nothing to build relationships with others and perhaps be able to speak into the lives of those with whom we disagree, or have them speak into our lives.

For your Meditation and Prayer: Do you ever have those sorts of experiences with your friends with respect to others? If so, that is an area where we need to repent and confess our sin, and change our behavior.

Read Philippians 4:10-13.

We'll deal with this passage differently tomorrow, but for now I want us to simply note Paul's contentment. Contentment is a great quality in some respects, though not all. We should not be content with sin in our lives, or with lukewarm spirits towards the things of God. We should not be content with the world as it is, or to leave people to their own deserved condemnation. We should not be content to have obtained a particular "level" of spirituality or understanding, etc.

1. What enabled Paul to be content with much or little? _____

2. Is God sovereign over the details of our lives? Over the relationships in our lives? Over the seeming randomness of events? Do you believe he works all things together for our good that we might be more and more conformed to the image of his Son? If God is sovereign over such things as these, what sort of response ought we to have? _____

I remember once reading an older writer who asked what was the sin of the rich man in the parable or story of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31)? His answer was "contentment without God." There was certainly the sin of ignoring the need of the poor man at his gate, but that largely grew out of his contentment without God. He was content with his wealth and lavish lifestyle.

3. Paul indicated that he had "learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need." Which would be harder, do you think? _____

Read Luke 18:18-30 for a hint.

4. What was the attitude of the Psalmist in *Psalms 73:23-28*? _____

For your Meditation and Prayer: Reflect on areas of your own life where you are discontented. What do you need to do or consider in order to learn contentment with and in the Lord? Think about Philippians 4:13, and make it a stimulus for prayer.

Paul opened Philippians with thanksgiving for the *partnership* of this particular church from the first days even until now while he is in prison.

Read Philippians 4:10-23 to see further what he meant by their partnership.

1. What did Paul mean by their partnership with him? _____

2. What occasioned this part of Philippians? _____

3. Paul commends them highly. Why? _____

4. What do you think Phil 4:17 means? What “fruit that increases to their credit”? _____

5. What does “a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God” indicate about what they have done? (vs 18) _____

6. What does Paul communicate in vs 19-20? Do any of these things said encourage you to be involved in supporting world missions? _____

For your Meditation and Prayer: The Church of Philippi was a great church, and one which Paul commends highly. It is a church that provides a great example for each of us. We too partner with missionaries in various ways. We can pray for them, and contribute towards their support. We can partner with missionaries to promote world evangelization. So pray for our missions work.

