

JOY IS A CHOICE

Philippians

Thoughts come from a wide variety of sources. Some from messages I have heard from individuals, some from assembly Bible studies, some from home life and some from books I have read. The Holy Spirit is the Teacher who makes them real to me.

- "Philippians and Colossians," by William Kelly
- "Philippians," by H.A. Ironside
- "The Life Application Bible." Tyndale House and Zondervan

Philippians 1:1-8

REAL INTEREST

How is it that two people sitting in the same place, hearing the same words, from the same person, respond differently? Joy is increased in one person, and bitterness in another. The difference is that some people live by feelings and the effects circumstances have on them, and the other lives by faith in Christ. They can find joy even in hardships because their strength comes from "Christ in you the hope of glory." Paul writes this letter from prison, not making the point that he is an apostle but that he is a servant of Jesus Christ. His joy was in the One he served. He also found joy in the one he was serving with - Timothy. It is cause for great joy to a servant of the Lord to see and share in the labors of others, especially one God saved through our ministry. To see that person going on faithfully in service for Christ is very gratifying. One of the themes in the book of Philippians is unity, and that is illustrated in the first words - "servants of Jesus Christ."

In Matthew 16:19 and 18:18, "Binding" is mentioned in both the universal and local aspects of the Church. Authority in both cases is based on one simple condition; agreement. Consensus grants to the Church incredible authority in heaven. When the Church *seeks* the mind of Christ and when it *speaks* the mind of Christ (1Cor.2:1-5) then it has power and authority. That "binding" is prefaced by one condition; reconciliation (Mat.18:15-17). Whether one is offended (Mat.18:15) or the offender (Mat.5:23-24), a Christian is to take the initiative in being reconciled. We should never underestimate the value of the local church in enabling this to be accomplished.

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

ALL THE SAINTS.

Two men: different ages, different background, different countries -
One older than the other by far; brought together by God.
Each a servant in his own way and in his own right -
One called to serve in the Gospel dramatically, unforgettably.
The other young, impressionable, sensitive, willing but unsure -
Wanting to please God; impressing others with his real faith.
The one outspoken, passionate, devoted to a cause and his God -
The other willing to do what he was told; to serve the older in any way.
One out front in "The Way"; rising to each challenge without turning aside -
The other doing mundane tasks; going where he was told, making things easier.
Both servants of Jesus Christ; both aware of His sovereignty and authority -
Both caring for those God cares for; likeminded, responsive to needs - Servants.

Called out by God, though we all are different -
Lives to be lived in wholeness and meaning.
Not wasted people nor time in God's eyes -
But chosen, elect, of supreme importance to God.
Saints without statues raised in their memory -
A reason for existence; a purpose not fully understood.
Meeting together with a common gathering Center -
The Lord's name and Person; the reason why they know each other.
Living in the same city; brought together by grace -
Gathering in fellowship and unity; needing to be preserved for God.
Servants and saints; brothers and sisters; believers and witnesses -
Children of God who love the Lord; followers of Christ - Saints.

Responsible men who have been tried and proven - and don't quit -
Using their hearts as well as their heads to draw conclusions.
Leaders of men, they do not turn aside from the hard questions -
They pray for answers - answers in peace; they know God has given them this work.
They shepherd sheep and lambs: sheep need food - lambs need care -

And they provide for others by listening to God, and acting for Him.
Making decisions together; looking at options; considering the choices they have -
Cautious and bold; quiet and forthright; plain of speech and careful how they speak.
Not satisfied to leave things undone; ready for every good work; prepared -
Humbled when God blesses; thankful for each forward step; appreciate little things.
Men of the Word; quoting relevant scriptures; reading what truly applies -
Shepherds who feed; elders who have experience; bishops who watch -Leaders.

Ready to work; willing to act when delegated a task; careful over their charge -
Not complaining about the work load; thankful to be able to help.
Rising to the occasion; faithful until the work is done; not a quitter -
Accepting what they may not understand; fulfilling what is expected of them.
Trustworthy and willing to be counted on; there when needed; expecting to work -
Acting without being told all the time; seeing what needs to be done and doing it.
Accepting criticism as par for the course; knowing not everyone will be pleasing -
Accommodating themselves to the comfort of others; going without, that others may have.
Doing the same thing over and over again for God's glory; looking beyond tomorrow -
Standing in the gap; building up the wall; fixing the broken gates of truth.
Doing what they do in the name of the Lord, not for praise of men; standard-bearers -
Deacons who are ministering to the needs of others at their own expense - Ministers.

**“We are one in Thee, O Father God; we are not our own; we function as one body.
Thanks for the variety of persons Thou hast put in my life to help meet my needs.
May I be ready to serve and minister to Thee by serving and ministering to others. In
the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”**

Obedience is a characteristic of servant-hood that is both expected and appreciated. Paul had wanted to go from Mysia to Bithynia, but when the call came to Macedonia, He "assuredly gathered" that he was to go there in obedience to the call. That led him to Philippi and a new work in a new area began. It is one of the things that brings joy to a believer/servant that cannot be really defined. To be in the place God wants us, doing what God wants us to do, gives us joy no matter what difficulties might occur and, to a certain extent, what the results are. "One plants, another waters, and God gives the increase." The joy of sharing in a work with the Almighty God is beyond expression. When one can share that work with a son in the faith, that also gives great joy.

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

UNIFIED SERVANTS, SAINTS, LEADERS.

There is something very special when people are agreed,
You feel very drawn to them especially when in need
Their advice and fellowship you really want to heed,
Because there seems no evidence of selfishness or greed.

Two preachers that are unified have important things to say.
There seems to be real evidence, before they preach, they pray.
The truths passed on yesterday you see them live today,
And you are quite confident they really know the way.

When brothers and sisters all gather together in one place,
If unity is there you are glad to see each person's happy face.
And when you talk together and the life of faith you trace,
When the time comes to go away, again we are amazed at grace.

The spiritual leaders are quick to know the state of all the sheep.
They recognize the Chief Shepherd has placed them there to keep
The lambs from straying off the path into treacherous places deep,
And they care that all are safe and fed before they go to sleep.

The deacons before they make some plans are sure of what they do.
They are aware that what is taught must be scriptural and true.
The teachings must be tested before allowing anything new;
They have carefully considered all before their talk is finally through.

A properly functioning church is beautiful to see.
Each one considers they are where the Lord wants them to be.
The gifts have a place and room to function in full entirety;
And each individual knows there is place in this church for me.

“O Lord God of the saints: truly there is joy and thanksgiving when an assembly of Thy people are walking and working under divine guidance. If there is some way, I can promote such effectiveness, please show me, teach me and guide me, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

Philippians has been called the Epistle of Joy. The Christian life is meant to be radiant and joyful. The Lord's people ought to be a joyful people. The introduction of the first eleven verses is like the avenue leading to a big house. The beginning of the work is recorded in Acts 16:7-10. The Lord's way of reaching people is through the obedience of the servant. In Philippi it depended on Paul's obedience. God closed one door and opened another. We are very familiar with the truth of forgiveness but have almost come to the place where it doesn't really matter whether we obey God or not. If I can simply turn to 1Jn.1:9 and confess my sin, why worry about obedience. If we were willing to go out and simply do what we know God wants us to do, revival would break out here. The whole situation in any given assembly depends on the obedience of a servant.

There wouldn't be an assembly if someone was not willing to be an obedient servant. There is a unique connection with people we know in an area where we presented the Gospel and the Lord saved those dear saints. By the word of the Gospel and the power of the Spirit, they were set apart for God not only now but forever. "All the saints" indicates the rich and poor, old and young, wise and simple, the successful and those who struggle are all one in Christ Jesus. An assembly of believers like the one at Philippi are all participants in the same blessing. In Christ we are neither "Jews nor Gentile, but the church of God."

Philippians 1:2. *“Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.”*

CHARIS AND SHALOM.

Grace and peace are two beautiful words
They sound like they belong together
Ringing like two tones from a heavenly bell
The middle wall has come down
And two cultures become one
Something new has been created out of two.

These come from the highest Source
Designed by infinite and holy Persons
They come in absolute perfection from glory
To display here on a sinful earth
True divinity - that gives without reservation
And is there to grasp and experience personally.

Father-like grace comes - giving and compassionate
Filling a need impossible to get from any human source
Peace that is startling in a world of turmoil
Calms the soul of those who receive His grace
And quietly assures the anxious heart
That all is well - now and forever.

From the incarnate God comes grace to me
Meeting every righteous demand
Because of His divine perfection
And peace is made through His blood
The sacrifice is made - propitiation is permanent
And I can live - and die - in perfect peace.

“O how kind and gracious Thou art, O God. How glad I am to be able to experience in this life, as well as the next, the grace and peace freely given to me. I thank Thee, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

It was by the operation of the Spirit in the work at Philippi people were saved. Lydia, a successful business woman, was religious and had a quiet conversion. A demon possessed slave girl who came from the depths of degradation; a jailor who was a civil servant and was saved as the result of an earthquake; were all part of the assembly at Philippi. There will be the opposition of society. Opposition came right away because money was involved. Whenever souls are saved opposition and suffering takes place.

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Philippians 1:3. *"I thank my God upon every remembrance of you,"*

EVERY REMEMBRANCE.

I go back to earliest recollections
And find reasons to give thanks.
Praying parents, open Bibles - reflection
Directs me to give thanks.
Gathering to worship, pray and preach - instruction
Reminds me to give God thanks.
Fellowship with those of precious faith - communion
And I am compelled to give thanks.

For over *50* years working in the Gospel - preaching
For souls saved I give God thanks.
New believers coming to learn spiritual things - teaching
For hearts and minds open to God I give thanks.
New villages and towns and cities beckoned - outreaching
Doors opened to us remarkably and I give thanks.
Sitting down together in many places and countries - worshipping
All of us as one giving God thanks.

For a wife and family joined in the Lord - unity
For life shared in every way I give thanks.
Assurance given that the work we do is worth the effort - surety
For loneliness and her adaptability, I give thanks.
Living an unusual life-style willingly - compatibility
For miles traveled without complaint I give thanks.
For her enduring embarrassment and humor with integrity
I give God thanks upon every remembrance.

"Heavenly Father, I thank Thee for putting in my life people who in spite of my ways, still love me. May I never take any of them for granted. May I be able to be of some benefit to them. I give Thee thanks for them, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Philippians 1:3-5. *"I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now;"*

FELLOWSHIP IN THE GOSPEL.

The methods of evangelism may change and times change but the task is the same and the basic principles are the same. People-oriented people working with people to reach people. The unfinished task the Lord Himself began, of building a Church, is still going on and we are the tools He is using. The crop is in our field and He has given us all we need to accomplish the task; the power, the gifts and the incentive. The compassion, the intelligence and the will is ours to develop and use.

JOY: CONTRAST JOY AND HAPPINESS. One of the key subjects in the book of Philippians is the subject of JOY.

Ps.4:7; 16:9. Inward joy comes from knowing and trusting God; happiness comes as a result of pleasant circumstances. Inward joy is steady as long as we trust God; happiness is unpredictable. Inward joy defeats discouragement; happiness covers it up. Inward joy is lasting; happiness is temporary.

Mat.5:3-12. Blessed means more than happiness; it means the experience of joy and hope independent of outward circumstances to find hope and joy in following Jesus no matter what the consequences.

Jn.15:11. Joy comes from a consistent relationship with Jesus Christ. The joy of living with Him daily will keep us level-headed no matter how high or low our circumstances

Lu.1:42-43. Joy takes care of jealousy

Lu.15:30. Heaven has joy when a sinner repents

Rom.4:6-8; Lu.15:30. There is joy in forgiveness; forgiveness changes bitterness to joy

Phil.4:4. Joy in view of the Lord's return in spite of suffering

Philippians 1:4. *"Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy."*

MAKING REQUEST WITH JOY.

Holy joy is not a surprise but a result of my choice.
Thinking of God and His interest in you then I raise my voice
To put into the words of my prayers a passion that comes from God.
For God's people are precious to me especially when owning Jesus as Lord.

When saints respond to God's truth something comes alive in them.
The grace of God is obvious when they choose to follow Him.
Thinking of them as they gather, though we are far away,
Brings joy to my soul as I remember, these also are going God's way.

Joy rises way above circumstances for a believer it comes from grace,
When we stop and consider God has brought us into a very large place.
Following where He leads is contentment when unsure of what's ahead.
By faith we confidently go wherever the Spirit of God does lead.

Joy gives strength in hard labor; the result is worth the pain.
We know God brought us here and we know Jesus is always the same.
No matter what the outcome of an issue with joy we can endure,
Because we trust God to answer and accomplish that which is sure.

"Father, remember the faithfulness of Thy people in Newfoundland and Labrador. I remember them all with joy. The brothers and sisters laboring for Thee in Central America have a special place in our lives. We lift them before Thee with joy. The saints in my home assembly are getting old and weary. Yet their great faithfulness gives us joy. Bless and encourage them I pray, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

God has uniquely designed the local church to respond to the needs of people. As this conviction grows, so does the frustration. Interpersonal relationships within the church with God in worship and believers in fellowship, is the key to fulfilling this role. By misleading, misdiagnosis and legislating commitment, the potential for satisfying and nourishing life in the assembly diminishes. Too often, as sincere Christians continue on faithfully, their convictions harden into complacency and doctrinal orthodoxy declines into dogmatic traditionalism. Local churches have the responsibility to restore troubled people to peaceful, purposeful lives that can bear testimony to God's redeeming power before a watching world.

"I too, Father, give thanks to Thee for those of Thy people who have taken the vision Thou hast given them, and used them in Thy service. Bless them; give them heart and encourage them; allow them please to have some joy in the results of their service and labor. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

As saints who have been called by God through the Gospel we share in common, unity of life in Christ. As those who have been placed into an assembly in a certain geographical area, we each have a role to fill in the work of God there. Each individual believer has their walk with God we share in fellowship with others, and our work for God for which we are responsible. The elders of an assembly are responsible for the souls of the Lord's people by being guides who care for the inward life of the assembly. They are internal guides as it were who serve God and His people by example as well as personal care for their well-being. There was apostolic authority given at the beginning of the age to designate for the people those who the elders. Qualities and characteristics are given in written words in scripture for us today to identify those the Holy Spirit has raised up.

Deacons have been given the privilege, and responsibility for the external affairs of an assembly. Those who speak for the assembly publicly, whether it be in teaching and preaching, or in dealing with assembly affairs in the public domain are our visible/audible representatives and qualifications for their work is plainly given. This is no some obscure role they are called to fill, but a responsible work that represents all the saints. In neither of these important works is there any indication there is a salary paid for doing this work. These are

voluntary servants who minister the Gospel and all that is associated with the furtherance of the work in a public way.

Philippians 1:5. *“For your fellowship in the Gospel from the first day until now:”*

FIRST DAY UNTIL NOW.

She was there on that first day
Lydia and others had come to pray
While gathered hearing what Paul had to say
She believed on that first day.

Years had passed, now Paul's in prison
This time his message is in a letter written
But the fellowship is just like at the beginning -
There is still love for the Gospel now.

When first I believed, the message of the Gospel
Was dear to the saints who were willing to travel
Bringing lost sinners through weather that was awful -
There was fellowship back in the first day.

As years passed their course, they supported me well
Wanting lost souls to be delivered from hell
Praying for us for more than *50* years as we tell -
The Gospel from the first day until now.

Now more than *50* years have gone by
How the years and time seems to fly
Men and women far away did buy -
The truth back in the first day.

Many now are old and others have passed on
Their faithful fellowship and work is all done
They are enjoying the blessings of their heavenly home -
They started the first day and they're there now.

“Gracious God, who has saved to the uttermost all who have come to Thee in faith: I look to Thee still today, as it was at the first, to bless Thy Word in the Gospel to the salvation of many more souls. If it would please Thee to still use me to guide some to Thee, I would be so greatly privileged. I pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

Respectful customary greetings are in order when God's people come together and/or communicate with each other. There is a dignity and respect we owe each other as those who are united in Christ Jesus. Whether it is the grace of God, or the peace that maintains the harmony between divergent people and personalities, God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ are the Ones who bind us together.

The Holy Spirit is the Person in the Godhead who is the operational force behind a properly functioning assembly. The thankfulness that is a natural response when we hear of our brothers and sisters in Christ is motivated by the Spirit of God. The nearness of our thoughts to each other is promoted by the Spirit who leads us to intercede at the throne of grace for them. Thoughts of God's people, and joy when we hear of their faith and testimony produces fellowship and gratitude as we think about the time, we first knew each other. That fellowship in the Gospel includes remembering how God saved us. Then what I enjoy from day to day is because of constraining love when the Lord is the center of our lives. Paul would remember the constraint of the call of the Spirit to go to Macedonia. He no doubt thought about Lydia who quietly came into the kingdom of God without any fanfare. The young demon-possessed woman who was freed by the power of the name of Christ created a scene in the whole city. Satan doesn't back off quietly. Paul would remember singing in the jail at the beginning of the work, the earthquake and the jailor being saved and his family. What fellowship! What joy! What confidence in God! Paul was thankful for them personally. He was also thankful for the fellowship in the Gospel: the life that he had in common with the believers; the love-constraining fellowship; the Lord Jesus who is central to fellowship.

Philippians 1:6. *“Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:”*

A GOOD WORK.

It began with the witness of some faithful men;
In the streets of the city again and again,
They proclaimed the truth witnessing to them,
And now from prison Paul is remembering when -

When Lydia and others went by the river to pray,
And the preachers came there and spoke that day,
And those who prayed, listened to what they had to say,
As they witnessed of Christ, who is "The Way."

Then the jailor and the prisoners too,
Heard the chained ones sing and praise the God they knew
Forgives the sinners and makes life brand new;
Believed, when they said Jesus will save even you.

The Gospel spread from there, the first town in that land;
The saved ones there were a happy band;
From the very first day, concern for their fellow-man;
Made fellowship in the Gospel a priority demand.

They loved those men who brought the Gospel first;
Paul praised the Lord for their obvious thirst
For the things of God and the Gospel work;
And a love for souls who by sin were cursed.

Paul longed for the saints who lived in that place;
He was hoping to see them again face to face;
There is a bond with those, who we take time to trace,
Have been saved when we told them of redeeming grace.

It is not a sham, we appreciate those,
Who God saved first when the messenger goes
With the truth of God and finds those God chose;
And forever the Gospel binds us close.

We hear their names, and we turn to prayer;
We picture in our minds those loved ones there;
Gathered at the table with the bread and cup to share;
And we thank the Lord for those who on our heart we bare.

"Father, I am thankful that I have had the privilege of taking the Gospel on occasions to people who had never been exposed to the message of salvation. Even now names arise in my mind and I intercede on their behalf; that they will be preserved for testimony in the place Thou hast called them. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

All these things remain true today when we think and pray for all the saints. Believers still enjoy the Gospel. Emotion has its place in us and from us when it is directed toward others. Thoughts of God's people; the fellowship we have in Christ; the constraint love has on us; the thoughts of our unity in Jesus Christ raises praise and worship from our hearts even in adverse circumstances. Praising the saints for their strength to withstand the pressures to conform, and for the impact of their lives on others on others, is an important way to encourage God's people. Genuine praise for a consistent witness and concern for the spread of the Gospel, motivates our fellow saints. All saints need to remember we are in Christ. All believers are able to be effectively used by the Lord. All have a good work that can keep us focused on what is really important. All of us are partakers of God's grace that comes from the Source of grace to us when it is needed. All have a genuine interest. A proof of reality for ourselves is "do I love the brethren?"

Philippians 1:7. *"Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace."*

IN MY HEART.

There is a oneness we share that is strange to others;
"How do you know them? You don't look like brothers!"
But the common bond of the Gospel makes as one those we find
Who we've never met before but are willing to take the time;
To discuss together the fullness of the Gospel of God's grace,
Which is close to the heart of all those who know Him by faith.

Our hearts are knit together and we willingly identify
Ourselves as those who know the Lord and the truth of God did buy.

Some may be rich and others poor; some are old and others young.
The basis of our common bond goes back to when God began
A work of grace by letting us hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ
And because of that message we believe in Him who paid the price
Of redemption - and by the Holy Spirit, placed us in God's family -
The common bond, being born of God when other family members we see
It is unique - this work of God - but all across this land
We find those of like precious faith and become a happy band.

We all have partaken of the same grace; all of us have the same Spirit.
We all have the same heavenly Father, and the same Savior is ever near us.
We all use the same Holy Book to find our instruction and guidance.
We all have a new love imparted; all have the Teacher to guide us.
We are all going the same way, we all walk on the narrow road.
We all love one another; we all are willing to bear each other's load.
We all have eternal life; we all have a desire to pray.
We all have love for the souls of others; we all will be in heaven some day.

So remarkably our hearts are warmed when we hear what others are doing.
And often when we meet new family members, we ask, "How are things going?"
And they know automatically we are referring to the state of their spiritual life,
And pass on to us some comments that help us to walk in the light.
How gracious and miraculous of God to bind His children together
With cords of love and interest that come from His imparted divine nature
From place to place; from country to country, this blessing I have found
In the hearts of those in the family of God, the life of God abounds.

**"Father in heaven, I thank Thee for all Thy people who bear evidence of the love of
God shed abroad in their hearts. Draw us closer to each other - but more - closer to
Thee, the Source of new life. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**

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

THE AFFECTION OF JESUS CHRIST.

We read His words and learn how deeply and compassionately He cared
He looked upon the multitudes as from His divine nature He shared
Not only miraculous fish and bread but His words of life and truth
When they rejected His call to faith, He was grieved for He knew their worth.

May I never look at rejection with anger or with disdain
May I always look upon young and old, and consider them all the same
May the affections of Jesus Christ be shown to others through me
May others through me, see something of Christ that they want theirs to be.

We read He met a young rich man who wanted eternal life
When the Lord gave him His answer, he considered it too high a price
Jesus watched him walk away and loved him just the same
Knowing all the time He would be rejected for friends and wealth and fame.

There are those who came close to the door that I know have also rejected
Both the Gospel and me the messenger, thinking they have just neglected
To act in faith at the present, but think the opportunity will come again
And I feel sadness with love for them who carelessly rejected Him.

We read He wept over a city that rejected the Lord as their King
He knew they didn't realize the consequences rejection would bring
He looked out into the future with tears streaming down His face
For He could see the time ahead when not one stone would be left in its place.

There are towns I have driven through where the Gospel was presented to them
And because of religious prejudice the Gospel was rejected then
Now there is no interest although I know many people there by name
My heart goes out to them who God's salvation have refused to claim.

On the cross forsaken and alone, He prayed that they might be forgiven

Impartially He still responded and a hell-bound thief went to heaven
He never spoke with bitterness, His affection remained intact
The deep yearning and love for His Father, and us, surrounded His every act.

The soul-winner's heart reaches out to others; he has deep love for the lost
Often, he will go to unusual lengths not considering what it costs
The names of many martyrs and faithful laborers will someday be known
They considered the needs of others more important than those of their own.

“I fear O Lord God, I do not have that deep compassionate love and longing for the well-being of others that I should have. Do You think Father, that I can be trusted to reach out and meet needs the way I should? I am not really so concerned about whether what I believe is accepted by others. I am more concerned about what they believe about the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.”

Philippians 1:9-11

ABOVE THE NORMAL

Believers who share in common their lives with other saints, are interested in the well-being and blessing of others. We can't help this. It is part of the new nature we have been given by God. There is family feeling toward those God saved and with whom we have fellowship. There is the fellowship of life we have with any believer we meet that gives us joy to know God is working in grace all over the world. There is also the fellowship of light we have with those believers who are committed to the word of God and the practices of a scripturally gathered assembly. Paul was looking for growth in the believers at Philippi. His prayer for abounding love in them was not for the emotional attraction of people toward each other that is continually changing. The reference to love is the love of God that has been "shed abroad" in our hearts. The development of love to its fullest extent is the desire of Paul, the servant of Jesus Christ, for the believers. When something is abounding, it keeps growing.

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

ABOUND MORE AND MORE.

Beyond what is normal - continually growing
To practice what I learn by consistently showing
There is a process which comes from biblical knowledge
That cannot be learned by attending a college.
It is rooted in God and passed on by His Spirit
The Divine Teacher knows when I finally do “get it.”
It is insight far beyond mere human understanding
That enables love to abound farther than a lesson I hand in.
It is a maturity that comes by knowing more of God.
It continues on through the practice of assimilating His Word
Until it becomes part of me, not just something factual
Increasing my discernment and making my faith practical.
I don't want only a theory learned from some other men
Making me smart but not a whole lot like Him
Whose affectionate love had no limits - no bounds
Its reality showed wherever the Lord Jesus was found.
My desire is that same sensitivity and maturation should be
Observable and real by being daily lived out in me.
In times of decision, that love helps me make
Wise choices and actions regarding the way that I take.
Hopefully it will also bring glory and honor to Him
Who has saved me and now keeps me making changes within.
I won't cease to grow; God has only just got started
To make me what He wants by the Holy Spirit imparted.
As I learn and pray that love will more and more abound -
May His knowledge and judgment in His servant be found.

“Father God, I need more insight that gets deeper and deeper - and more rooted in Thee. I pray this for myself and also for those I know who are seeking to live for Thee and serve Thee in the places to which Thou hast called them. What we need can only really come from Thee. May we all commit ourselves to take His yoke on us and learn of our Lord Jesus Christ, in whose name I pray, Amen.”

The full knowledge and full discernment needed is a result of the love of God and the comprehensive insight only God can give. Through the word of God, the knowledge of His will and how to apply it to each situation

is made plain to us. That abounding love not only gives greater knowledge of God's will for us, but fuller insight and discernment in making decisions. In life we are constantly confronted with issues in which we have to make moral judgments. Not every decision we make has a precise biblical statement regarding it, but there are effects that come from any matter with which we deal.

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

ABOUNDING LOVE.

What kind of love is this that will continually increase?
What kind of love is this that will never cease?
What kind of love is this that I can seize?
It must be the love of God.

But how can God's love abound in me?
What is there about it that others can see?
Is there some evidence that God has made to be?
It must be the love of God.

How would such love continually grow?
How would such love out to others flow?
How would God through me Himself to people show?
Evidence of the love of God.

Knowledge can show that love is real;
Knowledge through love can hurts of others heal;
Knowledge in love will God's heart reveal;
Making visible the love of God.

To step out beyond my own comfort zone;
To take others burdens along with those of my own;
To share what I have learned from God alone;
Is showing the love of God.

To know when to speak and when not to speak;
To know where there are the answers that others seek;
To know when to listen and private counsel keep;
Is passing on the love of God.

To know and not judge and yet judgment make;
To be honest to my friend and yet his counsel take;
To carefully respond and not his confidence break;
Means practicing the love of God.

With knowledge and judgment, God is pleased to use;
A person for His work in the place He shall choose;
To show to my brothers what they will lose;
Apart from the love of God.

Without deceit and without offense;
Love will show grace and some common sense;
And will bear others burdens at one's own expense;
When we practice the love of God

“Father of all struggling saints: I am sure that there are believers who hardly know what to do next because of the difficulties of life. May I be empowered by Thy Spirit to show them Thy love and Thy knowledge with true judgment in an appropriate manner. May it be evident to them that I care for them and love them in the Lord. May it never be a question in their minds that no one cares for them. May I be able to honestly love them in a Christ-like way and not appear to be patronizing. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

There are many good things we can, and should, apply ourselves to. Some things are more "excellent" compared to others. By discernment that comes to us through the scriptures, we can approve certain things as more appropriate than others. As an instance, the worship of God is a very important part of our Christian life. The Lord Jesus said that those who worship the Father must worship Him "in spirit and in truth." Behind the act of worship, there is that which I must approvingly discern in myself. To go through a form is not what God intends of me.

Philippians 1:10. *“That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may sincere and without offence till the day of Christ;”*

MORAL DISCERNMENT.

It is working; I can see it in the lives and words of the new born.
As the days and weeks pass good choices are becoming more the norm,
That shows the new life to be real both at home and in the workplace
The ability between right and wrong is easier to differentiate.
The vital and the trivial are much plainer now to see -
And good and bad are quite obviously not questionable to me.
The tendency to fill the deficiencies with something that's like wax,
Placed in the needed spots and to fill the moral cracks -
Has passed away as time goes on and I am more aware of Christ -
Being knowledgeable and involved in every part of life.

It takes awhile but God is working to make me more like Him.
There isn't quite the pressure from the world to be like them
Because after awhile they understand that "No" really does mean "No -"
And places they frequent for social entertainment are places I don't go.
Things they do I refuse to do because of moral discernment.
To walk in the darkness of questionable things is not my entertainment.
It is my consolation that there are many around the same
Who find our joy in spiritual things and want honor for Jesus' name.
We have a lot in common but what really makes us stand out
We want our lives to be "Christ-like" that's what we are about.

So often when others are going down, we all are going up.
When they have run out of money, the Lord has filled our cup
With things that last like love and peace and a conscience that is clear.
When the declining situation of life comes up, we really have no fear,
For we know what is coming as the world situation gets much worse.
The Lord Himself is coming and then true justice He will dispense.
Those who know Him in their lives when moral discernment they did show
Will not be ashamed to look on Him when into His presence we will go.
The life of faith always works best when we practice the presence of God,
For those moral choices keep us living in the way we always should.

“Father in heaven, each day decisions arise in which I have to make choices. I pray that I will always consider the need of moral discernment to decide these things in the fear of God and with a view to what truly honors Thee. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

Beyond even that action is the effect it has on me. My motives need to be pure and sincere in any act or decision I make. The measure of love for God through me toward others should be increasing. That love ministers with God-given knowledge and discernment based on God's word, not my opinions. The objective is that it will be demonstrated when the best things are approved and there is genuine integrity in my dealings with others. I will be fully committed to do what is right.

To be without offense simply means God intends me to be blameless morally. There should be no covering of "wax" put in or over the flaws I want to keep hidden from others. God intends the wrong habits, attitudes and actions I may have excused in my life should not be there at all, let alone try to cover them with some excuse. There is a time coming at the rapture of the church and the judgment seat of Christ when everything will be exposed as to what it really is right before the Lord. "The fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is."

In order to maintain and nurture assembly relationships in the way God intended, there are steps we have to take by our own choice. Character traits are given in the new Testament in five lists. If these are attended to, they will make relational living, not a chore, but a natural way of virtuous living. "Virtues" are traits of moral excellence that are formed because we want them to be the way we really are. These are things I can do to make my assembly life significant and make me willing to accept my responsibility to the assembly joyfully.

Philippians 1:10. *“That ye may prove things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ.”*

DAY OF CHRIST.

Would I be doing the same tomorrow as I have done here today

If I was sure the Lord at 10 o'clock would call all saints away?
Would I be living in mediocrity or would I change my plans -
To make sure that everyone would know the Lord's Coming is at hand?
Would I have prayed the same way when making intercession?
Would I have pressed more Gospel into my regular conversations?
Would I have thought the same thoughts during my personal devotions?
Would I have written these same words or am I going through the motions?

I hope I will still keep God's people in my thoughts and prayers.
And I hope my love for them will show as much as they show theirs.
I want my knowledge to increase when making my decisions
And common sense guided by the Spirit to lead me in paths of wisdom.
I know I have to test things that I will say and do -
Making sure what I tell the saints is biblical and true.
I know some things would be different than are usual to me -
I want to make sure what I take in is what God wants to me to see.

The Day of Christ may be nearer than I may say or think.
That day may be today - we may be living on the brink
Of that first moment we see Jesus and look upon His face -
And the nail marks in His hands my fingers long to trace.
Lord, help to be sincere and not fill my cracks with wax.
Keep me from offending others - to be faithful is what I ask.
I don't want to cover up things - the Lord may come at any time -
When I see my Lord's face, I would like it to be reflected in mine.

“Father, this may be the day Thou hast appointed to call the saints up to be with the Lord. May I be able to step from what I am doing into the Lord's presence without being startled. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

With genuine integrity before God and men I should be committed heartily to do what is right under the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. The products of righteousness in life will bring glory and praise to God. When I am willing to do that which exalts God in every part of my daily life, God is honored. There are character traits that we should apply in order to "escape the corruption of this world." When we add to faith virtue which is really excellence, spiritual intelligence and knowledge will then be manifested. Self-control and steadfastness in the things of God follows. Holy dignity leads to genuine affection for others, and Christian love is real. The qualities we should add to our lives are the products of righteousness that keeps us from being idle and barren in our lives.

When such a prayer is answered, God is glorified and praise goes to Him alone. This prayer is for all, not just a few, and when Christ is honored and God is glorified, grateful believers who love the Lord have the natural response of joy for His saving and keeping grace.

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

FILLED WITH THE FRUITS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

When the thought arises in the mind
Is the time to take control.
For the mind is the source of decision making
That travels then to the soul.

There are the emotions and characteristics
That molds up my personality
And takes on a mental and spiritual form
That outwardly others will see.

The facial expressions and my hands
Reveal what I am like inside.
Through these two visible extremities
Righteousness has no place to hide.

They join with words that come from my tongue
To express what is important to me.
As all these body parts work in unison
Fruits of righteousness now come to be.

My face will reveal what I am feeling

As my hands bend to accomplish a task.
My tongue will form words to give guidance
Creating impressions that last.

So when all of me turns to do a work
That God has placed me to do,
The fruits of righteousness will clearly reveal
God is accomplishing before it happened, what He knew.

“Heavenly Father, may there be evidence today as I mingle with people that You are working through me. May there be real fruit that results in bringing much glory to Thee today and in days to come. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

Philippians 1:12-26

BITTERNESS AND BLESSING

We will not find every situation in life easy. But that doesn't mean the difficulties of life are wrong. It is in these times when the contrasts of what we have, and what we want, demonstrate our faith and develop our character. There will be places where we find ourselves, in which we can choose to be bitter or a blessing. It is when we are in those hard places, we realize joy is a choice. It is really up to us whether we use the difficulties as a potential for blessing or nurse a bitter spirit. Paul used what could have been bad, for good.

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

A BAD SITUATION BECOMES GOOD.

The situation seemed bad and it could get worse -
But this man didn't consider being imprisoned a curse
But an opportunity that had come where his faith he could share,
And God had arranged to bring his audience right there.
Not just any audience but a captive one too.
They had to stay near to guard him he knew.
This was a place where his testimony could be seen -
Not discouraged by the circumstances; his witness was keen.

We have times when opportunities are there if we look.
When a job is lost or something valuable took -
Like a home to a fire or the loss of one's health -
Or the situation arose and we lose all our wealth.
How we react to this and the way we choose to respond
Gives watching people an unspoken view of whose side we are on.
Do we really trust God and allow Him to work through me -
When people listen and watch, what is the message they hear and see?

God allows things to happen and we may never know why
These hard circumstances came until after we die.
But if we are aware of the fact God has let this thing happen -
We may pray for His guidance and grace in this situation.
There may be in the pressure of a time - of indecision,
That God will open a door that previously was hidden.
In a time of discouragement through which I must pass -
There will be some results come that really will last.

The Gospel is often furthered in times of serious opposition,
When observers watch Christians pass through normal human conditions.
They may begin to reflect on the way you act in hard times,
And say to themselves; “Why is their reaction to trouble so different than mine?”
God has His reasons for letting bad things happen to us.
His light seems much brighter when His children don't fuss -
But use the bad times to bring good - especially to others.
Paul did, and many of the soldiers became his spiritual brothers.

“I don't know what is ahead Father God: but I do know when I look back, that some of the best results in Gospel activity came when there was serious opposition. I praise Thee for this - and wait - for what will yet unfold here. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

Philippians 1:12. *“But I would that ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the Gospel;”*

FURTHERANCE OF THE GOSPEL.

It started small, then a gathering tide of living souls rolled out from the safe shore.
Moving on the feet of men and women, the voices sound out the news of new life.
The voices consolidate; gather in clear unity and publicly the cities hear the truth.
Cities, and from there to towns, farms, individuals, large crowds - Jesus died.
But the story does not stop - He died for all, for us, for me - He died and rose again.
And the country hears, the nation too; from there it goes to adjoining nations.
From nations to continents; the Gospel crosses borders and oceans and cultures.
It is passed on to the generation following and generations following them.
It gains momentum - the wave rolls on through persecution, violent deaths, martyrdom.
The foundation is solid; the Cornerstone firmly in place; stones are added - some fake.
Righteousness is visible; truth is audible; unseen is plausible; confidence is tangible.
In times of hunger, it gives hope; when dryness parches, it quenches the thirst.
In times of war, it gives consolation; in bereavement, it gives comfort; in the dark - light.

In prison a man writes, a guard watches his pen move across the pages and moves.
He moves to look and read and wonder and ask. The answers come - clearly, personal.
He wonders and comes again another day; another conversation; another conclusion.
He is reborn; he is changed - his facial expressions; his words; his ways; his walk.
He speaks and another asks why he is different now: and throughout the prison - and
Palace, and barracks, and army, and in camps in far and distant places the Gospel goes.
The Middle East, Gaul, Italy, Greece, Britannia, and to all the far reaches of the empire;
Outposts of truth; people gather and sing and pray and worship; faith is spread all over.
Amidst life and death; famine and feast; fear and confidence; hope and despair - it grows.
Without hesitation; with much consolation; with great expectation; goes God's salvation.
Throughout many nations, and all generations, and hard situations - it is furthered.
By wandering pilgrims to far distant islands; by intellects keen to the great of the nations:
To hungering souls, to questioning scholars; to mothers with babes; "The Way" unfolds.

Finally: after years on the move it reaches by means planned by God - to me, yes me.
It came unappreciated, unrecognized as important, unheeded, unattended and unwanted.
But now as then: things happened - planned by God, but seemingly, just happened.
A mother's song, a father's prayer, a table and a black book to read - "furtherance;"
One word at first: "God," then "Jesus," then "sinner" - the message "...of the Gospel."
The words come together; the truth is lived and seen, and heard; a dead spirit awakens.
Framed by divine intent; lived out by divine nature; new life, divine life - it's "happened."
New desires framed; "What does God want, why am I here - Lord, what do You want?"
Availability: willing to do the small things - falls out to "The furtherance of the Gospel."
Responsibility: can be trusted to do what is needed - "The furtherance of the Gospel."
Suitability: has learned from others and can work for - "The furtherance of the Gospel."
Accountability: to God and truth; to self and honor; to those who trust him and those -
Who need hear - "The things which happened... have fallen out... unto the Furtherance of
the Gospel."

"Even as I think, and praise and worship here this morning, Father God; I am moved by the history and the movement of Thy truth. It seemed so small at first and now so large. Its significance is not in the power of force but of a love that makes little things "happen" and works to bring life in unexpected ways to unexpected people. All praise to Thee! Amen."

Philippians 1:12. *"But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the Gospel."*

FURTHERANCE OF THE GOSPEL #2.

This weekend we are addressing the value of a human being. We are also addressing the responsibility of an assembly and each individual in it to fellow human beings. Every human being is of inestimable worth to God, and we dare not look on any person as if they are not worthy of our attention.

Evangelism and our commitment to it, necessitates us considering how to connect to all ages. Senior citizens in care homes and their families need our Gospel. Children from their earliest years and their parents need the Gospel. Our neighbors and workmates need the Gospel. Our children and grandchildren – and extended families, need the Gospel.

We have examples in the scriptures of truth how those before us met this need. Our Lord Jesus is the supreme example of personal and public evangelism. The apostle Peter, Philip the evangelist and the

apostle Paul all give us examples of reaching individuals, cities and the whole world. We also have examples of how local churches like Philippi and Thessalonica reached to their communities and areas around, with this great responsibility.

“O God of the harvest, I know there are often things that cannot be explained that happen when we are involved in Gospel work. Help me to understand that I do not need to know all the reasons for those unexplainable things. Help me to always trust Thee completely no matter what comes up. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

*

The facts of the matter were that the imprisonment of Paul was totally unfair. He was imprisoned in Israel, taken by ship as a prisoner to Rome. In Rome he was in prison for at least two years. What possible benefit can come from that? All along the path of this servant in bonds souls were saved and believers in various cities were contacted and ministered to from the servant of the Lord. The testimony of those events is still being used to bless people today through the words of the book of Acts and the epistles written during Paul's time in prison. We can use the difficulties in which we are found to encourage others even by the way we live during the hard times. What could have brought bitterness, brought blessing.

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

BONDS IN CHRIST.

There are chains forged by men, bonds because of sin.
Contrast bonds in Christ - ways we can manifest Him.
Christ is seen in reflections of grace in His people.
Bonds forged by love are far more lasting and real.

How can these bonds by observers be seen?
When we go through difficulties, do we act like Him?
People marveled at His words that were spoken with grace -
Even children were attracted when they looked at His face.

Publicans and sinners considered Him their friend.
People with problems experienced blessing He did send.
The “bonds in Christ” people need to see today
So they can observe those called “Christians” and hear what they say.

There is no place to hide genuine faith that is lived.
Much of the world “takes,” there are few that will “give.”
When the bonds of Christ are able to be seen -
The manifestation will follow wherever you have been.

From one to another the ripple effect goes.
Truth passes on when one tells what he knows.
A family is changed when one member is saved -
The others watch carefully to see what she has.

Then on to extended groups; maybe other places
Reality shows in life changes and happy faces.
God's name and His truth is passed on with respect -
And many are blessed because of one's good effect.

“There are those Father: I know who have had great influence on others. May they continue - and others join them - to extend Thy truth to places near and far. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

Paul knew the reason for his imprisonment was to further the Gospel. And that was the outcome. There was the message of salvation brought to those to whom he was chained and to others who were in the palace as well as to “all other places” where those people would go throughout the Roman Empire. There is joy in the Gospel on the part of those who preach it, those who believe it, angels in heaven and people who are reached by the multiplying effect of heralding the Gospel. What could have been fear, brought boldness.

Philippians 1:14. *“And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word with fear.”*

BOLD TO SPEAK THE WORD.

They must have watched him - strong under pressure

Treating those who guarded him - respectful, measured
Balanced as the opposition focused on him - quietly confident
Quite gracious in words, not threatening - compliant.

Yet the words were spoken fearlessly - in the beginning by him
Then those who had heard and believed - now he encourages them
Not just one or two, but most - both sisters and brothers
Those who had believed on Christ through his message - now speak to others.

Bold words of faith spoken have impact on others - we have something today
But we cannot reach all so the "others" boldly speak out - "Jesus is the Way."
And from one whose faith is strong, others are stirred - they pick up the refrain
The Gospel is true; Christ has suffered for sin and died - now He is risen again.

And confidence increases as the number of laborers grow - appreciating God
From house to house and city to city with holy boldness - traveling around the world
One man with a vision reaches out in his quiet way - others are made bold
The Word of God is proclaimed by many in their strength - even some who are old.

One looks and sees problems; a world in turmoil - another sees lost sheep
Some glance around complacently without concern - others lose sleep.
Some gather for a "rainy day" - others "give;" burdened for the lost.
Some seek new adventures if they can play - others are bold not counting the cost.

One man in his limitations still can convey his vision - others his vision catch
Not able to reach more than one to whom he is bound - others learn as they watch.
From one to another the challenge comes to reach out and venture - bold to speak
Without fear the Word of God is spread by word of mouth - the lost are reached.

"O Holy God: give to those who are hindered by limitations courage to speak a word when they can. Give to those who hear them a spark to light their own testimony and to pass on what they know. Even here where so many are of us old - give us boldness to speak and faithfulness in prayer. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

The potential for bitterness was there when some of the believers who knew Paul was in prison began to preach the Gospel. It is not uncommon for the difficulties of one of God's children to have an effect on other believers. The unfriendliness of some of those who preached Christ because of "envy and strife" did not make Paul bitter. We have the choice to be glad when God uses others to carry on what we have done, or to be bitter. Sometimes the backward and timid are stirred to action by the misfortune of those who have taken sick or are sidelined for some reason. When they reach out with the Gospel to new areas or follow up a work already begun, we are obviously glad. Then there are those who are restless and have "the itch to preach" and they seek to preach the Gospel even though they are not really able to do it well. It is up to us as to whether we are going to be critical or grateful that Christ is preached.

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

PREACHING CHRIST.

Some use the right words, for the wrong reasons,
The motive behind their preaching is opposition.
Some speak of Christ but misrepresent Him -
There is opportunism that brings financial gain.

Others have been inspired by the faithfulness of the tested.
Good will toward their generation is what prompts them.
Their strong faith and assurance stir many hearts.
They reach out preaching Christ in spite of the rivalry.

It is not my right, I guess, to criticize what others do -
But when they appeal for money, I don't think they are true
Who preach that kind of message, so foreign to Christ's message -
Filling their own coffers with money to mark their passage.

I've watched some workers from afar and others who were near.
They preached Christ with good will; from them you'd never hear
The appeal for money of any kind, they would rather give -
Passing on not only the Gospel, but much of what they have.

So when Christ is preached, we should consider what is the real motive
Listen to the words and compare that with what is descriptive
Of the Gospel message when passed on from hearts sincere
And match the attitudes of men's souls with what you really hear.

“O All-Knowing God: there are those who are making merchandise of the most needed message in the world. Thou dost know the reasons behind every Gospel message preached. Glorify Thy name and Thy Son in whatever way can be approved by Thee alone. I only look on the outward appearance; You look at the hearts. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

Philippians 1:16. *“The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds:”*

ADDING AFFLICTION.

The words seem right but the motives insincere.
It seems like they want to make burdens harder to bear.
I am not sure what satisfaction they would gain,
By adding affliction to the already present pain.
Perhaps there is some benefit they perceive
Would come from someone if the moment they seize.
But to, in mockery, preach God's glorious Gospel,
Is an action that really is seriously awful.

It may be for some kind of selfish ambition,
They preach Christ as a form of competition
Supposing those that listen to them
Will all choose to turn away from him
Who God has sent into this situation
To preach Christ and His salvation
In order to reach those who would not hear
Unless some unusual reason brought them there.

So, we will not despair.
It is God who brought us here.
All the reasons may yet be unclear
But God's truth we are here to share.
And in spite of added affliction,
God can be glorified even in competition.
And blessings come to those who hear
Because the Lord has left us here.

“Father God, and Lord of the harvest: for Thy own honor and glory, bless the word that will be presented to those who hear in this place. Those who came and walked away may return if they really want Thy truth to be practiced in their lives. Help us to be faithful to Thee this day. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

Let us be glad when God uses others, to continue to further the work we once were able to do. They may be inclined to do it differently so we need to give them the credit of being the Lord's servant for that time and place. Paul was neither self-seeking nor filled with self-pity because of the circumstances in which he found himself. He could, and so should we, rejoice in all that God was doing through others as well as himself. It is not wrong to ask for prayer that the difficulties will pass. But there are resources and power available to us in the Spirit who can change everything in a moment if that is God's will. When that does not happen, it is up to us to make that time an opportunity for the Gospel, rather than question the faithfulness of God. What could have brought sadness brought joy.

Philippians 1:17. *“But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defense of the gospel.”*

THE DEFENSE OF THE GOSPEL.

Love shows its power in many ways -
Not just in the words a preacher says -
But in the expressions upon his face.
And the words are spoken with holy grace -
Body language and to tone of voice -
A certain dignity and inherent poise
All affect the way listeners respond
To the Gospel when to it they act upon.

The message is the same however it is preached
The purpose of the message is that sinners we might reach
And bring an action of genuine repentance
As they consider the danger of sin's sentence.
But also we must present the only solution -
Is trusting Christ alone for God's salvation.
Bringing people to act in faith based on God's Word -
And making sure they come to Jesus as Lord.

A short-cut way to make a confession
May lead some soul to a false profession
It is important that we preach with love -
But not be satisfied until we know they have
Heard the whole message of God's salvation;
It is on this basis one becomes a new creation.
New life can then by the Spirit spring forth
From one who has received God's eternal Truth.

"O God of the Gospel: let me be one of those to send out Thy light and Thy truth. Keep me from looking for, or counting, numbers of professions of faith. Use me to confirm in the faith those who are truly Thy people. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Philippians 1:17. *"But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defense of the Gospel."*

I AM SET.

A quietness of spirit knowing that God brought me here - "I am set..."
A passion for the souls of those that are near - "I am set..."
A deep understanding of the truths held so dear - "I am set..."
A solemn awareness that only once some may hear - "I am set..."

Not just in pride or with confidence in self - "The defense..."
Not thinking that God left me sitting on a shelf - "The defense..."
Not worrying or complaining no others can help - "The defense..."
Not trusting in men but in the Living God Himself - "The defense..."

It is what God gave me the day I was saved - "The Gospel."
It is that which I preach to those by sin depraved - "The Gospel."
It is liberty to those who to their chains are enslaved - "The Gospel."
It is freedom and new life from the Savior who gave - "The Gospel."

Whatever men do when they try to oppose - "I am set for the defense of the Gospel."
Whatever they say then their guilt is exposed - "I am set for the defense of the Gospel."
Wherever they go, those whom God has chose - "I am set for the defense of the Gospel."
Whenever they speak, must make sure each one knows - "I am set for the defense of the Gospel."

"The defense of the Gospel," was a calling for Paul;
"The defense of the Gospel," was a blessing to fall;
"The defense of the Gospel," was a large work, not small;
"The defense of the Gospel," was a challenge to all.

So now I must ask, "For this work... am I set?
Will I stay firm and steadfast, whatever beset?
Will I be true to the Gospel whatever I get?"
By God's help, to His Gospel, I again recommit.

"I am not always sure, O God, how much of opposition and tension I would be able to take. I can accept the fact of criticism, of disagreements with methods and personal differences; but I am not sure how I would respond to someone preaching Christ out of contention and making a mockery of the Gospel. I am asking for an understanding that is needed to know how to react if such a time arise. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

To "live Christ" is different than living for Christ. Living for Christ is an addition to living for ourselves. To live for someone or something gives that the control of our life. To live business makes it the priority over every other interest. To live pleasure or fame sets those things up as the meaning of life. To live Christ puts Him in the place of the life-source of a committed Christian. That would also mean whatever we do would have a

good reason behind it. We would use our time as effectively as possible and put our efforts in a place that counts.

Philippians 1:18. *“What then notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached: and I therein rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.”*

I WILL REJOICE.

If Christ is preached to the world of men,
Then I am caused to reflect,
His name and His message God can use
To bring sinners unto Him.
And though their motives may not be pure,
I never should neglect
To pray that the Holy Spirit
Will make God's Word endure.

Now I'm the one to stop and reason;
Will I in my heart rejoice?
After all, God is able to bless His Word,
And use any person's voice.
The concern then is will I look beyond
The person God uses, to the fact -
In His own way He gives power to His Word
What is spoken is never coming back.

So I choose to rejoice in the Gospel itself,
There is enough in a few words to give light.
The person who speaks isn't really the main point -
When Christ is preached - it's alright.
I thank God for what is true and people can hear
Redemption's plan whenever it is told.
I will seek not to criticize but rejoice in this way -
God is bringing lost sheep into His fold.

“O Righteous God, I do have this tendency to criticize those who preach on TV and other places, to huge crowds. What they say seems so shallow and twisted. But then I remember they hold in their hands the Bible and often speak well of the Lord Jesus Christ. So I know the Holy Spirit can use that to bring blessing. Help me to be faithful to Thee, Thy Word, and present Thy truth - no matter what others do. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

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

MY SALVATION.

There are more ways to experience salvation than the salvation of the soul.
For those in strong pain on the bed, it comes when finally, they feel whole.
Or even when there is no hope and they know death soon will come -
Salvation to them is the final release when they arrive at their heavenly home.

Others of God's people are going through times that are really very tough.
They have been daily persecuted and feel they have had enough.
God in His grace and wisdom chooses to finally set them free -
And they rejoice in their “salvation” of being set at liberty.

Those going through times of testing think those times will never end.
They have been incarcerated in prison; days and nights both seem to blend.
Like Job and Paul, they know God is near to help and their burden share -
Patiently they wait and hope, trusting God who is always near.

The salvation that God effects when a person comes to Him in faith -
We first are aware of at the time when He saves us by His grace.
Then we learn by experience there is a salvation for each unfolding day,
That enables us to live for God as we walk the heavenly way.

When a church has difficulties, there is a salvation too -
That can be accomplished when saints take time to pray things through
And come to a conclusion that brings peace and comfort to the flock.
So, unity is maintained as together before the world they walk the walk.

I am not just looking back in life to fifty years and more
To experience the blessings of salvation that took place long before
I realized God was with me and saving me day by day;
My salvation in all its different ways is what God still does for me.

“O God of all grace, 59 years ago Thou didst save my soul from hell. Before that time, and many times since, Thou hast saved my life. How can I thank Thee for doing for me what could never be done by any other person or in any other way. I can only praise Thee and honor Thee, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

There is a quality of life that magnifies Christ whether we are in good or bad circumstances. To live or die is not up to us but to the One who holds that key. As to what I do, though, in life or death is to be an opportunity in which to glorify God. A person with purpose of heart to live Christ has been given a real meaning to life. We are ready to live when we are ready to die. Either one can bring joy into what could have brought sadness. One thing we know about dying, after death is far better for a believer than life is here.

Philippians 1:20. *“According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death.”*

CHRIST SHALL BE MAGNIFIED.

It has happened in many places - world wide
The Lord Jesus is manifested as truly God - identified
People hear the Gospel and believe, and God is glorified
Souls are saved by grace and Christ is magnified!

One lives for God in spite of opposition - sanctified
His purposes unfold to those around - before their eyes
Christ is honored by his faithfulness - justified
New believers learn and grow and Christ is magnified!

No matter what others say or do - not intimidated
The faithful saints stay true to God - not ashamed
Walking before the Lord not man - consecrated
Consistent as the years pass and Christ is magnified!

While others sit in silence this one speaks - for God
Others may fear frowns, this one lives boldness - for the Lord
No compromising, but remaining true - to God's Word
As old age approaches, still reliable and Christ is magnified!

So in my body day by day - may Christ be magnified
In the motivation and purpose for living - may Christ be magnified
When my death day comes and final words are said - may Christ be magnified
From the heritage of birth to the Rapture - may Christ be magnified!

“I do want to live Father God, each and every day so that in some way Christ is magnified, honored and glorified. I ask this in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

Philippians 1:21. *“For to me to live is Christ, and to die, is gain.”*

FOR ME TO LIVE.

It comes from God for He is its Source
Even in the darkness there is a life-force
That presses to survive until I am born -
Christ is our life at the beginning.

Time moves on and childhood has its testing
Surviving unseen dangers - Satan is never resting
As he seeks to claim my soul and keep me from trusting
Christ is our life maintaining.

New life is given in Christ and I then received
A whole new attitude - a new creation is conceived
By the Holy Spirit of God when on Jesus I believed
Christ is our life transforming.

Years run their course as I present to men salvation
That has produced in many others spiritual regeneration
Often leading them to commit to a life of consecration
Christ is our life in communicating.

Age brings with it some unwelcome changes
There is no doubt limitations are here as this body ages
Now I am getting to be like one of the ancient sages
Christ is our life sustaining.

Looking back to the beginning and following up to now
If Christ was not my life, I often wonder how
I would even want to live if I did not really know
"For to me to live is Christ."

"His name is still like ointment poured forth Father. It seems like He is more precious, more important, more real to me as the days pass. I do love the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

However, here we have opportunities that we will not have in the eternal future. One thing that gives value to living now is that we can live for God under adverse conditions, among those who oppose God and His truth, and represent Him and His righteousness. We won't have that after we die. Another reason for living now even if things are hard is that believers can be helped by us if we so choose, and if we are ready and willing to be used by God. Day to day while Paul was in prison, he prayed for the Lord's people in the different places he had gone preaching the Gospel. While there in prison, letters were written to assemblies and fellow-laborers to give instruction and encouragement. Time can be used effectively or wasted depending on whether we have an attitude of bitterness or blessing.

Philippians 1:22. *"But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labor: yet what I shall choose I wot not."*

THE FRUIT OF MY LABOR.

The spread of the Gospel - the joy that it brings
The joy that I get when a congregation sing,
"O happy day, O happy day, when Jesus washed my sins away..."
Is what has made my life more than what I say
But is a series of holy and daily events
That comes through Him whom the Lord sent
The Holy Spirit to dwell within and then guide
As continually He remains and in me abides
To produce in my life what can bring glory to God
Allowing me the privilege to speak for my Lord
Words of life to those who in sin are dead
And then through them, the Gospel is spread
The believers are gathered to be built up in faith
And through them to their communities God shows His grace
As they in turn teach their own children and others
And live as God's family - they are sisters and brothers
With a new life-style that changed them, that is obvious
And a darkened community now has light and a conscience
That reveals what is right to those in the darkness
And brings the light of life when they too hearken
So, the process continues and it has spread world wide
And the fruit of my labor in prayer, is that this work will abide
With commitment to God and His unfailing truth
And rejoicing, some day we partake of this God-given fruit.

"I don't know what Thou art able to use Father God, of the years of my labor. But if some precious souls are blessed with salvation and spiritual growth, then I am satisfied and blessed. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

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

A NARROW PLACE.

There are these places we come to in life,
Where we have major choices to make.

Should I do what I know is pleasing to me,
Or is there another, better way I should take?
If I did this one thing, my trials would be over
And I would finally be comfortable and at rest.
On the other hand, if I go the hard way,
It will for other people be best.

When it comes to preaching the Gospel:
Some places seem to be very hard -
And night after night speaking with no results,
Tends to make me discouraged and tired.
But then on occasions some will come much later,
And say, "I never told you I have been saved."
In those difficult times when we despair,
A gracious God, His salvation gave.

There are those straits we sometimes pass through
When we've had so much pain we want to die.
"I've had enough; please take my home,"
To our heavenly Father we cry.
Then it may be later, or maybe not at all,
Some suffering believers will say,
"I learned from you when you were in pain,
To cast my care on God each day."

The Lord is coming, it may be today,
And this I am anxious to see -
For it means a new dawn, finally done with sin
I will forever and ever be able to be.
And then I remember some people I know,
Who are not ready yet to meet their Maker;
Part of me wants to go, another to wait,
Until I know the Savior they have taken.

I know some things are right, but timing is wrong,
There is much more than today to consider.
These narrow places I pass through make me become strong,
And also, these are where I stop to remember,
God has not given us the reasons for all
The things He allows us in life to experience.
There is a big picture, maybe sometime God shall
Reveal all these results and reasons so extrinsic.

"It would be wonderful if the Lord was to come today, O God, but I know for Your own reasons it has to be in Your own time. By Thy grace and mercy, move upon people and events of our time to bring greater glory and honor to Thee. All the turmoil around the world does make me look up more consistently and truly wait for the portals of heaven to open to one way or another. I will be glad to finally see Thee and be at home. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

All of us need to recognize the value of living, and seek to live life to the full for the glory of God. Let us be bold in our concern for God to be glorified in the work of the Gospel and service for the saints. At the same time don't be too concerned as to the degree of comfort or discomfort we might have because of that work. If we have comfortable circumstances, be thankful and use them wisely for God. If we are barely able to get along, let alone minister to others, we need to commit ourselves to be of spiritual help to others in prayer or by any other means we can.

Philippians 1:24. *"Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you."*

MORE NEEDFUL.

They wait for me to make a decision that affects them.
I cannot avoid the fact that to a degree my family needs me;
Even if it is only as a silent example as to what I believe -
And what my expectations of them are to be.

To those I work with in furthering God's kingdom,
There is a responsibility to them I still have.

They want from me - and I think they have the right -
To learn from the experience, I have to give.

To the assembly which over half a century ago,
Confidence in me and a commendation did give;
I still am accountable and for my lifetime will be.
It is needful for me to give what I have.

To those who the Lord saved when the Gospel I preached,
I still have obligations that I must fulfill.
I need to continue to support them and to instruct,
So their testimony where they live will continue on still.

Whether I understand it fully or not, I know it is true.
I cannot take the view, "I have nothing to contribute."
I am responsible to God to show in all life's ways -
What I have learned; the example of Christ to imitate.

"I know I am not done Father, otherwise I would be in heaven. Until I am taken to heaven, I would like to pass on what I have learned about Thee, Thy ways, Thy Word and Thy work. I need Thee to lead and guide me in every step of the way. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

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

FURTHERANCE AND JOY OF FAITH.

Not looking back to failures or fears.
Not looking back to some wasted years.
Looking ahead to opportunities that wait;
Looking ahead to open doors and gates
That lead into fields waiting to be reaped,
And pastures that are green; ready for sheep
To come and find food they can easily digest -
Just waiting for an under-shepherd who knows best
What is needed and how to get there and find -
Food for the soul; for the life and the mind.

Progress and joy seem to fit well together.
As faith develops one seems to know whether
The need all around can be met by God through him
Whose joy is contagious; able to be caught by other men.
That kind of progress comes when we look ahead -
Not allowing obstacles and opposition to fill us with dread.
Recognizing with humility that his progress and joy,
Is able to be caught by others; he refuses to toy
With the trivial things that hinder and wrongs that attract -
He looks ahead in faith; not in regret looking back.

Progress can be measured by the signs on life's road:
"Has this day been to profit?" "Have I today pleased God?"
Progress doesn't mean badges given; worn with pride -
It really is best measured by changes I know are inside.
And the joy of faith: Why please let me explain -
It started the night when I was born again.
In each successive act of my obedience to God,
Joy increased when I owned Jesus as Lord.
Now in fellowship with God, and my sisters and brothers -
I can progress in life with the joy of faith in my heavenly Father.

"I rejoice in Thee this morning Father. I find delight in the Name and Person of the Lord Jesus Christ and it all comes to me by the Holy Spirit. I praise Thee in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Our confidence is in God who knows the reason for everything He allows. When Paul was in prison, he did things he could not have done if he was at liberty. It was not wrong for him to hope for release because there was other work yet to be done. We are not done until the One with the key makes that unmistakably clear. The joy we find in a hard place is a real, and maybe more so, than the joy we have when we are at

liberty to press ahead to the goal God has for us. Paul wanted "to live Christ." When that is true, we will find opportunities to bless others wherever we are found. When our minds are focused on Christ and His work, we will have joy through the work of others as well as our own. It will also bring blessing to us and others for which we GIVE GOD ALL THE GLORY.

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

BY MY COMING.

The news is out - he is coming here.
Is this met with anticipation or a sense of fear?
The last time he came he really condemned us,
Not calling us by name but telling us we must
Conform to what he says, we must do things his way.
What he simply means is he has the answers or there's a price to pay.

That would be awful if it is said about me.
I would hope some would come out even if only to see
That I care about them all and their joy of faith -
Because I know they live and work in this very place.
And daily people watch them wanting to know
If what they believe is real or is it all for show.

By God's grace, I desire to bring some rejoicing -
That can give holy joy and some real encouraging
Teaching that makes the Christian life real
In a hurting world that only God can heal.
As I go now to speak, may my words be with grace;
And may every saint of God leave with joy on their face.

"When invitations come Father, please make me aware of how I can bring joy and hope to Thy people. Help me to build them up in the faith. Let them know in some way that they are important to me and to Thee. If my words, actions and attitudes are the things Thou art going to use - please let me exemplify the dignity, honor and respect for them they deserve. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

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

ABUNDANT REJOICING.

Rejoicing with the lips, as the saints recall again;
Who and how, what and when the work did here begin.
We think about it, talk about it and raise our lips in cheer;
God did Himself begin a work, and it began right here.

Rejoicing hearts go back again and faithful ones recall;
When God did speak with clarion tones, and challenged one and all.
Our souls awoke, our conscience too, began to speak to us;
And rejoicing did break out again, as folks in Christ did trust.

The lost were found, the dead got life, and darkness turned to light;
Our conscience then found peace with God, and we began new life.
Our rejoicing now was not in sin, but in our Christ, who died;
And Someone new, now lives within, The Spirit is inside.

Some suffering came, it was not fun, when people walked away;
Families too, rejected light that shone like a new day.
But even then, we did rejoice for suffering brings with it;
A simple trust and confidence; we now with sin don't fit.

We have new hope, and in this fact our hearts now do rejoice;
Because God had given promises when we made Him our choice.
This is a start this life we live, but earth is not our home;
We shall be changed, like Him we'll be when He for us does come.

We rejoice right now in many ways, as we God's plans can trace;
For He has given joy that fits our lives in every place.
We rejoice with saints with whom we share our life as we move on;
The day is coming when with rejoicing we think of work well-done.

Rejoicing then with God's dear ones, seems always to increase;
Rejoicing with the heart abounds, when lost souls find true peace.
Rejoicing with a conscience clear increases as the blessed hope draws near;
Rejoicing is abundant when with the saints we our life share.

“O heavenly Father, I have been finding as I move farther through life, that I am rejoicing more than ever in the simple things. It is not always the great answers to prayer that give such joy, but I now I am experiencing joy in things I have long overlooked. Forgive my ingratitude and help me see each thing big or small, with holy joy. Amen.”

Philippians 1:27-30

ONE MIND

Human relationships are a fundamental part of our lives. Almost everything we do affects other people in some way. The words I say, the way I live, what motivates my actions are all parts of my "conversation." Our first relationships involve those closest to us such as husbands and wives, parents and children and the extended family. However, when we are saved by God's grace, a whole new area of close relationships comes into our lives. As born-again children in the family of God, we are brothers and sisters of every believer in Christ. But within this area of Christian relationships there is one that is even closer. The one we share with believers who gather in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ alone, and are committed to following the word of God in faith, is a special kind of relationship. These people are found in a local fellowship similar to the "saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi."

The manner of life of the believers at Philippi tied them to the apostle Paul and to each other with the blessed bands of the Gospel of Christ. That good news brought a very divergent group of people together in close fellowship. Paul and Timothy had that. Timothy and Epaphroditus had that, and we today have that same blessed fellowship that joins us together. Our joy as believers is closely tied to that relationship we have with other saints of "like precious faith." This relationship is important for our witness in the world as well as the cause of joy among us. Most problems in ministry come between fellow-laborers who have differing opinions based on personal preferences.

Philippians 1:27. *“Only let your conversation be as becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel:”*

FAITH OF THE GOSPEL

It is important that all Christians take a look ahead to the challenge of the Gospel work in our time. We cannot do anything about the failures of the past. Clear vision is needed to fulfill the work before us. Many are saying there is no reason to continue preaching the Gospel. People are not listening. Is this what the problem is, or is it that we are not talking? Maybe we are not speaking about what is important to us in the right way and in the right places. People around us are not impressed if the things I say are not consistent with what I do.

Whatever the situation, we cannot ignore the need of lost souls and blame our age as the problem of indifference toward the God we love. The early church did not have Bibles to read and preach from. They would have had to speak from personal experience and what they learned from those who did have the scriptures or had passed on what they knew first hand. As generations passed, we finally got the Word of God in our own language. Most people today never read it or have the desire to read it. They are still looking at believers to see what real Christianity is.

The relationship between people is not something unique only to the Lord's people. There is a bonding or lack of it between employers and employees, between nations and between businesses. However, the relationships of believers involve eternal consequences. That which binds believers in an assembly together is the Gospel. The manner of life of those in the fellowship of an assembly is an assembly matter. We do not act independently without accountability to others. The call to unity and harmony in word and deed keeps us striving together for the same common objective - the faith of the Gospel.

“Father, I have proven personally the power of the Gospel. I know the change that takes place when a person believes the message of the Gospel and rests completely on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation from the consequences of sin. May we; Thy people never spend our days looking back at our failures but upon the fields that are ripe and ready for harvest.

Philippians 1:27. *“Only let your conversation be as becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent; I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together of the faith of the gospel;”*

YOUR CONDUCT.

I am being observed though I may never know -
Each daily incident, each act I do shows -
In some way or another, my conduct exposes
What is really important to me - my choices
Make it impossible for me to hide what is real.
The faith of the Gospel has never lost its appeal,
Not just to me but to the whole gathered company
Meeting together in fellowship each Sunday
To proclaim with clear voice what is so important -
For in the Gospel of Christ, He alone is prominent.

Some think it's not needed; they know they are saved.
They find it enough to enjoy and rest on the way -
Content to let others come to them with questions to ask,
And then they believe they'll be up to the task -
Of giving an explanation as to why they are different -
Not realizing the value of believers acting with one spirit
Exemplifying by their conduct their manner of life;
The value of a soul; their love for God; the price -
Of redemption when Christ gave His life on the tree,
That those bound by sin can forever be free.

My conduct when alone may not have much of an impact.
When with my family, it may teach my children how to act.
When with my wife, it reveals plainly how I feel -
And she knows when I'm faking it and when I am real.
When with unsaved people, they know what I think about God.
With the believers they'll know whether I honor Jesus as Lord.
When my conduct is one way but my attitude is another -
My pretense is known by my heavenly Father.
So, a lesson in conduct is to continually be,
Living in a manner so others the Gospel will see.

“Father, there is a manner in which my life is more private and isolated than it used to be when I was younger. Am I doing right by not being out in the public as much as I once was? Should I be making a greater effort to be going about town in order to interact with more people or should I continue to spend time the way I do? I ask this in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

It is important that we resist anything that would divide God's people. There are some attempts to divide that come from without, but most that divides the saints comes from within the fellowship of the assembly. It is not right for us to demand everything to be done my way. The judgment of others should be considered and cooperation should be maintained as long as truth is not compromised or overlooked. A strong united testimony is based on scriptural, settled and solemn convictions. A humble united spirit on the part of each believer enables the evangelist to preach the Gospel confidently. That also enables the teacher, shepherd, minister and every believer to be an effective part of the local fellowship.

Philippians 1:28. *“And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God.”*

NOT AFRAID.

It comes - often in ways unexpected - unthought of
It comes - from sources very diverse - unaccountable
It comes - in times of joy and sorrow - unannounced
But when opposition comes, I have no reason to fear.

I may not know why - because we truly wanted to bless
I may not understand the cause of this present distress
I may not know the extent - but I will not be depressed
Even when opposition and adversaries are near.

Often it happens to give clarity to reason
Often God allows it to purify me for a season

Often it may be misunderstood but it is not treason
Because opposition comes to make reality clear.

Satan sends it because he wants God's purposes to defeat
Unbelievers promote it, trying to make the Gospel to retreat
Some believers oppose not really knowing what they seek
It altogether proves that God is working here.

I do not need to fear when opposition comes
I know some may come from near my home
I am sure opposition will prove reality to some
So without fear I'll move forward good news to bear.

“God of all comfort: I thank Thee this morning for giving the needed grace to go through the times of opposition without fear. I must confess I have been disappointed in the sources of some opposition but I am thankful for the clear guidance by Thy Holy Spirit through the scriptures. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

There will always be opposition from without. Our responsibility is to "stand fast" and maintain the unity we have. That means we are not to retreat from our commitment to God's truth we hold. A calmness and confidence under pressure is a confirmation of what is right. It is also a warning of coming destruction to those who fight against God. The truth of salvation preached by those who labor in the Gospel is a guard of the unity of those who gather in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ alone. There is no room for compromise nor accommodation because we speak on behalf of Christ.

Philippians 1:29. *“For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;”*

SUFFER FOR HIS SAKE.

She lies in her bed with quiet contentment
He groans with pain as he tries to sleep
Why does God allow on-going suffering for years?
His plans for the future include suffering in the present.

Organized opposition starts a whispering campaign
Other forms of opposition are openly hostile
The intervention of a life-changing Gospel affects many
Suffering may come to those who carry its message.

For the sake of the Lord Himself there may be a price
Whether it is financial or physical, suffering comes
We can trust Him without question in difficulties
The scars of suffering may be badges of honor.

In prisons; in hospitals; in isolated places
In home; in places of education - God's people suffer
Whether physical, emotional, financial or other ways
To suffer for Christ's sake is evidence of godly living.

“O Father of all compassion and grace: give needed strength, grace and peace to those going through the testing times of suffering. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

When this is done there will be suffering that follows those who commit themselves to this unity. Suffering is part of Christian testimony. It will happen because of our faith in Christ. Suffering will keep us from depending on our comforts, and will also weed out those who are not real. It strengthens the faith of real believers and serves as an example to others who put their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. Actually, suffering is exalted in true Christianity because it is noble and for a noble cause. When God's people suffer in a dignified way, the testimony of faith is greatly enhanced. It is a privilege to suffer because we are engaged actively in the conflict for the souls of our fellow human beings. We know this to be true not only where we are, but it happens to all who live godly.

Philippians 1:30. *“Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me.”*

SAME STRUGGLE.

The trail is uphill all the way

Those who oppose are here to stay
So, press on in faith from day to day -
The struggles you have - others have too.

We dare not stop doing what God requires
But looking ahead to heaven, our souls are inspired
And gives us answers to the problems when one inquires -
The conflicts that are now will soon be through.

Listen to the voices of others who have stayed the course
They looked in times of suffering to the source
And trust without hesitation in the Lord -
Knowing that through suffering, grace will show.

“I follow the path of the pioneers Father, and learn the value of the suffering of the saints. They honored Thee and kept their calling and goal before them as they served Thee faithfully. I pray I too will not be turned aside from the course You have for me to follow. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

Philippians 2:1-11

THE THINGS OF OTHERS

The underlying objective of Paul in writing to the believers at Philippi was to urge them to be unified as an assembly. In view of that purpose there are given examples for living the Christian life as God intends. The first example in this chapter is the Son of God Himself. The second is the servants of God. There should be a practical display of Christ seen in His people. Pride and ego can cause strife among God's people. But since there is "consolation" or encouragement in Christ, we need to claim for ourselves that which is ours in Christ.

Philippians 2

EXAMPLES.

The attitude of Christ is before me as an example of a submissive mind.
In grace He came and humbled Himself to take the place of hopeless men.
To the death of the cross from heaven's highest place, He came in humility,
And has every right to expect that same mind to be found in me.

He was the Highest of the high, to Him all seraphim and angels bow.
For Him to leave such glory and be found in fashion as a man here below,
Was an act of such unparalleled grace, that my soul is ever amazed -
The Lord of glory humbled so low that upon the cross He was raised.

Not one person can ever say He never experienced pain like mine.
Such a lowly stoop was a choice He made from His own submissive mind.
How much more should I, a sinner, who on God had no claim at all -
Humble myself to meet needs of God's people even when they fall.

The apostle Paul is an example to me of a brother, who though in jail,
Was willing to make that sacrifice even when some saints had failed;
He was aware of their danger of falling into some snare and lose their identity.
So, he sent some other men to learn their state and set his mind at ease.

Timothy, though a younger man, was blessed with a servant's mind.
He had submitted himself to Paul's leadership, not sure what he would find.
When a man has had servant training, he is man that you can trust.
He will not be one high-minded, but seeing God at work, will rejoice.

A brother like Epaphroditus who is faithful, and has experiences to prove,
He knows what it is to labor and be a soldier in the army of the Lord -
Is a man who can help the Lord's people to keep a balance because he cares,
And will not be demanding, and their burdens he will gladly share.

An attitude of submission, like the Lord had should be seen on everyone.
The servant-hood of the saints should be taught as the assembly is moving on.
Depth of character is a gradual thing learned from God as in life we move ahead.
As these things are seen there is joy in the Lord, and the hearts of the saints are glad.

“Father, I do choose to put on the submissive mind, to listen and really hear what Thy people are saying when there are undercurrents and issues that keeping them from

sweet fellowship. May I not speak too fast, and yet not keep silent when something should be addressed. May I speak as Christ spoke when faced with genuine confusion and as well, when there is obvious deception. May the power to accomplish Thy divine purpose be done by the Spirit's power, not my own. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Philippians 2:1. *"If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies,"*

FELLOWSHIP OF THE SPIRIT.

He has given it his best doing what he thinks is right.
Often starting early and laboring long into the night.
He hasn't seen the results he had hoped for at the start -
And he didn't just pretend - he worked at it with his heart.
He needs some real encouragement - who better to give than me -
"Sometimes we are called to harvest, and sometimes to plant the seed."

She has lost the one she loved and has been lonely a long, long time.
Each day is like the one before, but you can't see an outward sign
Of her need of comfort: if only someone would stop by and show some care.
They would find she has a lot to say and spiritual experiences to share.
So, when the Spirit prompts you, don't wait for someone else.
Go yourself and visit - and give her that good book that is on your shelf.

This work that is ahead needs a lot more workers than just one.
When many come in fellowship, it is not long until it is done.
And the interaction we enjoyed, will continue, to each one bless
Long after the task is over and each one has gone home to rest.
There is a satisfaction, a joy and a smile on each one's face -
As we go over in our minds the blessings of that very special place.

They are only young and often ignored by those who're older.
They stand around and wait for some work that they can shoulder.
But instead of delegating some specific work for them to do,
Older ones criticize, forgetting we were once young too.
Show a little kindness and in tenderness take them along -
And before you hardly know it, those young folks are very strong.

A little bit of compassion can go a long, long way.
Sometimes what you do is more important than what you say.
Look around you at the need - and let the Holy Spirit guide.
You will find more joy in filling needs than running away to hide.
The saints of God who are involved will find sweet unity.
And as for myself, I will enjoy being the person I ought to be.

"I thank Thee, Father God, for the unity of the believers here. I know we are small in number but You know that too. I wonder if we were a large company - like in the past, if there would be disunity - like in the past. Keep us in the sweet fellowship of the Holy Spirit I pray, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Philippians 2:1-2. *"If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfill ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind."*

CONSOLATION.

Consolation is such a beautiful word;
It finds its source, in the risen Lord.
Its' character stirs thoughts of God's great grace;
Its' sound brings comfort to the darkest place.
Its' source is in Christ, like a well that is full
With refreshing water that will make my soul
Rejoice in the Lord, in spite of passing events;
That may come and go, yet make no sense.

Such encouragement is needed, it comes from God;
And reminds us that He speaks through His written Word.
It not some kind of feeling that just comes and goes;
But consolation gives assurance that God really knows
All the things that challenge and can bring us down;

When we live our lives as if we are on our own.
So, first of all, comes the "comfort of love."
Consolation in Christ, God's great interest proves.

Consolation goes further; it's in the nature of it;
To bind us close in the Spirit's grip.
It is the "fellowship" the Holy Spirit provides,
That encourages me on every side.
I am not alone; the Father and the Son,
Abide with me as I move along.
Also, since new birth, the Holy Spirit lives
Within, and life and guidance give.

Care and mercy are there when we think of the past;
It is of God's great mercies that will forever last;
That will make us joyful with a similar mind;
To all those saints who will such favor find.
Our wonder at grace shown to us who are undeserving;
Prompts worship and thanks to our Lord unending.
Together we praise Him who as Lord we claim;
And offer as one, honor to His holy name.

Consolation is real when we share together,
With the people of God, what has brought forever
As one, such a Body of which I am a part,
And from the bonds of such love never will depart.
Consolation in Christ with one accord and one mind;
Will keep God's people forever entwined
In the comforting circle into which I have come;
And makes this fellowship I'm in to be called my home.

"I am thankful, Father, that I am not imprisoned like Paul was. Yet there is still the need and blessing, of consolation in Christ when there are things that arise in normal living. The encouragement of brothers and sisters in Christ really does matter to me. It is not that I feed on it, but there is something special about a word "fitly spoken" that I appreciate. Thank You for these people who are around me in this life. Amen."

Love and unity go together under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. That spirit and purpose in believers happens when we put others first. Selfish ambition divides and destroys that which God desires in an assembly of His people gathered to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. One mind in chapter 1 binds us together in the faith of the Gospel. The submissive mind in chapter 2 shows how this is accomplished in a practical way. The tender mercies and compassion toward each other keep us not only with a single mind toward the things of God, but a similar mind, the lowly mind, is not just something I put on or off at my choice, but it focuses my mind on the things of others. A humble mind can unify and build up the saints. We need to be on guard against anything that causes division. The attitude and mind of Christ is used as an example for us.

Philippians 2:2-4. *"Fulfill ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others."*

SAME MIND... SAME LOVE... SAME SPIRIT.

To think alike there has to be the same common denominator,
A power beyond which is our own to draw us all together.
Not only is the source the same, but also the same goal -
That is not just from common interest but comes from in the soul.

To love alike would indicate one object of our affection.
It would keep us all united because we would be looking in one direction -
Towards the one and same Person who has captivated our hearts -
And also love the same interests we shared right from the start.

One accord is really like musical harmony in our spirit.
There is a sense of joy and fellowship linking us to it -
As the Spirit of God unites us who are different and yet the same -
Each with different gifts and abilities all used in Jesus' name.

To reach a common objective calls for a single mind.
Though each person is unique we all know when we find
The motivation to join together and labor together as one.
The supreme objective of us all is to glorify God's Son.

To demonstrate the will of God as a company of gathered saints -
Means each one recognizes the others first in the decisions he or she makes.
We're not a bunch of independent people who come at our own choosing,
But as a unified house of God, our independence we are losing.

A much higher principle to learn is, "The way up is down."
When a person is called to lead, he serves, and other people crown.
Selfish ambition and conceit will only cause division.
To be one in mind and love and spirit is the attitude of heaven.

Each gathered company of God's people, whether great or small -
Will only function as God wants when there is room for all.
To know, what others think and love, then in spiritual harmony -
Each believer will be assured they're where they're supposed to be.

"O God of all the churches: may there be in the assemblies I seek to help, a sense of the holiness and reverence that belongs in the house of God. May there be created and maintained a harmony and grace that empowers them to testify in that place and bring blessing to the believers - and glory to Thee. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

There are a number of characteristics in the mind of Christ that the Spirit of God has listed here. He gave up His rights as God in heaven to do the will of God on earth. The attitude He showed is given so we will look for opportunities to do the will of God on behalf of others. rather than our expectations as to what others will do for us. He was, is, and always will be the eternal Son of God. He did not ever stop being who He was, but added to that perfect humanity when He came to earth. He subjected Himself to human limitations in order to provide the redemption we needed. There is a principle here for practical Christian living. We need to have the attitude of laying aside our own rights in order to serve others. So, in the fellowship of the Spirit we are to stand fast and exercise love in the Spirit. There is another presence, another Person, in our lives. It is through Him we can remain unified with others.

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

THIS MIND.

To be a man to most of us is to get to a higher place.
We do not consider humility our path in life to trace.
Oh, there may be some times when it pays to take a lower seat -
But usually we want to be known for accomplishing a great feat.

The radically different mind of Christ is a beacon of bright light,
To those who follow Him but often don't think things right.
Though He was high yet He was willing to think like a man -
Apart from sin so we may know how He thought, so we can.

Mind and attitude go together, what one does the other follows.
When mind is high then attitude is too in all he does allow.
If attitude is haughty, then mind begins to think it's true.
And both together form the pattern of what I think and do.

I need an example as to how things ought to be.
Christ Jesus is the only one who models this to me.
His attitude and mind were joined and worked the same.
There never was in His life here a cause for any blame.

I want this mind and attitude to claim a hold on me.
I pray there would be something Christ-like that other folks can see.
I realize this only can happen if I will think like Him.
When I read the scriptures, I must pay good heed to them.

"My mind wanders Father. Far too often I am thinking a whole lot of different thoughts at one time. I have learned this lesson though, that "perfect peace" does

come when my mind is “stayed on Thee.” That is why this time with Thee is so important to me. Amen.”

The steps Christ took in His humility are given so that we will do the same things. There was love in Him, and harmony and unity with the Father. He always existed with the Father and was always equal because He is God Himself. Even so, He became a real human being that He might be the Savior of the world. He didn't just appear to be a man; He was a man. He became that so He could identify Himself with us as one of our own kind, and voluntarily take the consequences of our sin upon Himself. He could, and did, empathize with our situation and stepped in to do what was necessary to reconcile us to God. To esteem others better than ourselves is not natural to us. But when we have the mind of Christ, this can be done. He didn't set aside any part of His character or person to do this. He veiled His inherent glory so He could live among people like us.

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

THE NATURE OF GOD.

The Lord Jesus was not grasping for something to give advantage.
In His very nature there was eternal equity.
It wasn't something He took on for temporary passage.
The nature of God was in Him, for He is deity.

Equal in their working is the Father and the Son.
Any work they did was always done as one together.
Some of God's work continues; other work is done.
The cross-work is finished and redemption's when we're gathered.

What the Father knows, the Son knows equally.
The Father raises the dead and the Son restores life too.
Both are able to judge, but the Son's role is in equity;
To judge churches, nations and individuals before He is through.

Both Father and Son are equal in the honor they deserve.
Honor is inherent in them, and honor to them is given.
Both are able to give new life to those who new life need,
To be regenerated and be able to go to heaven.

The nature of God is in the Lord, He exists within Himself.
He had power to dismiss His spirit and take it back again.
There is no doubt that He is God, the only thing He shelved,
Was the glory that surrounded Him when He came here from heaven.

“Father God, I know when You sent the Son, there was no lessening of His nature in any way. He had then and always, all power in heaven and earth. He is and always will be the Supreme Judge. He is and was always the eternal Son, equal to the other Persons of the Godhead. It is the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ that astounds me. I praise Thee for it in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

Christ voluntarily laid aside His rights and privileges to do for us what we could not do for ourselves. It is our choice to do that for the benefit of others. The conduct of a believer starts in the mind. If we have the mind of Christ, we will conduct ourselves in life as He did. Christ died so we could have eternal life. We live so that others can be served by us in a way similar to how our Lord served us. He took manhood into deity without compromising anything. We can take the effects of the divine nature into manhood and minister to others. Christ glorified God by His obedience to the Father's will. We can glorify God by our obedience to Him.

Philippians 2:7. *“But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.”*

PERSONAL CHOICES.

There was a glory uniquely His, He chose to lay aside.
Veiled instead the Savior came, in humility, not pride.
He who angels bowed before was here as lowly man,
Not forced upon Him, nor unwanted; part of an eternal plan.

To have His mind in me like this means I must also choose

To set aside great ambitions that I in turn might lose
My life for self; instead live my life for Him.
Those He has chosen need to know His care for them.

The nature of a servant is to be submissive to another.
The Lord Jesus when He came did the will of God the Father.
Through years of submissive service, He was obedient;
Doing humbly the will of God, as man, though He was deity.

It is important for me to remember I'm a servant too.
To have the mind of Christ in me, leads me to want to do
Whatever my Lord indicates in thought and word and deed.
It is my calling as a servant to the Master's will give heed.

The Lord Jesus chose when He was here to be a normal man.
When traveling long miles while moving about the land
He submitted Himself to the restrictions of humanity
That I might know that He was willing to be a man like me.

Humanity is not my choice; it is what I really am.
I should always keep in mind He was God's chosen Lamb.
For His own reason God chose me to make me like His Son.
As He is now, I'll be like then, when my life's work here is done.

“O God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ: thank You for sending Him here as a humble, holy, perfect Man. There is no question that in every way He pleased Thee as a man. I would like to please Thee too and fulfill the work I have been given to do. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

As a man there was no limit to the sufferings the Lord Jesus Christ endured. There was no limit to the insults against Him that He silently accepted. There was no limit as to how much he was willing to bear that we might be saved. This same attitude should be in us. The death of the cross was uniquely His. The life that each of us lives is uniquely ours and can have as its objective that to which mind directs us. We can live for self or others. We can serve God or be self-serving. There was no limit on how much the Lord was willing to set aside that He might forgive us. If we set limits on our willingness to forgive, that will effectively stop our joy. The death of the cross involves much more that we can understand. God's righteous demands had to be satisfied. Sin had to be removed in order for us to be justified. Satan and death had to be defeated. All these things and more were accomplished by the Lord. His sacrifice saved us.

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

OBEDIENT UNTO DEATH.

In appearance He was truly human, not a superman.
In attitude towards man, He was humble, not a proud man.
In acceptance He was obedient to death, not a bitter man.
This is what God wants from me.

In life He felt hunger, pain and weariness.
In love He saw the value of others, even those overlooked.
In light He shed hope in the darkness of souls.
This is what God wants from me.

In service He used what was His alone for others.
In sacrifice He gave everything He had, even Himself.
In suffering He did not complain but trusted God.
This is what God wants from me.

In public He lived, walked, acted and spoke with dignity.
In private He taught, mentored and led with integrity.
In personal life He prayed, wept, trusted God implicitly.
This is what God wants from me.

In death He was quietly submissive to God's will.
In darkness He was silently enduring all God gave Him to do.
In departing He was confident all was accomplished.
This is what God wants from me.

“God my Father, give me a faithful heart to be obedient to Thy every desire and fulfill it to Thy glory. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

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

THE EXALTATION OF CHRIST.

There are heights we can perceive, but He is higher still.
No one, nor all together, can this position fill.
Before He came to earth, He the universe had made.
Every mighty star and galaxy; every grass's blade
Was made and is maintained by His almighty power;
Every desert storm that happens, every leafy bower
Declares with voiceless testimony, He is very high -
Yet higher still will He be exalted in the by and by.

Voluntarily humbled while on earth where He came to die
That we through Him might be brought to God and raised with Him on high.
That act of condescension has brought many sons to God:
Each one a new creation and each one owning Him Lord.
Each one appreciating forgiveness and God's amazing grace
Each one has trusted Christ alone and by Him live by faith
Each one even now expressing their appreciation
Each one forever praising God for His great salvation.

The Lord Jesus has ascended now up to heaven above.
More high and lofty than ever and the object there of love
Of millions of saints who still living down here below
Testify of Him and to each successive generation show,
The reality of the risen Christ, though He is yet unseen -
But daily lived out through believers who now live between
His first coming when His deity was in flesh concealed,
And His coming appearance in glory when His deity is revealed.

“Holy God, who told Joseph His name was “Jesus:” I thank Thee for that name which shall be spoken in a coming day with highest reverence and awe by every voice that can speak a word. To me the name of Jesus is sweet and spoken with a sense of joy because I know Him and love to hear Him well spoken of. I offer praise now in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

As a result, God has highly exalted Him. He is the supreme Sovereign of the universe. God was fully satisfied, and He has honored the Lord Jesus Christ above all. Ultimately every being will bow in honor to Him and acknowledge Him as Lord supreme above every other being. We are not called upon to have the mind of Christ that we might be equal to Him, but that we might understand the worth of others in God's eyes. The life of Christ has been left for us to read about and use for an example in our lives. His life is the pattern for our life. When we commit ourselves to serve God by serving others, God is satisfied, Christ is honored and exalted among the people. Humility doesn't claim a prize for itself but does desire blessing for others. When that is true the mind of Christ is demonstrated in each individual and also in the gathered assembly of His people.

Philippians 2:10. *“That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth;”*

BENT KNEES.

That name once known on earth at first and now is used in heaven;
Angel knees that long ago bent to Him now bend at His name given,
When one of their own company came to earth to tell a man,
His name shall be called “Jesus” before he returned to Emmanuel's land.

Shepherds at His birth bowed knees to Jesus and His name.
When wise men came at a later time, all of them did the same
Simeon, Anna and others, who had waited for Him to come,
All rejoiced to honor Him, speaking of Him to everyone.

Down through the generations of man there always have been believers,
Who, though only just a few in number, still call Him our Lord Jesus;
They realize there are but a few who acknowledge His authority;
In spite of all the world might say, they'll stay with His minority.

Angels, men, even demons, know the power of His name.
He is no usurper; He has authority over every claim.
Those who are false-Christ's will know they'll be exposed
As counterfeits by God Himself and those who He has chose.

As I bow my knees each day and all around the world,
Saints of God bow their knees too, we all know Christ as Lord.
A day is coming we are sure, when the knees of every one,
Will bow before the name of Jesus - the Judge is God the Son.

“We will gather together today Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. By Thy grace we will offer our praises and prayers in His name. When we eat our food, we will give thanks in His name. When we preach the Gospel, we will do so in His name. And here this morning I offer my thoughts and words, and pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

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

JESUS CHRIST IS LORD.

I have watched as some who had never heard His name
Listen to the Gospel preaching.
They find it hard to grasp that Jesus is the same
As God; it was never in their teaching.
Now they are asked to consider that God became man
To save our souls from hell.
How is this possible? Who in this world can
Be God and man as well?

What makes this truth real, though not truly understood;
Is the life of those who know the Lord.
People watch believers who live as they should,
Guided by the Spirit and the Word.
They are convinced of God and the need in their life
This is what they learn they are missing.
And watching humble saints shining as lights -
They step in faith to accept God's blessing.

Then it becomes real to them, as it is to me;
The One who paid our sin-price we love.
Each new believer then learns and begins to see
More of the blessings we have.
Out of joyful appreciation for God's salvation,
The new servant is willing to do,
All our Savior desires and his occupation
Is serving Jesus as Lord all life through.

“I know Gracious God, that very few understand much more than freedom from sin's consequences when they are first saved. The spiritual awakening leads them to understand who they are in Christ and who He is to them. Acknowledging Jesus Christ as Lord continues through life. But what a fearsome day it will be when all unbelievers acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord. I am thankful for every one who does confess that now, and believes in their heart. Accept my grateful thanks in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

Philippians 2:12-18

GUIDING LIGHTS

There are positive results when the Lord's people have the mind of Christ and show that in practical ways. Christianity is not just a philosophy and doctrine relating to Christ and the church, but it is a lifestyle that represents our Lord Jesus Christ in this world. To do that God establishes local assemblies of believers as visible evidence of His presence and interest people. In an assembly we obey in a practical, visible way what the mind of Christ instills in believers spiritually. Each assembly is responsible to deal with local conditions and/or problems in a way that is suitable to the needs and condition. In Philippi the need was evident in two women who had labored in the Gospel and for some reason did not like each other, or at least couldn't get along with each other. That kind of situation has to be faced and dealt with because it has the potential of dividing the Lord's people.

Philippians 2:12. *“Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.”*

THEREFORE... WORK OUT.

To humble minds and hearts that are warmed
With thoughts of what Christ has done -
The problems that arise in a local church
Can be faced and finished, making us again as one.

Not all leaders have an immediate answer
To issues that potentially divide -
But then we face them with humility -
The Holy Spirit is here to guide.

There is a solution to the differences of opinion
That sets one person against another -
Look for evidences of Christ in their life -
And remember, they are a sister and brother.

We cannot also look to others to solve
Problems that cause inner strife.
Believers have the Spirit, the Father and the Son -
Each one is a source of life.

Division is like death, it causes separation;
Unity of life comes from God alone.
With fear and trembling; attention and devotion -
The problem of division is soon done.

“There are times when division seems so inevitable Father that I despair of an answer. And then when reading passages like this, I take heart, trust in Thee and pray in faith. This assembly is suffering the effects of division that happened 30 years ago. If there is an answer to our numerical weakness, please send it soon, I pray; in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

The salvation of an assembly begins in the mind of each believer and works out in a visible way to an appropriate conclusion. An assembly is for God's pleasure and He gives the desire and power to do what pleases Him. Disunity is a snare to the whole assembly, because broken relationships stops positive activity in the Gospel and affects our spiritual growth. Testimony and worship in spirit and truth are effectively stopped by disunity. The salvation of a struggling testimony has to be "worked out" by wise leaders of the local assembly, not itinerant preachers. Local elders who know the people and the problem need to submit to God's guidance to motivate them and show them what to do.

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

IT IS GOD.

When the mind conceives a thought that has blessing as its aim -
It is God who brings that thought.
When you find delight looking over a valley, mountain or plain -
It is God reminding us what He wrought.

When you start the day out right rejoicing in the light -
It is God who made the sun to rule the day.
When with thanks you close your eyes sleeping in the night -
It is God who gives rest along the way.

When you see that new-born child and watch the little smile
It is God who gave life in it to spring.
When a person first sees the light after struggling in sin for awhile -
It is God who eternal life does bring.

When you hear the praises rise from the saints into the skies
It is God who put the song into their hearts.
When one opens up God's Word and reveals truths to mind's eye -
It is God who revealed truth right from the start.

When the Spirit reveals the Lord so it brings warmth in my soul -

It is God who is working deep inside of me.
When I can start to see as God and discern my real role -
It is God who lets me see as He can see.

When contentedly living in peace enjoying the fruits of redeeming grace -
It is God who makes this contentment last.
When resting from our labor and praying in expectant faith -
It is God who makes all good come to pass.

“Father, don’t give up on me nor ever let me take any of Thy blessing for granted. Whether giving rest and food; health and strength, or enabling me to speak to the people - keep impressing on me that Thou art working out Thy will through me. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

There is a solution that may escape us at first but God knows what it is. So, He is working in us to do what He wants. The salvation of an assembly from immaturity to maturity may take awhile, but God is the One who gives us the desire and power to move forward. We are not left without guidance but we need to commit ourselves to do what is revealed to us as His will. The mind of Christ motivates us to want to do God’s will and do it so the work of the salvation of the assembly is not halted nor hindered in any way. It needs to be worked out to completion or else growth is stopped that affects the assembly believers and also the testimony of the assembly to the world around.

We need to be on guard in relation to ourselves as believers in an assembly. Complaining and arguing accomplishes nothing. It is well for us to first judge ourselves in the presence of God. Perceived insults, being overlooked or not consulted the way we thought we should, needs to be carefully thought about. Analyze unkind words to see why they were spoken and whether they were really meant to be unkind. Criticism is hard to take but needs to be evaluated as to whether it was meant to be a help or a hindrance. A lot of times things are said on the spur of the moment because of an unexpected problem. It is better for us if any of these things come against us to not retaliate in haste but keep on doing what we do for the Lord without complaining and getting into an argument. There is usually no need to try to justify ourselves or to have a conflict to get our own way.

Philippians 2:14. *“Do all things without murmurings and disputings:”*

ALL THINGS.

There a lot of “things” associated with a church:
When it comes to “Who does what” some people fuss.
Some go right at a work with heart, others leave them in the lurch -
This leaves the potential for disunity among us.
But there is within each one of us, and the assembly as a whole -
The “Spirit of Peace” to aide us in our tasks.
He can take an empty cup and soon make it full -
And can guide us through each “thing” when we ask.

The Spirit designed gifts to meet the churches needs -
We all need each other to work right.
If I pay attention to my role in doing my “all things” -
We can work together in unity that is bright.
The problem with murmurings is they start out undercover -
And gradually expand from one or two
To where the buzz of dissatisfaction has moved all over
The church before it finally gets to you.

This leads to what is called “disputing” - arguments
unchecked -
That openly affect all - even may divide.
Come together in prayer, act in Christ-like humility next,
And murmurings and disputing soon subside.
The Spirit of Peace soon heals any man-made breach -
He is quick to aide us in “doing all thing.”
The assembly soon rejoices when harmony is reached -
And unity returns then, and the peace He brings.

“O God of guidance and grace: I pray here today that there will not be this undercurrent of uneasiness in the assemblies of Thy people. When it arises, please

give those who care for Thy people the wisdom to act in firm grace to bring about an effective witness. I pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Murmurings and disputes lead to bigger problems that can divide God's people and hinder our public testimony. We should earnestly seek to not disappoint God with our attitude and actions as well as words we speak to each other. A believer who thinks he or she is always right and everyone else should accept that as a fact, can stop joy and fellowship very quickly. Moral living and patience maintain peace in an assembly and enables it to be a guiding light in the world. A small light in a strategic location is what is needed to give guidance. One lighthouse on a point of land is a better guide than the bright lights of a busy street. The one shows where to go. The other lights only show where people are, not the place to which they are going. To be a light is really our only relationship to the world. We are to shine as lights among those in the world...: that the Father may be glorified [Mat.5:16]; that the Lord Jesus will be magnified [Phil.1:20]; that we may be lost sight of [Jn.3:30]; that sinners may be saved [Jer.33:8]; that life be not in vain [Phil.2:16].

An assembly is like a guiding star to ships at sea in the darkness. We are to be blameless so no charge can be laid against us as to whether we are scriptural or not. We are also to be harmless, without guile and with sincerity so that grace is evident among God's people. Grace and truth are two very important characteristics of a New Testament assembly. When the Lord comes and we appear before the judgment seat of Christ, everything will be revealed in its true light. Perhaps even the motives behind an action or word will be considered in the light of the holiness of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Philippians 2:15. *"That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world:"*

SHINING LIGHTS.

It looks like a lamp - all the parts are there
But obviously something is missing.
A lamp has no use in the darkness where
Light has to shine - darkness dismissing.
The world I live in is a very dark place,
People have no light to guide -
Except for reflected light revealing God's grace
In the lives of the believers alongside.

It is important that we be harmless and without blame,
That men may still easily see the standard
Of righteousness is here though maybe not a big flame;
It doesn't depend on our grandeurs.
To look and act like our heavenly Father,
Are true witnesses that our God still cares
About what happens on earth for He would rather
Men have the eternal life the Godhead shares.

We have been left with this charge to live as lights
Like lighthouses shining on a stormy sea.
Men will find direction from a trustworthy life
That will reflect what they really want to be.
One light alone makes not much difference,
But put a lot of lights in one place together -
And the shining of many makes spiritual luminescence
With blessings that will last forever.

"Father God, this assembly was one time only a group of five or six. Uncle William Brown was no doubt discouraged at times. Now the 75 or so here do have a testimony and an impact that is larger than the building on the corner. I thank Thee for it, in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

We "hold forth" something that can be seen. The life and light of truth are the words of life that goes forth and will bring joy at the return of the Lord. Paul considered his life as a sacrifice to God on behalf of the saints. He is an example of one who has the mind of Christ. As far as he was concerned, he was like the drink offering in the Old Testament that was poured out over the burnt offering and meal offering. It was only seen when it was being poured out and then it disappeared into the offerings that speak of Christ. A life lived as a sacrifice brings praise to God and directs honor and glory to the Lord. There is great value in the life of an assembly and the individuals that compose it when God is honored among us and is glorified by all of our actions, both of testimony and fellowship.

Philippians 2:16. *“Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.”*

HOLDING FORTH THE WORD OF LIFE.

I have seen the Statue of Liberty,
Holding a torch high in her hand.
I have seen statues of men on horses
In towns all across our land -
With guns or swords in hand reminding us
Of long-ago battles fought.
But God intends me to hold forth His Word,
Telling others what He has wrought.

One man alone doesn't connect with many,
Compared to all the people around.
But when there are many with the Word in their hands,
God's work then can through them mightily abound.
We must continue to hold that Word very high
That those who see us maintain it consistently
Will realize God's salvation to them is nigh,
Presented by those with the Word living faithfully.

When an assembly is working in unity and love,
This is a power beyond the organizing of men.
Oneness of heart and mind not many people have,
And it is the joy of spiritual fathers to see their children
Carrying on a work begun in opposition and pressure,
Following in their steps to bring others to God;
With enthusiasm and vigor that others can't measure,
But it is obvious to all they are holding forth God's Word.

“O Father of lights, the shining of Thy Word in the dark places of this earth is bringing understanding and light to the hearts of many. May all of Thy people be brought to realize the importance of what they do when they hold forth the Word of life to those that are dying and going into everlasting night. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

Philippians 2:17-18. *“Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all. For the same cause also do ye joy, and rejoice with me.”*

JOY AND REJOICE.

He is being poured out as a sacrifice to God
But there is no fear in his heart.
From the very first day Jesus Christ was his Lord -
His joy was in God at the start.
Now he seeks others living and giving by faith -
Their joy is in the same reason as his
They too have experienced the blessings of grace,
And anticipate the coming day of Christ.

I haven't met Paul but his joy I can share,
When I see faith living in the children of God.
There is reality when God's people as one care,
And exalt together the name of the Lord.
Hymns of praise sound with sensitivity and truth;
Prayers are made when together we join.
The Gospel and teaching unitedly go forth -
They press forward until victory is won.

Even when staring death in the face;
One who has been committed to service for God
Will be content knowing he is in the place
His Master wants him as he travels this part of the road.
He is content in himself, but even more than that -
The building up in the faith of his sisters and brothers
Brings mutual joy poured over a sacrificial act,
That blesses both the giver and receiver.

“Father, I have been lately in the presence of two faithful servants who are nearing the end of their lives. I thank Thee for the contentment and joy I can see in them as they continue on faithfully in each day's events. Grant them the grace they need and give us all the kind of joy Paul, and those of his day, had. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

Philippians 2:19-30

EXAMPLES

When we go back in our minds to people and places we have been, and where the Lord saved precious souls, we have joy and that joy comes back to us again and again. Reviewing the grace of God to us and to others is a blessing to us. It helps us to consider whether we have the mind of Christ today where we are, or have we strayed from that holy example. It is possible to have the mind of Christ at one time and then again turn to "seek our own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's."

Philippians 2:19. *“But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state.”*

A CERTAIN DISCIPLE... TIMOTHY.

From diverse cultural heritages
Contrasted by reason and faith
A natural tendency to be timid
Struggles with a personal bent of quietness
Looked down on because of his youth
Mentored by a man of opposite nature
Overwhelmed at times by the challenges given him -
In spite of his struggles - ready to serve.

A genuine believer, of that there is no doubt
Respected by those who knew him best
Submissive to whatever was necessary for effective service
Unhesitating to act on the guidance and desire of elders
Willing to learn when young and adapt when older
Could work with others of different nationalities and cultures
Faithful in times of adversity - loyal to those who led him -
A learner in the true sense - sent to serve.

Trustworthy when problems arise
Able to accomplish what was expected of him
Even when failure came - not one to quit
Patient with the unruly; firm in the scriptures
Kind to all - able to see beyond the obvious
Willing to take orders and do so uncomplaining
A heart that can blend in to the heart-exercises of another
From apprentice to leader - able to serve.

“I wonder if in some ways, Father God, I am like Timothy. Sometimes I am timid and other times bold. Often, I would rather follow than lead. I guess I am past the place where I can follow others much. Those I knew best and followed are at home in heaven. I pray I will be a true follower of Thee, and a kind and sensitive leader of others. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

Philippians 2:20. *“For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state.”*

TWO OF A KIND.

How can this be? One is old - the other young.
One just hitting his stride in life - the other almost done.
One is imprisoned - the other sent on a spiritual mission:
He is an example of humility the Spirit of God envisioned.

To love the Lord's people does not depend upon an age.
To genuinely care for others does not demand the wisdom of a sage.
The value of a person is linked with the reality of our love.
Two can find great joy in what each other does.

One can rest at ease while the other hastens to the work.
He knows his fellow-laborer is not a man to shirk

The work God has given him - his responsibility to fill
The work he once did himself, will be on-going still.

Not often in our lifetime will we find a true kindred spirit.
No one is exactly like another but the need - the other fills it.
To be two-of-a-kind really means we are the same within.
We look similarly on what is righteous and agree on what is sin.

I am still waiting as I get older for one who thinks the same.
There are some faithful young men I could easily name
Who have the same interest and are better far than me
In the work they have been called to, so I will wait and see.

“Father God, who sees way beyond what I am on the outside to what I am on the inside - give me, I pray, the understanding to assist the young workers who I have a little influence on, to love Thy people. Help them in their outreaches in the Gospel. Give them wisdom to lead the new believers in the ways of Thy choosing and Thy Word. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

Paul was still addressing the potential problem of disunity that was the purpose of this letter. He had taken steps to correct the problem by focusing the attention of the assembly believers at Philippi on the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the purpose for living and is our pattern for living. That is why it is so important to have the mind of Christ. He had given two examples already of self-sacrificing love when he directed them to the love of Christ for them and his own love for them. The love of Christ is of such greatness that we, as believers, can never forget "The Son of God who loved me, and gave Himself for me." Those who brought us the Gospel came because "The love of Christ constraineth us." Evangelists love souls and preach the Gospel to the unsaved because they want to see them delivered from "the wrath to come." Teachers love the truth, and so instruct believers in "the right ways of the Lord." Pastors (shepherds) love the saints and are concerned with their "state."

Philippians 2:21. *“For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ’s.”*

PREOCCUPIED.

“I really would like to, but I don’t have time.”
“Let me check my schedule and get back to you.”
These and many similar and well-used lines
Are the responses when there is work for God to do.

“We’ve made plans to go somewhere that day.”
“The sun is shining and we have got to make hay.”
Underlying the busy schedules of life -
Is a real misunderstanding of darkness and light.

“I’ll see if I can spare a day when we come back from vacation.”
“I would help if I could, but we’ve got another invitation.”
So, life passes rapidly by with a lot of good intentions -
But God’s service is well down on the list of obligations.

“One of the children has a game and I’ve got to go there.”
“I promised the family we would all go to the fair.”
Other things press in that we would much rather do -
And the things of the kingdom we can easily eschew.

“When I retire, I will have a lot of time then.”
But life is almost over before one is willing to begin
A service for God that demands the first place -
And by then we’re too old to start a new phase.

“I thank Thee Father, for calling me when I was young. I thank Thee for giving me opportunities to serve Thee from the day I was saved. I thank Thee for people in my life who had a vision of the value of the work of God to saints and sinners. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

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

AS A SON WITH A FATHER.

A young man looks and sees an older man of true faith.
And older man looks and sees a young man with grace.
As they watch each other - maybe even surreptitiously
There is a drawing together of mutual harmony.

The young man listens and learns when the older one speaks.
The older man takes time to hear what the younger one seeks.
As they listen to each other - both to, and beyond the words.
They find both are seeking, not his own will but the Lord's.

The young man observes as the older man takes the lead.
The older man gives opportunities for the younger one to heed.
They participate together in the work God placed in their hands.
And the younger man observes the skill of the older man.

The younger man has questions in their private conversations.
The older man is pleased with the younger man's observations.
They learn to talk freely as in the service of God they share.
The older man sees the younger man has the same earnest care.

This principle continues down through all generations.
As a son learns from his father how to handle life's situations,
When two who work together, the younger learns from the older -
How to bear the yoke in his youth and the heavy burdens shoulder.

“Father, I review my life and remember instructions from my father, and from older preachers I have labored with. Now it is my time to pass on to others some of the things I know have been tried and proven, and other things to avoid. Give me grace and wisdom I pray, to be a help to the younger. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

Two men are given as examples of this concern, and how it is to be seen in us today can be learned by their example. Both of these men, Timotheus and Epaphroditus, had unselfish care for the saints. This is also a choice we make - to know people and their problems involves us in a whole other responsibility than our own interests. In the lives of those who are concerned with themselves only there is self-occupation, the display of self, self-pity, self-centeredness, selfish motivations and self-serving. These things are foreign to the mind of Christ. I have to consider personally, "Is my priority in life my private interests, or the interests of others?"

These two men Paul used as examples were both quiet unassuming men who didn't live for public acclaim. An evangelist and a teacher who have a public ministry will hopefully be those God uses for His glory, and they know the answers to mans' need. Not very often do they know the problems that each person in the assembly has. In assembly life we need people like Timotheus and Epaphroditus who can get to the root of the problem because they sincerely care for the people of God and the people know this to be true. Timothy was like Paul in this way because he had been to Philippi and knew the people. He had been saved through Paul's efforts in the Gospel and had been trained, encouraged and mentored by Paul.

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

WHAT'S THE NEWS?

He is trustworthy, so will give a true report.
He is faithful so will not cut it short
Only telling the things people want to hear -
But that doesn't help when you're asking for prayer.
So the whole story must be told, both the good and the bad;
Even the parts that make all the listeners sad -
For life is lived often in difficult situations,
And the bearer of news needs to tell all the complications.

He is a servant in the true sense of the word,
Doing what he does always as unto the Lord.
He knows firsthand what has been taking place,
For he made it a point to get the news face to face.
What he had to say you can count on as true;
He always gets the full message before he is through.
He has been involved in the issue right from the start -

And you can rest assured what he tells you is from his heart.

Don't misunderstand me, he is not a tale-bearer.
Just one who knows the value of a "carer" and a "pray-er."
His objective is that all might get the big picture
Of the problems that are happening and the results that issue
Forth from the conclusion of this present-day matter -
And hopefully all who hear will appeal to our heavenly Father
To send aide or even a miracle to bring a conclusion
To the cause of this news that is bringing such confusion.

"O God and Father: the weakness is obvious and death is the only result I can see unless Thy divine intervention brings a change. Both the death of a friend and the death of an assembly bring sadness. But I can trust with full confidence and say, "The will of the Lord be done." In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

He had learned from his mentor the value of a soul and the uniqueness of the Lord people. He was able to be counted to do what was right in this situation for these people. His faith was unfeigned and his love was genuine. His thought about things and people in the same way Paul did, and he also had the mind of Christ. He was an example of those who shine as lights in the world. Each one was a very different person and so was Epaphroditus. Yet each was a servant of God and each one showed divine light in their own calling and way.

As a servant Timothy had unselfish concern for the saints. He was looking out for the interests of others. He had been trained as a son is trained by his father, by Paul. Now there was no question as to whether his judgment could be counted on. He was no fly-by-night. He was trustworthy. When there are issues to be faced and problems that need to be solved, we need those who have a shepherd's heart of compassion. We need those who can be whole-heartedly counted on to care for the people and at the same time not compromise truth and leave undone what has to be done, and unsaid what has to be said.

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

ANTICIPATION.

We have plans that we hope are in the current of God's will.
Some we are sure of, others we are praying about still.
It is not wrong to lay plans as long as we remember
God has a master plan that will go on forever.
It would be foolish and arrogant of me to demand
My plans are carved in stone and no one ever can
Change them or alter what I thought was best -
And not consider the interests of all of the rest
Who are influenced or involved in the outcome expected;
I will rest in hopeful anticipation, knowing my plans can be rejected.

Because a thing doesn't come to pass doesn't mean it was wrong.
To anticipate with interest means I'm willing to look beyond
What is happening now and look into the future -
Trusting God and praying there might be some way to nurture
A hope that is within that I think would bring honor to God,
And fulfill a general purpose that is taught in His Word.
So, I will continue to act in kind of a joyful anticipation
Of God doing a remarkable work to help this situation,
And keep burning a light that has glowed for over 100 years.
We will anticipate the result, and be thankful God still answers prayer.

"Father in heaven; You heard our united prayers last night and know our need far better than we do. I know Thy purposes and plans are not known by us in this matter. So, we will continue to pray and work as best we can in the circumstances that surround us. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Timothy followed the example of a trusted mentor who had sent him with a message and could be trusted to speak as a person who had the mind of Christ. Christ, as a servant, served God with "unparalleled humility, unreserved obedience and unquestioned victory." He knew what He was sent to accomplish and He did it completely. Devoted shepherds feed and protect those who are in their care. To have the mind of Christ is not impossible. The Lord said, "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls." The strength of character is associated with meekness, and lowliness

of mind makes us approachable. These characteristics are needed in those who lead and love the Lord's people.

Epaphroditus was a different kind of man than Timothy. His name links him to Aphrodite (to the Greeks, Venus to the Romans) the goddess. He had probably not come from a sheltered background like Timothy but a very ungodly background. To come from darkness to light and the power of Satan to God would have been very real and personal to this man. Paul refers to him as my brother, making reference to the same interests and same affections. He is also called "my fellow-laborer" which would tell us he was no by-stander to the work of the Lord, but was personally involved in it. As a fellow-soldier his commitment to the work indicates he was able to successfully engage in the conflict for the souls of men and the strengthening of saints. He was obviously a balanced Christian with a burden for the blessing of the people of God.

Philippians 2:25. *"Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labour, and fellow-soldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants."*

HE THAT MINISTERED.

There are characteristics of some from whom we all can learn
The affectionate term of "brother," is not one we have to earn
But a "companion in labor" is different, for laborers have to choose
Whether they are going to work in the field before the harvest they lose.

There will be opposition and circumstances that are hard to face.
Soldiers who win battles do not always stand in one place.
It is true we have to defend, what has already been gained for God -
But there are other places and people who presently are lost in the world.

A messenger is a person under orders with something urgent to tell.
He has to listen carefully so he has the message's facts down well.
It involves immediately taking a journey away from the comforts of home,
In order to bring blessing to others - maybe a warning or message to come.

One thing these all have in common is the source from which we begin.
There is a desire to bless the one who had chosen him.
The One who has given the challenge for us to minister too -
Is the Lord who expects those around us to read "The Gospel according to you."

There are those who need compassion like a needy sister or brother.
Others are out in the harvest field and need another to help in the labor.
Still others are facing opposition either at home or in a distant land -
And a fellow-soldier with a message to give is welcomed to lend a hand.

May I have all of these characteristics and step out with faith in God.
This really is essential if I can honestly own Jesus as Lord.
Such activity also gives meaning to a life that could be mundane,
And the ones we assisted will be glad, and encouraged when we finally came.

"O Lord of the laborers: may I always be ready to assist when asked. May I not push my way into someone else's work unwanted, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

This man is only mentioned here in Philippians but from the testimony given we can know he was trusted by the assembly to take money and deliver it to Paul. Paul also trusted him to return with this letter to the same people that sent him. Even though he was not a famous person well-known throughout the churches of his time, he has become an example to us of a man with the mind of Christ even though he lived and worked in relative obscurity. He had godly zeal, yet like the Lord, "Made Himself of no reputation." He was "meek and lowly in heart." He did not want to cause concern in those who knew him. He did not dwell on his sickness. He didn't want others to worry that they had caused it by sending him on a 700-mile journey with their gift to Paul. Health is not the right of all believers. Sickness is not always the result of sin, and instant healing and miraculous recovery is not always God's will. Healing is a result of mercy being shown, not our demands and rights being met.

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

NOT WANTING TO BE A BOTHER.

We are interested in others - they are objects of our affection.

But we don't want them to be distracted and give us all their attention,
Because they have a much higher One who should be their occupation.
He is the One who unites us all and intends us to work out our salvation.

It is not a man, no matter how great he is, who is the final solution.
God Himself is the only One who is our Great Consolation.
Men, for the most part, only can see an issue from their own position.
The one guided by the Spirit of God is the trusted one in this situation.

I can understand the concern of the people when one of their own is ill.
But his state of health may be recovered, while disunity continues still.
A man of faith trusts God for his health, and is conscious of God's will,
Wanting God's people to be as one and their obligations fill.

Grace in a man is a beauty to see - confidence and quiet trust
Faith helps him understand God allowed him to suffer thus.
Hope in the promises God has given, helps him act as he feels he must.
Examples of men who love the Lord are ways that God teaches us.

"I thank Thee Father, for the unobtrusive people who are going about their lives in quiet faithfulness to Thee. They often are unseen and unknown by us, but they all are known to Thee. Bless them and continue to make them a blessing, I pray: in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

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

ANXIETY.

It is there when one is missing.
It is there when time has lapsed.
It claims all our thoughts possessing -
It is hard our cares to cast
On the One who bears our burdens;
Bids us rest in Him content -
Even though the spirit urges
Trust, it is our bent -
To lay down our cares and worries,
And then pick them up again;
Justifying our anxious scurries -
Changing nothing in the end.

Why not listen to the voice of reason?
Better yet, why not act in faith?
When opportunities come - seize them;
Take your time - don't act in haste.
There is One who loves supremely,
And has bid us trust in Him.
Leave your anxieties on Him wholly,
Knowing He knows all of them
And it will in the end be right -
For He has passed through, as a Man,
Similar things as your present plight,
And will deal with them as God only can.

"Uncertainty is still causing anxious thoughts Father. I know these things can work together for good to those who love Thee and are called by Thee. The decline of numbers here; the decline of health in those close to us; whether to respond to the invitation for Gospel meetings - these all are known to Thee: I cast these burdens on Thee and remain at rest, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

He was sent home carefully by Paul and was to be received joyfully. Such people deserve to be trusted respectfully. It is right for us to honor those who do what we can't do, or go where we can't go. In Epaphroditus' service he was unreserved. That kind of person will give their lives for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the kind of person who will work for God in all kinds of weather. He served with dignity, labored faithfully and represented the interests of others gladly. Paul did not look at the sickness of Epaphroditus with uncaring eyes or dismiss it as something unimportant. These examples of those who had the mind of Christ are given so that we will not look carelessly or with indifference on our calling.

Philippians 2:27. *“For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but also on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.”*

GOD HAD MERCY.

We feel for each other - maybe not physical pain -
But a concern for one that we know.
Especially if that pain comes again and again -
We can't help but let our sympathy show.
To know one is grieving, helpless and alone,
Touches our heart strings as we think of their plight.
It is natural in God's family for empathy to be known -
And to be assured of our prayers in the night.

It affects all of us who know that sister or brother,
When we hear of heart trouble, cancer or a stroke.
We are caught unawares at first and think, “How awful,”
Our concern came back this morning when we awoke.
So one of the first things we do, maybe still lying in bed,
Is to pray for that person's problem to our Father.
We ask for their recovery, but if not, then instead -
We ask for contentment and comfort for our brother.

I know when one is ill, there continues a hope still -
That God in mercy may bring back their health and strength.
But if this is their final hill, O God, their cup of comfort fill -
That they may endure with peace for its full length.
May God's grace be on display, in all they do and say -
May their faith in God be manifest to all.
May God's love along the way, be evident each day -
May they have joy in heart and soul when God calls.

“Father of the hurting saints: remember those we pray for who we know are going through hard physical times. A number of them are in the terminal stage of life. Others are struggling to get back some normalcy in life. Give them grace for grace. I pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

If all the characteristics mentioned in this chapter teaching us of the mind of Christ were ours, we would have real joy in what God is doing in and through others, and in us. The examples of Paul, Timotheus and Epaphroditus should search us that we may see if we can be used for the blessing of sinners in our Gospel work, and if saints in the assembly of which we are a part.

Philippians 2:29. *“Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation:”*

RECEIVE HIM... IN THE LORD.

A man of faithful reputation is one whose friendship prize.
He comes among God's people humble, not needing to be pared down to size.
His care for others has been recorded in words of commendation -
And his coming will be a blessing we know by his reputation.

He has been tried and proven, as other will testify.
Such people don't come suspiciously, making us wonder why
He didn't seem very willing to tell us from whence he came.
A person we gladly receive will have gathered in Jesus' name.

We can easily open our homes to anyone who has a need.
But receiving to our assembly fellowship, means to God's Word they heed.
The testimony of others gives weight unto their words -
And we hold them with respect - others assured us that we could.

A lesson to learn in this day and age is not everyone can be trusted
To tell the truth about themselves, so if they seem arrogant or flustered -
Read a commendation letter from someone that you know -
And that written assurance will his testimony show.

And if there is some grace that can be manifestly seen -
You are generally on safe ground to ask where they have been.
True saints will gladly answer knowing you are acting biblically -
And the saints of the assembly can receive that person heartily.

“Holy God, my Father: in the recent past we have had some come in to our remembrance meeting, but they seemed offended that we didn’t receive them without question. The facial expressions and body language showed they were angry at our guarded reception. Please give us wisdom to act at such times as the Spirit of God would guide us. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

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

FOR THE WORK OF CHRIST.

They left their high paying occupations - for the work of Christ.
They left a favorable situation - for the work of Christ.
Their families couldn’t understand why - for the work of Christ
They would leave and go so far away - for the work of Christ
A call from God is of highest priority - to the work of Christ
To tell the wondrous Gospel story - of the work of Christ
So never should we hesitate to tell - of the work of Christ
People can be eternally saved from hell - by the work of Christ.

Some are called to other lands - for the work of Christ
Others to work near at hand - for the work of Christ
Some are to reach out to children - for the work of Christ
Others to reach the wandering pilgrim - for the work of Christ
Some work together united as one - for the work of Christ
Some find they have to work alone - in the work of Christ
Some are out in the field every day - doing the work of Christ
Others are called to watch and pray - doing the work of Christ.

Some pay in their service the highest cost - for the work of Christ
Some suffer for years, total loss - for the work of Christ
Some labor daily in order to meet needs - of the work of Christ
Others spend time doing good deeds - for the work of Christ
Whatever the Holy Spirit calls you to do - for the work of Christ
Do it heartily, others are watching you - in the work of Christ
Whether at home or far abroad - for the work of Christ
Do what you do as unto the Lord - in the work of Christ.

“Lord God of the harvest, I pray again this morning for laborers to go into the harvest. I have joy in seeing some we know, go gladly to work in Thy field. Is there another I should be asking to help in the work before Linda and me? I pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

Philippians 3:1-11

EXHORTATIONS FOR LIVING

This begins the practical section of Philippians as Paul evaluates himself and others as an accountant would sum up figures to determine profit or loss. There are warnings given for the benefit of the believers against false teachers, against self-righteousness in themselves, against thinking we attain absolute perfection by our efforts and against false professions in some who claim themselves to be Christians. This is a call to me to determine what kind of Christian I really am. To rejoice in the Lord, I must find my joy in Him, not in myself, my religious heritage or the works I do in the service of the Lord. The circumstances of life may give brief times of rejoicing, but rejoicing in the Lord in this present life is related to my spiritual condition. This can be maintained by the discipline I impose on myself and the commitments I make. Then I will be rejoicing in Christ Jesus not only in service now but in anticipation of the future.

Philippians 3:1. *“Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe.”*

REPETITION.

Some things need to be said again,
We often forget things learned when we begin
To add to our knowledge things more profound,
And opportunities for learning more are all around,
Waiting and calling for my immediate attention,
And I have a tendency to forget the impact of things when first mentioned,
That turned on the light of understanding and truth -

And those fundamental things still are of invaluable worth.

I wish to remember my first joy in the Lord
And go back to the beginning and love of the Word
Which seems simple now, but then brought great light
And has impacted me since every day of my life.
Things that are basic never should grow old.
Things that bring change should often be told.
Ways to please God should oft be renewed,
That I might rejoice again in the blessings He showed.

Over and over is a very good way to teach.
Repetition of truth very often will reach
The hearts and minds of others - including mine
Of the things written in scripture, there's always more to find
That will impact my life and help me to live -
And also, will provide me with a lot more to give
To those I connect with in the course of my labor,
Giving more light as I tell of my Savior.

“In Thy great wisdom, O God; Thou hast given the same information over and over again. Whether in types and shadows, or messages and illustrations - I know it is right to commit myself to repetition. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

The word "finally" does not mean that the things he writes are sort of an add-on to the truths he has already taught. This adds a practical dimension to the teaching about having the mind of Christ. A spiritual mind can understand what is wrong as well as what is right. This mind is maintained to the degree we find our joy in the Lord, not in people or "things" around us. Nine times in this chapter Paul mentions "things." Some are good and some are bad. It is important for our daily living as a Christian to, first of all, heartily rejoice in the Lord no matter what the circumstances are in which we are found. So, in spite of the things going on around us, some things have to be said.

Philippians 3:2. *“Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision.”*

BEWARE!

They really are opposed to the preaching of the Gospel
They antagonizingly resist faith - often face to face
Insisting you must do the best that you can
And can only hope for the best when life is done.

They have got Christianity backwards thinking what they do
Earns favor with God - salvation is up to you.
Some even go so far as to mutilate their flesh
Thinking this will show God they are doing their best.

Watch out for those who with guile oppose
Be careful when you hear among you are those
Who with strong opinions want to impose mans' laws -
They are not true believers who promote their own cause.

Beware of those who try to add anything to the work of the cross
Those who do so probably are strangers to grace and to God.
Take care to compare what they say with God's Word -
He is not a believer who denies the finished work of the Lord.

Go back to the scriptures when conflicts arise.
Don't allow smooth talkers to catch you by surprise.
Be alert, and beware of those who add to God's work of grace.
Press ahead and promote truth - you'll experience the victory
of faith.

“Holy God, I thank Thee for the righteousness imparted by Thee through faith alone. Thy grace is so sufficient. I know any things that people try to add to such a work must be an insult to Thee. Be merciful to these sinners and save them. By Thy Spirit, lead them to genuine repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ alone. Amen.”

A review of the basics is never out of order because we are influenced to a degree, by those things and people around us whether we realize it or not. There were Judaizers who came to Philippi urging the new believers to keep the traditions and practices of the Jewish religion. Some people inadvertently mislead others and there are others who deliberately seek to mislead the Lord's people. In this case they were called "dogs" referring to their character, "evil" as to their conduct, and with a touch of sarcasm, Paul uses a take-off to the word "circumcision" by writing the word "conscience" as to their creed. These are examples of those whom we are to avoid.

Philippians 3:3. *"For we are the circumcision which worship God in the Spirit and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."*

THREE MARKS OF THE NEW NATURE.

Worship in the Spirit - a quietness of soul
Rejoicing in Christ Jesus - He has made us whole
No confidence in the flesh - it can only deceive
These are marks of reality in those who believe.

Worship in the Spirit - led when appropriate
Rejoicing in Christ Jesus - the One who did propitiate
No confidence in the flesh - death is its ultimate fate
These marks of the new nature we appreciate.

Worship in the Spirit - links our thoughts with others
Rejoicing in Christ Jesus - sharing new life with our brothers
No confidence in the flesh - it only our sin uncovers
These marks are obvious when we get together.

Worship in the Spirit - guided by God
Rejoicing in Christ Jesus - we truly love the Lord
No confidence in the flesh - learning through the Word
These are marks of the new nature and we are assured.

"Father in heaven: I have experienced these and find it to be true personally. I know this can only be a work of God in me. I am grateful to Thee for not allowing me to have been side-tracked by the pressures of dissatisfaction that have come upon me at times. Thanks for "keeping grace" in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Philippians 3:3. *"For we are the circumcision which worship God in the Spirit and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."*

WHO WE ARE

Peculiar, yet not unusual in the usual sense -
A cut above, yet normal in that there is no pretense -
Different, yet the same in the visible way -
Out of it, yet in, because they know what to say -
They are separate.

Walking with us, yet in a way they walk alone -
Talking with us, but conscious of their voice's tone -
Living with us, but careful of the way they live -
Sharing with us, but wanting more to give -
They are different.

Worshippers, but not only in the church -
Prayers, but not only in the church -
Singers, not only when others do it -
Helpers, sharing other peoples' hurt -
They are confident.

They are confident, but not in themselves -
They are rejoicing in Christ, who came Himself -
They are worshipping God, not worshipping self -
They are using their gift, not leaving it on the shelf -
They are called.

Eternity is in their hearts they live in its light -
Christ is preeminent, He is their life -
God is their Father He knows what's right -

The Spirit is their Guide, in every plight -
They are His.

When people are in need, they are usually there -
When a load is heavy, they the burdens share -
When the grief is heavy, they really care -
When the loneliness is real, they want to know how you fare -
They come alongside.

In all of these ways, and in many more -
The new nature shows, what we are here for -
We worship God, who knew us before -
We rejoice in Christ, who our iniquities bore -
They are redeemed.

When we were born again, we began life anew -
When indwelt by the Spirit, by His power we grew -
When given a new nature, God's life we show -
When obeying His Word, we His will do know -
They belong to God.

“O gracious God, who has called out from the world a people for Thyself: I am thankful for my brothers and sisters who are living for Thee and working for Thee in so many different walks of life. God's people never cease to amaze me in their versatility. Housewives seem to know how to reach neighbors; builders are reaching their men; young people are reaching their peers. I pray that their faith will not fail. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

In the Christian life, faith is what counts, not our works. Faith is our response to God's grace and this is the same in all true children of God. We have nothing to boast of in ourselves, only in God's grace. The Judaizers thought to add their traditions to the work of Christ which would negate the value of the sacrifice He made. That would imply that what the Lord Jesus Christ went through on our behalf was not enough to meet our need. Anything that people seek to add to the cross-work is not only valueless, but an insulting response to the complete redemption price paid when He gave His life as a ransom for us. Our position is that of the true circumcision of the heart, not of a fleshly circumcision. The cutting off of the evil heart took place when God saved us by His grace alone. So, we are the true circumcision of which the physical was a type. What we do is worship God in the Spirit when we have the mind of Christ. Also, we find our cause of rejoicing is our Lord and Savior, Christ Jesus. What we don't have, is confidence in the flesh.

Philippians 3:4. *“Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more:”*

PRE-CHRISTIAN.

The intellect was there but used for self-improvement
The physical strength was there but only used for movement
Character was there - a real source of pride
All the human attributes both outward and inside
Were there to make one skilled and successful in this life
With all these functioning together, there was darkness never light.

Well thought of by the leaders who needed such a man
Able to lead others to do his will - not everybody can
Educated in the best of schools, able to debate and answer questions
Constantly on the fast-track; quick to deal with serious situations
All of these skills and talents come from a well-trained mind
But none of these can satisfy or ever peace will find.

Heritage brings a sense of worth associated with a name
Education has its place but the real man stays just the same
Religion gives many answers related to the future
Patriotism gives a sense of pride but is only based on culture
These all have place in a natural man but don't make one a Christian
Humbled pride, awakened to sin, leads to repentance and contrition.

“Righteous, Holy God, may those who lead our nation come to the place where they realize their weakness. I believe then Thy strength could be revealed in bringing repentance and genuine conversion to Thee. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

We need to beware of those who care only for the external. The true circumcision is inward, not outward. True worship is by the Spirit of God and not religious activity. True glory is in Christ alone, not in things we might do or in things attained by self-effort. True confidence is in God Himself, not in anything of the flesh. These three characteristics are marks of the new nature. Legal righteousness is basically self-confidence contrasted by true righteousness that is steadfast in its purpose because we have the mind of Christ.

Philippians 3:5. *“Circumcised the eight day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, and Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee;”*

DEEP ROOTS.

It started with Abraham; a separation to God
A covenant known only to the two persons involved
John the Baptist and Jesus, now the apostle Paul
Forever reminded of Him who them called.

Born into Jewish privilege, of that there's no doubt
Not a proselyte but a Benjaminite with a deep root
The nation's first king was one; he was a shoot
Even Jerusalem itself was on Benjamin's route.

In language and culture, lifestyle and attitude
His background was deeply impressed on his mind
Even in religion as a Pharisee, he proved
His pedigree; his roots were as deep as you'd find.

No matter how deeply rooted a person might be
In the kingdom of God, there's a need deeper still
Genuine faith in Christ others can't see
But the results of that faith have a message to tell.

Known to God and worked out through living
The roots in God's kingdom start out at new birth
All of one's assets, one's labor, one's giving
When done for God's glory establishes their worth.

Our roots are in God now, heritage is shallow
The roots that bring life and its results to full fruit
Are deeply implanted in a life that's eternal
Life-flowing nectar flows through an in-grafted shoot.

Though from a family of faith I still have the choice
Of letting God's grace through me to others flow
I appreciate my family roots, but I'll give my voice
To the roots deep in God, and from Him I can grow.

“I thank Thee Father, for my forbearers who had a real sense of God in their lives. I saw their example and learned that I needed Thee and Thee alone for divine life. I thank Thee now for eternal life, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

The false teachers were examples of people we should avoid. The apostle Paul was an example to follow. He had all the credentials the false teachers said were necessary for salvation and righteousness before God. He was Jewish and could trace his ancestry back to Benjamin, so he could boast in his pedigree if he wanted to. He was steeped in the self-righteous tradition of the Hebrews and as a Pharisee was above the rank and file as to religious testimony. As far as the law was concerned, he would have been considered a perfect man outwardly. But all that tradition was worthless as far as true righteousness before God.

Philippians 3:6. *“Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law blameless.”*

RIGHTEOUSNESS BASED ON THE LAW.

It stands unchanging - carved in stone
Inflexible, hard and cold - demanding
Perfect in holiness - exacting in righteousness
A standard of absolute perfection - unattainable

Emotionless, unswerving - universal
A teacher with a stick - unmovable

A scale with weights - incomparable
A standard far higher than mortal men - unreachable

The phylacteries are in place - obviously
The alms are given - dutifully
The prayers are heard - publicly
The dress code is adhered to - perfectly

One's heart is focused - in anxiety
The ears are opened - to petty instructions
No smile of contentment upon the lips
That would be sacrilege

Days are kept track of carefully
The number of steps taken religiously
Food intake observed under scrutiny
Always trying to measure one's self outwardly

Anger directed to those who rejoice
Criticism of those who live in love
Organized against changes that reach the heart
Determined opposition to biblical commitment

Always afraid inside, that something is undone
Always conscious of the persecution of others
Covering fear with strict rules and demands
Striving for perfection and righteousness unattainable

"I thank Thee, O Righteous God, for grace that is greater than all my sin. What relief, what joy, what peace I have in Thee. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

All of these religious things would have exalted him before man and even in his own mind, until he had the mind of Christ. Now he had the right perspective when he compared himself with his Lord. Everything he had and all he attained was loss when he had the mind of Christ. Things of the past need to be forgotten and we can now find our joy in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a good thing for me to ask myself, "What am I willing to change in my life for Christ's sake? What am I honestly willing to lose in order to be like Him and serve Him wholeheartedly?"

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

THE GREAT REVERSAL.

Credentials won by faithful study under a wise teacher
Success I would like to claim because I am a preacher
Things considered to one's credit only are in vain
The only value worth considering is, "What does my Lord gain?"

People may at times express some flattering communication
Over something successfully done or some lengthy dissertation
Treat those praises as their response and take them only lightly
The object of any words and service is to honor God more highly.

Travel to distant places and the challenges that brings
Are often quite misunderstood when people our praises sing
Those efforts must be for God alone under the Spirit's guidance
If there is underlying deception, it is time for my repentance.

Past achievements and present work may get in the way
Of the ongoing personal relationship with Christ, needed every day
Who cares who gets the credit if God is honored thus;
We all need to remember success doesn't depend on us.

We dare not be self-centered; the center place belongs to Him
Who gave us this new life and then sent us out to win;
Others who are lost in darkness, and tell them of God's love
That they too would experience the eternal life we have.

Do not consider it profit because you may seem successful

Don't think there is virtue in appearing to be stressful
Because pride in any of us takes many different forms
And no good will ultimately come to those tooting their own horns.

Throw all of self overboard and count all loss for Christ
Self-aggrandizement is always sin, though others think it's nice
Throw all advertisement of your work to the four winds
And be assured God knows when we give all glory to Him.

“O God, please keep me from advertising any success and never let me cast a dark reflection on Thee for any failures. I trust thee to evaluate properly all that I do. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

The cost of living as a Christian is the willingness to "count all things but loss." Beyond that then is what we gain - "the knowledge of Christ." To know Him in this way is a priceless privilege that leads us into a deep relationship with Him that enables us to understand Him better and ourselves as well. Anything that would come between that objective is worthless trash to be thrown away. In a practical way we know Christ better by studying His life as it is written in the Gospels. There are references to Him through all of the New Testament, and types and shadows of Him in the Old Testament that reveal Him to us. What he said and what He did in various circumstances are written for our learning. Once we read about Him, then it is up to us to practice the same things in order to really know Him.

Philippians 3:7-8. *“But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ.”*

I COUNT.

The accountant bends over his ledger seeking to find profit that will last.
His work is to find some meaningful benefit of all the labors of the past.
He has an established set of values, that govern all the work he does,
And a pattern that he follows as he finally adds up all his sums.

“My family was of good stock, after all, can't all you people see;
How great the world has been blessed, because of our superior family?
We had such a good religion, other folks looked up to us,
Wanting the kind of life we had, instead of their awful fuss.”

But after figuring out all that seemed to him to be so positive,
The accountant began to wonder, “What is left if I don't live.”
Every point of pride he wrote down, and every religious action,
Never gave the worried accountant the least bit of satisfaction.

He realized the things he thought were so important then,
Had no lasting value if not a treasure laid up in heaven.
So, summing up life's account, the accountant had to say,
“Everything I thought was gain, was loss for a future day.”

Now he has new values; now his work is not vain,
For all his work is spent, to bring his Master gain.
The joy he gets these days, is not in a ledger full of things,
He is sharing in the blessings that God's salvation brings.

The things he wants to know now, are the ways that he can share
In the power of Christ's resurrection, and the suffering that he shares.
The goal of his life is to know his Lord as a man knows his best friend,
Assured that his new accounting ways have eternal profit in the end.

“Heavenly Father, I learn lessons of value as I read of the losses that Paul wrote of and the gains of the knowledge of Christ, the righteousness of Christ, and the fellowship of Christ. It is humbling to me that far too often I put an estimate on things that are useless in the light of eternity. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

Philippians 3:8. *“Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ,”*

KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST.

I know the facts of Christ - learned them in my youth
I knew He was the Way to heaven; the Life and the Truth
I knew He was God sent by the Father to become a man
I knew He was the creator; I knew He was Deity like any child can
These, and many other facts were taught me; I knew they all were true

I believed Jesus' cross-work and His resurrection too.
But I didn't know Him, I had accumulated information
And even then, I knew, believing facts is not salvation
All these facts were to me a very great blessing
For because of them I was aware of what I was missing
Faith in those facts that are revealed in God's Word
Ultimately lead me to confess Jesus as my Lord.

I knew Him first as my Redeemer and I truly thanked Him
Then as my Savior who took my sins, and in the sea buried them
As my Lord He is a gracious and wonderful Master
As my Guide and Goal, He keeps me from disaster
As my Advocate He continually pleads my every cause
As High Priest He makes acceptable every thought of praise.

A relationship has been formed of the highest kind
I am accepted in the Beloved with cords that eternally bind
Me to Him who pleased His Father in every deed and way
And has guaranteed that I with Him will forever stay
Kept by His power, His love and His keeping grace
And each life-experience with Him is an act of faith.

“Lord God, I thank Thee this morning for the privilege of knowing Thee. For the instructions that led me to believe about Thee, I give Thee thanks. For the work of the Spirit to convict me, I give thanks. For the light of the Gospel that led me right to Thee, I give thanks, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

Our position as believers is that we are "found in Him." Our purpose is that "we may know Him." Then we will know our progress is to "follow after" Him to our prize, "the mark." To do this our practice should be to "walk by the same rule," and "mind the same thing as "followers together." Our prospect is "the Savior" who "shall change" us to be "like unto His glorious body." Our righteousness comes from our Lord and we will have to make sacrifices in order to know Him. It is by His power we can live moral, new, righteous lives, and reckon our old nature dead to sin.

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

FOUND IN HIM.

The start of a new life was wonderful - it was truly a new creation
At first all I really knew was I possessed God's salvation
He had given this gift freely when the Lord Jesus I received
And I became aware of the Person on whom I had believed
Relief was followed by joy; then really knowing I was by God accepted
And given a new nature and eternal life I possess ed.

There was a difference between me and others which I could not explain
It had to do with identification and how each responded to Jesus' name
Being found in Him made me separate from many I knew before
Who only knew about Him, not thankful that their sins He bore
So, it made me walk alone on many different occasions
And I became aware of the meaning of sanctification.

Life in its course has taken me to many different places
I know a lot of people but am starting to forget names and faces
Still there is the calm assurance that my righteousness is in Christ
The faith that brought me to Him first still maintains implicit trust
I am in Christ forever; God has accepted me as a son
And being found in Christ means, I am His and He is mine.

Years that unfold leave me many faded recollections
Of things that happened while serving God in many situations

Some stand out so clearly, when God seemed so near He was felt
Guiding, protecting and comforting lest faith would seem to melt
In those times there was confidence that Christ was in them too
The "faith of Christ" gave full assurance He would bring me through.

"For Thy sake, Lord Jesus; Thou hast placed me and kept me. I thank Thee for this. I know faith is not a feeling but there is comfort when I am reminded of being found in Thee, Amen."

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

EXPERIMENTAL KNOWLEDGE.

I may say I know a person or a lot of things
But I really don't know that person until life brings
The things they endured to pass upon me
Then I will know by experience just what came to be
Placed upon that person and how they coped
What they felt physically and what was their hope
When the circumstances they were called to, came to pass
How they responded and how long it did last.

Positionally we have in Christ passed through death and resurrection
But we really don't know actually without personal participation
Of what it is to leave family and friends, maybe even freedom
And identify with the needs of others in order to bring them
The message and blessings of a life that begins anew
When we tell of the Lord Jesus and what He passed through
That they can be accepted when they accept Him as Savior
And know sin's penalty is paid - brought into divine favor.

When we are united with Christ on the basis of trust
Or really want to know about Him, there is a high cost
There will be a sacrifice in order to experience resurrection power
And fellowship with His sufferings follows what we endure
How we apply crucifixion onto the circumstances of life
Reveals through moral conformation there is a price
I am willing to pay to know the victory of resurrection
That in turn produces in me genuine consecration.

"I know Father, there is very little of what Christ endured that I have experienced. But there has been enough, that I can go confidently through misunderstanding and criticisms that at times come our way, to realize sacrifice is a blessing. It draws me nearer to His "wounded side," and I praise and thank Thee. Amen."

There is a spiritual and moral resurrection that took place when we were saved. We died in Christ and have been raised in Him to walk in newness of life. So now we are citizens of heaven though we are living here on earth. Paul was not doubting that at the Coming of Christ for His church he was going to be raised at the resurrection of the just. For all who are saved by God's grace, we will be raised from the dead physically. If we are alive, we will be instantaneously changed. But between now and then, we will be called upon to share in the "fellowship of His sufferings." When we follow Christ, we should be willing to accept what comes as a result of being conformed to Him. This resurrection "from among the dead" is similar to the resurrection of Christ when He rose "from among the dead." The second resurrection, the resurrection of the "unjust," will be after the millennium reign of Christ.

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

RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD.

Uncertainty may be there as to how one will die
Or if the Rapture takes place before death happens.
We don't have death's key - One greater than I
Has designed my life to fit His own pattern
More important than my death is the assurance of life
I know the resurrection is a fact
When God chooses, whether in day or in night
Resurrection is sure - the way of death is just the first act.

How I meet God - whether by a slow process or fast
Of this I am positively assured
Resurrection comes, and death, when it has passed
Gives way to God's resurrection power
So how one dies isn't cause for deep concern
God allows it in a way to bring Him glory
My body will be raised and when it the soul returns
Then we'll understand more of life's story.

It is enough for me now to be sure of resurrection
The time and manner are all in God's hands
I am humbled to know when I received salvation
I became part of God's infinite plan
It is not with uncertainty or any kind of doubt
That I am not able to fully explain
The day or the hour when the Lord gives a shout
And the Church is raised to meet Him.

It affects me today in several ways
My conduct and practice are in view
Of the coming resurrection when on that remarkable day
All the ties to the earth we will eschew
The purifying effect is that in deed and thought
My attention is directed to Him
Who opened doors to new life when with His blood He bought;
A bride and gave His own life to them.

“Father God: this day is another to be used in Thy service. Already I have been considering this may be the day Thou hast chosen for the Lord to come for us. I am humbled before Thee to consider that I am part of that resurrection already. Accept my thanks, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

Philippians 3:12-21

LIVE IN THE PRESENT

In the first verses of this chapter Paul looks at himself as an accountant summing up his life as a believer with the words, "I count." Then in verse 12 through 16 he speaks as an athlete in a race and says, "I press" - as one who is running for the goal. In the last verses he compares himself to an alien who is living away from home in a colony of people who are looking for the Savior - "I look." In each of these views of the lives of God's people we can see who we are and learn what is important about our present life. Our goal needs to be clear and plain before us. It is the challenge for us to be like Paul. He knew he had been captured by God to be a pattern-believer so that through him God could show us what He can do with one human life that is devoted to Him.

Philippians 3:12. *“Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.”*

THE PROCESS.

God started a work on me a long time ago
Actually, it began when I was first conscious of sin
I must confess, very little did I know
When the striving of the Holy Spirit began
But God is God, and when He continues to move
In many ways to bring me to Him
Before long I was awakened and moved by His love
To start on this journey to heaven

It was like there was a starting line when I began to run
A race that will cover many miles
It is not a competition but a course different for everyone
Uphill and down, rough and smooth, tears and smiles
According to how God chooses to design
The course that is set before me
Is the speed that I travel at a speed that is mine
Producing what He has foreordained to be.

I am still on the run, not trying to escape

From the road that stretches out in the distance
But in many ways enjoying the way that I take
It is a privilege to be involved in God's business
I don't know how many more twists and turns
Lie ahead now that I'm on the home stretch
Each day there are experiences and things I learn
And I have to stop longer my breath to catch.

Sometimes I think I catch a glimpse
Of the goal line not too far up ahead
But when I get there it is only a twist
To make the way interesting and get me out of bed
So, by God's grace and power I'll keep on the run
He's made the course to suit me each day
When the goal is reached - the earthly race is done
I'll praise Him for each step of the way.

“Father God, this is a new day and the tasks before me seem to be simple. I will take time to think and meditate as I do them. Give me some thoughts that will help me be a good worshiper - and a good intercessor. I pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

Philippians 3:13. *“Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,”*

DON'T DWELL ON THE PAST.

We won't lose all memory of things done in the past
Don't dwell there, just leave them behind
What has been done, is done, that's a burden to cast
On Him so that His rest we can find.

Now, we are to look ahead where there is a yoke to bear
And our Master who says, “Learn of Me” -
Calls us to stretch forth our arms right where we are
We have been “apprehended” for this work we can see.

Effort is needed to fulfill this call
This is not a time to look backward and quit
Gratefully we trust Him who knows every fall
And realize He wants us to get on with it.

The day is still light, there is work in the field
A harvest is ripe; there are souls that are waiting
For laborers to move out and bring what it yields
Into a place of usefulness without hesitating.

Before the sun goes down and darkness descends
Reach forward to what God has called you to
He knows who you are; who did apprehend
You and sent you out to do what you do.

Backward looks stop forward progress
And time still doesn't stop for any man
Apply yourself; give the work your best
You've been apprehended, now do for Him what you can.

“Gracious Father, I find joy in knowing Thou art aware of every aspect of my life and hast enabled me to serve Thee. Thanks for taking me for Thyself in spite of my weakness and inabilities. I know there are many who are more able. Make me a blessing to others in some way, I pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

There is an underlying sense of dissatisfaction with his past as he presses ahead like a runner striving to reach the goal. Paul's goal was to know Christ intimately, to be like Christ personally, to be all that Christ wanted him to be practically. He had a single mind toward this goal. As far as we are concerned, the past has passed and let us leave it there. Looking back may only discourage us and make us ashamed of what we did or did not do. We need to concentrate on the present and our present and personal relationship with

God, not the past and our guilt. Faith and obedience now lead to a full and abundant life. Devotion to Christ instead of dissatisfaction will keep us going in the right direction.

Philippians 3:13-14. *“Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”*

I PRESS.

A very determined look in the eye; the muscles are flexing well.
The face of the athlete is set toward the goal it is very easy to tell
There has been constant training, and the preparation time was long.
Now the time has arrived for the athlete to strive for the victor's crown.

His stride is firm it takes him places he has never gone before.
Sometimes his run is in his town and others times on distance shores.
There is serious opposition raised and attempts on his life are made,
But this athlete is quite different than most, he is willing his life to give.

This man of God has been running for years and his race is almost run.
He has been running for the souls of men, not a casual race for fun.
It has taken him to great cities, and at times he has been in prison.
His motivation is the high calling of God, and telling others of salvation.

He does not dwell on the past for credit, or try to win men's sympathy.
His purpose is reaching forth to claim those people he has not seen.
He wants to live for future gains, not to rest on victories that are past.
The goal that lies before him brings rewards that will always last.

I am seeking to learn from the examples of the athletes of long ago.
It seems that I am not getting too far, and my feet are getting slow.
I need God's help and power to keep my face toward the prize.
Sometimes it almost seems like the goal is just before my eyes.

By God's grace and examples of athletes who ran a very good race,
I will seek to keep on pressing until I see my Savior's face.
When this race is finally over and all the teammates are at home,
We will praise the One who called us to run and give to Him our crown.

“God of Infinite strength and power, this day is another brief stop on the marathon race of my life. I am a little bit tired today of the run. But please give power to speak for Thee before this day is over. I need some special anointing (if that is the right way to say it) to reach the ones who are listening and bring them to love Thee supremely. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

Philippians 3:14. *“I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”*

THE CHECKERED FLAG.

Some started fast and did a lot - too soon their race was run
Before they lived very many years, their work on earth was done
God in His sovereign plans gave them one work to do
While others were still preparing, they were already through.

Others take a long time trying to get things all figured out
The meaning of words, the gifts they have, what life is all about
A lot of time is spent waiting and trying to get more training
Finally, they get things all together and then they start off running.

Others are known as “plodders,” they don't move very fast
They start off at a steady pace and watch other runners pass
They press on past training centers and the cemeteries too
Steadily moving toward the goal just doing what they need to do.

There are a lot of different ways the people of God run in the race
All of them are going to be satisfied when they see the Savior's face
The “checkered flag” - the goal line - these are only metaphors
The prize will be to see Jesus, who our eyes never saw before.

Whether fast or slow, timid or bold, aggressive or a plodder
All have one thing in common - we are going to our Father

And there when we see Jesus in the flesh and give account to Him
We will rejoice in the results of grace - we will see more clearly then.

Now, while pressing ahead each day, I'm becoming more conscious
Of the checked flag; the goal line, the actual presence
Of the One who waits for us, and often comes unseen
To assist me in this race I'm running, helping me to honor Him.

“Lord God, I know the race is not the objective nor is the goal the reason for the race - but the prize of bringing honor to Him who called me. I thank Thee for allowing me this privilege of running for Him - even though I am a slow runner. Amen.”

Paul had one aim before him. He wanted to be the man God wanted him to be in order to attain that supreme prize of a "Well done, good and faithful servant." What greater aim is there than that for one who loves the Lord. His one ambition was that in this race he would keep that in view in spite of all that would happen to him. He did not let the memories of the past change his direction nor his determination. It is important that we leave behind everything that would hinder us from fulfilling the privileges and responsibilities of our Christian calling. In the same way runners train for the race by focusing their attention and energy on the race before them, so we need to constantly remind ourselves that this race we are in as Christians is not designed to be easy.

Philippians 3:15. *“Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.”*

PROGRESS IN SPIRITUAL GROWTH.

As time goes by there are always changes
When the Spirit of God has His way
Things we did wrong, now we don't do them
There are differences in what we do and say
It is interesting to note that in spiritual growth
We take on similar characteristics
As other brothers and sisters in the family of God
We're more Christ-like, not odd religious mystics.

When one speaks of the Lord, the others respond
With similar thoughts of His love and grace
If the subject is life, or of this darkening world of strife
Each offer encouraging words based on faith
Prophetic words of truth are of highest worth
When fear of coming conflict and death are voiced
The scriptures are discussed and there's a strengthening of trust
And we are conscious of our own spiritual growth.

The Bible is the key to spiritual progress
Its truths are our counsel and guide
The Spirit of God teaches and our mind reaches
For the light of understanding deep inside
When the meaning is finally grasped, the effect lasts
Though the world of men around, think it's a joke
With true believers I find we are of the same mind
Along with them, I have chosen the Savior's yoke.

When that is a conscious act, growth becomes a fact
We learn from Christ Himself the way we are to be
Effective in our living; generous in our giving
A meek and humble mind other folks can see
When I give attention and often choose to mention
The work of God and the real Christian's hope
Others perhaps will find when we have one mind
We are maturing; there is obvious spiritual growth.

“I am seeking to learn, Father, ways that I can encourage other believers in the things of God. May I be mature enough myself to be able to influence them in the ways of Thy choosing, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

We need to direct our energy into things that count for eternity and God's glory. We need to exercise ourselves "unto godliness" lest the excess baggage of earthly things hinder our progress. We need to

persevere in our journey toward the goal in spite of difficulties, setbacks or even stumbling or falling. If that happens, we need to get up again and run the race again.

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

LIVE UP TO WHAT YOU KNOW.

I know the results of sin - therefore sin not
I know the price the Lord paid - therefore forget not
I know repentance must be real - therefore pretend not
I know one must turn to Christ alone - therefore linger not

I know grace has provided salvation - therefore work not
I know faith in Christ works - therefore fear not
I know the Spirit of God guides - therefore wait not
I know the Word of God is true - therefore doubt not

I know Christ is the Light - I now can see
I know Christ is the only Way to heaven for me
I know He is the Truth so I can see
I know He is the Life now and eternally

I know God saved me for a purpose - so I live for Him
I know this world is doomed - until He reigns
I know the devil attacks and tempts - I must not sin
I know the flesh is deceptive - so never give in

I know the Spirit indwells and gives me power
I know the Father hears me at any hour
I know the Son is in our midst when we gather
I know the Godhead is One and works together

I know my life is hid in Christ - so I must use it
I know God gives gifts - so I dare not abuse it
I know my soul is saved - so I can not loose it
I know God's will is right - so I must choose it

There are lots of things I've learned, some I have practiced
It's not enough to say I'm a Christian, I must act it
By God's grace I want to live up to what I know
If I do that, maybe more of Christ to others I can show

“For over 60 years Father, I have been learning from Thee the ways of righteousness. Yet it seems I have so little to show for it. Please don't give up on me now. I pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

Mature believers are not deceived into seeking sinless perfection but rather moral maturity. Sinless perfection is in our future, not at present. Moral maturity is for the present and demands that we discipline ourselves. Maturity in Christ involves us acting on what we know as the Holy Spirit guides us. We do not have to spend our lives looking for some new doctrine or searching for the truth that has already been revealed to us. We need to live up to the light we have and not just mark time. Perfection in growth is what is needed and is possible as we keep the one supreme Object before us. Spiritual "fathers" know "Him that is from the beginning." Mature believers are willing to pay any cost in response to the desire of God for them because they "know Him," love Him and appreciate Him. Truth has its demands and God reveals His truth to those who are willing to follow it. We are able to walk together with saints as far as possible trusting God to reveal what we need to learn and do. That orderly walk can be maintained when we obey the "same rule" and "mind (obey) the same thing."

Philippians 3:17. *“Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so, as ye have us for an ensample.”*

THE EXAMPLE.

If people who never read the Bible, want to learn about Jesus
They should be able to know something about Him whenever they see us
There should be enough of a difference in me that those who live in sin
Would recognize, even though I'm a man, in practice I am different to them.

My speech should be with gracious words so I don't have to shout

To declare my allegiance to God when I am around and about
The things that I say should be trustworthy; they should know I tell the truth
When I buy or sell a thing, they should know its real worth.

In my dealings with others, those who are poor or of a different race
I should not base my response to them on what they have or on their face
For to God each one is worth more than the whole material world
If they come from different nations, I should keep my own flag furled.

My lifestyle should not be flamboyant even though I am not poor
To flaunt my success or riches would close people's ears for sure
It is better if I become like them as close as it is possible to be
Not practicing sin or patronizing, but joining with them in empathy.

If I am to follow the example set forth, when it comes time to eat
I will eat what the others are eating, and not take the highest seat
My like and dislikes I will hide, not allowing my face to express
Some kind of inner aversion, so I can other people bless.

Some differences to me may seem funny but it would be wrong for me to laugh
To make some careless comment perhaps would be a social gaff
The Lord, when He was here, could identify with needs of those in sin
And like Him, I too should connect that I some souls would win.

Paul was a pattern example; he focused his life on Christ
Now I must follow the same way even though there is a price
The end of the life of example can be either good or bad
I want those who follow to know in their lives, the blessings
I for a lifetime had.

“Father God of all grace: my prayer this morning is that I might not forget people may form their opinions and decisions on what I do or say. I know many good examples that influenced me. May I now influence others to be like the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.”

When our focus is on Christ as Paul's was, we can be an example to others as he was. He obeyed heaven's laws and knew heaven's language. He was loyal to heaven's cause and he knew his record was in heaven. It was heaven's Lord who was his Lord, and he was looking for Him to come. These are characteristics of those who follow the path of those godly servants like Paul who have gone on before us. There is a great contrast between Paul and those who were enemies of the cross of Christ. There are those who claim to be Christians who are false professors. They are not called enemies of the blood of Christ. Nor are they called enemies of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ which is the Gospel. But they are enemies of "the cross of Christ." The cross is our identification with Christ personally from day to day. There is shame and reproach to the cross that is not popular even among Christians. Not many are willing to suffer what Paul did in his life for the sake of the cross. He wrote, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." Christ was truly his Lord and that is the position He holds in our lives. He is our Lord.

Philippians 3:18. *“(For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ;”*

BE WARNED.

They come in many different ways
And have many different reasons
Their animosity is not always recognized
It doesn't follow any particular seasons
It seems to be that wherever God
Or His Word is given honorable mention
Immediately they show their colors
And they give God their full attention.

But attention is not given in a positive way
It soon becomes easy to see
They are against whatever we say
Not trying to cover their animosity
“Where was God when my mother was sick?
If there is a God why did she suffer so?”
Or, “Why are there wars and hungry people?
If there's a God where did He choose to go?”

Enemies of the cross of Christ
May also be people of religion
They don't like the thought of grace alone
Being the only way of salvation
They want their sin-polluted personal acts
To be added to God's saving grace
And to find out "works" are like filthy rags
Disturbs their sense of false peace.

Rather than being humbled and grateful
The enemies of the cross unite
Instead of welcoming the Gospel of grace
They join together to fight
Against the truth of God and light
They deny and oppose until
The message of salvation by grace is silenced
Or until they are lost in hell.

We may weep over their souls like the apostle did
Our words we may think are in vain
But we must remember it is God who saves
The Holy Spirit makes them born again
The best way to help such people
Is to continually preach and pray
Perhaps God will allow an event to come
So, they will listen to what we say.

"Righteous, Holy God: I mention here before Thee the neighbors around whose opposition isn't open but is seen in their silent avoidance of us. If there is some way, I can reach them for Thee, please give me an opportunity. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

This is our training time. Here we are able to suffer for Christ and with Him. When He comes this privilege of suffering for His sake will be passed. We are to live what we teach the same as Paul did. The enemies of the cross don't mind religion, religious things, religious songs or even the Gospel as much as the reproach of the cross. They mind "earthly things" that are popular with the majority. Even evangelical Christianity has become popular as long as people "feel comfortable" and "are excited" about what is happening. The cross, means death to the world. The cross does not allow for self-indulgence and comfortable living. The cross trims everything down to the basics that contrast what is false and true, light and dark, heavenly and earthly.

Philippians 3:19. *"Whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things."*

EARTHLY THINGS.

Why can't they understand?
What is it about the earth?
That appeals so much to some people
They can't see what has real worth.
Is it a passing hunger -
And they think they're going to die?
To live for what is put in the stomach,
Surely isn't the reason why
They live lives that are so sensual
With such a selfish attitude -
Epicureanism is so shallow
They have nothing when life is through.

Perhaps there is a deep-seated longing
To know everything just a little bit.
They want to taste the forbidden fruit
Just because they have heard of it.
When that sin has been tried -
They must realize they've been deceived.
It may be they wish they had died
When that invitation they received,
Because the results of that choice
Has opened them up to deep grief.

They listened to the tempters voice;
The pleasurable rush was very brief.

Earthly things are passed along
From one unsatisfied person to another.
Misery likes a lot of company
Unhappy people want to gather together
In dark places where it is easy to hide
What is in a sinful heart
And a taste of wrong comes to abide
What they didn't intend to start -
And the consequences start to take their toll
On what could have been a satisfying life.
What started out full of potential
Now ends in lasting strife.

When one's mind is set on earthly things
Usually there's no turning back.
Earthly things cannot satisfy
The fundamentals such things lack.
The heart of man can't be satisfied
With what I taste and see.
God created us at the first in His image;
He knows what He wants us to be.
To trivialize a life's potential
By focusing on what earth brings,
Is to waste what one really could be,
On empty cisterns and poisoned springs.

Don't be deceived, there is a better way
God has intended for you.
Stop and listen to what He says
And you will learn before you are through
That what makes a person fulfilled,
And meaning in life can give -
Comes not from surrounding earthly things
But from God who can make you live
In harmony with God and all His creation
For He can satisfy the total person
When one receives His great salvation.

"I have looked at remarkable things created by man's wisdom, O God, and there is truly something lacking. People hop from one display to another trying to find something that will meet their expectations. They seem only to get a little bit here and a little bit there. 'Satisfied with Thee, Lord Jesus, I am blessed.' Amen."

The "conversation" or citizenship of those who are aliens in this world involves our relationship with Christ and the interests of our heavenly Father. Our position in this citizenship is that of people whose home is in heaven, but we are here as a colony of heaven on earth. We obey the laws of the nation we live in and are subject to the government that has been "ordained by God." At the same time, we anxiously wait for the Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ, to come. Our eyes are looking up as we crane our necks for the first sight of the Lord when He comes. Then these bodies of humiliation that so limit us in our lives and service for God, will be changed. No longer will they be subject to death and decay. No longer will there be the barriers of time and space. Our bodies will be suited to heavenly living. But for now: What interests do I promote? What country and citizenship do I represent?

Philippians 3:20. *"For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ:"*

CITIZENSHIP.

One time this world was the extent of all my hopes and dreams
But because of the Gospel message, I learned this is not what it seems
Underneath all the natural beauty there is the pollution of sinful man
Until God acts in judgment of nations it won't be what He originally planned.

When by His grace He saved, and made a new creation out of me
I then understood I belong to heaven, a country I someday will see
The new birth made me a citizen of the kingdom of the God of love
I am a citizen now, even though on earth, but home is in heaven above.

That is why I don't fit very well in all the "goings on" of the world
The very best that man can do is by the world's system imperiled
Almost all humankind has done is for the selfish interests of his own
Not even the religions of this earth are so the glory of God be shown.

The music may be very beautiful but its objective is to entertain
If it wasn't loud and up to date, most people wouldn't even come in
The lyrics are light and trivial and congregations just sit and listen
Occasionally someone there, when hearing Christ's name, a tear will glisten.

Business for most is for material gain, but for the citizens of heaven
They are seeking to lay up treasure there that glory to God will be given
The labor of life has a goal to reach to further the kingdom of God
So the good news of salvation by grace will reach all around the world.

What delights the heart of the heavenly citizen are things that honor Christ
He returns to the Lord's Supper weekly, not just yearly once or twice
The joy of worship comes from within and shows itself without
The blessedness of life in Christ is consistent, he doesn't have to faint or shout.

On the day he became a citizen, the Holy Spirit dwelt within
The citizen of heaven finds a meaningful life through guidance given by Him
The Lord Jesus Christ is our Savior, and we are looking for Him from heaven
While here in this and land we wait for Him; that promise He has given.

"Father in heaven, I am waiting for that wonderful day when all of us who belong in heaven, finally get there. The citizenship You gave on the day of salvation has made me a stranger to most in this world. May I bear my identity with dignity and not fear to show my allegiance. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Philippians 3:21. *"Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."*

POWER UNDER HIS CONTROL.

It seems to let us down at times because of sin's awful curse
As it ages and matures it gradually is getting worse and worse
But this body of humiliation is going to have a change
By the power of Christ, at His coming, mine and His will be the same.

Weakness and decay will cease and be replaced
The marks and scars caused by sin, no more will me deface
Food we eat and what we drink won't be needed for survival
And there won't need to be fasting days when praying for revival.

The unlimited power of our Lord is under His control
He uses it as He chooses, to send an earthquake or save a soul
There certainly are good reasons of which I am not aware
When the Lord Jesus uses that power, it is because He cares.

To make something new that has been dying for nearly a century
Takes power that is beyond understanding and man's ability
Skin that is wrinkled and worn will take on a heavenly glow
The aging process that bends bodies down, will no longer show.

The heart and organs unseen that are needed to keep me alive
Will be no longer essential so I can still survive
The deterioration of the brain and loss of memory
Will be a thing of the past when His glorious body I see.
I really can't fully perceive all that such power entails
But I can catch a glimpse of it when a boat is under sail
Or when the lightning flashes and thunder makes its roar
The silence of the growth of life - all those reveal His power.

With a sense of anticipation, I am looking for that day
When such a change takes place instantly - with no delay
And the power of God I first recognized the night He saved me
Will again be used and this body of mine is changed eternally.

"Is this the day, Father? I wait and wonder each day if this body will be changed today. It seems to need more attention as time passes. I do not want to be too concerned about it, but I understand it is Thine - and I am its steward. Amen."

Philippians 4:1-7

HOW TO LIVE WELL

Living for God is not complicated because of high demands laid on us by God. Some very simple things can be done to make our lives as believers what they should be. This chapter begins with a reference to the two verses before, where we are directed to focus our attention on the Lord Jesus Christ. Enablement for living the Christian life comes from Him now, and the prospect of His return and the change that will take place when He comes. It is our responsibility to stand fast in the Lord. We just don't want to get side-tracked by the pressures all around us. Being of the same mind in the Lord keeps us in fellowship with our brothers and sisters in Christ. Rejoicing in the Lord is our choice as the means to take care of the needs of our own souls. When those things are working in our lives, we will be living conscious of the presence of the Lord with us.

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

MY JOY AND CROWN.

It came unexpectedly, "Please show me how to be saved."
Again, after a long dearth, "Would you come in for a cup of tea?"
The next day, "I got saved this morning, and I thought you would like to know."
Another voice, "So did I."

Sitting in the van after all others had left, "I want to be saved now."
At a kitchen table with open Bibles and tears, "How could I have missed it so long?"
With voices gruff with emotion, grown men confess Christ.
Young ones with child-like simplicity, "Thank you, O thank you."

In the grief of soul trouble and guilt, "Is there any hope for me?"
Sitting on the edge of a bed reading a verse of scripture out loud;
On the front row after a Gospel meeting, with determined voice - and tears;
God reveals Himself through the Word, and souls are saved.

In a snowbound store, reading Isaiah 53, "He was wounded for my transgressions..."
In the back room of a Gospel Hall, "He was bruised for Mary's iniquities..."
In the wheelhouse of a boat, "The chastisement of Don's peace was on Him..."
In the front room of a house, "By His stripes I am healed."

At 3:00 in the morning, "What does whosoever mean? Is that really me?"
At 10:00 in the morning, "It was for me, yes all for me, O love of God so great..."
At 8:00 in the evening, "I want to be saved now. I am not leaving till I get it."
At 9:30 at night, "O yes! God says I have everlasting life. How could I have missed it?"

After a Gospel meeting, "I am this close. I really want to be saved."
Another voice, "I don't care about what my friends say; I want to be saved now."
A child comes back through the door, "I want you to know I just got saved."
Coming through the door with smiles of joy, "God just saved me."

One says, "Christ died for the ungodly. I am ungodly, so Christ died for me."
Another says, "I was under God's judgment, but Jesus took the judgment for me."
Another, "Whosoever means me. I do believe Jesus died for me. I have eternal life."
And again, "I confess that Jesus died in my place and I receive Him as my own Savior."

"How do I receive Him?" - By opening the door and asking Him in.
"How can I know I have everlasting life?" - Who is speaking to you in this verse?
"What does 'believe' mean anyway?" - It is not what you believe, but in Whom.
"Is it really that simple?" - Ask God how much it cost Him and then ask that question.

A young child thinks, and understands, "It is not how sinful I've been. It's, I'm a sinner."
A young adult, "That's what God says and I believe Him. Jesus is my personal Savior."
An old man, "After all these years of sinning and God is willing to forgive me -Yes."
An old lady, "This is the best three weeks of my life. It is like coming home."

"O God of our salvation, and Father of all that believe on the Lord Jesus Christ: My joy is so great when I think of souls that Thou hast saved. It is all of God that such undeserving people can be delivered from the power and penalty of sin and saved

for heaven. Thanks for letting me part of the process of this saving work, and rejoicing whenever souls are saved. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Paul had great affection for the believers at Philippi. This is an example of the attitude believers should have toward each other that affects our actions. If there is affection and warmth shown towards others, that is often reciprocated. Rejoicing and thanksgiving on my part will often produce that same response in others. Then when a concern has to be voiced, it makes it much easier to accept by those to whom it is directed.

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

STAND FAST.

It is not really complicated - it means just stay where you are - don't move.
To "stand fast" for some means nothing happens, and to others it means good.
Not shifting about from place to place, because one is discontented -
Is what is urged upon the Philippian saints, for whom the apostle was concerned.

It is not easy to remain at one's post, resolute, alert when the action is elsewhere
Fidelity in duty requires my commitment to my Leader - He who knows and cares
Whether a mother or a shepherd, a soldier or a friend - steadfastness in with concern
Is conduct that is "becoming" whether it has been commanded or is learned.

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

STAND FAST IN THE LORD.

There is a good reason to commit to stability here
At any moment at all, the Lord will appear
All opportunity of service in a hostile environment
Will have passed forever in that revealing moment.

So, stand fast in your service, be a person of fidelity
Your calling is from the Lord - you represent deity
He who chose you and called you to speak for Him
Has a right to expect stability in every situation we are in.

We belong to an elite group - the family of our God
It is no light passing matter to be saved and called by the Lord
All around this world there are people just like you
Who are on the narrow road to heaven; though comparatively few.

There is something about being in God's family that's hard to explain
We are from different backgrounds yet our interests are the same
When we meet for the first time, there are common interests we have
And the greatest bond of all is divinely imparted love.

Often when we hear of tragic events here and abroad
The first thing that comes to mind is how have our brothers fared
We long for their protection and for safety in the crisis
When we hear their news, we praise our God who blesses.

There are some special people God has sent into our life
When they heard the Gospel, God let us be to them a light
We get joy in hearing of them going on well for God
Especially when we know they are leading others to the Lord.

There is no time or place when we can slack off and let things go
There is a world of people around us who the Savior do not know
They may not openly seem to pay attention what you do
But fidelity to truth and righteousness is what they see in you.

"Father of the faithful: I ask Thee today for help in standing fast along with my brothers and sisters. May divine power be given to us to represent our Lord in the unknown events of the day before us. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

We stand fast in the Lord by resisting temptations that come. The Lord will, with the temptation, "make a way to escape." There are also false teachings, against which we will have to stand fast in the Lord. Any teaching that in any way demeans Christ, His work and/or His word cannot be accepted. There will be

challenges made against us and opposition - maybe even persecution, but in the face of all of this, don't quit, but stand fast in loyalty to the Lord and in His power.

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

SAME MIND IN THE LORD.

Thoughts are like wild things: flitting untamed through my mind
They dodge and leap, then run and hide - dormant
But for a moment or two; and then they join others
Untamed like themselves, until there is a multitude -
Unchained thoughts wreaking havoc in my mind -
And then charging through the opening beneath my nose.

Others, like me, have the same experience -
But different personalities, so two armies of thoughts
Array themselves to do battle, waiting for the opening -
But it does not come because another Power; another Force
Stronger than all the united forces of untamed thoughts,
Takes control: The Lord, the Master, the supreme Commander has come.

Now the wild band of thoughts line up -
By fifties and by hundreds - like freed slaves
Now forming armies that are controlled and orderly
They are under authority now - turned toward the One who knows
And has experienced obedience to an equal - unto death
And tamed thoughts become powerful - under authority.

A remarkable change takes place - innuendo has ceased
Self-centered thoughts are focused on a different Person
Thoughts, instead of dwelling on ancient experiences long over
Are directed to the immediate present - and the Presence
Who opens the mind to direct thoughts to others of like-mind
And unite them - thoughts, then mind - now blend, with others.

Instead of back-to-back, and going away
Or even face-to-face, with too much to say
Now side-by-side facing the same direction
Arm-in-arm they face the present situation
And step-by-step move forward multiplying power
Following the Lord; while untamed thoughts hide and cower.

"I pray today Father God, my thoughts will all be brought under control to the obedience of Christ. I want to keep the door of my lips so they only open when appropriate. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

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

SAME MIND.

What I allow to enter my mind each day, involves far more than my way of thinking.
My soul is affected emotionally, also my will and the understanding.
A "fellow feeling" with others around, gives weight to my meditation -
And differences of opinion become less important than the joy of our salvation.

Unity does have a cost; I must allow the flexibility of other's opinions.
For me to insist things to be always my way, is a potential for deep division.
To have the "same mind" means I must communicate my views
And then I will leave it there as I listen to yours - after that we can choose.

Relational difficulties are not uncommon among the people of God. Any relationship will be tested and has to be nurtured by committing ourselves to having the mind of Christ. Paul had a concern because a broken relationship between two women who labored in the Gospel was a threat to the unity of the whole assembly. This matter was addressed with an exhortation to unity in a pleading, kind way rather than a scolding demanding way. We all will have differences of opinion about things, but we can all be of one mind when we are subject to the Lord.

Philippians 4:3. *“And I entreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellowlaborers, whose names are in the book of life.”*

HELP THOSE WOMEN.

They would look around to see who Paul meant, when this letter was written to them.
Who is the man to help those women who had worked in the gospel with him?
Most never will know the labor and suffering that has gone on behind the scenes -
But the Lord knows well what is involved in His work, much labor remains unseen.

A heart of love to the Lord will cheer those who are warring out at the front.
The help of a hand has power to lift, as does a timely word that brings one comfort.
Ability to do a thing, a look of concern, any act that uplifts and helps bind
The wounded laborer who has experienced your help, appreciate your acts so kind.

Philippians 4:3. *“And I intreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellowlabourers, whose names are in the book of life.”*

FELLOW LABORERS.

I wonder what is in that book besides the names of saints -
Would in that book or one like it be what we were for or against?
The faithful laborers for the Lord through generations past
Have left their imprint on kingdom-history in deeds that really last.

There is labor involved in the Gospel, not only in factory or farm
Some Gospel labor has been encouraging, other times has brought much harm
To life and limb of those who went forth the message to proclaim
Brothers and sisters labored then and now, reaching souls in Jesus' name.

To the best of their ability, those laborers work the fields
Sometimes there is a good harvest; other times little yield
But the true laborers keep at the work knowing they're called by the Lord
They labor for the glory of God, not for personal reward.

For over half a century I have labored with some great men
Their names are now forgotten by most, they were well known back then
They were those God had chosen to suit their generation
Laboring for the Lord, they made serving Him their occupation.

Then there were those of my own age, we tried reaching to fields beyond
We had golden opportunities, now most of them are gone
The few of us who are left are more suited by our age
To shepherd the sheep and lambs, we're not given to easy change.

There are younger laborers God is raising up today
They are more suited to their generation - they know what to say
For even the ways of expressing truth has to adapt to present youth
The methods may change a bit, but never the Gospel truth.

As fellow-laborers with this group we want to try to help
Them in their work doing what we can't do ourselves
When they see results, either here or in other nations
We can rejoice as fellow-laborers in the triumphs of salvation.

“O God who answers prayers: give those laboring in Central America, Africa and here in North America, the power to fulfill their calling. Give me the wisdom to know when to encourage and contact them, and when to mind my own business. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

The role of women in an assembly is an essential one. As pray-ers they are usually faithful in their attendance and silent participation. There are many women missionaries in various parts of the work doing work for the Lord that men either cannot do or will not do. The teaching of young women by older women is a work that is uniquely theirs. But when their opinions affect all of the assembly, then the matter has to be dealt with no matter who they are. Two women had labored with Paul, but the problem between them was such that they had to have help in being reconciled to each other. When a problem persists, it has an effect on all, and there has to be a "yieldingness" on the part of all who are involved.

Philippians 4:4. *“Rejoice in the Lord always: and again, I say, Rejoice.”*

REJOICE.

Joy and gladness spring forth from my heart like plants from the soil of devotion.
Rejoicing comes from within following blessed times of divine contemplation.
The choice made for joy when one could have allowed the choice for sorrow
Is because of our love for the Lord and confidence, there will be a better tomorrow.

Gladness looks outward and upward at God for the Lord is the aim of our life.
Our joy is in Him, His grace fills each need, fellowship with Him is bright.
Whether it is from within in the heart, or from what we observe outside
Rejoicing with gladness and genuine devotion, makes the joy of the Lord to abide.

Philippians 4:4. *“Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, rejoice.”*

REJOICE IN THE LORD.

I rise from my knees and there is peace
I rejoice in the Lord when I pray
We read the Bible together and commune
We find joy in what we say
That joy isn't based on our humanity
We rejoice in the Lord's ways in our life
The shared blessings we receive from Him each day
Give us joy as man and wife.

We come together with anticipation
As a gathered company we rejoice in the Lord
In our worship and our remembrance meeting
We rejoice as we hear His Word
In casual conversation or in time given to study
Our joy in the Lord we seek to maintain
When the Gospel is preached and souls are saved
Our joy in the Lord we cannot contain.

When with fellow-laborers in God's field
We rejoice in what the Lord has done
Our gifts are different and our personalities
And still rejoice in the Lord as one
We know our labor is needed
But our rejoicing in the Lord is the key
Those who watch and listen to us
Form their opinions in the joy they see.

We live with our eyes on the heavens
Rejoicing in His promise to come
We work with our hands to labor
While rejoicing in thoughts of home
We wait with hearts of anticipation
Rejoicing in the Lord unseen
And when this is all over
We will rejoice in the Lord all over again.

“Father in heaven: for the blessings of life and hope; for the grace that saved and keeps; for the power to live and learn - I rejoice in the Lord today. Amen.”

There are times when help is needed to assist in the reconciliation of two who have differing opinions. A "yokefellow" is someone who we have worked with and know they have the ability to deal with the matter because of their experience. Shared labor often reveals the inner attitude of people and bonds those who share common goals. That inner attitude is not necessarily affected by the circumstances around us, but reveals a consciousness of the presence of the Lord in a situation. That carries one through, and above, the circumstances. So, we must stand fast in the Lord in spite of all the pressures around us. We must stop fighting among the people of God so that the power of unity can be experienced. And we must stay focused on the Lord because He is near at hand in every situation and is affected by our attitude toward Him and other people.

Philippians 4:5. *“Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.”*

YOUR MODERATION.

On every side there are temptations designed to make me covet
Advertising, the huckster's voice, insist that I must have it
But in the Bible, I read that God intends me to be content
With what I have, and if I need more, He will arrange to have it sent.

In talking with others our dialogue doesn't have to be noisy and loud
A moderate voice of reason is best, not the demands of the proud
I should remember in every conversation, a Listener is there unseen
Who knows the objectives behind the words, with knowledge infinitely keen.

When there is work to do, whether a calling or one task
Moderately pace oneself or your latent strength won't last
And what you began you will be unable to finish -
Your credibility as a laborer will quickly diminish.

In public participation, both when you pray and preach
Don't take too long verbalizing your point to reach
Multiplying words, you may think imply you are wise
But the quiet snores of the audience soon pare you down to size.

When a stand has to be taken and there are different opinions
In moderation, side with God and stand against the minions
Of the tempter who races back and forth over the land
Seeking to thwart God's purposes if they possibly can.

When your children reach an age when they have to choose
Be moderate in demands and guidance - there is too much to lose
If you take a hard line and their anger is mixed with fear
You are in danger of losing the respect of those you hold dear.

When I am conscious of the fact, the Lord is near at hand
It helps me in making decisions because I am only a man
Who has a tendency to self-will and needs to stop and consider,
The value of moderation, lest the right consequence I hinder.

"I have made a lot of mistakes, Father. I confess them to Thee as sin and pray for a spirit of moderation and a certain flexibility that I might rejoice in reaching the objective of Thy will. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Joy comes when we realize we are in Christ and He is in us. Joy and holiness go together and the peace of God is the result no matter what problems we might have. We have joy when the Lord is able to use us in His service and we are willing to do it. We have joy when the results of spiritual labor are seen. We have joy when we sense the presence of the Lord with us. We have joy when we think of the promise of His coming. Everything is known by Him and in every situation our Lord is involved. So, with consideration of others and a willingness to consider their judgment, we need to be willing to yield to their opinion without compromising what is right. Other people are positively affected when we are reasonable, fair and patient.

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

MODERATION.

Consideration of others, seeking to understand why their life is different from us,
Is an act of moderation and forbearance that will enable them to be willing to trust
Words that we say and things that we do that at first might be hard to take -
But later they will know with some gentle words, we do this for their own sake.

The Lord is beside us, He is not far away, every response that I make He sees.
With consideration and moderation, it is our Savior first that we must seek to please.
Our fellowship with others is promoted and enhanced when they know we love them -
Moderation is evidence that we are not extreme, we serve in view of His coming.

"Father God, I am wondering just how soon the time will be when the Lord Jesus will come to take us from this world to be with Him. I know Thou art longsuffering and people need salvation. As we preach the Gospel here help us to keep an eye on the sky for the Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

We do not have to retaliate against those who may be unfair to us because the Lord is near. We do not need to demand our rights when we think we are being mistreated. A "sweet reasonableness" is not a compromise but a virtue. The is value in prayer so we need to pray about everything. We can talk to our heavenly Father at any time about anything. What we do with our burdens is up to us. Rather than fuss or fret over things, we can pray about the things that bother us. Then we turn everything over to God instead of worrying about them to no profit.

Philippians 4:6. *"Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."*

MY REQUESTS.

The pacing continues; agitation is obvious; fingernails are short
Long stares; quick glances through the window
Deep sighs; short words; furled brow; disheveled hair
What is wrong? Why such anxiety? Is God dead?

The head is bowed; the knees are bent; eyes are closed
The heart is opened; then the emotions; then the mouth
Tongue and lips; vocal cords and breath - and brain
All join in harmonious unison - thankful for what God said.

Scattered thoughts are corralled and placed in orderly lines
Then these become words expressed in ways appropriate
The mind recalls past blessings and present Persons
Thanksgivings take form rejoicing for what God did.

The affairs and demands of life are formed in words
Daily duties repetitive and boring are expressed
Strength to do what is needed again and again - is asked for
And assurance the request is heard - our God has not hidden.

Things out of the ordinary have come to our attention
They must be faced and acted upon, not later - soonest
We cannot put off the decision and hope it will go away
Make your request - then rest awhile, assured that God is.

You've never been this way before - the place and people are strange
How should I act? What should I say? What should I not say?
The culture, the language; landscape and the weather - are different
Make your requests, go ahead in confidence - God says all is His.

Personal things known only to you and God alone - make requests
Family things - you've done what you felt was right; now they're gone - make request
Assembly things, financial things, health things: past, present and future
Be thankful, be specific in supplication - and rest, for God lives.

"I am not very good at praying, Father, but I am so thankful Thou art good at answering. At times my requests seem so trivial and my thanksgiving so casual. Forgive my lack of fervency, I pray - and could You take away some of this pain in my shoulder and the right side of my neck? I thank Thee for being able to sleep well in spite of it. Am I really a "stiff-necked" person inside? Maybe I need a stiff neck to remind me. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

The value of prayer is that it lifts the pressure of anything so that we can lay it on our Lord and not be overanxious about anything. Coupled with the virtue of praise, peace will follow because there is a consciousness of God being involved in the whole matter. The resulting benefit for us is that we become more Christ-like and are able to discern the mind of Christ in us. When gratitude and praise come in difficult times, there is power in our witness to others, unity among God's people, and peace comes into our own souls. This garrisons our hearts and minds against the inevitable pressure of living so that we will live well.

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

THE PEACE OF GOD.

To know everything is going the way God intended
Gives me peace, though all around is upended

That offer of peace is to people of faith extended
When their hearts and minds are stayed on Him.

One who makes requests to Him has the blessed assurance
God is not going to test them beyond their endurance
And they consistently follow Him in their pursuance
Of their commitment to the will of God.

The heart is at rest because of their implicit trust
In God's plans and purposes which they know are best
Though we don't know the extent of all God's rest
The present peace is enough for me.

When my mind is under the control of what's right
And I am walking by faith, not just by sight
The present peace of God sheds holy light
On the things I don't naturally understand.

The reason all this works without my understanding
Is, the peace of God is beyond natural comprehending
I'm limited by time; God is without beginning or ending
So I'll just enjoy His peace for what it is.

"Thy peace is operational in my heart today, O God. I am enjoying answered prayers. Situations in life seem to be working well beyond my manipulations - and I am thankful. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Philippians 4:8-23

POWER FOR LIVING

Consciousness of God's presence keeps a believer in the condition of soul in which he or she can live in peace and experience the power of God at work in their life. Man is made in the image of God in that we have emotions so we can love God, we have a mind so we can know God and we have a will so we can obey God. These three parts of our humanity can be seen in this chapter. Our emotions are dealt with in verses 4 through 7. Our thinking and the control of our thoughts are addressed in verse 8. Our behavior, our will is instructed from verse 9 through verse 18. When we put these together, we understand where the power for living the Christian life comes from.

Philippians 4:8. *"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think of these things."*

PROGRAM THE MIND.

Like a continuous stream of water, lined one behind another
Are the things that influence my life, as information I gather
They march as an invading army taking control of my mind
When they are inside my storehouse of thoughts, permanent places find.

They are not content to just be there; they want to take over control
That is not a bad thing if those thoughts are a blessing to my soul
The thoughts that man the "control-tower," come in by way of my senses
Depending in what I have taken in, is what my mind dispenses.

What I read, what I see, what I say - all affect what comes to the front;
For the accumulation of material, I take in, can promote growth or permanently stunt
Things morally pure and holy can produce solid character in me
What occupies my mind is ultimately what my speech and actions will be.

Things that are honest and true will benefit any business I do
Just and noble thoughts can't be hidden, they always will come through
Pure and morally clean thoughts will reflect my integrity
Lovely thoughts are Christ-like in nature; they revealed the new nature in me.

Good reports are admirable responses to things that come in through my ears
These can be a great blessing to many when God's mercy to others they hear
All of these positive things are around, waiting to enter and be used for good
When they are in control of my mind, my soul and life will be what it should.

“Father, I know the things taken in from the Bible are the supreme storehouse of potential profit in me. As I draw daily from the mine of information I have taken in, may these things be a blessing to me and to others - and bring honor to Thee. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

What we put into our minds is what is going to come out. God's peace does keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus, but we have the responsibility to control our thought-life. It is up to us to the worthy thoughts of verse 8 so that we will do the worthy deeds of which verse 9 speaks. The new affection that comes with the peace of God helps us overcome the power and control of negative thinking that so often takes control of God's people.

Philippians 4:9. *“Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.”*

LEARNED-RECEIVED-HEARD-SEEN: DO.

We read the words, perhaps knew all their meanings -
Can give an exegesis of their theme
It wasn't just time spent in superficial gleanings -
Things were kept in order, the study was keen
All that learning is good, it keeps the mind active
But that is not the point of learning - not the objective
What I have learned; now I must practice
So, truth is much more to me than just subjective.

Many times, I have listened to well-taught men unfold
The scriptures of truth; and by them have been blessed
Some of what I received, to others I have told
That they can know all the good teaching they have missed
But the real point is, what I now know
I am responsible to make it a real part of my life
God who gave this to me, now expects me to show
Evidence in action, that I may be truly wise.

In many conversations and in various ways
I have heard God's Word presented to me
It is easy to debate what a passage says
In an effort to define points with clarity
Beyond all these hours learning, receiving and hearing
Is a reason I dare not for any reason ignore
What God has shown me I am supposed to be sharing
By making charges from what I was before.

I have seen in faithful Christians, preachers and such
Reality lived out in the situations of life
They practiced what they knew and to me have given much
They didn't just speak; but by walking in the light
I am taught by what they did when situations arose
To challenge their loyalty and their faith
They did what was right, and when they chose
I learned the value of acting with grace.

“Father, I know the Word of God is deeper than I can ever fathom. I want to continue learning - but I also want to be a real practitioner of what I know in a proper and consistent way. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

The things that are true are genuine and real. We need to give ourselves to them rather than fantasies and wishful thinking. Honesty indicates reliability and a moral attractiveness that shows in our ministry toward others. When a person is just, they are fair to men and righteous before God. There are a number of "just" people mentioned in scripture, and the fact that they were just is the defining quality of their lives. A moral character that is lived consistently is that which is pure. Temptations will always be seeking to attract the flesh, but one who is pure in heart will "see God" even in the everyday things of life.

Philippians 4:10. *“But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care for me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity.”*

YOUR CARE.

There are a lot of ways we can show our care for other saints
It is part of spiritual family life to be aware of needs and wants

So those who for some reason find themselves in narrow straits
Can be reasonably comfortable while for relief they watch and wait.

Sometimes you may have reached out to be some kind of help
And then you find circumstances hindering or you're in need yourself
Because there may be limitations that stop us at one time
Doesn't mean we shouldn't prepare to meet their needs again.

We do not really know the needs a lot of people have
Some we do and meet them, for others' need we should save
Because the God who cares for flowers and birds can reveal to me
In His own time and by His own way, the kind of help I can be.

In the meantime, it is important for me to be aware of the Spirit's prompting
And it is perfectly right for me to prepare for coming needs that I might meet them
If the sincere care for others is there and by God's help, I am ready
When the opportunity comes to show my care, my cupboard is not empty.

It is well for me to determine the difference between needs and wishes
And then set aside some of what God gave when He has blessed us
A lot I do not need at once, but no doubt darker days are coming
For other people beside ourselves who God through us is supplying.

Be ready and willing to show your care, saints all around this world
Go through times of serious hardship by being faithful to the Lord
The Lord can open doors to help; it may be in a moment of time
And through your care some needs are met, and God's grace brightly shines.

"Father in heaven, I am thankful to Thee for supplying our needs through blessings that I have come through others. Give us the understanding to know how and when to pass on these blessings to others who serve Thee and are in need. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

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

BE CONTENT.

This is not always easy when we depend on circumstances
We have picked up the idea, "more" our life enhances
All around us advertising prompts us to be discontent
Making us without caution until all we have is spent.

Did you have something to eat when starting out today?
Do you think God heard you when you knelt to pray?
Did you get some rest when you lay down to sleep?
Do you appreciate all that God allows you to have and keep?

Take some time to settle down and your many blessings count
Don't ever be recognized by the things you complain about
A contented person has a lot of influence on those around
Opportunities for blessing others, to a contented one abound.

Rest your head and quietly consider all the things you have
With words and thoughts, tell God, you're grateful for what He gave
Then let all those of your family and other folks you know
See you are truly contented; your smile is not for show.

Rich or poor, old or young, in sickness or in health
In every situation contentment does not depend on wealth
But in a person's mind contentment finds its birth
Godliness with contentment is of highest worth.

"I think I am truly contented, Father. Thou hast placed at our disposal all we need. Both Linda and I are in good health. But beyond this, we have had times when things were very different. And yet, through them, we were able to rest confidently in Thee. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Something that is lovely is admirable and attractive to a pure-hearted person as well as secretly admired by those whose conduct is the opposite. There is convicting power in that which is lovely. A reputation for

fairness and goodness is not something to be considered unimportant. What people say about a believer affects more than just one person. Virtue is moral excellence that is not willing to be compromised in any way. Virtue is either there or not there. There is no middle ground possible for virtue. Praise is deserved commendation usually associated with an action. In the case of praising the Lord, it includes who He is in His moral perfection as well as what He does. For frail mortal men, there is nothing in us that is praiseworthy, but there can be praise given as a result of what God does through us.

Philippians 4:12. *"I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound; everywhere and in all things, I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need."*

NON-ESSENTIALS.

The times were hard, the cupboard was bare, we had to eat the same thing
For each of the meals until someone came, and in their hand did bring
Something a little different, a welcome change, but there's no reason to complain
God had His plans, and we were to fit in - we gave thanks in Jesus' name.

The garden was good; the fish did bite; the cellar was full of good food
Hunger wasn't a problem; we had plenty to eat, and we understood
It's not how much we have that makes us content, more important is what we do
God arranges things the best way possible until this life is through.

To see life and service from God's point of view enables me to be a success
For He arranges things and expects my obedience to work things out for the best
When reaching the poor, I should adapt to accept their way of life
And if possible, help in some way so they can see God's true light.

It is hard to reach those who have everything but a satisfied mind
Hopefully they will listen to an equal who will tell what he did find
To meet the need of the inward person who has everything but peace
And can explain in terms they understand the riches of God's grace.

It is not important what I have or don't have; there is a lesson to learn
The frame of mind; the look on my face; the things for which my heart yearns
Is what people can sense when we stop to converse over things important to me
I am instructed to adapt to them, so God's interest in them they see.

The Divine Teacher can instruct me how to act in each new situation
How to act when I'm full or when I am empty, how to handle deprivation
What is needed is for me, the student, to be more concerned about what I do
Then what I have or hope to be - how to see things through God's point of view.

"Lately Father God, we have been full. It has been a long time since I have been hungry. Is this hindering me from bringing glory to Thee? Please help me every day to be what Thou would have me to be. I pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Philippians 4:13. *"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."*

POWER FOR LIVING.

Whatever life brings, God has supplied the strength to meet its demands
In His infinite wisdom He knows exactly what I can't do or can
I am assured His power is there to meet the needs that arise
He patterned my life to suit my abilities which challenges me to be wise.

I know I can't do everything so what does it mean to "do all things?"
Christ's sufficiency is continually there to accomplish what His will brings
He does not need me to have superhuman ability to live my life for Him
His interests should be mine and He gives strength to suitably accomplish them.

To raise my children and properly influence theirs is a serious task to me
They need to know what is right and wrong, they should be able to see
In my life, even facial expressions and hear the words I say -
That life in Christ is not impossible; in Him I have joy each day.

Living before others where temptations abound is where we are put to the test
To show by our commitment to God and His Word, the Christian life is best
Most of them are looking for some meaning in life, caught up in materialism

God gives the strength to live by faith and show them the way to heaven.

When health deteriorates and old age takes natural strength away
Christ's strength is there to cheer the soul and face each coming day
His strength doesn't promise I'll never have pain and will never physically die
But His strength does give the needed grace as the end of life draws nigh.

For the need within me or the challenges without - Christ gives the endurance
To meet each thing that comes along and face them with calm assurance
That His grace is sufficient and His strength is here to fulfill His will
And though things seem hard; maybe sometimes too easy; His strength will be with me
still.

"When things seem too easy, Father, I think maybe I am yielding to some temptation I have overlooked. When things are hard, I am prone to put the blame on others or even the devil - forgetting the strength of Christ is there to accomplish Thy will. I pray I will be conscious of Thy presence at all times to do all things. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Paul was a pattern and example of one who lived by the power of God. He was at peace even though he was in prison because he knew the God of peace was there with him. The believers at Philippi were near and dear to him and he wanted the same for them that he was experiencing himself. Hearing the word of God is a good thing. Reading the word of God is a good thing, and seeing it lived out in others is good also. But what we know has to be obeyed and practiced. That is a ministry which shows. Also, when we experience that power for living at peace, we learn to be content in all circumstances of life.

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

FINANCIAL SUPPORT.

To share what we have with others in their time of need
Is not just a real obligation
It involves us being part of their work when we heed
The Spirit's call to ease their situation.

For the sake of the Gospel and obeying God's call
They find themselves in narrow financial straits
I should identify with them and seek any way at all
To help them and lift from them some weights.

As they go out to reach people living far away
To communicate with them starts with me
They need food to eat, there are bills to pay
They have expenses that I will never see.

I know they will never ask for help or plead their poverty
And really, they should have their needs supplied
I can take some time each day to consider the reality
Of expenses that occur they from me will hide.

When laborers go forth in their services for the Lord
They deserve from us who know them, our real support
We are in a place where survival is not too hard
And our list of obligations we can keep short.

Often, they supply some food and medical care
For poverty-stricken people where they labor
By our financial support, we in their work can share
The load of their outreaching endeavor.

"Place on my heart today Father, some workers that at present are in need of encouragement and support. In whatever way we can, whether financially or in person, help us to come alongside and lift their load. I pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Philippians 4:15. *"Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me concerning giving and receiving, but ye only."*

THE EARLY DAYS.

I have experienced in times past, what some are going through now
The blessedness of giving and receiving gifts from others
The fellowship expressed and the Christian love that showed
 Endeared to us many sisters and brothers
Some supplied some meat when we needed something to eat
 Others came and asked how they could help
Now many years have passed but when we meet and greet
 Our conversation turns to when we had empty shelves.

In the years that passed we have memories that last
 Of the way God provided when we were poor
Those days were days of faith, and I've afraid that may have past
 As prosperity has come, we have less to endure
As material things increase, our prayers for survival cease
 We become more dependent on our money
In early days of need, we had our trust in God - and peace
 There's a tendency to want more - then we hadn't any.

Lord, help me to remember the early days when embers
 Broke into a flame poverty could not put out
If I can be trusted with the Gospel now that I am older
 Please stir again that fire that years have doused
Open my heart wide and bring out what is inside
 That I might have ready words of life from Thee to speak
I am still wanting to be fruitful, and in the Vine abide
 While the blessings for others will I continually seek.

“In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

God's promises and power enables us, to be content when we lack, and grateful when He supplies our needs through the financial support of His people. He supplies or withholds as He sees best. Paul didn't complain about shortages or even make them known. What God gives us is up to Him. We can be content when the desire for riches is gone. If our stomach is empty, our wallet is empty and our pantry is empty, we still look to our heavenly Father and trust Him to give or not give as He sees fit. Whether full or empty, when we see things from God's view, we will know that God's will is best.

Philippians 4:16. *“For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity.”*

ONCE AND AGAIN.

Need has a fashion of not going away
 It is sure to come back again
 Some things are needed every day
 Other things now and then
To place one's self in another man's shoes
 Is fellowship of the highest kind
The welfare of others I don't want to lose
 Prayer keeps them close in my mind.

At the beginning of a new work for God
 Many people step up to share
 They appreciate the spread of the Word
 For the needs of the laborers they care
But often their interest gradually fades away
 As the first glorious days are passed
The laborer who stays there day after day
 Still have expenses that last.

Like these people of old who did not forget
 It is our privilege to communicate again
The Gospel work is like fishing, people caught in its net
 Need hard work to get safely to land
To plant a new church is just the beginning
 The teaching goes on throughout life
New believers are often best at soul-winning
 Older ones pass on to others God's light.

My brothers and sisters need the assurance
They are not quickly forgotten
Those who support with their goods need endurance
To faithfully and wisely support them
When accounts are given at the judgment seat
The laborers and supporters together
Will each give account, when the Savior they meet;
And the fruit of their labor is gathered.

“All-knowing God, there are some I know who have been in the harvest field for a number of years. I wonder if they are being supported as well as they should be. Give us wisdom to know what to send to help them. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

Philippians 4:17. *“Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account.”*

FRUIT THAT MAY ABOUND.

Everything we do has some consequential effect
The results may not be seen here only in one day
We miss out on blessings if for some reason we neglect
To help our brothers and sisters in their journey on the way.

To lend assistance isn't just for their present need
Although that might be the reason, we first gave
The hand that reaches out to help, also we will receive
Fruit from God who gave us everything we have.

When we are a channel for God to use for His supply
He considers it as a gift we gave, though it came from Him
By being faithful stewards, we will by and by
Reap spiritual dividends from giving unto them.

When we seek others' welfare and assist in their promotion
We become sharers in the blessings they receive
By this means there is enhanced a spirit of love and devotion
That multiplies the value of the gift that we once gave.

The results of such interest and care in giving that is shown
Is, that treasure laid up in heaven is increased
The one who received the gift from your fellowship is known
And you who gave, both now can sleep in peace

He received the gift from God who gave it to him first
And blessing came to the one who gave it first to him
Now from him it goes to quench another's thirst
And fruit abounds in the lives of all the three of them.

God must look on and smile at the development of grace
As givers and receivers are all benefited
He knows this means He planned helps them live by faith
For the future service in His kingdom, they now are filled.

“O God of all provision: I marvel at the spiritual benefits coming from this design of Thine for the support of others. Everything came from Thee at the beginning. At every step Thy bounty makes, there is blessing to the receiver who then becomes a giver. This kind of fruit has lasting flavor. I praise Thee in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

Our power for living comes from Christ who gives is the strength to accomplish the "all things" He allows or directs for us. He gives the needed grace for the necessary tasks He gives us. The needed financial support for Paul came to him in prison and he was allowed to accomplish the work assigned to him in the situation in which he was found. When God supplies our needs through human instrumentality, that deserves our expressions of appreciation and acknowledgement. Money came from the Philippians to Paul on more than one occasion and he let them know he appreciated their gifts.

Philippians 4:18. *“But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God.”*

OF FRAGRANCE AND SACRIFICE.

No two other things could hardly compete with these
To bring pleasure to the heart of God
The fragrance from within and the sacrifice to please
And the legal claims revealed in His Word
Put them both together, one seen and the other unseen
And the purpose of the gifts has been achieved
The fragrance of holy worship and the sacrifice of giving
Is a blessing to God, from those who in Him believe.

The one in need is full; the one who carried the gift
And the one who from his store gave unto God
All have in different ways given back what was really His
And each one was privileged to share the load
The joy that comes from giving and the joy in meaningful labor
All stir in the heart words of praise and adoration
To our God and Father, and our Lord and Savior
For the grace and love that provided our salvation.

The angels can rejoice when a sinner has repented
The laborers in the field give thanks for saving souls
The ones who gave come together and are all contented
The labor to provide what was needed was worth the toil
God is glorified as His laborers bring into the kingdom
Those who in highways and byways once to God were lost
In the future like sheaves of harvest, He has plans to bring them
To glory with Him, there to be part of the heavenly host.

“Father God, what glory will there be when plowers and planters, waterers and reapers all join together as one band and tell of Thy grace to them and through them. Truly this is a foretaste of the “exceeding riches” of Thy grace. Accept my praise I ask, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

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

GOD SHALL SUPPLY.

They need comfort - assurance that God is doing what is best
God gave the life at the beginning - maybe this is a test
Of faith, preparing them for coming times ahead
That they can face the unknown without fear or dread
But in quiet confidence and a spirit of rest that is real
They can go through experiences knowing a loving God can wound or heal
Physically and spiritually that we might better be prepared
For the ministry He gave us and all that must be shared.

We know the seed planted gets its life from God alone
And because of a new life, new expectations will come
I must also remember, what God gives, He can take away
And in doing so I learn the need for grace every day
How would I know of His full supply for my grief;
If it wasn't that He allows great loss, be it ever so brief
The benefit that comes may be for others through me
That they in their confusion the value of faith will see.

God has supplied temporal needs when we were at a loss
Through His grace He supplied redemption at highest cost
He has felt pain and suffering greater than we can imagine
So that He could identify with the grief of His suffering brethren
He knows what is needed and just how, when and where
To come alongside us that our burdens He will bear
It is hard to let go and let God take full control
But when one does that, they will find rest unto their soul.

There are times when private tears come down like falling rain
And God calls us to pass through private grief and pain
But He has His reasons and calls me to draw nigh
And I will find then solace, in His bountiful supply
I may spend time wondering what might or might not have been
But it is better to look ahead in faith, trusting only Him
Who supplies every need I have on earth and in heaven,

And gives the grace needed now, and will explain the reasons then.

“Father God of all comfort: please comfort my brother and sister right now. They are going through a hard time and are finding it hard to cope with life and death at the same time. Help them to bless Thee when Thou dost give and when Thou dost take away. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

There is a tendency on the part of most people to hoard money because it is the main way adults measure security. We also measure our energy by how much we earn, and have a sense of self-worth because of the money we claim for ourselves. To give money away with no visible evidence of return on the investment, puts us at risk we seem to think. That is because we measure its value by the world's standards. The Philippians had learned the value of giving to God by giving to His servant in their early days as Christians, and they continue the practice. This was a tangible expression of their love for the servant of the Lord who brought them the Gospel. This letter from Paul must have blessed them when they heard it read. Both the giver and receiver are blessed when we give what we have to the Lord.

Philippians 4:20. *“Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”*

GLORY FOR EVER AND EVER.

It bursts forth with thoughts seeking expression
Words don't sufficiently describe the thoughts
All that is left by means of inner release
Are the tone of voice, the use of hands and face.

How can glory be expressed by simple mortal men
We are limited, but maybe the limitations are best
God knows our thoughts, even the hidden intentions
Before they are articulated in our minds.

And when these thoughts are finally released in words
I find they fail to say what needs to be said -
More - yearns to be said, so I pause -
And find one all-encompassing word - “Glory!”

Angels said it long before me, “Glory to God in the highest!”
Peter, James and John were eyewitnesses of Christ's glory
Paul saw things unlawful to utter when he was there
And as for me, well, I have seen glimpses too.

A friend, leaving for heaven, opens wide pain-filled eyes
Sits upright and lies back down with peaceful face
And is at home with God - in glory
Even there, as at journey's end for many - evidence of glory.

Even from me now, here, in this place
Reflecting on God's faithful provision - I say “Glory!”
Thinking of God's faithful people, living by faith -
Giving by grace - and the word that expresses it is, “Glory!”

Glory to God my Father for His great provision
Glory to the Lord Jesus Christ for His great salvation
Glory to the Holy Spirit for His great motivation
Glory be to God forevermore is my occupation.

“O Glorious God, my inner soul sings to Thee as I consider all the reasons for Thee to be honored, and all the ways Thou hast blessed me. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

Love and devotion are still expressed in gifts. Our thank-offerings to God are our response to the gifts God has given to us. This is called "fruit" because it has the taste and scent of gratitude, and the blessings associated with it. We give to God from that which He has given to us. Working for God and the work of God are different. Working for God is our effort that we expend for Him. The work of God is that which God does through us drawing from His great bounty to accomplish His work. It is not so much what I do that counts but what God does through me. God meets the needs of both the giver and receivers. Our giving has to do with the supply, "according to His riches" rather than the act of giving.

Philippians 4:21. *“Salute every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren which are with me greet you.”*

THOSE WHO ARE THERE.

They are the salt of the earth
They are found in every land
Though insignificant, are of highest worth
Because of them nations stand
Their prayers and supplications ascend
On behalf of all those who lead
People turn askance when their knees bend
But to their prayers the eternal God does heed.

They aren't usually rich, but they willingly use
What God has given with a view to help others -
They are not obligated but often they choose
To set aside a portion of what they gather
To be used where and when needs arise
So the load others are carrying, they share
Really, it doesn't seem much of a surprise
Because for the Lord's sake, they really care.

Most I will never see as I through this world go
But the effect of their presence is real
And it is by their love they to onlookers show
That where there is grief, they feel
The need to empathize and come alongside
Is part of what it is like for a Christian to be
And though others may mock and chide
Their agenda is the glory of Christ to be seen.

“Probably there are a lot of us before the throne of grace now, Father. Even though I don't know many of the others, I know we all know Thee. There is a fellowship with them that is there as soon as we meet. It is the fellowship of the redeemed, who have been blessed by Thee and share this same life with Thee. “What a fellowship, what a joy divine!” I give Thee thanks for Thy people, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

Philippians 4:22. *“All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar's household.”*

THOSE WHO ARE HERE.

We know each other here well enough to speak
For those who have similar interests and the welfare seek
Of those who are at a distance we very seldom see
But know they have interests, just the same as we.

When I send greetings they will often say,
“Give them my greetings, and tell them we pray
For their well-being and usefulness for God”
What more encouraging words could they say.

If we received letters with similar comments in them
The joy such greetings give escape words of this pen
To know there is genuine interest in the work I do
Is motivation enough to see the task through.

Those that are here have deep interest in those abroad
They continue as intercessors before the throne of God
When opportunities arise to connect with you
They want to encourage you in everything you do.

Some here are older but daily make it a point
To ask for and pass on prayer request we want
To act upon the behalf of those who are in need
Those here know how intercessors plead.

So be encouraged today wherever your daily labor
Takes you to, perhaps you would consider

There are those who are here who choose not to forget
The needs of those away until they know they're met.

"I thank Thee Father, for putting such positive interest in the hearts of these older saints. They find satisfaction in hearing of answers to their prayers, though they never met the people for whom they intercede. Give them a portion for themselves, I pray, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

When we are in fellowship with God, there will be words and songs of praise to Him for who He is and what He provides. Believers who are united will find great joy in knowing about believers living for God in other places. All Christians everywhere are brothers and sisters in Christ. Unity, humility, joy and peace are all results of minds that are focused on Christ. The Gospel that has penetrated to the hard places like Caesar's household is the power of God. That Gospel has been committed to us. This tender-hearted letter came from one who knew his purpose for living and patterned that after his Lord. There is a price for holy living, but the power to do it is given through our Lord Jesus Christ.

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

THE GRACE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

A plan was devised before there was a sun, moon and stars
That would include us in God's kingdom by virtue of His grace
And so, the results of that have goals more than ours
God intended a family of willing saints to forever see His face.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ moved Him to leave His throne on high
What emotion must have been in heaven when His leaving time finally came
The riches that are His were set aside when He came down here to die
And in His dying on the cross for sin, He defeated sin's awful claim.

His grace continues to manifest itself in many diverse ways
As daily He bestows on us what none of us deserve
We have received from Him grace to continually live each day
That we might be faithful stewards of the One we seek to serve.

There are times when sickness accompanied by grief and pain
Affects our bodies so that we can hardly read or pray
His grace is at these times sufficient until we're well again
And His grace has drawn from our memories what we need that very day.

In labor there are disappointments when things don't go well
What we had hoped for doesn't come to some fruition
At times like that, in grace, He supplies what tongue can never tell
The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ brings success out of that situation.

To have His grace to call upon whenever I approach His throne
Assures me that some blessing can come when I ask for grace
In the needs of daily living He doesn't leave me on my own
By His grace alone I can approach each day with faith.

"What blessed assurance Father, to know that the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is with my spirit in each and every situation before me - and also before the struggling little assembly of saints here. Hear our plea for strength, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."