



Philippians

Study 1

by Sandy Simpson

Paul's Confidence

Phil. 1:1-11

Background

Theme: Paul takes the opportunity to thank the Philippians for the generous gift that Epaphroditus had brought from them (Phil 4.10,18 with 2.25), to let them know about his spiritual prosperity (effectiveness, spiritual deliverance, joy, contentment) from living the daily plan of God even though he is in the center of severe testing and suffering (Phil 1.7-26; 2.17; 3.7-14; 4.1, 11-13, 18), and to communicate revelation God has given him for the Philippian church and for the church at large (Phil 1.6,27-30; 2.3,5,12,13; 3.1,15; 4.6,8,19).

The Philippians were believers that lived in the city of Philippi, a prominent city that was situated on the Via Ignatia, the highway from Italy to Asia (Phil 1.1.). Paul founded this geographical church, the first church founded on European soil, on his second missionary trip (Acts 16). Timothy, Silas, and Luke were with him (Acts 16.1-4, 10-12, 19; 18.5). The date was about AD 50- 52. This church was composed of Gentile believers. They were very responsive to his ministry (authority and doctrine) (Acts 18.5; Phil 1.5-8; 2.12 4.10- 16; 2 Cor 8.1-5; 11.8-9). The city was named for Philip of Macedon in the 4th century BC.

What was the immediate personal and political background for the letter? Paul had determined to go to Jerusalem even though he was aware of the Jews' rampant religious pride and self righteousness which made them violently opposed to him and his message. He was arrested. He lost his freedom. He was taken to Rome and imprisoned where he waited for the decision from the legal system. He was chained, by the hand, to a praetorian guardsman day and night. Some believers were hostile and competitive with him. He was under great pressure, but he continued to live in God's plan for his life and so Paul demonstrated how to apply Bible doctrine to life. In the middle of great pressure, testing, and suffering Paul was an effective servant of Christ, was stable, content, and happy. Paul wrote this letter to the Philippians from Rome near the end of his first Roman imprisonment about AD 62 (Phil 1.7, 13-18, 23-26; 4.22 and Acts 28.16, 30, 31). (PHILIPPIANS OVERVIEW, Written by: Kennedy, Tod M.)

It is also important to notice that Paul wrote the Philippians as to mature Christians. He wrote to some other churches dealing with more basic issues, but in this letter he writes to them to help them grow to maturity in Christ, to reach for rewards in heaven, and to allow the Holy Spirit to finish the

sanctification process in their lives Paul knew had already begun. Paul knew this because of the practical faith lived out as a witness by the people of Philippi.

Phil. 1:1 ¶ Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons:

2 Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

3 ¶ I thank my God every time I remember you.

4 In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy

5 because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now,

6 being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

7 ¶ It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart; for whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me.

8 God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.

9 ¶ And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight,

10 so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ,

11 filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.

Of course Paul's confidence starts with his confidence in the faithfulness of God to fulfill His promises. But Paul's confidence is also based on conditions that had to do with how the Philippians were obeying God's will. God's promise to complete the good work He started in those who have trusted Him is conditional. Salvation is not conditional, but sanctification is, and where there is no sanctification there is no evidence of salvation. God will not force us to follow Him. It is our choice and we already know that the Bible teaches over and over again that those who love Him obey His commands and that the Father loves those who remain in His love by obedience.

John 14:15 "If you love me, you will obey what I command.

*John 14:23-24 Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. **My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. He who does not love me will not obey my teaching.** These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.*

*John 15:10 **If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love.***

I know this is not a popular view, but it is a biblical one. God has given us a free gift of salvation, but we can reject that gift by living in continual, unrepentant disobedience to the commands of Jesus Christ, thus proving that we do not love Him. This is a hard truth that is not being taught today, but was taught by Paul, Peter, John and others.

Paul's confidence and joy over the Philippians is based on some important things that are the same criteria we need to live by in order to be carried on to completion in our walk with Christ.

- (1) The Philippians were preaching the Gospel (vs. 5).
- (2) They were backing up and supporting Paul and sharing in his persecution, which is why they were also sharing in God's grace (vs. 7).
- (3) They had already begun to show knowledge and depth of insight into spiritual things (vs. 9).
- (4) They had already begun to be discerning about what is pure and blameless, and were applying that discernment to themselves (vs. 10).
- (5) They had already begun to show the fruit of righteousness in Christ Jesus (vs. 11). These are the marks of Christians on the way to maturity. Let's look at each of these points.

(1) **They preached the Gospel and witnessed for Christ.** This means they were preaching the same Gospel and sound doctrines that Paul and the Apostles had taught them. They were not teaching false doctrine, wandering away from the truth. Paul was always quick to rebuke any Gospel other than the one that the Apostles had learned from Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 11:4 For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough.

Galatians 1:8 But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned!

There were men traveling around trying to divide the churches by teaching things they should not teach, just like there are today. The only difference is that today we have **thousands** of them, not just a handful. We will also see later that there were men who were actually preaching the Gospel but were doing so to try to get people to follow and support them, having the wrong motives. We will also study how these two types of teachers are two different categories. But the Philippians were witnessing for Christ, and were not following any of the false Jews or traveling false teachers of their time.

(2) **The Philippians had shown Paul grace in his persecutions.** They did not desert Him at the critical times when he was imprisoned or being persecuted, but evidently shared in his persecution by standing up for Paul and sending encouragement to him while he was in prison. Paul loves them because of this with a deep, inexpressible love. We can also be assured that Jesus loved them deeply as well. When you are a true follower of Christ you will not desert Him or His servants when the chips are down. Because of this stand by the Philippians, Paul was confident that God would reward them, and would bring them to maturity, completing His work through them in their area of the world. Paul's confidence is conditional, however. I will cover that in a moment. The point is that, as a follower of the Lord, you will never know the true extent of the grace of God or the rewards from God unless you are willing to be persecuted and endure through that time of testing.

James 1:2-4 Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

(3) **The Philippians had already started down the road to knowledge and depth of spiritual insight.** This is why Paul could really share his heart with them. When you are trying to teach your children something, you often have to simplify it, and you expect them to stumble and not really understand deeply till the Lord can teach them. But when they are older you can speak more directly to them about deeper spiritual things. This is why Paul could share more deeply with the Philippians. They had obviously studied to show themselves approved (2 Tim. 2:15). They listened and put into practice what Paul had taught them. They stayed true to the words of the Apostles. They studied the Scriptures and allowed the Holy Spirit to teach them through the words of the prophets. This is why

Paul prayed that they would “abound more and more”. We are all to grow. There is no point where we stop growing and have reached maturity in Christ. We must all continue to grow in the knowledge of the Word, and in depth of insight. That means we are not just growing in knowledge, but also in wisdom.

Wisdom is the reward you get for a lifetime of listening when you would have preferred to talk. - Doug Larson

The Philippians were good listeners. They listened, then they applied what they knew by preaching the Gospel, standing for truth, and being there for Paul when he was under pressure. As a result they were growing in maturity.

(4) Because the Philippians were growing in maturity, they were also growing in discernment.

What is the bottom line on maturity?

Hebrews 5:14 But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.

In this letter to the Philippians, Paul states that he is praying that they will continue to grow in discernment so that they will be pure and blameless. The reason discernment is critical for Christians is that they need to be able to know the difference between right and wrong, good and evil ... not so they will just know it, but so that they will be able to live a pure and blameless life. How long are they to do this, to walk this road toward purity? Till the day of Christ! They must “walk the walk” and “talk the talk” till the end. They must continue to grow. Paul is confident they will do this because they are already doing it, not because this is a guarantee from the Lord. The Lord helps those who obey Him.

(5) The end of this road to knowledge, discernment and practice is the filling of the fruit of righteousness. But be aware that this fruit can only be obtained “through Christ”. Anything done apart from Christ is useless, even damaging. What is done through Christ, because a person has chosen to obey Christ, results in fruit ... the fruit of righteousness. Righteousness is defined this way:

dikaioisune dik-ah-yos-oo'-nay: integrity, virtue, purity of life, rightness, correctness of thinking, feeling, and acting

The fruit of righteousness on this earth is a person who is looked up to as having integrity, virtue, purity of life, rightness, correctness of thinking, feeling and acting. The fruit of righteousness, only attainable through Christ, is how we become light and salt to the world. Not by big words, by boasts, by signs and wonders, by claiming special anointings, by building mega churches, by riches, by fame, by power, by glory. It is simply obeying the Lord and living that out before men as someone stands for truth and lives in it.

One last issue has to be dealt with that this passage is used for incorrectly. Many Christians use part of verse 6 to try to reinforce their hyper-Calvinistic theology. Many of us have heard the phrase; “he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” The problem is, as with most passages clipped out of their context, you can come to a wrong understanding of this part of a verse. Some Christians conveniently leave out the part that says: “being confident of this”. They leave it out because it tends to degrade their argument. They try to claim that once you are a Christian it’s like you get in a car, God is the driver, you sit back and take a ride to eternity. But Paul does not say this at all, in context. Paul’s “confidence” is not based on an unlimited guarantee from God, but on one that has requirements. God will not carry people on to completion if they do not continue to submit to the Lord, obey His commands, and allow the Lord to grow them to maturity.

*Romans 11:22 Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness. **Otherwise, you also will be cut off.***

*Hebrews 3:14 We have come to share in Christ **if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first.***

Paul is confident about the Philippians because he has seen the evidence that they are obeying the Lord. How?

1. The Philippians were preaching the Gospel.
2. They were backing up Paul and sharing in his persecution, which is why they were also sharing in God's grace.
3. They had already begun to show knowledge and depth of insight into spiritual things.
4. They had already begun to be discerning about what is pure and blameless, and were applying that discernment to themselves.
5. They had already begun to show the fruit of righteousness in Christ Jesus.

We can be confident in the Lord bringing us to completion IF we continue to walk with Him. It is a two way street. God will not walk away from you, but you can walk away from Him. Many have done it, and there are many in the Bible who walked away from faith in God. Saul did it. Solomon did it. Simon the Sorcerer did it. Judas did it. Ananias and Sapphira did it. We must cooperate with God. We don't just get in God's big limo to the sky and sit there. We either get busy fellowshiping with those in the car and witnessing to those on the street, or we get out of the car and join the world. It is still our choice. God will not force obedience from His followers. We follow of our own free will, or we do not follow at all. If we claim we need do nothing to work out our salvation, then check back in a few lessons and we will hear Paul will talk about that issue.

*Philippians 2:12 Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed— not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence— **continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling,***

Without jumping ahead too much, this is not saying we can do works to earn salvation. It is saying that we have been given a gift. If we don't use that gift, we can wander away from the truth and destroy our faith.

*James 5:19-20 My brothers, **if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins.***

Who is James writing to? We already learned from our last Bible study that he says over and over again "my brothers". And yet notice that people who claim to be Christians can (1) wander from the truth (2) become a sinner (3) and ultimately die. We need to go after those who have wandered because they are in danger of sin and death, because the wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23).

If we continue in the love of Jesus Christ, putting into practice those things the Holy Spirit is teaching us through God's Word, then we will be assured that "*he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.*"

Philippians

Study 2

by Sandy Simpson

True Or False Motives?

Phil. 1:12-19

A mother was preparing pancakes for her sons, Kevin, 5, and Ryan, 3. The boys began to argue over who would get the first pancake. Their mother saw the opportunity for a moral lesson. "If Jesus were sitting here, He would say, 'Let my brother have the first pancake; I can wait.'" Kevin turned to his younger brother and said, "Ryan, you be Jesus!" - Source unknown

This is a funny story to illustrate wrong motives. Now it was not wrong for either boy to want pancakes, but it was wrong for them to only think about themselves instead of the other. We will deal with this issue in this lesson.

Phil. 1:12 Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel.

13 As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ.

*14 Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to **speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly.***

This is a good lesson for us. Paul, instead of being depressed or defensive about his imprisonment, was glad because Christ was being glorified. The Word of God was being preached to the "whole palace guard". This would not have been possible under normal circumstances. But once in prison Paul took the golden opportunity the Lord had given him to witness to his captors. Not only that, but Paul's example was taken up by others who were made braver to preach the Gospel, including the Philippians he was addressing. Notice that the right motive for preaching the Gospel should come from recognizing the will of God in our circumstances, and using every opportunity He gives us. Often we can turn what would normally be considered by worldly standards to be a difficult, embarrassing, or almost impossible circumstance into an opportunity to serve the Lord. Those who have discernment and a true heart for the Lord will not only support those who are witnessing for God in difficult circumstances, but will look for ways we can do the same. This comes from a heart that is tuned into God's will, not on what we can gain from the situation. But there are those who also witness for the Lord from wrong motives.

*Phil. 1:15 It is true **that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill.***

16 The latter do so in love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel.

*17 The former **preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains.***

*18 But what does it matter? **The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice. Yes, and I will***

*continue to rejoice,
19 for I know that through your prayers and the help given by the Spirit of Jesus Christ,
what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance.*

There were those who were preaching out of good motives for the pure sake of the Gospel and in obedience to the words and will of an Apostle, Paul. But there were others, just like there are today, who were preaching Christ out of selfish ambition, from false motives. Their motives were to get people to follow them instead of Paul at a time when Paul was not able to be there because he was imprisoned. They were also likely in it for the money. But Paul's motives are clear, and our motives should be the same. He doesn't worry about his own reputation, and places God's flock in God's hands. It is His Church after all. Instead Paul rejoices whenever the Gospel is being preached for whatever reason. There are many teachers and preachers out there today who are truly preaching the Gospel. We are not to be the judge of their motives, though sometimes their motives become plain. God is their judge.

This passage is one of the passages used by false teachers and their followers to try to justify themselves, to cause Christians not to question their false teachings. But this passage is not talking about false teachers, false prophets and heretics. It is talking about true believers who have wrong motives. These people were preaching Christ, preaching the true Gospel. Paul is not talking here about false teachers. Paul tells us plainly what his attitude is toward false apostles and teachers in a number of other places and later in this letter:

*2 Tim. 4:2-5 Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage— with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, **they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.** But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.*

*2 Cor. 11:12-15 And I will keep on doing what I am **doing in order to cut the ground from under those who want an opportunity to be considered equal with us in the things they boast about. For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve.***

Again, be careful of people who try to use Phil. 1:15-19 to justify any teacher. Paul addresses only teachers who are teaching the true Gospel, either from good motives or bad motives, in this passage. Otherwise Paul is clear about our rejection of heresy.

Titus 3:10 A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject;

The amazing thing about Paul's attitude is that he says twice that he rejoices over his situation. He is in prison, teachers with bad motives are trying to make a name for themselves at his expense, and yet he knows that God has a plan in it all. He says first: *As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ.* While in prison God wanted Paul there as a witness. Then Paul states: *I know that through your prayers and the help given by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance.* Paul is confident that God has a plan for him wherever God has put him. He is content where God has him at the moment.

Notice one more interesting feature of this last verse. He calls the Holy Spirit the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Only one other time is this phrase used by Luke in Acts 16:7. In the context of Acts 16:7 the Spirit of Jesus Christ clearly refers to the Holy Spirit, as it also does in Phil. 1:19. This is not an argument for Jesus Christ being the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ is the Second Person of the Triune God. The First Person, the Father, sent the Third Person, the Holy Spirit in Jesus' name to testify about Jesus Christ, the Second Person.

John 14:16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—

John 14:26 But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

John 15:26 "When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me.

The point Paul is making is that Jesus Christ Himself sent Paul on a mission all the way back on the road to Damascus.

Acts 22:6-10 "About noon as I came near Damascus, suddenly a bright light from heaven flashed around me. I fell to the ground and heard a voice say to me, 'Saul! Saul! Why do you persecute me?' " 'Who are you, Lord?' I asked. " 'I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting,' he replied. My companions saw the light, but they did not understand the voice of him who was speaking to me. " 'What shall I do, Lord?' I asked. " 'Get up,' the Lord said, 'and go into Damascus. There you will be told all that you have been assigned to do.'

Paul was forever a changed man "on a mission from God". He would never forget that, in prison, in health, in sickness, in persecution, in the good times and bad times. God was in control. God is in control when you put your life in His hands and serve Him. Then you can truly be at peace in any situation, anywhere, anytime.

Long ago a man sought the perfect picture of peace. Not finding one that satisfied, he announced a contest to produce this masterpiece. The challenge stirred the imagination of artists everywhere, and paintings arrived from far and wide. Finally the great day of revelation arrived. The judges uncovered one peaceful scene after another, while the viewers clapped and cheered. The tensions grew. Only two pictures remained veiled. As a judge pulled the cover from one, a hush fell over the crowd. A mirror-smooth lake reflected lacy, green birches under the soft blush of the evening sky. Along the grassy shore, a flock of sheep grazed undisturbed. Surely this was the winner.

The man with the vision uncovered the second painting himself, and the crowd gasped in surprise. Could this be peace? A tumultuous waterfall cascaded down a rocky precipice; the crowd could almost feel its cold, penetrating spray. Stormy-gray clouds threatened to explode with lightning, wind and rain. In the midst of the thundering noises and bitter chill, a spindly tree clung to the rocks at the edge of the falls. One of its branches reached out in front of the torrential waters as if foolishly seeking to experience its full power. A little bird had built a nest in the elbow of that branch. Content and undisturbed in her stormy surroundings, she rested on her eggs. With her eyes closed and her wings ready to cover her little ones, she manifested peace that transcends all earthly turmoil.

(A Wardrobe from the King, Berit Kjos, pp. 45-46)

When you place your life in God's hands, as did Paul, you can be a blessing under any circumstances. Your faith will grow in any situation where the Lord wants you to be.

*Romans 8:28 And we know that **in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.***

This promise is also not unconditional. God works for the good of those who (1) love Him and (2) are called according to His purpose. When God calls, if you obey that call, you will then know the true extent of the goodness of God, the peace that passes all understanding.

I'm about to give away the ending of this book, but I just can't help but skip to the end because this sums up Paul's relationship to the Lord:

*Phil. 4:4-7 **Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.***

Philippians

Study 3

by Sandy Simpson

To Live Is Christ, To Die Is Gain!

Phil. 1:20-30

In 1986 angry Filipinos took to the streets of Manila and drove Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos from power. In her haste to escape into exile, Imelda left behind more than 1,200 pairs of shoes, 427 designer dresses, and 71 pairs of sunglasses.

In a country where two out of every three households lacked adequate food, this was extravagant to say the least! During their twenty years in power, the couple plundered nearly \$12 billion from their poverty-stricken country.

(Today in the Word, August, 1997, p. 34)

There are many people in this world who are consumed with earthly gain. I have often prayed for island leaders because it only takes one greedy leader to bankrupt small nations like those in Micronesia. This has already happened in some islands. It is not unusual to see that unbelievers in the world are laying up their treasure here. But they can't take it with them.

Ecclesiastes 5:15 Naked a man comes from his mother's womb, and as he comes, so he departs. He takes nothing from his labor that he can carry in his hand.

Worldly people can be expected to act worldly. But when believers act like the world and lay up treasure here, it is a terrible witness. When you watch TBN and see the gold chairs, gold piano, and furnishings that look like a palace, you begin to realize the apostate state of Christianity today. Benny Hinn once stated on TBN during a Praise-a-thon show:

I'm sick and tired about hearing about streets of gold [in heaven]. I don't need gold in heaven. I got to have it now."(Benny Hinn, TBN)

Hinn has accomplished this goal as he makes around \$150 million per year. But the Bible says that those who lay up their treasure now and make a big show out of giving a tiny portion to the poor have already received their reward in full:

Matthew 6:2 "So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full.

This is what disgusts me about seeing Christian leaders on TV trying to get into the spotlight anytime there is a major disaster. Rod Parsley switched his broadcast location to New Orleans to raise funds for weeks recently. T.D. Jakes was seen on TV standing next to President Bush in a gold suit after the New Orleans hurricane and flood. When you make a big show out of giving, you have your reward already.

Paul's life stands in stark contrast to the false teachers of today.

Phil. 1:20 I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.

21 ¶ For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

22 If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know!

23 I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far;

24 but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body.

How many believers can truthfully say that their whole reason for living is Christ, and to die is gain? What I see more often would be more like: for me to live is gain, and to die is Christ. Do we truthfully live to serve Christ instead of our own sinful appetites? Paul was persecuted to the point where I am sure he would have preferred to die on numerous occasions.

2 Cor. 11:23-28 Are they servants of Christ? (I am out of my mind to talk like this.) I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches.

Paul was willing to endure these things because God still had work for him to do here, and for Paul “to live is Christ”. But why did he also say “to die is gain”? Because Paul, as all other true believers in the Bible, was looking forward to another home, a reward beyond death.

*Heb. 11: 13-16 All these people (the saints of the OT) were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And **they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth.** People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. **Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one.** Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.*

*2 Pet. 3:11-14 ¶ Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? **You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming.** That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. So then, dear friends, **since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.***

Those who would call themselves Christians can be tested in two ways, and they must meet BOTH criteria. (1) Do they live for Christ or actually live for themselves? (2) Do they look forward to their reward in heaven or build a kingdom on earth? This is one good way to test yourself to see if you are in the faith.

2 Cor. 13:4-5 For to be sure, he was crucified in weakness, yet he lives by God's power. Likewise, we are weak in him, yet by God's power we will live with him to serve you. Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you— unless, of course, you fail the test?

Phil. 1:25 Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, 26 so that through my being with you again your joy in Christ Jesus will overflow on account of me.

There are two reasons why we fellowship together, and why good Christian leadership needs to continue. It is for our progress in the faith and our joy in the faith. Progress is growth in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ and the outgrowth of that faith in action. Joy is our attitude and witness before the world. Many times our candle of witness is hidden under a bushel of anger, depression, or irritability with our circumstances. If worldly people look at Christians and see that they react exactly like **they do** to circumstances, why would they think Christianity offers them anything life changing? Yet this is exactly what we are seeing today. We see people who call themselves believers who are not progressing in the faith, and do not show the joy of the Lord during trials. Churches today try to be more and more like the world to try to win the world. But in doing so they lose their witness, and even affect the witness of true believers. Many unbelievers who watch Christian TV come away not ever desiring to pursue Christianity.

*John 3:19-21 This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But **whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God.**"*

*Phil. 1:27 ¶ Whatever happens, **conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.** Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you **stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel** 28 **without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved— and that by God.***

The sign of a true believer is (1) standing firm together with true believers before the world and (2) contending (fighting, arguing) for the faith of the Gospel. We must stand in unity of the Spirit in the face of the world so that our witness will be clear. That means we are to live like Christians, witness the Gospel, stand for truth both inside and outside the Church, and be willing to be persecuted for it while remaining calm, peaceful and joyful. This is not easy, and is impossible without the help of the Counselor, Comforter, Helper – the Holy Spirit. This is our duty as believers and as a Church. What do you think it says to the unbelievers when you have TV evangelists and false prophets all over the world sucking money out of the poor with promises of healings that do not really happen? What kind of witness are the prophecies of thousands of false prophets today that do not come true and are never repented of? What do non-believers think when they see Christians acting worse than unbelievers? We need to be sure the world understands who true Christians are, then act like followers of Christ. Jesus stood for truth, compassion, mercy and grace under pressure. Simply sharing the facts of the Gospel is not enough. The practical outworking of the Gospel message must be in evidence in people's lives for unbelievers to be convinced. Yet sadly this is often not the case, which is why fewer and fewer people

are becoming Christians today, and those that say they are have not really removed themselves from the world because those who witnessed to them are not removed themselves.

Lastly, the part of the Gospel about sin and punishment in hell has all but been removed from the modern Christian Gospel presentation. But that is the very reason we are to stand firm together with true believers before the world and contend for the faith of the Gospel. We are to be a sign to the world that it is headed for destruction. How will unbelievers in the world be saved unless they realize they will be destroyed?

Phil. 1:29 For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him,

30 since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have.

This important part of our life in Christ, which is all but ignored today, is that Jesus has “granted” to us the privilege to suffer for him. What? Is that really a privilege?

*Rom. 5:1-5 ¶ Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. **And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.***

1 Peter 4:16 However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name.

If is God chooses you to suffer persecution, insult, ridicule, curses, beatings, hatred, malice, envy, and slander for the cause of Jesus Christ, we are actually being blessed. We can never repay the debt of Jesus Christ’s own sufferings, persecution and death, but we can prove we are truly “in Christ” by enduring under pressures of all kinds. Perhaps some of us will never be beaten or put to death for the cause of Christ, but there are a million little ways in our lifetime where we have the chance to exhibit the joy and peace we have in the Holy Spirit before the world through all kinds of situations.

A. Parnell Bailey visited an orange grove where an irrigation pump had broken down. The season was unusually dry and some of the trees were beginning to die for lack of water. The man giving the tour then took Bailey to his own orchard where irrigation was used sparingly. “These trees could go without rain for another 2 weeks,” he said. “You see, when they were young, I frequently kept water from them. This hardship caused them to send their roots deeper into the soil in search of moisture. Now mine are the deepest-rooted trees in the area. While others are being scorched by the sun, these are finding moisture at a greater depth.”

When we go through suffering and our witness for Christ remains firm, it is (1) a sign to the world and (2) our own lives will send roots of faith deeper into the soil of Jesus Christ.

Philippians

Study 4

by Sandy Simpson

Christ-like Humility

Phil. 2:1-11

The young pastor was excited about preaching his first sermon in his home church. After three years in seminary, he felt adequately prepared, and when he was introduced to the congregation, he walked boldly to the pulpit, his head high, radiating self-confidence. But he stumbled reading the Scriptures and then lost his train of thought halfway through the message. He began to panic, so he did the safest thing: He quickly ended the message, prayed, and walked dejectedly from the pulpit, his head down, his self-assurance gone. Later, one of the godly elders whispered to the embarrassed young man, "If you had gone up to the pulpit the way you came down, you might have come down the way you went up." The elder was right. God still resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.

(Prokope, Vol. No. 3, July-September, 1997)

Humility is a lost fruit today in the Church. If you watch and follow almost every big name Christian leaders today you will end up with foolish pride. Paul deals with that issue in this section of his letter. But first Paul addresses the need for true believers to be one in spirit.

*Phil. 2:1 ¶ If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, 2 then make my joy complete by being like-minded, **having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose.***

We as believers need to be reminded of the benefits we have from being born again. We have great encouragement in life because of our unity with Christ through the Holy Spirit. I think you can remember back when you felt alone and carried all the problems of the world on your shoulders. But when you heard the Gospel message, repented of your sins, believed in the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, and cast all your cares upon Him, you began to know what encouragement was. You began to know the comfort of His love. You experienced the fellowship of His Spirit, and you found you were no longer alone. You found out firsthand what the tenderness and compassion of the Lord is all about, as well as those who shared the Gospel with you. Paul says we should remember those things so that we will know that we are one in the spirit. Because of our common experience in Christ and unity of the Spirit, we begin to be like-minded. We see things the same way, the way the Bible and the Holy Spirit teach things to us. We find that we have the same love for God, but also for one another. We begin to live out the experience of being born again in one Spirit, one purpose. But this is a growing process and we need to go back regularly and remember our first love.

*Rev. 2:4-5 Yet I hold this against you: **You have forsaken your first love. Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first.** If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.*

Jesus spoke this to the church at Ephesus. We need to repent and turn back to our first love of Christ, which will then spur us on to the right type of relationship to our brothers and sisters in Christ. But there are those who would disrupt the unity of the Faith and Spirit that we have.

*Phil. 2:3 **Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.***

4 Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

There are men and women who claim to be in the body of Christ but are full of selfish ambition and vain conceit. They are tearing up the churches and this should not be. True believers are humble. I have pointed out before just how humble the Apostles were. When you compare them, who are our examples, to the teachers of today you see little resemblance. We should not conduct ourselves as many modern teachers do. We should be humble and consider others better than ourselves. We need to consider the interests of others above our own. This is very difficult for us to learn in the modern times we live in since the world is urging people to look to their own interests first. Rick Warren's third Ladies Home Journal article was entitled "Learn How To Love Yourself". But the Bible does not teach this at all. The Bible is clear that we already love ourselves to the exclusion of God and others. We need to learn to love God and others as we love ourselves. This type of false teaching is simply repeating the false wisdom of the world in order to gain followers. True believers are in the process of learning to look to the interests of others, which is a lifelong lesson. We dare not allow false teachers like Rick Warren to delay our lessons from God any longer. True humility and selflessness is one of the hardest lessons to learn in life.

*Phil. 2:5 **Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:***

6 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,

7 but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

*8 And being found in appearance as a man, **he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!***

9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name,

10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

If we want an example of humility we need look no further than Jesus Himself. Jesus was, is and ever shall be God. Yet He gave up the privileges of being God in Heaven to become a man. Why? In order to die to save us from our sins. There is no greater sacrifice a man can make than this.

*John 15:13 **Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.***

What was it like for Jesus to be born a human being, yet still be God? Can you even imagine this act? A.W. Tozer expressed it this way:

I have given much thought and contemplation to the sweetest and tenderest of all of the mysteries in God's revelation to man—the Incarnation! Jesus, the Christ, is the Eternal One, for in the fullness of

time He humbled Himself. John's description is plain: the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. I confess that I would have liked to have seen the baby Jesus. But the glorified Jesus in heaven now at the right hand of the Father on high, was the baby Jesus once cradled in the manger straw. Taking a body of humiliation, He was still the Creator who made the wood of that manger, made the straw, and was Creator of all the beasts that were there. In truth, He made the little town of Bethlehem and all that it was. He also made the star that lingered over the scene that night. He had come into His own world, His Father's world. Everything we touch and handle belongs to Him. So we have come to love Him and adore Him and honor Him!
(A.W. Tozer, *Renewed Day By Day*, Vol. 2, December 22)

God the Father gave everything when He gave His Son. God the Son gave everything when He gave His life. God the Holy Spirit gave everything when He chose to create a "holy of holies", the very temple of God, in every human spirit that believes that Jesus Christ is God. The Son served the Father in humility as the Spirit serves the Son, always pointing us to Jesus Christ in worship.

Because of what Jesus Christ did, He was exalted by the Father and given everything in heaven and in earth. "But Jesus Christ already had that", you might reply. Yes He did, but upon completion of His mission on earth He brought even **greater** glory to the Father, and the Father glorified the Son.

*John 8:54 Jesus replied, "If I glorify myself, my glory means nothing. **My Father, whom you claim as your God, is the one who glorifies me.**"*
*John 12:28 Father, glorify your name!" Then a voice came from heaven, "**I have glorified it, and will glorify it again.**"*

*John 17:1 After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed: "**Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you.**"*

*John 17:5 **And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.***

What does the word "glory" mean? It is the word "*doxa*" in Greek. It means: splendor, brightness, magnificence, excellence, preeminence, dignity, grace, majesty, a thing belonging to God--the kingly majesty which belongs to him as supreme ruler, majesty in the sense of the absolute perfection of the deity, a thing belonging to Christ--the kingly majesty of the Messiah--the absolutely perfect inward or personal excellency of Christ. In the Old Testament the word for glory is "*kabowd*". It means: glory, honor, glorious, abundance, riches, splendor, dignity, reputation, reverence. The word "glory" is all those things and more than we can imagine because God IS glory.

The amazing thing is that the glorification of the Lord Jesus Christ is also a picture of what is in store for us. If we humble ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Christ we too will share in His glory in heaven.

*James 4:10 **Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.***

*Luke 9:23-24 Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, **he must deny himself** ("aparneomai": to forget one's self, lose sight of one's self and one's own interests) **and take up his cross daily and follow me.** For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it.*

*Romans 8:17 Now if we are children, then we are heirs— heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, **if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.***

2 Thessalonians 2:14 He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Someday every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. If you confess Him now and obey Him, you will be glorified with Him. If you deny Him now and are forced to admit you were wrong on judgment day, it will be too late and you will be sent to everlasting punishment. Today is the day to humble ourselves before the Lord of this universe and acknowledge that Jesus Christ is King of Kings and Lord of Lords and live for Him. He is giving everyone an opportunity to make that choice today and live it out as proof that belief is real.

Philippians

Study 5

by Sandy Simpson

Our Work – God’s Work

Phil. 2:12-18

*When a person becomes a Christian, he usually undergoes some radical life changes, especially if he has had an immoral background. Through the first steps of spiritual growth and self-denial, he gets rid of the large, obvious sins. But sad to say, many believers stop there. They don’t go on to eliminate the little sins that clutter the landscape of their lives. Gordon MacDonald, in his book *Ordering Your Private World*, told of an experience in his own life that illustrates this truth. “Some years ago, when Gail and I bought the old abandoned New Hampshire farm we now call Peace Ledge, we found the site where we wished to build our country home strewn with rocks and boulders. It was going to take a lot of hard work to clear it all out.... The first phase of the clearing process was easy. The big boulders went fast. And when they were gone, we began to see that there were a lot of smaller rocks that had to go too. But when we had cleared the site of the boulders and the rocks, we noticed all of the stones and pebbles we had not seen before. This was much harder, more tedious work. But we stuck to it, and there came the day when the soil was ready for planting grass.”*

(Our Daily Bread)

*Phil. 2:12 ¶ Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed— not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence— continue to **work out your salvation with fear and trembling,***

13 for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.

The process of sanctification of the believer is a two way process. God works on us (Phil 2:13, 1 Cor. 12:6) and if we respond and learn our lessons then we grow. If we do not respond then we shrink back (Heb. 10:39), wander away (James 5:19), and finally fall away (Luke 8:13, Heb. 6:6) and are destroyed (2 Tim. 2:18, Heb. 10:39). This is why in these two verses we just read we find the work of the Christian and the work of the Lord both mentioned with regard to sanctification. What does the word “sanctification” “*hagiazō*” mean in 1 Cor. 6:11 where justification and sanctification are both mentioned? It means: to separate from profane things (sinful things) and dedicate to God, to purify. God wants to separate and purify us but we must be willing to “work out our salvation”. This does not mean we can justify ourselves with God. We cannot save ourselves by our works. That is not what Paul is saying. He is saying that we need to obey the Lord or else we will be judged. Why did Paul say “with fear and trembling”?

*1 Peter 2:17 Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, **fear God,** honor the king.*

We must always realize that God is the Judge. He can save us, He can sanctify us, but if we have no healthy fear of judgment and wander away, He can also end up judging us. We must not only believe in Jesus Christ to be saved, but as I have said before, the word for “believe” “*pisteuo*” means to commit.

We must believe but also live out our faith by obeying God. Remember what John said many times:

John 14:23-24 Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.

We prove we love Him, that we *pisteuo* Him, that we have committed to Him, by obeying Him. This is why we must work out our salvation. The work of faith is not the same as works. Works is talking about things we do in order to try to justify ourselves with the Father. That does nothing. But we must work out our faith, show our faith in works, as James says, in order to prove we really love the Lord. This is not a work, it is a tangible evidence of belief and commitment to Christ. This kind of work evidences itself in the living out of the fruit of the Spirit.

Gal. 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

As we commit to Christ and obey Him, God guarantees that He will sanctify us. He will even come after those who wander away like a good Shepherd. But if you lose your fear of Him as Judge then you may wander away so far that you are not longer his lamb. Then the world, the flesh and the devil have you. But if you suffer for the cause of Christ and stand in your commitment to Him, you will be saved in the end.

1 Peter 4:19 So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.

Hebrews 3:14 We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first.

Phil. 2:14 ¶ Do everything without complaining or arguing, 15 so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe 16 as you hold out the word of life— in order that I may boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor for nothing.

Now we get to the difficult part. If we are to be sanctified we are to do everything without complaining or arguing. I am still working on this. Are you? Now there is a type of arguing that is right and good, though to do so we need to take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

2 Corinthians 10:5 We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

We do argue for the truth, though we should not do so just to argue. We do so to demolish demonic arguments. You demolish arguments by arguing for the truth. But Paul is not addressing this in this verse to the Philippians. He is saying that, as believers, part of our witness is being seen as people of integrity and wisdom that do not complain and argue all the time about unimportant issues. Paul says the Philippians live in a crooked generation. What about us? I would say that we live in the most crooked generation yet.

Luke 17:26 "Just as it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man.

We must stand for truth, integrity, purity, honor, and wisdom in a generation that has lost these things. We must live as salt and light before the world.

Matthew 5:13-16 ¶ "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men. "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

We can lose our saltiness by complaining and arguing, amongst ourselves and in the world. We can hide the light of Christ in us when we are a poor witness to the world and act like they do. How do we do this? By holding on to the word of life. Jesus Christ is the Word, the Word of life. His words are in the Bible. The Bible contains the words of life from God Himself. We must hold on to our faith in Jesus Christ and to His Word in order to be an effective witness to this crooked generation. This is where many churches have fallen down. They think that by becoming more like the world they will influence the world. But the truth is that when we become true believers we are set apart from the world. Paul said that he was "set apart" to preach the Gospel.

Romans 1:1 Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God—

Remember that "set apart" is the meaning of being sanctified. We are not to become like the world to win the world, but we are to live a life in contrast, in opposition to the world in order to win the world. This is why many people are saying they are Christians today, but few are actually born again. So-called Christians, who have not been set apart from the world, are preaching a message that cannot save them because they are not sanctified themselves. Paul is hopeful that he will be able to boast about the Philippians that they did not give in to the pressures of the world and unbelievers to become worldly.

*Phil. 2:17 But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you.
18 So you too should be glad and rejoice with me.*

Paul's life was being poured out. He literally gave his all for Christ, and the reason Gentiles are saved today is mainly because of the sacrifice of Paul. The reason island people are saved today is because of the sacrifice of missionaries who poured out their lives as a drink offering to the Lord so that many could be saved. Paul rejoices that the Philippians are running the race with him and only need a gentle reminder and encouragement to keep going. Some see Paul as a harsh man, but when you read his letters you see the love and concern he had for those churches he established. Those who stand for the truth are often mistaken as being harsh, but when you really look at the situation you begin to realize that they are the most loving and caring of all. When a schoolteacher urges you to do your homework and study better, is he/she being harsh? When a mother scolds her children for being disobedient, is she being harsh? Sometimes her attitude may be harsh, but the reason she does it is because she loves her children. When God rebukes us we need to realize it is out of pure love that He is doing what He is doing. God wants us to rejoice with Him when we suffer yet come through it with greater faith and the ability to help others in turn.

Philippians

Study 6

by Sandy Simpson

Compassion & Commitment

Phil. 2:19-30

A little girl who was late coming home for supper. Her mother made the expected irate parent's demand to know where she had been. The little girl replied that she had stopped to help Janie, whose bicycle was broken in a fall. "But you don't know anything about fixing bicycles," her mother responded. "I know that," the girl said. "I just stopped to help her cry."

(Source: Unknown)

A man spoke with the Lord about Heaven and Hell. "I will show you Hell," said the Lord. And they went into a room which had a large pot of stew in the middle. The smell was delicious and around the pot sat people who were famished and desperate. All were holding spoons with very long handles which reached to the pot, but because the handles of the spoons were longer than their arms, it was impossible to get the stew into their mouths. Their suffering was terrible. "Now I will show you Heaven," said the Lord, and they went into an identical room. There was a similar pot of stew and the people had the same identical spoons, but they were well nourished, talking and happy. At first the man did not understand.

"It is simple," said the Lord. "You see, they have learned to feed each other."

(Found at Afterhours Inspirational Stories)

These are just two humorous illustrations to teach us about care for one another's needs in the body of Christ. We are to have compassion for all men and help the poor and needy as the Lord gives us grace to do so, but our first place to help with the welfare of others is in the body of Christ. It is not our mandate as Christians to solve the world's problems like Rick Warren claims we are to do. The problems of the poor will always be with us.

*Deuteronomy 15:11 **There will always be poor people in the land.** Therefore I command you to be openhanded toward your brothers and toward the poor and needy in your land.*

*Mark 14:7 **The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have me.***

Yet Rick Warren claims that with his P.E.A.C.E. Plan we will "solve" world poverty. He says through his P.E.A.C.E. Plan the churches will solve *Spiritual Lostness, Lack of Godly Leaders, Poverty, Disease, and Lack of Education*. The Bible never says that the body of Christ will solve these problems. We can help where we can, but it is not our place to solve these problems because they are problems the Bible says we will always have with us. To make such a claim is "bragging" that cannot be fulfilled. What is "spiritual lostness" anyway? There is no such thing in the Bible. If Warren meant the problem of "sin" that would be correct. But Rick Warren does not address that subject in his plan at all. If Warren wants to solve the problem of a lack of Godly leaders, he had better start with his own church and stop hanging out with heretics, false prophets and New Agers. His mentors, Robert Schuller and C. Peter Wagner are both ungodly leaders because they are heretics. We will NEVER solve the disease problem. The Bible

is clear that the end times will be a time of great pestilence, disease. We now have a flu called the Avian Flu that is passed to humans from birds and is threatening to be the next great epidemic in world history.

Instead, we as a Church are to (1) preach the Gospel and disciple all nations in Christ (2) take care of those in the body of Christ and support those in ministry (3) give to the poor and help others as the Lord gives us grace to do so and (4) live as salt and light before the world. Timothy was a man who cared about the welfare of the body of Christ.

Phil. 2:19 I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you.

*20 I have no one else like him, **who takes a genuine interest in your welfare.***

21 For everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.

*22 But you know that **Timothy has proved himself**, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel.*

23 I hope, therefore, to send him as soon as I see how things go with me.

24 And I am confident in the Lord that I myself will come soon.

Timothy was a faithful student and companion of Paul. Paul trusted him to be sent in his place when Paul was busy elsewhere or imprisoned because Timothy had demonstrated that he really cared for people. Others had apparently not done this and had tried to lord it over the churches, get money from them, get followers to follow them instead of Paul. But Paul says that Timothy had proven himself to be a faithful and compassionate leader who served with Paul in the work of the Gospel. This is what it means to be a true Godly leader. It takes compassion for the welfare of the churches. It takes someone who is not in it for what they can get out of it, but is genuinely concerned for the welfare of others. It takes someone who is faithful to the Word of God and the Gospel. It takes someone who is a servant because Paul says Timothy “served with me”. A Godly leader is also confident in the Lord. Paul’s confidence was not placed in himself, or Timothy, though he was sure Timothy would be faithful, but he says that his confidence is in the Lord.

*Phil. 2:25 But I think it is necessary to send back to you **Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker and fellow soldier**, who is also your messenger, whom you sent to take care of my needs.*

26 For he longs for all of you and is distressed because you heard he was ill.

27 Indeed he was ill, and almost died. But God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, to spare me sorrow upon sorrow.

28 Therefore I am all the more eager to send him, so that when you see him again you may be glad and I may have less anxiety.

29 Welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honor men like him,

30 because he almost died for the work of Christ, risking his life to make up for the help you could not give me.

Another faithful servant was Epaphroditus. Paul calls him a brother, worker and soldier. This is what a true Christian will be to others in the body of Christ. He will be a brother. A brother is family. He stands up for and cares for his own family as he cares for himself. He is also a worker. That means he works hard.

*2 Corinthians 6:5 in beatings, imprisonments and riots; **in hard work**, sleepless nights and hunger;*

*Revelation 2:2 I know your deeds, **your hard work and your perseverance**. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false.*

Christian leaders are to be hard workers. They are not to sit back and enjoy a life of luxury while others work. They are to be an example of hard work themselves. Finally, he calls him a fellow soldier. Soldiers don't just work--they fight. They defend and they also fight for truth. They are not afraid to get out on the battlefield because they have put on the armor of God (Eph. 6:11-18) and are ready to do battle against lies, false teaching, demonically driven people and movements, and anything else that sets itself up against the knowledge of God (2 Cor. 10:5). They are willing to endure hardship and ridicule. They can endure because they have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil and have learned the lessons of discipline from the Lord.

*Hebrews 5:14 **But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.***

*Hebrews 12:11 No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, **it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.***

Like a good soldier, Epaphroditus almost died. But God healed him. Has God ever healed you from a sickness or even brought you back from the edge of death? God has done that for me a number of times. He did so because of His mercy and grace toward me, his child, but He also did so because my work was not finished yet. Epaphroditus still had work to do, and so did Paul. So Paul was sending him to the Philippians also and told them to honor him. What does that mean? Was he saying to give him an award, or a certificate, or put him on a throne and bow down to him? No. The word used in Greek is "entimos" which means holding something as precious, dear, more honorable in reputation, someone who is prized. Epaphroditus was precious because he was a gift back from death from the Lord. The Philippians were being asked to treat him as something precious, something that was costly, something prized. Those who have gone through suffering and the Lord has delivered them have often learned valuable lessons and can be a great blessing to others. I think about someone like Joni Ericson Toda who has been a great blessing to people after she was brought back from the brink of death from a diving accident. The Lord taught her many things even though she would never walk again, and she has been a valuable witness for Christ around the world. There are many others.

Lastly, Epaphroditus risked his life to help Paul even while he was in prison. We don't know what he did, but this man was clearly a soldier for Christ who would not become a deserter when times got tough. This is the kind of Godly man we need today in the churches.

Philippians

Study 7

by Sandy Simpson

What Used To Be Profit Is Now Loss

Phil. 3:1-9

Influences of Culture

Jesus was speaking about this danger in His comments on leaven (yeast). He warned His disciples to “beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees” (Matthew 16:6, RSV) “and the leaven of Herod (Mark 8:15, RSV). Leaven symbolizes human imperfection (see Exodus 12:15-20, 13:3-8; Leviticus 2:11; 1 Corinthians 5:6-8). Jesus was warning against mixing imperfect human ideas with God’s truth. The Pharisees had mixed their own religious traditions with the teaching of the Scriptures; the Sadducees were the philosophers of Jewish society; and Herod represented the world system. These three influences—tradition, philosophy, and society—seem inevitably to work their way into and become part of the value system of any Christian community. Many so-called “Christians” live almost entirely within a pagan value system and yet do not even perceive it.

Paul begins to teach us a valuable lesson that I think is very important for Christians in all the cultures of the world to learn.

*Phil. 3:1 ¶ Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, **and it is a safeguard for you.***

Paul wants to safeguard the Philippians from a deep delusion and deception of the world. The deceptions of Paul’s day are again being played out in our modern world, and they are even worse. It is the deception that we can have confidence in the flesh, in the traditions of men.

*Phil. 3:2 **Watch out for those dogs, those men who do evil, those mutilators of the flesh. 3 For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh—***

Paul was not afraid to call people very descriptive names. Today we view this as being harsh and unloving, even slander, but sometimes the best way to describe false teachers is with attributive names. Paul calls them “dogs” for a very good reason. Dogs can be friendly as long as you are kind to them. The moment they decide they don’t like you anymore or they are hungry, they can turn on you and rip you to pieces. They will take a piece of meat and tear it apart viciously. They can also attack without warning. One day I was walking from the main road through someone’s property back to my college dorm in Oregon. I was far away from the house minding my own business when suddenly there came running at me a big German shepherd. He was not barking, he was just running to me as fast as he could. I thought that he was friendly and wanted to play, so I waited for him. Without barking he ran up to me, ran around my back, and bit me in the behind. This startled me so much that I ran away back to my dorm. When I got there I had a big single hole in my pants and in my rear. This taught me that

some dogs can appear friendly but be dangerous.

Paul was warning the Philippians about evil men who acted like dogs. They could be friendly and then turn on you in an instant. These evil men were trying to convince the Philippians, who were Gentiles, that they needed to be circumcised to be true followers of Christ. As with any other work, this idea denies salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. These friendly dogs came in with that idea, got some people to do it, and later chewed up those Gentiles for not following the whole Mosaic Law. It was a trap and a deadly one.

This trap by the false Jews was a trap of culture and tradition. Our cultures can trap us into doing things that we should not be doing as born again Christians.

Phil. 3:4 ¶ though I myself have reasons for such confidence. If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more:

5 circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee;

6 as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless.

7 But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.

8 What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ

9 ¶ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.

Paul, a Jew, compares himself to Gentiles. He says that he had much more reason to hope in salvation by culture than any of them. He was part of the most important culture in the world, Israel. Not only that but he was a Pharisee, and a Zealot for the Law. Yet when he was met by Christ on the road to Damascus, all that changed. He realized the futility of trying to be justified by the Law. He came to understand that only faith in God through Jesus Christ would save. So for the sake of knowing Christ as Savior he considered all that he had done before as lost. Not only that but as garbage. Well, actually the word translated as “rubbish” in the NIV is translated as “dung” in the KJV. That is closer to what Paul probably actually said. The word is “*skubalon*” which means: any refuse, the excrement of animals, offscourings, rubbish, dregs, things worthless and detestable. He is comparing his former life obeying every law in his Jewish culture as garbage, dog poop, offscourings or someone rejected by society, something to be thrown away and burned, as the yeast and grape skins left at the bottom of a wine bottle, as something completely worthless and detestable that needs to be thrown out because it will stink up the place if it remains. If Paul was treating his Jewish culture as dung, how much more should we treat our Gentile cultures as something to leave behind?

This is a **very** difficult lesson for us today. I bring up this issue, in context, because I want to warn you again about a New Apostolic Reformation movement called various names such as the “Indigenous People’s Movement”, “First Nations”, “A Call To The Nations”, etc. with false teachers such as Richard Twiss, Daniel Kikawa, Don Richardson, John Dawson, YWAM, Terry LeBlanc and hundreds of others. They are trying to get people to go back and revive their old customs in their cultures saying that all nations have always worshipped God, though in the wrong ways, and that God has always been in the process of redeeming whole cultures. So they are taking the names of the old gods and making up elaborate mythologies about them, such as what Daniel Kikawa cooks up in his “Perpetuated In Righteousness” book, and is teaching people to make up their own in their own context. Daniel

Kikawa's church, for instance, with people like Leon Siu, pray to the old Hawaiian gods such as "Io". But Io was a false demonic god among many gods and his symbol is a type of bird. If you want to read up on this issue, come to my site and read the many articles detailing Kikawa and others false teachings. Suffice it to say that Gentiles have NEVER worshipped the true God, even if they have a supreme being among a pantheon of other god. Paul says this about Gentiles:

Ephesians 2:12 remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world.

Gentiles had no way to know the truth about the one God in Three Persons unless someone shared the Gospel with them.

Romans 10:14 How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?

We were all ignorant of the true God, and the gods of the nations are false gods.

1 Chronicles 16:26 For all the gods of the nations are idols, but the LORD made the heavens.

1 Corinthians 10:20 No, but the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God, and I do not want you to be participants with demons.

The fact is:

(1) Our earthly cultures are the traditions of men, which are often in opposition to God (Mark 7:8).

Mark 7:8 You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men."

(2) Paul tells us that when we become a follower of Christ our earthly cultures and traditions are of no value in the kingdom of God--in fact they are refuse (Phil. 3:8).

(3) If we promote our earthly cultures and it becomes more important to us than God's will, we will not be an effective witness for the Lord (Phil. 2:14-16).

(4) The reason to get away from earthly things is, like Paul, "*that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law* (or old cultural practices and traditions in the case of the Gentiles), *but that which is through faith in Christ— the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.*" If we think that we will be justified by going back to our old ways in our cultures, no matter if we are trying to go back under the Mosaic Law or under Gentile cultural traditions, we are fooling ourselves into thinking that we can gain righteousness on our own. Only faith in Christ will gain us righteousness, and living in obedience to the Law of Christ, which is Grace will save. We must put off the things of this world, and put on the things of heaven.

Eph. 4:22-24 You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

1 John 2:15 Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love

of the Father is not in him.

*Colossians 3:1-2 Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. **Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.***

Philippians

Study 8

by Sandy Simpson

Run The Race, Win The Prize!

Phil. 3:10-21

As you all know, I grew up in the island of Palau. One day I was fishing outside the reef with two of my friends. I was spear fishing while the other boys were line fishing from the raft. Very quickly, a storm came up. It came up so quickly that within minutes the waves at the reef were over ten feet high. I was pretty far away from my friends and as I looked up I saw them paddling for the reef. The last I saw of them was the long bamboo raft tumbling lengthwise, end over end, and disappearing on the other side of the reef waves. One of the boys was only 8 years old and I was afraid that he had probably died. But, at the moment, I had myself to worry about. I looked at the gigantic waves on the reef and the blowing rain and I decided that I would probably not be able to make it over the reef. I looked at the channel but I knew that the tide was still coming out and I would not be able to swim in the channel, especially with the added currents brought about by the storm. My only chance was to swim on the very edge of the channel. I knew I had to swim in far enough so that I could begin to grab the rocks on the side of the channel and pull myself in to safety.

Then my struggle began. I swam as hard as I could in between waves simply to not lose ground, then let the waves push me in a couple of feet. Then I would swim as hard as I could, and then let the waves push me another couple of feet. I did this for about 45 minutes. I had almost given up hope of seeing the coral by the channel when I spotted my first rock. I began to haul myself in, hand over hand, until I reached the inside of the reef. Exhausted, I returned to the village to tell my story.

When I returned I discovered that the boys had made it in safely and that people were worried about me. I will never forget this experience for it taught me some lessons.

Life is made up of a series of small, day to day struggles. But to strive against the problems and pressures we face today without a goal, or if we lose sight of the goal, it can be disastrous. What kept me swimming toward the inside of the reef was the fact that I had faith that the rocks would be there for me to grab on to.

God gives us in His Word, the Bible, not only instructions for how to deal with the day to day struggles of life, but the BIG picture. Seeing life clearly through God's Word can save us a lot of heartache and wasted energy. When we begin to see things from God's perspective, our struggles take on a different light. No longer are they strivings in vain, but rather we can see ourselves running a race with a firm goal in mind. We then can run with patience. Paul said of himself in **Philippians 3:13-14**:

Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead, I press on towards the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenwards in Christ Jesus.

To see where God wants to take you in life, you must trust in Him ... put on patience (Col. 3:12), put your life in His hands (1 Pet. 5:6), study His Word (2 Tim. 2:15), talk to Him in prayer (Col. 4:2), and

follow Him where He leads (1 Pet. 2:21, John 12:27). Hang on to Jesus the Rock (Ps. 94:22, 95:1), and He will guide you through the storms of this world to the peaceful waters of eternal life.

God has a purpose for your life. That purpose is that you will grow to maturity so that you will be able to weather the storms of life. The winds of spiritual darkness and the waves of the world are frightening if we do not keep our eyes on Jesus Christ. But He wants to equip us to be able to walk through the stormy seas of life and follow Him. That will not happen if we remain spiritual babies. Babies drown in rough seas. Adults know Who to follow and how to survive.

So finish the race! Set your eyes on the goal of maturity in Christ, fill your mind and heart with His Word, and go out and put it into practice.

Paul tells us how to grow to maturity by pressing on to take hold of what Christ has for us.

Phil. 3:10 I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, 11 and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead. 12 Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.

Paul was resolved to know Christ and the power of His resurrection by becoming like Him in His death. That does not mean Paul had a “death wish” as we call it. It meant that Paul was pressing on to dying more and more each day to self and allowing the Holy Spirit to do the work of sanctification so that Paul could be an effective witness for Christ. We will not be made perfect in this life, except with regards to our legal standing before the Father because he sees us as believers “in Christ”. But our personal perfection is something that the Spirit begins a work on when we are born again and continues through our life. But again we must participate in this process, or more accurately we must agree to this process. Paul said he had made a choice to “press on”. This is also what every believer must do in order to attain to the resurrection from the dead. Why? Because if we do not press on, if we do not die to self, if we do not take up our cross daily and follow Christ, if we do not agree to the sanctifying work of the Lord in us, then we can shrink back and possibly be destroyed.

Heb. 10:38-39 But my righteous one will live by faith. And if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him." But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved.

We must decide that we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but are of those who believe and are saved. Belief is not necessarily one moment in our lives. God sees it that way, but we are not omniscient (all knowing) so we must continue to believe and not shrink back. Paul was determined to stay the course and press on.

Phil. 3:13 Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

To press on we need to forget what is behind. If you stay in your past, in the sins of your past, in the life of your past, in the culture of your past, you will not go forward. And going forward is a “strain”. It is difficult. We have to leave behind old familiar ways, old sinful patterns, old damaging friendships with the world, old habits, and press on to the new. Why? Because there is a prize ahead. The prize is, first

and foremost, to be with Jesus Christ. The second benefit is eternal life. The third benefit is a crown of life, a crown of righteousness. We are to lay up our treasure in heaven, not on this earth. That means we are to do the will of the Father now, no matter what it costs, and God will reward us in heaven where our spiritual riches will never fade away. Paul is an excellent example of this and we should follow his example. Would that we all could give our all to Jesus Christ the way Paul did. But we must.

*Phil. 3:15 ¶ **All of us who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you.***
16 Only let us live up to what we have already attained.

Those who are mature in the faith realize that they are in a race. It is a race of time. It is a race against the enemies of the world, the flesh and the devil. It is a race that we must run if we are to prove our love for the Lord Jesus Christ and for others. Some might paint another picture of how we are to carry out the will of God, and Paul allows for that. But his point is that we must live up to what we have already attained. We have attained Sonship in Jesus Christ and justification before the Father. We now have to work out our salvation with fear and trembling, not becoming overly familiar with God to the point where we no longer recognize Him as the final Judge of all. We need to realize that He has given us a great gift, but it is what we do with that gift that makes the gift count. Do nothing and the gift is useless. Run the race and live up to the gift and you will be rewarded.

*Phil. 3:17 ¶ **Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you.***

18 For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ.

19 Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things.

20 But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ,

21 who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

As I have stated we need to follow Paul's example. He is a foundational apostle of the Church and here he is not embarrassed to ask the Philippians to follow His example and join with him in running the race to the fullest. We are to take note of those who are pressing on to the mark and join with them. Conversely we are to mark and avoid those who are not.

*Romans 16:17 Now I beseech you, brethren, **mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.***

We are to emulate those who are running the race according to the commands of Christ, and to avoid those who do not because there are many enemies of the cross of Christ. What makes them enemies? Those who preach another Gospel, another Jesus, or another Spirit are enemies of the cross (2 Cor. 11:4). Those who teach heresy are enemies of the cross (Tit. 3:10). Those who falsely prophesy are enemies of the cross (2 Pet. 2:1). Paul goes on to describe those who are enemies of the cross. *Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things.* The race they run is to destruction, not to reward. They are fleshly, fulfilling only fleshly appetites. They glory in themselves to their own shame. They are worldly-minded. This description describes many of the false teachers on Christian TV. All you have to do is look at how they

live their lives to see that they are really enemies of the cross. Don't be fooled by their words. Listen closely and you will hear false doctrines and false prophecy. Look at their actions and you will see where they are heading. They are fleshly, glory-hungry, worldly people. We need to pray for their salvation and pray that they will stop bringing the name of Jesus Christ into disrepute.

2 Peter 2:2 Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute.

But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body. Jesus Christ is coming again. We are citizens of heaven, not this earth, and Jesus will come to take us to our homeland. So true believers eagerly await His coming, unlike those who oppose the cross of Christ who think they must take dominion over the earth or laugh at the idea of the Rapture. There are many of them today. We know that when Jesus comes that by His power **He** will bring everything under His control. We are not called to do that as the Church. Jesus will do that when He comes, and when He comes we will be changed and receive our everlasting bodies that will never wear out.

*1 Cor. 15:51-57 Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but **we will all be changed—in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet.** For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. **For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality.** When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory." "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. **But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.***

Philippians

Study 9

by Sandy Simpson

How To Be An Effective Christian

Phil. 4:1-9

The story is told of a young girl who accepted Christ as her Savior and applied for membership in a local church. "Were you a sinner before you received the Lord Jesus into your Life?" inquired an old deacon. "Yes, sir," she replied. "Well, are you still a sinner?" "To tell you the truth, I feel I'm a greater sinner than ever." "Then what real change have you experienced?" "I don't quite know how to explain it," she said, "except I used to be a sinner running after sin, but now that I am saved I'm a sinner running from sin!" she was received into the fellowship of the church, and she proved by her consistent life that she was truly converted.

(Our Daily Bread)

I am not what I might be, I am not what I ought to be, I am not what I wish to be, I am not what I hope to be. But I thank God I am not what I once was, and I can say with the great apostle, "By the grace of God I am what I am."

(John Newton)

Paul tells the Philippians how to stand firm in Christ.

*Phil. 4:1 ¶ Therefore, my brothers, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, **that is how you should stand firm in the Lord**, dear friends!*

2 I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to agree with each other in the Lord.

3 Yes, and I ask you, loyal yokefellow, help these women who have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

Paul expressed his love for the Philippians again. Paul was an encourager. He made sure they understood this before he launched into how to stand firm in the Lord. Paul also loved these two women, which is why he pleads with them. Today almost all rebuke is viewed as being "unloving". I have a saying at the end of my emails right now that says this: *"Truth is seen as "unloving" only by those who are convicted by it...and yet refuse to listen and repent."* The most loving thing you can do for a fellow believer who is living in error is to lovingly point out their sin and instruct them in the Word how to stand firm in the Lord. Those who are wise take rebuke and realize that it is coming from the Lord. One major problem in the churches today that is causing people not to stand firm in the Lord is the problem of arguing over unimportant things, gossip and slander. If you argue for the truth of God's Word, as Paul is doing, then that is a good thing. If you argue because you are trying to put another person down so you can rise higher, that is a bad thing. It can cause you to no longer stand firm in the Lord. Often loose talk, gossip and backbiting are a problem for women in the churches. This is not to say men don't do it, but there is something genetic in women that seems to make it hard for them to be quiet. I believe it is because men tend to prove themselves more in action, while women are masters of words. This is why women are often cautioned to allow the Lord to control their tongues.

*1 Timothy 3:11 In the same way, their wives are to be women worthy of respect, **not malicious talkers** but temperate and trustworthy in everything.*

*Titus 2:3 Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, **not to be slanderers** or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good.*

Men are cautioned to be sure their actions are right before the Lord.

*Colossians 3:19 Husbands, love your wives and **do not be harsh with them.***

*1 Peter 3:7 Husbands, in the same way **be considerate** as you live with your wives, and **treat them with respect** as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.*

*Galatians 6:4 **Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself,** without comparing himself to somebody else,*

Both of these overlap, and there are many verses about gossip and actions that apply to both men and women, but if we realize that women and men do have differences and those differences include positive aspects and negative aspects, we will be quicker to realize error in our own lives.

In this case of the two women, Paul asks the male leadership of the church to help them. He then ends this rebuke and admonition by validating that he believes that all their names are written in the book of life. “But I thought Christians couldn’t tell for sure who is saved and who is not?” Apparently Paul could, and so could the other Apostles. It is true that no one knows the final salvation state of anyone, and God is the ultimate and only judge of salvation. But we can tell by the teachings, prophecies and fruit of the Spirit in a person whether or not they are currently saved. This sounds weird, but Paul’s confidence was based on having tested them and found them to be preaching the Gospel and living and growing in the Lord.

Paul goes on with his list of how to stand firm in the Lord.

*Phil. 4:4 Rejoice **in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!***

If we are always joyful in the Lord, we will have a view of life different from the world. The world often views life as a series of unlucky accidents or as a dreary existence without purpose. But when we belong to the Lord our lives have ultimate meaning, and everything that happens in life is part of His greater plan.

*Psalms 24:1 Of David. A psalm. **The earth is the LORD’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it;***

*Proverbs 16:4 **The LORD works out everything for his own ends— even the wicked for a day of disaster.***

Rejoicing does not mean we do not have times of great sadness and sorrow also. But there is always a deep abiding joy in the knowledge that everything works together for good to those who love the Lord and are called according to His purpose (Rom. 8:28)

Phil. 4:5 Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.

We need to live lives of gentleness toward one another and in the face of a harsh, brutal and evil world. Our light shines when we face all kinds of situations with a gentleness that shows we are under self-control and confident in the Spirit. We should also conduct ourselves in gentleness because we realize that Jesus Christ is near. He is near because He is living in us. He is near because God is omnipresent. Most of all, He is near because He is coming again soon at any time. This causes us to have a different viewpoint of life, unlike evolutionists and other religions who think that this world will go on and on without purpose.

Phil. 4:6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

To stand firm in the Lord we are not to be anxious about things, but instead we bring our concerns, especially for others, before the Lord with thanksgiving and praise. Paul tells us that the Lord does want us to request of Him.

Luke 11:9 "So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.

Of course we are not to demand things of God, or ask outside of His will, or not according to His Word ... but God wants us to ask. We often do not have because we do not ask, and when we do ask we often ask the wrong thing for selfish reasons.

James 4:2-3 You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

When we give our whole lives over to the Lord and trust in Him to provide our needs and the needs of others, we then have His peace. That peace is a powerful witness to the world, which is not at peace. Muslims clearly have no peace. They need a witness from Christians to show that you can have perfect peace only in Christ Jesus. The peace that God gives will actually guard our hearts and minds against wandering from the truth and shrinking back. We can stand firm when we have the peace that Jesus Christ gives.

Phil. 4:8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable— if anything is excellent or praiseworthy— think about such things.

This verse is a very practical verse. If every Christian took this verse to heart they would avoid all kinds of temptations. Think of this verse when you begin to see life in a negative way. Think of this verse when you are tempted by past addictions. Think of this verse when you are looking at someone other than your husband or wife with lustful eyes. Think of this verse when you are planning to lie, or cheat, or steal. When we think about truth, what is noble (upstanding, has integrity), what is right, pure, lovely, and admirable and anything else that is excellent or praiseworthy, we are thinking about the things that God desires for us. If we will our minds full of these things, then there will be little room left

for lies, base things, wrong things, filthy things, ugly things, low things, poor things (not poor people but spiritually poor), and things that are not worthy of anyone's praise. To fill your mind with these things you need to be filling your mind with God's word, with songs and words of praise to the Lord, with prayers, with gentle encouraging words when they are called for or gentle rebuke when it is necessary. We need to fill our minds with truth and live in the truth.

Phil. 4:9 Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me— put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

Paul, again, tells the Philippians to follow his example. This is also a message for us. We should also follow the example of Paul and the Apostles. Can you tell your children "Whatever you have learned or received or heard or seen in me ... put into practice?" If not, why not?

When we do these things we will be able to stand firm in the Lord. When we stand firm in the Lord, He is with us. When God is with you, who can stand against you?

*Rom. 8:31-39 What, then, shall we say in response to this? **If God is for us, who can be against us?** He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all— how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? **Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen?** It is God who justifies. **Who is he that condemns?** Christ Jesus, who died— more than that, who was raised to life— is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. **Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?** Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. **For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.***

Philippians

Study 10

by Sandy Simpson

Contentment

Phil. 4:10-23

*Philip Parham tells the story of a rich industrialist who was disturbed to find a fisherman sitting lazily beside his boat. "Why aren't you out there fishing?" he asked. "Because I've caught enough fish for today," said the fisherman. "Why don't you catch more fish than you need?" the rich man asked. "What would I do with them?" "You could earn more money," came the impatient reply, "and buy a better boat so you could go deeper and catch more fish. You could purchase nylon nets, catch even more fish, and make more money. Soon you'd have a fleet of boats and be rich like me." The fisherman asked, "Then what would I do?" "You could sit down and enjoy life," said the industrialist. "What do you think I'm doing now?" the fisherman replied as he looked placidly out to sea.
(Our Daily Bread, May 18, 1994)*

There is a great lesson to be learned about being content. The whole world preaches against this idea daily on TV, in newspapers, in magazines, in movies, in music, even in the churches. We are told we must be upwardly mobile, that we must always be striving for something more, more stuff, more money, more fame, more beauty, more, more, more. Yet the message of the Bible is completely opposed to the message of the world. We are told by false teachers in the church to think positively, to make positive confessions and to speak things into existence with our mouths so we can have more, that God wants to give us more stuff, more power, more influence, more of the world. People like C. Peter Wagner say that the Church needs to rise up and overthrow the governments of the world and take over all the businesses and that the riches of the wicked will be given to Christians, etc. This is all an old trick of the enemy. If the devil can make you unsatisfied with where God has you in life, he has gained a foothold in your life he will not easily let go unless you repent of it.

In contrast to what the world and worldly false brethren teach, Paul tells us the following:

Phil. 4:10 ¶ I rejoice greatly in the Lord that at last you have renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you have been concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it.

11 I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.

12 I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.

13 I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

Paul is teaching the Philippians by example how to be satisfied with what the Lord provides in any situation. We as believers need to learn to be content with whatever situation the Lord has us in. We are to be witnesses for him wherever the Lord has us. Sometimes the Lord has us in a very difficult

place, perhaps for years. We need to learn to make the best of it and use our time wisely instead of complaining. Most of us here have learned what it means to be hungry at some time in our lives. We have lived with plenty or with want. All those situations should not matter to our relationship with the Lord or our witness. We need to stop spending all our time thinking about how unfortunate we are, or even how fortunate we are, and live our lives in thanksgiving before the Lord. We need to pour out our lives as a sacrifice to the Lord because we look forward to another country, a new heaven, a new earth, and an eternity with Him beyond these humble circumstances. We need to be able to say with Paul “*I can do everything through Him who gives me strength*”. God gives us strength to endure in any situation. That strength is not to be used in order to better our circumstances, but in finding what God wants us to do IN those circumstances. If we allow the Lord to work His will through us, then we are truly strong.

*Psalms 18:2 2 **The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge. He is my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.***

*Psalms 28:7 **The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and I am helped. My heart leaps for joy and I will give thanks to him in song.***

*Psalms 59:9 **O my Strength, I watch for you; you, O God, are my fortress,***

Phil. 4:14 Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles.

*15 Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, **not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only;***

16 for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid again and again when I was in need.

17 Not that I am looking for a gift, but I am looking for what may be credited to your account.

*18 I have received full payment and even more; **I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God.***

*19 **And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.***

The Philippians were a giving church. They gave even when other churches did not. They cared for Paul even when Paul was not asking for it. Yet Paul was also in need, particularly when he was in prison. Prison in those days was not like it is today where the government gives people three square meals, they can watch television, have game rooms, sports, medical attention, etc. Often people would bring things for Paul in prison to meet his basic needs. Paul says that our offerings are a sweet smelling fragrance to God. They are sweet smelling only if they are given freely. If Paul had demanded that the Philippians give him money or food, or if they had felt obligated to tithe, it would not have been pleasing to God. When teachers demand giving, when they try to put Old Testament tithing practices on their people, when they make people feel guilty if they do not give, they are taking away the joy of giving. Paul said this to the Corinthians:

*2 Corinthians 9:7 **Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.***

Tithing is fine if it is from the heart of the individual Christian and not a requirement put on them from pastors or organizations. This is one reason why TBN and other Christian Networks are so unbiblical. They put heavy burdens on people about giving, and even make promises of blessing to them that the Lord has not made. Giving should be free. People should give as the Lord gives them grace to do so and out of a thankful, joyful heart. The word for “cheerful” above is “*hilaros*” from which we get the words hilarious and hilarity. Hilarious means: causing or intended to cause laughter. Have you ever given an offering of food, clothing, money or something else to someone in need and found yourself smiling and even laughing? This is one of my favorite things to do, especially if you can do it in secret. It is a great joy to pull off a secret giving where you can just imagine how happy you have made the person.

Matt. 6:3-4 But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Paul ends his letter by giving praise where it is due.

Phil. 4:20 ¶ To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

21 Greet all the saints in Christ Jesus. The brothers who are with me send greetings.

22 All the saints send you greetings, especially those who belong to Caesar’s household.

23 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

It must have been an encouragement for the Philippians to know that through their giving and support of Paul there were converts even in Caesar’s household. Paul could have meant the Roman Christians in general, but there are documented men who had become Christians in Nero’s court because of Paul and other Christian witnesses in Rome. John Gill mentions that there was “*Torpes, a man in great favor and dignity in Nero’s court, and Evellius his counselor, who both suffered martyrdom under him, according to the Roman martyrology.*” Jamieson, Faucett and Brown say that there were “*slaves and dependents of Nero who had been probably converted through Paul’s teaching while he was a prisoner in the Praetorian barrack attached to the palace.*”

Paul gives praise to God from prison. This whole book is a lesson in humility, grace under pressure, contentment, standing firm in the Lord, and Paul’s confidence that the Christians at Philippi would stand with him to the end. The question is--will we stand firm to the end?