

# **A Brief Study of Philippians**

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# Chapter 1. Chapter 1

*"I miss you and pray for you, but let me share why I can rejoice in spite of my current circumstances." (Paul)*

## I cannot be with you, and I wish I could.

READ - *Philippians 1:1-11*

There are a couple of incidental lessons to learn before we see Paul's main point here.

1. First, notice *verse 1*, which provides some valuable teaching about the proper government of the local church.

QUESTION - What does *verse 1* teach us about the church?

ANSWER - We learn that there are 2 church officers, bishops and deacons. "Bishop" means "overseer" and is so translated other places in scripture. (cf. *Acts 20:17,28* for a couple of examples.) In the New Testament local church, a study of scripture reveals that there is the office of Pastor (called pastor, bishop, elder, and overseer at various places in scripture), and the office of deacon (cf. *Acts 6*)

2. Second, notice *verse 7*, where we get a clue as to the context for Paul's letter.

QUESTION - What clue do you see in this verse that helps us to understand Paul's situation as he writes?

ANSWER - "... *in my bonds...*" Paul is in prison at this time. *Philippians* is one of Paul's "prison epistles," so named because it was written during one of his imprisonments. We learn from our study of the Bible that Paul was imprisoned twice. As the book of *Acts* concludes, we find him in prison in Rome, but in that particular instance he was under house arrest. He was able to receive visitors, and was actually treated quite well, even though he was imprisoned. ILLUS - You might think of his state there as being similar to Martha Stewart's now, where she is not actually in a prison, but is nonetheless deprived of freedom and confined to a single portion of her home. *Philippians* was written during this time. There was a second imprisonment, and Paul wrote *2 Timothy* during that time. He was in a dungeon and awaiting death then, and that is apparent from reading *2 Timothy*. ILLUS - I have been in Rome and stood in the very dungeon cell from which Paul is believed to have written *2 Timothy*. It was an amazing sight.

3. Third, notice *verse 4*.

QUESTION - Does anything jump out at you from this verse, especially in light of Paul's imprisonment, which we just discussed?

ANSWER - "... *with joy...*" Paul was able to rejoice in spite of his circumstances, and this is the theme of the little book of *Philippians*. We will see it throughout the book as we study it. Notice for example:

BIBLE STUDY (have class read these) - *Philippians 1:18,25-26, 2:2,16-17,28,3:1,3, 4:1,4,10*

In all these verses, Paul writes of JOY and/or REJOICING.

*Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice. (Philippians 4:4)* This verse could be considered the theme of the book of *Philippians*.

And so, these 3 thoughts provide a backdrop against which to view the entire letter. He writes to his beloved church, many of whom he won to Christ. He writes during a time of dire circumstances; in spite of which he writes joyfully.

We can learn some things from Paul's attitude here. Even though he cannot be with his brothers and sisters in Christ, he does what he can to encourage and help them. We should do the same. Notice:

1. He prays for them - *vss. 3-4, 9-11*
2. He tells them he misses them - *vs. 8*

DISCUSSION - When we are separated one from another, do we do enough of these things? What can we learn from Paul's attitude and actions here that will help us in our relationships with other believers today?

DISCUSSION - How important are little things like letting people know you are praying for them? ILLUS - I have a friend in whose office I once sat, having a friendly conversation as he worked through his stack of mail. I watched as he froze over a postcard. He shared what it said. "I am praying for you everyday this week by name." My friend was visibly moved by this simple thought. Since then I've sent a few of those cards, and consider it vital to let people know I'm praying for them.

DISCUSSION - How important is it for others to know they are missed? How can we as believers live out that attitude in our homes, our church, and even in this class? Have you ever been out of church for a while and had nobody mention it? How did it make you feel? ILLUS - Just last week Beth mentioned some absentees. We need to remember Paul's thoughts here as we consider them. Let's let them know they are missed.

## I rejoice in spite of my circumstances.

READ - *Philippians 1:12-30*

In the first part of the chapter we learned that Paul's imprisonment impacted his relationship with his brothers and sisters in Christ. In this second part of the chapter, we learn that his imprisonment impacted the preaching of the gospel. These were two things that were always of paramount importance to Paul - his relationship with his churches / flock, and the continued preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ. In spite of these hardships, though, Paul was able to rejoice, and that is the great lesson of this chapter and this book - the Christian can rejoice in spite of their circumstances.

DISCUSSION - What impact did Paul's imprisonment have on the proclamation of the gospel? Notice *verse 12*. Was the preaching of the gospel hurt or helped?

DISCUSSION - Notice *vss. 13-17*. What were some of the reasons why gospel preaching and witnessing INCREASED when Paul was imprisoned?

1. He witnessed in prison - a new mission field! (*vs. 13*).  
ILLUS - Can you imagine what it would have been like to be a prison guard chained to the apostle Paul?
2. Other believers were emboldened by his example, and they increased their efforts. (*vs. 14*)
3. Some even increased their efforts for wrong reasons (*vs. 15*).

DISCUSSION - What was going on here?

QUOTE (Barnes) - "What was the ground of this "envy and strife" the apostle does not mention. It would seem, however, that even in Rome there was a party

which was jealous of the influence of Paul, and which supposed that this was a good opportunity to diminish his influence, and to strengthen their own cause. He was not now at large so as to be able to meet and confute them. They had access to the mass of the people. It was easy, under plausible pretences, to insinuate hints about the ambitious aims, or improper influence of Paul, or to take strong ground against him and in favour of their own views, and they availed themselves of this opportunity."

QUOTE (Peoples New Testament) "The motives of all preachers are not pure. Some still preach Christ, full of envy for other preachers, and some from a love of strife."

DISCUSSION - Does this kind of thing happen today? Share some examples if you can.

DISCUSSION - Look at *vss. 18-19*. What was Paul's attitude toward these things?

1. He rejoiced because Christ was being preached.

Regardless of the motives and methods of those who preach the gospel, that preaching will always be a good thing. (NOTE - Read this sentence a couple of times and ask for discussion.)

*Isaiah 55:11 So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.*

*John 12:32 And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.*

2. He rejoiced because his future was secure.

The remaining verses of *chapter 1* show Paul's confidence that if God wanted him to stay here longer, good would come of it. If God wanted him to come home to heaven, that would be wonderful. Either way, Paul could rejoice because he knew God was working His will in His life.

DISCUSSION - Does this have implications for you and I? When we find ourselves in difficult circumstances, can we learn anything from Paul that will help us? How?

Let's go back to *Philippians 1:6* as we conclude. Paul stated it earlier and explains it at the end of the chapter:

- God is in control - no matter what things look like.
- God is working in and through YOU.
- God will continue that work until He calls you home.
- Regardless of your circumstances, therefore, you can rejoice in Him. *vs. 4:4*

May God help us throughout the coming days and weeks to know that we can rejoice in spite of circumstances. May we put into practice the things we learned from Paul's handling of difficulty.



## Chapter 2. Chapter 2

*"I encourage you to put others first in everything, just as Jesus did."  
(Paul)*

READ - *Philippians 2*

### Introduction

Having read the chapter, let's begin our lesson today with some general discussion.

DISCUSSION - Of the 30 verses in this chapter, if you could pick just one of them and call it the theme verse for the chapter, which would you pick? Why?

DISCUSSION - If you could narrow it down even further, picking just one phrase or word from this chapter, and call it the theme of the chapter, what would it be?

I would suggest that the theme verse for this chapter is *vs. 2, "Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind."* And, if we narrow it even further to just a word or phrase, I would select those last two words as the central thought for this chapter - *"ONE MIND."*

Like with the previous chapter, we could construct a single sentence to sum up this chapter. For chapter 1, we said that single summary sentence was, "I miss you and pray for you, but let me share why I can rejoice in spite of my current circumstances." For chapter 2, that summary sentence might be, "I encourage you to put others first in everything, just as Jesus did."

Let's examine this chapter by breaking it down into 3 main topics:

- The EXPECTATION
- The EVIDENCE
- The EXAMPLE

### The expectation - "ONE MIND"

READ - *Philippians 2:2*

Let's break down *vs. 2* a little, and examine each phrase separately.

QUESTION - Paul says we should be "likeminded." What does this mean? How can we as a class / church practice this?

QUESTION - Paul says we should "have the same love." What does this mean? How would a church look that practiced this?

QUESTION - Paul says we should "be of one accord." What does this mean? How does it differ from the other two phrases he already provided?

So much of the Christian life has been injured by our obsession with the world's philosophy. The unbiblical teachings on the pre-eminence of self-esteem is no longer just creeping into our pulpits and churches... it is there, tearing away at the Bible which teaches just the opposite. We are all worried about ourselves and what is best for US. Think about it... if we are all individuals (which we are - like snowflakes, no two alike), and we are all concentrating and working toward what is best for us and our own self-esteem, then how can we "be of one accord?" Each of us have different needs and different wants, and therefore, we are not "of one accord" but of "many accords." This leads to the church being out of tune and out of harmony.

ILLUS - A high school orchestra was preparing for a concert that featured a pianist in a rendition of Grieg's A-minor concerto. Before the performance, it was customary

for the orchestra to tune up with an "A" sounded by the oboe player. But the oboist was a practical joker, and he had tuned his instrument a half step higher than the piano. You can imagine the effect. After the pianist played a beautiful introduction, the members of the orchestra joined in. What confusion! Every instrument was out of tune with the piano. What would it have been like if half the orchestra insisted on playing in one key and the other half in a different key?

ANSWER - Jamieson, Fausset and Brown, in their commentary on this passage, mention that this phrase could be literally translated "with united souls." That brings to my mind the idea of soul mates, a phrase usually applied to married couples. (ILLUS - The eHarmony.com ads come to mind.) Paul is here saying, though, that we as believers in a local church, should literally be "soul mates" with one another. (DISCUSS)

QUESTION - He sums up his instructions in this verse with the phrase "one mind." Does this bring any additional thoughts to mind for you?

DISCUSSION - We have been looking at this verse as it applies to Christians and the local church in general, and so we should. However, since this is the HomeBuilders class, we always try to apply the Word of God to our homes and marriages. So, do the concepts we have discussed apply there? What would the impact to our homes and marriages be if we added 5 words to the end of verse 2, "in your homes and marriages?" What is the impact when these concepts do not exist in our homes and marriages?

## The evidence - OTHERS FIRST

READ - *Philippians 2:3-4*

If we have one mind, and are truly soul mates, as *vs. 2* says we should be, then there must of necessity be some evidence of that. In other words, if you and I are "like-minded" then our actions will demonstrate that. If we "have the same love," then it will be evident to all around us. If we are "of one accord" (i.e. "with united souls"), then our every action, our every word, our every behavior will demonstrate it. Everything about us will demonstrate that we are truly "of one mind."

Paul gives a few evidences that will be present. You might think of a few others, too. I don't think the list is meant to be exhaustive. However, if we are "of one mind," then these things should be evident:

- *Nothing will be done through strife or vainglory... vs. 2*

Here is an evidence that is negative. In other words, it should be MISSING from our relationships.

QUESTION - What do you think this means?

QUESTION - What are some things that occur in the church, that are examples of strife or vainglory? How about the home; are there examples there?

QUESTION - If there is evidence of strife or vainglory in a home, a church, or any other relationship between believers, what does that signify? (not one mind) What should we do if we find these things?

- *Each esteem others better than themselves... vs. 2*

This one is positive. It should EXIST in our relationships.

This is pretty clear, and there is not much interpretation needed. Our relationships should be marked by humility (i.e. "*lowliness of mind*"). This is demonstrated when we BELIEVE that others are more important than we are (i.e. "*esteem other better*").

QUESTION - Notice the emphasis in that last sentence. It is important to understand that this evidence is something that takes place in our heart and mind. I cannot see what you think about me. (Probably best) You cannot see what I think

about you. You do not know whether I really consider you more important than myself. How, then, do we ensure that this evidence exists in us?

ANSWER - I think Paul is telling us to examine ourselves. I cannot see whether it exists in you, but I can sure see whether it exists in my own heart and mind. And so, let us make this a matter of introspection and prayer. "Lord, help me to truly believe others are more important than myself. Help me to be humble and unselfish in my heart and mind, always."

QUESTION - If we really felt this way, what impact would it have on our church? Our homes? Other relationships?

- "Look... on the things of others."

QUESTION - Is Paul saying the same thing as the previous point, or is he saying something different?

ANSWER - Where the previous point described an invisible attitude of the heart, this point describes a lifestyle that is visible to all. Both evidences need to be there, together - the heart that is truly humble and truly considers others more important, and the outward behavior that demonstrates it.

ILLUS - Unfortunately, we all believe in helping others, but too often have it backwards. We get offended when a need arises in our own life and the church is not there for us. We concentrate on how others fulfill this verse toward us, and ignore how we fulfill it toward them. We are like the little boy who learned the story of the good Samaritan in Sunday School: The story is told of a little boy who came home from Sunday school after learning about the good Samaritan. His mother, as was her custom, asked what the teacher talked about in class that morning. The lad related the parable in great detail. He had all the facts straight and all the people in their right character roles. Then she inquired, "And what is that story meant to teach us? Why did Jesus tell it?" The little boy replied immediately, "It means that when we are in trouble others should come to help us."

QUESTION - What are some ways we, as a church, might put feet to this verse? Be practical and specific.

QUESTION - What are some ways we might live this verse in our homes and marriages?

## The greatest example - Jesus Christ

READ - *Philippians 2:4-11*

QUESTION - Because we are looking at Philippians from a high level, we will not spend much time on this passage. Realize, though, that this is a very important set of verses theologically. These verses describe an important truth about Jesus Christ, so important that this truth has been given a big fancy theological name based on this passage. Does anybody know what that theological truth / word is?

ANSWER - These verses describe the "KENOSIS" of Christ, the "emptying" of Christ. *But made Himself of no reputation* in our English Bibles translates a Greek word which literally means "to empty."

QUESTION - What do you suppose it means when the Bible says Christ "emptied Himself?"

(Have some of the class share their notes from their study Bibles on this topic, but don't dwell on it.)

QUOTE (Ryrie Study Bible re: vs. 7) "The *kenosis* (emptying) of CHrist during His incarnation does not mean that He surrendered any attributes of deity, but that He took on the limitations of humanity. This involved a veiling of His preincarnate glory

(cf. *John 17:5*) and the voluntary waiving of some of His divine prerogatives during the time He was on earth. (cf. *Matthew 24:36*)

Without getting too deep into the theology of the kenosis, though, we can see that Paul is using it as an example of the humility of mind, the "other-mindedness", the "one mind" that we all need to have. Christ's mind was on others, always. Although He was and is the King of glory, King of Kings and Lord of Lords, creator of all that ever was and ever will be, yet He laid that aside to serve you and I. He clearly did NOT look on His own things, but on the things of others - you and I.

*For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth. (Luke 22:27)*

## Two other examples

We will just mention these two remaining examples, and leave them for you to ponder as homework assignments. Certainly Jesus Christ is the supreme example, but Paul here mentions two other men:

- Timothy - *vss. 20-22*

QUESTION - In what way was Timothy an example of the "one mind" that we need to have?

- Epaphroditus - *vss. 25, 30*

QUESTION - In what way was Epaphroditus an example of the "one mind" that we need to have?

We would do well to emulate both of these individuals.

And so, in summary:

- There is an EXPECTATION - We will have ONE MIND

*Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. (Philippians 2:2)*

- There is EVIDENCE - We will put OTHERS FIRST.

*Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. (Philippians 2:3-4)*

- There are EXAMPLES - Jesus Christ being the supreme example.

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

## Chapter 3. Chapter 3

*"No matter how your relationship to God currently, do not slack off or give up; keep pressing forward, for you are not there yet, and you have a great future to look forward to."  
(Paul)*

### **Beware of dogs - opposers from without.**

At the beginning of this chapter, and then again at the end, Paul gives similar warnings.

*Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision. (Philippians 3:2)*

*(For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.) (Philippians 3:18-19)*

QUESTION - Let's discuss Paul's use of the term "dogs." Why did he use that word? Was he warning us to avoid the canine species?

The term "dog" was a derisive term. Jews considered Gentiles dogs. There are various examples in scripture. Jesus said, in *Matthew 7:6, Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.*

Paul was not talking about Jews vs. Gentiles, though. He was using a common term of derision and applying it to something else.

QUESTION - So, what kind of warning was Paul giving here? Who was he talking about?

There were various groups that were a problem to the early church. They could all be described as false teachers.

- There were the Judaizers, who believed and taught that the Christians must obey the Jewish law in order to be saved. That law included circumcision, so this group may have been on Paul's mind in *vss. 2-3.*
- There were others who preached a life of excess and pleasure, and they may have been a problem. Perhaps Paul had these in mind in *vss. 18-19*
- Certainly, there were plenty of those in ministry and the church who "minded earthly things."

QUESTION - Is this relevant to us today? How?

QUESTION - What are some examples of dogs that we need to beware of today? Do we have "Judaizers"? Those who preach lifestyles of excess and pleasure? Those who mind earthly things? Can you cite examples?

We need to beware of dogs - false teachers, anybody who teaches something other than God's Word is suspect.

*if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them. (Isaiah 8:20)*

### **Beware of accomplishment - opposition from within.**

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

QUESTION - What were Paul's good works, in which he might have trusted?

QUESTION - Let's make sure we have this nailed down - Is it possible for us to attain salvation by our goodness, or by our good works?

*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)*

ILLUS - And yet, many people are confused by this issue - According to a recent poll, 88% of Catholics and a majority of Presbyterian and Methodist evangelizers (those who actively try to share their "faith") believe that "if people are generally good, or do enough good things for others during their lives, they will earn a place in heaven." (National & International Religion Report, 8-23-93)

*Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; (Titus 3:5)*

QUESTION - OK... so it is not possible for us to obtain salvation through works, but what about reward? Is it possible for our good works to improve our standing with God once we are saved?

Our standing with God is based entirely on our faith. *the just shall live by faith, we walk by faith* (Romans 1:17, 2 Corinthians 5:17). There is nothing we can add to that, and therefore no works enter into the equation for salvation or anything else. No matter what you do, either before or after salvation, your standing with God is perfect, because He sees you through the blood of Jesus Christ, who died for you.

*I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. (Galatians 2:20)*

Our relationship to God, then, is based entirely on faith and not on works. Paul has this in mind throughout this passage, as he reminds them of all he might have trusted in from his religious past, and his lifetime of good works. We know from a recent lesson, though, that there is also the matter of rewards for service, which will be awarded at the judgement seat of Christ. I believe Paul also had this in mind in this passage, which leads us to the next topic.

## **Be never satisfied; ever reaching.**

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

We have established that our past good works have nothing to do with our salvation. However, Paul seems to have an urgency here to continue working for God. He "follows after," he "reaches forth," he "presses toward the mark." All of these are present or future activities, indicating he is still trying and working.

QUESTION - Why? Why is he still pressing, striving, working, and running, if salvation is by faith? What do we learn from Paul's attitude? How do we apply it to our lives?

Paul worked not to earn his salvation, but to demonstrate it.

ILLUS - The other day I came home from work to find a plate of peanut-butter snack bars on the kitchen counter. Accompanying the delectables was a note from my 12-year-old daughter Melissa to her grandparents. "Dear Grandma and Grandpa, I made these for you. Love, Melissa." No one told her to do this. She didn't have to. She just did it. But why? Was Melissa trying make sure that they loved her? Was she trying to win Brownie points (well, snack -bar points) with her grandparents? No she cooked up this little confectionery delight just to show her grandparents she loves them. It was evidence of their close relationship. She did it because she is their granddaughter, not to somehow earn the right to be their granddaughter. That's how it is with the good works we should do as followers of Jesus Christ. We don't do good works so we can win a place in heaven. Rather, our good deeds show evidence of our salvation and faith in Christ. Jesus did all the work of providing salvation. But we still have

to work. Why? Not to win His favor but to show our love. It's an outpouring of a grateful heart. - JDB (Our Daily Bread, Sept 7, 1997)

With respect to our salvation, we must never consider our past works. We must walk by faith, and trust only Christ and His finished work on the cross to gain us entrance to the family of God. We must be born again by believing in Him. *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved. (Acts 16:31)* With respect to our daily walk with God AFTER WE ARE SAVED, we also need to IGNORE the past. We can never forget it, and that is not what Paul means here. But he teaches us that we should never be satisfied with it, and never consider that we have reached a stopping point. Never satisfied, ever reaching.

ILLUS - Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. was and still is generally regarded as one of the most outstanding justices in the history of the U.S. Supreme Court. He was known as the Great Dissenter because he disagreed with the other judges so much. Holmes sat on the Supreme Court until he was 91. Two years later, President Roosevelt visited him and found him reading Plato. "Why?" FDR asked. "To improve my mind," Holmes answered. (Bits and Pieces, December 13, 1990)

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

Paul is using athletic language here. He is describing the Christian life as a race, and saying that as a runner strains to reach the finish line, so we should strain forward toward the goal in our Christian race.

ILLUS - I am far from an athlete, but there have been times in my life when I tried to be. My successes were few, and my failures many. As a senior in high school I decided to try my hand at running track. The coach put me on the 220 relay team, thinking that anybody ought to be able to run half way around the track and hand a little baton to somebody else. Usually, I did ok at this, although I was no superstar. However, there was one invitational meet in the area (I've forgotten where) that is memorable. I was running one of the middle legs of the relay, and I received the baton in a clean exchange with the previous runner and took off at top speed. For some reason, I really wanted to do my best this day, and I blasted off like a rocket and tore around the track. However, in doing so, I did not pace myself, and at about the 150 yard mark, I had nothing left, and by the time I reached the exchange zone, I was staggering and nearly unable to raise my legs, which were now rubber. I managed to throw the baton into the outstretched arm of my teammate just seconds before I crashed to the ground. I have always considered that one of the more embarrassing moments in my athletic endeavors, but I wonder if it is a good illustration of the way we should run the race of our Christian lives. Flat out, giving our all with each step, not worrying about "pacing ourselves" or reaching the goal line - JUST RUNNING, and then reaching with all our might for that finish line.

QUESTION - What do you think? Is this an illustration of how we should run the race of our Christian lives? Why or why not? Is this what Paul describes in *chapter 3*?

ILLUS - General "Chinese" Gordon was leading his forces in the Sudan. He assigned one of his officers the task of capturing a strong fortress. After days of hard and demanding conflict, the officer returned to headquarters. Galloping into camp, he reined in his tired steed before General Gordon, saluted, and announced, "General, I have taken the fort!" His commander calmly replied, "Go take another!" (P.R.V., Our Daily Bread, May 7, 1982)

We must be never satisfied, ever reaching.

## **Be ever ready to meet Him.**

QUESTION - What impact does *vs. 20* have for us? What does it mean to you?

Chapter 3. Chapter 3

It tells us that our citizenship is ALREADY in heaven. Note the verb tenses in this verse. When you got saved, your address changed at that moment, and heaven is a present possession to you! Glory!

*Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. (John 5:24)*

Not only do we have the present possession of heaven, but we have the future realization of it, and we look forward to seeing it in new and glorified bodies (vs. 21).

QUESTION - Does this knowledge help us to fulfill the other things Paul has taught in this chapter? How?

## Chapter 4. Chapter 4

*"As you concentrate on running the race all the way to the end, and as you concentrate on standing fast in Christ, here are some things you should be doing." (Paul)*

We have spent three weeks in our study of Philippians now, and today, Lord willing, we will wrap it up. Before we examine the last chapter, though, let's review some of the things we learned. (REVIEW KEY POINTS FROM CHAPTERS 1-3)

As we turn to chapter four, we find Paul leaving us with some final thoughts:

1. There is a renewed call to steadfastness, unity, and effort. *vss. 1-3*

QUESTION - Can you see those three topics in those three verses? How are they applicable to us today?

QUESTION - What would happen in a local church where one or more of these three characteristics are absent?

QUESTION - In the context of our HomeBuilders Class we always try to make application to the home, so what about a marriage where one or more of these three characteristics are absent?

Paul gave us three vital truths here which apply to all our relationships. You want to see growth in your local church? Try emphasizing steadfastness, unity, and effort. You want to see success in your marriage? It takes steadfastness, unity, and effort. How about your job? To succeed you need steadfastness, unity, and effort.

2. There are some reminders about the importance of giving much and living with little. (*vss. 10-19*)

QUESTION - What does the Bible teach about giving? Should Christians do it? Why?

QUESTION - In these verses, Paul provides a wonderful promise to those who are givers. What is that promise that you may claim if you "give much?"

*But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:19)*

QUESTION - In these verses, Paul also teaches us some wonderful truths about the importance of "living with little?" Is there a promise or truth that we can claim if we are in that state?

*I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me. (Philippians 4:13)*

DISCUSSION - Think about these two promises for a moment. How can they help a struggling local church? How can they help a struggling marriage?

These are not truths that the world will teach you. These are Biblical paradoxes that can only be understood and realized by those who are born again and indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God. We succeed in the Christian life when we give much and live with little. Do you want a successful, growing, vibrant local church? Give much and live with little. Do you want a marriage that is a slice of heaven on earth? Give much and live with little. The same can be said for your job, your career, your education - any relationships can be improved and strengthened by application of these two truths - give much and live with little.

OK... we examined the beginning and the end of Paul's thoughts here, but now let's return to the middle. For in *vss. 4-9* I think we have the meat of this chapter, and the most important truths Paul wanted to pass on.

**Note:** SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION - Break the group into 3 smaller groups, and assign group 1 *vss. 4-5*, group 2 *vss. 6-7*, and group 3 *vss. 8-9*. For 5-10 minutes, let each group discuss the following questions within the context of their assigned verses.

QUESTION - How important is it that I live the truth of these verses?

QUESTION - What impact will there be on my various relationships (church, home, work, etc.) if I live the truth of these verses?

## Remember to REJOICE IN MODERATION

Have group 1 share their results with the class.

Remember that the theme of Philippians is JOY or REJOICING. Paul merely takes that theme up again here. No matter our circumstances, good or bad, we can rejoice in the Lord. Only Christians can do this.

ILLUS - As a third-century man was anticipating death, he penned these last words to a friend: "It's a bad world, an incredibly bad world. But I have discovered in the midst of it a quiet and holy people who have learned a great secret. They have found a joy which is a thousand times better than any pleasure of our sinful life. They are despised and persecuted, but they care not. They are masters of their souls. They have overcome the world. These people are the Christians - and I am one of them." (Moody Bible Institute's, *Today In The Word*, June, 1988, p. 18)

We are of that group, and so we need to rejoice in our relationship to Christ - ALWAYS.

Hand in hand with our ability to rejoice is the requirement that we moderate our lives. Let me read a quote from Barnes Commentary about this passage.

QUOTE - "Let your moderation be known unto all men. That is, let it be such that others may see it. This does not mean that they were to make an ostentatious display of it, but that it should be such a characteristic of their lives that it would be constantly visible to others. The word moderation refers to restraint on the passions, general soberness of living, being free from all excesses. The word properly means that which is fit or suitable, and then propriety, gentleness, mildness.-- They were to indulge in no excess of passion, or dress, or eating, or drinking. They were to govern their appetites, restrain their temper, and to be examples of what was proper for men in view of the expectation that the Lord would soon appear." (Barnes)

When people look at us, do they see REJOICING? If not, why would they want what we have?

When people look at us, do they see MODERATION in our lifestyles? If not, what is different between us and them?

## Remember to PRAY IN EVERYTHING

Have group 2 share their results with the class.

In these verses we have an imperative and a promise - pray about everything, and God will give you peace about everything.

We face more decisions on a daily basis than people did in the past. We have, I believe, more things that require prayer than ever before. And yet, we don't pray enough, and we don't have peace enough. Our churches would be more successful and fruitful if we practiced more prayer. Our homes would benefit, and all our relationships - if

we would just pray more. That was Paul's thought in these 2 verses - pray about everything, and God will give you peace about everything.

ILLUS - In one region of Africa, the first converts to Christianity were very diligent about praying. In fact, the believers each had their own special place outside the village where they went to pray in solitude. The villagers reached these "prayer rooms" by using their own private footpaths through the brush. When grass began to grow over one of these trails, it was evident that the person to whom it belonged was not praying very much. Because these new Christians were concerned for each other's spiritual welfare, a unique custom sprang up. When ever anyone noticed an overgrown "Prayer path," he or she would go to the person and lovingly warn, "Friend, there's grass on your path!" - RWD (Our Daily Bread, November 18, 1996)

Is there grass on your path? How is your prayer life, Christian? Husband, how often do you pray for your personal purity and your walk with Christ? How often do you pray for your wife? Wife, how about you? How often do you pray for yourself, and for your husband?

We can experience the peace of God in everything, if we will just practice praying about everything.

## Remember to **GUARD YOUR THOUGHT LIFE**

Have group 3 share their results with the class.

Here we have 2 truths which are unbelievably relevant to 21st century Christians. If we would obey these verses, we must THINK about right things, and DO right things.

ILLUS - Seen on a bumper sticker - "I can read your mind and you ought to be ashamed of yourself. (GOD)"

Bumper stickers have a way of capturing truth in a few words. The fact is, God CAN and DOES read your thoughts. He knows your innermost self, and is privy to every secret conversation of your mind. What do you think about? Few things are as important and fundamental to your relationship with Christ as your thought life. Why? Because thoughts left alone become actions - ALWAYS!

DISCUSSION - What do you think of that last statement? True or false? If it is true (and I believe it is), what ramifications do our thoughts have to our walk with Christ? How about to our marriage relationships?

There are various things we face today that bombard our thought life with more intensity than any in the past have faced. Television is at the top of the list. I am convinced that we need to turn it off if we find it affects our thought life. If you think more about American Idol than you do about Jesus Christ, then you need to turn it off - it is taking over your thought life. If you think more about Survivor than you do about Christ, turn it off. Television can be a wonderful medium of information, it can provide harmless and relaxing entertainment, or it can change the way you think. If it is the latter, you are on dangerous ground - turn it off.

There is a website called [www.tvturnoff.org](http://www.tvturnoff.org). I do not know whether it is a Christian organization or not, but they sponsor an annual TV Turnoff week, which just happens to be April 25 - May 1 this year. Consider doing it - try living without the TV for 1 week. Read your Bible more, talk to each other more, go for walks, play games - there are an infinite number of ways to occupy the time TV has taken - and your thought life will benefit. Some statistics from [tvturnoff.org](http://tvturnoff.org):

1. Time per day that TV is on in an average US home:  
7 hours, 40 minutes
2. Amount of television that the average American watches  
per day: over 4 hours

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3. Time spent daily with screen media for U.S. children age six and under: about 2 hours
4. Percentage of US families with children age 0-6 with at least one television: 99
5. Percentage of US households with 3 or more TVs (2003): 50
6. Percentage of parents who say that if they have something important to do, it is likely that they will use the TV to occupy their child: 45
7. Percentage of Americans who always or often watch television while eating dinner: 40
8. Percentage of Americans who say they watch too much TV: 49
9. Time per week that parents spend in meaningful conversation with their children: 38.5 minutes
10. Percentage of 4-6 year-olds who, when asked, would rather watch TV than spend time with their fathers: 54

Of course, TV is only one area where our thought lives are bombarded. The internet is another. I'm sure there are many, and I do not mean to single out only television. Paul teaches clearly that we need to THINK RIGHT THOUGHTS. Husbands need it, wives need it, and children need it - a RIGHT THOUGHT LIFE. May we learn to guard against anything that would hinder that.

Paul also teaches that we need to DO RIGHT THINGS. This springs from our thought life. We will do those things that we think about. It is a barometer indicating the clarity and purity of our thought life. If an unbeliever were to examine your daily activities, would he notice anything different than his own? What would he conclude from that? And so, we need to DO RIGHT THINGS.

May God help us to THINK RIGHT and DO RIGHT.