

April 30, 1995

"At One With Christ"
Philip. 1

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

I. The congregation of believers at Philippi was the first church established by Paul in the Roman province of Macedonia. God's Word at Acts 16:6-15 relates that on Paul's second missionary endeavor, after going throughout the provinces of Phrygia, Galatia and Mysia, they thought to go northeastward into Bithynia, but God (the Holy Spirit) would not permit them to do so. At Troas in Mysia, a vision appeared at night to Paul in which a Macedonian begged the apostle to come over to Macedonia and help them there. Thereafter Paul's party (Silas, Timothy, and Luke) set sail from Troas, and after following a course through Samothracia and Neapolis, they arrived at Philippi in Macedonia. Philippi was a Roman colony. Colony status was given as a special concession by the Roman government. Only at Acts 16:12 does the word appear in the New Covenant. A colony was a settlement of Roman citizens, authorized by the government in conquered territory. The settlers were usually retired Roman soldiers, settled in places where they could keep enemies of the empire in check. They were the aristocracy of the provincial towns where they lived. Such colonies had the rights and privileges of Italian cities, i.e., municipal self-government and exemptions from poll and land taxes. On the first Sabbath Paul and his fellow believers went down along the river there and held a prayer meeting. Their prayers were heard by a Jewish business woman from Thyatira who was also there with other women for religious worship. The business woman's name was Lydia, and her business was selling purple cloth. When Paul witnessed to her of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Lord opened her heart, and she believed the Gospel. She and her family were baptized and shared with Paul and his group her living quarters. Thus began the first major penetration of the Gospel into Gentile territory, the first European church founded by Paul. (For the full account, see Acts 16:9-40).

II. Since this letter to the Philippian believers was hand-carried by Epaproditus from Rome in about 62 AD and Paul had established the Philippian church in about 52 AD, approximately ten years had passed in between. Paul had been through many trials, persecutions, and imprisonments during that ten years, but his memory of the Philippian experience was very positive, even though he had been publicly beaten and inappropriately jailed there. However, keenly planted in Paul's mind in the prison in Rome were Lydia and the jailor's acceptance of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, along with others. Their faith in the Lord made Paul's addressing them as saints appropriate, along with the overseers (spiritual leaders) and deacons (those servants of the Lord who managed the group's temporal matters). Paul assured the believers there that he still thanked God for their faith and that they could rely upon the grace and peace of God the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ, the Lord. The apostle was confident that God who had begun his work through them would not abandon them but would complete "until the day of Jesus Christ," i.e., when Jesus could return and directly rule God's kingdom. It should be noted that the expression "the day of Jesus Christ" appears twice in this first chapter, in vs. 6 and 10.

Because God will be ever faithful in his promise through Jesus Christ, so should the believers remain faithful as well in their good works toward one another and in sharing the Gospel to those outside the group. This attitude of humility and service should never cease among the fellowship of believers there in Philippi, [or anywhere else at any time, for that matter]. Paul's attitude toward his own imprisonment (vs.12) was much like that of Joseph in the Old Covenant period (Gen. 45:3-9). God was using the providence of Paul to further the spread of the Gospel of God just as God was using the selling of Joseph into Egyptian slavery by his hateful brothers to "preserve you a posterity (remnant) in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance," Gen. 45:7. Paul uses the fact that he has been placed in prison to influence those in the Roman Emperor's palace and others who knew those people. Not only were nonbelievers influenced by Paul's testimony, but also other believers were strengthened by witnessing his strength and endurance, in spite of the troubles and persecutions his faith in Jesus Christ was causing him. Other believers were bolder to continue their witnessing because of Paul's example. At this point in the letter God makes a point that is very relevant for us today, vss. 15-18. Paul states that Jesus is proclaimed by some because of their response to their knowledge of realizing that they have eternal life forever. Others proclaim Christ for selfish reasons, to adversely affect believers such as Paul. The question is asked, "Should we stop witnessing for Christ, because some do so contrary to proper decorum?" Paul makes it clear that, whatever ones motive, however Christ is proclaimed, witnessing should bring joy to all believers. The biggest fault is for anyone to ignore the claims of Christ for any reason.

III. In vs. 19 Paul stresses the dependency of his spiritual condition (salvation) upon his relationship with the Spirit that was in Jesus Christ, God's Holy Spirit. Paul's expectation and hope in the future of his relation with Jesus Christ abolished shame which could be tied to relying upon a suffering servant as the most important decision one can be made in anyones life. That decision involved not only ones physical life but continued after ones physical body is laid to rest in the earth. As Paul put it, "For me to live (physically) is Christ, and to die (physically) is gain." In fact, he went on to say, "For I am hard pressed between the two, having a desire to depart (die physically) and be with Christ which [I know] will be exceedingly better." To counter the idea that Paul was, in fact, suicidal, he adds, "Nevertheless, to remain in the flesh (physically alive) is more needful for you." For example, Paul's commission which involved making God's Word complete was not only needful for the Philippians but for the Couples Class of the First Baptist Church of Tallahassee, Florida in 1995. Paul then closed the chapter with encouragement to practice their faith even if they met with persecution, because they were "at one" with Jesus Christ (atonement).

Standing on the promises that cannot fail, when the howling storms
of doubt and fear assail,
By the living Word of God I shall prevail standing on the promises
of God, my Savior. I'm standing on the promises of God!

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Teacher

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Why not
apostles
None
strictly
Roman

← examined + Acts 16:17 +
visited Philippi at least 3 times Acts 16 + 20; II Cor. 2:13 Luke left at P. Philippi 20:5-7 on 3rd journey

II. Since this letter to the Philippian believers was hand-carried by Epaproditus from Rome in about 62 AD and Paul had established the Philippian church in about 52 AD, approximately ten years had passed in between. Paul had been through many trials, persecutions, and imprisonments during that ten years, but his memory of the Philippian experience was very positive, even though he had been publicly beaten and inappropriately jailed there. However, keenly planted in Paul's mind in the prison in Rome were Lydia and the jailor's acceptance of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, along with others. Their faith in the Lord made Paul's addressing them as saints appropriate, along with the overseers (spiritual leaders) and deacons (those servants of the Lord who managed the group's temporal matters). Paul assured the believers there that he still thanked God for their faith and that they could rely upon the grace and peace of God the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ, the Lord. The apostle was confident that God who had begun his work through them would not abandon them but would complete "until the day of Jesus Christ," i.e., when Jesus could return and directly rule God's kingdom. It should be noted that the expression "the day of Jesus Christ" appears twice in this first chapter, in vss. 6 and 10.

↑ the same time referred to in Isa. 40
"the day of the Lord" or "that day"

See Acts 2:12, 17, 20, 21
Don't worry if you can't
... ..

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Standing on the promises that cannot fail, when the howling storms of doubt and fear assail,

By the living Word of God I shall prevail standing on the promises of God, my Savior. I'm standing on the promises of God!

May 7, 1995

"Believers And Humility"
Phili. 2

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

I. We noted last Lord's Day that there were some individuals who were competing for recognition within the early church at Philippi. Euodius and Syntyche Paul mentions specifically and by name, 4:2. In Chap. 2 the apostle illustrates by examples how believers should, under God, be humble and willing to follow the Lord's will. Vss. 1-4 give a general attitude which should prevail within a congregation of those with faith in Jesus as Savior and Lord. Grammatically the concepts in vs. 1 are stated in what is called the subjunctive mood (of mode) , i.e., the property of a verb that denotes the state of mind in which the action is conceived. (We noted the importance of this element at Heb. 6:6 having to do with a believers assurance of eternal life.) However, in Philipi. 2:1 Paul's state of mind was positive as compared to negative in the Heb. passage. He states, "If there is any encouragement in [our faith in] Christ, if any consolation [in his love for us as believers], if any fellowship [meeting of the minds] with the [God's Holy] Spirit, if any [sympathy with] feeling of mercy [because of what God has done for believers through Jesus Christ]," then we should behave in certain ways. In vs. 2, "Make my (Paul's) joy complete by demonstrating as a group [like my assumptions in vs. 1] having this outstanding [Godly] love to a person (everyone). Vss. 3 and 4 approaches a proper fellowship of believers from a negative viewpoint and contrasts. Your motives for what you think and do should not be caused by contention, dissension or seeking ones own selfish position [at the expense of the welfare of the group]. To the contrary, ones attitude should be humble, considering the position of others as having some importance in the collective decisions which are to be made. Every believer should not be totally egotistical but give credence to every position in the group. The first four vss. in this chapter is the groundwork for the remainder of the chapter. It makes clear that Paul assumed a local congregation of believers to be a democracy in the way they conducted their affairs and that every person's ideas should not be overlooked. (For settling matters of grave concern in a local congregation, see Acts 1:20-26; 11:2-4,17-18; 13:2-4. Differences between individuals was not settled in the same way, e.g., Acts 15:36-40; Gal. 2:11-14.)

II. To further strengthen Paul's exhortation for humility among the Philippian believers, he begins listing those who demonstrate or have demonstrated the kind of humiliation which should characterize a believer. His first example is the superlative of those who express ultimate humility (submissive to God the Father). Believers should tune their own wills to live lives based upon the principles which Jesus Christ practiced. Jesus as God in a human body and circumstance did not take advantage of the situation by negating the will of other human beings. He did not ever demonstrate his control over his creation for selfish purposes (humanly speaking). Not only that, he conducted his affairs as a servant and told his followers that the greatest (most effective according to God's reckoning) of his followers would be those who served others rather than self, Matt. 20:27. Jesus himself exercised the ultimate humility

by giving his body and spirit (Acts 2:31) to be sacrificed to physical and spiritual death because of the separation (through sin) of all people from God the Father. For demonstrating such humility God the Father has "highly exalted" him and placed his name at the head of all names. In the presence of Jesus, God the Father has proclaimed that every human knee shall bow, therefore, to recognize the supremacy of Jesus Christ above every thing or person of all time in all of God's creation. For God to be pleased every tongue is to confess Jesus as God's Savior and Lord. Only such confession gives God the glory which he (God) deserves and expects. Because of God's expression of his own love for mankind as God's creation through sacrificing his own only begotten Son, Jesus the Christ, we should practice the lives of ones whose spirits have been salvaged through faith in Jesus. " - - - work during the remainder of your earthly lives like the salvaged people (reborn) you are with extreme seriousness and earnestness, and note that your conduct is the expression of God's Spirit working in and through you to bring pleasure to himself," vss. 12-13. As you are so led you will do things without murmuring and disputing as true sons of God, even though you are living during a time of a crooked and perverse period (generation). Your lives should shine like a light in black darkness, Matt. 5:16. In "the day of Christ," Paul will rejoice, because their lives would be "holding fast" to the very word (God's communication with mankind) of life (the state of being at one with God).

III. In vss. 17 and 18 Paul indicates that he considers himself humbly committed to Christ's cause in bringing to them the message that brought their faith in Jesus Christ. Following his own example, he mentions (vss. 19-24) his fellow servant Timothy who would be coming to be with the Philippian believers shortly so that Paul could learn of their welfare. The apostle contrasts Timothy's service as selfless when compared to others who seek their own personal gain rather than furthering the cause of Christ. In vs. 24 Paul expresses the hope that he himself would be able to come to Philippi for a visit. [Whether he was able to, the Bible does not relate.] Beginning with vs. 25 and through the remainder of Chap. 2, Paul gives the Philippians information about Epaphroditus who was the messenger to carry this letter to them and who was also a native of Philippi. In this short passage we learn much about Epaphroditus. He was a believer (brother), a fellow worker in spreading the Gospel, and server of Paul's needs while the apostle was imprisoned there in Rome. He was homesick for Philippi in part, because the Philippians had sympathized with him while he had been very ill. In fact, Paul states that he had been so sick that he nearly died, but God had been merciful and had spared his life. God's mercy in sparing his life was also an expression of mercy for Paul, because taking away Epaphroditus' helpful service would have caused Paul much grief. The helper's service in the Lord's work, in fact, had been an aggravating factor in his illness.

All to Jesus I surrender, all to him I freely give
I will ever love and trust him, in his presence daily live.
All to Jesus I surrender, humbly at his feet I bow;
Let me feel the Holy Spirit, guide me, Jesus, guide me now.

Matt. 5:5 Happy are the meek
Matt. 11:29 I am meek and lowly

WA

May 7, 1995

"Believers And Humility"
Phili. 2

Couples Class
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Read
2 matts
at top
↑

4 Pet. 3:18-22

WA

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 I will ever love and trust him, in his presence daily live.
 All to Jesus I surrender, humbly at his feet I bow;
 Let me feel the Holy Spirit, guide me, Jesus, guide me now.

May 14, 1995

"The Flesh Will Fail"
Phili. 3

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

I. In Chap. 3 Paul does what in today's parlance we would state "gets down to the nitty-gritty" about a saving faith of an individual believer's trust in God's saving grace in Jesus Christ. He strips away the farcical, hypocritical coating from ones faith to reveal that which is genuine and real. In Chap. 1 he has discussed a believer's joy seven though he or she is required to suffer for his or her faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Remember that at the time Paul was writing this portion of God's Word, he, himself, was "serving time" (in jail) for his declaration of a personal faith in God's Messiah, Jesus Christ. In Chap. 2 Paul made clear what a joy it was, and is, to experience the life of serving God by subjecting oneself to self-discipline (with the aid of the Holy Spirit) and thereby pleasing the Lord God through personal testimony to God's saving grace, and righteous living. Even as Christ suffered as a servant of God the Father, so should we believers serve our loving Creator in humility as new creatures (spiritually reborn) through God's love and grace by honoring our trust in his only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. And now in Chap. 3 Paul relates that a believer is to realize abundant joy in simply believing God's promise in and through Jesus Christ. Reflect on Jesus' words in John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Since Jesus told that truth to Nicodemus one night and since Paul wrote to the Philippians, many who have claimed to be following Jesus Christ have woven into God's grace a need to supplement that grace (through Jesus Christ), ones own contribution to God's spiritual reclamation process. In fact, we learned in II Thes. 2:7 that this iniquity had begun already to work in the world. It is evident now that those who began at that time (c. 51AD) to reinterpret God's grace have invalidated the original Gospel truth with a sophisticated system which incorporates mankind's additional contribution to God's free grace through the "once and for all" gift of eternal life to those who trust in Jesus' merit alone, Heb. 9:24-28 - 10:2,10,14,23-25. Such amalgamation of self "goodness" (so determined through ones "keeping of the law") into God's grace as a means of satisfying God concerning mankind's sin problem, is anathema (accursed), I Cor. 16:22; Gal. 1:6-12; Jude 3-4; II Pet. 2:20.

II. To understand this third chapter of Philippians one must, I believe, sense the situation as noted above. Chap. 3 begins by Paul's telling believers to "rejoice in the Lord." Such admonition is not tedious (boring by being repeated often) rather is safe, he affirms, vs. 1. He places a believer's reason to rejoice not in oneself, not what one has, not in paying ones just debts, etc., but in the Lord exclusively. A believer should do good things not in order to make him or her become or maintain being a child of God (reborn), but rather, he or she should do good things that please God out of gratitude for what God has done through Jesus Christ for them who trust (believe) him. The fourth stanza of Isaac Watts' hymn, "At the Cross," beautifully puts our obligation and

privilege to respond to God's love for us in this way, "But drops of grief can ne'er repay the debt of love I owe. Here, Lord, I give myself away, 'Tis all that I can do. At the cross, at the cross, where I first saw the light, and the burden of my heart rolled away. It was there by faith I received my sight, and now I am happy all the day!" We believers are not obligated to keep the law but to love Jesus Christ and do what he says. The difference is in what motivates ones attitudes and actions, Rom. 3:21-31. A human spirit which has been quickened by God (reborn) can depend upon God's Holy Spirit to guide ones life. Jesus promised such an arrangement in John 14:26, and I believe him.

III. Beginning with vs. 2 and through 9 Paul told the Philippians (and us) to be cautious of dogs, evil workers, because they would attempt to combine God's pure grace as an alloy with a person's own merit. (Alloy: to reduce the purity of by mixing with a less valuable metal) For an explanation of the term "dogs," see Prov. 26:11; Isa. 56:10-11; II Pet. 2:22. The apostle here uses his own life as an example. He tells of the confidence he had in his own "perfection" (blameless) according to his keeping of the law, but this state of self righteousness he counted as dung (waste) after his experience through faith in Jesus Christ, vs. 9. In vss. 10-16 Paul explains that spiritual salvation is a process since the ultimate reward for trusting Christ is not attained while still in the mortal body, John 12:24; I Cor. 15:35-38. During the mortal body period of eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ, one should do even as Paul, "Press toward the goal of the upward calling of God in Christ Jesus." If we consider ourselves to be mature (perfect), there is still more to be gained, because "God shall reveal even this (more growth) unto you." However, our growth should remain within the same framework (free grace) which we attained at the beginning or our walk with God through faith in Christ. There is a continual temptation to take advantage of our being in the family of God to turn that relationship into personal gain. When a believer entrusts his spirit to God through Christ, that spiritual experience does not do away with the weakness of the flesh to do contrary to God's holy will. Jesus himself made this truth evident when, during the last week of his mortal life as God in human flesh, said, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will (as a human), but as thou wilt." Just after this prayer, Jesus said to James, John and Peter, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit (human) indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." In this frame of mind Paul in vss. 17-21 cautioned against living for the flesh rather than ones reborn spirit. He took a position that not many of us would be willing to take, "Believers follow along with me and note those who walk otherwise. Many who have joined what the world knows as Christianity, I tell you with eyes full of tears, are really "enemies of the cross of Christ." I believe that Paul (God's Word) is telling us in vs. 18 that many are claiming to be followers of Christ but are diluting Christ's sacrifice (the cross) with their own "righteousness." This practice was rampant among the Judaizers (Those who would insist that a believer must incorporate the keeping of the law with their faith in Christ to be right with God.) The end of such an arrangement is destruction, vs. 19. Our conversation is heavenly (spiritual), and so we should place our trust in Jesus Christ alone at the expense of all else, Acts 4:19; Rom. 9:30-33.

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May 14, 1995

"The Flesh Will Fail"
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Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

I. In Chap. 3 Paul does what in today's parlance we would state "gets down to the nitty-gritty" about a saving faith of an individual believer's trust in God's saving grace in Jesus Christ. He strips away the farcical, hypocritical coating from ones faith to reveal that which is genuine and real. In Chap. 1 he has discussed a believer's joy, even though he or she is required to suffer for his or her faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Remember that at the time Paul was writing this portion of God's Word, he, himself, was "serving time" (in jail) for his declaration of a personal faith in God's Messiah, Jesus Christ. In Chap. 2 Paul made clear what a joy it was, and is, to experience the life of serving God by subjecting oneself to self-discipline (with the aid of the Holy Spirit) and thereby pleasing the Lord God through personal testimony to God's saving grace, and righteous living. Even as Christ suffered as a servant of God the Father, so should we believers serve our loving Creator in humility as new creatures (spiritually reborn) through God's love and grace by honoring our trust in his only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. And now in Chap. 3 Paul relates that a believer is to realize abundant joy in simply believing God's promise in and through Jesus Christ. Reflect on Jesus' words in John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Since Jesus told that truth to Nicodemus one night and since Paul wrote to the Philippians, many who have claimed to be following Jesus Christ have woven into God's grace a need to supplement that grace (through Jesus Christ), ones own contribution to God's spiritual reclamation process. In fact, we learned in II Thes. 2:7 that this iniquity had begun already to work in the world. It is evident now that those who began at that time (c. 51AD) to reinterpret God's grace have invalidated the original Gospel truth with a sophisticated system which incorporates mankind's additional contribution to God's free grace through the "once and for all" gift of eternal life to those who trust in Jesus' merit alone, Heb. 9:24-28 - 10:2,10,14,23-25. Such amalgamation of self "goodness" (so determined through ones "keeping of the law") into God's grace as a means of satisfying God concerning mankind's sin problem, is anathema (accursed), I Cor. 16:22; Gal. 1:6-12; Jude 3-4; II Pet. 2:20.

II. To understand this third chapter of Philippians one must, I believe, sense the situation as noted above. Chap. 3 begins by Paul's telling believers to "rejoice in the Lord." Such admonition is not tedious (boring by being repeated often) rather is safe, he affirms, vs. 1. He places a believer's reason to rejoice not in oneself, not what one has, not in paying ones just debts, etc., but in the Lord exclusively. A believer should do good things not in order to make him or her become or maintain being a child of God (reborn), but rather, he or she should do good things that please God out of gratitude for what God has done through Jesus Christ for them who trust (believe) him. The fourth stanza of Isaac Watts' hymn, "At the Cross," beautifully puts our obligation and

privilege to respond to God's love for us in this way, "But drops of grief can ne'er repay the debt of love I owe. Here, Lord, I give myself away, 'Tis all that I can do. At the cross, at the cross, where I first saw the light, and the burden of my heart rolled away. It was there by faith I received my sight, and now I am happy all the day!" We believers are not obligated to keep the law but to love Jesus Christ and do what he says. The difference is in what motivates ones attitudes and actions, Rom. 3:21-31. A human spirit which has been quickened by God (reborn) can depend upon God's Holy Spirit to guide ones life. Jesus promised such an arrangement in John 14:26, and I believe him.

III. Beginning with vs. 2 and through 9 Paul told the Philippians (and us) to be cautious of dogs, evil workers, because they would attempt to combine God's pure grace as an alloy with a person's own merit. (Alloy: to reduce the purity of by mixing with a less valuable metal) For an explanation of the term "dogs," see Prov. 26:11; Isa. 56:10-11; II Pet. 2:22. The apostle here uses his own life as an example. He tells of the confidence he had in his own "perfection" (blameless) according to his keeping of the law, but this state of self righteousness he counted as dung (waste) after his experience through faith in Jesus Christ, vs. 9. In vss. 10-16 Paul explains that spiritual salvation is a process since the ultimate reward for trusting Christ is not attained while still in the mortal body, John 12:24; I Cor. 15:35-38. During the mortal body period of eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ, one should do even as Paul, "Press toward the goal of the upward calling of God in Christ Jesus." If we consider ourselves to be mature (perfect), there is still more to be gained, because "God shall reveal even this (more growth) unto you." However, our growth should remain within the same framework (free grace) which we attained at the beginning or our walk with God through faith in Christ. There is a continual temptation to take advantage of our being in the family of God to turn that relationship into personal gain. When a believer entrusts his spirit to God through Christ, that spiritual experience does not do away with the weakness of the flesh to do contrary to God's holy will. Jesus himself made this truth evident when, during the last week of his mortal life as God in human flesh, said, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will (as a human), but as thou wilt." Just after this prayer, Jesus said to James, John and Peter, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit (human) indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." In this frame of mind Paul in vss. 17-21 cautioned against living for the flesh rather than ones reborn spirit. He took a position that not many of us would be willing to take, "Believers follow along with me and note those who walk otherwise. Many who have joined what the world knows as Christianity, I tell you with eyes full of tears, are really "enemies of the cross of Christ." I believe that Paul (God's Word) is telling us in vs. 18 that many are claiming to be followers of Christ but are diluting Christ's sacrifice (the cross) with their own "righteousness." This practice was rampant among the Judaizers (Those who would insist that a believer must incorporate the keeping of the law with their faith in Christ to be right with God.) The end of such an arrangement is destruction, vs. 19. Our conversation is heavenly (spiritual), and so we should place our trust in Jesus Christ alone at the expense of all else, Acts 4:19; Rom. 9:30-33.

May 21, 1995

"Rejoice In Peace"
Philipi. 4

Couples Class
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Teacher

I. When a person of influence (Paul) tempers suggestions for correcting problems, with love and concern, the entire process of improvement is less debilitating. Paul's method of communicating a way for the Philippian congregation to be more effective in relating to one another and in witnessing to those outside the group was to relate properly to the Lord at the same time. Note the prepositional phrase in vs. 1, 2, 4, and 10, "in the Lord." The apostle is careful not to suggest improvement primarily in their relating to himself but "in the Lord." The contexts of those phrases are: stand fast in the Lord, "be of the same mind in the Lord," "rejoice in the Lord," even as Paul himself, "rejoiced in the Lord." In fact, in vs. 5b Paul testified that, even now during his being in prison for his witness, he had not discontinued his rejoicing in their trust in and service to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. These believers at Philippi were Paul's "joy and reward." He mentions especially those women who had been so instrumental in helping him, Timothy, Silas and Luke establish the congregation there in Philippi at the outset. These were the ones we would identify as the charter members. Remember the riverside worship service when Lydia accepted Jesus as her personal Savior, Acts 16:11-15, along with other women? It would be a mistake to overlook Paul's terms of endearment in vs. 1, "dearly beloved," "longed for," and, again, "my dearly beloved." No doubt Paul felt a genuine, sincere love for his fellow-believers and therefore felt free to do what followed in vs. 2, a plea to the two women who were apparently in disagreement about some concern of the congregation. We should note that Paul did not have in mind that Euodias and Syntyche be conformists on every issue. For example, he did not have in mind that they agree on such mundane matters as drape colors or whether to place the lectern in the middle or on the left of the meeting area. No, Paul stressed that their minds should be alike "in the Lord." Their views of the Lordship of Jesus Christ should not be at odds. If this nucleus of faith is correct, then the less important concerns will be settled without major hindrances to the congregation and the cause of Christ.

II. We should give attention to Paul's mention of Clement in vs. 3. He is included in those who labored with Paul in the Gospel there at Philippi. Apparently he was an outstanding worker whom Paul had remembered through these many years since his visit. Since this letter was written while Paul was first imprisoned at Rome, the date would have been about 61 or 62AD. Roman Catholic tradition claims that a Clement was the pastor of the Rome church and the fourth head of the papacy in either 88-97 or 92-101 AD. The first dates are possible, of course, but I do not subscribe to the Roman Catholic tradition. In seeking to link together continuous authoritative personages to have a unique precedence for the church's welfare as a whole (catholic), I believe, damage has been done. This damage grew through an evolution of false doctrinal positions, I believe, which have led a host of people known as Christians to be encouraged to yield their faith to be molded, rather than

personally by God's Holy Spirit, by only one human being (called Pope or Holy Father) who is considered to be Jesus Christ's stand-in or substitute (Vicar) on earth. The problem of authority existed during the apostolic period when God was dictating through his Holy Spirit his Word for future generations (including us). As we have noted before, several New Covenant writers cautioned against false prophets which were then active and would come later. These writers include Paul, Peter, Jude, John and others. Jesus himself at Mark 13:5-6 said that many would come in my name, saying I am Christ; and shall deceive many. Paul at II Thes. 2:1-12 noted a "hidden truth" (mystery) which was even then at work and which would make way at the end time (just as Jesus Christ returns for God's children who have and are trusting Jesus as Savior) for the coming of the lawless (Satanically evil) one, the son of perdition. In view of this revelation in God's Word, maintaining a chain of commanders who have explicit, singular authority over the church has a negative connotation rather than a positive one, I believe. (Note Mat. 20:25-27.)

III. Beginning in vs. 4 Paul encourages the Philippians to rejoice in the Lord continually. For emphasis he repeats, "and again I say, 'Rejoice.'" Be gentle and thereby show the confidence that comes from recognizing that the Lord is constantly with you, i.e., "is at hand." Everyone will sense your confidence in your faith in Jesus as your Savior and Lord. In fact, believers should not be anxious but converse (pray) with God, telling him of any concerns they have. When you follow this course of living, you will know God's peace, the peace which passes human understanding. That peace will guard your emotions and thoughts against any enemies through Christ Jesus. A believer's whole outlook should remain positive: whatsoever things are true, just, pure, lovely, of a good report, virtuous, and trustworthy, meditate upon these things. Paul reminds them that, just as he has not been dictatorial, vs. 9, (and see also at I Cor. 7:6; 9:12; II Cor. 8:1,8), their affairs should be following his example, and God's peace would be the result. Vs. 10 indicates that the Philippians gave of their means to Paul just after the forming of the group, and then they forgot him for a while. Now, learning of Paul's straits, they had revived their support. He wanted them to know that their help was much appreciated, but his material circumstances did not alter his continually serving God's cause, spreading the Gospel. He was adaptable, whether with much or little. His lips bore the same Good News whether much or little food passed through them. He "could do all things through Christ who made him strong." They had sent him support while he was in Thessalonica even though he had not solicited the aid. Here, in vs. 18 he mentions that Epaphroditus had been the one who had more recently brought to him their sacrificial gift. He noted that God would "reciprocate according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." In his conclusion Paul attributes to God glory for ever and ever. He (Paul) asks them to greet all the believers there at Philippi for him, and, at the same time, the believers (saints) there at Rome greeted the Philippian believers, "especially those who were of Caesar's household." The latter were most probably the imperial guards who guarded prisoners near the Caesar's palace. Some of them had become believers, no doubt, through Paul's testimony to them of the grace of God in Christ Jesus.

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