



Finding  
+ the power  
to believe

A study of Philippians

*David Bergsland &  
Pastor Patricia Bergsland*

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It was edited by

Pastor Patricia Bergsland

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<http://www.radiqx.com> •

[david@bergsland.org](mailto:david@bergsland.org)

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This is a work of biblical opinion sharing the experiences of over forty-five years of serving Jesus of Nazareth, teaching the scriptures, and walking in the spirit. All opinions should be examined and prayerfully considered before they are blindly acted upon.

*This book is dedicated to my wife  
& our relationship as we grow  
into the image of Jesus.  
Without Pat, I would be  
as bad as I was—  
the hippie, Jesus-freak  
she met at that Bible study  
so many year ago.  
Her copyediting & wisdom  
greatly improved this book  
and the entire series.*

*She went home last year,  
& I miss her greatly.*

*David*

# As we begin

This is not likely to be a bible study with which you are familiar. First of all, I am not assuming that you are a Christian—though I do assume that you are a seeker of Truth and quite possibly a church-goer. This will be a simple sharing of what the Lord gives me as I pray for you while writing this book.

## My credentials

As far as the world is concerned—I don't have any. All I have is experience—both the experience of reading many versions of scripture cover to cover many times and the experience of teaching and leading Bible studies since late 1974. In addition I have sought to put what I read into practice—more & more as I mature.

I was born again out of a life of fine art, drugs and occult practices on January 15, 1974. I was so stoned, it took several days before I even noticed anything. But the transformation by the summer of 1974 was truly astounding. I am not the same man I was—thank God!

You really can't say I was a hippie, because I dropped out before that term was coined. Though I considered myself a fine artist, I had no real talent except for the necessary ego. For the first couple years I was trained in the Lord by my father, who was one of the first charismatic Episcopalians—beginning in the late 1960s. Throughout 1974 (and much of 1975), I went with him daily as we were deeply involved in seven bible studies a week, a couple led by my father and several led by others. At that point I was Episcopalian (and in many ways I still am). I was taught through immersion into the spirit-filled life with a well-trained mentor to guide me.

In 1976 I married the woman who would transform my life, Patricia Harper. Here was a woman with a very clear call to ministry—both in gifts and in a desire to serve. Her wisdom and common sense approach to following Jesus has enabled me to open up more to the Lord and begin to become what He designed me to be.

## Scripture versions & usage

I am a firm believer in using many translations and a few paraphrases to build a consensus of accuracy. I have discovered that the King James has a unique anointing. So, I give it added weight. My usual choices are (in no particular order): Modern English Version [MEV], New King James [NKJV], (which are modern translations built off the KJV source materials), New American Standard Bible [NASB], Revised Standard [RSV], God's Word [GW], New Living Translation [NLT], and many more. For study purposes, I normally use [biblegateway.com](http://biblegateway.com)—which I highly recommend. You can have as many versions as will fit on your screen side-by-side.

I will be teaching from the Modern Viking Paraphrase [MVP], which is my personal understanding of what is right and true. I will put in relevant version copies, as necessary. This not only allows me to keep the copyright police calm, but I can also combine appropriate versions into a composite reading that my experience suggests will be more meaningful to you. I will give you references so you can look them up in your Bible.

You'll want to follow in your favorite version(s) to make sure that you can see why I slant my paraphrase toward the core meanings I see in the text. You don't have to agree. You do need to pray for wisdom.

## Your responsibility

**Read this with your mind and Bible open.**

I am convinced that your active participation in the study and analysis of these verses is the only way the Holy Spirit will be able to actually change your life for the better through these teachings. Pray that the Holy Spirit will guide you and teach you. This is his primary job given by Jesus.

*This is my prayer:* That you will be brought closer to the Lord, that you will end up knowing Him better, and that the power available to all believers is more active in your life.

## The Word of God

### Bible worship?

One of my concerns is Bible worship—people who follow the Bible instead of serving the Lord. I am not led by the bible, but by the Lord through His Holy Spirit. We are taught by the Spirit. Yes, He uses the scriptures a lot. Yes, the scriptures will lead us to the Lord—if we let them and we are true seekers of Truth. Do you see this as a real problem?

**The Word of God is a person: Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah.** We are told this in Revelation 19.13. Here the rider of the white horse (who is clearly the Messiah) is described as the one with the robe dipped in blood whose name is the Word of God.

Many people call the Bible the Word. I don't call the Bible the Word because people are too easily confused as it is. Jesus is the *logos*, the living Word of God. The Bible is the inspired writings of men and women of God as led by the Holy Spirit. The purpose of scripture is to show

us how God thinks, what kinds of things He does in the world, how we are to live, and so much more.

*You cannot understand scripture without the Holy Spirit to guide you into the truth. You need to pray before you start reading—every time—that He will show you what He wants you to learn today. He wrote it all and He has things you need to know now.*

## The world, the flesh, and the devil

For those of you new to belief or those still pursuing truth, you need to understand some terminology that I will be assuming throughout this book. I believe that there is a real, literal Satan who hates Christians and is out to destroy each of us individually. He is the devil referred to in the subhead above.

The flesh is the conscious side of us as human beings. This includes our senses, genetics, emotions, thoughts, and will power. The Biblical belief that our flesh is always self-serving and focused on selfish needs. We can look outside ourselves, but it is always an effort of our will. Though our will might be strong, it is of no use in earning us favor with God Almighty.

The world in the New Testament is described by the Greek word, *kosmos*. This is the global system of things that are controlled by Satan and used as his primary weapon to attract and distract our flesh to keep us from serving the Lord. It is a spiritual organization that cannot be seen by the flesh. It is very legalistic and evil. It offers excitement instead of joy, fashion instead of beauty, politics instead of leadership, and temptation instead of satisfaction.

## Becoming a believer

Are you a citizen of the Kingdom of God? Only if you have specifically asked to be a part of it. You cannot get in because your parents are, or were, believers. You must ask for yourself. Have you done that?

If at any time throughout this short study of Paul's letter to the Philippians you come to realize that you might not truly be a believer in the Lord Jesus or a citizen of the Kingdom of God—there is a simple solution.

We are all sinners. Ask the Lord to show you your sin. Then, recognize that Jesus died on the Cross to pay the price of your sin [the wages of sin is death]. All you need to do is renounce the world, the flesh, and the devil. You then repent of your selfish, sinful ways and turn to Jesus for forgiveness. Then you ask Jesus to come live within you, and fill you with His Holy Spirit. Acknowledge Him as the Lord and King of your life. That's all there is to it. You can do this at any time. If you are in doubt, please do it now. Just talk to Jesus like He is your best friend. He doesn't want or need fancy words. He truly loves you, and you will come to know that.

### [A list of study tools](#)

Recommended books and Websites to help you study scripture are listed in the back of the book. The link will take you there.

# The church at Philippi

Paul's ministry to Philippi started spectacularly. You can read about it in Acts 16. He was on his second trip and had picked up Timothy. He was prevented, in the Spirit, from continuing in Turkey. The Lord gave him a vision of a man from Macedonia, so he headed over there with Timothy. As usual, he went to the Jews first. But there were less than ten Jewish men there which is not enough for a synagogue. That minimum is normal Jewish custom.

## In the Spirit?

This is a bit of Christian lingo that is used to describe a more direct contact with God through communication between our spirit and the Holy spirit. This can take many forms.

He went to the place of prayer, led by a woman named Lydia (a dealer of purple). She was convicted by the Spirit and converted through Paul's teaching and was baptized with her household. Then she prevailed on Paul to come stay at her house. Evidently she was a strong woman leader.

## Women in ministry?

Because my wife has a very clear call on her life, I have researched this thoroughly. I read [an article by Jack Hayford](#), one of the most respected Christian teachers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, about women pastors and how he had come to the conclusion that women often led the home churches that were the norm for the early church during the first three centuries after Jesus hung on the cross. We have the article in our files. It's quite possible Lydia is one of the leaders Paul references in verse one.

Shortly after that Paul had the run-in with the fortune-teller and was tossed in jail. This is the miraculous story told in Acts 16: 19-40 where the jailer and his house-

hold become saved and baptized after a massive earthquake released Paul and Silas from prison.

The Lord used Paul's status as a Roman citizen to make the event even more powerful. It's quite probable that the Philippian church earned a little Roman protection because of his apostleship. Please notice that Paul went to Lydia's before they left town.

#### Some rights of Roman citizenship

To vote

To stand for office

To make legal contracts and to hold property

To have a lawful marriage with a Roman citizen

To have the legal rights over the family

To have the children be Roman citizens

To preserve one's level of citizenship upon relocation within the Empire

The right of immunity from some taxes and other legal obligations

To sue

To a legal trial

To appeal

A Roman citizen could not be tortured, whipped, or receive the death penalty, except for treason

To be tried in Rome if accused of treason

When you talk to older more experienced preachers, apostles, evangelists, and pastors, one of the normal things you hear are the wonderful stories of power in their ministry. Those things are never forgotten. It is clear that Paul never forgot and the story was told enough so that Luke used it in Acts. So, I think we can be assured that Paul had a special fondness for the Philippian church and this affection comes across clearly as the book opens.

Philippi was a Roman colony and all its citizens were Roman citizens so the church there had a powerful effect in the Empire. Roman citizens had benefits not known by outsiders and Paul could minister there in power partly because he was a citizen also. The Lord had chosen well when he picked Paul to go to the Gentiles, heathen, or non-Jews. This citizenship was a definite benefit as Paul spread the word about Jesus throughout the Roman Empire.

# Chapter 1

## Verse 1:1

Paul and Timothy, slaves of Jesus the Messiah,  
to all the saints in Jesus who are at Philippi,  
including the bishops and deacons

I've used a compilation of versions here because none of them say it all. Most, for example, say servants or bond-servants is the better translation. But actually the Greek term used here means slave.

### Slave or bonds slave?

Jack Hayford, in his Spirit-Filled Life Bible, defines bondservant as an employee who was treated well and enjoyed legal protections. But he or she was still a slave and was not allowed to resign and leave. They could be ordinary workers but they could also be highly trained, well-educated servants of considerable skill and responsibility.

What is the reality of slavery in our society, including America [wage slaves]?

What about the millions of sexual slaves around the world & in America?

Clearly our euphemistic 21<sup>st</sup> century usage is not going to cut it here. We don't like to think about slavery. But Jesus never condemned slavery. It was an assumed part of life. It still is. We've just hidden our slavery under a huge pile of politically correct phrases like employee (as if there is an option to work). But we all know we are slaves. Our only freedom is the freedom to quit and get another job—but then that ruins our résumé.

I use the phrase Jesus the Messiah because Christ is not Jesus' last name (contrary to popular belief). Christ

means the anointed one and it was Jesus' title. Jesus was called and anointed to be our Messiah—the savior and Lord of all. Messiah was Jesus' calling just as Apostle was Paul's.

### Apostle

This is one of the ministry offices of the church. The list in Ephesians, in order of authority, is: Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Pastor, and Teacher. An apostle is a person sent on a specific mission or sent to do a specific task under the authority of a master. Paul's task was to bring the Gospel to the Gentiles, and he was the head person on earth over that work.

It is especially interesting that Paul establishes his authority over the bishops and deacons at Philippi. As an evangelist or traveling teacher, this would not be so. But as the apostle to the Gentiles, he clearly knows that he has this authority.

### Verse 1:2-5

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus, the Messiah. I thank my God whenever I remember you always offering my prayer with joy as I pray for you in view of your participation in the Good News from the first day until now

### Grace?

Unmerited favor; how God treats us even though there is no way we can earn or deserve good treatment. We receive grace just because that's who He is & He loves us

This is the normal polite chit-chat required by the culture of the day. He's just letting them know that he prays for them, cares for them, and wants the best for them.

### Verse 1:6

I am confident that Jesus will complete what he started in you and bring you to maturity

## Maturity?

Stable, reliable, bearing the fruit of the Spirit; having found your place in the Kingdom so you can be used by the Lord; not tossed to and fro by the winds of doctrine & fashion.

This is a statement of a type that was common in that day. But we have lost it in our culture. The word used is *epiteleó* which means to perfect or bring to completion. But this perfection does not mean what we understand today. This word is much like *teleios* used by Jesus in His word in Matthew 5:48;

Therefore you will be perfect as  
God your Father is perfect

The concept of perfect here is one of fully developed maturity—a completed character. As Christians, it describes a person wholly submitted to the Lord, walking in freedom in the Holy Spirit, bearing all the fruit of the Spirit listed in [Galatians 5: 22-23](#), with the Lord free to manifest himself easily in that person's life. Paul is convinced that this will happen to his friends at Philippi.

This is a common theme in the New Testament. Jude, in verse 24 shows this with:

...now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling  
and to present you pure and spotless...

Paul says the same in I Thessalonians 5:23-24;  
...may the God of peace make you pure in every way  
with your whole three-part being kept blameless  
until our Lord Jesus comes again. God will make  
this happen, for he is faithful and He called you.

### 3-part being?

Body: Our physical being, our  
flesh, with the five senses

Soul: the interface between body and spirit,  
our conscious mind: will, emotions, personality

Spirit: Our connection with God, often referred to as the heart in scripture; normally not perceivable consciously.

The soul's job is to control the flesh and give permission for the spirit to control the soul.

The writer of Hebrews says the same in 10:24  
Let's hold tight, without waffling, to the hope we proclaim,  
because we can trust God to keep His promise

Our assumption is that our trusting in the one who is able (faith, in other words) will bring about this perfection by the power of God. It is not something we work up, for we are not capable of this. It is something wonderful that the Lord does in us by grace as we allow Him to.

### Verse 1:7-14

It is right for me to feel like this about you, because you mean a great deal to me, both in my imprisonment and in the defense of the Gospel. God knows how I long to see you, my friends in the Lord. My prayer is that you continue to grow toward that maturity which is possible in the Spirit, that you will be found pure and blameless when Jesus comes back to us again. I want you to know that my imprisonment is being used by the Lord to promote the Gospel. My presence here is known to be for Jesus throughout the Praetorian Guard and the rest of them. Many of the brothers and sisters have become more confident in the Lord and are speaking out more boldly without fear.

### The praetorian guard?

Formed from the best, bravest, and most loyal of the emperor's own men, the Praetoria were generally exempt from any standard camp duties, this elite guard was only responsible to protect the emperor (and some of the more powerful generals). [FROM UNRV HISTORY]

This is all personal encouragement to his friends and loved ones back in Macedonia. It shows us a lot about the relationship he had with his friends back there.

### Verse 1:15-16

Of course, some are bold to get me in trouble, but the boldness of many is out of love for me because I am here due to defending the Gospel.

As commonly the case, Paul is given discernment about the motives and intentions of the heart of the believers in Rome. At least, our assumption is that he is talking about his 2-year imprisonment in Rome. As the apostle with the vision, Paul is concerned about how his imprisonment affects the work.

### Verse 1:16-17

The ones speaking out to get me in trouble don't really bother me. All that matters is that Jesus the Messiah is proclaimed. For that I rejoice.

Paul shows us his heart—what really matters to him. What happens to his flesh is of no real concern to him. All that matters is that the task is fulfilled for which he was called and sent out.

Again I use the phrase Jesus the Messiah in place of Christ because so many people think that Christ is part of His name and not His title and calling.

### Verse 1:19

For I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit, this will turn out in my deliverance. It is my assumption and hope that I will not be ashamed, but that by maintaining courage now Jesus the Messiah will be honored in my flesh whether I live or go to be with Him forever.

This is one of Paul's marvelous statements of faith. We can see that the jail time is not a bed of roses, but that Paul does not care. His concern is that he will be a cause for honoring Jesus.

### Verse 1:21

For me to live is the Kingdom of God  
and to die is even better

Here I use the phrase Kingdom of God because in the context of this statement it is clear that Paul is talking about living within the body of Jesus—not about the individual person of Jesus.

This is one of the things you really need to get a handle on. Dying is no big deal. It is a bad thing. But, it is a wonderful thing to be free at last—thank God Almighty, free at last, [in the words of Martin Luther King, Jr.] So many Christians are motivated by the need to avoid death. Jesus spoke of this clearly in Matthew 6:27

Can all your worries add a single moment to your life? [NLT]

The foolishness of modern medicine in getting us to do things because they “increase our chances of living longer” amazes me. They are just talking about bettering our odds. You cannot lengthen your life. I'm not even sure how much you can change your health. You can make yourself feel better. But you cannot avoid what you have been assigned.

All of us have conditions in life to try us. For many these are health conditions. Even [Smith Wigglesworth, the amazing man of God and healer](#), had a bad heart condition that the Lord didn't heal. Many times, our prayers for healing either go unanswered or they are perfectly answered by allowing us to go home to be with the Lord.

We are guaranteed spiritual healing—all we have to do is ask for it and persistently work to allow Him to do it in us. Physical healing is simply misunderstood. Yes, God heals. Yes, He heals miraculously when he wants to. He can cause tumors to drop out of your body. He can make pacemakers disappear. But that is never guaranteed. What could be better than the chance to go home and be with the Lord forever?

Paul clearly understands this.

### Verse 1:22–23

If I continue to live in the flesh it will mean fruitful work for me. But which one to choose perplexes me. My desire is to go and be with Jesus, for that is far better.

Here he makes what we were just discussing even more clear, at least as far as Paul's desires are concerned. We need to remember this when we get so frantic about all that we are doing.

### Verse 1:24–26

Yet to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you—convinced of this, I am certain I will remain here and continue with you, so that you will have ample cause to rejoice in me when I join you again.

This sounds almost arrogant. My assumption is that the Lord gave him a [rhema](#) (a personal, specific revelation) about it. (Of course, there might be a bit of arrogance. We have never been told that Paul was sin-free.)

### Verse 1:27

Regardless, let your manner of life be worthy of the kingdom, so that whether I come and see or I hear in absence, I may know that you stand in one spirit, side-by-side, fighting for the Gospel,

Here he shows us that it remains a faith walk for him—just like it is for us. He really doesn't know if he'll survive the internment or not. We never do. I don't even know if I'll be given the opportunity to finish this book.

Remember James 4:15—

Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that."

## Verse 1:28

Not in any way frightened by your opponents— which is a sign for them of their destruction, but a sign for you of your salvation from God.

Our fearlessness is a major sign to the world around us of the reality of God's salvation. One of the constants in the world [[kosmos](#)] is fear. The world runs on fear. The entertainment industry sells fear. The news shares fear, causing fear. It's one of the enemy's strongest weapons.

Are you fearless?

If you have them, are your fears legitimate?

But as you know, from John 4:18

There is no fear in love, because love casts out all fear

God [Father, Son, & Holy Spirit] is love. This is the core of God's being no matter how we see Him manifested. The more God is allowed to manifest His presence through us the less fear we have. The more we look to Him the better we'll feel and the more power we will find in our life. This is a clear sign to those in the world around us. In fact, you will have people asking you why you're not afraid.

## Verse 1: 29–30

The opportunity has been given to you to not only believe but also to suffer for His sake, experiencing the same conflict you saw and now hear to be my portion

Here is a truth we do not want to hear. Suffering is part of our walk in the Lord. It's not a strange thing. It's a normal part of Christian living. We learn far more and much better when we are under trial than we do when we are comfortable.

## This is part of the Good News

Rejoice in your suffering?

Paul means it, as does the writer of Hebrews and Peter.

God means it for good, and it will provide training that you cannot get in any other way.

We can see it in Hebrews 12:11. It's called discipline. At the time all discipline seems painful never pleasant, but in due time it produces the peaceful fruit of righteousness but only after you've been trained by it. Peter was a bit more blunt with the word suffer, not surprisingly. In I Peter 5:9b-10, he writes:

...knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brothers and sisters around the world. Plus, after you have suffered a little while, God himself will restore, strengthen, and establish you. In His continuing grace, He's the One who called you into this life in Jesus in the first place

It's part of his plan. God is not surprised or confused about suffering and testing. He knows it is necessary for growth and maturity. He allows it because he loves us. But He doesn't tempt. He tests us.

# Chapter Two

## Verse 2:1–2

If there is any encouragement from belonging to Christ? Any comfort from his love? Any fellowship in the Spirit? Any brotherly love and compassion? Then complete my joy by being of one mind, one love, united in spirit, and focused on the same purpose.

If this is all real—then pull together. Allow the Spirit of God to make you one in love, support, and purpose. This is Paul’s admonishment to work out Jesus’ statement in John 13 that the world will know we are Jesus’ disciples by our love.

## Verse 2:3

Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better or more significant than yourselves.

The one who keeps his or her life loses it?  
How does Matthew 10:39 apply to verse 3?

And who said Christianity was easy? Maybe you have no trouble with this one. I do. It’s not that I do not agree that it is right and true. It’s just hard to step outside your flesh and care this much about others.

Of course, this is especially hard for a writer like myself. Why would I bother writing if I didn’t think I had something worthwhile to share? But the paradox is that I really have nothing to share unless my focus is on serving others. My prayer is that I be given the opportunity to write something that will help you, gentle reader. My reason cannot be to build myself up. It must be that maybe I can help you understand something better—maybe I can ease your burden.

The great men and women of God put the health and welfare of the ones they serve above their own personal welfare or comfort. Mother Teresa is an obvious example. The problem, of course, is that people like this do not make the news. But do you want to make the news or be in the team helping Jesus in the Millennium? Do you want fame and power or a place in the new creation?

Get your priorities straight!

### Verse 2:4

Each of you must look out not only for your interests, but also to the interests of others.

#### Selfishness

If you see a person in need, do you stop yourself and ask "How can I help that person in need?" Do you always think of self first—your wants, your needs, your fears, your time, and so on?

Somehow this one is a little easier to take than verse three. But it expands on the same theme. Maybe it would help if we talk about this as a goal. This is how we will act when we are complete, perfect, and mature. I hear Joyce Meyer ringing in my head, *I'm terrible at this, but I'm certainly better than I was ten years ago.*

It's a process. *But* do not let yourself off the hook. This is the core of the Christian walk. They will know we are Jesus' disciples by how well we live this out. What kind of witness have you been this week?

### Verses 2:5-8

You need to match the attitude of Jesus of Nazareth. He was truly God, but he did not hold on to His rights. Instead he gave up everything and became a slave, being born as a human [as a baby]. When he became like one

of us, He humbled himself further by becoming obedient unto death—even the shameful death on a cross.

Jesus as a baby

The One who created it all, burping and spitting up on Himself—with no memory of where He came from. What a God we serve! What a man Jesus is!

He certainly gave up “self” to die for us. As Americans, this is where the rubber meets the road. *We’ve got our rights!* No, you do not. As a follower of Jesus you give up all rights to yourself. You are a slave of the King. You do what the King requires. Thank God we have a righteous and loving King who has been where we are and understands.

Rugged individualism?

Is this American virtue godly?

But his understanding is not our license to get away with acting out. It is the source of His mercy towards us—not the reason we do what we do. We accept Jesus as our Lord—give Him control of our life. We volunteer to be His bond-servant/slave. We love Him and serve Him for He is the only one who is worthy. BUT we have no rights. We give those up.

All we’ve earned is the penalty of death for our sins

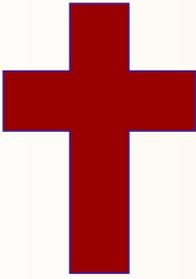
How does our sinful nature affect our rights?

Jesus is the sovereign Lord with life and death authority over us. Actually this is true whether we believe or not, whether we accept it or not. However, if we accept it we get to be on the good side and receive His approval and blessing. Not because we earn it, but because of who He is.

He may ask us to serve unto death. He may require us to suffer pain and loss. He may ask us to do things

that embarrass us. But He deserves our love and service no matter what happens to us! He is the Lord of the Universe and beyond. He is God Almighty. The Good News is that we are allowed to be part of His world, invited into the inner courts, and share in the blessings of the King.

We get to live in the Kingdom by laying down our lives to serve Him and by counting others as ones whom we serve in the name of Jesus. We are to follow Him in this. We may be his fiancées, but we lay all of that down to serve the King.



### The shame

But it is much worse than that. Jesus died a shameful death. The cross was a shameful device. There is not a modern equivalent. But it is like being sentenced to a public hanging, naked, for child pornography you never saw. This was a horrible, incredibly painful, extremely shameful death he suffered for us.

It was so bad that Luke 22:44 records that he was sweating blood. This is a documented physiological condition brought about by extreme stress. The person afflicted becomes so stressed out that the capillaries in his or her forehead break and blood oozes out the pores. In Jesus' case, Luke tells us that the blood drips on the ground in drops. Jesus did not want to do this—in the flesh. Yet He was obedient and saved us. What a King we serve!

### Verse 2:9–11

Therefore, God highly exalted him and gave him the name above all other names, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven, on earth, and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus the Messiah is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

This is what Jesus accomplished through his obedience. We can't earn any position—because of our sin. Jesus passed that hurdle and presented himself as a pure, undefiled, spotless sacrifice for us. As a result, he legally earned the position God gave him: King of kings, Lord of lords, above all, sovereign authority over all.

One of my favorite sayings has always been: **Jesus is Lord, like it or not.** He's Lord whether or not you believe it. God has raised him up over all creation.

### Verse 2:12

Therefore, as you have always obeyed, not only when I was there but also now that I am not, work out your salvation in deep reverence and careful caution

Actually, I like the normal translation better: work out your salvation with fear and trembling. But the MVP version is more accurate in modern terms. This is serious. You need to be on guard, watching and cooperating with the Lord. It is a work (even though it has little to do with your effort)—it doesn't just happen magically overnight. It's not like working out to get fit. It's a focusing with perseverance. It will take you the rest of your time here on the planet.

One of the major things you need to understand is that your salvation is a process. While it is true that people who accept Jesus on their death bed will make it to heaven. It is equally true that they will make it by the skin of their teeth and have no rewards built up.

Now these rewards are not something we earn. They are something we allow Jesus to do in us. Nevertheless they are real. Jesus explained this in the parable of the talents (among other places) in Matthew 25:14-30.

A man went on a trip (like the one Jesus is on now, seated at the right hand of the Father waiting for the time

to bring us home with Him). Before he left, he gave each of his servants different numbers of talents (a money of the time).

A talent was about 400# of silver  
So, today (Spring 2020) 400 talents  
would be worth around \$84,000.

This is like what we have been given when we are born. We all have different talents. And we are all expected to do something with those talents. When the master came back he demanded an accounting.

The man with many talents had doubled his wealth. The master praised him and said, “you have been faithful in much and I will put you in charge of many things.

The slave who had been given few was told, “You have been faithful in few things. I will put you in charge of many things.” In other words, this slave had few talents, but he got the same reward as the slave with many talents. He did his best. The goal was not how much wealth you acquire, but how faithful you were to be a good steward of what you were given.

However, for the slave with very few talents, who became terrified of the master and buried his talent (seemingly so he wouldn't lose it) incurred the wrath of the master. He was told that just putting the money in the bank to earn interest would have been acceptable.

But because he was too afraid to do anything and showed his lack of trust in the master (no faith), the following was told to him. Matthew 25: 28-30

Then the master ordered, ‘Take the talent from this servant, and give it to the one with the ten talents.

To those who are faithful in what they are given (*db: whether they are given a little or a lot*), even more will be given, and they will have an abundance. But from those

who do nothing, even what little they have will be taken away. Now throw this useless slave into outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

It certainly looks like this is serious. Hiding your talents in fear—not working on your salvation, never doing what is necessary to grow in wisdom and stature in the Lord—is an attitude showing lack of faith and can forfeit your rewards at least.

Not trusting Jesus to take care of you is a serious issue. It's a way of sitting on the fence, as it were. Investing the talents is a risk. Playing it safe is a worldly way. When you are backed up by the Lord of Lords and King of Kings you can safely risk. The clear implication is that trying is far better than doing nothing. I certainly do not want to be labeled a *useless* servant tossed out of the master's household. Of course, this is a radical interpretation on my part. But how else can we read this? Working out your salvation is a serious and reverent thing.

### Verse 2:13

But God is working in you, both to make you willing  
and to make you able because it pleases Him

As far as I am concerned, this is the core of the Good News. Does God require us to do good and be righteous? Does he require us to be good stewards of our talents and gifts? Certainly,

But, He is in us to do it through us. We are not left to our own devices. His power is in us to help and enable us. What wonderful news!

What does it mean that God  
must work in us—both to make  
us willing & to make us able?  
What does this say about our  
natural character?

If we will step out and ask Him to develop us and bless our efforts, if we will listen to him to see what he wants us to do, He will work within us to make us willing and able to get it done. We are not left alone—without help!

### Verse 2:14-15

Do all things without murmuring or complaining  
& questioning or doubting, that you may show  
yourselves to be without blame, innocent and  
spotless children of God in the midst of a perverse  
and wicked generation, among whom you are  
seen as bright lights in the dark world,

We must never forget the major lesson of the journey in the wilderness led by Moses. This journey is usually looked on as an analogy to our lives in Jesus. The Israelites leaving Egypt were headed on a 11 day trip. Yes, it was an eleven day trip! All they had to do was follow God.

Because of their murmuring and complaining, none of them made it to the promised land. They all (except for Joshua and Caleb) died in the wilderness—and the truly short eleven day journey took them forty years and a new generation.

One of the major signs of maturity is this lack of complaining and doubting. This is one of the reasons why the working out of our salvation takes so long. According to these verses, it is also the source of a lot of our witness. It is why we shine in the darkness as children of the light.

### Verse 2:16

holding fast to the word of life, so that in  
the day of the Messiah I may be proud that  
I did not run in vain or labor in vain.

Paul's not looking to be able to boast about those he led to the Lord. He is looking to have a good report when

we are all gathered at the marriage supper of the Lamb. He is trying to show them what would be pleasing and what he is looking for. This is a motivational group of statements.

### Verse 2:17–18

Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me.

I'm not sure about this one. The Contemporary English Version says it this way:

Your faith in the Lord and your service are like a sacrifice offered to him. And my own blood may have to be poured out with the sacrifice. If this happens, I will be glad and rejoice with you. In the same way, you should be glad and rejoice with me.

Is Paul saying that he, in some way, will lose his life for teaching them about Jesus? No matter how it turns out Paul will rejoice. They should not be sad either—but rejoice.

When I see this amount of variation in translations, I know that it is a hard area to translate—probably because of idiomatic use. As always, it is not in an area that is really important to doctrine. We get the gist of what he is saying, but the specifics are not clear. It is probably a contemporary cultural thing to the time of Paul and would be relatively meaningless to us anyway.

### Verse 2:19–24

I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy shortly to you, that I also may be of good comfort when I get word concerning you. For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your welfare. For all seek their own, not the things of Christ Jesus. But you know of his proven worth, that as a son with a father, he has served with me in the gospel. Therefore I hope to send

him soon after my situation is resolved. But I trust in the Lord that I, myself, shall also come shortly. [MEV]

I just used the Modern English Version because there is not much here. However, there is one area of interest. We tend to think that back in the time of the apostles things were better than they are now. We assume that there were many strong believers and mature believers were common in the churches.

This passage shows that this is not reality. Out of all the people that Paul knows, he only trusts Timothy to be true to the doctrines Paul knows to be true.

Everyone else whom Paul sees ministering is out for their own gain, as far as Paul can tell. This is really an indictment of the church. But in a way it is good news, because we have the same situation now.

It is sad that it appears that many in the church will not make upward call to join Jesus in heaven. But we do not know for sure and it isn't our place to judge.

### Verse 2:25-30

Yet I thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, who is my brother and companion in labor, fellow soldier, your messenger, and he who ministered to my necessity. For he longed after you all and was filled with heaviness, because you heard that he was sick. Indeed he was sick, near death. But God had mercy on him, and not only on him, but also on me, lest I should have had sorrow upon sorrow. Therefore I sent him the more eagerly, that when you see him again, you may rejoice and I may be less sorrowful. So receive him in the Lord with all joy. And hold such ones in high regard, because for the work of Christ he was near death, not regarding his life, endeavoring to make up for your lack of service toward me. [MEV]

This is just a kind thing that Paul did. Notice that he does not include Epaphroditus in his list of people he trusts with doctrine. But he'd been sick unto death and really wanted to go back so Paul kindly sent him along—while making it clear about his status to those in the know. He is to be honored, but Paul does not see him as a teacher or leader who can be trusted doctrinally like Timothy.

# Chapter 3

## Verse 3:1

Finally, brothers & sisters, rejoice in the Lord. To write you like this doesn't bother me, and it is helpful for you.

We have no idea what he was responding to here. They might have written for advice.

## Verse 3:2-3

Watch out for those dogs, those evil doers who mutilate the flesh. For we who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Jesus the Messiah are the ones who are truly circumcised because we put no confidence in the flesh

Here Paul returns to a theme he writes about elsewhere—specifically in Romans 2: 28-29—

...no one is a Jew who is merely one religiously, nor is circumcision outward and physical. But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the Law and religious observance.

Paul is talking about the spiritual cutting off of the flesh by refusing to follow its desires. He sees circumcision as a radical statement of attitude toward the flesh. Romans 6 says that we kill the flesh in its entirety. It's pretty extreme for a man to be willing to have the end of his penis cut off for his god. But it had become a bigoted, religious thing.

“We're better than you.” “Look what we are willing to do!” That attitude is anathema to Paul. He sees it as a horrible thing that is purely evil.

True circumcision is the cutting off of the flesh in its entirety—no longer obeying its dictates. Serving God by the Spirit and following the lead of the Spirit instead of the dictates of the flesh. The rule of the flesh is terminated.

## Verse 3:4-6

though I myself have reasons for such confidence. If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: 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; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless. [NIV]

What is he bragging about?

These are all essential indicators of his perfect obedience to the requirements of being a good Jew.

Paul goes on to say that as far as religious righteousness is concerned, he has it covered better than all those trying to get the Gentiles to become circumcised. He is a Jew's Jew, one of the Chosen people, righteous and holy according to religious rules. As far as it is possible to have religious status, he meets the requirements better than most anyone.

## Verse 3:7-8

But whatever gain I had I counted as loss for the sake of the Messiah. More than that, I count all these things as loss compared to the surpassing worth of knowing Jesus the Messiah as my Lord

Here again is one of the reasons why I love Paul. He cuts through all the religious posturing and goes straight for the jugular. Religious credentials are meaningless compared to the worthiness of Jesus.

*If you do not know this deep within your gut, you really need an attitude adjustment. One of these days—soon—all of this will be gone and it will be you and Jesus, face to face. What will not get you into heaven: being a member of any particular*

*church or denomination, having a degree from a seminary or Bible school, attendance at Bible studies, spending endless hours in prayer, or reading the Bible through six times a year. It is a relationship with God: Father, Son, & Holy Spirit that matters.*

As usual, the key word in this portion of scripture is: knowing. You must know Jesus. This is knowing as a relationship—not knowledge of, but experiential understanding. This is the word, when used as a verb (*ginosko*), used to describe the oneness of a marriage.

This is what Paul considers worth more than anything. Nothing else matters when compared to knowing Jesus. Solomon used to call it vanity. We can call it a distraction. But the things of this world—and that includes religion—do not draw us into closer relationship with the Lord.

Remember Jesus' words in John 17:3  
This is eternal life, knowing you the only true  
God, and Jesus the Messiah whom you sent

Knowing is used Biblically as in: Abraham knew Sarah, a husband knows his wife. This is talking about the two shall become one: spiritual, emotional, and physical intimacy. In a real way we are engaged and to be married to Jesus—we have a marriage coming, sooner than we think.

*Let's keep it focused, people.*

Verse 3:9–11

That at the end I may be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in the Messiah, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

Here we have the walk of faith.

Paul gives us a glimpse of his priorities in the context of his seeming lack of certainty—at least in most translations. However, Vine's gives us a glimpse of something more. He believes that the words used (a different form of the word resurrection coupled with the word used for attain) suggest that Paul is talking about experiencing oneness with Jesus' resurrection life and its power.

Faith in or of?

In this passage the translation is normally "by faith in Christ". But we need to remember something. One of the major things my father taught me was what he saw in the grammar of Galatians 2:20

...the life I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God...

I don't live by my faith in Jesus, I live by His faith and what He did. Yes, I need faith, but even that is a gift. I can't produce this powerful faith. All I can do is receive it as it is given to me.

It's a small quibble, but the attitude behind it is important. All we have is given. By grace we are saved by God.

This goes back to something covered more in Romans—the idea that we literally die and are resurrected into the body of Jesus when we believe. That we experience His life lived out through us. Whatever Paul is precisely talking about here, it is obvious that his top priority is getting closer to, becoming one with, entering into the fullness of life in the Messiah—living in the Kingdom now.

Verse 3:12

Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect. But I keep pushing to make it my own, because Jesus the Messiah has made me His own.

In this life we never completely attain this maturity, this walk of faith, this knowledge of the Lord. In the flesh, “we see now in a glass darkly”. But we persevere, press on, continuously strive, knowing that our striving isn’t what matters. What matters is the One we desire to be one with. He promised it will happen. We must keep focused on the prize, always remembering the goal—oneness with the Lord Jesus Himself as His joyful obedient wife.

### Verse 3:13–14

Brother & sisters, I do not consider that I have achieved this. But one thing I do: forgetting what’s behind and straining toward to what’s ahead, I press on toward the goal—the upward call of God in Jesus.

The prize is the upward calling, the invitation to heaven, being part of the resurrection, joining the marriage feast of the Lamb. As this is a walk of faith, this is never a sure thing—or it would not take faith.

But as we see Paul’s straining to attain we realize that nothing else matters. The short time we are on this planet does not even begin to compare to being called to join the Kingdom in the new creation where He will be with us and among us face to face. Our goal is to please Jesus—that he will testify that he knows us and that we have been good, obedient slaves. There we will find our position as sons and daughters of God.

### Verse 3:15–16

Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, have this attitude; and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you; however, let us keep living by that same standard to which we have attained. [NASB]

Here the New American Standard rules. Remember, perfect means completely mature. If we aren't there yet, we need to pray: "Lord, show me where my attitudes are wrong." In the words of David, "Create in me a right spirit, O Lord." We are to be never stepping back, always moving forward, pressing on to be as mature as possible by the time He calls us home. Do not give up—persevere.

### Verse 3:17

Brothers & sisters, pattern your life on mine and carefully watch those walking in this model you have in us.

This is a sign of maturity, not arrogance. Once you get to a place where you know that people looking at your life will not see you, but Jesus in you, then you can simply ask people to do what you are doing. This is part of the joy of listening to Joyce Meyer teach. This was the joy of listening to Oral Roberts or Billy Graham.

However, you cannot do this when looking at a younger instead of an elder. Many of our churches today are led by youngers, and there are no elders in the congregation. This is a really dangerous thing. You need to be looking for elders to oversee you. A fellowship without a true elder is in a really dangerous place.

### Verse 3:18–19

For many walk as enemies of the cross of the Messiah, as I have told you often and in tears. Their end is destruction from their god, the desires of the flesh. They glory in their shame because their minds are set on things of the earth.

This is what John was talking about in his first letter, verses 2:15–17

If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him

Jesus talked to us about loving two masters in Luke 16:13. We cannot serve both of them.

This is no little thing. If you are focused on the world, the flesh, and the devil, you are the enemy of God. Worrying about success, promotion, comfort, and the like makes you the Lord's enemy.

*Quit it!*

### Verse 3:20–21

Our citizenship is in heaven, from which we eagerly await a Savior, The Lord Jesus our Messiah. He will transform this flesh into the same wonder as his glorious body with the power He has been given to subject all things to himself.

We must keep the long view. Actually, considering how short a time we are here, it is really a short view, but you know what I mean. Our focus must always be on the final result, where we are headed, the goal toward which we strive, the prize we will be given—to see Jesus face to face.

# Chapter Four

## Verse 4:1-3

Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brothers, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my beloved. I exhort Euodia and Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. I ask you also, true companion, help those women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with my other fellow laborers, whose names are in the Book of Life. [MEV]

Paul gives them a break from the strong, heavy message by going to personal business with his friends and compatriots. He reminds them that this is their friend talking.

## Verse 4:4

Always rejoice in the Lord; again I will say, rejoice.

When we look at this one, we immediately see that Satan's primary attack is to take our joy away from us. How much of your life is taken up with things that are distracting, irritating, and frustrating? Maybe I'm the only one. But I doubt it.

The solution is found in this verse. Focus on the Lord. There we find reason to rejoice. Here is a king worth serving. Here is a good thing, an excellent man, a wonderful Lord to take our mind off the things of the world that are designed to distract us from the truth about the Kingdom and the Gospel. We must get our mind off the circumstances.

Jesus warned us about this in the parable of the sower. What we need to pray against is the danger of being a seed sewn in the thorns. I believe we can move the place of our planting. We can move (or ask God to move) the seed from the thorns to the good soil. The danger in America is severe.

## Let's look at Luke 8: 14

And as for the seed that fell among the thorns, this is people who hear, but as they go on their path of daily living they are choked by the cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature.

Jesus called our walk a straight and narrow path. As you can see, just wandering to the edge of that path can be really dangerous. We need to remain focused.

## Verse 4:5

Let all men know your forbearance.

The Lord is at hand. [RSV]

Here I wanted to use the RSV for the word forbearance. It is an old-fashioned word, but it does not have the modern baggage attached to the words used in the modern translations: gentleness, reasonableness, and the like.

The dictionary.com site gives us this definition of forbearance which really helps us understand what is asked for here. What Paul is talking about is your public image, how the world perceives you—and it's important.

### **Forbearance:**

1. The act of forbearing; a refraining from something.
2. Forbearing conduct or quality; patient endurance; self-control.
3. An abstaining from the enforcement of a right.

Strong's tells us that the word in Greek is *epieikes* which also has some specific meanings to help us here. It's an adjective attached to the word spirit in many translations—but the word spirit is not in the Greek.

4. Seemingly, suitable
5. Equitable, fair, mild, gentle

What we are talking about is the basic description of our daily walk: rejoicing in the Lord and quietly, gently,

patiently dealing with those the Lord leads us to relate to day by day.

## Verse 4:6

Don't worry or get upset about anything, but no matter what is going on let the Lord know your opinion about everything, not forgetting to thank Him constantly.

OK, so the MVP is radically paraphrased this time—it is accurate. It is a sin to worry because it is a lack of faith and trust that God will take care of us. Worry looks away from God and toward our circumstances. My trial lately has been our daily bread. My wife's has been her health. All of us have something the Lord has us working on for this season of our life. In this verse we are told how to deal with these things.

First, we refuse to worry. We remind ourselves that He has it under control. We thank the Lord for calling us, loving us, having a plan for us, and being trustworthy. Then we let him know our concerns. Please don't tell me that you think He doesn't know what you are concerned about. Jesus covered this in one of his short discourses on prayer in Matthew 6. Verse 8 says:

Do not be like the heathen, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

Heathen prayers?

Matthew 6:7 seems to be talking about heathen petitions that are based on using overwhelming words to convince the god, spirit, or demon. The ultimate example of this foolishness is probably the Buddhist prayer wheels where prayers are made effective by passage through space and a rotating wheel with an attached prayer prays the prayer every rotation it makes.

So, we don't need to worry or carry on. But it does not mean we are not supposed to ask. This is important, we need to ask. In Jesus' sample prayer He told us to pray, "give us our daily bread". The manna had to be harvested daily. You could not collect enough for a week so you could take a week off. Any leftovers rotted the next day.

We are not allowed to pray, "heal the sick in the whole world" or "take care of my finances so I don't have to be constantly nagging you about money every day". God wants us dependent on him. This is the faith walk. We are required to pray daily about everything in our life.

### Learning to pray

This daily praying has great benefit. We have found that prayer is experimental. You do not know how prayer will work until you try it in every manner you can think of. On top of that is Paul's injunction to "pray without ceasing" in I Thessalonians 5:17. This is a constant thing on the level of "She's constantly watching TV." You pray all time, any time, whenever you get a chance (and you always have the chance). In everything, ask the Lord

### **Here's some more prayers to try.**

For an example, when we're looking for something we need, we pray and ask the Lord to show us where to find it. Often one of us will have a strong sense that we are to go to this particular store. When we get there, we usually find the item we're looking for and it is usually on sale.

Between you and me, this is also how we vote. This is only our vote. We do not get knowledge of how others are to vote. This is how we pick a church to attend. This is how we find lost items. It is a very practical gift and necessary discipline, used daily in a wide variety of circumstances. I use it for practice in hearing the Lord accurately.

## Thankfulness

Just as our prayers are a constant thing, our thankfulness needs to be a constant awareness. I find that as I thank Him for all the little things He does to and for me every day, I have an increased awareness of His presence. I can see what He is doing more clearly.

The key in opening my eyes to see this presence in my life is prayer and thanksgiving. As I get my eyes off my needs and look at what He is doing in my life, I am quickly amazed at all the little things He does for me on a daily basis: parking places, pretty flowers that specifically grow outside my tiny window directly in my view, plants that sprout from seeds I did not plant—exactly where they are the most beautiful, rocks that fall from bluffs just before I go to collect rocks. Sometimes that can be overwhelming.

When we lived in the Southwest, I remember a drive home from Albuquerque down to Los Lunas (20 miles south) late one afternoon. The place where we lived had a view of a hundred miles or more in every direction (except for the mountains 15 miles to the East). Off to our right an amazingly glorious sunset grew. This was a fairly common occurrence out there.

But the amazing part was that we could see the line of clouds as it extended north and south from the Jemez mountains a hundred miles north to the Gila Wilderness a hundred fifty miles south. It was all dark and gray. There was only one short section where the sun was cutting through under the clouds and turning them all red, orange, and rich purple. We were in the middle of that short section and we could see that the view of that spectacular sunset only extended about two or three miles in front of us and a couple miles in back of us. That was a neat treat.

What made it special is that we saw the Lord do sunsets, sunrises, storms, rainbows, and so on—where we were among the few that could see them day in and day out, dozens and dozens of times a year. We learned that this was a thing to be thankful for. He was showing off His creation to a pair of visual artists whose life was focused on visual beauty. The more we became aware and thanked Him for the beauty the more he delighted in showing off His creation to us in special ways.

It is sad to think of how He feels when the beauties of His creation are taken for granted by the heathen and most believers. How sad is He when we kill off a whole species? We would tell our people in the church what happened and show them when it happened when we were together and often they simply did not care. As a result, they rarely saw such things—and usually saw them only when they were with us. We were teased us about thinking the Lord would actually have a deer walk out of the woods directly next to the car exactly at the time we were briefly parked there for a snack. Or, that the Lord would have a buffalo walk up to the fence to look in the face of our daughter out on the highway where we had stopped to look at the herd in the field. It happened too often to not be the Lord's hand. So, we thank Him for His love.

### Verse 4:7

And the peace of God, which goes far beyond all understanding, will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Here is the practical result of all this prayer. Our hearts and minds are kept in Jesus, within the Kingdom. The thorns and briars are cleared away. The seed finds good soil and grows and flourishes within us.

This is that peace in the midst of the storm, in the center of conflict, under the assault of danger, when everything around us seems to be collapsing into chaos. This is the power we receive to be forbearing. This is the reason we can sincerely rejoice. It is all the result of an ongoing constant relationship with the One who called us into His Kingdom where we talk together about everything..

## Verse 4:8

Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. [RSV]

Why does Paul tell us to have  
“good thoughts”?

Is our thought life important?

GIGO! Garbage in, garbage out. Most of you have probably heard that old computerese aphorism. This verse is the positive side of it. It takes effort to do this in the world of the enemy. There is not much available that is good, true, honorable, pure, peaceable, excellent, and so on.

When was the last time you watched a movie or a TV show that brought you closer to Jesus and helped you become a better, more mature citizen of the kingdom of God? When's the last time you heard a song that did that for you? When's the last time you had a superior at work bless you spiritually?

If it's been a while, maybe you should examine your priorities. I'm speaking as a man of whom God has been requiring that self-reexamination for the past five years or more in a very intensive manner. He has had me radically change my lifestyle, my work, my relationships, my attitude. It's really been good.

I did nothing but try to cooperate as He gave me the grace to do so. But the result has been a much deeper focus on the good things of life. I've been given a much more clear vision of what is important for my life.

You need to do the same. It is a much more pleasant process if you start it by seeking Him. The necessity of being put in circumstances that force you to make choices that are not comfortable is pretty much the norm. Mainly you need to get your mind off your circumstances and back on the good & true life in the Kingdom of God.

### Verse 4:9

Keep putting into practice all you learned and received from me—everything you heard from me and saw me doing. Then the God of peace will be with you. [NLT]

I've heard people get upset about the egotism of this statement by Paul. But that has nothing to do with what is going on. There were no Bibles, no Christian TV, no Christian books or counselors or any of the resources we consider common and necessary as believers in the new millennium in America in Paul's day.

The leadership of godly men and women has always been God's chosen method of discipleship. It's what Jesus himself did for the disciples who ended up in the upper room. There were ten times as many people awaiting Pentecost as the twelve we normally think of.

We are expected to model ourselves after the men and women God gives the responsibility to lead us. It is our task to give them the authority they need to do this joyfully. Remember the verse in Hebrews 13:17,

Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you. [NKJV]

It is vitally important that you talk this over with the Lord and pray that He will give you a leader you can serve to increase the Kingdom, and who will enable and allow you to mature in the Lord.

### Verse 4:10

I rejoiced that you demonstrated your concern for me, knowing that it was only the lack of opportunity that prevented you from doing so earlier.

This certainly sounds like Paul had been concerned or upset with what he was hearing or not hearing from the church at Philippi.

### Verse 4:11

And I am not saying this because I feel neglected, for I have learned to be content, no matter what's going on

It's hard to read this in modern PC America without reading in all kinds of psychological babble that probably do not apply. The key thing to learn is the ability to be content—no matter what.

This is a hard lesson in a marketing economy like the one we live in. Every day we are told in thousands of commercial messages that we need more or better. We are told that we deserve the latest fleshly pleasure. We have earned that fancy car, huge plasma screen, iPad, or whatever. But not just earned. We somehow deserve it. It's our right to have it! Now!

In the Christian walk you may have times of plenty and times of lack. There might be days you do not know when your next meal is coming or where it is coming from. And you will have days when you have so much you will be wondering where to share it. You will have times you are healthy and feel good and times you are sick and feel terrible. For most of us, it will not get to the point that

Jesus reached where He was so upset He sweat blood—but it certainly could.

The key is to remember that it is all part of a specific plan of God to bring you to maturity in him. It is part of your blessing. We are so limited by being restricted to time. In eternity many of these things will assume their proper place. For now we need to learn to be content, no matter what the circumstance. For circumstances change, but the promises of God remain and are always brought to pass in our lives if we allow it. So, we can relax and be content.

### Verse 4:12

I know how to live in poverty or prosperity. No matter what the situation, I've learned the secret of how to live when I'm full or when I'm hungry, when I have too much or when I have too little. [GW]

None of this worldly and fleshly concern matters as far as our position in the Kingdom is concerned. And the only thing that matters is where we spend eternity, whether we are with God in His Kingdom and that when we see him face to face he says to us, “well done, thou good & faithful servant”.

### Verse 4:13

I can do all things in him who strengthens me. [RSV]

This is not that idiotic message of humanism saying that you can be anything you want to be. That is not true. But it is true that no matter what circumstances you find yourself in you can be peaceful, forbearing, and joyful—content.

God will give you the ability to do whatever he has called you to do. The secret here is: “what He has called you to do”. If He has called you, he will enable you to do what he wants to be done. He will provide what you

need. It will be your choice whether you are obedient to Him or not.

Remember Paul is coming from a place where he was stoned, flogged, left for dead, and trials like that. Yes, he is saying that he has learned to be content even in those extreme circumstances—jails, earthquakes, shipwrecks... But the truth is: the most dangerous circumstances are those of comfort and wealth. Then we relax and do not cling to God. There are very few rich believers. Many have fallen away in comfort.

### Verse 4:14–18

Nevertheless, you have done well to share with me in my affliction. You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone; for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs. Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account. But I have received everything in full and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God.

My mama always taught me to send a thank you note. Here we find out that the letter to the Philippians was that. Of course, it was more than that—but 14-18 is about thanks. Paul just has a slight tendency to verbosity.

### Verse 4:19

& my God will supply every need you have with all His abundant wealth available in Jesus the Messiah

It's just a standard Christian closing, but what a statement! God is good. God is wealthy beyond measure. But above all, God is concerned about your life and will do

what is necessary for you to bring you into maturity and into His presence in the New Creation.

### Verse 4: 20-23

Now to our God and Father be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren who are with me greet you. All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. [NASB]

Chit-chat & a blessing. Just social niceties, but it shows Paul's manners.

### Philippians is a wonderful letter

Here we get a glimpse of Paul and how he relates to his friends. We also are given a look into what drives him and the source of His strength in the Lord. There is a lot packed into this short letter.

### The best verse

As far as I am concerned, the best statement of the letter is found in this short phrase—

*God is working in you,  
both to make you willing and to make you able!*

With that kind of help, you have the power to believe. You can be perfected—a mature believer in Jesus our Messiah.

Is this what you want?

*Go for it!*

If you have any questions or comments:

Please write me: [david@bergslund.org](mailto:david@bergslund.org)

I would love to hear from you.

# Study tools

## Recommended Books

### ✚ Several good study Bibles

#### What is a good study bible?

There are several attributes to consider when you buy a study bible. The main thing is to get a book that is comfortable at your normal studying location and comfortable to read.

A lot of this is personal. For example, I find that single-column Bibles are much easier to use and especially easy to teach from:

Leather-bound: nothing else will last long enough

Many cross references

Good maps

Word definitions either in the footnotes or built into the cross references

Wide margins for taking notes

A translation you trust: You'll need to pick up many translations and paraphrases, but unless you are certain you will use them for serious study, they can be paperbacks or hard-bound covers

No denominational slant in the footnotes and commentary: you want clear explanations of the scriptures. You do not want doctrinal slants

### ✚ Vine's Expository Dictionary

### ✚ Strong's Concordance

### ✚ Manners & Customs of the Bible

### ✚ Bible Dictionaries

### ✚ Dictionary & Thesaurus

## Useful Websites

### ✚ Bible versions: [biblegateway.com](http://biblegateway.com)

✚ Strong's Concordance and lexicons:

<https://www.blueletterbible.org/>

✚ Vine's Expository Dictionary:

<https://www.blueletterbible.org/>

✚ Maps and much more:

<http://www.ebibleteacher.com/imagehtml/ntmaps.html>

✚ Roman history:

<https://www.unrv.com>



**Jesus**  
**IS LORD**  
**BELIEVE IT OR NOT**

It's almost Easter here on the southern edge of Lake Ontario in Rochester, New York. This was my Easter reminder in 2020.

**Maranatha!**