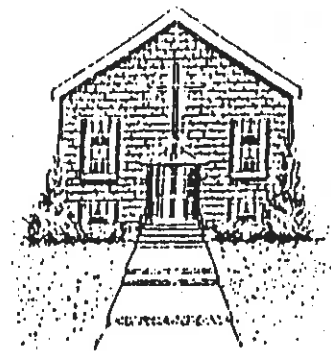


DARTMOUTH BIBLE NOTES

Sermon

Notes From the Sunday Messages

52 Morton Avenue North Dartmouth, Massachusetts



Series: Exposition of Philippians
Scripture: Phil.1:1,2; Acts 16:11-40

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Lesson 1 June 30, 1991

THE CHRIST-FOLLOWERS IN PHILIPPI

Introduction Probably one of the most encouraging books in the Bible is the Book of Philippians. There's doctrine for you theology-hounds; there's a lot of information about the life of the early church for those of you who wonder what the early church was like; and, there is just a lot of spiritual food here for getting fed--and that, to me, translates into encouragement. Do you recognize these words of Paul?

For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus (1:6).

For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain (1:21).

Do not merely look out for your own interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus who, though He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant... (2:3-7a)

...at the name of Jesus every knee should bow...and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord... (from 2:10,11)

for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure (2:13).

But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord... (3:7,8a).

Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus (3:14,15).

For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ (3:20).

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God which surpasses all comprehension will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus (4:6,7).

Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things.

(4:8)

Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am (4:11).

I can do all things through Him who strengthens me (4:13).

My God shall supply all your needs, according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus (4:19).

Philippians is maybe the most memorized-from book in the New Testament; surely one of the most loved... But perhaps the most famous verse in the book is in chapter 4 and verse 4,

Rejoice in the Lord always; again, I will say, Rejoice!

I have been praying for more than a year, that there might be a real resurgence of JOY in this assembly. You say, "Well, what are you looking for, Neil?" And I say, "I don't know--but I'll know it when I see it." I am inclined to think this particular fruit of the Spirit is in short supply among your generally evangelical, Bible-believing Christians. That may be, in part, because the Spirit-filled and Spirit-led believer is not at peace--he's at war, and the burdens of spiritual warfare, with all the casualties and demonic tactics and so forth can get him down, if he's not walking real close to Christ. It may also be because we're afraid to LET the Lord give us His joy... And if my hypothesis is true, there may be other explanations; I don't know...

But for whatever reasons, I believe we need a revival of this fruit. And if 4:4 is the most well-known verse in this book, then, I want to know why.

The assembly that Paul is writing to, is one of his own. And it was a very young assembly when he wrote this letter to them, probably less than ten years old. And Paul is not writing this letter from some padded armchair in a nice, cool office someplace... He's writing it to them from a prison cell, and his very writing materials must have been precious to him. But if one thing is clear in this letter, it is that Paul loves these people.

Philippi was an important city because it straddled the great east-west highway in northern Greece, known as the Egnatian Way. It was a hip and cosmopolitan city, with a forum in the center, surrounded by temples, a library, fountains, monuments and public baths. In 42 B.C. there was a big battle in this place, fought between Mark Antony and Octavia, and Brutus and Cassius. In honor of his victory, Antony made Philippi a Roman colony, thus giving the Philippian residents special privileges. The Philippian women enjoyed an especially high status in the Empire, taking an active part in both public and business life. Paul founded this church in about 50 A.D., of which we have read Luke's account (Acts 16:11-40). The senior members of this fellowship were a business woman (*Lydia*), and a cop (actually, a prison guard). And it was a church-plant NOT without great difficulty, as we read about Paul and Silas being thrown into the Philippian "slammer" after being roughed up pretty good ("beaten with rods").

You know, spiritual triumph often has risk attached, and sometimes there is a price to pay. Paul and Silas DID succeed at planting

a Christian assembly in Philippi, but at a price. They were misunderstood and falsely accused; mugged and "thrown" into prison.

I wonder if spiritual battles are EVER won without a struggle; without some sacrifice made on the part of the troops? I wonder if part of the lack of enthusiasm that sometimes seems to get us down, part of the infrequency which believers sense real victory is because we aren't willing to make much sacrifice for Christ?

What would it cost you, to say, start an evangelistic Bible study?
What would it cost you, to say, make prayer such a priority, that you were willing to give an hour a day to it?

What would it cost you, to say, make enough *time* available so that you could really get involved in some deep relationships with some of the brethren, and there could really be a useful and valuable give-and-take kind of ministry?

It would take sacrifice, dear ones, *sacrifice...*

Philippians 1:1

Actually this letter was *co-authored* by Paul AND his young under-study, Timothy. Maybe Paul was dictating and Timothy was doing the actual "word-processing," but nevertheless, it comes from the heart of two apostles, working and laboring together to spread the good news that God has sent a Savior.

They describe themselves as *bond-servants* ^{of} that Savior, Jesus. Paul was always quick to IDENTIFY to which movement he was attached. It is a testimony to his great *honesty*, a trait not often mentioned among the Bible commentators.

Religious HONESTY is something you find quite lacking today. Often times religious groups will try to *sell* you on their product and only later inform you with whom they are *really* associated. Some of the biggest religious movements in the country are run that way. But Paul and Timothy immediately go out of their way to IDENTIFY themselves, even to their own comrades in Philippi.

As *bond-servants* Paul is saying they viewed themselves as *slaves* of the Savior they preach. They viewed themselves as being TOTALLY AT THE DISPOSAL of their Master. Their livelihood and anything they experienced in connection with that livelihood, were at the ultimate command of their Master. *THEY* were not in charge--the Master was in charge. That is the life of a slave.

Notice that unlike his letters to the churches in Galatia or at Corinth, Paul felt no need to stress his apostolic authority. In Philippi that was no issue as it was in those other churches. He was among friends, as he fellowshipped with them through the mail. I take it from this that he felt a sense of acceptance among these particular "saints." And as we shall see as we get in to the letter, he maintained an intimate and affectionate relationship with them. His shepherding-relationship really modeled the very thing he wished to see AMONG them: grace and peace.

The letter is addressed to two groups, one including the other. It is addressed to the *saints* there; that is, to the true people of God. "Saints", as the Bible uses the term at least, are nothing more than the true Christians. There are not LEVELS of being a Christian;

You either are or you aren't.
You either *have* been called by God or you haven't yet.
You either *have* truly met Christ, or you haven't.
You either are a saint, or you aren't. There's no "I'm working on it;" or, "I HOPE I am." If you are, you know it. That's the kind of assurance the Scripture gives us, when we rest on ITS proclamations.

The second group, which is part of "the Philippian saints", is their elders and deacons; that is, their leaders and helpers. This is one of the places in the NT where both offices are mentioned, and within the Philippian assembly, at least, they were distinct offices. That seems to be the pattern in the whole NT, even if it is not everywhere as clear as it is here.

The "elders" are the ones whose responsibility it is, to oversee and shepherd the flock. They are the ones who teach, instruct, lead, guard the doctrine of the church, and give direction and spirit to the church.

The "deacons" are the ones who take it upon themselves--and see it as their calling--to make sure the physical needs of the flock do not go unmet. In the early church, the deacons were not building superintendents, since the early church *had* no buildings. They busied themselves though, with the many and varied physical needs that the saints experienced, insofar as they could. This freed up the elders to give themselves to preaching, teaching, and prayer, and, I am sure, a lot of discipleship and counseling too.

Philippians 1:2

As he did so often, Paul extends his wish to this church that they may experience God's GRACE and PEACE. These are perhaps the most *basic* two words which describe the Christian's newborn relationship with God. He has been saved through God's unmerited favor ("grace"), and he is sustained by grace too. We are UNDESERVING, and yet UNCONDITIONALLY LOVED.

And, he is brought into a relationship of PEACE with God--all hostilities have ceased. He is not on trial with God; he does not have to be on-guard with God, nor does he have to live in mistrust of his fellow church members. He has been brought into a realm of PEACE, and above all Paul wishes for them to see it, feel it and have their whole lives transformed BY grace and peace. These two things are the very core of what the Christian Life is to be about!

In his most recent book (*The Grace Awakening*, p.302), Chuck Swindoll identifies 24 "grace-killers", each is a brick in the wall that holds believers back from JOY:

legalism, expectations, traditionalism, manipulation, demands, negativism, control, comparison, perfectionism, competition, criticism, pettiness, pride, fear, resentment, bitterness, an unforgiving spirit, insecurity, fleshly effort, guilt, shame, gossip, hypocrisy

These two blessings, grace and peace, come from *God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ*. When a person comes to know Christ, he finds out that God is far more *gracious* than he ever imagined possible. And he finds out that within the Godhead, there is perfect harmony and unity. And from God directly to the Philippian Christians, as Paul wished it, would flow that same unity and harmony; *peace*. These are the main things that ought to characterize us, dear ones.

I am under conviction myself this week for my own lack, sometimes, of *graciousness*. I confess it to you, and ask your forgiveness when I lapse into some anger or disinterest or callousness. I am still learning about the grace of God too. And when there is ever anger, there is no peace. And that we need too, dear ones, in great abundance.

Our desire is that DBC will be a place where people can explore together just how *gracious* God is; and just how much spiritual peace He wants to give to the saints. May the Lord use this Book of Philipians to build our *JOY*, through a deepening experience of His *GRACE* and *PEACE*.

Benediction *May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all (2 Cor.13:14).*

FRUITS

LEGALISM

EXPECTATIONS

TRADITIONALISM

MANIPULATION

DEMANDS

NEGATIVISM

CONTROL

COMPARISON

PERFECTIONISM

COMPETITION

CRITICISM

PETTINESS

PRIDE

FEAR

RESENTMENT

BITTERNESS

INSECURITY

AN UNFORGIVING SPIRIT

FLESHLY EFFORT

GUILT

SHAME

GOSSIP

HYPOCRISY

DARTMOUTH BIBLE NOTES

Sermon

Notes From the Sunday Messages

52 Norton Avenue North Dartmouth, Massachusetts



Series: Exposition of Philipppians
Scripture: Philipppians 1:3-11

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Lesson 2 July 7, 1991

HOW PAUL FELT ABOUT THEM

Introduction Have any of your good friends ever told you what they appreciate about you? How about this: have you ever listened while someone else prays for you? Its a good feeling to be assured that others care and notice your efforts to grow in Christ. That's an identifying mark, Jesus said, of being one of His disciples. He said that people would identify His followers by the love they have for one another. This applies within our families, between individual Christians in their one-on-one relationships, and it applies to church bodies. Now I think the Apostle Paul was a man of strong emotions, at least when it came to how he felt about the new Christian churches with which he was dealing.

Now Paul is going to demonstrate in his words to the Philipppians today, THREE PRINCIPLES of "body-life" that are incumbent on Christians. And as we are constantly working at getting to know one another, and at learning how to minister to new people as they become part of this body, these are three principles we need to keep in front of us. I think these are things we are familiar with, but you can never hear it too much, and there are times in any church when they lapse.

AFFIRMATION

When someone tells you what they appreciate about you, its hard to not feel good, right? When someone tells you that you did a good job, that feels pretty good doesn't it?

In Phil.1:3-7, Paul *affirms* the Philipppian believers in how they have helped him in his ministry.

To affirm someone means to STATE POSITIVELY something about a person. To affirm someone is to make a DELIBERATE and DIRECT attempt to encourage them about some aspect of spiritual growth you have noticed, or something they did that you noticed and appreciated.

To affirm someone is to cut across the grain of what might be a natural inclination to *withhold* affirmation, because of a lack of it in your own experience. The flesh says to you, "Naaah--don't reinforce him," and the Spirit says, "Build UP your brothers and sisters at every opportunity."

Now, the Philipppian Christians had played a valuable part in Paul's own ministry.

While he was with them, several of them had worked hard with him to spread the Gospel (4:3) and after his departure they continued their witness.

They prayed for him regularly (1:19).

They maintained contact with him through messengers like Epaphroditus. They sent him financial gifts.

They were a group of Christians which when he thought of them, he would give thanks to God--they were a real blessing to him.

In verse 6 he affirms what he thinks will be their future--that the good work of faith that began in them in Acts 16 will see its conclusion and will not get side-tracked, as it had in the some of the Galatian churches, for instance. He felt that this church would reach a level of maturity and strength, and he was excited about that.

In their book, *The Blessing*, Gary Smalley and John Trent talk about "giving the blessing" to our children, in the OT manner we read about with Isaac and his sons. Smalley and Trent tell us that one of the keys to giving our kids the blessing, is to affirm them with words of confidence about their future.

When a parent tells his child, no matter how old that child is, that he thinks that child is going to do well, the child might just actually *believe* it!

In verse 6, Paul is affirming this church about their future. Notice that the work of "perfecting the good work" that began at conversion, doesn't end until "the day of Christ Jesus." Jesus is AT WORK in us, and in this church, until the very DAY when He will come back to the planet.

The idea is, that the Lord is not going to give up on them (or us), and that HE will keep on working to sanctify us,
to give us the wisdom we need,
to build our unity and love.

In verse 7 Paul wrote to them that it was only *natural* that he should feel so close to them--they were a real part in backing him up in his ministry. Their partnership meant a great deal to him while he was free to move about; but it meant even *more* to him now that he was in prison. He was not alone, even though he may have looked alone!

Sometimes we can feel useless, maybe because we're not out there actually putting our lives on the line for the Gospel. But if we are involved with the work of Missions, in a support capacity, it means a great deal to the folks that we're supporting. You and I can have a real part in the spread of the Gospel. Can you get excited about that?

How would you feel if you had a brother or sister--in the flesh, I mean--who really felt the call of God to make the full-time ministry their livelihood? Would you get involved with their lives? Of course you would. And you would feel a real part of their ministry, because you *naturally* care about them. Well, you can develop a close, working-relationship with a mission family beginning right today. You can help them financially, on a personal level, you can make their ministry a regular part of your prayer life. You can write to them, and send them things in the mail.

These are all things that Paul affirmed in his backers from Philippi.

GODLY AFFECTION

The second principle of body-life that Paul demonstrated in this letter was the godly affection he had for them. This was a church he knew. He knew Ms. Lydia; he knew the jailer and his family; he knew Euodia and Syntyche. And in the first verses of ch. 1 he expresses a deep affection for them.

Do you care about your brethren here? Or in other churches? How do you feel about them? Are they important to you?

Now, you can't have apostolic feelings for a whole church maybe; but there was a fine, godly affection Paul felt for these people because of their faithful involvement with his ministry. In our church, we are attached to seven missionary families right now. They minister in different places: around here; in New Hampshire; in Africa; in Spain; in Argentina; in Yugoslavia/Austria. Seven families who love Jesus Christ and the good news about Him, just like you do. Do you have any feelings for them?

Well, if you're honest, you have to admit, "Not all of them, Neil." Because we have just completed the merger between Elim and Dartmouth, not everyone is familiar with all the missionary families yet. It will take some time; but as we get to know them--and you had an opportunity to get to know one of the seven families just two weeks ago--and other opportunities will come up--you will begin to know them well, and understand how God called them into His work, and the things God is doing through them.

Part of body-life is looking beyond just your own "time at supper." Too many Christians look at "going to church" as the time where they get fed, and that's all they're interested in... It is not how God intends for His body to work. According to the pattern Paul is DEMONSTRATING here in Philippians, He intends for believers to CARE about each other, to be INVOLVED in each other's lives--especially the lives of missionaries--and to "participate" in the spread of the Gospel together.

Paul said he had the Philippians in his heart (vs. 7). He said he longed for them (vs. 8) with the same kind of affection that Jesus had...

By the way, have you ever thought of Jesus as an affectionate individual? Having deep feelings of brotherly love for each other is not strange. It's not maladjusted or perverted. It is the way JESUS was, so sayeth the Apostle Paul. And he could honestly say that towards the Philippians at least, he could feel about them the way Jesus felt about His disciples.

Dear ones, expressing our affection towards one another--even if we've known each other for a long time, is the kind of evidence to the world that says "JESUS IS HERE."

Prayer

The third principle of body-life fits right in with affection and affirming worth and appreciation. It is what you will naturally do with and for your brothers and sisters in Christ IF you appreciate them and have warm feelings towards them. If you do NOT, then you probably won't practice this last body-life principle much... It is PRAYER. In this section Paul tells them that he prays for them a great deal.

In verse 4 there is an unusual thought about prayer. There Paul says he "offers prayer with joy." When he would think of the Philippian assembly, many hundreds of miles away, it brought him JOY as he spoke to the Lord about them. And he tells them that they bring him joy before the Lord. This, from a man in chains, in jail.

Sometimes the only joy a missionary or a pastor can find, is in his prayers for the saints he loves. When he sees their faces in his mind, and plays back the tapes of victories he experienced with them it wells up as joy before the Lord. And I think God is pleased when we think of each other with good thoughts and happy memories.

Last summer we had John and Pam Fernandez here for a Sunday. John pastored this church for a short but critical six-months. When he was here again, and it was on a Sunday when we had the Lord's Table like today-- it brought JOY to those of you who knew him, I could see it.

Now, Paul prays in verse 10 that they might keep growing in more and more devotion for one another. He wants them to keep glorifying Christ increasingly, by deepening their affection and commitment for one another. It isn't a silly, shallow kind of love, for he says *love...in real knowledge and all discernment*. Christ-like love requires discernment and understanding. And to practice that kind of love with someone requires effort. You have to pay attention to each other.

God's GOAL for DBC, as it was for "PBC", was that all the way, right up to the very day He comes back, that DBC should be working on the important things, *the things that are excellent (vs. 10)*, like

evangelism

acts of kindness and support of one another

worship

mercy and rescue efforts when we get into difficulty

discipleship

These are the things a church needs to emphasize and KEEP emphasizing. These are the things Paul prayed about a great deal for this church which he loved so much.

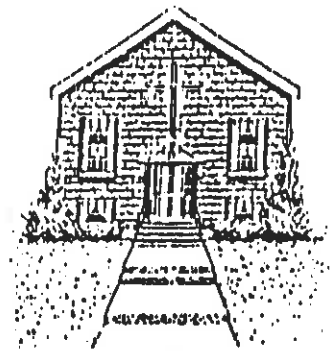
In verse 11 Paul acknowledges that the only *fruit of righteousness* worth being filled with, is that which comes through Jesus Christ. Good works that have nothing to do with Christ are ultimately worthless. But good works that come OUT OF knowing Jesus Christ are the stuff to have your life filled with! Let's be praying for THOSE kinds of things for each other, for our missionary families and for our sister churches in the area.

DARTMOUTH BIBLE NOTES

Sermon

Notes From the Sunday Messages

52 Morton Avenue North Dartmouth, Massachusetts



Series: Exposition of Philippians
Scripture: Phil. 1:9-11

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Lesson 3 July 21, 1991

major's love

PRAYING FOR ONE ANOTHER

Introduction A Christian busies himself or herself with many tasks:
He gets involved with

getting to know his Bible
sharing the Gospel
visitation
distributing Bibles and Christian literature
feeding the hungry
the abortion issue

and any number of other important activities. But the most important and absolutely essential activity of the Christian life, is my personal prayer life. The degree to which I give myself to prayer, will determine the degree of success I see in all the other areas of the Christian life, including those I just mentioned. If I make the development of my personal communion with God a priority, and I seek Him even when I'm tired or busy, then He gives me a special assurance that He is in control, and He blesses me in the things I want to accomplish for His kingdom.

One preacher assessed the modern church scene this way:

The church has many organizers, but few agonizers.

Many who pay, but few who pray.

Many resters, but few wrestlers.

Many who are enterprising but few interceding.

The secret in praying is in praying in secret. A worldly Christian will stop praying, and a praying Christian will stop worldliness.

Tithes may build a church building, but tears will give it life.

That is the difference between the modern church and the early church.

--Leonard Ravenhill

Now, something I hear often from folks, is, "I would pray more if I knew what to pray about--more specifically, if I knew what to pray FOR."

Today, we're looking at Paul's prayer for the believers in Philippi with a view to learning something about HOW to pray for one another. There are three links in the "chain" of this prayer. They are:

- a. A LOVE that has perspective (verse 9)
- b. A CHARACTER that possesses purity (verse 10)
- c. A RIGHTEOUSNESS that produces glory to God (verse 11)

And as we consider these three "links in the chain", consider this angle about it: "Lord, I'm praying this because I want You to put Your glory on display." Have you ever prayed that way? "Father, we need more of your love evident here--not so that we can have a good reputation as a church, but that Your glory might be known."

A Love That Has Perspective (verse 9)

As Paul thought from prison about his friends back in Philippi, it burdened him to pray that their love for one another wouldn't stall out at a certain level, but that it would KEEP GROWING.

Now KNOWLEDGE without love, is something Paul spoke about to the Corinthian church. In I Cor. 8 he said that knowledge, divorced from love just puffs a person up with pride, whereas love BUILDS UP. Even though we have good knowledge about doctrine or evangelism or church organization, etc., if it isn't matched with the love of Jesus Christ, it isn't worth much.

On the other hand, what Paul had in mind, as he interceded in prayer for the Philippian believers, was that they should develop *smart love*. Paul was not blind to the dangers of emotion uncontrolled by intelligence. He prayed that their love and affection and sacrifice for one another would be "smart" ("real knowledge and all discernment").

This is still true today. Often believers will make sacrifices for one another, and it is *unsmart*. Because of guilt, or an unconscious desire to control or influence, believers will make sacrifices that are NOT smart. They are sincere--it is love which motivates them, but it is immature love, and Paul was praying for a growing love, which was controlled by "knowledge" and "all discernment."

There were other churches who still needed to learn the BASIC elements of love. But the believers in Philippi had the basics down and now needed to go on from "Love 101" to "Love 306": *Practicing Discerning Love*.

A case in point might be a person who has a natural desire to provide short-term housing for other Christians. They may even have some gifts in the area of hospitality. Now, that is a needed area of service, and their motivation to provide housing is sincere and out of real love. But if that person has a family, or a limited income, and they infringe on the health of their own family to exercise this need to help others, they are compromising their own family. That isn't *smart love*. God also calls us to meet our own family's needs first, and to be good stewards of what we have.

A Character That Possesses Purity (verse 10)

Practicing a discerning, smart kind of love--which is what Paul prayed for them--enables one to CHOOSE WHAT IS BEST. In fact, that is how the British NT scholar translates verse 10: *so that you may be able to choose what is best.* FF Bruce

Smart-love chooses the best among the good. We grow in our discernment of how to love one another, and we develop wisdom in how to "approve the things that are excellent"; how to "choose the best way."

One thing the Deacons are working on and wrestling over at the moment, is how the best way would be to administer our emergency-helps fund. It is harder than you might think to know how to work with people's requests for financial help. It requires wisdom and a discerning-love

that frankly, I don't think can be developed apart from prayer. I would ask you to pray for your Deacons in this, and in their whole ministry, as well as for the other people working in the ministry here.

Another example is in the sale of the downtown building and any future development of property by the church. What *governs* the way we make decisions? It is *smart/discerning-love* that controls us? It surely needs to be...

The GOAL of developing a pure character is not so we can be proud or self-righteous, but as the rest of verse 10 says, *in order to be sincere and blameless until the Day of Christ*. We have yet to answer to Christ, dear ones, and His Day will arrive. If we act out of mature-love, in every decision, we can have a clear conscience.

We can say, "Well we made this decision; we were unsure about it, but we know our motivations were Christ-honoring; our discernment was as much as we could muster; our hearts were in the right place and our heads were in the right place."

And then, Paul prays further (verse 11)...

A Righteousness That Produces Glory to God (verse 11)

Paul wanted to see and hear about good qualities developing in the lives of the Philippian church members. Only Jesus Christ can produce these kinds of qualities, "*the fruit of righteousness*." A non-Christian can develop some relative goodness, or, a "non-badness". But only through walking daily with Jesus Christ, and being filled with His Spirit can a person really give glory to God.

When we pray, instead of always praying for Aunt Sophie and all kinds of physical things, why not imitate Paul's prayer for the Philippians?

I'm not saying we shouldn't pray for healing and God's will for people in jobs and car-buying and salvation for unsaved loved ones. I believe God wants to be part of every aspect. But can we not embark on a campaign of praying for the FRUITS of righteousness in each other's lives and in the lives of Christians in our sister churches?

I don't think I've ever heard anyone pray,

"Lord, would you give Hixville more love? Would you give Calvary more joy? Would you fill up Mullen Hill with Your peace? Would you grant Cross Road more long-sufferingness? Please use Your precious Spirit to manifest Your gentleness within the assembly at Long Plain Baptist Church...?"

From Scripture, dear ones, this is the agenda in prayer that Paul had.

May we become a praying church. May we be burdened to seek out the Lord in private, secret prayer. May He grant us that blessing...

Benediction

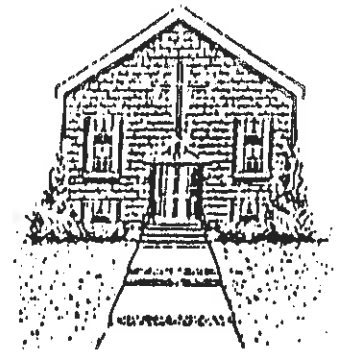
The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn His face toward you and give you peace. (Numbers 6:24-26)

DARTMOUTH BIBLE NOTES

Sermon

Notes From the Sunday Messages

52 Morton Avenue North Dartmouth, Massachusetts



Series: Exposition of Philipians
Scripture: Phil. 1:12-18

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Lesson 4 July 28, 1991

LESS THAN PURE MOTIVES

Introduction I wonder if you ever ponder the question, "How is the Gospel doing in southeastern Massachusetts?" Is it doing well?

- * Are people hearing the good news?
- * Are people coming to faith in Jesus Christ around here, and making a personal commitment to Him?
- * Are churches being planted and are existing ones growing?
- * Are lives being touched and changed with the message of grace?
- * How is the Gospel doing in S.E. Massachusetts?

Some Christians are sensitive to this, and others are not too concerned about such things. But think about it with me today, at least. Is the "good news" getting a good reception around here? Or, is it not prospering at the moment?

In times past, the good news did VERY well in these parts. In the beginning of the colony, the majority of Englishmen around here were fine, Bible-believing Christians... During the first part of the 1700's, this area experienced the "Great Awakening" and many people responded to the Gospel... During the late 1700's and the first few years of the 1800's, Daniel Hix planted at least six churches right here in Bristol County... And there have probably been other seasons of revival around here since, too!

But how is it doing now? Do you ever wonder about that?

There are definitely places in the world where the Gospel is not doing well. Places where they haven't even heard about Jesus yet; places where Satan is very strong; places where materialism is rampant (like England and northern Europe). In places like these, the Gospel is not being heard much, at the moment.

In the Apostle Paul's time, the Gospel was catching on all over the Roman empire like wild fire! I'm sure there were places of great resistance then too, but generally it was taking the Mediterranean world by storm. But even though the effect of the preaching of the Gospel was in seeing thousands of people respond to Christ, the messengers were not always doing it for the right reasons. We should not idealize the first century to the point where we mistakenly believe that the progress of the Gospel was without difficulty. It was spread and shared from one town to the next, from one province to the next, and from one nation to the next, at GREAT difficulty. And in our passage today, we read the few lines that Paul wrote to the Philippian church, describing the progress of the Gospel and the condition of those who were sharing it.

So that's the actual issue in today's text, dear ones: THE PROGRESS OF THE GOSPEL.

But what I want to draw out for you too, is Paul's *attitude* about his present situation. It was less than ideal, to say the least. Reviewing his circumstances,

- * He's in jail
- * He's aware of some intentional opposition to him, from within the Christian community
- * He is powerless to GO THERE (or wherever) and take the bull by the horns himself

How do you operate in a situation where your hands are pretty much tied? I tend to get frustrated. And I'm not just talking about in evangelism. If a ministry situation is going on that I'm aware of, and I can't do anything about it, my natural reaction is to get itchy. Paul was in that situation, as he describes it in vss. 15-18.

But first let's look at verses 12-14...

How He Views His Own Trials

Its one thing to look at hard circumstances you might be in, and to consider just yourself, as in a vacuum. But sometimes the Lord is doing things *through* the problem that are bigger than just you, yourself. Paul also wrote,

And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. (Romans 8:28)

The "all things" includes the hard things too. Now, Paul's circumstances were brought on by nothing other than his preaching of the pure Gospel. He wasn't under house-arrest in Rome because he had been obnoxious, or because he was an unruly lawbreaker. It was just for openly sharing the good news of Jesus Christ that had brought him all the way to Rome. But he doesn't say, "Woe is me. I've lost my liberty."

He writes them--"Hey, something bigger than just my life is happening here."

The Gospel is spreading faster because of my being under arrest. All the Emperor's body-guard knows why I'm here, and what I stand for. To Paul, having the name of the Lord Jesus Christ become known in such a central and influential place was *worth* confinement.

The other positive effect of his personal trial, was that it was emboldening the other Christians there. You know how a "righteous cause" tends to unify a people and make *them* bolder, especially where there is suffering on the part of a leader:

The Desert Storm experience has unified this country like it hasn't been in many years. And when those flyers were paraded on Iraqi TV, it was probably the dumbest thing the Iraqi leaders could have done because it just inflamed the national will.

How do you view those trials that might be in your life; the ones which are NOT of your own doing? Can you see God using them for His glory in any way?

Paul knew he had the right motives.

He knew that people knew he was a Christian and that they were watching HOW his faith would sustain him.

And he knew that the Lord would shine through him, and that it would strengthen other Christians.

There are some people in our assembly who have big difficulties, which they did not invent or ask for, and yet who do not complain. They do not whine, but rather they carry on in the faith and expect God to use them despite their troubles. That's the place we need to get to, dear ones!

The Gospel Is Preached, At Least

Paul was unable to "screen" every preacher of the Gospel back in the region around Philippi. That was beyond his control, and he looked at the fact that some were doing it for wrong motives in light of the bigger picture: the name of Jesus Christ was being proclaimed.

Not only were some preachers motives selfish, he says some were doing it for the purpose of making life even harder for Paul. What motive could be worse? The ambition of selfish ambition is bad enough, but when some were doing it for *conspiratorial* reasons--to double Paul's hardship; that is incredible!

But Paul says, "Hey--its OK" People are hearing about Jesus Christ." He knew that the Holy Spirit would use the message, even if a few preachers were using it for reasons OTHER than a love for the lost.

We can have the same attitude about preachers or ministries today whose motives we may hold suspect. Some preachers have a "Messiah"-complex. Its nothing new, and there will always be some with this. They want to build a personal kingdom, giving lip-service to Christ, but loving their growing influence, power, comfort and control over people.

There are some preachers who, yes, they preach Christ, but they always seem *mad* at somebody. They preach the existence, death, resurrection of Jesus, but they display little of His love and healing. Its OK, Paul says, so far as his personal emotions were concerned. The Holy Spirit is bigger than any preacher. He will use the Word of God where and when it is proclaimed and He will accomplish what HE wants to accomplish.

I know of a church in Texas, in a city with relatively few good, Bible-teaching churches--or so I've been told. And in this city is this one BIG evangelical church which has Bible classes every night of the week except Saturday night. People are expected to come out as often as they can to get Bible "doctrine." And the pastor is a former military man, and there are gun cases in the church, displaying firearms. Now that church is packed out. It attracts hundreds of people. Why? Because they LIVE Christ? I do not know. I don't think that's their draw. I think its because of even with all the weirdness in that church, they do preach the Scripture. They do preach Christ and the Lord uses that.

Paul says he rejoiced in the name of the true Christ being preached. Now, I do not rejoice in the fact that the Mormons name Christ. I do not rejoice in the rapid growth in this country of the Jehovah's Witnesses who condescendingly make some room in their theology for the name of Jesus Christ. That is not what Paul is saying.

But when the TRUE Christ is proclaimed, in that we can rejoice. We live in a post-Christian culture now. It is not a Christian society any more and the presence of Christians, I believe, is going to become an increasing irritant here, unless we see revival. How many churches are there now in which, even in the CHURCH SERVICE, Christ is not considered the one and only Savior, God, true man, and where even the Apostle's Creed cannot be sincerely recited. But where the name of Jesus Christ *is* proclaimed sincerely and correctly, praise God for that place, be it a home, a small group of Christians in the workplace, in the Mall, in the ballpark or in the church!

Less than pure motives do not defeat the Kingdom. God is bigger than all the mistakes and sins that Christians can commit. His Kingdom will not be thwarted by the likes of selfish or even wicked preachers...

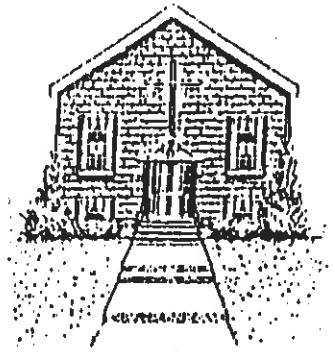
I hope you will look at your own circumstances, and at the progress of the Gospel through Pauline eyes. Pray for the progress of the Gospel and the part we play in it.

DARTMOUTH BIBLE NOTES

Sermon

Notes From the Sunday Messages

52 Morton Avenue North Dartmouth, Massachusetts



Series: Exposition of Philippians
Scripture: Philippians 1:19-26

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Lesson 5 Sept. 1, 1991

TO LIVE IS CHRIST: Coming Out a Winner, Whatever Happens

Introduction When you hear the phrase, "the Christian Life," what do you think of?

- * Do you think of a certain set of spiritual activities: like having a Quiet Time, going to church, giving someone a Gospel tract?
- * Do you think of *abstaining* from doing some things that a non-Christian might have no problem with: drinking nine beers, concealing something defective in a car you're trying to sell, getting a divorce, having an affair? Or,
- * Do you think of the sacrifices that might be involved, the cost of discipleship?

Each of these is a *symptom* of "the Christian life", but today we're going to consider a far simpler definition for this phrase... Based upon Paul's words to the believers in Philippi, I suggest to you that the Christian life is simply LIFE IN CHRIST, CHRIST IN ME. It is a personal relationship with Him.

Men: how would you describe your relationship with your wife, and
Women: how would you describe your relationship with your husband?

Some would say, "it is fun," or "it is comfortable," or, "we talk to each other all the time, about all kinds of things," or, "it is a commitment of trust and a willing vulnerability." But whatever your relationship to your spouse, it IS THAT--a personal relationship.

- You are WITH each other.
- You talk to each other, perhaps more some days than others.
- You confide in each other and understand each other.
- You enjoy the special things about your husband/wife that make him/her uniquely themselves.

I was privileged to perform three weddings this year. In the pre-marital counseling, if I had said to those couples, "Marriage is primarily a financial obligation," or, "Marriage is primarily a social thing, the hooking up of two families," or, "Marriage is primarily a rearrangement of old habits, and learning new ones," I guarantee you, each one of those six people would have looked at me like I was from another planet. The main thing is the NEW and EXCITING and FULFILLING relationship!

The "Christian life" is just that too, but instead of a physical relationship--seeing, hearing and touching--it is an invisible personal relationship. It is maintained by faith, not by sight. It is a spiritual personal relationship.

No one captures what this relationship-aspect of the Christian life in print like the apostle Paul. Listen to this:

I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me. (Galatians 2:20)

Paul says the Christian life is a relationship with Christ. A highly personal, living, ongoing, alive relationship which involves an intimacy with the Savior whereby the person lets Christ live HIS will through his life.

Now dear ones, perhaps all of you here already look at this Christian life this way, as a personal relationship rather than as a moral code by which we live, or a set of religious (and time-consuming) activities... You already know this very Biblical truth that, if nothing else, a Christian is a person who has met Jesus Christ and who walks with Him and enjoys His fellowship.

But this sets us up to look at the passage today in Philippians. The passage we have is Paul's personal meditation on his own life. At this point in his life, he was facing a couple of prospects: execution, or release and freedom, whereby he could travel about again and even pass through Philippi.

Whatever Happens, I Win (vss. 19,20) Paul's attitude about his prospects for the future, depends on two things:

- * prayer support
- * the supply of the Holy Spirit

Now looking at it from the reverse, if a Christian doesn't have anyone praying for him, and if He is not actively depending on the things the Spirit provides, then he almost certainly will not have a hopeful expectation about his future. There are plenty of Christians around who live in defeat. They have no joy and even though they're promised a bright future when Christ returns, you wouldn't know it by looking at them or talking to them.

Prayer support is so very important, folks. We need to be praying for one another, and doing so regularly. And we need to be praying especially for those who are in the front lines with bearing the message of salvation, like our missionaries.

Paul says he knows its going to be OK because he knows the Philip-pians are praying for him. When I know someone is really backing me up in prayer, it has an effect on my outlook to. My attitude is better even though the prospects may not be what I want all the time. Sometimes we face ministry decisions which aren't black and white, cut and dry. My goal is to make a decision which is honoring to the Lord. Paul puts it this way: *that I shall not be put to shame in anything.* When the people are praying, and when I'm depending on God's Spirit to supply what I need, I can't go wrong, can I?

Now what DOES the Spirit supply? He gives

- * Companionship, as Jesus promised in John 14:16;
- * Counsel, as Jesus promised He would in John 14:26;
- * Courage for witnessing (John 15:26,27)
- * Intercession in our prayer lives (Romans 8:26).

All of these are things which the Holy Spirit gives me, and in plentiful supply which get me through, dear ones.

Now you may look at a certain circumstance you're facing and feel that it is more than you can handle. Now, what are the most difficult circumstances you're facing? How can Christ be exalted in that situation? Let me say that IT IS POSSIBLE for Jesus Christ to be honored through your life even if you're facing some hard times.

If you're out of work but looking, there are ways for Christ to be honored. If you're sick, there's ways for Christ to be honored. If you're misunderstood or even ridiculed at work, there are ways in which you can honor the Lord.

Whatever Happens, Even Death Now Paul was facing the possibility of being killed for his stand. But that was OK, because to die as a Christian meant that he would immediately go to be with Christ, and what could be better than that.

Sometimes our Christian belief-system is criticized today for its conviction that there IS a heaven, and there IS the real prospect of actually being with Jesus Christ. But that is the fact, my friends, even though your belief may be assaulted. It is a fact! For the Christian, dying is GAIN, Paul wrote. It wasn't a thing to despair; it was GAIN.

Sometimes I really believe we need to renovate our whole funeral system, as believers. We get into this grief thing so much, and when a loved one, who is a Christian, dies, we rig the whole system around OUR loss. Little is said or celebrated about *THEIR GAIN*.

In verse 23, Paul talks about *departing and being with Christ*. He says nothing about purgatory, or soul-sleep or any state at ALL other than being with Christ. Dear ones, when you die, if you are truly a Christian, you go to be with Christ. How can I be so sure? Because I have placed my entire confidence on the reliability of the teachings of the Scripture. And the Scripture teaches that when the believer becomes "absent from the body," he becomes "present with the Lord." Doesn't take a day or a week or a month to get there, either. The strong indication is, that it happens immediately!

But If I Stay On Here... The other prospect Paul was contemplating, was to be released from prison. He dearly loved the Philippian believers and he knew there was still some things he could do to strengthen them. If he could get back over there, there was more work for him to do.

Now the whole purpose Paul had in his life, was to see progress in the Christian life in other people. We consume our lives with that, and with other things too. Oh, that the spread and growth of pure faith might be the biggest thing we strive for.

Let making money take SECOND place.
Let gaining professional advancement take SECOND place.

It may be hard to hear this, but you must let some of those family obligations and loyalties take SECOND place.

It doesn't mean that we ignore other things, but that all the while, with everything I do for my kids, with everything I do on my job, with all pursuits in recreation, I'm continually looking for ways to further the kingdom of Christ, to encourage someone else's faith, to tell someone NEW about Jesus Christ.

Folks, I think what this town needs to hear first of all, is not that they need to be saved. First of all they need to hear that Jesus Christ is real. And then they need to know that He is all the things the Bible says He is. And THEN, they need to hear and see that He does in fact make a positive difference in a person's life. THAT's what people need to see and hear.

If I'm striving to make Him first in my life, and to really live Christ, then whatever prospects I am facing, my feeling about them, and in fact my emotional health, will fall into place. Seeking Him is no waste of time. It is no vain pursuit. It is the finest thing there is to occupy us...the finest thing. And to the extent that we can really and genuinely assist other people to find Jesus Christ, we are doing real ministry. All the rest is just sideline stuff.

May we each push on to know Him better. May we make some fresh commitments this week. I know He will meet you when you seek Him, and He will supply all that you need to live for Him and to tell others about Him.

**THE REASON FOR THE EXISTENCE
OF D.B.C. IS TO HONOR GOD
BY GROWING IN OUR RELATIONSHIP
WITH HIM AND ONE ANOTHER,
THROUGH A BALANCED FOCUS ON
WORSHIP, DISCIPLESHIP,
FELLOWSHIP AND EVANGELISM.**

Dartmouth Bible Notes

Dartmouth Bible Church 52 Morton Ave., North Dartmouth, Mass.

Series: Exposition of Philippians
Scripture: Philippians 1:27 - 2:2

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Lesson 6 Sept. 22, 1991

MAKE ME PROUD

Introduction Two hours after Hurricane "Bob" passed by us, I went out with a buddy of mine touring the area and looking at the damage. It was hard not to be impressed by the extent of the damage, especially if you saw all the boats in Padanaram harbor. And of course, it could have been a lot worse. But the thing that we saw so much was the destruction to trees. I noticed that certain kinds of trees seemed to just snap right in half (pines); others seemed to come right up out of the ground (white birches). Nearly everyone had some experience either with their own trees or with a neighbor's. But you know, maybe the tree-type which you saw the least number blown over, was the oak. So many old oaks just stood right up to the 110 mph "blow" and took it. They were steadfast. Maybe they lost a lot of leaves and a few branches, but that old oak, he's still standing out there!

Living for Christ is sometimes like standing out in a windstorm. You have to lean into the "blow" just to stay on your feet. You plant yourself, determine that you're not going to be blown away by the force of the storm, and depend on some deep roots to keep you steadfast. As Paul wrote this letter to the believers in Philippi he wanted them to stand firm against the storms. He wanted them to remain steadfast for the faith and to live their lives out with a determination that, whatever happens to me or around me, I'm going to glorify Christ. More than anything, Paul wanted this for his close Christian friends over in Philippi. And I think any Christian pastor wants the same thing for the sheep in his flock. When a pastor can look at his flock (or his former flock) and say, "They have remained steadfast," he is proud of them. In the passage today, Paul is basically saying to the Philippians--with great affection for them as the backdrop--MAKE ME PROUD!

There are all kinds of storms that may come. We could very well enter into a time of being persecuted for being Christians and taking the stand that we do. We may fall into a pit of strife, internally. There could be an epidemic of some kind that breaks over us. Naturally, I hope none of these things ever happens to us, but inevitably there will be times of stress that the whole church will face and how the church does will be determined by how the individuals do...

The Command (1:27a)

Now, Paul tells them to *conduct themselves in a manner worthy of the Gospel of Christ*. Another way of putting it is to say LIVE AS CITIZENS. It is an appeal for a sort-of nationalistic pride. When a person accepts Jesus Christ as personal savior and Lord, they are also implying that they are willing to live as one of His disciples. At least, that is how I see conversion. The new convert understands something, at least, of the obligation, now, to live for Christ. That involves change and sacrifice

and putting to death the "deeds of the flesh." Getting saved is easy. Living "saved" is not easy. It takes time. It takes determination. It takes *steadfastness*.

So, the basic command for us here, is to make it a priority to conduct our lives in a manner consistent with the high quality of the Gospel. Paul is pleading for "gospel-worthy Christians who will carry on for Jesus Christ without the prop of the apostle's presence (1:27b)" [Strauss]. Now, how can we do that?

5 Ways to Obey This Command (2:1,2)

Now in Paul, there are always practical ways to do what he says we need to do. And a little further on in our passage today, I see FIVE WAYS to conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of the Gospel.

1. DWELL on the GOOD THINGS

The first is in 2:1 and it is to *concentrate* on the good things around us. Before we read this verse again, jump ahead in Philippians to 4:8,9 because there Paul recommends the same strategy. There, he says to them that they should "*let their minds dwell on*" the good things around them. In those verses he says the "good things" are the things which are honorable, right, pure, lovely, and so forth. And in 2:1 he recommends the same strategy--concentrate on the good things. Back in that verse, he mentions *four* things on which to concentrate... And before we consider those four areas of focus, let me ask you, what occupies most of your attention? Is it the news? Is it sports or recreation? What is the most time-consuming thing in your life, other than your livelihood?

- a. encouragement in Christ - that is, the gentle experience of having Him comfort you and lead you on.
- b. consolation of love - have you truly experienced the love of God, personally? If so, you can dwell on that, and it will really affect how you relate to your brethren in the Body.
- c. fellowship of the Spirit - the Spirit actually does bind us together, dear ones. It is not my imagination. He works gently and quietly to minimize selfishness and pride in us and to strengthen our commitment to each other. If you watch, over a year say, you can see Him doing it, and that is a good thing to dwell on, to give attention to, to become a real student of...
- d. sympathy and compassion for others. There is no finer thing to really work on, than to *reproduce* the love which Jesus Christ has given you.

2. BEING OF THE SAME MIND (2:2a)

A second strategy for becoming Gospel-worthy, is to become like-minded. I think that this is not easy, friends. We are *not* naturally like-minded. We are stubborn, independent, self-willed, opinionated and pontificating rebels. Only when we *concentrate* on developing like-mindedness, will we see it happen. Now, the Philippians had achieved something of this. More than we have yet, I think. Paul's prayers for them were joyful because of it, and he wants to see it continue.

Like-mindedness means to have the same GOALS and to actually be unanimous in their decisions. Now, we have, in fact, seen a little of this lately. The vote to merge was very like-minded. But other things--interestingly enough, usually things involving money--we need to seek the Lord's direction. He never gives *two directions*. He has one direction for us. What is it? To be like-minded means to *think the same thing*.

Do you know where the "laboratory" for this should be? It should be in our quarterly or special business meetings. That is where we hash out God's will and make strategic decisions. That is where you see whether we are seeking like-mindedness. Unfortunately, in too many churches, QBM's and SBM's are times to strut and pontificate. But they should be the experimental time when we come together to do the work of like-mindedness.

Well, there is a *third* way to become Gospel-worthy...

3. MAINTAINING THE SAME LOVE (2:2b)

This is the hard work of forbearance, patience, forgiveness and a steadfast commitment. When a person joins this church--and it should be the same in any church-membership program--they are agreeing to a covenant to attach themselves to that body and to maintain a loyalty there. It should not dissolve just because the going gets rough once in a while, or you do not get your way every day. We are not on trial with each other, dear ones. And we should be careful not to damage the unity that the Holy Spirit is working to instill in us.

Love involves hard work. It isn't just hugs and kisses and sweet-speech. It IS those things, but it isn't only those things. It is commitment and perseverance with one another, and it takes YEARS for a body to mature where there is SOME of it in the church. Then,

if you want to conduct yourself in a manner worthy of the Gospel, that is...

It takes hard work and a real determination to MAINTAIN it.

4. UNITED IN SPIRIT (2:2c)

Well, working on maintaining love, fosters a united-ness of spirit. This is not a reference, specifically, to the Holy Spirit. It refers to *our* spirits. It is *souls that beat together*, in tune with Christ and with each other.

It will not surprise you, at this point, if I ask you, how filled with the Holy Spirit have you and I been lately? How much spiritual fruit--

you know what I mean: love, joy, peace, longsufferingness, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance--

--has there been? Being united in our spirits happens when the majority of the church members are filling up their lives with the pursuit of spiritual fruit!

5. INTENT ON ONE PURPOSE (2:2d)

A last way to develop a Gospel-worthy quality to our lives, is to concentrate, to *dwell on*, having one purpose. Now, what is our purpose as a church? Here is a short, concise statement of our purpose, as the membership of this church voted it into place just this past April 27th:

THE REASON FOR THE EXISTENCE OF DARTMOUTH BIBLE CHURCH IS TO HONOR GOD BY GROWING IN OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM AND ONE ANOTHER, THROUGH A BALANCED FOCUS ON WORSHIP, DISCIPLESHIP, FELLOWSHIP AND EVANGELISM.

Now is that what you are all about? Is that statement the thing that gets you moving, that motivates and excites you? If you're here, and if you're interested in obeying Paul's command to "conduct yourself in a manner worthy of the Gospel," then being intent on the same purpose is part of the strategy. Is this your statement of purpose, as you view this church? Think about it carefully, dear ones...

Now, there are some good results from these five strategies for developing Gospel-worthiness, and we need to back up in the passage to see them.

The Results (1:27, 28)

Three things will result from concentrating on becoming Gospel-worthy.

1. You will be able to stand firm--and that is what Paul wanted to hear about the Philippian church. He wanted them to make him proud that they were standing firm, and not blown down by internal strife, or criticism by others, by rejection from the world or even by outright persecution. He knew that if they were united in spirit, working on preserving their love for one another, and connected by one purpose--to honor God--then they *would* stand firm. He longed for news that they were doing just that...

2. Another result of this program for Philippian revival, was that they would see themselves as *striving together for the faith of the Gospel*. There are not many people in this country who are really maintaining the faith of the Gospel. A great many churches have departed from the pure Gospel, and have adopted a gospel of good-works, or a gospel based on man-made traditions. But the pure Gospel of grace is often thought of out there as an obsolete remnant of the Victorian or Puritan era. Well, its not Victorian and its not Puritan. It's New Testament, and we need to *strive*, like an athlete, to stand firm for the objective truth of the Gospel, no matter whether it is popular, or whether people poke fun at evangelical Christians, or not. This sense of striving together for the faith, will be evident among us here, and within our little community of evangelical churches, if when we as individuals, are really taking our personal discipleship of Christ seriously.

3. And the last result of obeying Paul's command, is that we will be ~~not~~ alarmed when opposed. We are being opposed, dear ones, whether we are fully aware of it every day, or not. And the opposition to the Gospel-principles for which we stand may indeed grow far more intense, and sooner than we think. Case in point:

I am pro-life for one reason. Because I am a Christian. Is it popular to be pro-life, today? Is the intensity of opposition increasing? You bet it is, and that reflects a growing intolerance, subtly, for the Gospel, because I believe that when a person meets up with the Gospel, it affects his views on a lot of other issues.

Well, when we are opposed by various opponents, it will not alarm us badly, if we are standing firm, intent on one purpose and full of a serious kind of love and loyalty for one another. Opposition may trouble and sadden us, but it will not disrupt us or damage our functioning as the Body the Lord Jesus desires us to be.

Two Theological Facts, By the Way (1:29,30)

There are two little facts Paul mentions. The first is that the very *believing* in Christ, is a gift from God. God does not expect a non-Christian to conjure up faith of the saving-kind, out of a black and evil heart--which we all have. He GIVES the very *faith* by which a person believes and comes to salvation.

And just as He grants us saving-faith by which to be born-again, saved, redeemed, He also grants the privilege to SUFFER for Him, just as Paul himself had to do. Suffering is not very self-actualizing. Suffering for the cause of Christ, for the life-style of a committed Christian, for the sharing of the Gospel with those who have not yet heard, is not "hip." But it is a gift. And if you experience some degree of suffering for doing what you're supposed to do as a Christian, realize that it is a gift from the Lord to be counted worthy to suffer for Him.

Now this is a little long of a message. We are seeing just this, in this passage... Dear ones, Paul says, walk with Christ. Let the Holy Spirit control how you relate to one another. Attach yourself to the full-time cause of becoming worthy of Christ! Next lesson, we will entitle it, *Make Me Proud, Part 2*, because Paul is not through with us yet... May you be touched by the fervor Paul shows here. May you be prompted by the Holy Spirit to really seek Him this week. And may you feel His joy for the seeking!

Dartmouth Bible Notes

Dartmouth Bible Church 52 Morton Ave., North Dartmouth, Mass.

Series: Exposition of Philippians
Scripture: Philippians 2:3-11

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Lesson 7 Oct. 6, 1991

MAKE ME PROUD, II

Introduction Two weeks ago we had a message I entitled, "Make Me Proud", in which we looked at Paul's plea to the Philippians that if they really wanted to make him happy and proud of them, they would give themselves to the task of excelling at church unity, and therefore becoming WORTHY of the Gospel of which they had been graciously endowed with.

One of our goals as Christians is to be the best that we can be at whatever we do. Doing so helps us with our self-concepts, too, because you know that if you're doing the best you can then that is all anyone can expect from you. And many of you folks work hard at being the best worker, husband, wife, parent, deacon, Sunday School teacher or whatever, because you are a Christian, and being a Christian just sort of makes us want to do what we do with excellence.

But let me ask you today, is it possible to have a good self-image and to be the best, and still be humble--and not become conceited?

In today's portion of Philippians, Paul points us to Jesus Christ, a person who was equal with God and yet whose life and ministry are the supreme example of humility. And in this passage you and I are urged to imitate Him.

Every so often I will ask you, what kinds of sermons do you like to hear? The answer that has made an impression on me is this one: "I want to hear about Jesus." No passage of Scripture better fulfills that desire than this one today. This is one of the best-loved passages in all of Scripture--it presents Christ in all His beauty, and this is what we're talking about at those times that we sing, *Isn't He Beautiful?*

The Context of 2:3-11

Now, the context of the passage is the state of UNITY that did or didn't exist in the church in the ancient Roman colony-city of Philippi, now located in northeastern Greece. Paul has been urging them to cultivate real unity within their assembly. What he meant by unity was definitely not what many people mean by "unity" today. Today it most often means, "Let's have harmony and peace by adopting the conviction that everyone is right; that there are no real absolutes and that therefore anyone speaks truth just by opening his or her mouth." Now that is not the standard Paul is urging upon the churches. But within local churches and between churches which taught his Gospel, there was to be a peace, a mutual support, a patient and forgiving and forbearing spirit.

Now he is going to reinforce the cry for unity by telling us that unity is secured within the local church through development in the church members (and leaders) of a Christlike humility.

Step #1 How We View and Treat Each Other (2:3)

Christians are to look different from other people by virtue of the fact that we treat each other as more important than ourselves. Instead of the way most people out there are, which is the program *promo numero uno*, promoting No. 1's importance, we are to be involved in considering EACH OTHER as no. 1.

If you build up a theology of the church purely from the Apostle Paul's writings, you come across a certain phrase real often. It is the phrase *one another*. It is very common in his thinking, when he is thinking about local churches--and that's us.

We are to be students of *one another*.

We are to give preference to *one another*.

We are to forgive *one another*.

We are to consider personal interests, tastes, preferences as secondary to those of *one another*.

In short, God wants us to be different than all other classes of people on the earth. The reason for this is that He wants us to look like His Son. That's God's ultimate goal, to make us like His Son so that we will be prepared to dwell with His Son. And a like-mindedness with the church goes a long way towards that church really reflecting the reality of Christ.

People are wondering today, I think, "where can I find God?" They look at a lot of possible places, but one place that God Himself intends to be found, is right in the midst of His church, the Body. And if we have the Lord Jesus Himself right here among us, literally (though not physically), then how can any of us defend selfishness or empty pride?

Step #2 Giving Attention to Others' Needs (2:4)

It is in how we VIEW each other. It is an attitude. Another way of putting this into practice is in what we give attention to, what we spend time on privately and what we put our energies into.

It always encourages me when someone in this church or in any church takes part in our Christian Education program (teaches Sunday School or Children's Church, leads an AWANA group or takes part as a youth group leader), who does NOT have kids in the program. That is putting the interests of others in front of your own interests.

Its to KEEP AN EYE on each others needs. Now if you look around you today, what needs do you see? Just right here, right now?

Does someone need some help down the stairs?

Does our financial secretary need some help in counting the money?

Do the deacons need someone to close up and secure the building?

Does someone need to have someone else pray with them?

Does someone need someone to really ask them how their week was?

Are there other genuine needs within this Body, just as you look around you this morning, that you could meet?

Well, that's a little of what it is to practice humility. It isn't just acting meek, although our demeanor and way with one another is part of it.

When we come to church here to worship, to minister or for whatever, our main concern ought to be, "How am I going to be fed." Christian humility is not just our facial expression or our tone of voice. It is action. It is Christ-in-action through us. Hey--its not always convenient or easy. But as we sang, "I want to be, just like You, Lord..." it is our goal to become humility-practitioners.

John Calvin said that he heard a professor of public speaking say one time that the #1 Rule of Eloquence is "delivery," and the #2 Rule is "delivery," and the #3 Rule is "delivery." Calvin said, "Ask me what top three precepts of real Christianity are, and I will tell you, "Humility," "humility," "humility."

Another important facet of this, is that our children learn what it means to really know Christ by how we, as adult Christians and fellow-church members relate to one another (there's that phrase again) and how well and noticeably we look out for one another.

You know, people put much time into civic organizations and volunteer groups and labor unions and other kinds of secular fraternities. But if Christians will fill up their lives with watching out for the needs of each other and the needs of others around us, the need for so many secular organizations will dry up, because the church is becoming such a blessing.

Christ, Our Hero (vss. 5-8)

Here's where we see Jesus. We are to intentionally adopt the same MIND (NAS: "attitude") that He had. He wasn't always concerned with winning, and coming out on top and making sure HIS rights were maintained. In our country today, people have gone RIGHTS-WACKY. If nothing else, the rights-movement betrays its evil core because it is no longer interested in relieving oppression--it is interested in promoting rebellion and self-interest; to the damage of anyone else's "rights."

Well, Jesus was not that way, and if ever anyone had the RIGHT to strut His stuff, it was the Son of God. If ever anyone had the proper credentials to boast or demand a hearing or receive adulation, it was the Messiah. But even though He was God in every single sense, He voluntarily GAVE UP the right to be recognized and worshipped as the creator and lord of the universe, so that He might become its Savior.

Now much theological ink has been spent on what Paul meant in verse 7 by *He emptied Himself*. And I am not going to review all the positions that people have taken, except to note that in our day this verse is being used by some cultists to say that Jesus stopped being God when He became man. Nothing could be further than the truth. If Paul had meant that he could have said it easily enough, and he surely would have. But he did not mean that. He meant, rather, that Jesus voluntarily forfeited the RIGHT of recognition and suspended the USE of some of His divine attributes in order that He may truly become a servant.

Dear ones, I want to become like Him. But it is hard to become like Him. I am so full of pride and self-interest, and the fear of not being recognized for my true contributions... But Jesus focused on obedience (verse 8), and you will notice, and obedience-at-all-costs.

I find it interesting that from Jesus' vantage point, being called God was no big deal. That's essentially what Paul says in verse 6. Now, have you ever heard someone say, "Jesus never claimed to be

God?" Well, that's true from one angle and not true from another.

- a. Its true in that Jesus was not too interested in promoting His identity as being God. He was interested in promoting His identity as being Messiah.
- b. Its not true in that Jesus *did* claim to be God by claiming (and validating that claim over and over again) that Messiah would BE God, Himself. "Messiahship" could never be accomplished by someone who was only Man. It had to be done by someone who was both pure, 100% Man and pure, 100% God at the same time. Now that's quite a trick--and even so, it could only be accomplished by the Son of God, Himself, born into time of a virgin, nurtured and raised and grown as true Man in every respect except one. He was born with no sin-nature, though Mary was, and He experienced no sin, though Mary, Joseph, his brothers, sisters, disciples and apostles all did.

So being a self-promoter, always concerned and consumed with making sure His rights were recognized and acknowledged was not something that Jesus was. And therefore, dear ones, it shouldn't be something that WE are, either...IF we are going to look like Him.

The Rewards of Humility (vss. 9-11)

God exalted Jesus. He will exalt us as the adopted-children of Jesus. He will not blur the distinction between Jesus' glory and our glorification in Him. The disciples would have liked it, at one point, if the Father WOULD blur the distinction--they wanted the seats of prominence next to Christ in the Kingdom to come.

But the most exalted will not be the saints of reputation. It will not be the prettiest, the wealthiest, the most frugal or conservative, the deepest theological thinkers, the most effective people-movers, or the most recognized by their fellow-saints. It will be the lowly who have busied themselves with just doing the will of God, who have contented themselves with that. It will be the servants of Christ for whom it has been enough in this life, to wait longingly to hear Jesus say to them in the next life, *Well done, thou good and faithful servant.*

When we sing, Make me a servant, humble and meek. Lord, let me lift up, those who are weak. And may the prayer of my heart always be, Make me a servant; make me a servant; make me a servant, today...

...may we sing it with deep conviction and feeling, dear ones. May we become consumed, possessed, obsessed with becoming more like Christ, and may nothing else ever take higher priority.

HUMILITY, PRAYER FOR

I beseech him to wash my tears and purge my devotions, and to baptize me into a true burial with my Saviour, that I may be quite forgotten in myself, and only remembered in him.

"C. H. Spurgeon Autobiography," Banner of Truth, vol. 2, p. v.

Dartmouth Bible Notes

Dartmouth Bible Church 52 Morton Ave., North Dartmouth, Mass.

Series: Exposition of Philippians
Scripture: Philippians 2:9-13

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Lesson 8 Oct. 27, 1991

Working Out Our Own Salvation

Introduction Today we're going to look at two of the most famous and well known Biblical sayings that came from the pen of the Apostle Paul. They show up ~~ix~~ at the end of verse 12 and in verse 13,

Work out your salvation with fear and trembling

AND

For it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure

If you look back over the time that you have been a Christian-- however long that has been--what progress can you mark? **How has being a believer in Jesus Christ changed you?** There are many things, I'm sure. And as you review in your mind the ways you have changed, how have those changes come about? I think a change begins first of all, with the recognition of the need to become something different. Education, you might say. We get "educated" about what it means to be more like Jesus by reading our Bibles. We get educated by SEEING in the life of someone else some characteristic that is Christ-like, and we say, "I want to be like that." The process of changing starts with recognizing the NEED to become something different than what I am right now.

A second thing that happens, then, is when I recognize that it IS POSSIBLE to become something different. I come to believe that change is possible, and that perhaps I can learn new obedience to the Lord in this area. Recognition of the need to become different is useless by itself, if I don't decide that it is possible to change, right?

A third thing that happens is that I start to PRAY about becoming something different. This is a humbling step, because I must also admit that what I am right now *ain't all that hot*. So, I pray and I begin to tell the Lord that the way Jesus was in this area is the way I would like to become. I say,

"Lord--just between you and me, I would like to be more like you. Could you make it so?"

A fourth thing that happens then, is that I begin to make the attempt to change in little steps first. I must trust Him to hold me up in each little step. It is the conscious effort to do certain things and not do others and taking small steps at first. I will see small victories one at a time, because Jesus WILL give me the power to deny sin, a small step at a time, each and every time I make the attempt.

So that's one, two, three, four things that happen as we grow in the Christian life. Now, with these ideas as a backdrop, we come to the passage today. Paul has been talking to the Philippian believers about how to look like Christ, and in verses 6-10 we have what was perhaps a very early Christian hymn. In other words, the disciples would actually sing those words--Paul knew the song, and quotes it in this letter to the Philippian church. It tells us of who Jesus was. It tells us a lot of good theology, good *Christology*, in fact. It tells us of a Messiah who, although equal with God, was very, very humble and willing to be so. It tells us that this same Messiah will, at the last day, be recognized by all conscious beings in the universe.

Imagine Saddam Hussein saying, "Jesus Christ is Lord."

Imagine Axl Rose saying, "Jesus Christ is Lord."

Imagine Barney Frank saying, "Yes, Jesus Christ is Lord."

It won't just be the religious, the humble, the needy, and it won't just be believers. All will acknowledge it, and there will be no doubt whatsoever. Paul was looking forward to that day. You and I are looking forward to that very real day that is coming...

Well, it's a fact. The day is coming. And so believers live NOW, in light of the day that is not yet now. We live in obedience to the words of the apostles, as recorded for us reliably and dependably in the Scriptures. We CHOOSE to live in obedience to those words because we see a day coming which is yet veiled to so many.

Obedience in the Absence of Apostles Verse 12a,b

This week in the "AWANAdults" Bible study on Wednesday evening, we had what I felt was a deeply candid and powerful conversation about the subject of obedience. Jesus was obedient and it cost Him. It cost Him His life. If we want to look like Jesus we need to exhibit the same quality of obedience. If we want to really look like Christ we need to be willing to pay whatever price is necessary, even with our lives, to live in obedience to the will of God. And the way to be obedient to the will of God, to the best of our ability, is to live *strictly* according to the written word of God.

The word of God talks about our witness before men.

The word of God talks about how we speak to one another.

The word of God talks about God's moral will in relation to sexuality, money, and relationships.

The word of God talks *openly* about lots of things...

The Philippians though, were faced with the same deal we are: there was no apostle around to give them daily light on God's will, or to keep them in line. It would be easier if there was an Apostle Paul or an Apostle Peter or an Apostle John or an Apostle Alphaeus or an Apostle Barry (Bartholemew) around...

Paul knew they would rather have Paul's address read "City of Philippi" than "City of Rome", but it wasn't to be, at that time at least. But you know the INVISIBLE decisions we make about becoming something different than what we are right now, are *better*... Jesus said,

Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed (John 20:29b)

When I make an invisible decision to obey the Lord, and there's no Apostle around to approve it, to pat me on the back, or anyone else around for that matter--that decision is like a sweet smelling perfume to the invisible Lord Jesus. The invisible decisions to obey God are worth more to the Lord than the ones for which we get recognition.

Even though there is no apostle here to keep us on our toes, we work on obedience because we love the Lord, and loving Him means to keep His commandments. Jesus said (John 14:15,21),

If you love Me, you will keep my commandments

and

He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me, and he who loves Me shall be loved by My Father and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him.

Obedience will keep us close to Him... A little boy was riding his tricycle furiously around the block over and over again. Finally, a policeman stopped and asked him why he was going around and around. The boy said he was running away from home. Then the policeman asked why he was just going around the block. The boy responded, "Because my Mom said that I'm not allowed to cross the street." Obedience will keep us close to the one we love.

Working Out Our Salvation (2:12c)

Salvation is a free gift, right? Getting saved costs nothing, because it is already bought and paid for, and because we could never pay what it actually cost anyway, right? Salvation is a free gift...

But once saved, we spend the rest of our lives on this earth *completing* that salvation--that is what the Greek text literally reads here: KEEP ON WORKING WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING TO COMPLETE YOUR SALVATION. This means that for the rest of your life, once you invite Jesus Christ into your life, you live in the conscious presence of the Lord. But what of this "fear and trembling"? F.F. Bruce was one of our greatest evangelical scholars of this century. He wrote this in explanation of what Paul meant:

"Certainly the attitude here recommended has nothing to do with slavish terror...it is rather an attitude of due reverence and awe in the presence of God, a sensitivity to His will, an awareness of the responsibility in view of the account to be rendered before the tribunal of Christ. In their community life they must recognize that God is present..." (*Philippians*, p. 57)

Working out our salvation means work. When it comes to the Christian life, sometimes we're like Maynard G. Krebs on the old *Dobie Gillis Show*: Every time we hear the word "work", we cry out in spasm, "WORK!" Yes, the process of becoming something different from what we are now DOES involve work. It does not come easy. It requires concentration. And I think too many Christians are so distracted with *other* pursuits, so busy with *other* work, that we devote little effort to the "work" of completing our salvation.

Working out our salvation means adopting an attitude of Christlike humility, just as Paul said earlier in this chapter. A big part of sanctification is the work of keeping a lid on my pride and self-

sufficiency and self-interest. It means engaging in a long-term project of looking out for other people's interests, and not just being consumed with myself.

From time to time people will leave the church, and they don't go out and find another church, they just terminate any church involvement altogether. A sad by-product of this severing of church ties is that they no longer have to be confronted with the needs of anyone else. They can indulge their own interests completely.

One cynic noted that whenever someone leaves a church they receive an immediate pay raise...1%, 2%, 5%, 10%,...

"Trembling" says something about the worship side of the Christian life. Our whole lives are to be lived in worship of the Lord.

In I Cor. 2:3 Paul testified how he ministered the word in "fear and trembling"...

In 2 Cor. 7:15 he acknowledged how they, the Corinthians, had received Titus well, in "fear and trembling"...

In Ephesians 6:5 he told those Christians in the Ephesian assembly that they were to obey their masters with "fear and trembling."

But it is not God that we are to fear and watch warily. It is the FLESH since it is weak and will fail us every time. We need to fear the WORLD because it is ready to let loose its criticism at our failures. We need to walk wary of SATAN because he is ever working to break down our resistance that we might fall into temptation. Walking in reverence to the Lord serves as a fortress for us against trusting in ourselves. Dear ones, never feel that you have done your best to meet God's righteous standards, for you have not.

What Lies Behind Sanctification (2:13)

I take great comfort in this verse. Even as I work out my salvation each day and week and month and year, and even as I struggle to grow in grace and to stretch and exercise my faith in Jesus, I find that He is right there beside me, working right in me. All along, it is HE who is giving me the desire to grow and to change and to work at the process and expend the effort and attention to "become something different than what I am right now."

That little poem about the "footsteps", really IS based on biblical truth. Even the very DESIRE to work at my faith and improve it and maybe even the desire to rededicate your faith for some of you, is sourced in God's loving presence all along! Its not that God is sneaky--this verse has been in the Bible a long time, right there in black and white. Its that WE are so surprised when we read it, and see that the feelings in me that keep prompting me,

"Seek the Lord, seek the Lord, pursue holiness, work on your faith,"

All along are HIM! What a wonderful thing! What a God we have, dear ones, to be that patient with us and that involved with us. And it is because HE is pleased by our progress. We are HIS project!

In the old hymn Day By Day there is a line,

"The protection of His child and treasure, is a charge that on Himself He laid..."

He is, after all, very interested in what shape our faith is in, and in what shape our faith is in when He comes again. My friends, if I were an apostle I would demand this of you: make your personal relationship with Christ your primary occupation. Give it daily attention. Nurture it with all the love and knowledge that an engineer would give his engine, that an artist gives her painting, that a surgeon gives his patient. The Lord is worth it--He is worthy of it.

Dartmouth Bible Notes

Dartmouth Bible Church 52 Morton Ave., North Dartmouth, Mass.

~~Series: Exposition of Philippians~~

~~Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.~~

Scripture: Philippians 2:14-18

Lesson 9 Dec. 1, 1991

Lit Up Like a Christmas Tree

Introduction Today is the beginning of the Christmas season (although it may seem a bit soon). And one of the funnest things we do at Christmas is to set up the Christmas tree, and get those lights working. When I was a small child our neighborhood always had a neighborhood Christmas tree and one night each December the whole neighborhood would gather around the tree and sing Christmas carols and pass out candy to the kids. And the lights would be on, on that community tree every night until New Year's Day. My parents would also take me around the area of Northern Virginia at night in the car and look at the lights. In the late 50's and early 60's it seemed that everyone decorated the outside of their homes with lights. What would a Christmas be without lights? Disappointing!

The Lord Jesus intended for us to be just like Christmas lights. He wants us to light up the world. But if I were hearing some preacher say that, I would probably think, "Nice, but trite..."

Nevertheless, a big part--maybe the most important part--of a church's maturing process is not just growing in numbers (which I want us to do), or building a new building (which I want us to do), or developing different kinds of specialized ministries (which I want us to do). I think that if we want to be interested in Jesus' vision for us and for the community, it is in the KIND of people we are becoming. As Pastor Lou preached last week, it is in the CHANGE we are experiencing. It is not just procedural and organizational changes. It isn't changes, musically or in the order of service or the translation of Scripture... It is changes inside of each of us individually. Now THAT is church growth. It is those changes taking place in my heart, head, demeanor and attitude that shine in the world and that our neighbors will see. That's a big part of my vision, dear ones. As we seek "to honor God by growing in our relationship with Him and with one another",

That is exactly the message Paul had for the Philippian believers and we want to spend our time today dealing with what it means to be lights in the world. Often I don't *feel* like a light. Sometimes when it comes to whatever reputation I have around here, I'm not sure its always bright and shining and beautiful. If it comes to actually telling someone the Gospel, I'm not too sure how well I do that either, even though I have complete confidence in the truth of the Gospel. How about you?

So when we read these words from Paul, what does it have for us, today, here in 1991, in modern America? As Pastor Lou said last week, we're not living in Spurgeon's day. We're not living in times when religion is "in". What does Paul's talk about being lights in the world have for us?

The Context of Light Light only makes sense when you put it in the background of darkness, right? And in verse 15, Paul gives us the backdrop for what he means that Christians are "lights in the world." He said that the Philippian believers were living "in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation."

I'm sorry. I don't find much cause for optimism apart from knowing Christ. Maybe I'm too susceptible to the bad news that the media uses to sell newspapers, but I do see a fair amount of darkness--crookedness and perversion in the world around us, just as Paul saw in the world around him.

But if you want to talk "Jesus" and His people, I see a lot of light. He, and the things He is doing in and through His people, give me cause for lots of joy. And the "thousand points of light" that we hear about are really Christians in the world, I think. The main source of the light we bear is what Paul calls in Phil.1:16 "the word of life." What shines out from the lives of true believers is their message. It is their proclamation of eternal life. That's what we say, isn't it?--that anyone on the planet can have the real assurance of eternal life through personally trusting in the Gospel? That's what the "word of life" is.

As believers hold forth the word of life, even though Paul was in jail and literally giving his body and health for the ministry, he figured it was worth it, if the Philippians were steadfastly determined to continue to shine in the darkness of the ancient world around the Aegean Sea. But let's go back to what I was saying a couple of minutes ago: shining forth in the darkness also means the KIND of people we are becoming. Do we look like "light" in the quality of our behavior and lives and "conversation?" Being "lit up like a Christmas tree" isn't just in telling people about Jesus' birth, death and resurrection or even in telling them about the Gospel. It is demonstrating to them the *realness* and the *powerful changes* that knowing Christ bring. This translates into some very distinct character and behavioral changes...

Verse 14 - A Blunt Challenge Everything we do, dear ones, we are to do free of grumbling. And the group or organization that achieves that is unusual, indeed! But the Lord Jesus intends for His people to be free of it! And through His apostle, He appealed to the Philippians AND TO US to undertake a program of intentionally avoiding grumbling. Beyond that, the text says "or disputing". This is a legal-type Greek word which means ARGUING. The thing is, that in ministry grumbling or complaining often leads to disputes and arguments. My friends, I don't care how big a church is, how effectively it is reaching its community with the CONTENT of the Gospel--if it is characterized by cantankerous business meetings or argumentative board meetings, the Chief Shepherd is grieved. To the Ephesian believers, Paul wrote,

And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit [OK Paul, what does it look like to be filled with the Spirit?] speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; AND BE SUBJECT TO ONE ANOTHER IN THE FEAR OF CHRIST (Ephesians 5:18-21)

Now its easier to get drunk with pride and ego and that's the way I think it should be done. If you want to be a wimp, than just take the easy way out of insisting that things go your way in the church. But if you want to be a pleasure to your Savior, then you must endeavor to do ALL THINGS free of complaining and arguing.

Now, I don't think that Paul intends for us to never have lively, spirited discussions about the things before us. I don't see it as the Pauline model for how a church runs that the leadership just takes all responsibility for all decisions, makes all decisions, and expects all the saints to just passively stand by like so many sheep. In the process of coming to good decisions, there needs to be freedom and deliberation in a church. We are to DO decision-making. But we are to do it free of complaining and disputing. Churches are never led by the Holy Spirit to split apart because of an argument, although so often the "splitees" say, "Well, that's how the Lord was leading me, you know..."

Results of Being "Lit Up Like a Christmas Tree"

Here are some results that will happen when a church instituting a GRUMBLING-FREE environment:

1. Exemption from guilt (Verse 15a). Now no one ever admits to having disrupted a church. People rarely want to see the truth about themselves and so it is easy to blame all kinds of other people or factors. We doggedly pursue "innocence." Paul says, "You want to be blameless, innocent, above reproach? Whatever you do, do it without complaining and arguing". He expressed a similar thought to the Colossian assembly:

Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men; knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve (Col.3:23,24).

2. We win the high privilege of the title CHILDREN of God, when we institute a grumbling-free environment. Now children are young and innocent. I grieve the slow but inevitable loss of innocence in my girls as I see them gradually encounter this crooked and perverse generation.

And, children look like their parents. They resemble their parents, and when we determine to "expunge" complaining and grumbling from church life, we look more like the Redeemer we say we know.

Application Let's take this out of the church and into another circle of relationships wherein we NEED to be Spirit-filled: our own families. What's going on in your family, these days. Dear ones, do you want to shine forth there? Do you wish to have light in your home this Christmas season, beyond the colored light on your Christmas tree? If there is grumbling and complaining and arguing in your family, kill it! Execute it, waste it, determine that YOUR family, if none others on your block, WILL reflect the] light of Jesus Christ. Pray together about this, subject your pride to a greater master than YOU, and ask HIM to fill each family member with a holy innocence and forgiveness and mercy towards each other.

3. In verses 17 and 18 Paul is asking--is it begging?--them to make his own sufferings worth while. When a minister struggles and agonizes with his congregation in doing his best to point them in the right direction, keeping their focus on the important things, mediating in conflicts,

laboring over the word and prayer--he knows its all worth it when he sees real change of attitude. Paul is going to mention two Philippian believers by name in chapter 4, who apparently were fighting. In this kind of thing, he can envision the church really becoming side-tracked and rendered ineffective. He wants them to be *maximized* in ministry, and full of joy.

In these two verses he says a lot about real joy. It comes by people having a church in which there is peace, and harmony and acceptance of differing preferences, and mercy and forgiveness and a sense of being in there for the long haul with one another.

I rejoice in the things we have here at Dartmouth Bible Church, this morning. We have our flaws. But I rejoice in the progress many of you are making in your faith. It gives me joy, and I hope you derive some joy by looking at your pastoral and lay-staffs and seeing that everyone is working hard for the furtherance of the Gospel. We may not be the greatest counselors all the time. We may not always be available for every errand or visit that you would like. We may not always understand you. But we are all working hard at the ministry of the Gospel, and that is what God has called us to do. I hope that you can feel a little bit of pride and joy at what "offering" I and Lou and Bob and Dave and Laura and Cheryl and others make on behalf of the Gospel ministry.

One last thing: what do you do if you have a complaint? Sometimes a thing or two might come up that sincerely ticks you off, that genuinely troubles or offends you. I am not going to tell you to deny that problem in your mind and to simply repress your troubled spirit, because it WILL come out, one way or another. But the way to deal with it is, as follows:

- a. Wait a week.
- b. Ask God to give you wisdom in it.
- c. Speak to the person with whom the problem is directly concerned.
- d. Speak to an elder or a deacon.
- e. Ask to have the item placed on an agenda of an elders', deacons' or a quarterly business meeting if it is significant enough after you have waited, prayed and consulted in appropriate ways.
- f. Don't talk about it with members at large because that just spreads discontent.

Church growth is our agenda here at DBC. But before we take this town by storm for the Gospel--as we think God has plans for us to do--we need to have it clear within the walls of this assembly that complaining and disputing are NOT permissible behavior. Then we can let our light shine before Dartmouth!

***WE ARE EXEMPT FROM
GUILT IN OUR
RELATIONSHIPS***

***WE INNOCENTLY
RESEMBLE GOD***

***WE ENJOY ONE
ANOTHER***

- 1 WAIT A WEEK**
- 2 ASK GOD FOR
WISDOM IN IT**
- 3 SPEAK TO THE
PERSON INVOLVED**
- 4 SPEAK TO AN ELDER
OR DEACON**
- 5 ASK TO HAVE IT
PLACED ON AN
AGENDA**
- 6 ZIP IT**



Dartmouth Bible Notes

Dartmouth Bible Church 52 Morton Ave., North Dartmouth, Mass.

Series: Exposition of Philippians
Scripture: Philippians 2:19-30

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Lesson 10 Dec. 8, 1991

Tim and Epy: two Properly Focused Guys

Introduction If there has been one thing endearing about the long-running *Star Trek* mystic, it is the chemistry displayed among the crew members. There is an affection and a well-oiled cooperativeness between Captain, First Officer, Chief Engineer, Helmsman, Weapons, Medical and Communications Officers. It has been a lovely fantasy of our generation, albeit full of "new age" philosophy. But one thing that particularly warms the heart, has been the undying loyalty between the bridge crew and their Captain. And we may write that loyalty off as just so much Hollywood silly dreaming... But when we turn to the New Testament we do see that within the ancient Christian Church, there was a similar loyalty and commitment between Apostle and "bridge crew." Once in a while, you find someone who is so sold out on the Lord Jesus Christ--or shall we say, TO the Lord Jesus Christ--that his or her service to Christ translates into a single-minded and focused service to the ministry of other fellow-servants of Christ.

Introducing Two Properly Focused Guys Today we want to consider Paul's comments about two of his fellow-workers in the work of spreading the Good News about Jesus Christ. The first of these two "properly focused guys" was named Timothy. Timothy was probably from a town called Lystra in what is now south central Turkey and came from a believing family who faithfully taught their children the OT Scriptures. He was younger, perhaps, than any of Paul's other close co-workers and it may have been that his youth was a point of attack among the opposition. But Paul held Timothy in the highest regard and Timothy seems to have been closely attached to Paul right down to Paul's Roman imprisonment, as is implied in [Phil.2:19](#).

Epaphroditus (whom I'll call "Epy") was an esteemed member of the Philippian assembly itself, perhaps even an officer of the church. He had brought an offering from the Philippian assembly TO Paul and then stayed on for a while to help the apostle in the work of the Gospel over in Rome. It was during that trip that Epy worked so hard, apparently, that he became exhausted. Exposure from so much outdoors work may have contributed, but Epy continued on, alongside the apostle with a courageous stick-to-it-iveness worthy of great admiration.

Sidelight: If your name was going to be remembered for hundreds of years, for what would you like to be remembered? Here, we have Timothy and Epaphroditus "memorialized" for being loyal and hardworking servants of the Lord Jesus. Paul went out of his way to AFFIRM the faithfulness and sacrifice of many individuals. The last chapter of the Book of Romans is especially brimming over

with names of highly esteemed and appreciated believers; some names like

Phoebe, Priscilla, and Aquila

with which we would be somewhat familiar--and others less familiar to us, like

Epaenetus, Andronicus, Junius, Ampliatus, Urbanus, Aristobulus.

I think I would not mind being remembered for something I have done for Jesus, even five hundred years from now. I do not think it will happen, but if it did, I confess to you I would not mind. But there's also another kind of *memorializing* Paul didn't hesitate to employ in his letters, which is less than stellar. There are also people mentioned who are remembered for the great trouble they caused, names like

Alexander the coppersmith, Demas (who started out alongside Paul) and Euodia and Syntyche, mentioned later in this letter to the Philippians.

Now, it is good for us to consider what Paul says about these two individuals because I think we need standards today to shoot for, and ways to critique ourselves as to how we are doing in our ministries. Paul's statements about Tim and Epy give us a little light on the subject of what it means to faithfully minister for Christ. The Scripture is our "touch stone" dear ones... And we should not get tripped up by the feeling that "I'm never going to be able to match those guys' faithfulness!" Sure you can! Tim and Epy were regular guys, just like you and me. What they achieved for Christ IS ACHIEVABLE--even today.

Tim, the "Kindred Spirit" There was a oneness or an equalness in spirit between Paul and Timothy, which is what the word *isopsuchon* means. It is sharing the same exact feelings and sympathies for a certain ministry or group of people, or, for the Lord Himself. It is a very similar word to that which Paul used in verse 2 when he asked them to work at "being of the same mind." But it is not exactly the same word, and I think that neither the KJV nor the NIV do justice to *isopsuchon* as the NAS does--it is being of "kindred spirit." Until you have had this kind of relationship alongside someone working in ministering to people, I think it is hard to imagine. It is not a slavish subservience of a younger apprentice to an older taskmaster. It is a partnership, but one person is clearly the more mature. I think I had this once, for a few years, with Jack Arnold, whom some of you have met.

Well, in verse 20 Paul wrote that Tim was the only one there whom he could dispatch who really shared his feelings for the Philippians. The sympathy which Paul and Tim shared--at least that in view here--was a **genuine concern for the Philippian Christians' well-being**. Even though Tim was not *from* Philippi (as Epy was), he had a special place in his heart for them. And Paul wishes to send Tim to Philippi where not only will he prove useful for the furtherance of the Gospel ministry, but where Tim himself will take some pleasure in ministering.

There was also a *uniqueness* about Tim, because it seems that so many of the other Christians with whom Paul was in touch at the time he was writing this letter were putting their own interests in front of others. Tim's selfless concern stuck out like a sore thumb to Paul. It was unique and very special.

I think we have some here who tirelessly minister in the same kind of selfless way. We have some people who, in the area where they're gifted and confident, would rather do nothing other than minister in that way. They give and give and give and keep no scores. These kind of people are a gift of God to the church, and are the most valuable asset in this ministry.

Paul also shows how Tim was no rookie. He was a man of *proven worth* in furthering the Gospel. Notice that the Gospel, apparently, IS SOMETHING that is supposed to "be furthered." It's not supposed to come here and then STOP here. Now if you say, "Well, how far are we supposed to further it?" To that I would answer with Jesus' commissioning of the original apostles,

Make disciples of all the nations...even to the end of the age
Matthew 28:19,20

...You shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and in Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.
Acts 1:8b

In other words the Gospel is to be "furthered" until it can go no further. That will not happen until the Lord returns.

Epy, the Philippian Messenger Epy was the other one who meant so much to Paul at this time. He had knocked himself out for the ministry, and apparently had grown dangerously ill. I find it interesting HOW Paul describes his recovery: *God had mercy on him (vs. 27)*. His recovery was a token of God's mercy to Epaphroditus himself, but also to Paul whose depression would have *doubled* if he had had to watch Epy die.

Make no mistake about it, dear ones. Our God is a *merciful* God. He is full of compassion for the feelings and struggles and pains and uncertainties we face. He understands, and according to His own good counsel, He dispatches events and healings sometimes which translate into MERCY for us. There are a good many times when we NEED mercy. We need to see the Lord intervene in some sovereign and wonderful way to remedy a situation, and intervene He may!

The tender concern Epy felt for the Philippians is almost a threatening kind of standard for us. We don't indulge feelings of longing and tender concern within our own church often enough, and certainly not for other churches, even when some of you came HERE from other churches. The tendency is to indulge a narrow kind of tunnel vision where we concern ourselves with matters which only directly relate to me and my personal interests. It was the same thing prevalent in Paul's day, because he says that indeed, he had no one other than these two "properly focused guys" to dispatch over to Philippi to help them out.

Closing Observations

A couple of things--

1. JOY comes up again. In verses 28 and 29 Paul enjoins them to indulge JOY when Epy returns. We've seen this kind of joy here. Two summers ago John and Pam Fernandez were back in the area here for a weekend and they fellowshipped with us. John was interim pastor here for 6 months in 1981 and 82, in a time when a pastor was sorely needed. He brought his family out here all the way from California, stayed the six months he promised to give, and then took the family all the way back to California. But it has been obvious that this young man was greatly loved by those of you that were here ten years ago and when John and Pam were back again, just for a few hours, there was a special kind of joy in this room, I tell you.

I think enjoyment of ONE ANOTHER is one of the main *channels* of JOY God gives us. He intends us to enjoy one another. I do not mean enjoying each other's personalities only, or one another's idiosyncracies or homes. But specifically, enjoying one another's MINISTRIES and the special *giftedness* with which God has invested each member of the Body of Christ.

I don't just enjoy Bob Whitlow because we share a common interest in railroading (although that's fun). I enjoy Bob Whitlow because he helps me see past my own moodiness sometimes, and because he can spark up a room with energy (being an electrician doesn't hurt)!

God intends that we should enjoy each other, and that is why we have a Christmas Party and picnics and as many ministry functions each week as we can squeeze out. I think when a person leaves a church or moves and must go through a time of not having a church home, it is hard because they lose all that enjoyment which, whether they are conscious of it all the time or not, they do value and appreciate.

2. Three times in this passage, Paul uses the expression "*in the Lord Jesus*" (vs. 19), or, "*in the Lord*" (vss. 24 and 29). In the first two instances he is talking about his hopes and plans. He tempers those hopes and plans with the *provisio in the Lord*.

It is a submission to the providential control of his life by the Lord Himself. He wants to see His plans turn out to be Jesus' plan. He hopes certain things will work out in certain ways, but he was willing to submit his plans to the Lord's control. That is part of what we mean by the expression "the Lordship of Jesus Christ." Paul was hoping to send Timothy and he was hoping to go to Philippi once again himself, but only as the Lord would enable such things to happen. Our plan making, both as individuals and as a church must be tempered by the same willingness to submit the plans to the Lord's oversight and government.

Our Father, Who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name; Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven...
Matthew 6:9,10

The other *in the Lord* has to do with how the Philippians would relate to Epy's return to their midst. They were to receive him *in the Lord* and hold him AND OTHERS LIKE HIM in high regard. We are to esteem one another, brethren, and especially those who are the most selfless and committed to the furtherance of the ministry. They are the most valuable asset we have in this church. It does not mean we put anyone on a pedestal. But it does mean that we do not withhold joy and appreciation for one another. It means that the selfless and faithful and truly Christlike that emerge among us are to be the heroes, really! May the Lord make us and keep us properly focused on being genuinely concerned for each other's welfare--for that is what truly interests the Lord Jesus!

Dartmouth Bible Notes

Dartmouth Bible Church 52 Morton Ave., North Dartmouth, Mass.

Series: Exposition of Philippians
Scripture: Philippians 3:1-8

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Lesson 11 Jan. 12, 1992

The "Verbs" of the Spiritual Life

Introduction There are a great many people around today who are proud of themselves.

They are proud of their accomplishments;
Some are proud of their family heritage;
Some are proud of their cars;
Some are proud of their great knowledge;
And some are proud of the things they have managed to avoid.

There are a great many people whose self-esteem is based solely on who they are, what they have done, or what they have not done.

There was a minister, a boy scout and a computer executive that were passengers on a plane. The pilot radioed back that the plane was going down. There were three parachutes and four people. The pilot said, "I should have one of the parachutes because I have a wife and three children," and he jumped. The computer executive said, "I should have one of the parachutes because I am the smartest man in the world and they still need me," and he jumped. The minister turned to the boy scout and with a sad smile said, "You are young and I have lived a good life, so you take the last parachute and I'll go down with the plane." The boy scout said, "Relax, Reverend, the smartest man in the world just picked up my knapsack and jumped out of the plane."

People are proud of a great many things, and it was no different in the ancient world. Even the ancient Christians were no less susceptible to destructive pride than we are. Scripture is full of warnings against an arrogant kind of pride. Solomon spoke of it often in his proverbs. The prophets, as the mouthpiece of Yhwh Himself, condemned the self-righteousness that so often overtook God's people. Jesus said alot about it, Paul said alot about it, James wrote about it too. The phrase that we read often is the phrase, *putting confidence in the flesh*.

Now, the church at Philippi, although a church for which Paul felt an extraordinary amount of warmth and affection, was apparently in the midst of some turmoil. As so often happens in a church dispute, it isn't just one person or one issue that breeds trouble--it is a combination of several situations in which certain KEY PLAYERS are not walking in the Holy Spirit as they should. Instead, they are walking in the flesh, allowing their pride, their personalities and even their *theology* to rule them; instead of letting CHRIST rule them, through the governing work of His Spirit.

Today, it is the walk in the Spirit that I wish to concentrate on with you... And in our passage I see SIX VERBS which Paul encourages the Philippians to make a part of their lives, an integral part of their thinking and the very glue with which to hold themselves together as a local church.

Verb #1 In Phil.3:1 Paul wrote, *Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord.* There's a word that comes up alot in this epistle, REJOICE. JOY is a central part of Paul's theology. And, to intentionally allow the joy of knowing Christ personally to have its way in the your heart and mind, is to "rejoice." It is something which we intentionally DO. Rejoicing happens sometimes spontaneously, but it is also something which we can actually turn on, if we want to.

In this epistle up to this point, Paul encouraged those Christians to really *live* the Christian life. In chapter two he used the example of how Jesus lived, and also the examples of two young men, Timothy and Epaphroditus, to show how a humble Christian lives. Joy and humility are tightly woven together, I think. It is hard to have one without the other.

The humble person, who has an accurate view of himself, and an accurate view of His place in God's plan, is much more primed to receive the joy of the Lord. The Christian who *enjoys joy*, who can rejoice in the good fortunes of his brethren and in a perspective BIGGER than just his own concerns, finds himself less prone to promote himself; much less inclined to wallow in his own supposed accomplishments. In 2:29 Paul wrote about Epaphroditus,

...receive him in the Lord with all joy, and hold men like him in high regard.

Joy is something we get from being associated with each other and with being involved with each other, especially with the believers in our midst who have a measure of maturity in Christ.

Verb #2 Then Paul would have us know that sometimes, the spiritual life involves a watchfulness. In 3:2 Paul tells them THREE TIMES to *Beware*. Churches and fellowships which say they have no interest in theology are foolish, dear ones. Believers must beware of the fact that there will always be some around the camp, and even some INSIDE the camp sometimes, who will seek to DIVERT the flavor, the spirit, the priorities AWAY from truth; away from good, solid doctrine.

In the case of the Philippians, Paul was very worried about a theological trend in his day which it seemed he had to fight and counter-act almost everywhere he ministered. It was the cult of the Judaizers. These were the supposedly "Christian" people who insisted that although Jesus of Nazareth was indeed the Messiah, following Him by faith alone was not sufficient to be saved from sin. You had to become a Jew first, and you had to strictly observe various Old Testament laws first; THEN you could trust Jesus and be saved, so said the Judaizers. If ever a single group that Paul faced--and he faced many--ticked him off, it was these guys. He considered their teaching DANGEROUS, and even calls them the very name that they were accustomed to calling Gentiles: *dogs*. Now those might seem like fighting words, and indeed they were. When it came to maintaining and defending the pure Gospel by grace, Paul's attitude was "Any time, any place."

Now the trend we need to be careful about is similar. There are a great many evangelical, Bible-believing churches whose pure theology is near perfect. But the unwritten agenda inside the doors is legalism. While they use the lingo and the jargon of GRACE they live a religion of little more than do's and don't's, of watch-dogging one another and of putting each person who comes in the door under a bondage of what a

British friend of mine once called "microethics." A legalistic flavor to a church and watch-dogging is not what real Christianity is all about. In fact if any watch-dogging is to go on, Paul says, it's the real *dogs* who should be watched, and that is anyone who distorts what it means to live by grace!

Verb #3 The true "circumcision", now Paul says, is not those who can just point to some physical attribute and say, "Here is the badge that I am a righteous person." The true people of God, set apart by Him and marked by Him, are marked in their hearts. And they are a heart-marked people who really make genuine WORSHIP their priority.

Thinking maybe of Jeremiah's words, Paul wrote to the Romans, *For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh, but he is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter, and his praise is not from men but from God.* Romans 2:28,29

Jesus said to the Samaritan woman, *...the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth, for such people the Father seeks to be His worshippers.* John 4:23

Now when it comes to talking about WORSHIP, a preacher can do a lot with that!

Paul says, "Hey, my Philippian brethren, the true believers are not those who just ACT at religion, who use up their energy and time looking at each other; the true believers use up their energy and time looking at God!"

And they look at God, they worship Him *in the Spirit of God*. Now my understanding of this is that he is not talking about some ecstatic STATE or worked up CONDITION which, once you get IN IT, you can really see Jesus. That is the most popular interpretation of this phrase. But a better understanding of it is that he means UNDER THE CONTROL of the Spirit. How do you tell if someone is UNDER THE CONTROL of the Spirit? Consider the *fruits* which Spirit-control produces: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control. These fruits of walking with Christ are really INVISIBLE, and worshipping *in the Spirit of God* is more invisible than visible. When we worship as New Testament Christians, we are doing it ON FAITH that there's someone out there to hear it--or rather, IN HERE to receive it. Worshipping *in the Spirit of God*, in the context of what^{su} Paul is dealing with in Philippians has very little to do with the outward trappings of the flesh.

This is why I really don't think this kind of music or that kind of music makes that much difference. I don't think wearing a tie or not wearing one, insofar as God is concerned, really moves Him. I can wear a black tie and have a black heart on a Sunday morning. Or, I can wear an open-necked shirt and have an open heart too. I can also wear a black tie AND have an open heart too.

Here's the deal: my ACCEPTIBILITY has nothing whatsoever to do with how I dress up my flesh, or how much my flesh has accomplished in the ministry this week, or how many poor people I have fed. When it comes to my basic ACCEPTIBILITY--and more than than--the basic PLEASURE and JOY that God gets from my worship, I must worship Him on the merits of His Son alone, and by an invisible faith alone, that is, *in the Spirit of God*.

The publican (tax collector), as opposed to the Pharisee, is the one who worshipped God in the Spirit: *I tell you this man went down to his house justified rather than the other (Luke 18:14)*

Verb #4 Spiritual Christians also *glory in Christ Jesus*. In some places, in some cities, there seem to be a lot of Christians these days. But I really wonder how many believers really *glory in Christ Jesus*?

This means that the thing that really gets me excited is Christ! The thing that really motivates me and gives me hope and excitement is Him!

The thing that I would rather hear about more than computers, the Redskins, a new car, getting a pay raise, having a girl friend or boy friend, being accepted by my peers, is to hear about JESUS! He gets me going. He is charges me up.

Verbs #5 & #6 Another verb here is in verse 3, and that is placing no confidence in the things I CAN DO. My religion, if it is nothing more than that, is worthless. Jesus told His disciples to not run their prayer lives like certain hypocritical leaders who loved to be seen praying in the streets. Its not the activities, the hours logged in, the people my life has influenced for religion. I put no weight with that whatsoever--and of course, in the following verses Paul says, "You want to talk accomplishment, family heritage, the right paperwork? I've got you all smoked, buddy boy!" But all that is nothing more than trash, refuse, "crap." That's all it is. In fact how I look at all that, is the last verb, COUNTED. I consider all that garbage--which really doesn't do justice to the Greek word Paul uses here...

I consider all that balogne. Its as much use before God, when I stand before Him, as a bucketful of landfill. You been to the landfill lately? Great stuff out there, eh? Well, that's what good family name and heritage, and what my greadfather did, and the fact that my great-great-great-great grandmother came over on the Mayflower, or the ARK for that matter, and the fact that I was a good altar boy, and I always give \$3 to the ministry...when it comes to worshipping the living God. The spiritual person, who invisibly walks in the Spirit, by faith alone, looks at all that stuff he's done, and says, "don't mean squat." My confidence is in the Son's righteousness; HIS accomplishments, put to my credit and account.

*He is the Rock of my salvation, He is the strength of my life.
He is my hope and my inspiration, Unto Him will I cry...*

Dear ones, I think that that song we sang is one of the most "spiritual" songs we sing, when we sing it intentionally, with prepared hearts, in faith.

May we love Christ! May we concentrate on THESE verbs, being watchful of anything which might distract our worship of Him. May nothing dethrone Christ from this place.

Dartmouth Bible Notes

Dartmouth Bible Church 52 Morton Ave., North Dartmouth, Mass.

Series: Exposition of Philippians
Scripture: Philippians 3:4-11

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
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To Know the Power of the Undead

Introduction In the movie industry, which caters to American youth more than to all people in general, there has been in recent years, a great interest in the afterlife. The interest and theme of the kind of movies I'm thinking of is not religious, although it is theological. I am thinking of movies like "Night of the Living Dead" and "Dawn of the Dead" and "Ghost". In movies like this, there are people who come back from being in the grave. People are fascinated with this, as if it is some new concept. Unfortunately, such formerly dead people in such movies are almost always wholly driven by various lusts and evil hungers. Even so, many young people in our society are captivated by the theme of coming back to life, once very dead, and preying upon the mortality and weaknesses of still living people. I found it interesting to read an interview with one of the young stars of *Star Trek: The Next Generation* recently, who boasted that he had viewed "Night of the Living Dead" sixty five times. Our young people are being bewitched with a hunger to understand death in a dark way while the movie industry continues to feed their desire TO KNOW THE POWER OF THE UNDEAD.

But the power of the undead *IS* no new idea. That there might just be life after death in this world, *IS* no new concept. If a person were to engage himself in an honest inquiry for teaching or teachers, books or gurus, who OFFER some ideas on the afterlife, he would find a great deal of information about JUST THAT in a very old vault. That vault is the Bible. Now I recognize that the Bible is an unpopular place to look for information about the afterlife today. And so, the Bible publishers--most of them--are re-packaging the Bible with hipper covers, and re-titling the Bible with hipper titles. We now have "The Student Bible", "The Application Bible" and simply "The Book." But if a person were to give those old Scriptures an honest search, with an open-mind, he would find a tremendous amount of food for thought on the subject of the afterlife. Perhaps the Bible is an unlikely place to look today for many, but in fact the afterlife is the whole subject of the Book. And in that sub-book of the Book, called the letter to the Philippians, the author lays out a whole life-style, an entire world-view for living life NOW, based on certain realities concerning the afterlife--the "undead", so to speak.

The third chapter of Philippians has a fair amount to say about how a person should *live now*, in light of the afterlife. Of course, the author of this letter seems to think that the afterlife--the whole thing--is controlled by, and revolves around one Being. This author names that Being: He is "the Lord Jesus Christ." (And now you know the rest of the story)...

Knowing the Undead One In order to KNOW THE POWER OF THE UNDEAD, you've got to KNOW SOMEONE WHO IS UNDEAD! And the Apostle Paul says that there is nothing better than to know that Being, the Lord Jesus Christ...to know Him personally. He says that it is actually possible to know Him personally. In fact (Paul claims) up against the value of knowing Christ, everything else in this life; the things you have accomplished and the things and people you have lost, are all nothing. Up against knowing Jesus Christ, and to really be in possession of all the PROMISES that He made, and to enjoy the indwelling of His Spirit--all OTHER things that a man might have, are worth as much as a bucket of landfill! That's what he says in Phil.3:8.

- * In terms of accomplishment and success, Paul had it all. In verses 4-6 he gives us his "portfolio."
- * In terms of the things and people he had lost, well, just read the book of Acts sometime. For the Great Cause of sharing and proclaiming the Good News, Paul had sacrificed a great deal. (See 2 Corinthians 11:22-27)

Maybe the biggest thing Paul sacrificed though, or gave up, was his own self-righteousness. There was one over-riding *passion* in Paul's breast, and he states it at the end of verse 8 through verse 10. Oh, folks, I could preach a year I think on these few verses!

This is what it is, TO KNOW THE POWER OF THE UNDEAD. Verse 11 is the pay-off in the future. The believer in Christ benefits from Jesus' defeat of death *immediately* upon his last breath in this life by being *instantaneously* transported to the presence of Christ. AND, the believer benefits in the future because at a fixed point in time, when Jesus returns to the planet, that believer will experience the gift of a new body; a resurrection body. As David Schaffer shared at the graveside on this past Friday, our bodies will BE NEW, because JESUS' resurrection body was and is new!

Dear ones, when you start to ponder these things...when you start to ponder the probabilities, the possibilities, the evidences, and when you start to dream about the Christian's future, what is better? What gives more pleasure and more hope? Name one thing! Its all rubbish compared to what is coming for the believer! To know the CERTAINTY that "YES, I shall indeed be 'UNDEAD', and these are the circumstances..."

THAT is the POWER of the "undead" NOW. To know in your mind, in your convictions, in your emotions, in your daily struggles, that this life is not all there is, and that God's plans for you are ONLY JUST BEGINNING, is to feel the power of coming back from the dead even before you get sick that last and final time!

That's why I go to church;

That's why I give money to the ministry;

That's why I read my Bible and pray and try to tell others;

That's why I don't throw in the towel in the fight against temptation;

Now dear ones, MERE RELIGION or tradition or guilt or family habit will not keep you fired up. In verse 9 Paul explicitly says that any righteousness--goodness--that I experience here is not something I have forged by myself. I do not call myself a Christian because I have successfully kept the Ten Commandments, or the Golden Rule, etc. I call

myself a Christian because JESUS kept the Ten Commandments AND the Golden Rule. I'm just "with Him." You see, it's WHO YOU KNOW! I "know the power of the undead" because I get in "on HIS I.D. card"

How do you do that? Paul says how TWICE in vs. 9: *through faith*. That means I walk with Him even though He's invisible, even though my devotion to Him is invisible. There'll be time enough for walking by SIGHT when He comes back, but now, we've got to walk with Him, and DEVELOP our willingness to *trust Him* invisibly.

We take it "on faith" that He's listening when we pray.
 We take it "on faith" that my making decisions based upon the Bible isn't a colossal waste of time.
 We take it "on faith" that God will answer and respond to prayer.
 We take it "on faith" that when I die and go into the ground that He won't leave me there, or let my spirit just evaporate.
 We take it "on faith" that Phil Griffin is literally with Jesus today, where he was not a week ago.

Phil's life, before he breathed his last, testified to the power of the undead. His life did not say "PHIL" so much as it quietly said "JESUS." He would have been embarrassed to hear that said of Him a week ago. If he knows I've said it today, I'm sure he just turned to His Savior and said, "Thank you for the privilege of making you a little more visible down there, my Lord, from time to time..."

Phil was very valuable to us. He is missed and will be missed. But now it is someone else's job to take the place of mentor. That must fall on the next generation to die to self and live for Christ.

God's perspective on the church, is that really it is a collection of people who have simply trusted in Jesus for HIS righteousness, and for His ability to satisfy God's demands concerning sin.

Knowing the Power of the Undead In verse 10 we get some more from Paul about what's involved in knowing Christ--really KNOWING Him, and experiencing "resurrection power" here, and now... And it's not some promise for health or automatic wealth. It's quite the opposite, I'm afraid:

that I may know...the fellowship of His sufferings...

Part of knowing what it is to be empowered by the same power with which Jesus' defeated death--by resurrection power--is to SHARE in His sufferings. That means, frankly, to participate in the kind of humiliation and criticism and rejection that He faced. Pastor Lou commented to me last week, "We should not be surprised if some we share the Gospel with, reject it: many who sat at Jesus' feet rejected Him face to face!"

There are times when you must share the cost of being a person growing in righteousness. It will cost you! The Philippian believers had to decide if they were willing to experience a little humiliation, a little loss for the high privilege of having the confidence and the feeling of strength associated with really knowing the "Undead One." You must decide too, sometimes.

What are you willing to sacrifice in order to better come to know Christ?

What are you willing to discard in your life in order to better, to more frequently, to more deeply and to more completely enjoy a vibrant, Spirit-filled walk with Him?

The final piece of the puzzle of KNOWING THE POWER OF THE UNDEAD, is to DIE! At the end of verse 10, Paul says that to know the power of Jesus' resurrection, is to be

conformed to His death.

Am I molded to Jesus' having died to anything and everything that would have pulled Him down or distracted Him from fulfilling the Father's plan for Him? Am I so completely dead to the flesh that the contours of my life match the contours of His life perfectly. Paul says THAT was His purpose, His passion. Fortunately for us, he says that even HE, at this point in his life, had not achieved that kind of transformation yet. But, as we shall see the next time, he was *straining towards it*.

In verse 11, the idea is not that somehow through becoming a good enough Christian he WINS the resurrection from the dead for himself. It is that he wants to win it in the HERE AND NOW. He has the PRESENT in view, not the future. He says, "I want to realize resurrection power in my life NOW--not just when I breath my last."

"Bring the future to me NOW", he says... And that comes through surrender, and through commitment and through seeking Him daily, and through hard work and struggle over months and years!

Dear ones, what are you willing to do to PERSONALLY know the power of life over death, the power of the undead? What are you willing to *discard*, to lose in order to more fully and genuinely experience Christ's power and presence in your life? Only YOU can grapple with the question and answer it for your life right now. Only YOU KNOW what issue or issue stands in your path from knowing real Spirit-filling more. May the Lord who loves you deeply, show you. May he empower your old, bent and corrupt will to desire Him more than anything else...

Dartmouth Bible Notes

Dartmouth Bible Church 52 Morton Ave., North Dartmouth, Mass.

Series: Exposition of Philipppians
Scripture: Philipppians 3:12-14

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Lesson 13 Feb.2, 1992

Pressing On in Perseverance

Introduction There has been in the Christian Church, the theory put forth that it is theoretically possible to reach a state of moral perfection. It was taught by one of the great heroes of church history; the man, in fact, who founded Methodism, John Wesley. Others have adopted a Wesleyan view too, and although we do not hear this theory taught a great deal today, it has sprouted in the field of theological thought from time to time. The idea is, that it is possible to become so consumed with Christ, so given over to the control of His Spirit, that for a time a person can actually live on a certain "plane" completely free of sin and the desire to sin. Wesley admitted that a person in such a state could, quickly fall off that plane, and tumble back into a more mundane struggle with sin. But he did say that he hungered for arrival ON such a plane of perfection at least a time or two before the end of this life...

(Another person once observed though, that the only place a person reaches a plane of perfection is when they're filling out a job application...)

Now while you may dismiss a doctrine of perfectionism at first, it does have some attraction.

First, it would be nice if it were true, wouldn't it? What a wonderful thing to ponder--being in such a state of holiness that for a few moments, or an hour or two, or even a day...to be completely eradicated of sin and its poison. If you knew that such a state were possible, would you seek it?

Second, one can imagine one's self in worse theological company than John Wesley. For all his free-will-ism, and for whatever other errors he may have taught (including *perfectionism*), if I accomplish a tenth of what HE accomplished for Christ, I will surprise myself, let me tell you!

Third, we do have verses in the Bible like Matthew 5:48, ...you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect, and I John 3:6, No one who abides in Him sins; and no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him.

Fourth, there ARE some churches today which teach a kind of perfectionism. Some ministries teach that a Christian can be so full of Christ that he becomes aglow with Him, and starts to do supernatural things, or so they appear. "And gee, my Uncle Bill goes to that church

and I've always respected Uncle Bill. Maybe that theology is correct."

Paul's Ambition, Not His Experience But the problem with any pipe-dream like this, is that it simply doesn't match up to what Paul says in our passage today. In Phil.3:12a & 13a Paul says that he did not judge that he had achieved any perfection yet. Actually, he wrote that he had not YET "attained to the resurrection," to such a complete empowerment by the Risen Savior, that he no longer struggled against the flesh.

Paul also wrote the seventh chapter of Romans, which over the centuries has been a great comfort to countless believers. In that chapter, you will remember, Paul wrote,

For the good that I wish, I do not do; but the I practice the very evil that I do not wish (Romans 7:19).

But even with knowing that he would not reach any spiritual plane where all sin was gone (even if only temporarily), he still strove for a more complete walk and more ALIVE and POWERFUL walk with the Risen Jesus. And THAT, dear ones, is the kind of determination I want to talk about today. For this is surely yet another message on the Christian life, as is impossible to avoid if you risk reading and understanding Philipians.

I have no interest in talking about doctrine for doctrine's sake.
I have no interest in fine-tuning theoretical theology just for the intellectual buzz it produces.
I have no interest in even memorizing Scripture, if it does not draw me closed to Him "Who has eyes like a flame of fire" and "Whose feet are like burnished bronze." Revelation 2:19

There is no point to Bible study, and gaining knowledge if the gaining does not create more desire, hunger and drive to be LIKE Christ and to abide near to Him, is there? So, yes, this is yet another message seeking to draw out from Paul something for my daily walk with Paul's Savior...

But One Thing I do... So, having dismissed any misconception that he, Apostle to the Gentiles, writer of deep things, mentor of many and sufferer of innumerable hurts for the Cause, was not yet perfect, he says what his ambition WAS, in fact...

In these verses Paul intentionally employs a lot of *athletic* language. You see, we tend to think that we are the only civilization blessed with great athletes (Mark Rypien, Gary Clark, Art Monk, Joe Jacoby, Ernest Byner, etc.) But the ancient Greek world was very much consumed with athletic competition too, and Paul speaks of track and field and boxing in particular, as one who evidently enjoyed such events!

The Christian life, you see, is, from one VERY APPROPRIATE way of viewing it, a RACE. I am not racing against my brethren, watching to my right and left, and watching "my 6" for them...

I am racing against my own FLESH.
I am racing against an evil and deteriorating world system of morals.
I am racing against an evil angel (Satan), and his foul henchmen.

Against such opponents, there is only one victor: me or them!

Paul says, *I PRESS ON*. Dear ones, he means this and simply this: he does not give up!

A teenaged Christian may cry out, "God, I'm so tempted!"

A young single may cry out, "God, I'm so lonely," and soon they cry out, "God, I'm married!"

Then, a young wife cries out, "God, I'm pregnant!" And a young parent cries out, "God, what do I do with this baby!"

Then its, "God, this kid is driving me bananas!"

And then, a person with a career cries out, "God, I love my work."

And then, a little older, a parent with a teenager cries out, "God, what have I done to deserve THIS?"

And then, so very soon, that person says, when the teen has turned into their own young man or woman, "God, I'm so lonely."

And then, so very soon, that person's spouse dies and they cry out, "God, I'm so alone..."

And then maybe their own health fails them, and they cry out "God, I hurt so bad..."

But in all these experiences, and through surely many, many CHANGES that we face, some not too pleasant, some not asked for, Jesus is there asking,

"Do you still love Me?

Are you still seeking Me?

Are you still trusting Me?"

Notice at the end of verse 12 that Paul's goal is the same goal as Jesus'. Notice too, that he says he WAS LAID HOLD OF. Again in the Scripture we see a sovereign God who, in His sovereign grace, LAYS HOLD of people with a specific goal and plan in mind--that those people should become like Him, and that they should enjoy forgiveness and the joy of the Lord and victory over sin and all the privileges of an adopted son, and "every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3).

Another key part of Paul's strategy to win this race, is to

forget what lies behind

Believers get side-tracked, shelved, put out of action, placed on "injured reserve" sometimes because they dwell on something that has happened to them. Dear ones, I sincerely hope that I will be surprised by no tragedy, no sacrifice, no loss, no humiliation, no persecution which MIGHT just come my way sometime. I will grieve them; I will hurt and agonize over them when they come. If they might be by my own doing, I will kick myself over and over again, but

"Dear Lord, let me never be so surprised by what happens to me, that I stand and stare at it for the rest of my Christian life. Grant me this, my Lord: allow this servant to be able to keep pressing on, to persevere."

Then he says in the same breath,

reaching forward to what lies ahead

HOPE is the one thing that the world, Satan, my fleshly fantasies cannot counterfeit. True hope, based on the conviction that there are some powerful cool things coming in the future for the Christian, things which we cannot even imagine, is something the believer can ALWAYS focus on and concentrate on. He may grow sick. He may become alone. He may even find himself in some stinkhole of a jail, with nothing to eat but bread and stale water. But he KNOWS, dear ones, that this is not all there is.

Does this describe you? If you are a Christian, really, then it does. If it does NOT describe you, then you are either not really a Christian yet, or something is very, very wrong with your Christian life.

In verse 14 there is the PRIZE. Every race has a finish line and a prize. There is a *motivation* in all this pressing on and straining after the tape! Paul calls it the "*upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*"

He speaks of this further in 2 Tim.4:8 It is to gain Christ, finally and once and for all. It is to be WITH HIM. It is to have ended the "walking by faith" and begun the "walking by sight." It is to dwell with the Lamb of God in that place which He has gone and prepared for me. It is no pipedream, dear ones. I do not press on for some fantasy. Paul did not "suffer the loss of all things" for a wispy dream. We believe that Jesus LITERALLY meant those who trust Him shall dwell with Him!

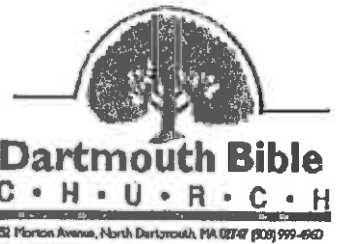
Dear ones, this message is just about this. Are you persevering? Are you hanging in there, still praying and still reading your Bible and still trying, though it is hard sometimes, to minister in His church? Are you STILL trying to share the plan of salvation with somebody? Are you still believing in the promises?

I think of the story I heard about some time ago about a remote island in the South Pacific. A Japanese soldier was found there, very aged, but still wearing a tattered old, faded uniform of the Japanese Imperial Army. When he was discovered, and was told that the war had indeed ended, and that he could now go home, he said he did not mind it so bad that Japan had lost the war--he had suspected as much...what he minded was that he was forgotten. He had persevered, labored over his little stash of equipment, painstakingly scrawled various intelligence notes, and waited, waited, waited; watching the coast each day for a Japanese Naval vessel to retrieve him.

You and I shall never be disappointed like that. Jesus calls us to press on, to persevere, to wait on Him, just a little while longer. He will come again. Do you love His appearing? May the Lord empower your faith, your believing in His promises today.

Dartmouth Bible Notes

Notes from Sunday morning messages



Series: Exposition of Philippians
Scripture: Philippians 3:15-4:1

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Lesson 14 Feb. 9, 1992

I Shared My Coke, He Threw Me His Jersey

Introduction You will remember ten or so years ago there was that commercial on TV with Mean Joe Green. Joe Green was an all-pro defensive end for the Pittsburgh Steelers and in the commercial he is slowly hobbling down the stadium tunnel after a grueling game, by himself, and half unwrapped from his uniform and equipment. He encounters a little boy who offers him his bottle of Coca Cola. Joe Green sort of mindlessly accepts the Coke and continues down the tunnel as the boy says "See ya." Then Green calls back to the boy and throws him his game jersey, dirty and sweaty but to the boy worth no less than the Hope diamond!

That scene took me back to my childhood and I'm sure it connected with a lot of people. It was excellent advertising! It reminded me of that great need I had, and all kids have, for mentors. A mentor is somebody you want to be like. It is someone you admire and whose strengths you would like to have too.

Many kids love sports heroes. They say to themselves, "I wish I could play defensive end for the Steelers." Or, "I wish I could hit .350". Or, "I wish I could swim in the Olympics."

For myself, I have greatly admired several people in history. Although the tendency is to romanticize people in history, certain noble people truly rose to the occasion of the hour, and became great due to their character or their accomplishments.

Martin Luther always impressed me.

William Bradford was the first main Governor of "Plimoth;" a man of great courage.

John Eliot came to this country right after Plimoth and Boston were founded. He learned the Indians' language, figured out a way to write it down, taught them to write it, and then translated the entire Bible into their language, taught it to them, and saw many become Christians. Whole Indian villages turned to Christ!

Thomas Jackson, for three short years, rose from a nobody to become "Stonewall."

Now these men were heroes to me, but a MENTOR is someone you know personally. I started latching on to a few *mentors* when I was in Junior High School, and I had several. One was a swimming coach; another was a teenager four years older than me in my Boy Scout Troop who took me with him to do a lot of fun things. All through high school I had no one

really, that I was mentored by, but when I became a Christian, that opened up a whole new family to me, the Body of Christ, and I have enjoyed many mentors since then.

Mentoring is a healthy thing. Within the context of Christian fellowship, it is a very useful thing, and it is a biblical thing. Our passage today is a picture of what Christian *mentoring* is all about.

Paul's Comfort (vs. 15) Have you ever needed to have someone tell you...just REMIND you...that God will keep you on the right path? In this verse Paul assures the Philippians that God will reveal to them any deviation from the proper understanding of the Christian life. In other words, we can depend on GOD to keep us straight. The Philippians were surrounded by forces who would seek to CONFUSE their understanding of just how the Christian life was supposed to work. We are too. But we can depend on the Chief Shepherd to take ultimate responsibility to shepherd the individual sheep. Through the Holy Spirit, the Lord will keep instructing us and bringing us to maturity. Even though human leaders and even mentors will fail us sometimes, the Lord Himself will watch out for us.

But we should not just lie back and say, "OK then, I don't need to work at this Christian life."

Paul's Example (vss. 16,17) No, we need to keep doing the same good things that we learn as newborn Christians. I don't know where you were or who you were with when you first started

- reading your Bible for yourself; or when you first started
- to make prayer a priority in your life; or when you first
- discovered your spiritual gift and how to minister it in the Body;
- or when you first started trying to share the plan of salvation with other people...

Paul spoke of this in his letter to his friend Titus (Titus 2:1-8). In that passage *mentoring* is encouraged and mandated for the church of Crete. Younger believers were to learn basic Christian living from older believers.

Now in our society we have become cautious about granting a whole-sale endorsement to any Christian leader. We have seen too many Christian "heroes" fall prey to ego and power and so we react by not allowing ourselves to admire very many leaders. But Paul told the Philippian Christians to mark out those who were living their Christian life rightly. Now here, I think Paul is looking primarily at how people THINK about *sanctification*.

There are a great many different *theories* that people have about how a Christian is supposed to go about living for Christ, and all the details. On the one hand, it is a fascinating and detailed study. On the other hand Jesus pointed out that the whole Old Testament (with all its intricate laws and rules) depends on two basic commandments:

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind...and you shall love your neighbor as yourself (Matthew 22:37-40). Jesus also said,

...however you want people to treat you, so treat them, for this is the Law and the prophets (Matthew 7:12).

But there are always going to be people around, "authorities", churches, ministries, who teach something different than good old Bible doctrine. They may LOOK Christian; they may use Bible verses; they may seem Christian enough, but if they are in error, Paul says, avoid them; attach yourself to those who follow the apostles' pattern.

I think we practice this in terms of the books and tapes and radio shows we seem to pass around, and talk about. We have certain Bible authorities today, certain "thinkers" about how the Christian life works, that we mutually endorse to each other. We say things like,

"Did you listen to Dobson this week?"

"Have you seen Swindoll's new book?"

"Congress" each year in Boston, is sort of the "Woodstock" of good, soundly evangelical teachers and ministries. When I go to Congress, or buy a book from certain publishers, etc. I relax a bit. I know whom I can generally depend upon to maintain the apostolic standard and balance. This does not mean that other teachers, authors, etc. don't have anything to say to me. But there are just some that I think are trustworthy.

LET ME SUGGEST THREE BOOKS FROM OUR LIBRARY...

Now "sure as shootin'" someone will say to me at the door, "Now Neil, I don't agree with everything Dobson or McArthur or Stanley says, you know..." Well, neither do I. But I'm talking about a general agreement on ALL the basic tenets of the faith, the "fundamentals," so to speak.

The Danger of Mentors (vss. 18 & 19) There IS a dark side to following people. People are gullible and easily misled. That is a fact of life. It always has been, from the days of Israel being led astray by Aaron and the others who said, "Hey, let's make a calf..."

It greatly grieved Paul that some, whom he undoubtedly knew, were so seriously in error. He took no pleasure in exposing error and those who furthered it. He had a godly attitude and approach to confrontation. But he was willing to confront error when he saw it, and when he knew it endangered the people he had labored over. He was jealous for them and to see them maintain the "same standard."

In vs.19 he has some strong words about the "enemies of the cross:"

- a. He prophesies that they shall end up destroyed.
- b. He pronounces that what they really worship is their desires.
- c. He evaluates that they are proud of what they should, in fact, be ashamed of.
- d. Finally, these false teachers have no sense of what it means to have a higher standard of behavior than the surrounding pagan culture. They think only of things that belong to this world.

Now my attitude about this is not to become preoccupied with the presence of false teachers and false teachings that lurk about. There are some good resources we have, like Christian Research Institute, Spiritual Counterfeits Project, etc. that we can pretty much rely on to perform that

watchdog role for us. We do need to guard against any teaching which would take us off the track of a sound understanding of how the Christian life is lived. But our major concentration should be on the LIVING!

It takes most of my energy to maintain some kind of spiritual health. Isn't that true for you? I would rather concentrate on doing the things that I know a disciple of Jesus is supposed to do...

Now, that right there is going to take up most of my time and attention.

The professional athlete, like a Joe Green or a Roger Clemens, must give his full attention to becoming a better athlete, if he's ever going to achieve anything.

And, I admit, that if I use up my life setting my mind on heavenly things (as opposed to setting my mind on earthly things, vs.19d), then I will probably seem a little strange to the general public. But dear ones, that's OK! It's OK to be fundamentally different from the world around me because a Christian is essentially a citizen of another society!

Our Future (verses 20,21) Real, born-again Christians are card-carrying CITIZENS of heaven, Paul said. And the "I.D. Card" of heaven is the person who EAGERLY await Jesus' return.

The New Testament scholar F.F.Bruce believed that Paul was alluding here to the Constitution of the City of Philippi. Philippi was a Roman colony, and expected to promote the interests of the mother city. The translator Moffatt, renders this phrase, *We are a colony of heaven*. We are to represent the interests of heaven in an earthly colony. One day that may mean defending pre-born human life; another day it may mean going against the trend for acceptance of all beliefs by sharing the Gospel with a neighbor; another day it may mean something else...

There is a reaction among some circles of Christians today to all the emphasis that the Second Return of Christ is having. The premillennial theory of Christ's return (to which I and this church hold) is met with skepticism from some who don't view eschatology in quite the same way. But becoming TOO un-premillennial, in my view, tends to diminish the excitement for Christ's literal return. And I want to be numbered among those who EAGERLY AWAIT THE RETURN of Heaven's King!

Part of my CITIZENSHIP RIGHTS, is that Jesus Himself has entitled me to a new body, a resurrection body that is like His. Now this puts me in awe because I have always wondered what His body was like. It was clearly Him--they recognized Him. Apparently Jesus ate with the disciples, because John went out of his way to record that breakfast of cooked fish and bread. But it was also somehow not limited to the physical laws of this planet, and dear ones, I don't know how that works. But He who has the power to *subject all things to Himself* knows how it works!

So dear ones--

and I call you that (in case you've ever wondered) because I feel a little towards you as Paul did towards these saints...

--the gist of it all is this: STAND FIRM in the Lord (4:1). Enjoy those that you know who are further along in the faith. Don't shy away from looking up to them, attaching yourself to them and simply enjoying a God-given means of spiritual growth. Don't become too disillusioned when you find out they aren't perfect and might have feet of clay too. But look for people from whom you can learn.

Many experiences yet lie before you and me. But we must determine NOW to stand firm in Him. What do you think? Will you stand firm for Christ? I pray and trust so...

Dartmouth Bible Notes

Notes from Sunday morning messages



Series: Exposition of Philippians
Scripture: Philippians 4:1-4

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Lesson 15 Feb. 16, 1992

Enjoying and Appreciating One Another

Introduction Being together with other Christians, on the Lord's Day and at so many other times, is something I have been doing for 20 years now. It is such a part of my own life, that I can hardly imagine living without it! Not all fellowship times have the same intensity or intimacy of course, but all are good and profitable. The Scripture warns us to not forsake the assembling of ourselves together--even though too many Christians do this--and one of the reasons is that we *cheat ourselves* out of the blessings which we enjoy by being part of the Body of Christ.

God intends for us to enjoy and appreciate each other. He intends for that to be the "NORM" for Christians, not the exception. One big source of the JOY of the Lord is supposed to come from each other. As I get to know you, I gradually begin to appreciate your strengths, your personality, your spiritual gift(s), your particular brand of humor, your background, etc. As you get to know me, you get the same blessings. And a big part of the real substance of being part of the Body of Christ, is in the **enjoyment** of such diversity, un-predictability, affection and nurturing that we provide for each other.

Take DIVERSITY.

Some in this church are born, raised, married and will die as native southern New Englanders. Others come from some other part of the country.

Some were raised in Christian homes, some were not.

Some are highly educated, and continue to pursue that, and others are interested in other things.

Some are young and some are old.

Some have children, some do not.

Some are men and some are women.

Some of you are sensitive, artsy types. Others of you are calculating, cut-and-dry types.

I enjoy it when one of us does something unexpected; when you do something UNPREDICTABLE.

Its just a tiny thing, but this week one of our members called me here at the church first thing in the morning, just to say that they were praying for me that day and to have a good day.

Last summer, Ron Gallegos and I were starting work on constructing a deck on the back of our house. As we were unloading the lumber, up drove Mike Dufresne, who then spent the next two days helping us--a spontaneous decision on his part, and we had good fellowship on those two days.

A third way we enjoy one another, is in the AFFECTION we share.

Cards through the mail (at times other than Christmas!), a slap on the back, a hug, granting to someone a real listening when they need to be listened to--these are signs of Christian affection in our Body that are commonplace.

Another way we enjoy and appreciate one another, is by NURTURING one another. By "nurturing" I mean the help in growing in the faith that we provide, the best we can. Some of the more obvious examples of this (beyond what your paid pastors are doing) are:

Bob Whitlow and Brendan Gahan working with those men who attend the Tuesday night men's study; Chris Ferguson leading a Bible study at the Sinclair's home on Friday nights; Dottie Carlton and Ruth Nolan leading small groups of ladies; our entire AWANA, youth and Christian education programs...

My intention, of course, is not to brag at all. But one thing is pretty clear to me, and that is that around here folks do enjoy one another. And that is part of God's plan for us!

Now our passage for today illustrates the kind of concern that Paul had for the churches he was involved with. These verses are simple, practical advice for ways to maintain the unity of the Body.

We ended last week with his exhortation to the Philippians to **STAND FIRM IN THE LORD**. We pick it up there again today. *Standing firm* takes all our effort some days, doesn't it? There are a lot of things, that if you allow them to, will bring your walk with Christ right down. Doctrinal error, misguided church leaders, pride, getting our eyes off Christ and on to *myself*...these are all things lying in wait to get us off the simple path of daily walking with Christ. "Don't let them," Paul says. "*Stand firm in the Lord.*"

A Sharp Disagreement (Phil.4:2) There was another problem that might distract the Philippian assembly from concentrating on the important things. These two women, *Euodia and Syntyche*, had a serious disagreement between them. Paul does not specify the issue, although it was clear to those hearing this letter for the first time. In fact, it doesn't much matter **WHAT** the issue was, does it?

I'm not sure that I would want my name immortalized for having been in a church fight. *Euodia and Syntyche* bear the marked distinction of being known for all church history for one thing and for one thing only--fighting, conflict, not being able to "agree to disagree."

Paul asked them--in fact, the Greek word is *parakalo*, "beseech," as though he were personally addressing the one and then the other,

Please, Euodia; please Syntyche...

These two, whatever the dispute, needed to agree as sisters in the Lord; to **DECIDE** to live in harmony *despite* their difference.

THAT'S the wonder of knowing Jesus Christ! All around us people harbor grudges for years. But in Christ we can forgive and accept one another and MAYBE even learn to enjoy each other despite the differences that inevitably will come up from time to time. (See Ephesians 4:32).

Now these two were indeed workers in the ministry. They had evidently suffered some and sacrificed some with Paul when he was there (See verse 3).

It's like that so often in the ministry. You get a few people doing most of the work, and they get tired and weary and sometimes at each others' throats. I have yet to be in a church that was immune from this, even though I have never been part of anything but outstanding and solidly evangelical Christian assemblies.

My friends, we need to always be careful to maintain the unity of the Body. Our testimony, our effectiveness in reaching out, and the general level of HAPPINESS of a church depend on the church's determination to keep the unity. But the best of churches are going to have issues, personality conflicts, even cliques and factions that occur sometimes. I'm afraid its not a matter of IF so much as it is a matter of WHEN, and HOW you deal with it when...

Clement On the other hand, while Euodia and Syntyche are known basically for their conflict, CLEMENT of PHILIPPI is known only for this brief comment in verse 3 that Paul wrote--

- a. He was a "fellow worker" with Paul in the ministry
- b. His name is in the "book of life."

--may I be known for that much and no more, will be fine, thank you.

Verse 4 This is one of the most famous verses in the New Testament. And remember, it has a context! The context is living within the Christian fellowship. Paul bursts forth with this exhortation right as he is thinking of Clement and Euodia and Syntyche, and the other ones he loved so deeply over in Philippi.

I can only think that perhaps Paul's greatest source of Christian joy was in the brethren he knew and loved. He was separated from them and longed to be WITH them again (verse 1).

Dear ones, we need to make it our priority, our goal, our purpose, our program, our routine job, to enjoy one another and to appreciate one another.

On the latter count, appreciating one another, I see a lot of this in this Body and in some of our sister churches. Let us never grow lax in looking for ways to appreciate one another and to affirm one another and to build one another up.

I hope we never again get so busy in a "business meeting" that we fail to take a few minutes and share some things we saw recently in the Body in specific people...*makes a business meeting, maybe, something to actually look forward to!*

So, rejoicing is often tied up in how much we are enjoying each other and benefiting from each other's ministry. Again, I feel like I'm saying something I have often said here: If you feel little joy in your

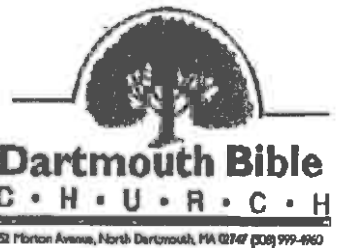
Christian life, one "check point" to look at is how much good fellowship and ministry there is in your life. Going to church just won't do it too well, by itself...

Conclusion I must say, I do love the church. I love this church and the church at Hixville and the one up in Lakeville and "IntNaz" downtown and so many others... I get a lot of the joy there is in my life from my fellow believers.

I don't get JOY from seeing the Redskins win a Super Bowl.
I don't get JOY from money, or new electronic stuff or other things.
I get JOY from you all, and seeing and enjoying the things the Lord is doing in your life! And I appreciate your individual efforts to walk with the Lord, to be used by Him in the work of the ministry.

Dartmouth Bible Notes

Notes from Sunday morning messages



Series: Exposition of Philippians
Scripture: Philippians 4:4-9

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Lesson 16 Feb. 23, 1992

How to Experience the Peace of God

Introduction It is hard for those of us who have never been to war, to appreciate the value of peace. If anything on this planet approximates hell, it must be war--indeed, the Union Army General William Sherman became famous, among other things, for his blunt statement, "War is hell." But even though most of us have not had to experience war, all of us have had to experience conflict. And though we are blessed right now with a season of geo-political peace, in the lives of many there is great on-going struggle.

As Christians, this should not surprise us because the Bible plainly tells us that we are always engaged in a *spiritual* warfare. As Christians, people brought back from being spiritually dead through personal faith in Jesus' resurrection, we are soldiers in a battle; a very real battle. We do not use M-1 tanks and attack submarines. The battle we are in is real, but it is spiritual.

Non-Christians are not IN the spiritual battle; they are prisoners held in bondage and, according to Scripture, completely unable to make any real headway against sin. Non-Christians are also ineligible to really experience God's peace. That may sound harsh, but if we have the "high view" of sin that God has--and if we come to appreciate and respect the thorough RUINING and POISONING effect which sin has on all people, it is easier to see that anyone still enslaved to it cannot yet really know what God's peace is all about.

The First Step to Experiencing God's Peace You see, God's peace is the after-effect of conversion, of becoming a real Christian. I will not say that all Christians automatically feel it right away, the day after they personally trust Christ. But it is a FRUIT of knowing Him in a personal way, and eventually at least, every true Christian will testify, "Oh yes, I thank the Lord for the peace He has given me."

Today we would like to talk about how a Christian can develop that sense of God's peace. Dear ones, of all the kinds of peace you can imagine, God's peace is the best kind of peace there is! The making of peace between God and man is the very reason Jesus came to earth. It is the

CONDITION OF FREEDOM FROM STRIFE, whether INTERNAL or EXTERNAL.

It is a CALM OF HEART for those who are trusting God.

It is the "air of heaven, the atmosphere of the place where God dwells..."

But as I say, it is not something which a Christian feels all the time, necessarily. Sensing it all the time is something which only those who have walked closely with Christ for a long time might achieve, and even then I wonder if even they sense "heaven's atmosphere" always.

Now, to the Philippians, Paul commended them to seek this thing. He desired that they should not be burdened down with strife, but that they should be an ISLAND in a pagan city where God's presence could be felt and enjoyed. It's not surprising then, that the first element of Christians experiencing God's peace is "corporate,"--that is, it has to do with the group of believers together.

Practicing Gentleness (verse 5) If every member of the church in Philippi (or here) would make it a point to be gentle with one another, and to bear with one another, there would definitely be a measure of God's peace felt in the church, at least. I think we expect this out of a church and rightly so, based on the authority of Phil.4.

After all, it is not as though the Lord is on a distant trip, away from us. Paul wrote, *The Lord is near*. He is right here, dear ones!

That goes flat-across the grain of everything our society is brain-washing us with today, but let us be aware of it! He is NEAR.

In Paul's great message on Mars Hill in Athens, he said to those pagan philosophers that God's will was FOR men to seek Him, *if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us (Acts 17:27)*.

My friends, it is much easier to act LIKE the Master--gentle and patient--when we realize that He is not away on a long trip. He is here. Now. Next week, next year. His peace should be the standard among all Christian churches, and we invite it as we seek peace among each other.

Prayer as the Great Key (verses 6 and 7) Our difficulty is worry, though. We get all bound up in anxiety and fear, and lose the sense of God's providential control of our lives all too easily. The Philippians did too. Paul wrote them *Be anxious for nothing--DON'T WORRY ABOUT ANYTHING...*

Now if anyone else said that to me I might be tempted to say, "But you don't understand!" Being as it is Paul, sufferer of "many dangers, toils and snares", I might just consider his prescription for peace.

Jesus had encouraged his disciples to be done with anxiety because their heavenly Father, who fed the birds and clothed the grass with flowers, knew their needs and was able to supply them. And so, instead of worrying, Paul says too, take it to the Lord in prayer. Now with a lot of trials and tough circumstances we deal with, praying about them maybe isn't the first thing that comes to mind. But I think the Lord is waiting for us to bring anything and everything to Him, as it comes up!

Paul uses three DIFFERENT words for prayer here. Each of them has a different twist on approaching God.

- a. "prayer" - talking with God; 1 to 1 communication, no intermediaries are needed.
- b. "supplication" - asking things of the Lord.

Until now you have asked for nothing in My name. ASK, and you will receive, that your joy may be made full (John 16:24).

c. "requests" - has to do with the THING asked for.

Don't miss too, that part of prayer--and I think this is another key to sensing God's peace in your life--is remembering the things God has done for you in the past. *WITH THANKSGIVING* is part of the whole process of prayer. Its not just in the saying of "thanks." Its in an attitude of genuine gratitude and taking the time--even amidst asking Him for new mercies--to remember that He has answered your prayers before!

I will enter His courts with thanksgiving in my heart...

Experiencing God's Peace (verse 7) The benefit, Paul writes, of taking things to God in prayer, is God's peace standing guard over us. Now I don't know about you, but I NEED this in my mind and in my heart. I am well aware of how easily I can fall prey to fear and anxiety. And this is precious, that as I pray about something, God's nearness, His powerful presence will guard over me and garrison my heart and my mind.

A contest was held in which artists were invited to paint a picture of perfect peace. The judges eventually narrowed down the competition to two men who had each painted beautiful pictures. The first created a scene of a still, lone lake high in the mountains. The second guy painted a thundering waterfall with the branch of a birch tree bending over the foam. On the fork of that limb, wet with spray, a robin sat undisturbed in her nest. The first picture spoke of tranquility, but the second picture won the contest! It showed clearly that absolute calmness can be found in the midst of turbulent surroundings. It is easy to remain unruffled when everything is quiet and serene. But to rest while the storm is raging--that is "perfect peace."

Our Daily Bread, Summer 1977

Notice the little phrase in the end of the verse, *in Christ Jesus*. It gets back to what we said at the beginning here today. Sensing God's peace is all tied to whether you are IN CHRIST JESUS or not. Paul did not include any other heroes in this. Jesus is not just A way, He is THE way and the only way to God.

Perhaps the most telling evidence of God's peace, is the ABSENCE of it when you know you have not yet prayed about the thing. You feel this and I feel it; it takes no process of proof! We just know when we are upset and fearful of a thing, it is ultimately because we have not yet really given it over to Him who has taken it upon Himself to watch out for us...

"The protection of His child and treasure, is a charge that on Himself He laid..." Hymn # 56, *Day By Day*

Paul describes this peace also as a peace which surpasses all comprehension. This is the properly mystical side of the Christian life! This is where things are so wonderful and excellent that no words can even enter our minds to describe it. When God's peace comes over you, it doesn't matter what sink-hole you've stepped in. All of human wisdom cannot finally figure out exactly how God's peace works in our minds and hearts, because it is a spiritual thing.

Ways to Sustain the Feeling of God's Peace (verses 8 & 9) But experiencing the peace of God for a Christian is not only a matter of passively sitting in prayer and letting it just encompass you. Because we cannot do that all the time. We must be out and about, working, keeping our families together, functioning as "salt and light" and sharing the good news.

For the rest of the time we need to simply guard our OWN minds and dwell on the good things. Now, these EIGHT FOCI (focuses) include a lot of good things for us to consume ourselves with, but they also "screen out" a lot of things that I am afraid we are not too careful with. Let me ask you, does *Terminator 2* fit into verse 8?

Again in verse 9 we read where an apostle says "live like me." The choices you see me making, make the same kinds of choices and you will do well. Finally, *the God of peace shall be with you*. How badly do we want to experience His peace, and His peaceful presence?

I think we want it pretty badly in times of crisis, but not too badly the rest of the time, judging at least by the kinds of things we still fill our lives with. God is a god of peace. He is not a god of strife and killing or even technology. He spreads peace in His presence and that is a thing all people need so badly.

In conclusion, remember that PEACE is a fruit of the Spirit. And like all the fruits of the Spirit, they do not come overnight generally. They come by nurturing them and growing them in your life through seeking Christ. I hope that you will seek the Lord this week. May you find Him powerfully, for He is not far away and He is not unwilling to fill you with His Spirit.

Dartmouth Bible Notes

Notes from the Teaching Ministries of Dartmouth Bible Church

52 Morton Avenue North Dartmouth, Massachusetts 02747



Series: Exposition of Philippians
Scripture: Philippians 4:8,9

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Lesson 17 Mar.15, 1992

Enjoying the God of Peace

Introduction Let me ask you this question this morning: how much do you really desire God's presence in your life? If you are a Christian then I know you do want to feel Him close by... Here's some of the kinds of things we pray for, which show that Christians want Him to be close by:

We pray for His protection,
We pray for Him to encourage us when we're down,
We pray for His provision when we're out of time, health, money, employment, strength, wisdom, etc. And make no mistake about it, the Lord loves to give us these things and more, and He has already promised to meet every one of our needs.

So we do like the Living God to remain available, sort of "on stand by." But how much do we desire His presence. Do we enjoy His abiding with us, and take pleasure in Him being right here on a daily, even hourly basis? Do you enjoy the process of nurturing your own personal relationship with Him; working on it, tending it like a garden so that it will grow and you will more and more sense His abiding presence in your daily life? Let me encourage you with some of Jesus' words that He spoke to His disciples in the very night before He was crucified... Walk with me for just a brief minute through: John 14:3,10,16,21,23,27.

Our passage today gives a real clue as to how to do that. In verse 9 Paul calls God *the God of peace* and says that He would be with the Philip-pian believers IF they would do something. It is a Bible *promise*, dear ones, and you can bank on it that it is true--

GOD WILL MAKE HIS PRESENCE FELT IN YOUR DAILY LIFE
AS YOU GIVE SERIOUS ATTENTION TO VERSE 8 and to
THE FIRST PART OF VERSE 9

The Ease With Which We Can Be Distracted For some reason the Lord doesn't overpower people with His presence. He does not come barging in, swaggering about like Hulk Hogan or Saddam Hussein, demanding attention, imposing His presence on all around. Of course when He wants to get our attention, He can! But normally, no, He is rather quiet actually, especially when you first come to know Him and aren't yet accustomed too much as to HOW to listen to Him.

Actually, most of us can miss His voice quite easily if we're not careful. His voice is a still, small and quiet voice. And a lot of things can get our attention off of Him. How easily are you distracted?

What can get your attention away from Him? Busyness? Disappointment? Unmet expectations of Him? Tribulation? Prayers, where His answer has been "wait?" It is easier to miss His voice, than to hear it, I think for many of us, at least...

So its good to see how the Bible instructs us to listen to God, don't you think? Its good to learn what's needed to increase my awareness of His presence. We cannot yet discern His presence by sight, as much as we might like to. We have to exercise and train our *spiritual senses* to discern His presence, and Paul gives us a real clue as to how to do just that in these two verses we are looking at today. Because the God of peace is Someone I would like to get to know well; and I would like to enjoy His presence as a matter of routine living, not just as an occasional "treat." How about you?

Two Words There are two words that tell us how to enjoy the real and wonderful *presence* of the God of peace. The first is in verse 8 and the second is in verse 9. The first is *dwell*, at the end of vs. 8. The second is *practice* in the middle of vs. 9. *Dwell* and *practice*...

"DWELL" The word as Paul originally wrote it here is *logizesthe*. The NASB translates it "dwell on these things". The KJV/NIV translates it "think on, or about these things". The Greek scholar F.F. Bruce translated it "**Fill your minds with these things,**" and that (I think) is the best translation. As we *fill our minds* with good things, folks, there is quite simply, less room for bad things. If we fill our minds with bad things, they tend to crowd out the good things and in the process, crowd out our really being keenly aware of God's presence. We also forfeit that fruit of the Spirit called *peace*.

A technical side-point that interests me, is this:
Do you notice back in verse 7 that Paul said *the peace of God* would accompany prayerfulness? And then down here in verse 9 it is *the God of peace* which will accompany "filling our minds" with certain things, and then "practicing" the things we see modeled in older, more mature Christians. In verse 9, it is not only that He gives us peace, peace belongs to His very character! And to have the God of peace Himself, is better than having the peace of God, don't you think?

Now, what are the things with which we should fill our minds if we really want to maintain the sense of God's presence and control of our lives? There are lots of things! Paul brings up several categories of things to focus on in our lives, which **facilitate, enhance, accommodate** God's abiding presence with us.

But first let me remind you (although some of you may not need this reminder): It isn't that God plays some kind of mind games with us, and if we do the right meditation-trip, we can *seance* ourselves into a mystical state of higher consciousness. He's present everywhere already. It isn't that His presence needs to be conjured up magically by our doing some kind of New Age-ey focusing deal...

I think it is only the Christian that can even approximate having a *free will*. A Christian can actually make a choice about what we are going to fill our minds with. A non-Christian is far more disabled, enslaved really, to the attractions of the flesh. But a Christian has the power of the Lord to help him to make some choices about what he or she is going to *dwell* on...

Now, Paul leaves our choice of "hobbies" open: He says *whatever*. There are a great many things we can concentrate on, fill our minds and lives with, that are profitable and perfectly fine to be "into."

First, he says, *Whatever is true*. That is, opposed to the things which come from fantasy. I might *daydream* about being a great rock and roll star, or being a major-league pitcher, earning six million dollars a year, becoming a Green Beret soldier, or all kinds of sexual exploits... But those are not things which are true. TRUE things, ANY true things, are all OK.

You see, the healthy Christian life is not one in which a person just sits and reads the Bible all day and goes out to church every night. You can have a full life, enjoying many things which are TRUE, but aren't necessarily devotional directly, all the time.

Second, he says, factor in some things which are *honorable*. That is, things which are MORAL. Concentrate on things which are good and moral. That may be an athletic thing; it may be an automotive interest. It may be artistic; it may be an intellectual interest.

The problem is that in our culture, we have our collective noses rubbed in so much which is IMMORAL, that we can scarcely tell the difference any more...

Third and fourth, fill your minds with things which are RIGHT and PURE. *Right* means like righteous thoughts and plans, planning GOOD things and activities. If you are involved in planning and preparing for something in the community which is a good thing, that is *righteous*. If you set your heart here in DBC to give involvement to something which is good, then that is righteous.

PURE means *innocence*, as opposed to those things which are *indecent* or greed-filled. I think *innocence* is something we need to guard in our kids as long as possible. We old, crusty adults are all burnt up sometimes, it seems. We've done everything; we've smelt every smell; we've sensed every imaginable sensation; we've been everywhere... And it is sad because in the willy-nilly, head-long pursuit of *experiences*, we lose all our innocence. That is why if I meet someone who was maybe handicapped, as a child, and is still a little child-like, it is so refreshing! Jesus had a special love for children, I believe, and part of the reason is because their innocence is more like heaven than anything! So we need to fill our minds with PURE things, not indecent things. There is an *oldness* to indecency and greed. There is a *youthfulness* to purity.

Whatever is lovely... is another thing worthy of filling our minds. Now here's a word that I get razzed about, as a man, if I use it: *lovely*. As Paul used the word, he means things which are intrinsically attractive. Things which have an agreeableness to everyone--things which give pleasure to all, and distasté to none. I think of the Royal Wedding of a few years ago. I think of many scenes in nature. I think of certain kinds of music and art. WHATEVER is lovely, this is good to pursue.

Of good reputation... Some things everyone admires; they have a good reputation and nobody questions their integrity. Although I do not know if she is saved or not, Mother Teresa seems to fit this phrase. She is of good reputation and no one seems to question her integrity or sincerity.

Within evangelical circles, James and Shirley Dobson seem to fit this description. Anything which everyone all agrees is GOOD, this is something which we can fill up our lives with.

Excellent and worthy of praise. Can you think of anything which is just plain excellent? Can you think of anything which is worthy of admiration and complement? That's something worth being involved with. Right around here, I can think of no finer organization than S-H-A-R-E, at UMD...

PRACTICE All of these things were aims and to a significant degree, I am sure, qualities of the lives of the apostles. Maybe not all the time or all at once, but in general, the Philippian believers could see these qualities lived out day in and day out in Paul and men like him. The Philippians learned how to concentrate on good things, by watching and PRACTICE "the same things" they saw in Paul, etc.

Now here's a problem we face with modeling around here. We really get so little time with one another; I mean real time. I have made it a real priority in my life, particularly in earlier years to target a few men I wanted to be around, and I made myself around them. And I learned a good deal about the Christian life.

But our whole week seems to be taken up with formal visitation, planning of activities, administration, study, official counseling, that it is very hard to get to KNOW and SEE someone you admire on any kind of an extended basis, as was common in the apostles' days, or even in modern times up to about fifty years ago. We are over-busy, over-distracted and over-swamped with all kinds of activities which do NOT enhance God's presence, and are NOT ultimately *profitable*, that we just struggle to find any time available to model for one another much, other than being at church with one another for one reason or another...

How much do you really desire the company of the God of peace? You will answer that question in the next month. You will answer it for yourself, won't you? You will decide what kinds of things you will put in front of your eyes, your ears, your mind. And you will either really accommodate God's presence, and enjoy His abiding with you on a daily basis, or you will feel distant from Him, only formally related, and restless. To a large degree, it is your choice. What's it going to be?

Dartmouth Bible Notes



Notes from the Teaching Ministries of Dartmouth Bible Church

52 Morton Avenue North Dartmouth, Massachusetts 02747

Series: Exposition of Philippians
Scripture: Philippians 4:10-16

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Lesson 18 May 3, 1992

On Receiving Help From Others

Introduction How easily do you accept help from other people? For some people: "no problem, if I really need it." For others, they might accept a helping hand from someone with some reluctance. For others, it is only with great, GREAT hesitation that they will consent to someone else helping them out. And a fourth group of people will not allow any help of any kind, no matter how bad off they are. Finally, a fifth group of persons--on the other end of the spectrum--actually thrive on receiving assistance from others, and they may even get used to just EXPECTING IT.

Now the Bible indicates that a real Christian can do both; he can give when he has the ability and a little abundance, and he can receive when he finds himself in genuine need.

A little trend in our Secret Sisters program developed this year which has been telling: some of you ladies, when you have received an anonymous gift from your secret sister, have felt obligated to send a return-gift, to "pay them back" for having given to you. The sentiment is, No one gets one up on me... Well, we all need to humble ourselves, and to enjoy it when someone DOES give to you out of the love in their hearts, PUT THERE BY JESUS CHRIST. No one participates in the Secret Sister program out of a sense of obligation! They're only in it because they want to encourage and help!

When Renée and I returned from vacation in August 1984, we found that the house we were living in had been put up for sale. We had just moved into the house a month previous. Now we had to move. (And Renée was seven months pregnant). The Body really came to our aid at that time and they put us over the top on the money we would need to purchase our own home (about \$1,400 was collected), helped us in locating an affordable house and helped us move into it. We are still thankful for how the Body helped us at that time!

At the same time, being a pastor has been a humbling experience for me and in many ways. One way is that most pastors are essentially on a fixed income, and while there is the occasional funeral or wedding or outside speaking engagement that involves an honorarium, it doesn't add up to even half what I would probably be making as an engineer. That is my choice, and God's calling of course, but it is still humbling. People in full-time Christian work quickly learn to trust God for His provisions in many ways, or they simply do not stay IN the Lord's work for long. And as part of the process, you learn to scrimp and save and change your natural spending habits--OUCH--in order to get by on less. That's simply the name of the game.

(I don't know too many other male "professional colleagues", as Lou and I are, who would have a discussion comparing supermarket coupons!)

The ministry has taught me--or, is TEACHING ME--what Paul taught in our passage today: how to be content with what you have. Paul was thinking about material possessions, and even just food and clothing. But what he said about it applies to pretty much anything.

Here's the principle: The Spirit-filled Christian is a person whose happiness is not overly dependent on having all my material wants fulfilled.

Some years you may do very well. Other years things may be tighter, financially. And other years may be much less well off. This isn't only in finances, though. It can be in terms of health, companionship, feeling fulfilled on your job... But let's get into the passage itself.

Paul's Missionary Support System Paul had started the church in ancient Philippi himself. He knew the people and he loved them. And they loved Paul. They wanted to be personally involved with seeing his ministry continue, and that his personal needs were met. Evidently, they couldn't always do what they would like to have done for him, but from time to time they would send a significant financial gift to him (Philippians 4:10, 16)

How easy things are for us today! We just call the Treasurer and ask her to cut a check and send it off through the U.S. Mail, and in a few days--almost without a hitch--the missionary has the support check. Often the missionary even provides the envelope! But in Paul's day it had to be done much more carefully, and with quite a bit more risk. A church needed to be really sure that they wanted to support somebody, because their gift was more precious.

It surprises me how many church-going Christians are not aware that full-time missionaries are not generally paid a salary *per sé* for their services in providing the Gospel. Far too many believers seem to think that any financial support a church or an individual might SEND to a missionary is "cream"; money for extras. The fact is that almost all missionaries DEPEND COMPLETELY on the giving of churches and individuals for their daily bread! If the support level drops in a month or two, say by \$100 or \$200 or \$300, then folks--they have to get by with that much less money for that period of time until their support comes back up. And they then have to communicate their situation TO their supporters, and that takes time... It all makes for a very stressful situation for a lot of missionaries. And if they have GONE to the field on faith to begin with, and maybe left when their support level was not quite up to 100%, on the belief that the Lord would supply--well, you can see how it really takes some faith and belief in God's calling to GO to the field at all.

I am not hesitant to tell you that it is our MISSIONARIES and their families that I think are our real heroes in the Christian faith today. It isn't Chuck Swindoll and John MacArthur and Carman and Amy Grant. It's those nameless and unknown people who have such a burden to reach the lost with the Gospel, that they are willing to make it their full-time job, to trust God to put it on the hearts of believers to support their work, and they just GO, man, and do it! I wish every single family and single person in this church would pray about taking on the support of at least

one missionary family--even if it was just a few dollars a month. I think that is something that we need to do. Yes, our church does send a little bit every three months to several missionary families. But we could do so much more--and we SHOULD do so much more. And more than just sending money and praying, I wonder if God would ever see fit to SEND someone from within this Body out INTO full-time work??? (I had a conversation last week with someone in this Body that is starting to pray about it, by the way!)

MISSIONS should not be the anti-lock brakes of the church--an expensive option. It should be the FUEL SYSTEM of the church--the main deal. Any church which is not excited and deeply involved in missions is missing a big, big part of what God wants to do in the world today and IS doing. Paul was, among many things, a full-time Christian missionary and we would not do justice to this passage if we didn't talk a little about missions from it.

What's Here For US In This Passage? But what is here for you and me today is Paul's example on how to graciously receive from people. Sometimes we do need to receive help from other people. God does not intend for missionaries to be the only people who receive help from other Christians. He intends that to be the NORMAL EXPERIENCE AND PROGRAM OF THE WHOLE CHURCH. You see a need, you meet it--or, if you cannot directly help you bring it to the attention of the church and you make sure the need gets met.

Paul wrote that he knew how to get along with abundance of supplies or food or clothing, and he also knew how to get along with just a little bit. Now, he was not *superhuman* though! He had to LEARN (as he testified in verse 11) how to be flexible. And, the SECRET is in verse 13. How did he manage to content himself with whatever he had? He did it through Jesus. He would consciously entrust Jesus to empower him--the Greek word reads *pour power through him*--to get along with little and not get bitter or angry or overly disappointed, or, to simply ENJOY a time of plenty, if that's what transpired, without letting it go to his head!

It has something to do with EXPECTATIONS, doesn't it? On the one hand,

if you've decided that the #2 thing on God's job description (after getting you to heaven) is for Him to keep you in comfort, or stress-free, or to save anyone you ask Him to, WHEN you ask Him to, or to keep you free of criticism or worse from non-Christians...

And then you have some disappointing experience, you will probably become disillusioned with the Christian life. I also see people who have the other philosophy-of-life:

"I'm going to feel guilty about any success I experience, any prosperity at all I find myself tempted to enjoy, any comforts I buy into... because deep down I know God wants me basically miserable." This belief--although few if any Christians would admit to it--is equally unbiblical.

As God's plan for your life unfolds--and dear ones, He DOES have a plan for your life--your job is to be flexible, to submit yourself to those circumstances which are beyond your control, give Him praise, and enjoy whatever lessons He is trying to teach you.

1. If you're in a time of suffering, praise God--you are probably at your MOST HUMBLE! And when we are most humble, we are most prepared for Him to use us.

2. If you're in a time of success and prosperity and comfort, praise God! Now is the time, NOW is the day to give some of it away and use your strength, while you have it, to minister to others.

By bringing Jesus into your circumstances in prayer and by reading your Bible a lot, you can handle either meager times or prosperous times.

And when you find yourself in need of someone else to HELP you, let them enjoy giving. Jesus said *It is more blessed [happy] to give than to receive.* But if you never let anyone give to you, simply because its a blow to your pride, or the ever-present "I wasn't raised that way", then you ROB your brothers and sisters of giving that Jesus wants *them* to experience! Verse 14 says it. It pleases Christ when believers reach out to another Christian--especially one of His missionaries--in time of need.

There are real needs just within the family of missionaries we are involved with. The Schaffers have needs right now. The Monks (who will be here on 5/31) have real needs right now. If you were to reach out and help them, the Scripture says, *you do well.* Paul wrote to the Galatians, *Bear one another's burdens and thus fulfill the law of Christ (6:2).*

How well we give to one another, and how well we receive from one another, DISPLAY how close to Jesus we walk. He allowed Mary to anoint Him with spikenard. He gave His life for her too. In Christ there is the perfect balance of giving sacrificially, and receiving graciously.

May He give us that balance.

May He burden us to share in the needs of our missionaries.

May He make us loving givers, who give with no expectations and no strings attached.

May He shape us into gracious RECEIVERS.

May we accept His will for us, whether that entails some periods of poverty and need, or some periods of prosperity--in all circumstances, may we say, "Change my heart O God, make it ever true, change my heart O God, may I be like you."

Dartmouth Bible Notes



Notes from the Teaching Ministries of Dartmouth Bible Church

52 Morton Avenue North Dartmouth, Massachusetts 02747

Series: Exposition of Philippians
Scripture: Philippians 4:17-23

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Lesson 19 (of 19) May 17, 1992

Genuine Joy in Giving

Introduction Two weeks ago we talked about how to RECEIVE help from other people. For some people, this is very hard to do. The context of our discussion about RECEIVING was Paul's "support system" as he talked about it in his letter to the Philippian church; and I also tried to say some things about missions, that apply to us and the missionary work that we support today.

The matter of giving and receiving is a funny business, and it touches the very core of who we are as people. Gift-giving on holidays or birthdays is tricky business in many families and a lot of effort and maybe even anxiety goes into the process, doesn't it?

This week is my Mom's birthday, and I was talking to my Dad about it on the phone. He said he thought he would try to find a nice copy of George Bernard Shaw's plays for her, and then thought, "Naa--she'd just get mad at me for trying to 'instruct' her..." Gift-giving is a tricky thing.

But when it comes to just GIVING in general, this is something that Christians do well, in general. Christians are better prepared to GIVE, at least, because Christians have been GIVEN TO in the highest and the most supreme way, after all! We have been GIVEN eternal life and complete and total forgiveness of sins, and the Holy Spirit, and the Word of God. We are so full of gratitude for what we have been given in Christ--indeed that we have been GIVEN CHRIST--that the "giving-spirit" just spills over in us, and we are abundant givers ourselves, right? Right?...

Missions Giving and MY Needs

Now the context, once again, is Paul's relating BACK TO the Philippian church how he feels about their financial support of his ministry. He has not been grabby--you know what I mean? He has not spent his time anxiously worrying about whether he will be able to purchase this horse or that fine coat or this house or that piece of land. Some months he has had all he needed. Other months he lacked. But he had learned to take both the times of lacking and the times of abundance before the Lord and not to take EITHER too seriously.

At the moment, he was in a time of what HE would call abundance--whether WE WOULD CALL IT a time of abundance or not, I am not sure. Paul was in prison when he wrote this letter! But from his perspective, as he wrote in verse 18, he had an abundance.

Now there are some very important principles in these four verses about giving to missionary work. And although I want to be careful about automatically applying anything we read from Paul directly to us, I think these principles are timeless; that is, they apply for any Christian living in any time period.

1. FULL TIME CHRISTIAN SERVANTS SHOULD NOT BE GREEDY (verse 17a). At this point in his life, at least, Paul was far less concerned about any "check" he might receive, than he was for the AFFECT that giving would have upon the Philippians themselves. He was able to LOOK BEYOND HIMSELF. Now that is quite a feat! It is a model for us of a level of spiritual maturity that I think anyone in missions or the pastorate, or whatever type of full-time work, CAN reach. It also models something for any Christian too, for greed is not something that only full-time Christian workers might succumb to, despite the media's fascination with Jim and Tammy Baker.

2. SACRIFICIAL GIVING TO MISSIONS ACCRUES A "PROFIT" FOR THE GIVER (verse 17b). It is possible that the word Paul uses for "profit" here--which is the Greek word *karpos*, usually translated *fruit*, may mean interest. When a believer gives to missions work, in God's economy, in the "HEAVENLY BANK ACCOUNT" (and I confess I have no idea what I am talking about!) there is some wonderful deposit made. It is not, of course, atoning--make sure you remember that! We cannot EARN any kind of buying power in heaven towards our sin-indebtedness. Only JESUS CHRIST has that kind of buying-power. But once a person has BECOME A CHRISTIAN, than involving himself in missions support means a great deal to God. That is because missions work is HIS work! It is the greatest enterprise on the planet! Far greater than social work; far greater than construction work; far greater than medical work! The sharing of the good news that people DO NOT HAVE TO PAY FOR THEIR SINS is the most excellent work any person can do on this planet, in any era! That is why our involvement in it accrues a special "profit" in heaven.

3. MISSIONS GIVING IS WORSHIP (verse 18b). You see, worship is not just something which goes on here in this room from 8:30 to 9:35 and from 11 to 12:15 (or so) on Sunday mornings. Worship is something which goes on in the temple of the Holy Spirit (your bodies and lives) each day of the week. Paul uses the LANGUAGE of Old Testament worship here to describe GOD'S REACTION to the Philippians' joint financial gift to his ministry. It was an act of worship in which God took delight! That He enjoyed!

You will remember back in the beginning of April we had a little Sunday evening praise time here during which we focused in on the fact that God delights in certain things. He takes PLEASURE in certain things, for instance: His Son, His creation, His plans for mankind, the election of the saints, the prayers of the upright, and also in the sacrificial giving of believers to the work of spreading the Gospel. But how many Christians have not yet discovered this avenue of worship, though it is laid out clearly right here in Philippians, one of the most often-read books of the N.T.!

Application: in two weeks, we will host our missionary Tom Monk on Sunday morning. I wonder if we might be able to take up an offering towards the Monks' work in Croatia. They have

real needs right now. I wonder if the Lord would move upon us to do this, and how important it will be to us, as a Body, to really help them out with a one-time expression of support. (Now, if your first thought is "we already give them \$440 per year," then I don't want you to put one dime towards any offering. Because the Lord loves a cheerful giver, not a grudging one.)

4. THERE IS A DIRECT CONNECTION BETWEEN MISSIONS GIVING AND A SENSING OF GOD'S PROVISION IN THE LIFE OF THE GIVER (verse 19). Now probably no one verse of the New Testament has been more abused in the church in America in the past 20 years or so, than this one. We see preachers all around saying, "Give to God to get from God." What amazes me is not that so many preachers SAY this and get away with it. What amazes me is that so many *Christians* buy it!

But even though the verse is abused, the verse is still here, to those Philippians. What DOES the verse mean? It's an exciting verse! I think Paul meant, for the Philippians (and the Holy Spirit means for US) that **there is a direct connection between missions giving and the giver sensing God's provision of needs in his own life.** Now this may give rise to more questions than it answers, but it is an exciting truth. Often times I see in the lives of believers (and there have been times in my own life too) a LACK of sensing God's provision. They are discontent. It isn't that God plays games with us, but it usually is because THEY THEMSELVES have withheld something from God. And dear ones, when WE BACK AWAY from God, why is it a surprise if the joy just seeps out of our life? I entitled this message *Genuine Joy In Giving*. I think one of the means of joy God intends for Christians to experience in the Christian life, is that joy that comes from God when we are giving. Jesus said, *It is more happy to give than to receive.* And if I see little joy in a believer's life, ONE of the places I would challenge him to look is in his giving practices. Now, you will remember I'm not talking today about giving to the church. I'm talking OFF THIS PASSAGE directly about giving to missions. Many believers have never, ever given ANYTHING to missions.

I just know this: when I am giving to the Lord faithfully, and especially at times when I have undertaken to give to missions in a sacrificial way, somehow, we always have enough. Notice please, that Paul promised the Philippians that God would supply all their NEEDS--he did not say "desires" and there is a word in Greek for "desires." But he DID say God would provide ALL their needs.

WHAT ARE YOUR NEEDS? When you have your priorities straight, and you are putting God first--even if you're in prison--He will bless you richly with a keen sense and awareness that He is watching over your needs, and meeting them, maybe even in super natural ways!

The Conclusion to the Letter to the Philippians Now we come to the end of this wonderful letter of Paul to that church in Philippi that he loved dearly. He felt strongly for ALL of the ancient assemblies of believers in Jesus Christ, but perhaps none did he so love as this one. The letter ends with three typical epistolary elements:

Verse 20 is a "doxology." You know, when we sing *The Doxology* that is a biblical thing to do! It is NEVER inappropriate to praise God. Even when you're in the midst of dealing with people, you're in the middle of some complicated personal circumstances, even if you *find yourself in prison*, it is always a healthy thing--and I think the mark of a true Christian--if you can find the time to praise the Lord. "Praise the Lord" is such a cliché today, it is a shame. But giving God the glory and constantly recalibrating our thinking, and constantly directing our gaze heavenward toward the throne of grace is *always* healthy!

Verses 21 and 22 are "greetings." Paul says "Say Yo to all the believers there, and all the believers here say, 'Yo'." And evidently there had been a handful of servants (maybe) from the Roman Emperor's own court who had been born-again (although there is no record of it in church history until a generation later). But greeting someone is a sign of affection and an act of courtesy. We have forgotten being courteous in this country, since the 60's I suppose. We resist the giving of simple greetings and simple acknowledgment today. And we don't teach our kids and demonstrate to them, to do it. It never ceases to sting when a child passes me in the hall and just ignores me; not because I'm the pastor, but just because I'm human. And children learn this at home. Greetings--not slobbery, over-doing it--but simple affection and respect, are just the way Paul closes all his letters. He is not a self-absorbed man. Even in chains, he remembered to extend the greetings of those with him, and to greet all the believers in Philippi, beginning with the elders and deacons (1:1) and right on down the line to *every saint in Christ Jesus*.

By the way (I cannot resist): notice once again how Paul uses the word *saint*. He means "believer," doesn't he?

Verse 23 is a "benediction." A *benediction* is a prayer for blessings from God upon a certain group of people. The Scripture is full of examples, and a number are printed for us in #613 of our *Hymnal For Worship and Celebration*. But sometimes we hear the word "benediction" and we immediately tune it out as some form of liturgical *boringness*. But it is a fitting way to close a letter, or a worship service--we do it all the time just by saying, "Hey, have a good one." Paul ends this letter with a benediction whose theme is the THEME of his whole theology: grace. He wishes finally that the Philippians would sense God's grace in that most private and intimate of places--*in their spirits*. When we sense the grace-- the UNMERITED FAVOR AND LOVE of the Lord Jesus Christ in our spirits, we can face anything. We can live with poverty, we can face conflict, we can keep our heads about ourselves and not take ourselves too seriously. We can do all things through Him who strengthens us, when we feel His grace at work in our spirits.