

*STAND FAST IN THE LORD*

*A Series of Sermons  
on the Apostle Paul's  
Letter to the Philippians*

First given at  
Mount Zion Baptist Church, Ashford  
by Pastor Christopher Buss  
2019

## Contents

- 1 *Paul's Praise and Prayer to God for the Church:*  
*Philippians 1.1-6* 4
- 2 *Three Essentials for a Local Church:*  
*Philippians 1.7-11* 11
- 3 *The Inspiration of a Christ-Centred Testimony:*  
*Philippians 1.12-20b* 16
- 4 *Paul's Christ-Centred Testimony (2):*  
*Philippians 1.20c-26* 24
- 5 *Living on Earth as Citizens of Heaven:*  
*Philippians 1.27-30* 31
- 6 *The Blessings and Responsibilities of Being*  
*in Christ: Philippians 2.1* 39
- 7 *The Blessings of Being in Christ, Leading to*  
*Fruitfulness: Philippians 2.2-4* 44
- 8 *Having a Christ-Like Mind: Philippians 2.5-8* 49
- 9 *The Christian Workout: Philippians 2.9-18* 56
- 10 *What to Pray For Your Pastor:*  
*Philippians 2.19-30* 65
- 11 *Our Salvation in Christ Alone:*  
*Philippians 3.1-3* 72

<i>12 Paul's Testimony: Philippians 3.4-11</i>	<i>80</i>
<i>13 Pressing on to the Prize of God's Upward Call in Christ: Philippians 3.12-14</i>	<i>89</i>
<i>14 Leading By Example: Philippians 3.15-19</i>	<i>95</i>
<i>15 Being Truly Heavenly-Minded: Philippians 3.20-21</i>	<i>106</i>
<i>16 Standing Fast in the Lord: Philippians 4.1-5</i>	<i>112</i>
<i>17 Standing Fast in the Lord (2): Philippians 4.6-9</i>	<i>120</i>
<i>18 All Things Through Christ: Philippians 4.10-13</i>	<i>131</i>
<i>19 A Gift Well Pleasing to God: Philippians 4.14-20</i>	<i>137</i>
<i>20 Sincere Greetings: Philippians 4.21-22</i>	<i>146</i>
<i>21 The Grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ: Philippians 4.23</i>	<i>147</i>

# 1. PAUL'S PRAISE AND PRAYER TO GOD FOR THE CHURCH

## *Philippians 1.1-6*

The record of the formation of the Church at Philippi is given for us in *Acts 16*.

Philippi was a Roman colony, known as a miniature Rome, devoted to worshipping Emperor Nero as a god. The inhabitants of the city were intensely proud of their Roman citizenship. They felt no need for God. The inscription above the gate archways of the city read: 'No unrecognised religion allowed in this city by order!' This really meant only man-made, pagan, idolatrous worship, designed and approved by Rome, was permitted.

Yet, despite this, the Holy Spirit was preparing the way for the Gospel in Philippi through the ministry of prayer. In Philippi there was a gathering of like-minded people, who could be described as seekers of 'The Way'. Because of the ban they were ordered to meet outside the city. Prayer meetings to God were not approved of by men here, but they were certainly approved of and blessed by God. God is building His Church '*and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it*' (*Matthew 16.18*). God works where He will! Remember this when it seems the barriers against the Gospel in a humanistic, godless society are huge. God, in the power of His Holy Spirit, deigns to work according to His sovereign grace, and applies the Gospel.

So God called Paul to go to Macedonia through a vision. Together with Silas he immediately obeyed (*Acts 16.9-10*). God blessed the ministry and sinners from all walks of life were saved. There is great encouragement here.

- Wealthy business woman Lydia came to the city for earthly treasure, but found spiritual treasure and was converted!

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 1*

- A poor slave girl, used and abused by her owners for monetary gain, was confronted by Paul, was healed and converted!
- The tough jailor, proud of his strength and cruelty, having a heart as hard as granite, was softened and converted!

So it was that a New Testament Church was formed in Philippi and grew according to God's amazing grace. While imprisoned, Paul wrote with a pastoral heart to this church at Philippi, desiring their spiritual growth.

### **Purpose**

We will notice a number of reasons for writing as we progress through the letter, but I suggest a main theme: Paul taught the secret of living a contented Christian life in the midst of a persecuting, pagan, secular society.

*'Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content' Philippians 4.11.*

Paul's answer is found in a Christ-centred approach to life which engages the mind and the heart.

*'Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus' Philippians 2.5.*

*'Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!' Philippians 4.4.*

Paul taught that it is possible to find peace and contentment in the midst of a materialistic, anti-God world. He wrote to encourage believers to exercise their God-given faith in obedience to His Word and in willing service to the Lord Who had redeemed them at great cost.

*'Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure' Philippians 2.12-13.*

Paul's guidance is opposite to today's humanistic philosophy of life,

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter*

which is encroaching into Christian thinking. It is nothing to do with ‘mind over matter’, positive thinking, positive self-image, or covering up the cracks. Paul realised that it is absolutely impossible to find contentment without dealing with root problem of sin. It is only in Christ a sinner can find, know and experience a peace which surpasses all understanding (*Philippians 4.6-7*).

Paul also shows in this letter that in Christ we find the secret of real joy whatever our circumstances. Happiness in the world’s view depends upon favourable circumstances; blessing in Christ rises above circumstances (*Philippians 4.4*).

I trust these studies in this letter will help achieve in us the Christ-centred objective Paul had for the church at Philippi.

### **Greeting**

*‘Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons’*  
*Philippians 1.1.*

‘*Bondservants of Jesus Christ*’: Paul and Timothy were ministering with real joy as slaves of Jesus Christ, purchased and owned by Christ – His bondservants. So they presented themselves as dependent servants with an undivided allegiance to Christ. Hendriksen describes Christ as being the Disposer and the Director of their lives. This is true submission. It means to minister with respect knowing that you are not your own. ‘*For you were bought at a price*’ (*1 Corinthians 6.19-20*).

Note Paul directs attention away from man to Jesus Christ. He is our Lord, the anointed of God the Father. We are owned by our Master, Jesus Christ, and in a holy and righteous sense are His slaves. Everything we do is ultimately under His leadership. Paul’s desire is to promote Jesus Christ as our Lord and Master at the outset. Paul wrote this at a time when allegiance to Caesar as a god was mandatory.

‘*All the saints in Christ Jesus, with the bishops and the deacons*’: (or elders and deacons). Notice here the inclusive nature of Paul’s writing from

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 1*

the outset. He continues this theme in verses 4, 7, 8 and *Philippians 4.21*. Saints are people upon whom great favour has been bestowed by God in Christ Jesus. They are set apart to glorify God and to proclaim the glorious attributes of God.

*'But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light' 1 Peter 2.9.*

They are those saved by grace – a great favour – and called by grace – a great responsibility. How we respond to being called by the grace of God is our great responsibility. We are not only saved saints, set apart according God's grace, but called to be saints.

*'To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints' Romans 1.7.*

*'To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours' 1 Corinthians 1.2.*

A saint is what a true Christian is in Christ Jesus. The life of a Christian should testify of being in Christ. We are only saints by virtue of our union with Him. Being set apart to glorify Him means you recognise in faith and obedience that your life is consecrated to God.

*Take my life, and let it be  
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee.*

*Frances Ridley Havergal, 1836-79*

The objective is to glorify the name of God and honour Him. All this is so different to the heretical teaching of the Roman Catholic Church regarding sainthood.

*'Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ' Philippians 1.2.*

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 1*

There can be no greeting or prayerful desire more blessed and positive than this. Paul is saying, 'I have no greater desire for you than you continually know God's gracious favour and love.' Grace is God's free gift of lovingkindness and favour to needy sinners in Christ Jesus. The peace of God is a gift of His grace merited by Christ for us as both a fact and an experience. This peace is an assured confidence of our position, that we are right with God, and at peace with God.

This wonderful privilege and fact comes to us by faith in the Person, work and merits of Christ. The peace of God is centred for us upon a real and right relationship with God through Christ Jesus. There is also peace as a felt experience, affecting the heart through the power and gift of the Holy Spirit. This peace actually passes all understanding; it is beyond man's wisdom and infinite in power and effect. It means heart and mind are under the control and influence of Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit: a position of peace with God in Christ, and experience of peace in the power of Holy Spirit in Christ.

*'I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy' Philippians 1.3-4.*

Paul thanked God for the evident work of grace going on at Philippi. Precious memories uplifted his heart in joy.

Notice the importance the Apostle Paul placed upon ongoing prayer: 'When I remember you I pray for you!' In other words, Paul proved his love to them through consistent, heartfelt prayer as both evangelist and pastor. With a pastoral heart Paul assessed the needs and dangers for the church, and sought the Lord to supply and protect them.

*'...for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now' Philippians 1.5.*

With thanksgiving he then praised God in prayer for their continued fellowship. The fellowship Paul referred to here is unique to brothers and sisters in Christ. This fellowship is a true blessing. It is much more meaningful than social interaction. It has to do with spiritual union

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 1*

providing mutual blessing and support while it remains Christ-centred. We must never underestimate or devalue fellowship by confusing it with social chit-chat among believers. Paul is not thanking the Lord for the church's social networking but for its God-given fellowship.

This fellowship is a gift of God the Father's grace, wherein only those saved in Christ Jesus partake. Attachment to Christ will mean detachment from worldliness. This church at Philippi had, in the sovereign goodness of the Father in Christ, fellowship by the Spirit and the Word. This included fellowship in prayer, worship, Gospel service, caring, the truth, in separation, persecution and giving. They led the way in their fellowship-support of Paul when in great distress.

*'Yet I considered it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier, but your messenger and the one who ministered to my need' Philippians 2.25.*

*'But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your care for me has flourished again; though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity. Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. Nevertheless you have done well that you shared in my distress' Philippians 4.10-14.*

Such evidence of grace and fellowship encouraged Paul in prison, filling his heart and mind with joy.

*'Being confident of this very thing that, He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ' Philippians 1.6.*

The converts were evidencing the reality of their conversion. A good work had evidently been done by God. Now Paul thanked God for a most

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter*

wonderful blessing – the divine preservation and sanctification of believers; for divine preservation and human perseverance in dependence upon Christ.

Here is true comfort. Whatever God starts He always completes. Paul calls us to holy confidence in God. This is a verse you must use in prayer when assaulted by Satan. The good work of grace is God's. He chose, He called, He saved, He will glorify and He will complete. There is no unfinished business with the Lord. The hymnwriter picks up our need of faith in this precious doctrine:

*O my distrustful heart,  
How small thy faith appears!  
But greater Lord Thou art,  
Than all my doubts and fears.  
Did Jesus once upon me shine?  
Then Jesus is forever mine.  
Unchangeable His will;  
Whatever be my frame,  
His loving heart is still  
Eternally the same.  
My soul through many changes goes;  
His love no variation knows.  
Thou, Lord, wilt carry on,  
And perfectly perform,  
The work thou hast begun in me a sinful worm;  
'Midst all my fear, and sin, and woe,  
Thy Spirit will not let me go.*

*William Hammond, 1719-83*

## 2. THREE ESSENTIALS FOR A LOCAL CHURCH

### *Philippians 1.7-11*

We now come to Paul's testimony of heartfelt appreciation for the church at Philippi.

*'Just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, you are all partakers with me of grace'*  
*Philippians 1.7.*

What moved Paul to thanksgiving here was the loyal identification shown to him by the church at Philippi. Paul was their esteemed brother in the Lord. They stood by him in his defence of the real Gospel of God. Note also Peter's teaching on this point.

*'But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defence to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear'* 1Peter 3.15.

Some were deserting Paul, influenced by the allegations being made against him. Others were deserting Paul because of persecution and because of their offence at the truth. But there were these believers remaining at Philippi who were loyal to Paul because of what he stood for. They were loyal to the truth as it is in Jesus. These were true Gospel people, and Paul's great encouragers.

They had demonstrated this in prayer, provision and love for the Gospel, and remained on the true foundation. They had remained loyal to Paul for better or for worse. Here is an important example for church and pastor. It is one thing to be identified with a popular man, but another to be identified with a man like Paul – imprisoned, despised and ridiculed.

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 2*

Notice something that speaks out loudly from this statement. This was a discerning church! Paul observed this as a sure evidence of grace in their hearts. They were spiritually mature Christians, partakers of grace, the fruit of which gave them discernment to reject error and be loyal to the truth. May the Lord grant us discernment to identify with those who stand like Paul for the truth as it is in Jesus

When Paul wrote of being partakers with of grace, he also had in mind the grace to suffer for the truth.

*'For God is my witness, how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ' Philippians 1.8.*

Firstly we must remind ourselves that this testimony is not a wafer-thin statement. Paul calls God to witness. Here we are reminded of how serious we need to be when testifying of our longing and affection. What problems we get into when do not think deeply enough about our statements of Christian affection!

What is meant here by Paul's testimony of greatly longing for them with the affection of Jesus Christ? A Christlike, heartfelt, deep-seated, inner, tender longing, in mercy and love, with sincerity, understanding and a sense of union.

What had changed Paul from the hateful persecutor to the servant who loved like Christ? The Holy Spirit. Paul as a persecutor was a driven man – driven by error and self. Now he was led by the Spirit, and was tender. Paul's affection is not meant to portray him as a man whose emotions ruled his head, or as being sentimental. His Christlike affection for the Church had depth and meaning. This letter is perfect proof of Christian affection.

The affection of Jesus Christ is a wonderful influence in a church. It motivates prayer, kindness and generosity. The deepest meaning of affection is *'Christ in you, the hope of glory' (Colossians 1.27)*, Christ living in you by the Holy Spirit.

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 2*

*‘And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God’ Philippians 1.9-11.*

In these verses we have for our consideration the content of Paul’s supplication to God for the church. There were three main supplications that Paul had for the church at Philippi, three essentials for us today.

### **1. Love**

Paul prayed that their Christlike love would keep increasing in its knowledge and wise discernment. Christian love is something which grows in its depth and spiritual maturity as it drinks in truth. We live in a day and age when the Church is teaching that Christian love can grow without the Word of God. In other words, Christian love is simply about emotion and sentiment; it has no doctrinal, foundational purpose. For example, a minister from another church in the town I was once pastoring in said, ‘I don’t do theology – I just love Jesus.’

But Paul prays for a love increasing in knowledge and discernment, a developing love that deepens us. It will mean our conversation will be helpful and valuable; love will manifest itself in discerning speech; our input will have a positive effect; we will speak as people governed by the Word, like the Psalmist:

*‘Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer’  
Psalm 19.14.*

Paul’s prayer is that their love would be characterised by wisdom and judgment in decision-making, not only to discern between the good and bad, truth and error, but between the important and unimportant. Not everything is an issue that we must fight a battle on. Love discerns what is a really important issue. Paul prays that their decision-making would only allow God-honouring practice and praise, that the church at Philippi

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 2*

would be known as faithful and consistent, not blown about by worldly influences.

*'Things that are excellent'* are those things which are approved by God. Note *Philippians 4.8*. This love would be of mind, heart and will. It means to test your actions and decisions for the good of your soul. *'Excellent'* means in a fuller, meaningful way.

*'But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way'* 1 Corinthians 12.31.

We should seek earnestly those gifts that edify the Church and our souls, leading to the excellent way in Christ.

*'By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks'* Hebrews 11.4.

Abel presented his offering in obedience, looking by faith to the Messiah. His love for God governed his choice. Abel's love was wise and discerning. It humbled him and gave him the deepest reverent respect for God.

### **2. Sincerity**

Paul's prayer was that the church understood that Christ was their Head. Therefore their words and walk must harmonise. The word 'sincere' is a strong word in the original. It means your life can come unashamedly before the light. For example, there is nothing you are doing in the secret of your home which is an offence to God. When we measure our lives by God's standard of sincerity, we have to confess we are unworthy servants. Nevertheless this is the standard set to which, by grace, we should be aspiring. We must be leading an 'open-book' life!

*'My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth'* 1 John 3.18.

With this word, sincerity can also be described as a precious metal from

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 2*

which dross has been removed. The work of sanctification in our lives is the removing of the dross to enable us to shine for Christ. In practice sincerity means that we, by God's grace, are seeking to live our lives governed by the new nature; that as our daily exercise we prefer the good to the evil and the essential to the trivial.

Paul prays that as a church they will realise the importance of their 'without offence witness' in the world. '*Without offence*' in the original means that we are not ambiguous in our walk; people know where we stand; there is no doubt in people's minds that we are Christians and Christ Whom we serve is the Head of our lives.

### **3. Fruitfulness**

This refers to the good works of a Christ-centred life. These Scriptures give us a helpful description.

*'Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me'* John 15.4.

*'But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness'* Galatians 5.22.

There is also a helpful connection to this verse in the Old Testament in relation to the fruitful Christian.

*'The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and he who wins souls is wise'* Proverbs 11.30.

The ultimate reason for salvation and service, the chief end of man, is 'to glorify God and enjoy Him forever' as the *Westminster Shorter Catechism*<sup>1</sup> puts it.

### **Conclusion**

Paul's praise and prayer to God for this church is for love, sincerity and fruitfulness, three essentials for a living, local church.

---

<sup>1</sup> *Westminster Shorter Catechism*, see <http://www.epcew.org.uk/wsc/wsc-html>

### 3. THE INSPIRATION OF A CHRIST-CENTRED TESTIMONY

#### *Philippians 1.12-20b*

We will now consider the powerful impact of a Christ-centred testimony. As we study Paul's testimony I trust it will prove an encouragement to respect the potential of our own. Paul was what he was by God's grace – God's grace has not diminished one iota since Paul's day.

#### **Paul's Christ-centred testimony**

##### **Optimism**

*'But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel'*  
*Philippians 1.12.*

Paul was in prison in Rome. He had been tried and was awaiting the verdict – deliverance or death. He was writing to an anxious church in Philippi. What was going to happen to Paul and the Gospel cause? How could the Lord be glorified in Paul's imprisonment? What was going to happen if they lost Paul? But in his chains Paul still rejoiced in the Lord and sent a note of optimism. There was absolutely no self-pity here!

Here is our first point to remember about our own Christian testimony – there is always a place for optimism. *'I want you to know'* not about my suffering, my pain or my chains. No, I want you to know God is in control. What Satan put as an obstacle (my imprisonment) is the very thing that has been used for the good of the Gospel.

*'The furtherance of the Gospel'* means God has cut through the obstacles to clear the way for Gospel. It is rather like the drill that cut its way through the granite to reach the miners in Chile to reach the trapped miners in 2010. God used Paul's testimony in prison to cut through the obstacles of Satan to reach people with the Gospel. In adversity Paul remained

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 3*

optimistic. There was a purpose in all this. Paul could serve God in or out of prison.

We see this time and time again in the history of the Church:

*‘But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive’ Genesis 50.20.*

*‘So they took Jeremiah and cast him into the dungeon of Malchiah the king’s son, which was in the court of the prison, and they let Jeremiah down with ropes. And in the dungeon there was no water, but mire. So Jeremiah sank in the mire’ Jeremiah 38.6.*

*“‘The Lord is my portion,” says my soul, “Therefore I hope in Him!”’ Lamentations 3.24.*

*‘Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know—Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it’ Acts 2.22-24.*

*‘I want you to know’.* There is great cause for optimism. The Gospel has had free course and has been glorified.

### **Evidence**

*‘...so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ’ Philipians 1.13.*

Paul was constantly chained to a Praetorian guard, one of an elite band of soldiers forming the Imperial Guard in Rome. These men were on double pay and had special privileges, and had become the most powerful body in the state. Probably at first they treated Paul just like any other prisoner – rudely, roughly and dispassionately – he was only a number.

### *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 3*

They heard him speak; they watched his demeanour; they observed his polite attitude; they heard him even giving thanks for his food.

After a while Paul's testimony of Christ began to take effect. Paul became an interesting prisoner to be with. They listened to how he spoke to his visitors – the lawyers and church members. Christ was his topic. They listened as he dictated letters to be written to churches, and would have heard the dictation of this letter to the Philippians.

They observed his demeanour, his gracious manner and his polite communication with his captors. They would have noticed how many times he prayed and his constant reference to the Word of God. They themselves became captivated, not by chains but by the Gospel. To be with Paul meant hearing about Christ. Paul and his testimony of Christ became the discussion point of the guards.

*'All the saints greet you, but especially those who are of Caesar's household' Philippians 4.22.*

These men understood there could be only one reason why this gracious, meek and honest man was in prison: it was not because of any crime he had committed but simply because of his committed belief in Christ.

*'It has become evident'.* Because Paul focused upon Christ in his testimony, Christ in the end was praised. How different it would have been if Paul had been full of self-pity in prison, feeling hard- done-by. But he saw it as an opportunity. The Word of God was not bound in prison. Paul's testimony in captivity proclaimed Christ and the Gospel.

As an illustration, I knew of two aged believers, both now in Glory, who lived in the same village, and who both had the same care visitor. One of the ladies maintained a wonderful testimony in suffering. Sadly, the other was always complaining. In the end the nurse swapped her calls so she tended the optimistic old lady last. Her testimony spoke!

From Paul we learn that in times of adversity people are watching us. Our testimony can make a difference.

## ***Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 3***

### **Inspiration**

*‘...and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear’ Philippians 1.14.*

Before Paul’s imprisonment there had been among many a fear of their adversaries. At his defence no one had been at Paul’s side; all had deserted him. It was just him and his Lord in Rome. But Paul’s testimony in prison inspired renewed confidence. The Lord had sustained Paul wonderfully.

*‘I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me’ Philippians 4.13.*

That same faith in Jesus Christ was now being put to good use outside the prison in Rome by others. There was now a boldness among the brethren in the Lord to preach Christ, whatever the cost. Paul’s testimony had a great influence. The result was that the Gospel became the topic of conversation without restraint. The church was focused again. It all came about when the key man was put in prison and bound, but considered the trial as an opportunity.

From Paul we learn that inspiration to serve and to be bold must come from the leaders.

### **Making known the name of Christ the key objective**

*‘Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from goodwill. The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains; but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defence of the gospel. What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice’ Philippians 1.15-18.*

To understand the next verses accurately we need to put them in their proper context.

### *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 3*

Verse 15: The impact of the Gospel under the inspiration of Paul's testimony stirred up a number of preachers in Rome. Before this period a number of them had become lethargic and lacked conviction in preaching the Gospel. Paul's influence stirred them up and embarrassed them in their lethargy. They became envious and jealous of Paul, so they were goaded into action to preach the Gospel, but did so with resentment towards Paul.

Verse 16: Others picked up on the increasing impact of the Gospel and wanted to be part of the action. They lacked sincerity, and in fact were opposed to Paul and resented his authority, even in prison. They thought that by preaching the actual Gospel insincerely for gain, Paul would be stressed and frustrated by his chains.

Verse 17: Still others had a love that discerned and recognised Paul's defence of the Gospel. These preachers loved Christ and preached the Gospel inspired by Paul's true testimony and his Gospel arguments. They knew Paul was *'appointed'* (set in his firm belief in the Gospel), this word depicting a fixed purpose.

*"Then Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, "Behold, this Child is destined [appointed] for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against" Luke 2.34.*

Veres 18: Paul rejoices that the actual Gospel is being preached. Sincerely or insincerely, the message is going out. Paul is not saying they are preaching another Jesus or a different Gospel, but that they had truth in their heads, not in their hearts.

The issue here is that, while all were proclaiming the true Gospel, not all were doing so out of right motives. But Paul was determined to rejoice in the fact that Christ was being preached. He was not discouraged by the unworthy motives. While he recognised the problem, he was not overwhelmed or stressed by it. 'I will rejoice; Christ is preached.' Christ was being brought to the attention of thousands upon thousands in Rome. The Gospel action was on!

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 3*

I know of a man who used to stand outside a church with a board hanging from his neck with a text on it. This brother knew his aggressive style was not the image the church wanted to portray, yet he continued. However, in the end the leaders just let him do it. It was the Word of God and in that they rejoiced.

From Paul's testimony of rejoicing we learn the importance he put on getting Christ known by preaching. He would never condone heretical preaching, but he did rejoice that the Gospel message was going out.

### **Christ-centred confidence**

*'For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed'*  
*Philippians 1.19-20a.*

Paul realised the day of decision about his case was getting closer. It would be deliverance whatever the outcome: either deliverance to serve Christ here on earth, or deliverance to glorify Christ in Heaven. This is the Christian's unique hope.

Paul looked to the future with optimism and hope whatever. Meanwhile the Gospel was gathering pace in Rome. He rejoiced in each daily report. He reminded himself of his utter dependence upon prayer and the Spirit of Christ. He recognised the precious value of intercessory prayer – your prayer, praying for the persecuted.

*'Remember the prisoners as if chained with them—those who are mistreated—since you yourselves are in the body also'* Hebrews 13.3.

Paul wrote of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, referring to the Holy Spirit through Whom Christ ministers to us. Christ said He would send the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, Who would minister to us of Christ as His channel of blessing.

The Spirit of Jesus Christ in Paul meant the Holy Spirit working in him conforming him to be Christlike. Paul would need real grace to persevere,

## ***Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 3***

but he could do all things through Christ Who strengthened him (*Philippians 4.13*). But it seems to me that Paul is also making reference here to following the example of Christ in suffering.

*‘...who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously’ 1 Peter 2.23.*

The same Spirit which sustained Jesus Christ in His witness, ministry and suffering here on earth is the same Spirit in us Who will mould us according to the Person of Christ and His way.

Paul’s Christlike witness in prison had such an effect for the good of the Gospel. Looking ahead he had dedicated expectation, a certain hope not in himself but in the keeping power of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit would bountifully supply, aiding him in his time of need and helping him to maintain a good witness.

From Paul’s testimony we learn the importance of understanding where our resources come from.

### **Christ-centred boldness**

*‘...but with all boldness’ Philippians 1.20b.*

‘I shall not be put to shame but will experience all boldness because my dependence is upon the Lord.’ This is like the boldness of the first rescuer going down to rescue the miners in Chile trusted in the capsule, who was also the last one out!

There is such a thing as a Holy-Spirit-given boldness which we are encouraged to exercise in our lives.

*‘Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marvelled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus’ Acts 4.13.*

*‘And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness’ Acts 4.31.*

### ***Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 3***

*'In whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him' Ephesians 3.12.*

*'For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus' 1 Timothy 3.13.*

*'Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus' Hebrews 10.19.*

From Paul's testimony we learn the importance of exercising a boldness which has its confidence in Christ.

## 4. PAUL'S CHRIST-CENTRED TESTIMONY (2)

### *Philippians 1.20c-26*

We continue considering some further characteristics of Paul's Christ-centred testimony.

#### **Christ-centred glory**

*'...as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death' Philippians 1.20c.*

Paul continues by reminding us of the best inner motive any person can have in this world – that Christ will be magnified in his body (meaning his entire personality) both in life and in death. What Paul means in its full depth is that Christ will take over his whole being, his Christ-centred personality, that Christ should appear increasingly glorious through his sufferings, even to death.

When writing to the church at Thessalonica Paul explained the nature of his prayer for them.

*'Therefore we also pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power, that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ' 2 Thessalonians 1.11-12.*

His prayer centred on this subject of Christ being magnified, but here he uses an even stronger term – glorified. I would again like to draw your attention to the power and fruit of intercessory prayer. In *Philippians* the church was interceding in prayer for Paul: the result was Christ magnified (verses 19-20). In *2 Thessalonians* Paul, Silvanus and Timothy were interceding in prayer for the church: the result was Christ glorified.

## ***Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 4***

Here is the ultimate desire for any Christian – that Christ might be magnified in their body. Paul had this most precious desire, that whatever happened to him, deliverance or death, Christ would appear more glorious in the estimation of believers. This is the testimony of a servant of Christ. Here was the Apostle Paul chained, having lost his freedom physically, but not spiritually. In such a seemingly impossible situation, through testimony and prayer, Christ was being magnified!

From Paul's testimony we see Christ magnified in our own body will always glorify His name wherever we are.

### **Christ-centred future**

*'For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain' Philippians 1.21.*

Here is the assured motto of the Christian – a purpose in life and a purpose in death. To help us understand what Paul means when he says 'to live is Christ' we need to look at other verses.

- His source of strength is in Christ: *'I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me' Philippians 4.13.*
- His inspiration for lifestyle is in Christ:

*'Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father' Philippians 2.5-11.*

- His holy ambition was to know Christ:

*'Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the*

## ***Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 4***

*knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ' Philippians 3.8.*

- His hope of righteousness was in Christ:

*'...and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith' Philippians 3.9.*

- His reason for rejoicing was in Christ:

*'Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!' Philippians 4.4.*

- His purpose of life was in Christ:

*'...and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again' 2 Corinthians 5.15.*

*'I have been crucified with Christ; 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 gave Himself for me' Galatians 2.20.*

If you were to examine all the positive statements of the world not one could match this for quality of hope.

From Paul's testimony we learn the importance of having a Christ-centred purpose for the future in life or death.

### **Christ-centred decision**

*'But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit for my labour, yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. For I am hard pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ which is far better' Philippians 1.22-23.*

Of course, Paul knew that it was actually God's will that must be done in his life as God's servant. In prison Paul was weighing up the two possible

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 4*

outcomes – deliverance or death. Which would he choose? Whatever he chose would either be a Christ-centred fruit for others or a Christ-centred blessing for himself. If he thought just for himself it would be better now to go to Glory. His longing for Glory pressed hard on him, but a great pastoral burden for the churches also pressed hard upon him. There was much yet to be accomplished.

Paul knew the day of reckoning was fast approaching. In a crisis consider how positive are the two options! In a way Paul was positioned between two blessings. Either way it would turn out for the glory of God.

Now consider for a moment an unbelieving prisoner facing a similar crisis to Paul, awaiting the verdict. He also would be in prison contemplating the future. Sadly he would not be between two blessings but two curses. Would he be able to return to his sinful life in the darkness for a time, or would he enter into eternal darkness? If he lived on as an unbeliever he would remain in spiritual darkness. If he was to die, he would enter eternal darkness.

You may be facing a crisis in your own life. What are you between? Two blessings or two curses? Jesus Christ came to this world as Saviour to deliver sinners from the cursed way to the blessed way. When we follow Him we enter a pathway of great spiritual blessing, a way that leads to Glory and Heaven. The future is assured and secure. Whether we live or die, we are in Christ. We live to serve Him and die to praise Him! Heaven is our home, our destination. We are walking as pilgrims on a journey to our eternal home in Heaven.

Two men in a town were suddenly taken ill with severe heart attacks. One was a believer, the other an unbeliever. Both men were in Casualty at the local hospital, facing a never-ending eternity. The men made totally different statements to the Consultant. The unbeliever in fear said, ‘Don’t let me die! I don’t want to leave home.’ His life was completely time-bound. The believer said to the same Consultant, ‘I do not fear the future. I am going home.’ He had an eternal hope. In death humanity is divided

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 4*

into two groups. We are either leaving home, or going home. When facing a crisis in our lives, which is a matter of life and death to us, are we at peace like the second man?

Paul is hard pressed. He sees the need around him but also desires glory in Heaven! One way would mean blessing through suffering, the other would mean blessing without suffering. Paul's dilemma epitomises what is true in measure for every Christian in a crisis. In the end Paul decided for the church and not for himself.

*'Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you. And being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith' Philippians 1.24-25.*

Paul's opinion by faith was that he would be delivered to serve and to bear more fruit for the glory of God. But in this hope of deliverance, he had a clear objective for his future ministry – the progress and joy of faith of believers.

'Progress' is the same word translated as 'furtherance' in verse 12. In other words, the Christian life is best characterised by constantly making progress – pressing on. Paul saw his ministry very much as inspiring Christians in zeal and endeavour, and in service for the Lord. He understood that Christian joy is most often experienced by Christians living wholeheartedly for the Lord. The point for us to remember here is Paul's objective to inspire progression, though not in a mechanical manner.

'Joy of faith': together with progression Paul's objective in pastoral ministry was to inspire the fruit of the joy of faith. What is 'joy of faith'? It is an assurance that rests solely upon the Person and work of Jesus Christ the Lord.

*To know my Jesus crucified,  
By far excels all things beside;  
All earthly good I count but loss,  
And triumph in my Saviour's cross.*

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 4*

*Knowledge of all terrestrial things  
Ne'er to my soul true pleasure brings;  
No peace, but in the Son of God;  
No joy, but through His pardoning blood.  
O could I know and love Him more,  
And all His wondrous grace explore,  
Ne'er would I covet man's esteem,  
But part with all, and follow Him.*

*Richard Burnham, 1749-1810*

Paul prayed for the church at Rome that they would experience joy and peace in believing (*Romans 15.13*). You know how Paul says later in *Philippians*, 'Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!' (*Philippians 4.4*). The point for us here is the link Paul made between progression and joy. Regression often leads to spiritual depression, whereas progression always leads to spiritual joy. Yet the way we progress in our spiritual life to experience the joy of faith is often by way of trial.

*'My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing' James 1.2-4.*

*Lord, may I bear my every loss;  
Be patient under every cross;  
Never may I my Saviour blame,  
Though I'm despised for His dear name.  
Thus make me willing, glorious Lamb,  
To suffer all things for Thy name;  
At last to where Jesus is,  
And rise to everlasting bliss.*

*Richard Burnham, 1749-1810*

## ***Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 4***

*'That your rejoicing for me may be more abundant in Jesus Christ by my coming to you again' Philippians 1.26.*

When I visit you again after such a trial, your pleasure in seeing me again will redound to the glory of Christ.

# 5. LIVING ON EARTH AS CITIZENS OF HEAVEN

## *Philippians 1.27-30*

We have been considering the Christ-centred characteristics of Paul's testimony. Now we consider lifestyle commands for our Christian conduct here on earth, as citizens of Heaven.

### **1. Christian citizenship**

*'Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ' Philippians 1.27a.*

The word 'conduct' in the original actually has a wider meaning of 'citizenship'. Believers conduct their life here on earth, yet as a citizen of Heaven, their true home.

The Romans by nature were intensely proud of their Roman citizenship. It was a passport to benefits and liberty. Yet converted Romans, now Christians, had a higher citizenship as children of God whose home is Heaven. Their real liberty was a spiritual one. Their aspirations had changed – they were following a new manual of life. Therefore they had to conduct themselves accordingly living by God's standard.

So here Paul reminded the church at Philippi that their new code of conduct was the Gospel of Christ. Walk worthy of this Gospel: have a God-honouring lifestyle in Philippi city, even in the midst of persecution. Their conduct as Roman citizens must be lived in the context of their Gospel calling. Hendriksen said theirs should be:

*'...a manner of life that befits a citizen soldier who belongs to the kingdom and army of Jesus Christ. Naturally good citizens of the realm of Christ will also be good citizens of the Roman realm.'*

Paul said to the believers, 'Whether I am present or absent the Gospel of Christ is to be your standard of life.' The Gospel of Christ is to be our

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 5*

mindset, our way of life, our outlook on life and the guiding principle of life. The Gospel of Christ is to be the lens through which we view the world and how we relate to it in our lifestyle.

Notice how Paul mentions the Gospel twice in this verse and no less than six times in this one chapter. It behoves us then to pause at this point and remind ourselves of what is meant by ‘the Gospel.’ Originally the ‘God-spell’, it means God’s story in which He tells us faithfully and truly of what He has done to save sinners. It is God’s good tidings to this world – what He has done in Christ for helpless, hell-deserving sinners.

The Apostle Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, defined it perfectly in *1 Corinthians 15.1-4*.

*‘Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.’*

Paul’s clear objective was to live a life worthy of the Gospel of Christ. He called the Church to the same way of life. He was a Roman citizen, but governed by higher, heavenly citizenship living as an ambassador, loyal to Christ. The point here is that citizens of Heaven are not to hide away, but conduct themselves as lights shining on the earth.

Walking worthy of the Gospel of Christ is in reality to be walking in the Spirit; only then can we be Christlike.

*‘But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit’ Galatians 5.22-24.*

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 5*

*Ye souls, redeemed with blood,  
And called by grace divine,  
Walk worthy of your God  
And let your conduct shine;  
Keep Christ, your living Head, in view,  
In all you say, in all you do.*

*William Gadsby, 1773-1884*

Paul then helps us by expanding on his theme of walking worthy of the Gospel of Christ. He gives us two excellent principles which relate specifically to believers walking together in the local church.

### **Christian unity**

*‘So that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel’ Philippians 1.27b.*

‘Stand in one spirit, with one mind’ – striving together unitedly for the truth as it is in Jesus, the Gospel of God. Here we learn how we stand is so important for us. There are those brethren in UK who are putting great emphasis upon ‘what we do’ or what ‘we do not do’. There is undoubtedly an important and vital place for warning. Biblical standards must be maintained! However, at the same time, there is a danger that Satan comes through the back door to hinder us in another way.

Paul says, ‘Stand in unity, in the right spirit, with a Christ-centred mind and purpose.’ The way we stand is vital! We can do the right thing in a wrong way. Worldliness can be defined as not being Christlike in our attitude. Satan will be happy if Christians stand for truth arrogantly, proudly, judgmentally, hypocritically or in a ‘holier-than-thou’ way. Reformed doctrine and reverent worship are not the only criteria to godly living. I have known churches that hold to these yet they are divided, hard, have no concern for the lost and spend time criticising and judging others. This is worldly! See Satan coming through the back door, tempting us to be

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 5*

selective about what we consider to be worldly. Remember it includes bitterness, hardness, lack of love and legalism. These are just different forms of worldliness, and not Reformed practice!

Paul teaches us a better way. Paul says it is much, much more than holding a certain position and way. It is about holding to these vital truths as a local church with love, respect and unity. The way we stand is important. Stand firm; stand with tenacity; stand on the solid rock of Gospel truth; and stand with conviction and loyalty.

*‘Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong. Let all that you do be done with love’ 1 Corinthians 16.13-14.*

The instructions given to the church at Philippi were in the context of current, impending persecution. It was vital to stay united as they struggled in this battle. United they would stand, but divided they would fall. That was Satan’s aim.

*‘One Spirit’.* Paul said, ‘Remember first and foremost that the way you stand in battle is a vital matter for your souls, for the spirit in which you are “standing fast” is important if that stand is going to be a blessing for your souls.’ This means our attitude, our approach and our motives are to be spiritually united together – of one heart.

*‘Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common’ Acts 4.32.*

The strength of the local church in its stand for truth it is not only in what it stands for, but how it stands.

*‘One mind’.* Here Paul links the heart with the mind, reminding us that it is with our whole being that we stand fast. There is a vital need to have unified understanding in our mind of what we are really standing for. We need to be united in the doctrines of God’s grace as taught in the Gospel of Jesus Christ the Lord. Our minds must be tuned to the beautiful voice of the Gospel and trained according to its blessed truths.

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 5*

The Bible describes a united church in mind and spirit as being ‘*awesome as an army with banners!*’ (Song of Solomon 6.4). It was the prayer of Jesus Christ ‘*that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me*’ (John 17.21).

‘*Striving together for the faith of the Gospel*’. The local church is not to be a group of individuals struggling independently of one another. They are to be united with one another. But notice also carefully Paul’s teaching. The Word is relevant to the day and age in which we live! Here there is united struggle *for* something, not only *against* something. Sadly there are many Christians who only know to stand together against things in a negative spirit. But here Paul says, ‘Your battle is not only against what is wrong, but also for something which is wonderful.’ Some churches are zealously standing for truth, but critically analysing what’s wrong with others around them. Sadly there is not the same zeal to strive together evangelistically for the faith of the Gospel. That is to obey only part of the Apostle Paul’s authoritative command to the Church; standing fast but not striving together for the uniqueness of the Gospel truth; a faith in the one and only way of salvation.

In using this word ‘striving’ Paul is bringing our attention to the picture of teamwork. Take the example of scoring a try in rugby. It is a battle. After a try is scored the replay shows the build-up to the it. You can see the struggle of the whole team. Maybe there have been tackles, a scrum, a line-out, passing the ball down the line and struggling forward as a team for an opening.

Here it means to struggle together for a common purpose, a clear objective – the faith of the Gospel. In the local church it could be described as the partnership of preaching, prayer and action.

*‘And not in any way terrified by your adversaries’ Philippians 1.28.*

‘*Terrified*’. This is the only time this word used in the Bible. It has to do with the manner a timid horse reacts. In the face of danger a timid horse

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 5*

will shy away and refuse to move, or bolt away, or try to throw its rider. The last thing a timid, frightened horse will do is remain still, or resolutely follow the lead of its rider. All harmony between them is lost. Paul says, 'Stand fast. Do not be in any way be terrified, frightened or intimidated by your adversaries.'

The church at Philippi was surrounded on every side with adversaries. Note how Paul described them in *Philippians* 3.2 and 18.

*'Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation... For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ.'*

- Dogs – the name Paul used of Jews who were legalists, who denied: the all-sufficiency of Christ and insisted on circumcision.
- Enemies of the cross – sensualists who had made a profession yet denied it through an ungodly walk.

On one hand were those advocating legalism; on the other hand there were those abusing grace by sinful liberty. We see these two pressures as adversaries upon the Church today – legalism and so-called liberty.

*'Which is to them a proof of perdition but to you of salvation and that from God' Philippians 1.28b.*

Here we are reminded of a solemn point often forgotten. Departure from the truth of the Gospel has a voice. The unrepentant adversaries evidence their perdition, meaning destruction, the opposite of salvation; whereas Christians stand fast, striving together for the Gospel, which is the evidence of their salvation. The reason their undaunted courage is evidenced is because it is not man-made courage but from God. It is evident as you stand and strive in the right spirit and mind that the work of grace has been started in you.

### **2. Christian calling**

*'For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also suffer for His sake' Philippians 1.29.*

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 5*

Here we are taught the privilege of persecution. The privilege centres on its reason and connection. Many people suffer persecution in this world for ungodly and evil reasons. Here it is suffering for Christ's sake.

Paul taught here that the Christian has been granted a double blessing in this life. Firstly the gift of faith has been given. Here the word 'believe' means absolute trust in Christ alone. Secondly there is the gift of suffering for Christ's sake. The secret to this suffering privilege is its reason and connection.

It can be difficult to see in what way suffering for Christ's sake is a gracious privilege for believers. However,

a. It clearly identifies us with Christ;

b. It is used by God to bring us closer to Him in spiritual fellowship. Richard Wurmbrand, the Romanian Christian imprisoned for his faith, experienced such closeness with God whilst there that a little while after his release he wished to be back in prison to experience it again;

c. It is used of the Lord to bring about assurance as it confirms to the believer where their loyalties truly lie;

d. There is promised a great reward for those persecuted for Christ's sake. The 'great' of Christ is truly great!

*'Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven'*

*Matthew 5.12.*

e. The witness of the stand-fast, united Christians serves as a powerful witness to unbelievers.

Persecution is the greatest weapon of Satan, and yet at the same time his greatest frustration. He sets up the persecution with the hope of destroying faith only to find he has succeeded in strengthening it. We saw this in verse 14 when Paul said the brethren were bolder to preach because of his own imprisonment.

*'...having the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear is in me' Philippians 1.30.*

## ***Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 5***

Paul remained strong in the Lord, counting it a privilege and spiritual blessing to suffer. Note *Acts 5.41*:

*'So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.'*

How we stand and how we suffer is vital for a blessed witness. The courage must be from God.

### **Conclusion**

Christian conduct worthy of the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ is being resolute; united; wholehearted in our stand for truth of the Gospel; a body striving together for the faith of the Gospel; not terrified; assured; understanding it is a privilege to suffer for Christ's sake; and in fellowship with Paul.

## 6. THE BLESSINGS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF BEING IN CHRIST

### *Philippians 2.1*

Paul understood the need for the members of the church to be truly established in the faith. They were facing persecution and opposition from the secular world around them. Satan would attempt to divide and distract the church to weaken its witness and walk. So here he focuses upon two essential requirements to be established in the Christian walk: recognise the blessings of being in Christ, and recognise the responsibilities of being in Christ.

#### **An appeal to recognise the blessings of being in Christ**

##### **Recognise the meaning and purpose of your consolation in Christ**

*'Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ...' Philippians 2.1a.*

'Consolation in Christ' means to be assured in His perfect Person and work in a way that affects our walk. How we take consolation in Christ is vitally important for our spiritual wellbeing. It is consolation with commitment. The Apostle Paul is gently warning us against the idea we can be consoled in Christ but not committed to Christ.

The root meaning of word translated 'consolation' in the original means Christ exhorts us by His example. Our union to Christ provides consolation and encouragement, while His example exhorts us to obedience.

*'Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope by grace, comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work' 2 Thessalonians 2.17.*

In our dependence and weakness we take consolation in His Person, His work, His intercession and in His Second Coming. We see Him as our

## ***Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 6***

Refuge in an increasingly sinful and rebellious world. But as we console ourselves in Christ and meditate upon His example, this encourages commitment.

### **Recognise the meaning of your comfort of love in Christ**

*‘...if any comfort of love’ Philippians 2.1b.*

The wonder of the comfort coming from the inseparable nature of the love of Christ to His people!

*‘Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: “For Your sake we are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.” Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord’ Romans 8.35-39.*

‘Comfort’ means the Holy Spirit comes alongside to stimulate us by the truth of Christ’s everlasting love. How many times do we have to run to this refuge of the unchanging, almighty, everlasting love of Christ! John Owen, in his work *Communion with God*<sup>2</sup> writing of the love of Christ, states:

‘When Christ gives Himself to the soul, then He loves that soul forever. He loves them to the end. And when the soul gives itself to Christ they love Him in sincerity.’

He continues by encouraging believers in the manner in which Christ delights in His redeemed children:

‘The delight of the bridegroom on his wedding day is the delight of his love for his bride. For Christ every day we live, is His wedding day. Christ so loves His people that He sings with joy over them.

---

<sup>2</sup> *Communion With God*, John Owen, Banner of Truth

## ***Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 6***

The thoughts of the fellowship He would have with His redeemed people were the joy of His heart from eternity.

Recognising the love of Christ to us as unworthy sinners provides comfort and inspires a loyal obedience.

*'But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light' 1 Peter 2.9.*

The love of Christ exhorts and also provides the incentive and the reason for us to love one another.

*'As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love' John 15.9.*

Notice the wisdom of Paul's teaching. He starts off with our union to Christ as the platform to unity.

### **Recognise the meaning of your fellowship of the Spirit in Christ**

*'...if any fellowship of the Spirit' Philippians 2.1c.*

When we talk about the fellowship of the Spirit, it is not emotional hype with visions or a direct word from the Lord. Paul is not calling us to mystical experiences but to be mindful of the fruitful influences of the Spirit in you.

*'However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you' John 16.13-14.*

What are the fruitful influences of the Spirit? The Spirit of truth will guide you into the truth about God and the truth about yourself in conviction. The Spirit of truth will guide you into the truth about salvation and the truth about Jesus Christ as Saviour. The Spirit of truth will guide you in the truth about the Person, Lordship, glory and suitability of Jesus Christ. The Spirit of truth will guide you into the Word of God that He has inspired,

## ***Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 6***

and mould your life accordingly. This is how we must understand the fellowship of the Holy Spirit working in us in a personal way. Fellowship of the Spirit in practice in the local church means we bear the fruit of the Spirit.

*‘But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another’ Galatians 5.22-26.*

Recognise the awesome depth of what is really meant by this Spirit-led fellowship; it unites us to God the Father and the Son. The Puritan John Owen again:

‘Christians in those days were poor and despised. Christian leaders were treated as the filth of the world. So to invite people to become Christians to join in their fellowship and to enjoy precious things they enjoyed seemed to be the height of foolishness. What good thing will we get if we join up with these Christians? Are they inviting us to share in their troubles? Do they want us to be persecuted, reviled, and scorned and to suffer all kinds of evils? Yet not withstanding all the disadvantages their fellowship lay under from a worldly point of view. In truth it was actually very honourable, glorious and desirable. “For truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.”’

So it is that, when we speak of fellowship in the church, it is only meaningful if it is fellowship of the Spirit.

### **Recognise the meaning of the affection and mercy in Christ**

*‘...if any affection and mercy’ Philippians 2.1d.*

Here Paul is reminding us that the mercy of Christ to sinners is heartfelt and tender and in no way begrudging. Be inspired in your relationships because of God’s wonderful tender mercy to you in Christ.

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 6*

*'Through the tender mercy of our God, with which the Dayspring from on high has visited us' Luke 1.78.*

*'But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us' Ephesians 2.4.*

*'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ' 2 Corinthians 1.3-5.*

The mercy of Christ is not like a legal transaction whereby God lets us off the hook, but it is tender mercy. As the hymnwriter said:

*He saw me ruined in the fall,  
Yet loved me notwithstanding all;  
He saved me from my lost estate;  
His lovingkindness, O how great!*

*Samuel Medley, 1738-99*

Paul encourages us to consider the amazing affection and mercy in Christ towards us needy sinners. He does this to inspire affection and mercy in our actions and attitude towards others. Sadly, by nature we do not always delight in mercy, and when we do show mercy it is not always tender. For example, read the parable of the forgiven servant who then throttled the man who owed him money, putting him in prison (*Matthew 18.21-35*).

Value the tender mercy in Christ and show mercy.

*'Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful' Luke 6.36.*

Charles Hodges said: 'The real test of the genuineness of any inward affection is not so much the character of the feeling as it reveals itself in the consciousness, as the course of action to which it leads.' It is this burden of action that Paul develops in the following verses.

# 7. THE BLESSINGS OF BEING IN CHRIST, LEADING TO FRUITFULNESS IN CHRIST

## *Philippians 2.2-4*

### **An appeal for fruitfulness because of union with Christ**

*‘...fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others’ Philippians 2.2-4.*

Paul is saying, ‘I will be fulfilled with joy in my pastoral heart if your union with Christ bears fruit in a Christlike manner.’ Note the words of John the Baptist.

*‘He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled’ John 3.29.*

The voice of the Bridegroom brings light, hope and fruitfulness.

Paul had received from the church a generous gift, demonstrating their love and affection to him (*Philippians 4.18*). Having received kindness humanly speaking one would have expected him to go easy and only praise them. The church at Philippi had a good reputation. It stood for the truth and the people gave sacrificially of their time and money. But Paul still appeals to them to examine themselves properly, sincerely and thoroughly according to Christ. Otherwise the church would develop into an outer shell with little Christlikeness or spirituality on the inside.

Paul says the fruitfulness of their union with Christ should evidence itself in a threefold manner: in harmony, humility and helpfulness, a three-stranded cord which is not easily broken.

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 7*

### **Harmony**

*'...fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind' Philippians 2.2.*

'Like-minded' means to think the same thing, to be on the same wave length and Christ-centred in focus. It means here to build and work together on the same Christ-centred foundation of faith, doctrine and practise. It works like a music pitch fork. If all attune themselves to the same note given by the pitch fork, harmony will follow.

'Having the same love' refers to Christ-centred love which is of a spiritual nature and unique to a believer.

*'Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another' 1 John 4.7-11.*

'Being of one accord' means our objectives, aims, affections and sentiments are to be Christ-centred.

*When is it Christians all agree,  
And let distinctions fall?  
When, nothing in themselves, they see  
That Christ is all in all.*

*Joseph Hart, 1712-68*

'Being of one mind' is the same as like-minded, only more forceful. Unity is being further emphasised.

*'I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me' John 17.20-21.*

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 7*

### **Humility**

*‘Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself’*  
*Philippians 2.3.*

‘*Let nothing be done*’. This is an exhortation in the context of our thinking, our minds being guarded – see also references to the mind in verses 2 and 5.

‘*Selfish ambition*’ is the habit of ensuring your personal aims are met, even if it has to be through strife. It means having a mindset tendency to faction. It can also have the meaning of serving in the church doing things that may be right but in the wrong spirit. It could mean a person who is resorting to whispering, intrigue and deceit to selfishly get their own way. This ultimately undermines the ministry or discourages those faithfully committed to the work of church.

‘*Conceit*’ includes actions motivated only by selfish interests or to bring attention to oneself and promote oneself. The word in the original has a very powerful meaning – to worship oneself or idolise oneself in a vain manner. For example, I read of a young teenage girl who ran up a £1700 texting bill by voting for herself in a beauty contest! Paul says there is absolutely no place in the local church for vanity. Vanity is empty worthless.

‘*Lowliness of mind*.’ The alternative to selfish ambition and deceit is a humble mindset.

*‘And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted”’* Matthew 5.1-4.

Only as we have an accurate, sober appreciation of ourselves can we esteem others better than ourselves. Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones said,

‘I sometimes think that the very essence of the whole Christian position and the secret of a successful spiritual life is just to realise two

## ***Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 7***

things. I must have complete, absolute confidence in God and no confidence in myself.

### **Paul's estimation of himself**

*'For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God' 1 Corinthians 15.9.*

This statement was made during his third missionary journey.

*'To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ' Ephesians 3.8.*

*'This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief' 1 Timothy 1.15.*

John Calvin said: 'Humility is the beginning of true intelligence.'

Thomas Watson said: 'The right manner of growth is to grow less in one's own eyes.'

God gives grace to the humble (*James 4.6*). This means to recognise the gifts in others, to be willing to take second place especially when it is recognised God is equipping another. This is not teaching a morbid sense of failure in yourself but an appreciation of the ministry of others.

### **Helpfulness**

*'Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others' Philippians 2.4.*

Here we are given one of the chief characteristics of a converted mind-set – being unselfish in our service of others, looking out for the needs of others. Paul wants the church at Philippi to be concerned about the practical and spiritual welfare of others. The 'What's in it for me?' mentality is changed to 'How best can I contribute to the needs of others? How best can I reach out to others while serving in the local church?' To fulfil Paul's joy the church members needed to adopt the policy of 'Jesus first, Others next, Yourself last' (JOY).

## ***Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 7***

Think of the four men taking the paralytic man to Jesus (*Mark 2.1-12*). Their faith was focused on Jesus. They were willing to help, willing to give of their time, willing to overcome obstacles, willing to do something unusual for the Lord and willing to lead by faith to the right Person.

## 8. HAVING A CHRISTLIKE MIND

### *Philippians 2.5-8*

Paul had exhorted the church to recognise the blessings of their being in Christ, and also to fruitfulness because of their union with Christ. In the stress of their persecution and challenges of Christian life in a pagan society they must have a Christ-centred appreciation for the blessings of being in Christ and Christ-centred fruitfulness. Only when he heard of this in them would Paul's pastoral joy then be fulfilled.

Now, as the crowning exhortation to be fruitful, Paul appealed to and exhorted the church to have the mind of Christ.

*'Let this mind be in your which was also in Christ Jesus' Philippians 2.5.*

This is Paul's supreme command which will enable believers to fulfil his previous exhortations. This means to exercise our mind, conforming it to the mind of Christ. It means to set your mind and fix it upon Christ. It is rather like the daffodils in Spring which always point their heads towards the sun. Likewise the minds of brothers and sisters in Christ should all be directed to the Person and work of Christ.

There is ample biblical evidence to alert us to the importance of this being a characteristic of our lifestyle. I want to point out key references to support the teaching of Paul to confirm its significance.

Jesus said:

*'Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls' Matthew 11.29.*

*'If I then your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you' John 13.14-15.*

*'A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another' John 13.34.*

## ***Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 8***

Note Paul's practice:

*'Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ' 1 Corinthians 11.1.*

But for us the exhortation is not to imitate Christ by looks, but to imitate Christ in our mind, attitude and action. Peter's teaching is the same.

*'For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps' 1 Peter 2.21.*

John's instruction is similar.

*'He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked' 1 John 2.6.*

Now Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, reminds us, in the context of unity, of aspects of the mind of Christ. In doing this he first alerts us to reverence and godly fear by pointing out Who Christ Jesus really is.

### **The authority of Christ Jesus**

*'...who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God' Philippians 2.6.*

As we come to this verse we need to remember we are on holy ground, dealing with awesome truths. Why does Paul specifically write 'Christ Jesus' rather than 'Jesus Christ' as he does later on? The name 'Christ' refers to the Person of the Son of God as the Anointed One Who became Man – Jesus. He is one Person, Christ the Anointed One, the Messiah, with two natures as God and Man. The divine office (Christ the Anointed One) is reminding us of His God-given authority to be Saviour. He is Christ Jesus, the Anointed Saviour, God and Man.

Now Paul moves on to teach us about characteristics of the mind of Christ, the example for us to follow.

### **The attitude of Christ Jesus**

*'...who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men' Philippians 2.6-7.*

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 8*

Even though He was gloriously equal as God the Son, He did not grasp at this glory and reality ungraciously. Rather He was willing to humble Himself and lay aside His visible glory for His time here on earth. Hendriksen writes:

‘Though existing in the form of God He did not count His existence in a manner equal to God something to cling to.’

*‘Who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped’ Philippians 2.6 ESV.*

In contrast, He was willing to take upon Himself a body, and in that body to be despised and rejected of men. *‘Made Himself of no reputation’* means that He emptied Himself. In what way did Christ empty Himself? He most certainly did not empty Himself of His deity. He never ceased to be the possessor of divine nature. His divine Being was not changed into a man, rather Christ added to Himself a human nature to be both God and Man in one Person. In His human nature He retained the consciousness of deity. He never divested Himself of His divine nature, but simply veiled it. So it is that Christ Jesus has a divine and human nature in one Person. This is Christ Jesus Who we worship. Paul’s great burden here is for us to fix our faith upon Christ Jesus, the Son of God made Man as a Person equal with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit.

So in what way then did Christ Jesus make Himself of no reputation or in other words empty Himself? He laid aside His visible glory for time. Here on earth He generally appeared simply as a Man among men, but to demonstrate this fact of His having laying aside His glory in time being veiled in flesh, Christ Jesus on very special occasions allowed a glimpse of His glory that was normally veiled.

*‘Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, “Lord, it is*

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 8*

*good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!” And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid. But Jesus came and touched them and said, “Arise, and do not be afraid.” When they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only. Now as they came down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, “Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man is risen from the dead”” Matthew 17.1-9.*

There were other special times when glimpses of the glory veiled as the Son of God were given: in His power over creation as He stilled the storm; in His ability to know what people were thinking; and in His ability to forgive sins.

But in what other ways in veiling His glory did Christ Jesus make Himself of no reputation? He laid aside for time His riches in Heaven and allowed Himself to be known simply as Jesus of Nazareth.

*‘For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich’ 2 Corinthians 8.9.*

He did lay aside for time His position of glory in Heaven. Note His prayer to the Father before Calvary:

*‘And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was’ John 17.1-5.*

He did lay aside His independence: He subjected Himself to His earthly parents. As Creator He laid aside all material ownership, and during His ministry here on earth lived as a borrower. At one time He said, *‘the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head’ (Matthew 8.20)*. At His birth He was laid in a borrowed manger. He went to His death at Jerusalem on a borrowed

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 8*

colt. He instituted the Lord's Supper in a borrowed room. At His death He was laid in a borrowed tomb.

He kept the Law perfectly, yet suffered on the cross as though He had broken the Law billions of times. *'He made Himself of no reputation.'* We grasp on to our reputation, but he made Himself of no reputation.

*'Taking the form of a bondservant and coming in the likeness of men.'* In a very real manner He took upon Himself servanthood. He was in the form of God but also the form of a bondservant. What amazing condescension! Christ's commitment to service was as strong as the reality of His deity. He retained yet veiled His deity as Lord of all. He took upon Himself humanity, becoming a Servant to all. He was willing to lay aside His glory on earth, at the same time being willing to take up service on earth. He said on one occasion, *'Yet I am among you as the One who serves'* (Luke 22.27).

*'Coming in the likeness of men.'* Here Paul does not say 'the form of men' but 'in the likeness of men.' Why is this? Paul uses the expression 'likeness of men' rather than 'form' to retain the doctrine of Christ's unique divinity. He most assuredly did have a body, a human nature and soul as we do. In that way He was the same as us. However, He was different because He was the only Person to have lived on this earth having both a sinless human nature as Man, while at the same time retaining His divine nature as God. So Paul did not say 'form of men' signifying exactly the same, but 'likeness of men,' signifying a similarity, but not the exact sameness.

Notice the way in which Paul uses the same word in *Romans 8.3*:

*'For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh.'*

Likeness, but not absolute identity. So Paul uses the expression 'likeness' rather than 'form' to retain the doctrine of Christ's unique divinity.

In addition, Christ's body was sinless, as was Adam before the Fall. This is one reason he is called the second Adam. Also Christ's body was not subject to decay or corruption as ours are, being subject to the effects

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 8*

of the Fall. As believers originally fell in the first Adam, born in sin and shapen in iniquity, subject to corruption, so they are pure and righteous in Christ the sinless One, as the second Adam, Head of the Church.

Paul is reminding us in a deep way of the amazing fact that Christ, the Son of God with supreme authority, took upon Himself a body like ours and made Himself of no reputation. What an example of attitude. Paul continues to a magnify such an attitude.

### **The action of Christ Jesus**

*‘And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross’  
Philippians 2.8.*

*‘And being found in appearance as a man’.* He appeared as a man, He looked just an ordinary man known as Jesus of Nazareth. Note *Isaiah 53.2*:

*‘For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of dry ground. He has no form or comeliness; and when we see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him.’*

The world looked on with their visible sight. Jesus appeared to them just like another man. He was most assuredly Man.

*‘He humbled Himself’.* Here we are brought to the deepest and most profoundly humbling action ever taken here on this earth. The reality of Jesus humbling Himself is characterised chiefly by His perfect obedience to His Father’s will. This obedience took Him ultimately to Calvary. God’s greatest sign of love was in Christ humbling Himself to suffer the eternal punishment due from God for the sins of all those who put their trust in Him. He humbled Himself to the extent of dying a cursed death, being crucified as a cursed person on a cursed cross. The Romans said: ‘Let the very name of the cross be far removed not only from the body of a Roman citizen but even from his thoughts, his eyes, his ears.’ He died a shameful death outside the city gates as One rejected, *‘a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief’ (Isaiah 53.3).*

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 8*

*‘Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”)’ Galatians 3.13.*

Hendriksen said:

‘While He was hanging on that cross, from below Satan and all his hosts assailed Him; from round about men heaped scorn upon Him; from above God dropped upon Him the pallor of darkness the symbol of the curse, and from within there arose a bitter cry, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” Into this hell, the hell of Calvary, Christ descended.’

It was an understanding, wise, loving and a complete obedience. It was an obedience that pleased and satisfied the sovereign purpose, will and justice of God the Father. Here we have the supreme and perfect example of what is at the heart of humility in our own lives.

*‘Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls’ Hebrews 12.2-3.*

Humility in our own lives shines brightest for God’s glory when we are willing and obedient to God’s way. The message of verses 5-8 speaks to us in a manner which encourages us to follow previous exhortations. Surely if Christ Jesus humbled Himself so very deeply we should be constantly willing to humble ourselves in our own small way. Surely if He became obedient to the extent of death, yes even death by a cross, we should become increasingly obedient to the divine directions of His Word. We should accordingly strive more and more to know in our lives the spirit of our Master, that is the spirit of harmony, humility and helpfulness which is pleasing to God.

Paul next moves on to a glorious theme – the exaltation of Jesus Christ, the reward of His humble obedience.

## 9. THE CHRISTIAN'S WORKOUT

### *Philippians 2.9-18*

Paul now moves on to the glorious theme of the exaltation of Jesus Christ, the reward of His humble obedience.

#### **The adulation of Jesus Christ**

*'Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father' Philippians 2.9-11.*

Here we see God the Father assuring and confirming to the world Who Jesus Christ really is – the glorious God-Man. God crowns His only Beloved Who had perfectly and gloriously accomplished the work given Him to do. We are shown the foreordained, predestined, ultimate reward of His having a glorious reputation, a name above every name for the One Who made Himself of no reputation!

Notice in verse 9 the words *'highly exalted'*. This is the only time this expression is used in Scripture. It means Jesus Christ has been super-exalted; in other words God the Father elevated the Son in a glorious manner. God raised Him to the loftiest heights, high above the heavens, seated at the Father's right hand. He gave Him the name which is above every name!

*'And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved' Acts 2.21.*

*'Let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. This is the "stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone." Nor is there salvation in any other,*

## ***Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 9***

*for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved' Acts 4.10-12.*

After the finished work of the Saviour at Calvary, and His glorious resurrection and ascension, the name 'Jesus' now embodies the whole glorious revelation of the Saviour with the names 'Christ' and 'Lord'. So Paul concludes the exaltation statement: *'Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.'*

Here Paul assures us that ultimately at the end of the world all created intelligent beings will worship Him. Paul describes three groups who will bow the knee to Jesus Christ as Lord to the glory of God the Father: those in Heaven – all the perfect angels and redeemed human beings who have departed this earthly life; those on earth – all human beings on earth, both saved and unsaved, will acknowledge Him as Lord; and those under the earth – all those damned in hell, human beings, demons and evil angels. The only truth that will unite saved and unsaved, good and bad angels, is that they will all cry *'Jesus Christ is Lord'*, to the glory of God the Father.

Is not our Lord worthy of all our praise? Inspired by the example of the humility, obedience and exaltation of Jesus Christ, let us follow Him as Lord. We must die with Him to be raised with Him; we must obey Him to be exalted with Him. We are not being called to follow and serve an ordinary man but the glorious Son of God made Man, most assuredly Man and most assuredly God, the only Saviour of the world. He is our Lord, He is our inspiration for the Christian life

Now the Apostle Paul develops his teaching of the Christian walk with emphasis on our sanctification.

### **The Christian's workout**

*'Therefore my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence' Philipians 2.12a.*

Here we have a 'therefore' call from Paul, meaning 'because of what has been taught before'. On this foundation of the example of the Person and

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 9*

work of Christ Jesus, and being inspired by His Lordship, humanity, humble obedience and ultimate exaltation, follow Jesus Christ as your Saviour and Lord, and look to Him as the perfect pattern for your own life.

I would like us to notice two things in particular about Paul's pastoral care here at this point. Firstly, his positive, kind and gentle approach to the church, *'my beloved'*. Paul assured the church of his loving motives. You will notice that Paul often commenced his letters by finding something positive to say about the church. Here again in the midst of his letter he called them to a committed Christian lifestyle. But he did so lovingly yet gently and assuredly, leading them rather than driving them.

This illustration shows the difference. A group of tourists were being taken around Galilee country. Having been told how the Eastern shepherds always lead their sheep, going before them to new pasture as in *Psalm 23*, they were surprised to see a man driving some sheep along a track. So they asked the guide why the change? *'That's easy'*, he said. *'That man's not a shepherd but someone hired to drive the sheep to market.'* This man had no care for the sheep only to drive them to the market.

Secondly, Paul was concerned they were living their Christian lives to please and obey the Lord, not just Paul. He realised the danger of the church following and depending upon him rather than God. Note this was the second time he had addressed this issue.

*'Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel'* *Philippians 1.27.*

He desired the same attitude of commitment to serve and love the Lord whether he was there or not.

*'Therefore my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure'* *Philippians 2.12b-13.*

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 9*

Paul exhorted the Philippians to even greater effort in his absence. ‘*Now much more*’– this is a seriously important issue. They were responsible to God to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling. What does this mean?

Here is taught the vital aspect of sanctification. Salvation is first justification followed by the fruit of sanctification. Sanctification is the refining part of God’s salvation in us as we serve Him and He prepares us for Heaven.

This exhortation must be seen in conjunction with verse 13 as this verse explains how the instruction in verse 12 is possible. It is by God working in us in the power of His Spirit, in the mind and the heart affecting the will and the actions. This is called the effectual working of God in us.

The Spirit is like the ever ready power battery within us. How dependent we are upon the power of electricity. What distress a power cut causes. All our electrical implements are dependent upon power working within them to be of use. So there can only be a true spiritual workout for us when God is first working in us by His Spirit.

*‘Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us’ Ephesians 3.20.*

We can only ‘*will and do for His good pleasure*’ when God works in us. This is effective power in harmony with effort. We are familiar with the term ‘workout’ in exercise. Here it has a similar meaning: a sustained, strenuous effort, not half-hearted or lukewarm or with divided mind like the people of Israel in Elijah’s day (*1 Kings 18.21*), but with singleness of purpose.

‘*With fear and trembling*’ does not mean a slavish, frightened fear but a healthy mistrust of self and a tenderness of conscience; a vigilance against temptation; a fear of offending God and constant apprehension of the heart’s deceitfulness taking heed lest we fall. So how is this going to impact upon our lives as the Lord’s people? There follows key aspects in

## ***Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 9***

the exercise of sanctification and its fruit in living the Christian life. The Christian life is a constant battle between the lust of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit.

*'I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish...And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit' Galatians 5.16-17, 24-25.*

### **Shining as lights**

*'Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life' Philippians 2.14-16a.*

*'All things without complaining'*. Do things for the Lord in the right spirit, not grumbling or in a discontented way. Sometimes we behave like the boy who was standing on his chair. He was told to sit down, and eventually did as he was told. As he sat down he said 'I want you to know I am sitting down on the outside but on the inside I'm still standing up.' It was the spirit of complaining that took away joy from among the Children of Israel despite God's grace (*1 Corinthians 10.10*).

*'All things without disputing'* generally means not to serve God in a divisive and wrong spirit. However, in the original the word 'disputing' has to do with suspicion, cynicism and questions that doubt God. So avoid pitching the intellect against God in a rebellious way, and tone up your enquiring mind with humility. Young people have questions. How you ask them and the spirit in which you come to God's Word is important. Remember the words in *1 Peter 5.6-7*:

*'God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.'*

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 9*

*‘Though the Lord is on high, yet He regards the lowly; but the proud He knows from afar’ Psalm 138.6.*

It is undoubtedly good to have an enquiring mind, but if you want to understand the answers you need humility.

This is also to do with the church being held back by debates over issues that detract from God’s way.

*‘Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things’ Romans 14.1.*

‘Without disputing’ means avoiding a spirit of suspicion or cynicism creeping into our thinking and communication.

‘That you may become blameless and harmless’ is to live in such a manner that if we are opposed or criticised it is for Christ’s sake not for folly on our part. So much harm is done to the cause of Christ when the world has opportunity to look on and justly pass judgment. To be harmless means to be of an undivided mind. It means to serve Christ in an unmixed manner. It means to serve Him for His glory, not ours, to have sincere motives, to be genuine people who are guileless in heart motive. Note the term ‘to become’. Paul is speaking here about the work of sanctification bringing us into Christ’s image.

‘Children of God’. Paul is writing to those who have been chosen, called and saved.

*‘But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God’ John 1.12-13.*

They are justified by faith in Christ. Their position before God in Christ is secure and perfect. However they are to become blameless and harmless in their lives and in their walk before the Lord and world. They are called to live in a manner in which they are recognised to have been with Jesus

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 9*

and learned of Him. Here we are being reminded of the Christian calling, being ambassadors of Jesus Christ, children of God!

*‘Without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation.’* The exhortation continues, meaning with God’s help to live unblemished and above reproach. People were morally warped, twisted, froward and deceitful.

*‘And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, “Be saved from this perverse generation”’* Acts 2.40

Nothing much has changed from Apostles’ day. This is still God’s assessment of the world. Much was made of the seven so-called wonders of the world. But here is an even greater wonder – God’s longsuffering mercy on a rebellious world!

*‘Then Jesus answered and said, “O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you?”’* Matthew 17.17.

*‘Shine as lights in the world.’* It is in the midst of such a generation (of which we were once part) that God calls us to shine. The meaning here is to shine like stars or luminaries, lighting up the darkness.

*‘You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden’* Matthew 5.14.

*‘For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light’* Ephesians 5.8.

*‘Holding forth the word of life.’* What a wonderful description of God’s Word we have here – the Word of life! The Word, when applied by the Spirit, brings spiritual life – eternal life in Christ. Living the godly life in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, hold forth the Word of life to them. Live it out and preach it out.

*‘Holding forth’* means to present the world with the message of the Gospel. When we truly believe and are assured the Gospel is the Word of life to this world, we will proclaim it. We will present it as the Word of God

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 9*

assured of its power, truth, relevance and blessing to a needy world. The problem comes when we are ashamed of its message, or dumb it down. Then it is no longer is the Word of life. Paul understands and believes for sure that the dynamic power of God works through the Gospel.

Calvin said: 'The Gospel is the way through which God exerts His power to save.' God has never promised to save apart from the Gospel. That would be saying we could be saved apart from Christ. So the Gospel reveals Christ, points us to Christ, and magnifies Christ. The Gospel reveals the dynamic saving power of God's almighty love, grace and righteousness in Christ. Paul believed this and was therefore assured of the significance of the Gospel. The Gospel that Paul preached is the same Gospel we must preach simply because God, in His sovereign grace, saves people through the preaching of this Gospel! That is why it is important not to water down or add to the Gospel. God's honour and glory is at stake.

At the beginning of the last century there was a serious train collision in USA. It was caused by the red warning flag having faded to orange, which meant something different. We are called to wave a red flag not a faded flag. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to apply the Gospel message for it to have any lasting effect upon our lives. But the Holy Spirit of God will not apply anything for salvation but the true Gospel. This is the '*power of God unto salvation.*'

*'So that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run or laboured in vain.'* Paul is looking forward to the end of the world when Christ will return and we will give account of our lives. For Paul it was not enough to know he was secure in Christ. He wanted to have some fruitful evidence. He said, 'Your testimony at Philippi will be my evidence that my ministry was not empty, vain and pointless.'

Such a statement was made by the Apostle Paul because he had absolute confidence in the Word of life. It was a statement made by a man who had laboured, giving himself to the ministry, loving the church.

## ***Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 9***

*‘Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved’ Philippians 4.1.*

Paul was reminding the church that they themselves have a responsibility to live out what they have been taught.

*‘Yes, and if I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. For the same reason you also be glad and rejoice with me’ Philippians 2.17-18.*

Paul expected shortly to lose his life because of his stand for Christ yet he approached such an event with hope. His death would be like the drink offering that crowned the sacrificial offering being made by the Philippian church. Their commitment and fully surrendered Christian life meant he could be at peace, even in the face of death. His ministry had had purpose and fruit; he would go to his death knowing his ministry had changed lives. The church at Philippi now served in a sacrificial manner. Their worship of God embraced their lifestyle. Paul’s death would be a cause of rejoicing inasmuch as it would confirm and seal the reality of his ministry. The church would know that if he died his testimony of martyrdom simply affirmed the Gospel, the Word of life.

### **Conclusion**

Paul described aspects of the Christian’s spiritual work for a healthy spiritual life. He taught essential aspects of the work of sanctification and how it is we exercise ourselves to godliness. We must understand that growth in grace, and displaying a faithful witness shining as lights, is only possible because God works in us.

# 10. WHAT TO PRAY FOR YOUR PASTOR

## *Philippians 2.19-30*

In the final verses of chapter 2 Paul turns his attention to characteristics of the Christian minister. He gives some sincere signs of a true pastor and some principles for members to pray for in their own pastor.

### **Characteristics of a Christian minister**

#### **Sincere concern**

*‘But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, that I also may be encouraged when I know your state’ Philippians 2.19.*

This verse should be placed in context with the previous two verses. The apostle Paul was in prison, facing probable death at the hands of cruel men, agents of Satan. Yet despite such distractions he still remained concerned for the wellbeing of the Church of the living God. In his concern he was willing, if needs be, to forego the companionship support of his right-hand man Timothy (see *Philippians 1.1*). He had a desire to find out the state of the church at Philippi and was willing to deprive himself in the process.

Here is a gracious concern and consideration for the needs of others seen in a godly unselfishness.

*‘When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He said to His mother, “Woman, behold your son!”’  
John 19.26.*

Notice then how his concern was submitted to and channelled through the Lordship of Jesus. In the end Paul realised that he was an under-shepherd of the great Shepherd of the sheep. This motivated a great and real concern for the sheep that had been placed under his overall pastoral care.

## ***Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 10***

So even as an apostle Paul recognised his decisions must be submitted to the all-wise Lord Jesus Christ. His leadership in ministry, if it was to be a blessing, must be done in dependence upon his Master.

The first principle for your pastor: a Christ-centred concern for the church.

*'Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I. Are they ministers of Christ?—I speak as a fool—I am more: in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness—besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches' 2 Corinthians 11.22-28.*

### **Sincere care**

*'For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus' Philippians 2.20-21.*

Paul discerned in Timothy the mind of Christ, a young pastor who had a sincere and genuine care for souls. He had a concern for the lost, a concern for seekers, a concern for backsliders, a concern for the lethargic, a concern for the building up spiritually of believers and a concern for the state of the church. This young man Timothy would sincerely care for the wellbeing of the church – he had the same mindset as Paul. This quality of care was defined by a genuine and prayerful concern for the spiritual wellbeing of the flock.

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 10*

So Timothy was told by Paul in his letter to him to study to show himself a worker approved by God (2 Timothy 2.15). Timothy was told to wage a good warfare against the enemy of souls as he cared for the flock of the Good Shepherd. Timothy was instructed by Paul in his pastoral care to be an example in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith and in purity. He was told to give attention to reading, exhortation and doctrine, and to meditate and give himself entirely to them. He was told to fight the good fight of faith, fleeing ungodliness and pursuing righteousness. Timothy must lead by example! So this sincere care should be serious and profitable. He must guard what has been committed to his trust.

Opposite to the testimony of Timothy is the attitude of selfishness that does not harmonise with Christ Jesus; a lifestyle characterised by ‘What can I get out of this for myself?’, self-promotion, self-gain and self-praise.

It may have that when this proposed trip to Philippi was mentioned only Timothy stepped forward as willing to go. This trip would not enhance the others’ profile; it would not be financially beneficial, and required much effort. However, Paul was discreet in his criticism. He did not ‘name and shame’ the others, but is thankful for Timothy. Timothy sincerely cared for the state of the church at Philippi. He had a Christlike spirit.

This account of the witness of a Christian postmaster illustrates this kind of care. Each week an old lady went to the local Post Office. Despite her age she was willing to endure long queues and wait her turn. On one occasion she got talking to the person in front of her telling them she had come to purchase some stamps. ‘Why wait in the queue’, the person asked, ‘when there is a stamp machine in the corner?’ ‘Because the machine does not ask me about my arthritis like the kind Postmaster does’, she replied.

A Christian minister is a person who is an ambassador of Christ Jesus, ministering of the things which are of Him. His ministry of sincere care is to be characterised by the promotion of things which are of Christ Jesus. This means, therefore, an attitude of humble, sacrificial service, to really care for the state of the church. The things which are of Jesus Christ led him to minister like his Master, focussing on Christ in the Scriptures.

## ***Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 10***

When Paul thought about who to send to Philippi, Timothy stood out as different. He had the Spirit of Christ in him. Note Caleb, the man who cared. How was he described by the Lord?

*'But My servant Caleb, because he has a different spirit in him and has followed Me fully, I will bring into the land where he went, and his descendants shall inherit it' Numbers 14.24.*

The second principle for your pastor: a Christ-centred care for the church.

### **Sincere character**

*'But you know his proven character, that as a son with his father he served with me in the gospel. Therefore I hope to send him at once, as soon as I see how it goes with me. But I trust in the Lord that I myself shall also come shortly' Philippians 2.22-24.*

The word 'proven' has to do with Timothy being genuine, having been tested in trial while serving with Paul. Timothy had developed spiritually, assisting Paul. It had a sanctifying effect upon his life. Paul knew what made Timothy 'tick'. He had fellowshiped with him and knew where his heart really lay.

It is said that a man shows his character by what he laughs at. Paul knew Timothy's tastes. Their relationship is described as that of a son with his father as Timothy served with Paul in the Gospel. I expect Timothy respected the honour of working with Paul. He was keen to learn, to grow and to benefit. They both had a serving mentality. It was in this furnace of sacrificial service that Timothy's character was proven. They both served in the Gospel; the Gospel of Jesus Christ was their purpose for sacrificial service. Timothy's character was proven in that he was willing to serve under Paul like a son with his father. He was willing to submit to Paul's authority rather than go off and 'do his own thing' like Demas.

Here Paul reminds us that character is important for a minister, not only what you know but who you are. Paul's respect for the church at Philippi

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 10*

is evidenced by his concern to send a man of proven character. So Paul in the administration of responsibilities used great discernment in who and when he made placement.

The third principle for your pastor: a Christ-centred character.

### **Sincere commitment**

*'Yet I considered it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier, but your messenger and the one who ministered to my need; since he was longing for you all, and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick. For indeed he was sick almost unto death; but God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. Therefore I sent him the more eagerly, that when you see him again you may rejoice, and I may be less sorrowful. Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness, and hold such men in esteem; because for the work of Christ he came close to death, not regarding his life, to supply what was lacking in your service toward me' Philippians 2.25-30.*

A few background observations of these verses are needed before making particular application. Paul introduces us to Epaphroditus, a leader of the church at Philippi, who was visiting him. His name means 'charming'. Epaphroditus had been trusted to bring the gift from the church, beautifully described in *Philippians 4.15*.

*'Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only.'*

However, while visiting Paul, Epaphroditus had succumbed to a grievous illness, being sick '*almost unto death*'. It is thought that the nature of his illness had to do with him being totally exhausted in the Lord's work. It may be asked, 'Paul was an apostle. Why did he not heal this man?' The answer is because any healing must conform to God's timing. In that

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 10*

charismatic era the apostles could not perform miracles at will – only in accordance with God’s will.

The Lord in mercy raised up Epaphroditus and encouraged Paul in his recovery, not adding to his sorrow. ‘*Sorrow upon sorrow*’ has the meaning here of wave upon wave, like a relentless battering in Paul’s life. During his grievous illness Epaphroditus longed for the church. In his distress he was homesick. Paul was now sending Epaphroditus back in unselfish concern for the church, having appreciated his support.

Note that when Paul speaks of supplying what was lacking in their service, he was not ungrateful for the gift. He recognised they not only sent Epaphroditus with a gift, but also served Paul spiritually. They were not able to do this before.

Hendriksen put it like this: ‘Your favours shown to me are deeply appreciated. If there was anything lacking in your kindness towards me you have certainly made up for it by sending me Epaphroditus.’ The church had sent Epaphroditus with a gift and to be a gift, and this Paul appreciated. When Epaphroditus returned to Philippi they must rejoice and receive him in the Lord with gladness and esteem. They must value this servant of the Lord who had risked his life by identifying so closely with Paul. He was a proven servant of God. Epaphroditus was willing to put his life on the line, identifying openly with Paul for the sake of the work of Christ.

Everything about the testimony of Epaphroditus speaks about sincere commitment in the work of the Lord. George Whitefield said: ‘I am never better than when I am full stretch for the Lord. O Lord, make me an extraordinary Christian.’ Notice in more detail the clear characteristics in the testimony of the sincere commitment of Epaphroditus.

- ‘*My brother*’ – sincerely committed with Paul to the faith as it is in Jesus, a standard of brotherhood;
- ‘*My fellow worker*’ – a labourer with Paul in the work of Christ in the Gospel, he was willing to struggle and to toil;

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 10*

- ‘*My fellow soldier*’ – willing to go to battle with the enemy and to stand up for Jesus in the midst of a pagan world;
- ‘*Your messenger*’ – a servant who can be trusted practically and spiritually, an ambassador of Christ and the Church;
- ‘*The one who ministered*’ – willing to serve others compassionately, as Christ washed the disciples’ feet;
- ‘*Longing for you all*’, or full of heaviness. This expression was used of Christ’s anguish in Gethsemane, conveying a deep concern of soul;
- ‘*Not regarding his life*’ – he was willing to risk his life, rather than compromise with Satan and the world.

Such a lifestyle resulted in Epaphroditus being held in esteem and respect. A pastor earns his respect and esteem through his sincere commitment.

The fourth principle for your pastor: a Christ-centred commitment to the work of the church.

# 11. OUR SALVATION IN CHRIST ALONE

## *Philippians 3.1-3*

The Apostle Paul's pastoral care involved a constant striving for a Christ-centred doctrine and practice. He had learned through experience that the church's wellbeing depended upon constant calls to this standard. Paul strove for perfection, knowing at the same time that in reality this is impossible while on here on earth. Such a reality in our walk will only be fully realised in Glory, but this does not mean we do not strive to be godly. The Christ-centred standard must continually be sought as we are to exercise ourselves unto godliness. Even in the practical concerns of life the best standards are constantly to be striven for – this is a fact of the Christian life. The quality of our Christian life is enhanced and is more fulfilling as we press towards this goal (see *Philippians 3.12-14*).

So Paul's pastoral care involved a consistent direction towards Christ-centred standards. Such a ministry involved constantly warning against dangers that are facing the Church of Jesus Christ. He had heard the church at Philippi was being infiltrated by those who denied the all-sufficiency of Christ. So Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, valiantly and vehemently goes to war with these false teachers. He reminds us that worldliness comes in various forms, of which ceremonial legalism is one.

This may surprise us inasmuch as we may think adding on some regulations and ceremony is very religious. We may think it is a sign of holiness and commitment to Christianity, a further safeguard for our salvation. But the passage we are considering sweeps away this type of thinking, bringing us back to Christ alone.

### **Paul's safeguarding policy**

*'Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe' Philippians 3.1.*

## ***Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 11***

An affectionate term *'brethren'* is used to assure the church that he is deeply concerned for them. Before he moves on to the warning he lays down his firm foundation stone – He has already reminded the church of the grand theme of rejoicing, but here he directed rejoicing to be in the Lord. It is the Lord Jesus Christ Who is your hope, your salvation and your security. Union with Him is everything! So this is the heading for Paul's safeguarding policy for the Church: *'Rejoice in the Lord.'* It is his rallying call.

Paul then explains why it is he must keep reminding the Philippians of the many dangers they faced. This exercise is not tedious for Paul, he really cares! We must see warnings as being needful not tedious. His reason for repeated warnings is for the safeguarding of the church. These are not just his 'hobby horse'.

### **Paul's severe warning**

*'Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation!'*  
*Philippians 3.2.*

Three times Paul repeats the word 'beware'. In those days repeating something three times signified it was serious. We see this pattern quite often in Scripture –

*'And one cried to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!"'* Isaiah 6.3.

*'The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!"'*  
*Revelation 4.8.*

It is a call to be awake to the danger: be alert, be on the lookout, be vigilant for those who pervert the truth! This problem of ceremonial legalism is something Paul assessed as extremely damaging to the Faith.

*'Beware of dogs'*. This refers to fierce animals like guard dogs, scavengers or stray dogs. These dogs were loathed because of their constant barking

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 11*

at night as they roamed around in packs. Paul was writing specifically here about heretical Jewish teachers infiltrating the Church. This is powerful and courageous language, considering the Jews called the Gentiles 'dogs'. Paul turns it around. 'Resist these evil teachers as you would a fierce, unclean dog. Have nothing to do with their teaching. These men are not pet dogs to be welcomed; rather they are roaming, cunning, devouring dogs to be resisted.'

*'Beware of evil workers.'* Note the danger. These are church workers inside the church yet with an evil motive! The root meaning of these workers is to be those who deceive, not helping the work but harming it. They could be described as Satan's demolition crew working hard to demolish God's palace of grace and peace. But Satan's deceit is portraying them as workers while at the same time making their evil seem right.

Deception of Satan inside the Church, drawing away from Christ is one of the signs of the end times. They add to the Gospel and fix upon it ritual that has no place in God's way of salvation by grace alone. For us it means that in our own striving for godliness we must never undermine the doctrine of God's grace. We must never embrace the idea, however holy it seems, that we contribute to redemption by our actions. We must reject such a notion as vehemently as we should reject any worldliness that detracts from Christ.

*'Beware of the mutilation!'* Paul is referring here to the physical rite of circumcision. He refers to it in a derogatory manner to show the utter uselessness of such an action for salvation. These false teachers had totally missed the point of what was meant to be symbolised by circumcision. By placing emphasis on the flesh they were detracting from what is needed spiritually in the heart – cutting away sin, separation unto God as His own special people truly dedicated to Him.

*'And the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live' Deuteronomy 30.6.*

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 11*

No amount of mutilation of the body will change the heart. It cuts away in the mind the truth of salvation. For us no amount of legalistic deprivation of the body can contribute to our salvation or change the heart. We follow God in Jesus Christ because we love God. We are saved by grace to good works, not by good works. Note *Romans 2.28-29*:

*‘For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.’*

### **Paul’s assessment of a true Christian**

*‘For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh’* *Philippians 3.3*.

The first thing Paul is bringing our attention to here is that there is absolutely no racial distinctive in Christ. ‘We are’ in Christ: there is no division between Jew and Gentile. They are one in Christ.

*‘For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation’* *Ephesians 2.14*.

Such teaching provides a salutary warning against denominationalism in the Church.

*‘But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light’* *1 Peter 2.9*

Paul reminds us that all members of the Church of the living God are characterised by three principles.

#### **1. Worship of God in the spirit**

The word ‘worship’ here used by Paul is identical to that used by the Jews for the worship. This statement and claim by Paul to true worship would shock the Jewish leaders who despised Christianity. But he held his ground. The real worship of God flows from renewed hearts energised

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 11*

by the Holy Spirit. It is not a question of ritual, robes, ceremony, ornate buildings or denomination. It is a matter of the heart and spirit. This raises the searching question of how it is we approach worship, what we ourselves bring to worship.

Many years ago an old man came into our church who was known in the local community for having mystical views of the Holy Spirit. He wrote letters on the subject to various ministers and would visit churches to judge whether or not they had the Spirit or not. This became quite intimidating to some ministers. When the old man arrived in the congregation what would be his verdict? Of course the old man quite enjoyed this type of attention. He would sit there and if he did not feel anything mystically around him, the church would be written off. On this occasion it was obviously our turn to be assessed. After the service the old man lifted up his hands and said in a loud voice, 'Where is He?' meaning the Holy Spirit. 'I can't feel His presence.' In the congregation were no less than three retired pastors with much experience of worship who testified at the time to the fact they believed the Lord was present with us as we were worshipping in spirit and in truth. Who was right? So the man went out of the building and continued his search among the many churches in Wiltshire trying to find the right atmosphere. To my knowledge the old man died without finding such a church. In his mysticism and yet sincerity he missed a fundamental doctrine of the Holy Spirit. He neglected to remember that our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit. We bring the Spirit with us into our worship services. So the old man's remarks said as much about him as about us if the Spirit was not with us in worship.

It is undoubtedly true we need and should desire to feel God's presence within us. God promises to be with His people as they gather together. If there is a body of believers indwelt with the Holy Spirit, regardless of denomination, worshipping together in spirit and in truth, the Lord is there. It is not a matter of manufacturing emotion and calling it of the Spirit. It is rather coming to the worship service in prayer and dependence with a God-given appetite for the Word, and a God-given desire to praise God.

## ***Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 11***

It is not first about the atmosphere round about us; it is first and foremost about the atmosphere within us. That is what we bring to the worship service.

*'I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them'* Ezekiel 36.26-27.

There is no better experience here on earth than the uniqueness in our own hearts of worshipping God in the Spirit. John Wesley describes it as our hearts being 'strangely warmed'.

So it is that Paul brings our attention to the state of the heart and our personality energised by the Spirit. For this to be a reality in our services there needs to be praise, prayer and preaching.

*'The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed'* Luke 4.18.

*'When Silas and Timothy had come from Macedonia, Paul was compelled by the Spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus is the Christ'* Acts 18.5.

Worshipping God in the Spirit will always be in harmony with God's truth. That is the basis and guide for our worship.

### **2. Rejoicing in Christ Jesus**

Rejoicing here has to do with glorying in Christ Jesus, worshipping Him as our one Saviour and Lord, in faith depending upon Him with our entire being. The same meaning is found elsewhere.

*'But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption—that, as it is written, "He who glories, let him glory in the Lord"'* 1 Corinthians 1.30-31.

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 11*

*'But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world' Galatians 6.14.*

*My hope is built on nothing less  
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;  
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,  
But wholly lean on Jesus' name.  
When darkness veils His lovely face,  
I rest on His unchanging grace;  
In every high and stormy gale,  
My anchor holds within the veil.  
His oath, His covenant, and His blood,  
Support me in the whelming flood.  
When all around my soul gives way,  
He then is all my hope and stay.  
When He shall come with trumpet sound,  
O may I then in Him be found!  
Clothed in His righteousness alone,  
Faultless to stand before the throne.  
On Christ the solid Rock I stand,  
All other ground is sinking sand.*

*Edward Mote, 1797-1874*

### **3. No confidence in the flesh**

How may we summarise the word 'flesh'? It literally means anything that detracts from solely trusting Christ. The false teachers were encouraging members to glory in their actions, their legalism, ceremonies and works. The character of their false teaching was demonstrated by their adherence to the fleshly rite of circumcision. 'No', Paul says, 'We must move from the "me" factor to our eternal security in Christ. It is not Christ plus what I do.'

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 11*

We must be disciplined in our response to absolutely anything which takes the wonder of grace from Christ. We must not mistake tradition for truth, otherwise the church tradition becomes our salvation truth.

In the early days of my ministry I preached at a church which prided itself in the form of its worship. For over 150 years they had used the same hymnbook and only ever sung three hymn in a service. Being naive at the time and new to the church, I asked the deacon whether they had three hymns or four. This brother replied, 'Three hymns of course! I hope we know the truth!'

Paul says we must be constantly on our guard against this danger of ritual, ceremony and tradition being truth. There is undoubtedly good tradition and good reverent worship, but these are not meant to be part of our salvation.

Remember these three principles of a true Christian:

- Worship God in the Spirit;
- Rejoice (glory) in Christ Jesus;
- No confidence in the flesh.

Paul's testimony is a great challenge to each one of us!

*'And now I urge you to take heart, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship' Acts 27.22.*

Anything that we look to or trust in secretly for salvation apart from Christ must be counted as loss for Christ. Our shipload of the grain and tackle of tradition, works, ceremony and background must be thrown overboard. In fact, the very ship which we may be sailing – our philosophy of life – apart from Christ is to be lost. In the end it just you and the Lord if you are to be truly saved.

## 12. PAUL'S TESTIMONY

### *Philippians 3.4-11*

This is the second time we have specifically considered Paul's personal testimony. In chapter one Paul refers to his experience in prison and the correct manner in which to walk. Here in this chapter we consider Paul's testimony again as he looks back over his previous lifestyle with wisdom, and testifies to the vanity of having confidence in the flesh. It had not contributed to his salvation one iota – it had done nothing to change his heart for good!

*'...though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless' Philippians 3.4-6.*

- His circumcision: Everything had been done according to the strict, historic practice and tradition.
- His family: Paul was not attempting to exalt the tribe of Benjamin. He was simply proving he was of genuine Jewish stock, of the tribe of Benjamin, an authentic Jew. He was truly from full-blooded Hebrew stock – Benjamin, a patriarch born in the Promised Land. Paul was originally named Saul after the first king of Israel from the tribe of Benjamin.
- His religion: He was a true Pharisee adhering to the Mosaic law.
- His zeal: He was renowned for persecuting the Church in his zeal for Judaism.
- His works: Concerning righteousness which is of the law, in the sight of man he seemed to be outwardly blameless. Paul was the rising star destined for great things in the future leadership of the Jewish Church, but God intervened:

## ***Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 12***

*'Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" Then the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads." So he, trembling and astonished, said, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" Then the Lord said to him, "Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do"' Acts 9.1-6.*

*'But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ' Philippians 3.7.*

There is a town in Iceland where in the winter it looks beautiful, with the snow covering the roofs and gardens, with fresh snow falling most days. But then in the summer just for a few months the same town looks more like a scrap yard. The melted snow reveals gardens full of junk and unwanted goods, a totally scruffy picture.

There was a time in his life, Paul says, when he really and sincerely thought his lifestyle was his salvation. He really thought he was righteous enough, religious, well pleasing to God and gaining credibility until the Sun of conviction melted it all away to reveal what he was really like. His problem was to count his deeds as gain in obtaining his salvation as a Jew, but he was attacking Christ and His people. God in Christ Jesus met him and changed all his false thinking. He realised God viewed him as a sinner and persecutor. He had to let it all go; it had no place in salvation. All he held dear, all that made him feel proud, went.

In reality Paul had to give up everything for Christ's sake. He had to place those things where they belonged. His whole view of salvation was turned on its head from works to grace! Instead of his works being an

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 12*

asset they had now become a liability in his thinking, a loss on the balance sheet. Now the only asset on his personal balance sheet before God was Christ.

‘*What things were gain to me*’ literally means ‘what things were gains’, what I thought I was gaining. ‘*These I counted loss for Christ*’ – I put them all in a bin in my mind called ‘loss’. The various gains I thought I was making can all be placed under the one heading – loss!

*‘Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish’ Philippians 3.8a.*

Here Paul extends those things he considered loss to all things that hinder his relationship with Christ. He was constantly counting and assessing his life and asking the question, ‘Does this hinder or help me spiritually?’ So too for us, this needs to be a constant exercise for a fulfilling and committed Christian life. My relationships, relaxation pursuits, my redeeming of the time – are they helping me to serve the Lord or hindering? It means not only a rejection of the past, unbelieving way of life, but a constant re-viewing of the present way of life.

Notice how Paul deals with such an exercise. This is totally opposite to striving for godliness via legalism. Paul’s striving for godliness is through a relationship with a person, the Person of Jesus Christ the Son of God.

‘*The excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.*’ Note the term ‘my Lord’. Nothing can compare with a knowledge of Him. In His excellence He superabounds all things. Therefore knowing Him is my greatest ambition and desire. The secret to letting go of the past or what hinders us, rests in the excellence of Jesus Christ the Lord. This was at the heart of Paul’s conversion experience. He had a life-changing encounter with a Person. It was the condescending love of Jesus Christ to Paul as an unworthy blasphemer that melted Paul down. Spurgeon comments:

‘A sense of blood-bought pardon, and of undeserved mercy, is the best means of dissolving the heart of stone. Are we feeling hard? Let

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 12*

us think of the covenant love, and then we shall leave sin, lament sin, and loathe sin; yes, we shall loathe ourselves for sinning against infinite love.’

For Paul this was amazing grace that Jesus Christ the Son of God, Head of the Church, should speak to him, should place him under the shower of His grace, love and mercy so that the sins of the past were washed away. Now thirty years later Paul’s estimation and knowledge of the Person of Jesus Christ was still growing. We can see this in the various ways in which he describes his understanding of Jesus Christ in his letters. He lives for Him, and lives because of Him. He is his Deliverer, his strength, his wisdom and his Guide; his life, his power, his glory, his security, his hope, his righteousness and his reason for rejoicing.

It is only as we build high views of Jesus Christ that we will ever let go of the hindering rubbish in our lives. In the end Paul had to let go of all things that hindered his walk with Christ, which was a painful experience.

In the book entitled *Men of Purpose* by Peter Masters<sup>3</sup> there is an account of a man called Fred Charrington who was the heir to the Charrington Brewery and entitled at the time to a weekly income of £1000, a vast amount in those days. However, Fred was truly converted and convicted of the cruel effect the beer his business produced was having upon thousands upon thousands of families. The crisis in his life came when he witnessed a husband cruelly beating his wife outside a pub after she had pleaded for money for the children. As he looked on his eyes went up to the sign above the pub and there was his name ‘Charrington’ proudly emblazoned on it! Deeply moved he went and told his father he could no longer be part of the brewery business. His father, offended and disappointed, accepted his resignation and then wrote him out of the family will. This is an example of what Paul is teaching here; letting go of past hindrances, the loss of all things, that I may gain Christ.

Interestingly, there is a very moving sequel to this in Fred’s life. Very soon after this his father was thrown from his horse, sustaining injuries

---

3 *Men of Purpose*, Peter Masters, Wakeman Trust, ISBN: 9781870855419

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 12*

from which he never recovered. On his deathbed with his family gathered round him the dying man said, 'You go out of the room for a little while. Let Fred remain with me alone. He is the only one who knows about these things.' When they were alone his father said to him, 'You are right Fred, you have chosen the better part which shall not be taken away from you.' Then father and son prayed together.

When we are faced with eternity then reality dawns. In the end it was Mr Charrington on his dying bed with eternity to consider respecting his son's position. Faced with eternity he wanted above all to be with one who believed in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord.

*'...that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith' Philippians 3.8b-9.*

Everything about this statement is centred on the wonder, beauty and all-sufficiency of Christ's righteousness. To *'gain Christ and be found in Him'* means to be in union with Christ, with His righteousness imputed to him. It means having the very righteousness of Christ reckoned as his own, Christ's righteousness from God through faith. His own righteousness, as he feebly attempted to obey the law himself, was totally inadequate and sinful. How much do we as believers value the infinite, perfect righteousness of the Son of God our Saviour? It is an unbreakable righteousness that resisted the full hatred and anger of the devil warring against it.

As the Union Pacific Railway in USA was being constructed, an elaborate trestle bridge was built across a large canyon in the West. Wanting to test the bridge, the builder loaded a train with enough extra cars and equipment to double its normal payload. The train was then driven to the middle of the bridge, where it stayed an entire day. One worker asked, 'Are you trying to break this bridge?' 'No,' the builder replied, 'I'm trying to prove that the bridge won't break.'

In the same way, the temptations Jesus faced were not designed to see

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 12*

if He would sin, but to prove that He could not sin. It is an infinite righteousness that will be good for both time and eternity, ever pure and ever all-sufficient. It is a righteousness direct from God in Christ Jesus, appropriated personally by faith as a perfect gift. It is a righteousness received by faith and imputed to us as unworthy, undeserving recipients, a grace gift.

Jesus gives us a picture of this in the parable of the prodigal son. The repenting son was given the best robe. God, the offended One, provides freely from Himself in Christ the means whereby He can receive us. He provides a righteousness which enables our forgiveness, reconciliation, peace, hope, acceptance and atonement. It is a dependable righteousness for time and eternity, no longer Paul's righteousness but Christ's. This righteousness has a profound effect upon our lives, giving us a holy ambition for life – to be found in Him! This may be proved through spiritual experience, by faith in Him, resting on Christ alone evidenced in spiritual experience.

*'That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if by any means, I may attain to the resurrection of the dead' Philippians 3.10-11.*

Here is the fruit of imputed righteousness – a longing to know more about the Person of the righteousness. This desire to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ is called 'imparted' righteousness. This is the sanctifying Holy Spirit abiding in the soul of the believer, inspiring Christ-centred affections.

Paul not only desires to be found in Him, but also that he may know Him. This means a knowledge of both the mind and the heart. We have already seen Paul was not fully satisfied with anything short of perfection. As this perfection is only found in Christ, his life's objective was to know more of Him and live for Him. It was not just a matter of doctrine for Paul, but a matter of life. He wanted not only the facts, but the experience of Christ.

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 12*

Now the question for us is, how can these things be for us personally? Knowing Christ in our lives by way of personal experience depends on us respecting God's means of grace. Once we have been converted God is very clear in His commands to avail ourselves of His means of grace. We will never experience Christ while neglecting them. This is one of the devil's myths. We may have an experience of some sort, but we cannot claim this to be of Christ if we neglect the means.

God's means of grace to us to grow and experience Christ for ourselves are His Word, prayer, praise, preaching, caring, committed service, meditation and reading sound books. In these exercises of the mind and heart, to know Christ we must be ever aware of the need of the Holy Spirit. Paul describes this as the power of Christ's resurrection working in His life by the Holy Spirit. Resurrection life is new life in Christ, a life of constant growth and discovery in Christ. Paul longs to know the dynamic, Christ-centred, cleansing power of the Holy Spirit in a deeper way in his life, so to make more room in his heart for Christ-centred living and witness. However, Paul reminds us that such a relationship means identification with the sufferings of Christ.

*'For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ' 2 Corinthians 1.5.*

*'But rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy' 1 Peter 4.13.*

The rejection of the world means being despised, mocked, rejected and persecuted.

*'So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name' Acts 5.41.*

We have to rid ourselves of the notion that Christians are called to be popular and acceptable to the world. We love to be liked, but if we are rejected for Christ's sake it is better than being accepted for the world's sake. So much of modern outreach is to do with making the Church

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 12*

acceptable to the world. Christians seem to be embarrassed, and there is little or no room for the real Gospel of salvation, only acceptance by accommodation of the world.

How different to the teaching of the Apostle Paul who desired to be conformed to the death of Christ – to die to the old way of life, to selfishness, to vanity, to pride and to be crucified with Christ.

*‘Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord’ Romans 6.4-11.*

This describes a person who is eager to be a blessing to others for Christ’s sake, so depicting the love of Christ at Calvary. These verses are to do with a total identification with Christ. This identification is evidenced in the tracking of Christ’s redemption as a pattern for life: to suffer with Christ; to be crucified with Him; to die with Him; to be buried with Him and raised with Him; to be joint heirs with Him; and to be glorified with Him, enthroned with Him and to reign with Him. It means conformity to Christ, His Spirit, temper, meekness, submission, love, devotion and hatred of sin.

As we conclude with verse 11, *‘if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead’*, we see Paul’s insistence on linking justification

## ***Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 12***

with sanctification. '*By any means*' does not mean he can add to or earn the great objective of the resurrection of the just. It means by all those means in Christ by way of justification and sanctification according to God's perfect will. The statement implies a complete and humble trust in the Lord's way of redemption in Christ.

Here he reveals the ultimate objective for the Christian, the final eternal state of the Church: to live with God in the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwells righteousness.

### **Conclusion**

We have been considering Paul's true Christian experience of trusting by faith alone in Christ alone, characterised by wholehearted devotion and belief in Jesus Christ and all that is aligned biblically with this.

He is telling us in these verses that personal growth in grace is not obtained through theological college, but is gained through walking with the Lord, and through experiencing an ongoing personal relationship with Christ.

# 13. PRESSING ON TO THE PRIZE OF GOD'S UPWARD CALL IN CHRIST

## *Philippians 3.12-14*

Having taught on the ongoing exercise of spiritual fitness and growth, Paul then describes this in three particular ways: *'I press on'*, *'reaching forward'*, and *'press toward'*. In the last chapter we reminded ourselves that the moral law as a rule of life for the believer is not obeyed by regulation but motivated by relationship to Jesus Christ.

*'If you love Me, keep My commandments' John 14.15.*

Now here the call to exercise is motivated by keeping our eye of faith on the ultimate reward – Heaven. While our walk is encouraged by relationship in Christ, our efforts – our *'pressing on'* – are encouraged by reward in Christ. Paul teaches us here that the Christian life is a life of pressing on towards the ultimate reward in Christ. It is a life of growth and development as we strive to realise more of the spiritual possibilities and potential in Christ – relationship and reward.

This was Paul's attitude of mind to the Christian walk. It was an exercise of constant discovery and growth. So Paul teaches us that the Christian life is not like laying in a sun lounger on the deck of a cruise ship. The Christian life is actually to be likened to a gymnasium where we are exercising ourselves unto godliness. We must rid ourselves of the popular Western notion the Christianity is like being on a cruise. Biblical Christianity is a life of constant exercise. Paul teaches us that this must be our attitude of mind.

### 1. *'I press on'*

*'Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me' Philippians 3.12.*

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 13*

Paul does not consider himself to be the finished article as a Christian – I have not attained perfection. What does Paul mean by this? Surely he was viewed perfect in the imputed righteousness of Christ? By faith in Christ he knew that he was saved and justified before God, eternally secure and chosen in Christ. Misunderstood, his words here could be viewed as him teaching salvation by works as well as in Christ, that by efforts he was somehow attaining his salvation. After all Christ has done, it still was down to effort! We know this is not true because Paul has already totally refuted any such doctrine; he taught Christ alone.

However, here Paul show he believed as strongly in the doctrine of sanctification as that of justification. What Paul is teaching here is the doctrine of sanctification motivating constant desire to grow in grace. He considered himself to be what is called a continual ‘work in progress’, a person being prepared for Glory. He was not one of those who said, ‘I have made it in my Christian life. I am satisfied with my spiritual condition.’ The more he grew the more he wanted to grow. The more he knew of Christ the more he wanted to know of Christ.

*More about Jesus would I know,  
More of His grace to others show;  
More of His saving fullness see,  
More of His love Who died for me.*

*More about Jesus let me learn,  
More of His holy will discern;  
Spirit of God, my teacher be,  
Showing the things of Christ to me.*

*Eliza Edmunds Hewitt, 1851-1920*

It is like going to a place of beautiful scenery and wanting to return to take in more of its beauty. When living in Wiltshire we would take a trip every year to Westonbirt Arboretum to see the Autumn leaves. The beauty of God’s creation compelled us to return to know more, see and

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 13*

learn more about this wonder. Paul had a very high estimation of what it meant to be called by grace and of the potential in Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ had laid hold of Paul not only to save him but also to sanctify him in service. Paul's great respect to the high calling of a Christian meant he was seeking to realise more of its meaning, so he was constantly pressing on in his objective of spiritual growth and service of the Lord. He wanted to realise more of the wonderful potential of being in Christ in service, as an ambassador of Christ. He was motivated by the supreme objective, the goal, the prize that awaited him in Christ.

Christ laying hold of us is already an eternally fixed reality, our assured security. However, us laying hold of Christ is a continual spiritual exercise in our lives until we finally arrive in Glory. Then, finally in Heaven, we will lay hold of the crown that awaits us – eternal life and Glory. It is a crown presented to us by Christ, a trophy of His grace. Then we will have fully attained; then we will experience the wonder of perfection; we will be the finished article.

This verse speaks to us of commitment, effort, engagement and enthusiasm, running the race set before us. It speaks of a life of constant growth spiritually to realise more and more of the wonderful potential there is in Christ, until we arrive at the end of the race and find the ultimate goal of complete fulfilment in Christ in Glory.

### **2. 'Reaching forward'**

*'Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead' Philippians 3.13.*

Notice here how Paul introduces the term 'brethren' in an endearing and kindly manner. He was writing to the church at Philippi which was upset and endangered by false teachers claiming perfection. They did this by adding salvation by works to salvation by faith: faith plus ceremony, circumcision and legislation, they said, would lead to a state of perfection. By his personal experience and belief, Paul warns against those who

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 13*

believe perfection is known by us on earth. Here we have the most experienced, deeply taught Christian believer saying, 'I do not consider myself perfect. Yet I nevertheless realise my responsibility before the Lord to strive for perfection in my walk. I reach forward to that final state of perfection in Christ when sin will be no more and the flesh, the old nature, will be eternally dead.' This is a striving yet with an honest realisation of indwelling sin. Please note:

*'If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us' 1 John 1.8.*

*'Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect' Matthew 5.48.*

*'One thing I do'.* One thing I continually have to do.

*'Forgetting those things which are behind me'.* Not recalling the hindrances of the past; learning from them, but not living in the past – past failures, past hurts, past departures, past error, past works, past rebellion, past trust in tradition. By faith in Christ forgetting those things of the past, which is a deliberate and constant exercise of the mind. This exercise is not an occasional 'add on'. It is a constant priority of liberation, not to recall what is behind me, constantly bringing it to the front of my mind, distracting me in the race.

In the Olympics a few years ago the British Relay team lost the race, even though they were once ahead, because one of the runners dropped the baton on handover. The runner receiving the baton should have started his run looking ahead with his hand open behind him for the oncoming runner to place it. But instead as he started he looked round behind him and in doing so his hand moved and the baton fell to the ground. His problem was that he was looking behind instead of in front.

*'Reaching forward'.* The meaning is of a runner straining every nerve in his body to follow what his eye sees. When we keep looking behind us and dwelling on the past we lose ground and we begin to wobble. By faith the Christian looks to the crown, the glory, the inheritance, the reward

## ***Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 13***

and the joy of being with Christ. Their resolve, their efforts, their commitment to godliness is the effect, a fruit, of what they see by faith. One of the secrets for us is to think more of the reward that is ahead of us. See *Hebrews 11* and

*'Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us' Hebrews 12.1.*

Research has shown that one of the most effective means of lifting the spirit and pressing on at work when weary, naturally speaking, is the exciting prospect of an annual Summer holiday break. How much more then spiritually, when seriously contemplating the inheritance of glory that will be forever!

### **3. *'I press toward'***

*'I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus' Philippians 3.14.*

Paul greatly respected his call by grace. He understood its meaning both for time and eternity. It was not a horizontal call, and certainly not a downward call; it was most certainly an upward call. The upward call of God in Christ means that everything about the call is heavenward and holy.

- It is a separating call from the downward pathway of sin towards hell to an upward call of holiness;
- It is a sanctifying call from the lifestyle of sin to the lifestyle of holiness, being prepared for a sinless state;
- It is an assuring call to lift us up from bondage and despair to hope in Heaven;
- It is a heavenly call to that which will find its ultimate fulfilment in blessing upon blessing being bestowed on us eternally.

Be ever mindful of the blessed positive nature of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. You are called to a lifestyle that rises about the quagmire

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 13*

of sin and materialism, and finds its hope in Christ.

The meaning is to run in straight line so as not to lose ground. This means to keep looking ahead. It is a contradiction of the despising statement, 'He is so heavenly-minded that he is no earthly good.' This is a false statement. Those who are most heavenly-minded are most useful to the Lord on earth. What is your ultimate prize today?

Sportsman say when they have achieved their ambition, 'This is a dream come true, all I ever wanted in this life.' Three months ago Andy Carroll (then as a Newcastle player) said:

'I used to watch Newcastle when Alan Shearer wore the number 9 shirt and always scoring goals. I always said, "That will be me one day!" It was all I ever wanted, everything I have been aiming at.'

Just last week he was transferred from Newcastle to Liverpool after only 18 games for a new challenge, although three months ago Newcastle was all he ever wanted.

The point I am making is that with the aims and objectives of this world comes the question, 'What then?' The prize Paul is speaking of here is an eternal one – Heaven. This is ever-fulfilling, ever new and ever wonderful. Our goal in Christ Jesus is to be there with Him. It means, 'I am pressing on for a purpose and with purpose.'

## 14. LEADING BY EXAMPLE

### *Philippians 3.15-19*

We now come to consider our responsible example in the Christian walk.

*'Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you. Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind'* Philippians 3.15-16.

What Paul describes in his letter for the Christian life will harmonise with spiritually mature Christians. They also see the point, they will themselves be committed to pressing on, looking forward and not looking back. They will also add their own 'Amen' to the doctrine of salvation by Christ alone, not Christ plus.

But note how Paul also reaches out to those who have not reached the same level of spiritual maturity. He says, 'Let us', including those who have not yet fully grasped the significance of what he has said. He does not cut them off as no-hopers, or treat them with disdain as second graders. They are converted believers, and on their spiritual pilgrimage God will reveal a deeper understanding. So let us, by God's grace, as brothers and sisters in the Lord, walk in the light God has bestowed on us. The principle is that if we walk according to spiritual maturity, with a sincere desire to grow, God will then grant further light and maturity and will bring us into deeper fellowship in these vital issues.

But whatever stage we are at in our Christian walk, let us unite around this one rule, this particular principle: in Christ alone, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching unto those things which are before. Let us be of one mind in Christ Jesus with a united desire to look to Him. May we be characterised by those who can say 'I press on', 'reaching forward' and 'press toward'. In our situation in this day and age, 'Let us',

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 14*

like Paul, unite on the fundamentals of the doctrines of grace, while at the same time understanding we are at different stages of our spiritual development. The fundamental issue is, in what direction are we looking and heading as churches?

*'Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern' Philippians 3.17.*

This is most certainly not a proud 'look at me and my righteous goodness' statement by Paul. Rather this is godly leadership setting the example of Christ-dependent, Christ-directed living. Notice how he also includes those walking with him in fellowship in Christ Jesus. A pattern has been set by Paul for Christian living as an example to follow. Remember what Paul has been teaching us in this letter.

*'For to me to live is Christ' Philippians 1.21;*

*'Let this mind be in your which was also in Christ Jesus' Philippians 2.5;*

*'For we are the circumcision which worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh' Philippians 3.3;*

*'What things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ' Philippians 3.7;*

*'That I may gain Christ...that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection' Philippians 3.8, 10.*

*'I follow after'... 'reaching forward'... 'I press toward the goal of the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus' Philippians 3.12, 13, 14.*

*'Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern' Philippians 3.17.*

Considering Paul's teaching, his words are meant to be understood as following the Christ-centred pattern: *'Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ' 1 Corinthians 11.1.*

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 14*

Notice here how Paul speaks in the plural to include those who he walks with in fellowship. He probably had fellow leaders particularly in mind at the outset: Timothy (*Philippians* 3.19-22) and Epaphroditus (*Philippians* 3.25-30). Godly leadership moves from the 'me' to the 'us' and encourages a united testimony of like-minded leaders.

Notice also the invitation to all believers: *'Brethren, join in'* with such a like-minded, Christ-centred walk. 'Join with me and let us support each other, and let us encourage each other in Christ-centred living. A life of sacrifice, renouncing proud self, not living in a spirit of self-complacency; a life of humble dependence upon Christ, not living in a spirit of arrogant self-esteem; pressing on in holy endeavour for the perfect ideal in Christ; not living in a spirit of indolence and carelessness. It is spirituality opposed to sensuality, and heavenly-mindedness opposed to worldly-mindedness.

A deep-seated, serious fellowship is meant here. It is setting a pattern for others to follow that is Christ-centred and godly that does not hinder or confuse. Brothers and sisters in Christ, what is the pattern we are setting? This is today's challenge in God's Word. Christian parents, what pattern are you setting your children? Are we putting them off Christianity as hypocrites? Our children read us like a book. What is our example? In the light of the Christ-centred example, there is surely much for us to repent of. Are we confusing those who stand on the brink of conversion who understand the nature of the call? They understand that if they follow Christ it means sacrifice, it means turning their back on the world. They are counting the cost! It does not help them if Christians are witnessing by their actions that you can have both.

*'For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things' Philippians 3.18-19.*

This issue of example was extremely serious in Paul's mind, one which led him to personal grief. It seems that Paul's wholehearted grief for the

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 14*

Lord was as sincere as his wholehearted joy in the Lord. Despite the fact that Paul was surrounded by paganism and legalism, his heart remained sensitive to sin. This is probably one of the greatest challenges we face today. How sensitive are we to sin?

We have already seen how heavily Paul comes down on the legalists. Now it is the turn of the libertines. Here the Apostle Paul refers to professing Christians who are really given over to worldliness in their walk. Such are the people that do greatest damage to the Church, professing Christians practising worldliness. Paul describes them as enemies of the cross of Christ, because hypocrites know what they are doing. Creating confusion they bring about their own condemnation and greater judgment on themselves.

There were then these two battle fronts attacking the local church at Philippi. On the one hand there were those who advocated Christ together with the ceremonial law – a serious error; on the other hand there were those who advocated Christ together with worldliness – an equally serious error.

But how may we identify worldliness? I want to spend a little longer on this issue as it arises in this passage. J C Ryle (1816-1900) once said that worldliness was ‘the peculiar plague of Christians’ in his day. I wonder what his assessment of today’s situation would be!

Worldliness among professing Christians today is the greatest hindrance to the work of the Gospel. It certainly far outweighs the efforts of Richard Dawkins to rubbish Christianity. It is far more dangerous and devastating to the work of the Gospel and the honour of God’s name. The reason is because it is opposition and rebellion from within the ranks of the army of the Church. The enemy within is far more dangerous than the enemy without. One preacher said recently: ‘Worldliness is rampant in the Church. The devil is not fighting churches – he is joining them! He isn’t persecuting Christianity in the West so much as professing it.’ Horatius Bonar spoke prophetically of our day.

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 14*

‘I looked for the Church and I found it in the world; I looked for the world and found it in the Church.’

The word ‘world’ in its evil sense occurs in Scripture in no less than fifty places. For example, in this sense we find ‘the world’ described as full of corruption and lust.

*‘...by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust’ 2 Peter 1.4.*

Believers are delivered, and therefore must be separate from, this corrupt, lustful worldliness.

*‘Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world’ James 1.27.*

Before conversion in our fallen state, worldliness is our natural habitat where we belong. But not after! Someone who has been converted understands there is something to overcome and separate from. This is the key issue here! Joel Beeke has commented:

‘Worldliness, then, is human nature without God. Someone who is of this world is controlled by worldly pursuits: the quest for pleasure, profit, and position. A worldly man yields to the spirit of fallen mankind. The spirit of self-seeking and self-indulgence without regard for God.’

Timothy, writing about Demas, shows how he failed to understand the importance of overcoming the world. In love with this present world he forsook Timothy and, even more seriously, in so doing forsook his Saviour. His testimony was ruined because his love for the world was greater than his love for the Saviour. Consider the searching words of John:

*‘Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him’ 1 John 2.15.*

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 14*

The Puritan John Brown once said:

‘It is infinitely better to have the whole world for our enemies and God for our friend, than to have the whole world for our friends and God for our enemy.’

Worldliness is to love the values and pursuits of this world that stand opposed to God. More specifically it is to gratify and exalt oneself to the exclusion of God. Worldliness in a professing believer is to reject God’s standards and replace them with their own. It is to create our own Christian walk and truth values, so exalting our opinions above God’s truth and warnings. Worldliness tramples on the very first objective of every Christian believer – to glorify God in their life. One commentator puts it like this:

‘Worldliness is departing from God. It is a man-centred way of thinking. It proposes objectives which demand no radical breach from man’s fallen nature. It judges the importance of things by the present and by material results alone. It weighs success by numbers. It covets human esteem and wants no unpopularity. It knows no truth for which it is worth suffering. It declines to be a fool for Christ’s sake. Worldliness is having the mindset of the unregenerate adopting idols and is at war with God.’

With worldliness it is vital that we remind ourselves that so much of this problem resides within ourselves! It has to do with the way we think, and our attitude to the world around us and its values! We must not forget sinful attitudes of mind and action are also worldly – bitterness, anger, selfishness, lust. I have known of older Christian ladies in one country I visited who dressed in black and appeared very godly. However, despite appearances it became evident that they were full of bitterness. It is much more than simply identifying an object, activity or a conversation, as being worldly. We will come to some examples a little later.

But remember it is first and foremost, for a Christian, a battle against worldliness within – it is an inner battle. Are we a friend of worldliness or

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 14*

an enemy? Are we crucifying the flesh and putting to death the old nature by daily exercise?

*'For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God' Romans 8.5-8.*

It is evident the issues of worldliness troubled the early New Testament Church widely. We know it was a problem warned about at Philippi, Corinth, Rome and Ephesus.

*'This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness' Ephesians 4.17-24.*

In this inner battle, theology against worldliness, it is vital for us to believe and submit to God's assessment of the human heart in humility by faith. Otherwise worldliness is downgraded to outside influences alone. Worldliness, I would argue, is first and foremost a problem of the heart.

*'For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also' Matthew 6.21.*

*'Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life' Proverbs 4.23.*

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 14*

Jesus warned:

*‘Do you not yet understand that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and is eliminated? But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man’ Matthew 15.17-20.*

It is vital that in our teaching against worldliness we start with the heart. To fail here means we will be prone to the error of legalism on the one hand or antinomianism on the other. Both positions miss the vital point that actually the first location of worldliness is internal!

Now I want us now to see in this passage how Paul drives a bulldozer through the contemporary view that because God is love He is tolerant of sin and the attitude of worldliness in a professing believer; that somehow talk of worldliness undermines our freedom in Christ and makes God seem like a taskmaster! Or it is expressed like this: we are saved by God’s grace in Christ, so we can sin without conscience that God’s grace may abound.

*‘What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin’ Romans 6.1-6.*

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 14*

Actually to be an enemy of the cross is to be an enemy of God's love, for the cross of Calvary where Christ suffered and died because of sin, is the manifestation of God's love. Worldliness in a Christian is not a manifestation of the tolerance of God's love; it is an attack on God's love! Paul warns us of four aspects to these professing believers described as enemies of the cross of Christ.

**a.** *'Whose end is destruction'*

The word for destruction here does not mean total annihilation but a punishing state of everlasting loss. Hell is an eternal demolition site! Nothing will be built or gained in hell. Better to lose in time for Christ's sake, like Paul, and then gain eternally in Heaven. Ultimately to follow such a path as Paul warns of means to be an eternal loser rather than an eternal gainer.

Now Satan would have us believe that being a Christian means we have to lose too much of this world. He tempts us into thinking that God makes unreasonable demands upon our Christian walk, it is too tough. Satan even suggests to us to have Christ and the world, knowing that such a position crucifies Christ afresh. Satan advocates a so-called conversion without repentance, a walk without bowing to Christ as Lord.

This passage is extremely solemn! It is not a passage that a minister delivers with vengeance but with tears.

**b.** *'Whose god is their stomach'*

Just on a practical note, this text reminds us that in God's sight gluttony is as evil as drunkenness. It is often characterised by a 'be good to yourself' self-indulgence in the spirit of 'give me'. It shows the lack of the spirit of self-control. It is also a phrase used to describe a selfishness, totally opposite to the Christian calling of self-sacrifice.

Here in this passage it is thought the men Paul described were probably themselves itinerant preachers who preached for material gain. They had no shame in parading themselves as wealthy to their congregations. They went about peddling their materialistic, worldly 'gospel', unsettling

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 14*

and damaging the Church. They are typified today by men on the ‘God Channel’ in their silk suits constantly asking for money, and by preachers who proclaim a consumer God, and as deceivers are really fleecing their congregations.

c. *‘Whose glory is their shame’*

They are proud of their material gain and worldly ‘know how’ and attainments. These people are more at home cracking worldly jokes and in worldly conversation than speaking on spiritual things. Jesus said: *‘Where your treasure is there will your heart be also’* (Matthew 6.21). What Paul considered as a Christian to be rubbish and waste, these people considered to be good attainment.

d. *‘Who set their minds on earthly things’*

Here is the exact opposite of having the mind of Christ. It means to wilfully set your mind towards the world. It means to knowingly walk into worldliness in your thinking and attitude of mind. Christians know better.

*‘For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be’* Romans 8.5-7.

So much modern entertainment is dabbling in the darkness, setting your mind on darkness rather than light. An example of this is computer games, the sales of which depend on increasing depths of iniquity and use of your time. ‘Oh,’ some Christians say, ‘but it’s just a game.’ Why as a Christian, set your mind on the depiction of darkness? If you have them in your house, do a Nehemiah and throw them out! It is like having a Tobiah in your house. Why copy the world as a Christian in what you sing, what you hear, what you watch, what you do – films and books that parade the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life? This is setting your mind on these things. The author of the *Harry Potter* books said that each book would get darker and darker to maintain readership. I plead

## ***Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 14***

with you not to be those who love the darkness rather than the light! Do not dabble with the devil!

*'Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them. But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth'* Colossians 3.2-8.

### **Conclusion**

Press on in holy endeavour for the perfect ideal in Christ. Do not live in a spirit of indolence and carelessness.

Be spirituality-minded rather than sensually-minded. Be heavenly-minded rather than worldly-minded.

Be a pattern for others to follow. Be Christ-centred, godly, so as not to hinder or confuse. Brothers and sisters in Christ, what is the pattern we are setting? This is today's challenge in God's Word. Pastor and Church alike each need to examine their hearts. It is not too late repent and make a new start, even in the home. Be those who lead in the Church and in the home by example. Otherwise we will have cause for deep regret.

*'I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God'* Romans 12.1-2.

Next we will be looking heavenward and anticipating the wonderful blessings in store.

# 15. BEING TRULY HEAVENLY-MINDED

## *Philippians 3.20-21*

A Christian is sometimes rebuffed by the world with the snide remark, ‘You need to get a life and be free!’ Well here, in these verses, Paul gives us the real meaning of getting a life and being free.

*‘For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself’  
Philippians 3.20-21.*

Here the ultimate nature of the Christian life is revealed. Actually it is absolutely incomparable to anything the world has to offer!

### **A life governed from Heaven**

*‘For our citizenship is in heaven’.* Before conversion the members of the church at Philippi were intensely proud of their Roman citizenship. They felt they belonged to a world superpower with a mighty emperor whom they worshipped as a god. They were part of a nation that was also the world leader in wealth, learning and sport. They had citizenship rights unique to their status as Romans and could hold their heads high in this world. All these things were very dear to them, giving them a sense of self-worth and of belonging to a great nation.

But their conversion had exposed its emptiness and corruption. They realised the weakness of world values. Now they were citizens of Heaven. They were not proud of their new citizenship but humbled by it, humbled by the amazing grace of God to rescue them from sin and give them an eternal inheritance that does not fade away, unlike the Roman Empire! History proved this one did fade away. Looking back over history we can see how foolish it is to depend upon an earthly kingdom. It is so volatile.

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 15*

A Christian is highly favoured, having a God-given dignity as a citizen of Heaven that does not fade away. The Apostle Peter wrote that we are saved –

*‘...to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time’  
1 Peter 1.4-5.*

Christians as citizens of Heaven are born from above. They are given a spiritual birth from Heaven direct from the Throne of God. They have their names on God’s register in Heaven inscribed indelibly from eternity by the sovereign will of God Himself.

*‘...to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel’  
Hebrews 12.23-24.*

Christians are governed by God, Who is in Heaven, by heavenly standards which are pure, true and sure. Their eternal wellbeing is secured in Heaven; their interests are represented by Jesus Christ Son of God. All their hopes are centred in Heaven and their prayers ascend right into the epicentre of Heaven. Their comforts are from Heaven from whence has come the Holy Spirit of God and His inspired Word. Their inspiration for life has its source in Heaven in Christ – they are no longer earth-bound in their thinking.

*‘If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God’ Colossians 3.1-3.*

In those days persecuted Christians, who were constantly looking heavenwards, anticipating their future inheritance, were forced to walk along the street as outcasts in shame looking at the ground with bent backs.

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 15*

What a comfort for these persecuted brethren anticipating Heaven to know that in Heaven dwelt the glorious Saviour, the Head of the Church, Who is not ashamed to call us brethren!

A Christian is really a stranger and a pilgrim on this earth. This is the lifestyle they are called to have. They desire a better country. This is the mindset they are called to have, to focus on the eternally better place.

We live in a world driven by people's desire to better themselves and their possessions. It is obviously not wrong to want to better ourselves in a healthy hardworking manner, but by nature we are actually enslaved to the never satisfied 'better' demands. So people get into debt. In fact, material goods sales rely upon the drive of the 'better' in life. The phone shops are full of people trading in nearly-new phones because a better is now available. But this lifestyle leads to a life of constant discontent. The drive of the 'better' is a hard taskmaster; it is costly to the pocket and never satisfies. How much more meaningful, valuable and secure is the eternally 'better' of Heaven.

*'But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them' Hebrews 11.16.*

The Christian believer joins with Paul and says, *'For our citizenship is in heaven.'* There is no depreciation in Heaven, no wearing out, no breakdown, no out-of-date, no disappointment, no getting tired of anything in Heaven. It is always better in Heaven. It is the place of eternal contentment where it always seems better and better, the place of eternal fullness. Read the Apostle John's description of Heaven in *Revelation 7.9-17*.

### **A life of blessed anticipation**

*'From which we also eagerly await for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.'* This is an important touchstone to where we are in our spiritual lives. This is speaking of the Second Coming of Christ. To 'eagerly await' has the meaning of an earnest and yet patient waiting for the Lord, being ready for Him. Are we eagerly awaiting the coming of the Saviour Jesus Christ the Lord in all His glory?

## ***Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 15***

The characters in verses 18-19 are not interested in Heaven, and most certainly not ready for it. How can they expect to be ready while wallowing in the lustful things of this world? Their minds are set on earthly things, whereas here Paul speaks of eagerly waiting for the Saviour.

Such an exercise will mean a decreasing attention given to inferior worldly goods. Our new Christian world will not be found idolising the shopping mall or attached to the TV soaps. No, we will be eagerly waiting the coming of the Saviour Jesus Christ, knowing our home is in Heaven.

This hope has a sanctifying effect upon our lives. We assess things from a different heavenly perspective.

*‘And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure’ 1 John 3.3.*

The Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour will appear in glory and every eye shall see Him. What a sight that will be! For believers He will be their mighty Saviour. On that great Day He will be their Refuge and righteousness. He will deliver from the wrath of God. He will pronounce His saved people just and righteous altogether. He will separate eternally the believers and unbelievers, never more to dwell together. For unbelievers He will be the mighty Judge Who will bring the perfect, unanswerable justice of God. Then, in the ultimate creative act even more glorious than the first Creation, by His mighty power together with God the Father and the Holy Spirit, He will create the new heavens and the new earth wherein dwells righteousness, described for us in *Revelation 21.1-8*. Here we are given the awesome divide in this final creative event.

### **A life to come of absolute glory**

*‘Who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.’* This body that has been subject to corruption and the Fall will be transformed. Here is the ultimate conformation to Christ – in His image! This was something which Paul was striving towards – a glorious body conformed to Christ’s glorious body, the body of His glory.

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 15*

Here we are reminded not only of the power of God as in the Person of Christ, but this power in action – the power of Christ to create and subdue. In the end all things will be brought unto Him in subjection as both the Ruler and Judge. For all the world Christ will be glorious in His pure justice in subduing all things unto Himself.

*‘...that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth’ Philippians 2.10.*

He will be glorious in Creation as our Saviour, transforming in resurrection power our bodies like His own. He will be glorious in His pure power in subduing all things unto Himself for the Christian’s eternal gain.

Paul is speaking here primarily of Christ bringing all things perfectly together in the new heavens and the new earth, where Christ, Christians and Creation will be together with God the Father and the Holy Spirit. This is glory – this is perfection – this is the real life to live. This is truly ‘getting a life’!

Now this amazing truth of the end of the world can only be believed by faith. How this will be accomplished is beyond human comprehension. Paul speaks of it in *1 Corinthians 15.49*:

*‘And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man.’*

- Faith rests, contents and assures itself that He is able to do all these things.

*‘Who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to himself’ Philippians 3.21.*

As Peter said:

*‘Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells’ 2 Peter 3.13.*

- Faith rests in His ability to secure.

## ***Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 15***

*'For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day' 2 Timothy 1.12.*

- Faith rests in His ability to support.

*'For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted' Hebrews 218.*

- Faith rests in His ability to save.

*'Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them' Hebrews 7.25.*

In the end it all comes down to this wonderful truth: He is able.

*'Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labour is not in vain in the Lord' 1 Corinthians 15.58.*

### **Conclusion**

We have reached the end of chapter 3. Paul has taken us on the journey of the Christian life:

- The Christian's relationship in Christ;
- The Christian's responsible example in Christ;
- The Christian's reward in Christ, culminating in the return of Christ.

## 16. STANDING FAST IN THE LORD

### *Philippians 4.1-5*

The Apostle Paul realised that what he had taught in the previous chapter was indeed extremely solemn. It was needful because of the great dangers facing the Church from the legalists and the libertines. We have seen how after the exhortation and warning he sought to set their minds on heavenly things. Now he summed up with a *'Therefore'*. He had faithfully laid the foundation for his next exhortation.

*'Therefore my beloved and longed for brethren, my joy and my crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved' Philippians 4.1.*

Note how he exhorted with a loving pastoral heart. Matthew Henry comments on this verse:

'Paul loved them, and loved them dearly: warm affections become ministers and Christians towards one another. Brotherly love must always go along with the brotherly relation.

Paul loved them and longed for them, longed to see them and hear from them, longed for their welfare and was earnestly desirous of it.

I long after you all in the compassion of Jesus Christ

Paul loved them and rejoiced in them. They were his joy; he had no greater joy than to hear of their spiritual health and prosperity. I rejoiced greatly that I found thy children walking in the truth.

Paul loved them and gloried in them. They were his crown as well as his joy. Never was proud ambitious man more pleased with the ensigns of honour, than humble Paul was with the evidences of the sincerity of their faith and obedience. All this is to prepare his way to exhort a greater endeavour.'

To stand fast in the Lord is to stand fast in His strength and by His grace, not trusting in ourselves, and disclaiming any sufficiency of our own. We must be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. It is as though

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 16*

Paul was pleading with them to realise that what he had taught, because he cared.

Now, having been faithful, Paul reassured them of his love and respect for them as a church. He described them as his joy and crown. He rejoiced over their salvation by grace. He rejoiced in the evidences in their conversions of the manner in which the Lord had crowned his labours. This is whole being pastoral leadership. He longed for them wholeheartedly, not mechanically. He had been deeply burdened about the need to be faithful. Now Paul encouraged and exhorted positively.

‘*So stand fast in the Lord.*’ Paul set a Christ-centred example to follow – stand fast in Him resolutely. Be loyal to all that Christ holds dear: the truth, love, holiness, the Lord’s service, compassion and the Gospel. Remember Paul in this letter so often wrote in this manner of being ‘*in the Lord*’ – ‘*hope in the Lord*’, ‘*trust in the Lord*’, ‘*rejoice in the Lord*’ and ‘*be of the same mind in the Lord*’. Here it is ‘*stand fast in the Lord*’.

This the argument Paul came to in support of what he had taught – simple and yet profound instruction. Because of the example of Christ, the enemies of Christ and because of your hope in Christ, ‘*So stand fast in the Lord.*’ Be heavenly-minded not earthly-minded. Dare to be different from the crowd, being strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

In a recent cross-country championship, 123 of the 128 runners missed a turn. One competitor stayed on the right 10,000 metre course and began waving for fellow runners to follow him. But he was only able to convince four other runners to go with him. They were very much in the minority! Asked what his competitors thought of his mid-race decision not to follow the crowd, all of whom were later disqualified for going the wrong way, he responded, ‘In reality at first they thought it was funny that I went in another direction than they did, until they got to the finish.’ He was the one who ran correctly. In the same way, our goal is to run correctly, to finish the race marked out for us by Christ, to stand alone from the crowd and not run with the crowd. It may mean being laughed at and ridiculed but it is better than being disqualified.

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 16*

*'I implore Euodia and I implore Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord' Philippians 4.2.*

It had been brought to Paul's attention that two believing women in the church were in a state of division. Their fall out and disagreement was affecting the atmosphere in the local church and grieving the Spirit. Notice how Paul approaches the problem. This is a guide for us in dealing with fall outs between believers. There is no 'big stick' approach here. There is no partiality. Paul implores each one personally in exactly the same way. To 'implore' here means to exhort in a kind and yet firm manner.

But then also notice the safe meeting ground at which as believers they will find a unity of mind. Unite around your common bond as believers – Jesus Christ the Saviour. Remember Who has saved you both; Whom you are both serving; Who is the Lord of you both; and remember the vital commandment of the Lord to love one another.

*'Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion' Romans 12.16.*

Remember to unite around the essential doctrines of grace and at least be of one mind in these. Paul teaches us that division is caused invariably by the wrong thinking and attitudes of the old nature. To rectify the problem our thinking needs to be under the new nature and essentially Christ-centred. The Lord has been wonderfully gracious to Euodia and Syntyche, so let them in this understanding be gracious to one another in the Lord. Paul is concerned that the church work as a team together. He is concerned for their unity in the Lord.

*'I urge you also, true companion, help these women who laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers whose names are in the Book of Life' Philippians 4.3.*

Now Paul moves his exhortation on to one of the leaders of the church, Paul's companion in the Gospel. Various views are held on who this person is. 'Companion' is also a person's name in Greek – *Syzygus* – like Grace

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 16*

and Mercy are English names, so some take the view that Paul means a specific person named Companion. Others take the view that Paul uses the word 'companion' in a ministry sense, so referring to Epaphroditus. At this time Epaphroditus was the minister of the church at Philippi and was ultimately responsible.

Whatever leader Paul is referring to, the same principles apply. He must come alongside these women who had been so faithful in the past in their labours in the Gospel. This does not mean they were preaching. Paul teaches against this in the gathered assembly for worship. God's order from Creation must be recognised and preserved in the order of the Church. However these ladies assisted in many other ways: prayer, hospitality, organisation, witness and outreach. They were true labourers, those who gave themselves willingly and wholeheartedly to the work of the Lord.

In the past they had in God-given courage contended in their witness alongside Paul for the Gospel. These women had not only been willing to serve Paul (as though he was the only one that mattered), but they had also assisted Elder Clement and all Paul's fellow workers that were ministering in Philippi. These women must be helped to overcome this problem between themselves that work of the Lord be not hindered. They must not be left as though the past meant nothing and the church could cope without them.

Everything about this verse is teaching us to take a positive, kindly and pastoral approach towards division.

Paul concludes his exhortation with a reminder of the significance of the Church of the living God. Remember to respect and appreciate each other; your names are registered in the Book of Life! The Book of Life is God's record of all those ordained unto eternal life evidenced by their true repentance of sin and turning to Jesus Christ as Saviour, following Him as Lord. The most wonderful blessing of all is to have our names recorded in the Book of Life. Jesus taught this:

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 16*

*‘Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.” And He said to them, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven”’ Luke 10.17-20.*

*‘Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!’ Philippians 4.4.*

This is powerful language here. Paul is in prison and the church at Philippi is being persecuted. The word ‘rejoice’ here has to do with an inner joy within your being. There is very little on the outside for comfort and rejoicing, but there is something for rejoicing on the inside. This is not stoical, mind-over-matter theology, burying your head in the sand as though problems do not exist. This is joy experienced by a serious contemplation of the Person, work and attributes of Christ.

In effect this means to rejoice and be assured in what we read about Christ recorded for us in His Word. It means to delight in and focus on the wonderful grace, kindness and love of Christ; to admire Him as the perfect Person *‘in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge’* (Colossians 2.3).

On a ministry visit to Nepal my wife and I had the privilege to stand on a viewing platform at the top of a mountain at dawn-break and have an uninterrupted view of the sunrise over Pokhara shining directly on the top of the vast Anapurna mountain range. The view took our breath away; it was majestic and we were full of admiration. Here Paul means us to marvel at Christ’s all-sufficiency; His sacrificial love for sinners in going to Calvary; His willingness to bear the eternal punishment due for the sins of all those who trust in Him. It means to join the angels in admiration and all those redeemed already in Glory; to rejoice in His way, His security, His patience; to rejoice in Him, the Good Shepherd Who is leading every-

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 16*

one of His sheep to Glory. It means to respond to His gracious invitation and trust Him at all times!

The fruit of this exercise of rejoicing in the Lord is that in times of adversity or prosperity we can be at peace in our minds and contented in the Lord, as we rejoice in Him. Whatever the circumstance, Christ remains and is always our hope, joy, Head and Lord, always the same.

Paul gives to us the sure and secure foundation for a fulfilled relationship of fellowship together, to be first and foremost united in Christ; to know we can overcome through Him; to realise that even in the really tough times Christ remains our Saviour and Lord, having this common purpose and united desire to live for His glory and praise!

Notice how Paul reiterates the exhortation to rejoice in the Lord, confirming its vital importance to unity.

*‘Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand’  
Philippians 4.5.*

We are still here in the context of unity and harmony among the Lord’s people. The word ‘gentleness’ in the original has a very rich meaning which is impossible to encapsulate in one English word. It has to do with having a measured and merciful response to the faults of others. It is the opposite of being critical of one another’s failings. It is to show forbearance, meekness, reasonableness, charitableness, mildness, generosity and tenderness. It is the exact opposite of living for selfishly just for oneself. It is not being an angry person or argumentative, not quickly rising up in self-defence.

An official of a Mission Board, who knew that it takes more than a desire to make a missionary, was appointed to examine a candidate. He told the young man to come to his house at 6.00 am. The young man went at 6.00 am to be examined, and the examiner kept him sitting in the room until 10.00 am. Then he went down to him and said abruptly, ‘Can you spell? Can you spell God?’ ‘Yes, sir,’ came the answer calmly. ‘Can you write your name? Do you know what your name is?’ ‘Yes, sir,’ again he replied. He put him through a series of questions of that kind, and then went to the

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 16*

Missionary Board and said, 'He will do. I tried his patience for four hours, and he did not break down: I then insulted him, and he did not lose his temper. He will do.'

That is one way to prove Christianity! If a man answers all abuses with patience, a fortitude, a gentleness that cannot be violated, depend upon it, Christ's love has conquered his heart, and the Christianity that has made him what he is, is vindicated by the very quality of his character. Such a Christian causes men to say, 'Well, after all, you've got to say something for a religion that produces a man like that.'

In the Church 'gentleness' means always seeking the wellbeing of each other, not ever putting each other down in an overbearing, patronising manner with the 'I-know-better-than-you' or 'I-am-holier-than-you' manner.

'Moderation' means to show a loving reasonableness in your behaviour towards one another. It is actually the first fruit Paul gives of rejoicing in the Lord, the fruit of Christ-focused living!

Paul then reminds us by way of warning and encouragement that '*The Lord is at hand*.' This is living in the knowledge that the Lord is omnipresent, that He sees and knows you. He sees how you are living! Live by faith in the knowledge that He is ready at hand to hear and answer your prayer in His time and way. It is living in the knowledge that He is coming soon as the One to Whom one thousand years is as one day (2 Peter 3.8).

A while ago we went to visit the grandchildren in Wiltshire and when we arrived I noticed our grandson sitting at the window watching. Evidently he had been looking out for us for over an hour, which as you know for a child is a very long while. This may have been to do with a promise to go with him to the toy shop! So Jesus reminds us to watch and pray to be ready for the Master when He comes. When He comes will He find us serving Him? Remember the parable of the wise and foolish virgins.

*'Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Now five of*

## ***Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 16***

*them were wise, and five were foolish. Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight a cry was heard: "Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!" Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, "Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out." But the wise answered, saying, "No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves." And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut. Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, "Lord, Lord, open to us!" But he answered and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you." Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming' Matthew 25.1-13.*

# 17. STANDING FAST IN THE LORD (2)

## *Philippians 4.6-9*

We continue in our consideration of what it means to ‘*So stand fast in the Lord*’ *Philippians 4.1*.

*‘Be anxious for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your request be made known unto God’ Philippians 4.6.*

Here Paul exhorts us not to be unduly concerned about a problem so as to be filled with anxiety. In the context of ‘*the Lord is at hand*’, be comforted by the words of Jesus in *John 14.1-4*.

*‘Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. And where I go you know, and the way you know.’*

Paul teaches that the cure for anxiety is not sitting back and expecting that everything will turn out all right in the end. No. Paul teaches the cure for worry is not inaction but prayer action, the wonderful therapy of prayer.

*‘Cast your burden on the Lord, and He shall sustain you; He shall never permit the righteous to be moved’ Psalm 55.22.*

*‘Come to Me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light’ Matthew 11.28-30.*

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 17*

Paul's exhortation means learning to live your whole life subject to prayer and in dependance upon God. Notice the contrast Paul makes between nothing and everything. Paul's cure for worry: Be anxious about nothing but pray about everything. The Lord is at hand to hear!

We may be like a family in USA who were being evicted from their home, having lived there for over fifty years. Before the eviction date they were sorting out the clutter in the basement. They came across a set of full colour children's books dating back to 1938. The next day they took them to a antique book valuer. Evidently the books were so rare they were valued as a collection item at \$250,000. The answer to their problem was hidden away in the basement unused. Sometimes in our anxiety prayer is like a hidden treasure in the basement of our mind – of great value but unused!

Here in our text it means to seriously reflect on your whole situation, however challenging it may be. Then, in a reverent manner, make your requests unto the Lord in prayer. It means to make known to God your heartfelt requests based on your real needs by faith.

*'Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you' 1 Peter 5.7.*

Notice how Paul uses two words 'prayer' and 'supplication', meaning be very specific in your prayers. Jesus spoke of the man in the middle of the night asking his friend to lend him three loaves.

*'And He said to them, "Which of you shall have a friend, and go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine has come to me on his journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; and he will answer from within and say, 'Do not trouble me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give to you'? I say to you, though he will not rise and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will rise and give him as many as he needs"' Luke 11.5-8.*

Note his persistence! He had a need and he was very specific. Support in anxiety is known by specific prayer. In times of crisis and need our prayers

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 17*

take on fresh intensity. God knows we need to pray! But always pray in a spirit of thanksgiving, remembering God's unfailing mercy and kindness towards you. As a believer let there be humble, grateful acknowledgement of the goodness of God towards you. Hendriksen said: 'Prayer without thanksgiving is like a bird without wings. Such a prayer cannot rise to God.'

Notice here how Paul speaks about requests. We are not demanding but requesting God in prayer. But the requesting is done with real faith and thanksgiving, trusting the wise and gracious character of God.

*'...and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus' Philippians 4.7.*

The peace of God is a gift of His grace merited by Christ for us and known both positionally and experientially.

- Positionally. This peace is an assured confidence that we are right with God by faith in Christ, a child in His family. This wonderful privilege comes to us by faith in the Person, work and merits of Christ. This peace of God is centred for us upon a right relationship through Christ Jesus. These are incredible promises that appear both in *Isaiah* and *Philippians*, meaning a complete peace from God.

*'You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You' Isaiah 26.3.*

- Experientially. This peace, as a felt experience affecting the heart, comes through the power and gift of the Holy Spirit. It actually passes all understanding; it is beyond man's wisdom and infinite in power and effect. It has the power to lift anxiety. It is an antidote to anxiety, the heart and mind being under the control and influence of Christ in power of the Holy Spirit! This is *'the peace of God which surpasses all understanding'*, meaning a peace bestowed by the Holy Spirit as fruit of faith and prayer. This is a felt peace from God, the experience of which surpasses human understanding.

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 17*

This experience can be an amazing testimony for God's glory when true peace reigns in the heart and mind through prayer and faith in Christ both at times of adversity and prosperity. It is good for us to remember the powerful witness of serenity in trial, such as an old believer dying of cancer heard to say, 'God has been good to me!'

It is beyond human comprehension or reason. Jesus said, 'My peace I give to you; not as the world gives' (*John 14.27*). This peace will stand like a guard at the door of the heart and mind to withstand anxiety in adversity. The Puritan William Gurnall, in his book *The Christian in Complete Armour*<sup>4</sup>, wrote of this peace as being, 'The garrison of the believer's mind.' This peace also stands like a guard against an anxious spirit about material possessions taking us over. It is a gift from God as a reward of faith and an answer to prayerful dependence.

Hendriksen comments: 'It is founded on grace, being the smile of God reflected in the soul of the believer.'

The peace of God is not only:

- provided from Himself through Christ, for us to be reconciled with Him;
- a precious attribute of God given to us in our minds by His grace in Christ;
- felt in our hearts and minds personally under the same power of the Holy Spirit;

but the peace of God is also a fruit which is to be evident in our Christian service and relationships. It lies at the heart of the exhortations to the Christian lifestyle throughout this chapter. Peace is one of the most important motivations for the Christian walk. Its worth must be respected. It is a blessing in Christ through the Holy Spirit to our whole being – our heart and mind – affecting our will.

---

<sup>4</sup> *The Christian in Complete Armour*, William Gurnall, Banner

## ***Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 17***

*‘Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things’ Philippians 4.8.*

### **True**

Think and communicate to each other truthfully, being moulded and guided by God’s Word. It means to be factual in your communication, not suggestive or exaggerating. It means to avoid gossip, understanding the hurt and pain that inevitably causes. It means to avoid exaggeration of issues with one another, and being known in our Christian walk for discretion and integrity, dealing in matters which are true and factual.

### **Noble**

Think and communicate with each other seriously and meaningfully, with the proper motive of integrity. It means to honestly assess the situation with integrity of mind and purpose; to be a reliable, trustworthy person who can be respected as such, a person who can be trusted in their words. This type of honesty has a dignity and gravity about it.

### **Just**

Behave towards each other fairly, in a manner which accords with God’s standards of love and holiness. It means to be impartial and consistent in our dealings with one another in the Church and in the home, respecting biblical principles of authority. It means to conduct one’s affairs in the sight of the Lord as His servant to honour His Word and way.

### **Pure**

Think and apply your minds upon that which is morally clean and undefiled. Such an exercise will affect what is watched, listened to and what is read in the home. It means living a life governed by the new nature not the old, feeding the new while starving the old.

An American lady visited Wales, where her grandfather had worked in a

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 17*

mine. She was wearing a white suit and wanted to go down into the mine. She was warned, 'You may go down white, but you will not come back up white!' So we are affected by the things which we allow into our lives.

### **Lovely**

This means to focus on those actions and words which are gracious. In terms of fellowship it means to act agreeably and pleasantly, to promote love towards each other, to think seriously of ways in which you can demonstrate your love and appreciation for one another. It means to have an agreeable manner and spirit without compromising the truth of God. This one word places the axe to the root of the spirit and way of worldliness – are my actions and words lovely or horrible?

### **Of good report**

Your conversations and thoughts are to be occupied with that of good report, not taken up with evil report. If we hear of evil report we treat it with the seriousness it deserves without wallowing in another's problem. It means to converse in a fair-minded manner, always seeking to speak governed by God's Word and way. It means to think of how best you can bring honour to God in your own lifestyle for good report; to use God-given discernment about what you do and are involved with. Is it something of good report? Are the activities you are involved in as a member of God's church those you can pray about and seek God's blessing on? If it is an activity which is sinful and ungodly, not being of good report in God's sight, turn from it – give it up!

As parents we have a responsibility of discernment for our children and also to teach them discernment.

*'Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma. But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. For this you*

## ***Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 17***

*know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them. For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret' Ephesians 5.1-12.*

There is so much of evil report around. Let us positively be engaged in something of good report. We may hear of a meeting or event which is of good report which is helpful to us and perhaps our children. Let us support that which is truly of good report and helpful for our practical and spiritual wellbeing. However, in our discernment of what is said to be of good report, also be aware of hidden dangers. In the last days the Lord says Satan will act as an angel of light. He can disguise himself as being spiritual, but all is not always what it appears. We do need to use God-guided judgment. Let us be those who use discernment and have a clear line of separation from error and yet support truth.

*'These things I have written to you concerning those who try to deceive you. But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him. And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming. If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him' 1 John 2.26-29.*

When John says 'you do not need that anyone teach you', he is not invali-

## ***Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 17***

dating the teaching office in the Church. He is simply reminding believers they have a solemn responsibility to discern between truth and error.

*‘These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so’ Acts 17.11.*

The Bereans were noble discerners.

### **Virtue**

‘If there is any virtue’ has to do with living with spiritual energy, to exercise energy in faith, leading to action for good, and to attitudes which result in a fruitful outcome for good, motivating a walk of godliness.

### **Praiseworthy**

‘If there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things’ means live your lives be for the praise of God, not man. Our theology must be matched by the way we live our lives. So Paul says ‘think on these things’; use your God-given discernment in your decision-making. Paul wants us to think about what we are doing. We are not robots but living souls walking before the Lord.

He has presented to us several characteristics of what it means to stand fast in the Lord. He calls us to think on these things and strive with God’s help to align our lives to such a way of life.

### **Conclusion: The inspiration of Christ**

*‘Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things. The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you’ Philippians 4.8-9.*

He is true: all the communication of Christ was absolutely true and remains so in His Word to us today.

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 17*

He is noble: the motive and purpose of Christ is always accompanied with absolute integrity, transparency and total dignity.

He is just: Christ deals with people in a manner which accords perfectly with God's standard of true justice and love.

He is pure: Christ has a perfect nature which can never be defiled by sinful thoughts, wrong motives and actions.

He is lovely: it is to Christ we must go to find the most gracious words and actions that truly constitute loveliness. At the beginning of Christ's ministry it was evident that His speech harmonised beautifully with Scripture.

*'So all bore witness to Him, and marvelled at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth' Luke 4.22.*

To the believer Christ is as described in the *Song of Solomon* as being 'altogether lovely' (*Song 5.16*).

He is of good report: Christ continually sought to bring honour to God the Father in His life here on earth. His faithfulness in this was confirmed when God the Father spoke from Heaven, '*This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased*' (*Matthew 3.17*).

He has virtue: Christ was constantly pouring forth goodness and spiritual blessing from Himself. Now He does so constantly through the power of the Holy Spirit and the Word.

He is praiseworthy: Christ is the One we can praise wholeheartedly, unreservedly, continually, for time and for eternity.

'*Meditate on these things.*' One of the great evidences of the work of grace in the heart is when we see Christ as our all in all; when through experience we come to rest wholly upon Him and find in Him all our delight. As the hymnwriter Isaac Watts (1674-1748) wrote:

*With joy we meditate the grace  
Of our High Priest above;  
His heart is made of tenderness,  
It overflows with love.*

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 17*

*Touched with a sympathy within,  
He know our feeble frame;  
He knows what sore temptations mean,  
For He has felt the same.*

*But spotless innocent and pure,  
The great Redeemer stood,  
While Satan's fiery darts He bore,  
And did resist to blood.*

*He in the days of feeble flesh  
Poured out His cries and tears;  
And, in His measure, feels afresh  
What every member bears.*

*He'll never quench the smoking flax,  
But raise it to a flame;  
The bruised reed He never breaks,  
Nor scorns the meanest name.*

*Then let our humble faith address  
His mercy and His power:  
We shall obtain delivering grace  
In the distressing hour.*

Paul says to meditate on these things in their Christ-centred nature, then, seeking God's help, to follow them.

*'The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do and the God of peace will be with you.'* This is not Paul proudly saying, 'Look at me!' No. Paul can only exhort like this because he is like his Master. This is his light of witness that honoured his Master Jesus Christ, displaying the graces mentioned in verse 8. Only as we reflect Christ can we assuredly say, 'Do as I do, do as I say – follow me.' Paul could say this

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 17*

with a clear conscience with apostolic authority, assuring the brethren of God's help.

He had spoken about the peace of God. Now he speaks of the God of peace being with us in such a way – the God who has made peace possible in Christ, the God of peace who delights in mercy. He it is Who will be with us as we follow Christ and fellowship with others who follow Christ. The God of peace promises union, fellowship, support, friendship, guidance and protection.

# 18. ALL THINGS THROUGH CHRIST

## *Philippians 4.10-13*

*‘But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your care for me has flourished again; though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity. Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me’ Philippians 4.10-13.*

In these verses we can see the profound fruit of Paul’s Christ-centred, Christ-following lifestyle.

### **Contentment**

The secret to his contentment was to view his life as always being in partnership with Christ. So we see how he rejoiced in the Lord as he received the care of the Philippian church to him. Notice here how Paul rejoiced greatly in the Lord. He rejoiced at the fruit of the Gospel in them in Christ.

To ‘rejoice greatly’ means Paul had an intense joy in the Lord over the church’s fruitfulness. The spirit in which he received the care, even though it had been delayed, demonstrated his contentment. There was no self-pity or bitterness at the evident delay that had transpired. Paul interpreted it positively.

Here is an example of what is called true Christian courtesy – always trying to put the best interpretation on something. It was not that the church lacked a spirit of care, but they lacked an opportunity to show that care to Paul. Now through Epaphroditus they had been able to express their love and care, and Paul rejoiced in that. For Paul their gift and care was like a tree blossom in spring time that evidences there had been life in winter.

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 18*

There then follows what has been described as the most profound statement of contentment in Scripture. The first thing we see in this statement of Paul's testimony is that he had learned to be content. Through experience he had proved the faithfulness of the Lord to whom, wherever and whatever. He had been initiated into this manner of life and attitude by the experiences of life being sanctified to him. All Paul's varied experiences of life as a Christian led him, by the Holy Spirit, to a closer walk with his Lord. So Paul had learned to be content and graciously self-sufficient through the power of Christ in Him.

His Christ-centred sufficiency enabled him to cope with whatever life had in store for him and to be content. So he knew how to be abased, that is to live in extremely humble and trying circumstances, and to be content. The Lord had taught him in adversity to remain content even when despised by men and undermined. By the same token Paul knew how to abound in a gracious manner and not be lifted up in pride. Paul learned how to use prosperous times spiritually and materially in a gracious manner: *'In whatever state I am in to be content.'*

Paul clearly outlined that God in His permissive will allows times of adversity and times of abundance; both pathways are in His control. We should respect what He ordains. We are not to envy riches or despise poverty. God works through both and calls us to be content in His way for us.

Note how Paul emphasised the all-embracing nature of contentment: *'whatever', 'everything', 'all things'*. I read of a city lawyer in a stressful position who visited his father-in-law who was a farmer. He spent a lifetime raising wheat, corn, cows, as well as some sheep and chickens. One morning while he followed him around the farm. They talked about the differences between city living and a rural lifestyle.

'Most city folks I know expect each year to be better than the last,' the farmer said. 'They think it's normal to get an annual raise and bonus whatever, to earn more this year than you did last year. As a farmer I have good years and bad years. It all depends on rain at the right time, dry days for

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 18*

harvest, and no damaging storms. Some years we have more; some years we have less.’

The statement taught an important principle for contentment clearly. That ‘law of the harvest’—some years being fat and others being lean—applies to much more than agriculture. Growing in spiritual maturity requires gratefully accepting the seasons of more and the seasons of less. These seasons God weaves into specific areas of our lives—our friendships, marriage, career, finances, ministry, and spiritual growth. This attitude of acceptance by faith is also embraced by faith in Job’s testimony.

*‘The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord’ Job 1.21.*

### **Assurance**

*‘I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.’* As we have considered the exhortations and standard for the Christian life given by Paul, we may be overwhelmed. We honestly assess our own weaknesses and failures, and come to the conclusion we are inadequate. Then there are times when we are facing challenging times in health and circumstances which again overwhelm us. But here the Apostle Paul is teaching us there is an answer. It is found in the empowering Christ.

When Paul writes ‘all things’, he means all things that the Lord calls me to or allows for me in my life. We read of the amazing variety of Paul’s life experience that he testifies to.

*‘And He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong’*  
2 Corinthians 12.9-10.

In Christ is our assurance, hope, confidence, strength, foundation and justification – we are saved by His grace.

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 18*

A man was having a meal in a good restaurant with his father. As they were finishing their meal, the waitress brought over the bill, but then took it away, and brought it back again a few moments later. She placed it on the table, smiled, and said: 'Somebody in the restaurant paid for your meal.' The man had a strange feeling sitting there. The feeling was helplessness. There was nothing he could do. It had been taken care of. To insist on paying would have been pointless. All he could do was trust that what the waitress said was actually true and then live in that. This meant getting up and leaving the restaurant. His acceptance by faith of what she said gave him a choice: to live as if it was true, or to create his own reality of fear in which the bill was still not really paid. That is an example of what Christian faith is like: to trust that we do not owe anything. It is to trust that something has already been done for us, to trust that grace paid the bill and to live in that knowledge.

Paul's contentment and assurance arose out of real faith in the wonder of God's free grace in Christ to him. But how is it Christ actually strengthens His people, granting them the spirit of contentment in all things? The answer to this all-important question is found in the words of Christ not long before Calvary.

*'But now I go away to Him who sent Me, and none of you asks Me, "Where are You going?" But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged. I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take*

## ***Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 18***

*of what is Mine and declare it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you' John 16.5-15.*

The Holy Spirit is called by Christ 'the Helper' or 'the Comforter'. *He will guide you into all truth'*; He will glorify Christ; He will teach the wisdom of Christ. Paul is teaching that Christ actually infuses strength in us under the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. He gives the strength to stand firm on doctrine, the strength to remain loyal to Christ and the strength to serve Him.

*'And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry' 1 Timothy 1.12.*

*'But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that the message might be preached fully through me, and that all the Gentiles might hear. And I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion' 2 Timothy 4.17.*

The secret is to use 'all things through Christ' as our motto in life. With this 'I can't' is transformed to 'I can.' I can do all things by the One Who makes me able. I am able to face all conditions by the One Who makes me able to do so. Remember the teaching of Jesus in *John 15.4-5*. The source of our capability depends on our union with Him.

*'Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing' John 15.4-5.*

Paul also taught these identical truths to both the church at Ephesus and the church at Colosse.

*'For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted*

## ***Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 18***

*and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height— to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen' Ephesians 3.14-21.*

*'For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light' Colossians 1.9-12.*

### **Conclusion**

We have considered two blessed fruits of our union with Christ: contentment and assurance. Here is the secret to a true sense of wellbeing. It is centred in Christ.

## 19. A GIFT WELL PLEASING TO GOD

### *Philippians 4.14-20*

*Nevertheless you have done well that you shared in my distress. Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only. For even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities. Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account. Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God. And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. Now to our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen' Philippians 4.14-20.*

The gift Paul received from the church at Philippi meant a great deal to him as God's servant in prison. This gift had undoubtedly comforted and greatly encouraged him. Using picture language Paul describes the gift as a sweet-smelling flower, a flower which was not only beautiful to behold, but also had a fragrance which was sweet to breath in.

By his testimony Paul teaches us how a Christian should receive a gift. He makes it clear at the outset that the gift was extremely precious to him, and one which he treasured. However, he had been content to live in whatever circumstance God ordained for him (verses 11-13). He was not demanding a gift, but nevertheless he was blessed by it and extremely grateful for it. The gift was an added blessing, considering how it demonstrated a right attitude in the church at Philippi. He was encouraged because the sacrificial giving on their part would bring blessing to their account (verse 17). So in these verses we have a precious example of the right partnership between giving and receiving.

## ***Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 19***

When a gift is given or received in a right manner there will always be a positive fruit. It is good for us to remember that the implications of Christian giving go beyond just the gift itself. This is one of the reasons why the ministry of giving is so significant. While the gifts may be practical, the blessed fruit of the gifts, both for the giver and the recipient, is spiritual.

But of supreme importance is that this gift, given to Paul as one of God's servants, was a *'an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing unto God.'* Here we are reminded of the chief aim and objective of all Christian giving and worship, that it might be well pleasing to God and bear fruit! Note the woman who John records as being Mary.

*'And being in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper, as He sat at the table, a woman came having an alabaster flask of very costly oil of spikenard. Then she broke the flask and poured it on His head. But there were some who were indignant among themselves, and said, "Why was this fragrant oil wasted? For it might have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor." And they criticized her sharply. But Jesus said, "Let her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a good work for Me. For you have the poor with you always, and whenever you wish you may do them good; but Me you do not have always. She has done what she could. She has come beforehand to anoint My body for burial. Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her"'* Mark 14.3-9.

I want to identify some of the reasons why this particular gift given to Paul was well pleasing to God.

### **It was given with careful consideration**

*'But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your care for me has flourished again; though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity'* Philippians 4.10.

## ***Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 19***

The church at Philippi had been carefully considering the needs of the Apostle Paul. So at the first opportunity that considered care brought forth fruit. Paul recognised that the gift he had received was not of a mechanical, thoughtless nature. It was the fruit of compassionate and loving hearts towards one of God's servants in trouble. No doubt the church at Philippi had been praying for Paul and had discussed his situation. They came to the conclusion that his case warranted a wholehearted and practical response. God calls us to carefully consider the stewardship of our resources and give particular priority to the work of His Kingdom in the Gospel.

### **It was given with consistent compassion**

*'Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only. For even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities' Philippians 4.15-16.*

The church were willing to support Paul in a consistent and committed manner. They had supported Paul not only in Thessalonica but also when he was in Corinth.

*'And when I was present with you, and in need, I was a burden to no one, for what I lacked, the brethren who came from Macedonia [Philippi church] supplied. And in everything I kept myself from being burdensome to you, and so I will keep myself' 2 Corinthians 11.9.*

Paul, preaching in the power of the Holy Spirit, had planted the church at Philippi. From the outset the church had demonstrated their love in a practical manner. The point Paul is making relates to the significance of communicating gifts consistently and compassionately. The church at Philippi was to be commended that their giving extended to others, whatever their nationality.

*'For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem' Romans 15.26.*

## ***Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 19***

The church at Philippi was willing to share their substance with others.

God calls His people to steward their giving with consistent communication – they *‘sent once and again unto my necessity’*. This requires carefully considering and taking note of the real need. Remember, for the church at Philippi great effort must have been made to monitor Paul’s needs. They did not forget him at Corinth, and they did not forget him when he was in Thessalonica.

### **It was given with confidentiality**

*‘Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only’ Philippians 4.15.*

The overall gift was made up from those from rich and poor backgrounds but no-one was singled out – it was a gift from the church. Probably Lydia gave a great deal, but it was still a gift from the church. In God’s sight it is not so much the amount but the spirit and the sacrifice that counts. Another person may have only given a small amount but that was all they had and it was precious in God’s sight. The gift was a token of their love and esteem for God’s servant Paul and an outworking of their faith in God. It was a gift given willingly, as an evidence of their salvation by grace in Christ alone. It is exactly opposite to the manner in which some wealthy unbelievers parade their giving as a good work.

In June 2006 Warren Buffet, the world’s second richest man at the time, announced that he would donate 85 per cent of his 44 billion dollar fortune to five charitable foundations. Commenting on this level of generosity Buffet said: ‘There is more than one way to get to Heaven, but this is a great way!’

### **It was given with a considerable effect upon themselves**

*‘Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account’ Philippians 4.17.*

Here Paul reminds us of the wonderful blessing that comes with sacrificial giving. He had not asked for anything but when he received the gift

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 19*

he knew that a blessed fruit would follow. He used the expression ‘*abounds to your account.*’ Paul saw giving as a spiritual investment for the giver. It gives a wonderful return on the investment that more than outweighs the sacrifice. When the giving is given in a right spirit for the glory of God there is a blessed fruit.

- A good conscience before the Lord and men;
- Assurance that we are involved in a good work for the furtherance of God’s Kingdom;
- Broadened horizons in your outlook to the needs of others;
- Increased joy and love when the giving is exercised in the right spirit (see *1 Corinthians 13*);
- A glorious reward in Heaven.

*‘But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully’ 2 Corinthians 9.6.*

It is helpful for us to have the most positive attitude towards giving. It is not only good, it is a ministry that has an abounding fruit in our lives.

### **It was given with considerable commitment**

*‘Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God’ Philippians 4.18.*

As a local church stewards the funds at its disposal it is good for them to remember that a number of the gifts given to the fund have been donated sacrificially. The giving has required serious thought, budgeting of finances and has been seen as a priority, and may have involved self-denial. Paul respected the fact that the church at Philippi had given sacrificially.

The word ‘*sacrifice*’ here has the meaning of putting to death. This means that people had given in such a manner that they had put to death needless material excess, giving away to those in need what they would otherwise use to spend selfishly on themselves as ‘extras’.

## ***Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 19***

Sacrificial giving means that the ministry of giving has a top priority in that person's life. G Mueller said, 'God judges what we give by what we keep.' This is when giving has just as an important place in the budget as food and clothes. Paul speaks here about a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God. This is part of taking up our cross and following the Lord. It pleases God the Father to live like God His Son.

### **It was given with consciousness of Christ**

*'Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God. And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus' Philippians 4.18-19.*

Here is the ultimate motivation for sacrificial giving when we consider the sacrificial gift of Jesus Christ. He gave Himself, and this was the great and perfect gift of a sweet-smelling aroma unto God. It is at Calvary we find the heart of the love of God in giving His only Beloved Son. That was an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing unto God! Here is the unfailing motive for giving.

But notice also the wonderful words in verse 19 that assure us of the fruit of Christ's work. Paul, by faith, focuses on the infinite God Who bestows according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. '*According to His riches in glory*' means that which is pure, infinite, blessed, secure and lovely (verse 8). When we stop and sit down for a little while and contemplate what Christ Jesus has given for us, our hearts will be softened and our giving will be willing, cheerful and generous.

*'But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work' 2 Corinthians 9.6-8.*

## ***Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 19***

The cheerful giver whom God loves is someone who rejoices in their salvation. They appreciate God's grace towards them in Christ Jesus. They stand in awe at the reality they have been chosen to inherit eternal riches in Christ; and respond to that grace accordingly. Zacchaeus is an example of such a cheerful giver – see the account in *Luke 19*.

*'All your need.'* Faith in God comes to the point where it accepts that God, in His wisdom, knows what we need. He knows what we need at any given point of life, in times of trial, adversity, sorrow, joy, failure and success. God's unfailing promise to His people is that our needs will be supplied according to His wisdom of the past, present and future.

There are times when God calls us to walk in painful pathways to equip us in an even deeper manner.

*'In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials' 1 Peter 1.6.*

He knows the future, and He knows how He will use us in His service to be a blessing through experience to others. There was a reason the Master needed to go through Samaria (*John 4.4*); a purpose for blessing.

*'Let us therefore draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and find grace to help us in time of need' Hebrews 4.16.*

Our own assessment of need often differs from God's assessment. In the end faith comes to the point where it rests in the will of the Lord.

*'Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you' 1 Peter 5.7.*

### **It was given with confidence in Christ for all eternity**

*'And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus' Philippians 4.19.*

Paul is saying, 'Always remember your status and security in Christ for all eternity.'

*'By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the*

## ***Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 19***

*son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward' Hebrews 11.24-26.*

Our real needs will be supplied, both providentially and spiritually, and ultimately eternally in Glory. The Apostle Peter writes in a very similar fashion linking our status, our walk and our reward. See *2 Peter 2.1-11*.

### **It was given with concern for God's glory**

*'Now to our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen'  
Philippians 4.20.*

Note Paul says, *'our God and Father'*. Such an expression is only possible for us to express by faith in Christ: to God, Who in Christ is the Father of all believers, be glory forever. The chief end of man 'is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever.'<sup>5</sup> God must be magnified in our minds and hearts. We must extol His wonderful character and works. God must have the highest praise and adoration in our hearts. We must live for His glory and His glory alone. This objective to glorify the name of the Lord is the best moulder of our motives in the Christian life.

*'Amen'*: so be it in our lives. Paul reminds us here, as elsewhere, of a vitally important principle.

*'Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God' 1 Corinthians 10.31.*

*'And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him' Colossians 3.17.*

*'And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men' Colossians 3.23.*

---

5 *Westminster Shorter Catechism*, see <http://www.epcew.org.uk/wsc/wsc-html>

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 19*

Here is the ultimate test for the ministry of giving: will the gift further God's cause? Is it given for His sake? Is it given ultimately with the objective of bringing in some way honour and glory unto God?

*'Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven' Matthew 5.16.*

'When God's work is done in God's way for God's glory, it will never lack God's supply.' Hudson Taylor.

## 20. SINCERE CHRISTIAN GREETINGS

### *Philippians 4.21-22*

*'Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren who are with me greet you. All the saints greet you, but especially those who are of Caesar's household' Philippians 4.21-22.*

'Every saint' means those who, in union with Christ, have been set apart for a life of consecration to the Lord. Even though there may already have been some differences among the churches over some issues, Paul nevertheless views all those truly converted and in Christ Jesus as being a saint. The greeting is not only from Paul but also from those brethren working with Paul.

Two points come out of this statement:

1. A united greeting responding to a gift to Paul given in a united manner. Love begets love!
2. A remarkable evidence of how Paul worked wherever and whatever. Even when he was bound the work went on!

We then come to the wonderful confirmation of this fact of Paul working wherever and whatever. The work of the Gospel had gone right into the pagan enemy territory of Caesar's palace. The emperor at the time was Nero, renowned later for his terrible cruelty to Christians. A palace renowned for decadence and idolatry had been broken into by God's power.

As discussed in chapter 3, through Paul's testimony there were in the employ of the Emperor Caesar those who had been truly converted. Paul was a witness to them in Rome of what true Christianity is in action. In the palace! Be encouraged! So we find those ordained unto eternal life joining the Church and the family of God. They themselves join in with Paul in their greetings to the church at Philippi, their brothers and sisters in Christ.

# 21. THE GRACE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

## *Philippians 4.23*

*'The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.'*

This final verse needs to be considered in harmony with verses 19-20:

*'And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. Now to our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.'*

The way that the Lord graciously provides for His people in every situation of life, through His Word and by His Spirit, means that the Lord's people are strengthened in their inner person to persevere. God never lies. He undertakes and covenants to supply all our need according to His infinite riches in glory, so we should rest in this. In His divine wisdom He chooses to convey these blessing through Christ Jesus. So earlier Paul could say, *'I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me'* (verse 13). God knows what we need at any given point of life. This is God's unflinching promise to His people. Our needs will be supplied according to His wisdom of past, present and future.

There was an advertisement on the side of a plumber's van in South Africa: 'There is no place too deep, too dark or too dirty for us to handle.' What a good explanation of the Gospel of God's grace! God supplies your need of forgiveness, of cleansing, of strength to persevere, your need to be kept and to grow. Faith in God comes to the point where it accepts that God in His wisdom knows what we need.

*'Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need' Hebrews 4.16.*

Paul wrote this to assure of the loving care of God that comes to us based on the merits of Christ Jesus. In Him we have the perfect, infinite resource

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 21*

for all the Lord's people for time and eternity. As Christ said to the woman of Samaria:

*'Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become a living fountain of water springing up into everlasting life' John 4.14.*

For your comfort, please notice the scope of this assurance. It is for all your need according to God's infinite riches. This word, in the original, means God provides of the perfect quality of His infinite riches in glory. It is not second-hand, hand-me-downs; not a pointless provision; and not a provision that God has no further use for. God gives of Himself and from Himself; He gives from His own eternal resources the very best spiritually.

It is amazing to think that God applies the same resource to our needs, both great and small. He responds and answers with perfect consistency, always using riches of His glory in Christ Jesus in His way. Now in providence as well as practically, God provides our needs. *'The cattle on a thousand hills'* are His (*Psalms 50.10*). God, in His divine wisdom, uses practical and providential means through which to provide for His people.

When Paul says, *'My God shall supply all your need'*, it does not mean we just sit in our chairs and God provides. It means we respect the way in which God provides through the working of His providence in many ways. God provides employment; He provides through giving; He provides through wise stewardship. I am sure you can think of examples of the way you have seen the hand of God in answering prayer. You have traced the hand of God many times and seen this is the Lord Who is perfect in all His ways. So faith ascribes all the glory of our provision, both in providence and in grace, to God. He is our Father who cares and bestows His blessing by Christ, in the name of Christ and for the sake of Christ. He is the faithful God Who, in His grace in Christ Jesus by His Spirit, never leaves or forsakes His people.

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 21*

This illustration of the training of teenage tribesman to conquer fear helps us. The teenage boys were taken into the forest and tied to a tree and left overnight. All night one boy could hear animals walking about and was quite scared. But in the morning light he saw his father. He had been there all the time to protect him. He need not have feared.

So as Paul came to his conclusion, he was inspired by the Holy Spirit to bring us to the point of all things – God’s glory is the great end and purpose of all things. Here is the believer’s ultimate aim and objective, that God may be glorified forever and forever. Here is a most solemn statement that runs counter to our desire to receive praise and honour. The Lord’s people are described as servants, labourers and ambassadors.

### **The desire of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ for one another**

Here is the greatest and the best desire we can have for one another as Christian believers. It is the greatest desire we can ask for unbelievers that the Lord would call them by His grace in Christ. Paul started the letter with grace:

*‘Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ’ Philippians 1.2,*

and finishes the letter with grace. Grace is God’s favour to us in Christ Jesus the Lord, conveyed to us by the Holy Spirit. It is God’s gracious favour bestowing forgiveness, peace, strength, hope, security and truth. We realise we are what we are by God’s grace. By grace we are saved, we stand, we serve, are sustained and grow. God’s gracious favour in Jesus Christ affects our spirit, and sanctifies our attitude, motives and aims. His provision to us by grace is for our Christian life in every circumstance.

*He giveth more grace when the burdens grow greater,  
He sendeth more strength when the labours increase,  
To added affliction He addeth His mercy,  
To multiplied trials, His multiplied peace.*

## *Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 21*

*When we have exhausted our store of endurance,  
When our strength has failed ere the day is half-done,  
When we reach the end of our hoarded resources,  
Our Father's full giving is only begun.*

*His love has no limit, His grace has no measure,  
His power has no boundary known unto men,  
For out of His infinite riches in Jesus,  
He giveth and giveth and giveth again!*

*Annie J Flint, 1866-1932*

There is no better source of goodness, blessing and favour than what comes from Christ. The Puritan Thomas Manton said, 'Grace is nothing but an introduction of the virtues of God into the soul.' This final verse can also be rendered: 'The grace of Jesus Christ be with your spirit' – may God's divine favour be granted to you in such a manner it affects your very inner being. So it is you will have a Christlike attitude of meekness, of gentleness and stability. As Christ forgives you, so you will be forgiving of others. As Christ has mercy on you, so you will have mercy on others. As Christ loves you, so you will love others. As Christ has compassion on you, so you will have compassion on others. As Christ has blessed you through the Gospel, so you will share the Gospel with others. As Christ loves those things which pure, lovely and of good report, so you will follow His direction. The grace of God being with our spirit, pervading all our being, will blessedly affect our Christian living. We will treasure and value the free gift of God's grace as the most treasured favour from God to us.

'As we paid nothing for God's eternal love and nothing for the Son of His love, and nothing for His Spirit and our grace and faith, and nothing for our eternal rest...What an astonishing thought it will be to think of the unmeasurable difference between our deservings and our receivings. O, how free was all this love, and how free is this

## ***Stand Fast in the Lord: Chapter 21***

enjoyed glory...So then let “Deserved” be written on the floor of hell but on the door of heaven and life, “The Free Gift”.’ Richard Baxter.

### **Our response**

*‘For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works’ Titus 2.11-14.*

### **Conclusion**

Paul taught the secret of living a contented Christian life in the midst of a persecuting, pagan, secular society. Paul’s answer is found in a Christ-centred approach to life which engages the mind and the heart. Paul taught that it is possible to find peace and contentment in the midst of a materialistic, anti-God world, but he realised that it is absolutely impossible to find contentment without dealing with the root problem of sin. It is only in Christ a sinner can find, know and experience a peace which surpasses all understanding (*Philippians 4.6-7*).

Paul also shows in this letter that in Christ we find the secret of real joy, whatever our circumstances. Happiness in the world depends upon favourable circumstances, while blessing in Christ rises above circumstances (*Philippians 4.4*).

Faith rests in Christ’s ability to secure, to support and to save.

Paul’s letter encourages us to Christ-centred living and Christ-motivated service, with a Christ-motivated attitude and with Christ-motivated eternal expectations.