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40 Years

A Great While Before Day

VOLUME XII

PART TWO:
July 1–December 31

**A New Devotional from
DON & PEARL ANDERSON**

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Bible Teaching Resources

P.O. Box 6611

Tyler, TX 75711-6611

903.939.1201

Toll free: 1.877.326.7729

www.BibleTeachingResources.org

A GREAT WHILE BEFORE DAY

Volume XII (July-December)
Daily Devotional

by Don Anderson

P.O. Box 6611
Tyler, Texas 75711-6611
(903) 939-1201 or
Toll-free 1-877-326-7729

Website: www.BibleTeachingResources.org

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Bible Teaching Resources

by Don Anderson Ministries

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A GREAT WHILE BEFORE DAY

The gospel writer Mark records that Jesus “rising up a great while before day... went out and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.” (1:35 KJV) Whenever and wherever you spend your time with the Father each day, we hope that these devotional verses and thoughts will be encouraging. Unless otherwise noted, New Testament verses are taken from Don Anderson’s translations from the original text or the New American Standard Bible and Old Testament verses are taken from the New International Version.

Our devotions will pick up where we left off in 2013. We will begin with Romans 12.

JULY

July 1 — First Things First (Romans 12:1-3)

We finished Romans 12:3 yesterday as we completed the first part of A Great While Before Day. Tomorrow morning, I want us to start on Chapter 12 in verse 4, but before we go there, let’s just review these verses and ask the Lord to do a good work in our lives. I am reading from the Phillips translation of Romans 12:1-3.

Romans 12:1-2: “*With eyes wide open to the mercies of God, I beg you, my brothers, as an act of intelligent worship, to give him your bodies, as a living sacrifice, consecrated to him and acceptable by him. Don’t let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould, but let God re-mould your minds from within, so that you may prove in practice that the plan of God for you is good, meets all his demands and moves towards the goal of true maturity.*”

Romans 12:3: “*As your spiritual teacher I give this piece of advice to each one of you. Don’t cherish exaggerated ideas of yourself or your importance, but try to have a sane estimate of your capabilities by the light of the faith that God has given to you all.*”

Verses 1-2: “With eyes wide open to the mercies of God, I beg you, my brothers, as an act of intelligent worship, to give him your bodies, as a living sacrifice, consecrated to him and acceptable by him. Don’t let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould, but let God re-mould your minds from within, so that you may prove in practice that the plan of God for you is good, meets all his demands and moves towards the goal of true maturity.”

Verse 3: “As your spiritual teacher I give this piece of advice to each one of you. Don’t cherish exaggerated ideas of yourself or your importance, but try to have a sane estimate of your capabilities by the light of the faith that God has given to you all.”

In summary, then, as the Spirit of God works within our lives:

1. We are not being fashioned to this age.
2. But we are being transformed.
3. This is done by the renewing of our minds.

This results in your putting to the test what the will of God is, that which is good and well-pleasing and perfect. We prove His will by testing.

In the process, our priorities are purified and our minds are made over anew.

Hendriksen says:

Paul does not say transform yourselves, but let yourselves be transformed.

Transformation is basically the work of the Holy Spirit. It amounts to progressive sanctification.

Lancelot Andrews says:

That so I may never harden my heart in provocation or temptation or in deceitfulness of any sin.

Let not my days be consumed in vanity, my years in misfortune.

Teach me to do the thing that pleaseth Thee, for Thou art my God;

Let thy loving Spirit lead me forth into the land of righteousness.

It seems most appropriate for us to turn to worship and praise by singing with Frances R. Havergal **“Take my Life and Let it Be.”** You will notice that there are four verses in the traditional hymn and I have written a fifth verse that I would like for you to pray and sing with me this morning. *“Take my mind and let it think, Thoughts that please and honor You. Let the mind of Christ my Savior, Show itself in all my ways, Show itself in all my ways.”*

July 2 — Functioning Where You Fit (Romans 12:4)

Romans 12:4: “For just as we are having many members in one body and; all the members are not having the same function,”

Verse 4: “For just as we are having many members in one body and; all the members are not having the same function,”

There are two things that stand out in our meditation this morning. One, there are “many members in one body.” Two, “all the members are not having the same function.”

Paul sees the body of Christ like a gigantic orchestra with everyone playing his part to bring forth beautiful music. Nobody can play all of the instruments and all of the parts, but blended together something beautiful results.

1. For just as we are having many members in one body,

2. And all the members are not having the same function.

1 Corinthians 12:19-22: “And if they were all one member, where would the body be? But now there are many members, but one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I have no need of you,’ or again the head to the feet, ‘I have no need of you.’ On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary.”

There are three things that Paul is longing for in this fourth verse (1) *unity*, (2) *diversity*, and (3) *harmony*.

Spiritual gifts are just tools for ministry. It is through the faithful exercise of our spiritual gift or gifts that we make a contribution to the body of Christ.

There are three verses from 1 Corinthians 12 that I want us to meditate on as we think about our contribution to the body of Christ.

1. 1 Corinthians 12:7: “But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit

for the common good.”

2. I Corinthians 12:11: “But one and the same Spirit works all these things distributing to each one individually just as He wills.”
3. I Corinthians 12:18: “But now God has placed the members each one of them in the body just as He desired.”

Let’s worship the Lord this morning by singing verse 1 of “**Channels Only**”:

“How I praise Thee, precious Saviour, That Thy love laid hold of me; Thou hast saved and cleansed and filled me That I might Thy channel be. Channels only, blessed Master, But with all Thy wondrous pow’r, Flowing thro’ us, Thou canst use us Ev’ry day and ev’ry hour.”

July 3 — Grace Adequate for Gifts Given (Romans 12:5-6)

Romans 12:5, “so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.”

Romans 12:6, “And since we are having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, [let each exercise them accordingly;] if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith;”

Verse 5: “so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.”

Verse 6: “And since we are having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, [let each exercise them accordingly;] if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith;”

We each have “gifts that differ according to the grace given to us.” The apostle said in verse 3: “for through the grace given to me.” The gift is the provision and the grace is the performance.

It is not something we earned or deserved. It is God’s unmerited favor in gifting us to function in the body of Christ.

The apostle lists seven gifts in these verses. None of the four different lists given in Ephesians 4, 1 Peter 4, 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12 are the same. I believe this is purposeful so that no one would be left out. It would indicate to us that none of the lists are complete by themselves.

The greater the gift, of course, the greater the responsibility.

James 3:1: “Let not many of you become teachers my brethren, knowing that as such, we shall incur a stricter judgment.”

Dr. Mitchell says:

God has given to each one of us gifts, according to the measure of faith. God in his sovereignty has put us in the body of Christ and gifted us by the Spirit as it has pleased Him. It’s not what we want. It’s what God wants. He knows the best place for you and me to serve Him. He has put us in the body to function so that He will be glorified.

Let’s worship the Lord this morning by singing verse 2 of “**Channels Only**”:

“Emptied that Thou shouldest fill me, A clean vessel in Thy hand; With no pow’r but as Thou givest, Graciously with each command. Channels only, blessed Master, But with all Thy wondrous pow’r, Flowing thro’ us, Thou canst use us Ev’ry day and ev’ry hour.”

July 4 — Gifts, Gifts, Gifts (Romans 12:7-8)

Romans 12:7: “*if service, in his serving; or he who is teaching, in his teaching;*”

Romans 12:8: “*or he who is exhorting, in his exhortation; he who is giving, with generosity; he who is leading, with diligence; he who is showing mercy, with cheerfulness.*”

Whereas the first gift mentioned is prophesy in verse 6, the other six gifts are mentioned in verses 7 and 8.

Verse 7: “if service, in his serving; or he who is teaching, in his teaching;”

Verse 8: “or he who is exhorting, in his exhortation; he who is giving, with generosity; he who is leading, with diligence; he who is showing mercy, with cheerfulness.”

Dr. Mitchell says:

The final gift Paul lists is showing mercy. This ministry may be to the sick; it may be to failing, stumbling believers; or it may be to discouraged, disheartened Christians. They don't need a club - they need some mercy. God has been wonderful in His mercy to you and to me. Should we not show the same to God's people?

Stedman says:

Paul had to write to Timothy and say, “Stir up the gift that is in you, that which was given you by the Holy Spirit.” Perhaps, Timothy was letting it slide, but we are expected to stir it up. I hope you present your bodies afresh today so you can find that gift and put it to work. Be busy doing what God has sent you here to do. Perhaps, you want to renew again your request to God to help you in the search for your spiritual gift and to lead you to put it into work, with a view toward that day when you stand before Him and he asks, “What did you do with the gift that I gave you?”

Let's worship the Lord this morning with singing verse 3 of “**Channels Only**”:

“Witnessing Thy pow’r to save me, Setting free from self and sin; Thou who bough-test to possess me, in Thy fullness, Lord come in. Channels only, blessed Master, But with all Thy wondrous pow’r, Flowing thro’ us, Thou canst use us Ev’ry day and ev’ry hour.”

July 5 — Seven Gifts and Twenty-One Commands (Romans 12:9)

Romans 12:9: “*Let love be without hypocrisy. Be abhorring what is evil; be clinging to what is good.*”

Verse 9: “Let love be without hypocrisy. Be abhorring what is evil; be clinging to what is good.”

In the remaining verses of the chapter, we will be focusing on interpersonal relationships in view of the gifts that we have been given. How does this all work out in social relationships? I have been commanded in the passage:

1. To present my body.
2. To resist the world and respond to the Spirit.
3. To find my gift.

There will be twenty-one commands in the remaining verses of the chapter. We are going to get a “21-gun salute” and see theology in “shoe leather” as the apostle speaks forth twenty-one maxims or commands to guide us in the Christian life. As we work our way through the remainder of the passage, let us be looking at these twenty

one commands that put theology in “*shoe leather*.”

Command #1 – Let love be without hypocrisy. Phillips translates it, “let us have no imitation Christian love.”

James 3:17: “But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits; unwavering, without hypocrisy.”

1 Peter 1:22: “Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart.”

Dr. Mitchell says:

Paul is saying, “Let love be real. Let love be without hypocrisy. Love must not be something you put on like a coat. Let’s be genuine in our love.”

How can love be “without hypocrisy”? It can only be that when it is the fruitage of the Holy Spirit. It is not fake, it’s a fruit. Galatians 5:22-23: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.” Let love be without hypocrisy.

Philip Yancey says:

All too often the church holds up a mirror reflecting back the society around it rather than a window revealing a different way.

Command #2 – Be abhorring what is evil.

1 Peter 2:11: “Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul.”

1 Timothy 6:11: “But flee from these things, you man of God; and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness.”

Command #3 – Be clinging to what is good. The “good” is the humility and the love that has been mentioned previously. It is humility which manifests itself in love.

This word “clinging” is best described as “*inseparably glued to that which is good*.” We are to be super-glued to the Spirit of God and the things which He produces in our lives.

Please join me in worshipping the Lord by singing verse 4 of “**Channels Only**”: “*Jesus, fill now with Thy Spirit Hearts that full surrender know; That the streams of living water From our inner man may flow. Channels only, blessed Master, But with all Thy wondrous pow’r, Flowing thro’ us, Thou canst use us Ev’ry day and ev’ry hour.*”

July 6 — Devoted to One Another (Romans 12:10)

Romans 12:10: “Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; trying to outdo one another in showing respect;”

Verse 10: “Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; trying to outdo one another in showing respect;”

Command #4 – Be devoted to one another in brotherly love.

Let’s meditate on the words of the Lord Jesus in the upper room as He was preparing to go to the cross. John 13:34-35: “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” (NASB)

This is manifested by trying to outdo one another in showing respect, or leading the way in showing respect. Take the initiative in this regard. Phillips paraphrases verse 10 by saying: “Let us have real warm affection for one another as between brothers, and a

willingness to let the other man have the credit.”

Godet says this word *philostorgos* could be translated “*full of tenderness*.”

Stedman says:

Years ago I ran across a sign that has helped me many times. I have often been on the verge of pointing out that the credit belonged to me, but I have been stopped by the remembrance of this little motto: “There is no limit to the good that a man can do if he doesn’t care who gets the credit.” If you really don’t care who gets the credit, you can just enjoy yourself and do all kinds of good deeds.

Paul Harvey’s story really tells it how it is:

In the wake of Chicago’s worst-ever winter ...

NOW it can be told:

When all of our roof tops were loaded, many overloaded with snow ...

Robert McGrath saw his wife go into the backyard garage to fetch some boxes. Seconds later, he heard the crash. Looking out he saw the roof of the garage had caved in.

McGrath did not stop for hat or coat...

He ran from the house--grabbed a snow shovel--and called out for neighbors to help. Yelling and digging and his sweat freezing on his face-- throwing snow and pulling away boards--he heard her voice--then saw her hand!

He kept digging and throwing and pulling... And within minutes he had his wife in his arms and was sobbing, “Are you all right? Are you all right?”

She was all right.

I would not tell what I am about to tell except that a neighbor saw and snitched...

Mrs. McGrath--had gone into the garage through one door and out through another. She was safe in the house when she looked out and saw her husband digging and shouting orders and throwing lumber and she could not let her gallant rescuer down.

She put her coat on again and went back out and went back in through the back door of the garage--and allowed husband Bob to be her hero.

Let’s worship the Lord this morning by singing verse 1 of “**He is So Precious to Me**”: “*So precious is Jesus, my Saviour, my King, His praise all the day long with rapture I sing; To Him in my weakness for strength I can cling, For He is so precious to me. For He is so precious to me, For He is so precious to me; ‘Tis Heaven below My Redeemer to know, For He is so precious to me.*”

July 7 — Be Diligent and Fervent in Service (Romans 12:11)

Romans 12:11: “*not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord;*

Verse 11: “not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord;”

Command #5: Not lagging behind in diligence. Gift #6 in verse 8 was “leading with diligence.” This is a manifestation of love. We are commanded to pick up our bucket and towel to wash more feet than anybody else!

Phillips translates verse 11: “Let us not allow slackness to spoil our work and let us keep the fires of the Spirit burning, as we do our work for God.”

Dr. Mitchell says: Be diligent. Don’t lie down on the job.

Erma Bombeck said in her book, *I Lost Everything in the Post-Nasal Depression*, she saw this ad in a Midwest newspaper a while back.

It read, “WANTED: Women to do ironing for housewife ten years behind in everything. Must have strong courage and sense of humor.”

Command #6: Fervent in Spirit. This is love that boils over in fervency. Phillips paraphrases it: “let us keep the fires of the spirit burning. It is love that has caught fire.”

Albert Schweitzer said:

In everyone’s life, at some time, our inner fire goes out.

It is then burst into flame by an encounter with another human being.

We should all be thankful for those people who rekindle the inner spirit.

Command #7: Serving the Lord.

Ecclesiastes 9:10: “Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might, for in the grave, where you are going, there is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom.”

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

Passion comes from the heart and manifests as optimism, excitement, emotional connection, determination. It fires unrelenting drive. Enthusiasm is deeply rooted in the power of choice rather than circumstance. Enthusiasts believe that the best way to predict the future is to create it. In fact, enthusiasm becomes a moral imperative, making the person part of the solution rather than part of the problem of feeling essentially hopeless and helpless.

Let’s worship the Lord together this morning by singing verse 1 of **“He Keeps Me Singing”**: *“There’s within my heart a melody, Jesus whispers sweet and low; ‘Fear not, I am with thee, peace, be still, In all life’s ebb and flow.’ Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Sweetest name I know, Fills my ev’ry longing, Keeps me singing as I go.”*

July 8 — A Three-Point Christian Life (Romans 12:12)

Romans 12:12: “rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, persisting in prayer,”

Verse 12: “rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, persisting in prayer,”

The 3-point Christian life we are talking about in this verse is:

1. Rejoicing in Hope
2. Persevering in Tribulation
3. Persisting in Prayer

Command #8: Rejoicing in hope.

Dr. Mitchell says:

Think of the early martyrs who went to the amphitheater singing the glories of Jesus even though they were going to be torn to pieces by wild beasts. They went singing because they were rejoicing in hope of the glory of God. They were going to say, “Good night, earth! Good morning, glory!” Oh, to rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Won’t you do that today?

J. Vernon McGee says:

I think of a brother down in my Southland years ago. In a church service, they were giving favorite Scripture verses. He stood and said that his favorite verse was "It came to pass." Everyone looked puzzled. The preacher stood up and said, "Brother, how in the world can 'It came to pass' be your favorite?" His answer was, "When I have trouble, and when I have problems, I like to read that verse, 'It came to pass,' and I know that my trouble or my problem has come to pass; it hasn't come to stay." He was looking for a new day out there, and that is what Paul has in mind when he says, "rejoicing in hope."

Command #9: Persevering in tribulation.

Acts 20:24: "But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, in order that I may finish my course, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God."

When Jesus is commending the Ephesian church in Revelation 2, the first of seven letters, He says in Revelation 2:3: "And you have perseverance and have endured for my name sake and have not grown weary."

1 Peter 5:10: "And after you have suffered for a little, the God of all grace who called you to His eternal glory in Christ will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you."

I think sometimes if we were sensitive, we would hear God saying, "This is time to buck-up, bow your neck, buckle your belt and hang in there!"

Command#10: Persisting in prayer.

Ronald Dunn says:

We enter the place of intercession with our much need and leave with His much more.

Ruth Graham, the wife of Billy Graham, is quoted as saying:

If God answered every prayer of mine, I would have married the wrong man seven times. Thank God for some unanswered prayers.

1 John 5:14-15: "And this is the confidence which we have before Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him."(NASB)

What are the three major points of the Christian life in our verse for today?

1. Rejoicing in Hope
2. Persevering in Tribulation
3. Persisting in Prayer

Join me, please, in singing verses 2 & 3 of "**He Keeps Me Singing**": *"All my life was wrecked by sin and strife, Discord filled my heart with pain, Jesus swept across the broken strings, Stirred the slumbering cords again. Feasting on the riches of His grace, Resting 'neath his sheltering wing, Always looking on His smiling face, That is why I shout and sing. Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Sweetest name I know, Fills my ev'ry longing, Keeps me singing as I go."*

July 9 — Learning to Give and Invite People for Dinner (Romans 12:13)

Romans 12:13: "contributing to the needs of the saints, pursuing hospitality."

Verse 13: "contributing to the needs of the saints, pursuing hospitality."

Command #11: Contributing to the needs of the saints. 2 Corinthians 9:6-7:

“Now this I say, he who sows sparingly shall also reap sparingly; and he who sows bountifully shall also reap bountifully. Let each one do just as he has purposed in his heart; not grudgingly or under compulsion; for God loves a cheerful giver.”

I love Paul’s words to the Corinthian saints in 2 Corinthians 8:1-5: “Now, brethren, we wish to make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia, that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality. For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability, they gave of their own accord, begging us with much entreaty for the favor of participation in the support of the saints, and this, not as we had expected, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God.”

Command #12: Pursuing hospitality. Notice the word “pursue,” in other words, don’t wait to asked.

Dr. Mitchell says:

And then be given to hospitality. I like what Hebrews 13:2 says about entertaining angels unaware. Be given to hospitality but don’t do it with a grudging spirit (1 Peter 4:9). Don’t say, “I wish they would go home. I wish they would go someplace else. Don’t they know I’m busy?” No, be given to hospitality.

The Greek word for “hospitality” could be translated, *“the love of a stranger.”*

HOSPITALITY

“The Love of a Stranger”

HOME IS WHERE IT HAPPENS.

OPPORTUNITY FOR EDIFICATION AND EVANGELISM.

SPIRITUALLY, SENSITIVE SERVANTS.

PRAYER, PREPARATIONS AND PERSEVERANCE.

INVITATIONS THAT ISSUE IN INVOLVEMENT.

TIME AND TALENTS IT TAKES TO TOUCH LIVES.

ACTIVE ADVENTURE AND ACCEPTANCE.

LOVE THAT LONGS TO LET YOU LOOK.

IDEAS INITIATING IMPACT.

TABLE TALK THAT TELLS MY TESTIMONY.

YOU AND YOUR YEARNING TO YIELD.

“Behold, I am standing at the door and knocking; if anyone is hearing my voice and is opening the door, I will come in to him, and will dine with him, and he with me.” (Revelation 3:20)

“An Open Heart precedes an Open House.”

“Lord, open our hearts, our hands and our homes!”

I think it would be appropriate to sing Bill & Gloria Gaither’s great song, **“The Family of God”**: *“You will notice we say brother and sister ‘round here. It’s because we’re a fam’ly and these folks are so near. When one has a heartache we all share the tears, And rejoice in each vict’ry in this fam’ly so dear. From the door of an orph’nage to the house of the King, No longer an outcast, a new song I sing; From rags unto riches, from the weak to the strong, I’m not worthy to be here, but praise God I belong! I’m so glad I’m a part of the fam’ly of God; I’ve been washed in the fountain, Cleansed by His blood! Joint heirs with Jesus as we travel this sod, For I’m part of the fam’ly, the fam’ly of God.”*

July 10 — Learning to Be a Blessing (Romans 12:14-15)

Romans 12:14: *“Be blessing those who are persecuting you; be blessing and not cursing.”*

Romans 12:15: *“Be rejoicing with those who are rejoicing, and be weeping with those who are weeping.”*

Verse 14: “Be blessing those who are persecuting you; be blessing and not cursing.”

Command #13: **Be blessing those who are persecuting you; be blessing and not cursing.**

It is important for us to note that these are *present imperative*, and they show this to be a habit of life.

1 Peter 3:9: “not returning evil for evil, or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing.”

Verse 15: “Be rejoicing with those who are rejoicing, and be weeping with those who are weeping.”

Command #14: **Be rejoicing with those who are rejoicing.**

Godet says:

The connection between verses 14 and 15 is the idea of self-forgetfulness. As self-forgetting is needed to bless him who hates us, we must also be freed from self to identify ourselves with the joy of others when our heart is full of grief, and with his grief when we ourselves are filled with joy.

Command #15: **Be weeping with those who are weeping.** John 11:33-35: “When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her, also weeping, He was deeply moved in spirit, and was troubled, and said, ‘Where have you laid him?’ They said to Him, ‘Lord, come and see.’ Jesus wept.”

It is far easier to “weep with those who are weeping” than it is to “rejoice with those who are rejoicing.”

Psalm 126: 5-6: “Those who plant in tears will harvest with shouts of joy. They weep as they go to plant their seed, but they sing as they return with the harvest.” (*New Living Translation*)

Revelation 7:17: “For the Lamb on the throne will be their Shepherd. He will lead them to springs of life-giving water. And God will wipe every tear from their eyes.” (*New Living Translation*)

Let’s worship the Lord together as we sing verse 1 of **“For Those Tears I Died”**:
“You said You’d come and share all my sorrows. You said You’d be there for all my tomorrows. I came so close to sending You away, But just like You promised You came there to stay, I just had to pray. And Jesus said, ‘Come to the water, stand by My side. I know you are thirsty, You won’t be denied I felt ev’ry teardrop when in darkness you cried And I strove to remind you That for those tears I died.’”

July 11 — Living in Humble Harmony (Romans 12:16-17)

Romans 12:16: *“Be having the same mind toward one another; not thinking the high things, but accommodating yourself to humble ways. Do not be wise in your own estimation.”*

Romans 12:17: *“Do not be paying back evil for evil to anyone, taking into con-*

sideration what is right in the sight of all men.”

Verse 16: “Be having the same mind toward one another; not thinking the high things, but accommodating yourself to humble ways. Do not be wise in your own estimation.”

Command #16: **Be having the same mind toward one another;** [negatively] **not thinking the high things, but** [positively] **accommodating yourself to humble ways.**

Phillips paraphrases this verse by saying: “Live in harmony with each other. Don’t become snobbish but take a real interest in ordinary people. Don’t become set in your own opinions.”

Philippians 2:3-5 says much the same thing. The Phillips translation says: “Never act from motives of rivalry or personal vanity, but in humility think more of each other than you do of yourselves. None of you should think only of his own affairs, but should learn to see things from other people’s point of view. Let Christ himself be your example as to what your attitude should be.”

Command #17: **Do not be wise in your own estimation.**

John the Apostle of Love certainly ran into conflict in his 3rd epistle when he speaks of Diotrephes in verses 9 and 10: “I sent a brief letter to the church about this, but Diotrephes who loves to be the leader, does not acknowledge our authority. When I come, I will report some of the things he is doing and the wicked things he is saying about us. He not only refuses to welcome the traveling teachers, but also tells others not to help them and when they do help, he puts them out of the church.” (New Living Translation)

Verse 17: “Do not be paying back evil for evil to anyone, taking into consideration what is right in the sight of all men.”

Command #18: **Do not be paying back evil for evil to anyone.**

Dr. Mitchell says:

Don’t return evil for evil--return good. In 1 Peter 3:9, the apostle tells us not to repay “evil for evil, or railing for railing; but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing.”

Stedman says:

As a boy in Montana I used to watch the cows in the corral. They would be standing there peacefully and then one cow would kick another cow. Of course, that cow had to kick back. Then the first cow kicked harder and missed the second cow and hit a third. That cow kicked back. I watched that happen many times. One single cow, starting to kick another, soon had the whole corral kicking and milling and mooing at one another, mad as could be. This happens in congregations, too.

Peterson paraphrased 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 in The Message: “Love never gives up. Love cares more for others than for self. Love doesn’t want what it doesn’t have. Love doesn’t strut, Doesn’t have a swelled head, Doesn’t force itself on others, Isn’t always ‘me first’, Doesn’t fly off the handle, Doesn’t keep score of the sins of others, Doesn’t revel when others grovel, Takes pleasure in the flowering of truth, Puts up with anything, Trusts God always, Always looks for the best, Never looks back, But keeps going to the end.”

Please let’s join in worship as we sing verse 1 of that great old hymn, “**Day by Day**”: “*Day by day with each passing moment, Strength I find to meet my trials here,*

Trusting in my Father's wise bestowment, I've no cause for worry or for fear. He whose heart is kind beyond all measure Gives unto each day what He deems best. Lovingly, its part of pain and pleasure, Mingling toil with peace and rest."

July 12 — Doing the Best You Can to Live in Peace (Romans 12:18-19)

Romans 12:18: *"If possible, so far as it is depending on you, be living in peace with all men."*

Romans 12:19: *"Do not be avenging yourselves, beloved ones, but give room for the wrath [of God], for it has been written: 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay', says the Lord."*

Verse 18: "If possible, so far as it is depending on you, be living in peace with all men."

Command #19: **If possible, so far as it is depending on you, be living in peace with all men.**

J. Vernon McGee says:

The Bible says 'as much as lieth in you', it doesn't say you have to get along with her. Just do the best you can.

In Philippians 4, Paul pleads with the folks in Philippi to help Euodia and Syntyche get their act together. Philippians 4:2-3: "Now I want to plead with those two women Euodia and Syntyche. Please, because you belong to the Lord, settle your disagreement. And I ask you, my true teammate, to help these two women, for they worked hard with me in telling others the Good News. And they worked along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are written in the Book of Life." (New Living Translation)

Verse 19: "Do not be avenging yourselves, beloved ones, but give room for the wrath [of God], for it has been written: 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay', says the Lord."

Command #20: **Do not be avenging yourselves, beloved ones, but give room for the wrath [of God].** Here we have the negative and the positive. Negatively, "do not be avenging yourselves," and positively, "give room for the wrath [of God]."

Dr. Mitchell says:

Paul concludes this twelfth chapter by giving us our responsibility toward those who don't love us or like us, who are opposed to our ministry and to our Christian faith. If you try to live as a Christian and please God, you are bound to receive opposition of some kind. Let's face up to it. The closer you walk to the Lord and the more you seek to please Him, the greater will be the opposition you can expect. We live in a world that has no place for the Savior. So what is my relationship to be?

Let's praise the Lord together as we sing verse 2 of **"Day by Day"**: *"Ev'ry day the Lord Himself is near me With a special mercy for each hour; All my cares He fain would bear; and cheer me, He whose name is Counsellor and Pow'r. The protection of His child and treasure Is a charge that on Himself He laid; As your days, your strength shall be in measure, This the pledge to me He made."*

July 13 — Taking the High Road (Romans 12:20-21)

Romans 12:20: *"But if your enemy is hungry, be feeding him; if he is thirsty, be giving him a drink; for in doing this, you will heap burning coals of fire upon his*

head.”

Romans 12:21: “Do not be overcome by evil, but be overcoming the evil by means of the good.”

Verse 20: “But if your enemy is hungry, be feeding him; if he is thirsty, be giving him a drink; for in doing this, you will heap burning coals of fire upon his head.”

You see this principle carried out in the conflict between Saul and David as Saul is trying to murder David. With Abishai, David snuck into camp and stole Saul’s spear and water jug. At another time, David also cut off a piece of Saul’s robe in a cave, but did not kill him.

1 Peter 2:15: “For such is the will of God, that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men.”

The passage is from the book of Proverbs that Paul is using in this situation. Proverbs 25:21-22: “If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat; if he is thirsty, give him water to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head, and the Lord will reward you.”

“Heaping the burning coals of fire upon this head” is the intense pain, the shame and repentance involved, that comes from realizing the wrong that was done is being returned with a kindness.

Verse 21: “Do not be overcome by evil, but be overcoming the evil by means of the good.”

Command #21(our last command): Do not be negatively overcome by evil, but positively be overcoming the evil by means of the good.

Stedman says:

One day I read a story about a boy who was in the Army. He was a Christian and had formed the habit of praying beside his bed before he went to sleep. He kept up this practice in the army, but he became an object of mockery and ridicule to the entire barracks. One night, he knelt to pray after a long, weary march. As he was praying, one of his tormentors took off his muddy boots and threw them at the boy, one at a time, hitting him on each side of his head. Saying nothing about it, the Christian just took the boots and put them beside his bed and continued to pray. But the next morning when the other man woke up, he found his boots sitting beside his bed, all shined and polished. It so broke his heart that he came to the boy and asked him for forgiveness. That led, after a time, to the man becoming a Christian. This is what Paul means when he says you overcome evil with good.

I love it when Russell Newport sings that great hymn, **“Broken and Spilled Out”**:

ONE DAY, A PLAIN VILLAGE WOMAN,
DRIVEN BY LOVE FOR HER LORD,
RECKLESSLY POURED OUT A VALUABLE ESSENCE,
DISREGARDING THE SOURCE.
AND, ONCE IT WAS BROKEN AND SPILLED OUT,
A FRAGRANCE FILLED ALL THE ROOM.
LIKE A PRISONER RELEASED FROM HIS SHACKELS,
LIKE A SPIRIT SET FREE FROM THE GLOOM.

BROKEN AND SPILLED OUT
JUST FOR LOVE OF YOU, JESUS,

THY MOST PRECIOUS TREASURE

LAVISHED ON ME.

BROKEN AND SPILLED OUT

AND POURED AT YOUR FEET.

IN SWEET ABANDON

LET ME BE SPILLED OUT AND USED UP FOR THEE.

Let's worship the Lord together by singing verse 3 of **"Day by Day"**: *"Help me then in ev'ry tribulation So to trust Thy promises, O Lord, That I lose not faith's sweet consolation Offered me within Thy holy Word. Help me, Lord, when toil and trouble meeting, E'er to take, as from a father's hand, One by one, the days, the moments fleeting, Till I reach the promised land."*

July 14 — The Powers That Be (Romans 13:1-2)

Romans 13:1: *"Let every person be putting himself in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which are existing are established by God."*

Romans 13:2: *"so that he who is resisting authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves."*

Verse 1: "Let every person be putting himself in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which are existing are established by God."

There are eight commands that are given in this passage. The first one is in verse 1.

Command #1: **Let every person be putting himself in subjection to the governing authority.**

Note with the words "every person," there are no exceptions.

The reason for the command is given in the latter part of the verse, "for there is no authority except from God and those which are existing are established by God."

J Vernon McGee says:

We are to submit ourselves to governmental authorities for the very simple reason that they are ordained of God. It is true that the kingdoms of this world belong to Satan and that injustice and corruption abound in all governments; yet God still has control.

Dr. Mitchell says:

When Paul wrote this passage, Nero was the emperor of Rome. He was a terrible man who came to power only because his mother, Agrippina, got rid of every man who stood in Nero's way. There was no question she was a wicked woman. But after Nero came to the throne, he had his mother banished from the royal palace and condemned her to death. When the executioners came to kill her, she said, "Strike! Level your raids against the womb which gave birth to such a monster."

Verse 2: "so that he who is resisting authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves."

Since this authority is from God and established by God, there are some serious consequences when you resist that authority.

The exceptions to the statement made in verse 2 about "resisting authority" have to do primarily with the freedom to (1) *preach the gospel* or (2) *stand for your conviction*.

tions when these are forged by the Spirit of God.

Since sin is rebellion against divine authority, there are consequences. We can talk to Saul, Ahab and a whole host of others.

Stuart Hamblen came to know the Lord through Billy Graham's early ministry in Los Angeles. He wrote several great songs. I love this one we're going to sing this morning as an act of worship **"Is He Satisfied?"**: *"Do you ever search your heart as you watch the day depart? Is there something 'way down deep you try to hide? If this day should be the end and eternity begin, when the book is opened wide, would the Lord be satisfied? (Feeble) is the lamp of fame by which man inscribes his name on the walls of time for other men to see. Though he boasts of wealth and pow'r none can help him in that hour when the angels hear his plea; is He satisfied with me? Is He satisfied, is He satisfied? Is He satisfied with me? Have I done my best, have I stood the test? Is He satisfied with me? When my Lord shall come again, when He walks and talks with men, what is ev'ry friend He had were just like me? Would he feel a welcome here or would He go away in tears? Am I all that I should be? Is He satisfied with me? Feeble me?"*

July 15 — Kicking Against a Stump (Romans 13:3-4)

Romans 13:3: *"For the rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Now are you desiring to be having no fear of the authority? Keep on doing the good, and You will have commendation from the same;"*

Romans 13:4: *"for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you are doing what is evil, be fearing; for it is not bearing the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who is bringing wrath upon the one who is practicing evil."*

Verse 3: "For the rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Now are you desiring to be having no fear of the authority? Keep on doing the good, and You will have commendation from the same;"

Paul gives us a reason for the previous statement "for the rulers are [negatively] not a cause of fear for good behavior, but [positively] for evil."

Genesis 4:6-7: "Then the Lord said to Cain, 'Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it.'"

I was teaching a Bible class in Greenville years ago, and there were two DPS officers in my class. I wanted to have some fun with them and just said, "You know I've never had an officer pull me over and say, 'Sir, you were driving so beautifully I just wanted to stop you and tell you.' Rather, there were obviously things that had been done disobediently and there were consequences." These two guys saw Pearl and I coming from Sherman to Greenville one afternoon and pulled us over. When I realized what they were doing, they handed me a ticket that said, "We are giving you this ticket as the safest driving Bible teacher in the Southwest. And you are going to appear before the one and only true judge." I have that ticket framed in my office as a memory that there is good law-abiding conduct.

Paul asks the only question in the passage, "Now are you desiring to be having no fear of the authority?" He follows up this question with the second command.

Command #2: Keep on doing the good, and you will have commendation from the same.

The late David Watson said it best:

The root of all sin could be called independence; and it is for this reason that God calls us not only into a personal relationship with Himself, but at the same time into a corporate relationship with the rest of the people of God. We are to be dependent upon Him; and in the right sense, dependent on one another.

Verse 4: “for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you are doing what is evil, be fearing; for it is not bearing the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who is bringing wrath upon the one who is practicing evil.”

The “sword” is the symbol of justice in the passage. Our last phrase reads “for it is a minister of God an avenger who is bringing wrath upon the one who is practicing evil.”

When it comes to authority, there is a struggle that goes on within each of us, whether we are going to be living above the law or by the law.

The answer to that choice determines the consequences.

Many of our great old invitation hymns reveal the constant struggle between going one way and going God’s way. Charlotte Elliott expresses this in her hymn we are going to worship the Lord by singing this morning, **“Just as I am.”** Let’s sing verses 1, 2 and 3. *“Just as I am, without one plea, But that Thy blood was shed for me, And that Thou bidst me come to Thee, O Lamb of God, I come! I come! Just as I am, and waiting not, To rid my soul of one dark blot, to Thee whose blood can cleanse each spot, O Lamb of God, I come! I come! Just as I am, tho’ tossed about With many a conflict, many a doubt, Fightings and fears within, without, O Lamb of God, I come! I come!”*

July 16 — Consequences or Conscience (Romans 13:5-6)

Romans 13:5: “Wherefore it is necessary to be putting oneself in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also because of conscience.”

Romans 13:6: “For because of this you also are paying taxes, for [rulers] are servants of God, continually giving their attention to this very thing.”

Verse 5: “Wherefore it is necessary to be putting oneself in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also because of conscience.”

“Wherefore” summarizes the valid supposition that comes from the previous argument. “Wherefore, it is necessary to be putting oneself in subjection.” This takes us back to Command #1 and verse 1, **“Let every person be putting himself in subjection to the governing authority.”** Then the apostle gives a negative and a positive. Negatively, “not only because of wrath,” but positively, “also because of conscience.”

The conscience is clear when we do submit because it is the right thing to do.

Isaiah 32:17: “The fruit of righteousness will be peace. The effect of righteousness will be quietness and competence forever.”

Verse 6: “For because of this you also are paying taxes, for [rulers] are servants of God, continually giving their attention to this very thing.”

J Vernon McGee says:

In this verse the word for minister is one from which we get our word liturgy. It is strictly religious and is the same word used as angels in Hebrews 1:14 where they are called ministering spirits. This means that the ruler occupies a divinely-

appointed office. He has no religious function, of course, but he holds a God-appointed office. That makes me pay my taxes, although I resent doing so.

Paul tells the Thessalonians in 1 Thessalonians 4:11: “Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, and attend to your own business, and work with your hands just as we commanded you.”

In the last two verses of “**Just as I am**,” Charlotte Elliott reveals the powerful conviction of the spirit in acknowledgment of sin and choosing the right way. Please join me in worship this morning by singing verses 4 and 5: “*Just as I am, poor, wretched, blind; sight, riches, healing of the mind, Yea, all I need in Thee to find, O Lamb of God, I come! I come! Just as I am, Thou wilt receive, Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve; Because Thy promise I believe, O Lamb of God, I come! I come!*”

July 17 — Living a Law-Abiding Life (Romans 13:7-8)

Romans 13:7: “*Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax [is due]; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.*”

Romans 13:8: “*Be owing nothing to anyone except to be loving one another; for the one who is loving the other has fulfilled the law.*”

Verse 7: “Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax [is due]; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.”

The third command is in verse 7:

Command #3: Render to all what is due them. Command #1 was in verse 1, “let every person be putting themselves in subjection to the governing authority.” Command #2 was in verse 3, “keep on doing the good and you will have commendation from the same” and now command #3 in verse 7, “render to all what is due them.”

The apostle then outlines 4 specifics:

1. tax to whom tax [is due]
2. custom to whom custom
3. fear to whom fear
4. honor to whom honor.

Luke 20:25: “And he said to them, ‘Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.’”

Verse 8: “Be owing nothing to anyone except to be loving one another; for the one who is loving the other has fulfilled the law.”

Command #4: Be owing nothing to anyone except to be loving one another. This takes us back to Romans 12:9: “Let love be without hypocrisy. Be abhorring what is evil; be clinging to what is good.”

Stedman says:

Therefore, Paul says, when you rub shoulders with people, remember that your first obligation is to love them. Act in love. Show courtesy, kindness, patience, understanding, long-suffering - whatever it takes, whatever the scene demands, you can show that. It is a debt you owe that person. “Owe no man anything but to love one another.”

The two verses I have chosen for the year are first Corinthians 16:13-14: “Be on guard. Stand firm in the faith. Be courageous. Be strong. And do everything with love.”

Howard and Jeanne Hendricks when talking about building a marriage that sur-

vives say:

Remember: love begets love, love prompts obedience, love motivates, love transforms, love stabilizes a relationship.

I think it would be wonderful to sing that great old prayer hymn, **“Have Thine Own Way, Lord,”** to surrender to Him in a fresh new way this morning as we begin this day telling Him to love others through us. We are totally available in surrender to Him to do His good will and purpose. Join me in singing verses 1 and 2: *“Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way! Thou art the potter, I am the clay. Mould me and make me After Thy will, While I am waiting, Yielded and still. Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way! Search me and try me, Master, today! Whiter than snow, Lord, Wash me just now, As in Thy presence Humbly I bow.”*

July 18 — Love and the Law (Romans 13:9-10)

Romans 13:9: *“For this, ‘You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,’ and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”*

Romans 13:10: *“Love is working no evil to a neighbor; love therefore is the fulfillment of the law.”*

Verse 9: “For this, ‘You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,’ and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”

Dr. Mitchell says:

In the Ten Commandments, the first four laws govern our responsibility to God. Paul doesn’t use them here since he is talking about our relationship to one another. Leviticus 19:18: “Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord.”

Stedman says:

Thus, as Paul says, Love will not sleep with your neighbor’s wife or husband. Love will not murder your neighbor, or poison his dog, or throw garbage over the fence into his back yard, or do anything harmful to him. Love will not steal from your neighbor, or even keep his lawn mower for more than a month. Love will not covet what is your neighbor’s, it won’t drool over his pool, or stew about his new Porsche. Love does not want what your neighbor has, but rejoices with him over what he has. Love, therefore, fulfills the law.

Verse 10: “Love is working no evil to a neighbor; love therefore is the fulfillment of the law.”

Here the apostle summarizes what he has been saying by giving us a working definition for love, “Love is working no evil to a neighbor.” He then concludes with a supposition he made earlier, “Love, therefore, is the fulfillment of the Law.”

When authority is right, relationships are right. Joe Aldrich, a personal friend that has gone home to be with the Lord, wrote the book, *Secrets to Inner Beauty*. He says:

First of all, submission is necessary so that a man can be a man. An old proverb says “Ill fares the house that knows a rooster that’s silent and a hen that crows.”

Men often complain that their wives have lost their beauty and attractiveness, the very qualities which the husband’s love is to sustain and develop. Wives often complain about their husband’s lack of leadership and spiritual maturity, the very

thing their submission and inner beauty are designed to stimulate. Godly submission stimulates godly leadership.

I feel it is critical for us to turn to our vertical relationship and pray the last two verses of the hymn we started yesterday. Let's sing verses 3 and 4 in worship to our Lord, **"Have Thine Own Way, Lord":** *"Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way! Wounded and weary, Help me, I pray! Power, all power, Surely is Thine! Touch me and heal me, Saviour divine! Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way! Hold o'er my being Absolute sway! Fill with Thy Spirit Till all shall see Christ only, always, Living in me!"*

July 19 — The Time Has Come for a Decision (Romans 13:11-12)

Romans 13:11: *"And this do, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now our salvation is nearer to us than when we believed."*

Romans 13:12: *"The night is almost gone, and the day is at hand. Let us therefore lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light."*

Verse 11: "And this do, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now our salvation is nearer to us than when we believed."

Here in Verse 11 is our next Command.

Command #5: And this do, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now our salvation is nearer to us than when we believed. The motivation is the nearness of our final salvation. Why live comfortably with authority? Why love? Jesus is Coming! To "awaken from sleep" is to recognize our obligations, our responsibilities and our duties.

To be "sleeping" is to be forgetful of those obligations.

The reason for this command is "now our salvation is nearer to us than when we believed." Why present our bodies? Why exercise our Gifts? Why take responsibility for one another? Why submit? Why love? It is because our salvation is nearer to us than when we believed.

Dr. Mitchell says:

Oh, listen, my friend, it's high time to awake out of sleep. Are you a sleepy Christian? An indifferent Christian? A lukewarm Christian? Are you so satisfied with the things of this world that in some way, somehow, you have missed Christ's appeal that you manifest the character, the heart, the compassion and tenderness of the Savior to men and women for whom He died? How are we going to reach our generation if we don't manifest that precious love of the Savior?

Someone once asked John Wesley, "Sir, what would you do if you knew the Lord was coming today?" He said, "I would do just what I am doing. I am living today, every day, in the anticipation of the coming of our Saviour."

Proverbs 27:1: "Do not boast about tomorrow for you do not know what a day may bring forth."

James 4:13-14: "Come now you who say today or tomorrow we shall go to such and such a city and spend a year there, and engage in business and make a profit. Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away."

2 Corinthians 6:2: "For He says, 'At the acceptable time, I listened to you. On the day of salvation, I helped you. Behold now is the acceptable time. Behold now is the

day of salvation.”

Verse 12: “The night is almost gone, and the day is at hand. Let us therefore lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.”

We learn the next command in this verse.

Command #6: Let us therefore lay aside the deeds of the darkness and put on the armor of light.

Hebrews 12:1-2: “Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

I like what C.S. Lewis says:

We are half-hearted creatures, fooling around with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us. Like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea, we are far too easily pleased.

Let’s worship the Lord this morning by singing verses 1 and 2 of **“All That Thrills My Soul”**: *“Who can cheer the heart like Jesus, By His presence all divine? True and tender, pure and precious, O, how blest to call Him mine! Love of Christ so freely given, Grace of God beyond degree, Mercy higher than the heavens Deeper than the deepest sea. All that thrills my soul is Jesus; He is more than life to me; And the fairest of ten thousand, In my blessed Lord I see.”*

July 20 — Conducting Ourselves Properly (Romans 13:13-14)

Romans 13:13: “*Let us walk around properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual excesses and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy.*”

Romans 13:14: “*But clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and stop making provision for the flesh in regard to its desires.*”

Verse 13: “Let us walk around properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual excesses and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy.”

Command #7: Let us walk around properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual excesses and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy.

The apostle then gives three pairs of negatives:

1. Not in carousing and drunkenness
2. Not in sexual excesses and sensuality
3. Not in strife and jealousy

Verse 14: “But clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and stop making provision for the flesh in regard to its desires.”

Command #8: Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and stop making provision for the flesh in regard to its desires.

This command takes us back to Romans 12:2: “And stop being fashioned to this age, but let yourselves be transformed by the renewing of your mind, resulting in your putting to the test what the will of God is, that which is good and well-pleasing and perfect.”

Stedman observes:

J. B. Phillips’ translation of this last verse puts it beautifully: “Let us be Christ’s

men from head to foot, and give no chance to the flesh to have its fling.” That is the way to live.

Since this is the end of Chapter 13, let’s just meditate on the eight commands in this chapter.

Command#1 (Verse 1): Let every person be putting himself in subjection to the governing authorities.

Command#2 (Verse 3): Keep on doing the good, and you will have commendation from the same.

Command#3 (Verse 7): Render to all what is due them.

Command#4 (Verse 8): Be owing nothing to anyone except to be loving one another.

Command#5 (Verse 11): And this do, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now our salvation is nearer to us than when we believed.

Command#6 (Verse 12): Let us therefore lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.

Command#7 (Verse 13): Let us walk around properly as in the day not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual excesses and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy.

Command #8 (Verse 14): Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and stop making provision for the flesh in regard to its desires.

Paul says something similar in Colossians 3:12-14: “And so, as those who have been chosen of God holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone. Just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. And beyond all these things, put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.”

Let’s enjoy our moment of worship as we continue singing the hymn from yesterday, “**All That Thrills My Soul.**” Let’s sing verses 4 and 5: “*By the crystal flowing river With the ransomed I will sing, And forever and forever Praise and glorify the King. Ev’ry need His hand supplying, Ev’ry good in Him I see; On His strength divine relying, He is all in all to me. All that thrills my soul is Jesus; He is more than life to me; And the fairest of ten thousand, In my blessed Lord I see.*”

July 21 — He Ain’t Heavy (Romans 14:1-2)

Romans 14:1: “Now be accepting the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions.”

Romans 14:2: “One man is having faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak is eating vegetables [only].”

Verse 1: “Now be accepting the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions.”

J. Vernon McGee says:

In this section, Paul puts down principles of conduct for Christians relative to questionable matters. He gives us three guidelines: conviction, conscience, and consideration.

Command#1: Now be accepting the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary reminds us that accepting is in the present tense and could be translated “keep on taking to yourselves.”

Romans 15:7: “Wherefore, be accepting one another, even as also Christ accepted us to the glory of God.”

Now be accepting the one who is weak in faith. It is a matter of immaturity, not iniquity; scruples and not sin. But in the continuing acceptance of this one who is weak be sure you are not doing it for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions.

Verse 2: “One man is having faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak is eating vegetables [only].”

One man [who is the strong man] is having faith that he may eat all things, but [on the other hand, the other individual] who is weak is eating vegetables [only].

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

In such situations, neither believer should judge the other.

Stedman quotes William Barclay when he says:

Such a man is weak in the faith because he has not yet discovered the meaning of Christian freedom; he is at heart still a legalist; he sees Christianity as a thing of rules and regulations. His whole aim is to govern his life by a series of laws and observances.

Jerry White in his book, *Honesty, Morality and Conscience*, says:

When you make a decision, evaluate whether it is based on conviction that has been thought through and studied, or simply prejudice. Someone has said, “The difference between a conviction and prejudice is that you can explain a conviction without getting angry.” Learn to develop your convictions and suppress prejudice.

I really love the way Phillip’s translates 1 Corinthians 13:4: “This love of which I speak is slow to lose patience - it looks for a way of being constructive. It is not possessive: it is neither anxious to impress nor does it cherish inflated ideas of its own importance.”

Please join me in worship as we sing Fanny Crosby’s wonderful hymn, “**Draw Me Nearer.**” Let’s sing verses 1 and 3: “*I am Thine, O Lord, I have heard Thy voice, And it told Thy love to me; But I long to rise in the arms of faith, And be closer drawn to Thee. O, the pure delight of a single hour That before Thy throne I spend, When I kneel in prayer, and with Thee, my God, I commune as friend with friend! Draw me nearer, nearer, nearer blessed Lord, To the cross where Thou hast died; Draw me nearer, nearer, nearer blessed Lord, To Thy precious, bleeding side.*”

July 22 — He’s My Brother (Romans 14:3-4)

Romans 14:3: “*Let not him who is eating be treating with contempt him who is not eating, and let not him who is not eating be judging him who is eating, for God accepted him.*”

Romans 14:4: “*Who are you, the one who is judging the house-servant of another? To his own master he is standing or falling; and stand he will, for the Lord is able to make him stand.*”

Verse 3: “Let not him who is eating be treating with contempt him who is not eating, and let not him who is not eating be judging him who is eating, for God accepted him.”

In verse 3, we have the 2nd and 3rd commands in the passage. Command#1 in verse 1 was “Now be accepting the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions.”

Command#2: Let not him who is eating be treating with contempt him who is not eating.

Command#3: Let not him who is not eating be judging him who is eating, for God accepted him.

The word translated “*treating with contempt*,” according to The Bible Knowledge Commentary, means “*to look down upon*.”

The word means “*to despise*” or “*to reject with contempt*.”

Stedman says:

Someone has defined a legalist as someone who lives in mortal terror that someone, somewhere, is enjoying himself.

So, we have been warned about contempt and condemnation in verse 3 when it comes to the matter of exercising our rights in the realm of Christian conduct.

Verse 4: “Who are you, the one who is judging the house-servant of another? To his own master he is standing or falling; and stand he will, for the Lord is able to make him stand.”

The one who is judging the house-servant of another indicates, with the present tense, that this is actually going on.

“Who are you [weak one], the one who is judging the house-servant of another?”

We need to realize we are not in the cloning business, turning out Christian clones!

Spurgeon speaking of John Calvin says:

When Calvin was banished from ungrateful Geneva, he said, “Most assuredly if I had merely served man, this would have been a poor recompense; but it is my happiness that I have served Him who never fails to reward His servants to the full extent of His promise.”

I think the warning in these verses is don’t let the devil distract you from fruitful ministry by focusing on the differing opinions of conduct.

I find myself singing and worshiping the Lord with that wonderful hymn, “**God Will Take Care of You.**” Let’s sing verses 1 and 3 this morning: “*Be not dismayed whate’er betide, God will take care of you; Beneath His wings of love abide, God will take care of you. All you may need He will provide, God will take care of you; Nothing you ask will be denied, God will take care of you. God will take care of you, Through ev’ry day, o’er all the way; He will take care of you, God will take care of you.*”

July 23 — Dealing with the Doubtful (Romans 14:5-6)

Romans 14:5: “*One man is judging one day above another, another is judging every day [alike]. Let each man be fully convinced in his own mind.*”

Romans 14:6: “*He who is observing the day is observing it for the Lord, and he who is eating is eating for the Lord, for he is giving thanks to God; and he who is not eating, for the Lord he is not eating, and he is giving thanks to God.*”

Verse 5: “One man is judging one day above another, another is judging every day [alike]. Let each man be fully convinced in his own mind.”

We move now in the passage from *diets* to *days*. In the *diets*, we have talked about *ham* vs. *health foods* and now in the *days*, we are going to talk about special days as

opposed to *every day* being alike.

The key command for the whole passage is here in verse 5:

Command#4: Let each man be fully convinced in his own mind.

Notice the word “each.” It is personal; it is not something which is second-hand. It is an inner conviction, not an outward conformity.

You cannot pour another person into your mold.

Romans 12:2: “And stop being fashioned to this age, but let yourselves be transformed by the renewing of your mind, resulting in your putting to the test what the will of God is, that which is good and well-pleasing and perfect.”

Daniel 1:8: “But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way.”

Verse 6: “He who is observing the day is observing it for the Lord, and he who is eating is eating for the Lord, for he is giving thanks to God; and he who is not eating, for the Lord he is not eating, and he is giving thanks to God.”

The Lord is the key in the whole situation. What we are doing or not doing is for the purpose of pleasing the Lord; and we know what things in our lives offend Him. Therefore, as He deals with us in an ever-deepening relationship, there are some things that come out of our lives that do not come out of the lives of others. That is a private matter. “Let each man be fully convinced in his own mind.”

It is the Lord who is the Governor of our convictions.

Dr. Mitchell says:

The first ground for receiving weaker brethren is that we have the same Lord, the same standing. We are going to glory together. We’ll spend eternity together.

This puts our receiving others on the unchanging absolute of our relationship to the Savior. We have no grounds for judging other Christians.

Let’s worship the Lord together by singing that wonderful chorus, “**Let the Beauty of Jesus Be Seen in Me**”: “*Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me – All His wonderful passion and purity! O Thou Spirit divine, All my nature refine Till the beauty of Jesus be seen in me.*”

July 24 — We Are the Lord’s (Romans 14:7-8)

Romans 14:7: “For not one of us is living for himself, and not one is dying for himself;”

Romans 14:8: “for if we are living, we are living for the Lord, or if we are dying, we are dying for the Lord; therefore whether we are living or whether we are dying, we are the Lord’s.”

Verse 7: “For not one of us is living for himself, and not one is dying for himself.” Whether we are living or dying, it is for the Lord.

Hendriksen says:

The fact that “we,” both kinds of Christians, the strong and the weak, behave as we do, is because none of us lives a self-centered life. On the contrary, while still alive on earth we live for the Lord Jesus Christ. Our basic aim is to please Him.

When we die we strive, even by means of our dying, to glorify the Lord.

Verse 8: “for if we are living, we are living for the Lord, or if we are dying, we are dying for the Lord; therefore whether we are living or whether we are dying, we are the Lord’s.”

The apostle in verse 7 has changed the word to “us,” and now in verse 8 we have the word “we” seven times.

The apostle has taken away the distinction of the weak and the strong, and has brought himself into the picture in this situation as he applies the truth he has been writing about.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

A believer’s individual accountability to the Lord in every area and experience of life is paramount. Each Christian in both life and death is seen by the Lord and is accountable to Him, not to other Christians.

Worry is like a warning light on the dashboard, informing us that we’ve taken back our lives from His care – a very foolish thing to do.

At the end of my meditation this morning, I find myself singing that very meaningful hymn, **“Calvary Covers It All.”** Please join me in singing verses 1 and 2: *“Far dearer than all that the world can impart Was the message that came to my heart; How that Jesus alone for my sin did atone, and Calvary covers it all. The stripes that He bore and the thorns that He wore Told His mercy and love evermore; And my heart bowed in shame as I called on His name, And Calvary covers it all. Calvary covers it all, My past with its sin and stain; My guilt and despair Jesus took on Him there, And Calvary covers it all.”*

July 25 — We Will Be Judged (Romans 14:9-10)

Romans 14:9: *“For to this end Christ died and lived [again], in order that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.”*

Romans 14:10: *“But you, why are you judging your brother? Or you again, why are you regarding your brother with contempt? For we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of God.”*

Verse 9: “For to this end Christ died and lived [again], in order that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.”

If Christ is Lord of all, He has the exclusive right to judge.

In summary to this point, the strong are not to despise the weak as narrow-minded, nor the weak judge and condemn the strong as unscrupulous.

The principles of reason are:

1. Refrain from judging
2. Recognize the relationship to the Lord
3. The right of the Lord to judge

Verse 10: “But you, why are you judging your brother? Or you [strong one] again, why are you regarding your brother with contempt? For we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of God.”

Both are wrong here. The first question was back in verse 4: “Who are you [weak one], the one who is judging the house-servant of another?” And now the second question: “But you [weak one], why are you judging your brother?”

Galatians 6:10: “So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.”

The third question: “Or you [strong one] again, why are you regarding your brother with contempt?”

The apostle concludes the verse with the reason and it is awesome, “For we shall

all stand before the judgment-seat of God.”

It would be good for us to focus on, and circle the words “we” and “all.” Both the “weak” and the “strong” are going to be judged at the judgment seat of Christ.

The final lesson in Our Daily Bread for November 3rd was:

There’s no place in the body of Christ for a bone of contention.

In worshiping our blessed Lord this morning, let’s continue to sing verses 3 and 4 of **“Calvary Covers It All”**: *“How matchless the grace, when I looked in the face Of this Jesus, my crucified Lord; My redemption complete I then found at His feet, And Calvary covers it all. How blessed the thought, that my soul by Him bought, Shall be His in the glory on high; Where with gladness and song I’ll be one of the throng, And Calvary covers it all. Calvary covers it all; My past with its sin and stain; My guilt and despair Jesus took on Him there, And Calvary covers it all.”*

July 26 — God Has the Last Word (Romans 14:11-13a)

Romans 14:11: *“For it has been written: ‘As I am living, the Lord is saying, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.’”*

Romans 14:12: *“So then each one of us shall give account of himself to God.”*

Romans 14:13a: *“Therefore, let us not be judging one another any more.”*

Verse 11: “For it has been written: ‘As I am living, the Lord is saying, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.’”

This is a quotation from Isaiah 24:23. We need to notice the focus once again on the word “every.” It was the word “all” in verse 10, the word “every” here in verse 11, and the word “each one” in verse 12.

Verse 12: “So then each one of us shall give account of himself to God.”

The little word “so then” brings us down to the application of the truth, the result of what he has been saying.

The principle here is:

We have no right to examine or judge a brother because Christ at the judgment seat is going to reveal the motive behind the conduct. Men whose hearts please the Lord receive reward.

We need to recognize the individual freedom to the Lord. The individual is responsible and the Lord will judge our use of freedom.

Joe L. Wall in his book, *Going for the Gold*, says there are three things we ought to do in view of the judgment seat of Christ:

1. Be alert: Keep your life pure!
2. Be sober: Make your life count!
3. Be expectant: Look forward to His coming!

David Jeremiah says:

When Christ takes His own to heaven (those whose earthly bodies have died and those who are alive at that time), they will stand before the judgment seat of Christ. Some people have asked, “If there are so many to be judged, why doesn’t Christ judge them immediately on their death, instead of letting all those millions of people pile up at the last minute?”

The answer is that we don’t finish our work when we die. It lives on after us. What we have done on earth, if it amounts to anything, continues after we die physically. How could there be awards and judgments when our earthly life

is over? Our influence upon friends, family, the people we knew during our lifetimes, does not cease when our obituaries appear in the local paper.

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 9:27: “But I am treating my body roughly and making it my slave. Thus, possibly after I have preached to others; I, myself, should be disqualified.” Your judgments disqualified you for reward.

May I suggest three things that will keep us on track and keep us from embarrassment at the bema or judgment seat of Christ?

1. A teachable spirit
2. A sense of accountability
3. A commitment to obedience

Verse 13a: “Therefore, let us not be judging one another any more.”

Command#5: Let us not be judging one another any more.

God is the Judge, not us. The command that is given is a present negative imperative. I could translate it *“Stop judging one another anymore. Quit it! Your credentials will disqualify you at the judgment seat of Christ.”*

Since Christ is Lord of all, He has the exclusive right to judge.

In the Sermon on the Mount, the Lord Jesus says these words in Matthew 7:1-5. The Phillips translation: “Don’t criticize people, and you will not be criticized. For you will be judged by the way you criticize others, and the measure you give will be the measure you receive. Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and fail to notice the plank in your own? How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me get the speck out of your eye’, when there is a plank in your own? You fraud! Take the plank out of your own eye first, and then you can see clearly enough to remove your brother’s speck of dust.”

Won’t you join me this morning in signing that very familiar prayer hymn, “**Cleanse Me**” or “**Search me, O God.**” Let’s sing together verses 1 and 2: *“Search me, O God, and know my heart today. Try me, O Savior; know my thoughts, I pray. See if there be some wicked way in me; Cleanse me from ev’ry sin and set me free. I praise Thee, Lord, for cleansing me from sin; Fulfill Thy Word, and make me pure within. Fill me with fire, where once I burned with shame. Grant my desire to magnify Thy Name.”*

July 27 — Careful in Your Conduct (Romans 14:13b)

Romans 14:13b: “But rather determine this - not to be placing an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother’s way.”

Verse 13b: “But rather determine this - not to be placing an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother’s way.”

In the first 13 verses of Romans 14, the apostle has been dealing with the grey areas of Christian conduct, those habits and practices for which we do not have any “Thus, sayeth the Lord.”

He has been contrasting the two separate points of view by calling the groups “the strong” and “the weak.” The key principle in verse 5 was “Let each man be fully convinced in his own mind.”

The two groups were challenged not to judge or to be looking down on one other in a contemptuous manner by the statement in verse 12 “so then each one of us shall give account of himself to God.”

If you will remember in our last devotional time together, we took the first part of

verse 13 to conclude the study. The first part of verse 13 reads “Therefore, let us not be judging one another any more.”

The first part of verse 13 is stated [negatively] “Let us not be judging one another any more.” [That is a present negative imperative so it is something that is going on.] “But [positively] rather determine this” - [negatively] “not to be placing an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother’s way.”

We are to forget the splinter in our brother’s eye and concentrate on the log in our own eyes.

Psalm 26:2-3: “Test me. O Lord, and try me, examine my heart and my mind; for your love is ever before me, and I walk continually in your truth.”

Psalm 139:23-24: “Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

William Barclay says:

Life must be guided by the principle of love. We have no right to distress another man’s conscience in the things which do not really matter.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says the word translated “stumbling block” means “*trap*” or “*snare*.” It is anything that leads another to sin.

There are five questions we can ask ourselves about any questionable matter of conduct or circumstances:

1. Does it enslave me? (1 Corinthians 6:12)
2. Does it build me up? (1 Corinthians 10:23)
3. Does it glorify God? (1 Corinthians 10:31)
4. Does it cause doubt? (Romans 14:23)
5. Does it cause others to stumble? (1 Corinthians 8:12-13)

I think it is most appropriate this morning that we continue singing that wonderful prayer hymn, “**Cleanse Me**” or “**Search me, O God.**” Let’s sing together and worship the Lord with verses 3 and 4: “*Lord, take my life and make it wholly Thine; Fill my poor heart with Thy great love divine. Take all my will, my passion, self, and pride. I now surrender; Lord, in me abide. O Holy Ghost, revival comes from Thee. Send a revival – start the work in me. Thy Word declares Thou wilt supply our need. For blessing now, O Lord, I humbly plead.*”

July 28 — Careful in Your Convictions (Romans 14:14-15)

Romans 14:14: “*I am knowing and have been persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but to him who is thinking anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean.*”

Romans 14:15: “*For if because of food your brother is grieving, you are no longer walking according to love. Stop destroying with your food him for whom Christ died.*”

Verse 14: “I am knowing and have been persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but to him who is thinking anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean.”

Conscience is the key. The overriding principle, then, is stated here in verse 14: “I am knowing and have been persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself.”

The apostle is speaking primarily of food when he is persuaded that “nothing is unclean in itself.”

This takes us back to verse 2 and 3 in chapter 14: “One man is having faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak is eating vegetables [only]. Let not him who is eating be treating with contempt him who is not eating, and let not him who is not eating be judging him who is eating, for God accepted him.”

Verse 15: “For if because of food your brother is grieving, you are no longer walking according to love. Stop destroying with your food him for whom Christ died.”

“For if because of food your brother is grieving,” he is morally pained because of what you are eating. If his conscience is weak, I have no right to use my liberty in eating a particular kind of food.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

I am to forego my liberty in Christ to avoid being a spiritual hindrance to my spiritual brother.

Verse 15 concludes with saying: Stop destroying with your food him for whom Christ died. Stop repelling him from the Christian faith.

J. Vernon McGee says:

Since Christ was willing to die for that weak brother, certainly we ought to be willing to refrain from eating something or doing something that would hurt him in his Christian walk.

Philippians 2:3-4 comes to mind this morning: “Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind; let each of you regard one another as more important than himself. Do not merely look out for your own personal interest, but also for the interest of others.”

Please join me in worship as we sing Fanny Crosby’s prayer hymn, “**Close to Thee.**” Let’s sing all three verses of this wonderful hymn: “*Thou my everlasting portion, More than friend or life to me; All along my pilgrim journey, Savior, let me walk with Thee. Not for ease or worldly pleasure, Nor for fame my prayer shall be; Gladly will I toil and suffer, Only let me walk with Thee. Lead me through the vale of shadows, bear me o’er life’s fitful sea; Then the gate of life eternal May I enter, Lord, with Thee. Close to Thee, close to Thee, Close to Thee, close to Thee.*”

July 29 — Righteousness, Peace and Joy (Romans 14:16-17)

Romans 14:16: “*Therefore, stop allowing your good to be spoken of as evil;*”

Romans 14:17: “*for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.*”

Verse 16: “Therefore, stop allowing your good to be spoken of as evil;”

The need addressed in verse 16 is for us to relinquish our own rights so we stop destroying our testimony.

In verse 15, the focus was on the other person: “Stop destroying with your food him for whom Christ died.” Now in verse 16, the focus is on the individual participating in this questionable behavior: “Stop allowing your good to be spoken of as evil.”

J. Vernon McGee says:

In other words, liberty does not mean license. The believer is to use his liberty not abuse it. We are always to keep in mind how our conduct will affect weaker Christians.

Verse 17: “for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.”

We have a negative and a positive in this verse:

1. “The kingdom of God is [negatively] not eating and drinking,”- in other words, those are secondary issues.

2. But [in contrast, positively], “the kingdom of God is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.”

Paul says to get your focus on the right things.

Romans 14:19: “So then let us be pursuing the things which make for peace and the building up of one another.”

Righteousness comes through our salvation experience as we are declared righteous by faith when we come to Christ.

Isaiah 32:17: “The fruit of righteousness will be peace; the effect of righteousness will be quietness and assurance forever.” Joy is the evidence that the King is in residence. When the Spirit of God is at work and we are submissive to his work, there will be joy. Joy is the flag that flies when the king is in residence.

Stedman says:

These three always go together: righteousness, peace and joy. They are gifts of God. They do not come from you, they come from Him. Joy is that delight in God that always finds life worthwhile, even though it may be filled with problems.

I am sure by now you know that I love to worship the Lord by singing one of Fanny Crosby’s hymns. The one I have chosen for this morning is one of her more familiar hymns. I know you are going to enjoy it. Let’s sing verses 1 and 2 of “**Blessed Assurance**”: “*Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine! O, what a foretaste of glory divine! Heir of salvation, purchase of God, Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood. Perfect submission, perfect delight, Visions of rapture now burst on my sight; Angels descending, bring from above Echoes of mercy, whispers of love. This is my story, this is my song, Praising my Savior, all the day long; This is my story, this is my song, Praising my Savior, all the day long.*”

July 30 — Acceptable to God & Approved by Men (Romans 14:18-19)

Romans 14:18: “*For he who in this way is serving Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men.*”

Romans 14:19: “*So then let us be pursuing the things which make for peace and the building up of one another.*”

Verse 18: “For he who in this way is serving Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men.”

In verse 18, we have the reason for the statements in verse 17. “He who in this way,” that is, serving with a concern for these three things:

1. Righteousness
2. Peace
3. Joy in the Holy Spirit

He is two things: (1) on the vertical he is “acceptable to God,” and (2) on the horizontal, he is “approved by men.” That covers all the bases, that gets it done, that focuses on the good things!

Accentuate the positive and eliminate the negative.

The focus of this one who is serving Christ is on the fruit of the Spirit and not on his personal liberty.

Verse 19: “So then let us be pursuing the things which make for peace and the building up of one another.”

The words “so then” point to the logical conclusion. “So then let us be pursuing the things which make for peace and the building up of one another.”

“Let us be pursuing” is a present imperative, therefore, it is something that should become part of our daily pursuit in living the Christian life. We are to be pursuing two things:

1. The things which make for peace
2. The things which result in the building up of one another

Hebrews 10:24: “and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds,”

I Thessalonians 5:11: “Therefore encourage one another, and build up one another just as you also are doing.”

Dr. Mitchell says:

I get letters from people who don't agree with things I've said on my radio broadcast. I can understand that. No man knows all the truth. We have all the truth in the Word of God, and after studying it for seventy years, I have barely scratched the surface of what's in the Bible.

Let us follow after the things which make for peace and build one another up.

Please join me as we sing verse 3 of Fanny Crosby's hymn this morning, “**Blessed Assurance**”: *“Perfect submission, all is at rest, I in my Savior am happy and blest; Watching and waiting, looking above, Filled with His goodness, lost in His love. This is my story, this is my song, Praising my Savior all the day long; This is my story, this is my song, Praising my Savior all the day long.”*

July 31 — What You Eat Can Tear Down the Work of God (Romans 14:20-21)

Romans 14:20: “*Stop tearing down the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are clean, but they are evil for the man who is eating and is giving offense.*”

Romans 14:21: “*It is good not to eat meat or to drink wine, or to do anything by which your brother is stumbling.*”

Verse 20: “Stop tearing down the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are clean, but they are evil for the man who is eating and is giving offense.”

In verse 20, you have the strong offending the weaker.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

This is personal convictions versus the Word of God.

Back in verse 15, we learned “destroying with our food him for whom Christ died.” And in verse 20, “tearing down the world of God for the sake of food.”

Robert Hicks in his book, *Uneasy Manhood*, says:

Chuck Colson has said on numerous occasions, “There is more empirical evidence for the sinfulness of man than any other doctrine of human history. If so, I wonder why we so struggle to see it in ourselves?”

The contradiction hits me at many levels. I want to love, but I can't. I want to change, but I can't. I want to be more involved, but I don't. I want to get more

organized, but I never do anything about it. I want to get out of things, but I stay in them. I want to build my relationships, but I tear them apart. I want to be successful, but I sabotage my efforts. O wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from this creaturely contradiction?

Verse 21: “It is good not to eat meat or to drink wine, or to do anything by which your brother is stumbling.”

This is a message to the strong ones:

1. By flaunting our freedom, we can be “destroying him for whom Christ died.”
2. We can be destroying our own testimony by “allowing our good to be spoken of as evil.”
3. We can be disrupting the peace of the body by “tearing down the work of God.”

The word “good” is in the emphatic position. It is the highest good, that is, recognizing our liberty and not using it.

It is good not to do three things:

1. Eat meat
2. Drink wine
3. Do anything by which your brother is stumbling

This takes us back to verse 13: “rather determine this – not to be placing an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother’s way.”

Paul tells the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 12:23: “All things are lawful, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful, but not all things edify.”

I find myself singing that wonderful hymn by Annie Johnson Flint, “**He Giveth More Grace.**” Please join me in worship as we sing verse 1 this morning: “*He giveth more grace When the burdens grow greater; He sendeth more strength When the labors increase. To added affliction He addeth His mercy; To multiplied trials, His multiplied peace. His love has no limit; His grace has no measure; His pow’r no boundary known unto men. For out of His infinite riches in Jesus, He giveth, and giveth, and giveth again!*”

AUGUST

August 1 — Faith in the Sight of God (Romans 14:22-23)

Romans 14:22: “*As for you, the faith which you are having, be having to yourself in the sight of God. Happy is he who is not condemning himself in that which he is approving.*”

Romans 14:23: “*But he who is doubting stands condemned if he eats, because [his eating] is not from faith; moreover, everything which is not of faith is sin.*”

Verse 22: “As for you, the faith which you are having, be having to yourself in the sight of God. Happy is he who is not condemning himself in that which he is approving.”

This is a command to the strong ones: “As for you, the faith which you are having, be having to yourself in the sight of God.” Refrain from exercising your freedom to the detriment of others.

Back in Romans 14:5 we learned: “One man is judging one day above another, another is judging every day [alike].” Then, we had that critical command: “Let each man be fully convinced in his own mind.” In other words, it is a private matter. Happy

is he who is not condemning himself in that which he is approving. His happiness is in knowing he has the freedom, not in exercising it.

Verse 23: “But he who is doubting stands condemned if he eats, because [his eating] is not from faith; moreover, everything which is not of faith is sin.”

Now, he is talking to the weak ones in verse 23.

There are four things that can happen that are very serious when freedom is used in the wrong way:

1. You can destroy the weaker brother with your food by repelling him from the Christian faith – verse 15.
2. You can destroy your own testimony by allowing your good to be spoken of as evil – verse 16.
3. You can disrupt the peace of the body by tearing down the work of God – verse 20.
4. You can lead the weak brother into sin – verse 23.

When you summarize the argument, you realize the seriousness of the matter of Christian conduct. When we use our liberty in a wrong way, we are in danger of disrupting the work of God, or we are in danger of sinning against a brother and also Christ.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

The principle is: when in doubt, don't!

Stedman says:

To sum up what Paul has said to us is this: First, do not deliberately shock your brother or sister. Do not deliberately do things that will offend them or even make them feel uncomfortable. Think about them, not yourself. Second, give up your right when it threatens the peace or hinders the growth of another individual. Be alert to judge in that area. And third, never act from doubt. Act only from conviction.

“By the word and by the Spirit of God.” If these problems are all settled on that basis, a congregation will be moving gradually toward the great liberty that we have as children of God.

Let's continue the hymn that we sang yesterday by singing verse 2 of **“He Giveth More Grace”**: *“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 pow'r no boundary known unto men. For out of His infinite riches in Jesus, He giveth, and giveth, and giveth again!”*

August 2 — Pleasing Your Neighbor (Romans 15:1-3)

Romans 15:1: “Now we who are strong are having a moral obligation to be bearing the weaknesses of those without strength and not [just] to be pleasing ourselves.”

Romans 15:2: “Let each of us be pleasing his neighbor for what is good to edification.”

Romans 15:3: “For even Christ did not please Himself; but even as it has been written: ‘The reproaches of those who are reproaching You fell upon Me.’”

Verse 1: “Now we who are strong are having a moral obligation to be bearing the weaknesses of those without strength and not [just] to be pleasing ourselves.”

Paul is a legalist overwhelmed by the grace of God, and thus, he speaks. The word translated “a moral obligation” is in the emphatic position. It is in the present tense, so it is a continuing obligation. A Christian should not be self-centered, but concerned about the spiritual welfare of others. 1 Corinthians 10:33: “just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of the many, that they may be saved.”

Robert Hicks quotes Billy Graham:

The smallest package in the world is a human being all wrapped up in himself.

Verse 2: “Let each of us be pleasing his neighbor for what is good to edification.”

One of the key words of the apostle’s epistles is the word “*edification*.” The spiritual gifts are to be used for the purpose of edification. We are constantly to be those who are giving freely of ourselves for the personal edification of others.

Romans 14:19: “So then let us be pursuing the things which make for peace and the building up of one another.”

Larry Crabb says:

A good relationship is one in which each member willingly and actively devotes whatever he or she has to give to the well-being of the other. In such a relationship, the highest criterion for deciding what to do at any moment is a person’s understanding before God of what would be the greatest service he or she can offer to the other.

Verse 3: “For even Christ did not please himself; but even as it has been written: ‘The reproaches of those who are reproaching You fell upon Me.’”

I am reminded of those beautiful prophetic words written by Isaiah in Isaiah 53:4-6: “Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned everyone to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.”

There are five principles and six observations from our study of Christian conduct in these previous mornings. The five principles are:

1. Questionable areas are a personal matter.
2. Compassion, not criticism, is the principle.
3. Peace and edification are our goals.
4. Develop your own convictions before God.
5. Patience with others and not pleasing ourselves.

Looking over the passage, there are six very important observations:

1. We do not have the right to pass judgment on another’s opinions.
2. God accepts both the weak and the strong.
3. It is for the Lord that we do or do not do certain things.
4. We will be held personally accountable to God for our convictions.
5. Emphasizing righteousness, peace and joy are acceptable by God and approved by men.
6. Forcing personal convictions on others can tear down the work of God.

Let’s celebrate and worship this morning by singing (you guessed it) another of Fanny Crosby’s hymns, “**To God Be the Glory.**” Let’s sing verses 1 and 2: “*To God*

be the glory, great things He hath done, So loved He the world that He gave us His Son, Who yielded His life an atonement for sin, And opened the Life gate that all may go in. O perfect redemption, the purchase of blood! To ev'ry believer the promise of God; The vilest offender who truly believes, That moment from Jesus a pardon receives. Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, Let the earth hear His voice! Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, Let the people rejoice! O come to the Father, thro' Jesus the Son, And give Him the glory, great things He hath done."

August 3 — Perseverance & Encouragement (Romans 15:4)

Romans 15:4: *"For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, in order that through perseverance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might be having hope."*

Verse 4: "For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, in order that through perseverance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might be having hope."

We are going to be looking at the principle of glorifying God through unity in verse 4-13.

Perseverance and personal convictions are part and parcel of the Christian experience.

The word "hope" occurs 4 times in these verses. It is hope that produces unity which is not disrupted.

The word "for" takes us back to verse 3: "For even Christ did not please Himself; but even as it has been written: 'the reproaches of those who are reproaching You fell upon Me.'"

"For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction."

2 Timothy 3:16-17: "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."

J. Vernon McGee says:

In my opinion, the greatest sin in the church of Jesus Christ in this generation is ignorance of the Word of God.

While 93% of Americans own a bible, half never read it, including 23% of all born-again Christians.

Psalm 119:97-100: "Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long. Your commands make me wiser than my enemies, for they are ever with me. I have more insight than all my teachers, for I meditate on your statutes. I have more understanding than the elders, for I obey your precepts."

We are instructed by what is written with the two-fold purpose in mind. In order that (1) through perseverance and (2) through the encouragement of the scriptures, we might be having hope.

William Barclay says:

Hupomone: It is far more than patience, it is the triumphant adequacy which can cope with life, the strength which does not only accept things, but which in accepting them transmutes them into glory.

2 Chronicles 15:7: "But as for you, be strong. Do not give up! For your work will be rewarded."

There are two things that result from a faithful study of the scriptures:

1. Perseverance
2. Encouragement

It is perseverance and not prosperity that is the focus. Perseverance ought to characterize your marriage, your work, your family, your church and your friendships.

There are two sources of encouragement – the scriptures and fellow believers.

Hebrews 10:24: “and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds.”

I find myself already singing in anticipation that great hymn, “**There Shall Be Showers of Blessings.**” Let’s worship the Lord by singing verses 1 and 2 this morning: “*‘There shall be showers of blessing’: This is the promise of love; There shall be seasons refreshing, Sent from the Saviour above. ‘There shall be showers of blessing’ Precious reviving again; Over the hills and the valleys, Sound of abundance of rain. Showers of blessing, Showers of blessing we need Mercy drops round us are falling, But for the showers we plead.*”

August 4 — Thinking the Same Things (Romans 15:5-6)

Romans 15:5: “*Now may the God of perseverance and encouragement give to you to be thinking the same thing with one another according to Christ Jesus;*”

Romans 15:6: “*in order that with one mind you may with one mouth be glorifying the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*”

Verse 5: “Now may the God of perseverance and encouragement give to you to be thinking the same thing with one another according to Christ Jesus;”

The apostle now turns to prayer, and the prayer repeats the two key things that are derived from scripture. It is God, the author of scripture, who grants these things. Thus, we have the apostle’s prayer:

“Now may the God of perseverance and encouragement give to you to be thinking the same thing with one another according to Christ Jesus.”

John Newton, the famous author of “*Amazing Grace*,” wrote another hymn called “*Prayer Answered by Crosses*”:

*I asked the Lord that I might grow
In faith and love and every grace,
Might more of his salvation know,
And seek more earnestly his face.*

*’Twas he who taught me thus to pray;
And he, I trust has answered prayer;
But it has been in such a way
As almost drove me to despair.*

*I hoped that, in some favoured hour,
At once he’d answer my request,
And by his love’s constraining power
Subdue my sins, and give me rest.*

Instead of this, he made me feel

*The hidden evils of my heart,
And let the angry powers of hell
Assault my soul in every part.*

*Yea, more, with his own hand he seemed
Intent to aggravate my woe,
Crossed all the fair designs I schemed,
Blasted my gourds, and laid me low.*

*Lord, why is this? I trembling cried;
Wilt thou pursue this worm to death?
This is the way, the Lord replied
I answer prayer for grace and faith.*

*These inward trials I now employ
From self and pride to set thee free,
And break thy schemes of earthly joy,
That thou may'st seek thy all in me.*

1 Thessalonians 5:11: "Therefore encourage one another and build up one another just as you also are doing."

Verse 6: "in order that with one mind you may with one mouth be glorifying the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

One mind and one mouth, that is, inward feeling and outward expression.

The word for "glorifying" is in the present tense and can be translated "keep on glorifying."

John Calvin says:

The unity of his servants is so much esteemed by God that he will not have his glory sounded forth amidst discords and contentions.

Obedience on our part brings the blessings on God's part.

Let's continue singing "**There Shall Be Showers of Blessings**" this morning. We will worship and sing verses 3 and 4: "*'There shall be showers of blessing': Send them upon us, O Lord; Grant to us now a refreshing, Come, and now honor Thy Word. 'There shall be showers of blessing': Oh, that today they might fall, Now as to God we're confessing, Now as on Jesus we call! Showers of blessing, Showers of blessing we need Mercy drops round us are falling, But for the showers we plead.*"

August 5 — Accepting One Another (Romans 15:7-8)

Romans 15:7: "*Wherefore, be accepting one another, even as also Christ accepted us to the glory of God.*"

Romans 15:8: "*For I am saying, Christ has become a servant of the circumcision on behalf of the truth of God to confirm the promises [given] to the fathers,*"

Verse 7: "Wherefore, be accepting one another, even as also Christ accepted us to the glory of God."

"Be accepting one another" is a key phrase. It takes us all the way back to Romans 14:1:

Now be accepting the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions.

“Be accepting” is in the present tense so it means “keep on accepting one another.” The model of acceptance is the Lord Jesus Christ. The list can go on and on of the miracle Christ brought by accepting so many – Mary Magdalene, the woman at the well, the woman caught in adultery in John 8, Matthew the tax collector, Zacchaeus – the tax collector who found a rich treasure in Jesus Christ.

Romans 5:8 in the Phillips: “Yet the proof of God’s amazing love is this: that it was while we were sinners that Christ died for us.”

Verse 8: “For I am saying, Christ has become a servant of the circumcision on behalf of the truth of God to confirm the promises [given] to the fathers,”

“For Christ has become a servant of the circumcision [or the Jews] to confirm the promises [given] to the fathers.”

Numbers 23:19: “God is not a man that he should lie, nor a son of man that he should change His mind. Does He speak and then not act? Does He promise and not fulfill?”

One of the great old hymns that I sang as a child, but did not comprehend much of the meaning is “**Standing on the Promises.**” Let’s sing verses 1 and 2 this morning and celebrate God’s faithfulness to keep His word: “*Standing on the promises of Christ my King, Thro’ eternal ages let His praises ring; Glory in the highest, I will shout and sing, Standing on the promises of God. Standing on the promises that cannot fail, when the howling storms of doubt and fear assail, By the living Word of God I shall prevail, Standing on the promises of God. Standing, standing, Standing on the promises of God my Savior; Standing, standing, I’m standing on the promises of God.*”

August 6 — Glorify God for His Mercy (Romans 15:9-10)

Romans 15:9: “and a servant for the Gentiles to glorify God for His mercy; even as it has been written: ‘Because of this I will give praise to You among the Gentiles, and I will sing to Your name.’”

Romans 15:10: “And again he is saying: ‘Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people.’”

Verse 9: “and a servant for the Gentiles to glorify God for His mercy; even as it has been written: ‘Because of this I will give praise to You among the Gentiles, and I will sing to Your name.’”

The phrase “to glorify God” takes us back to verse 6: “in order that with one mind you may with one mouth be glorifying the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

“To glorify God for His mercy.”

The Bible Knowledge Commentary points out:

There are no covenants for the Gentiles, therefore, God manifests mercy to them.

Even as it has been written, because of this, I will give praise to you among the Gentiles and I will sing to your name.

2 Samuel 22:50 and Psalm 18:49: “Therefore I will praise you, O Lord, among the nations; I will sing praises to your name.”

Paul says, whereas, Christ is become a servant of the Jews; He is a servant showing mercy to the Gentiles.

Verse 10: “And again he is saying: ‘Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people.’”

Moses in his farewell address in Deuteronomy 32:43 says: "Rejoice, O nations, with his people, for he will avenge the blood of his servants; he will take vengeance on his enemies and make atonement for his land and people." This is the close of Moses' address to the children of Israel. All he has left to do now is to bless the tribes and then go on home to be with the Lord.

William R. Newell wrote a great hymn, "**At Calvary.**" It is one of my favorites. Let's worship the Lord this morning by singing verse 1 and 2: "*Years I spent in vanity and pride, Caring not my Lord was crucified, Knowing not it was for me He died On Calvary. By God's Word at last my sin I learned, Then I trembled at the law I'd spurned, Till my guilty soul imploring turned To Calvary. Mercy there was great, and grace was free; Pardon there was multiplied to me; There my burdened soul found liberty, At Calvary.*"

August 7 — Be Praising the Lord (Romans 15:11-12)

Romans 15:11: "*And again, 'Be praising the Lord all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples praise Him.'*"

Romans 15:12: "*And again Isaiah is saying: 'There shall come the root of Jesse, and He who is arising to be ruling over the Gentiles; in Him shall the Gentiles hope.'*"

Verse 11: "And again, 'Be praising the Lord all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples praise Him.'"

This is from Psalm 117:1. The psalm is very short, only two verses in length. It was written by David and these are the verses. Psalm 117: 1-2: "Praise the Lord, all you nations; extol Him, all you peoples. For great is His love toward us, and the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever. Praise the Lord."

Paul actually commands both groups, Jews and Gentiles, to be praising the Lord; and in the process, I'm sure, he had in view a unity and a love that would pour forth, swallowing their differences, and together with one voice they would be praising the Lord.

Verse 12: "And again Isaiah is saying: 'There shall come the root of Jesse, and He who is arising to be ruling over the Gentiles; in Him shall the Gentiles hope.'"

This verse is coming from Isaiah, the prophet, in Isaiah 11:10: "In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his place of rest will be glorious."

God had promised in 2 Samuel that David's kingdom would be eternal. He is speaking here of David when he uses the term "*Root of Jesse*" – who is the son of Jesse; and out of David, generations later, comes the Lord Jesus Christ. "He who is arising to be ruling over the Gentiles," that is, the Lord Jesus Christ, is going to sit on the throne of his father, David, and "in Him shall the Gentiles hope."

The word "hope" in verse 12 takes us back to verse 4: "For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, in order that through perseverance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might be having hope."

Please join me in worship as we sing verses 3 and 4 of "**At Calvary**": "*Now I've giv'n to Jesus ev'rything; Now I gladly own Him as my King; Now my raptured soul can only sing Of Calvary. O, the love that drew salvation's plan! O, the grace that brought it down to man! O, the mighty gulf that God did span At Calvary! Mercy there*"

was great, and grace was free; Pardon there was multiplied to me; There my burdened soul found liberty, At Calvary.”

August 8 — The God of Hope (Romans 15:13)

Romans 15:13: “Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may be abounding in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

Verse 13: “Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may be abounding in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

The apostle picks up on that word “hope” that we ended in verse 12, and we see the third occurrence of the word here in verse 13.

This is a great verse and one to memorize. Paul again returns to a prayer wish here in verse 13 just as he did in verse 5: “Now may the God of perseverance and encouragement give to you to be thinking the same thing with one another according to Christ Jesus;”

Dr. Mitchell says:

Friend, I do not need to know your circumstances. I know One who is with you in your circumstances, One who knows all about your circumstances, One who never leaves you in your circumstances. He is the God of hope who can fill you with all joy, with all peace in believing. He is the One who has caused you to abound in hope through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Paul’s prayer wish “Now may the God of hope fill you” with three things:

1. Joy
2. Peace
3. Abounding in Hope

We have seen that He is the God of perseverance and the God of encouragement. Now we see Him as the God of “*Whatever You Need.*” And all of this is to be done “by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

Hebrews 6:19-20: “This hope we have is an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us, having become a High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.”

The question that we ask of ourselves as we conclude the meditation this morning: “Is the God of hope filling you with all joy, peace and hope?”

My heart is bursting with praise this morning and I would like for us to sing “**Crown Him with Many Crowns.**” Let’s sing verses 1 and 4: “*Crown Him with many crowns, The Lamb upon his throne; Hark! how the heavenly anthem drowns All music but its own! Awake, my soul, and sing Of Him who died for thee, And hail Him as thy matchless King Through all eternity. Crown Him the Lord of love! Behold His hands and side, Rich wounds, yet visible above, In beauty glorified; All hail, Redeemer, hail! For thou hast died for me: Thy praise shall never, never fail Throughout eternity.*”

August 9 — The Real Deal (Romans 15:14)

Romans 15:14: “And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also have reached a settled conviction that you yourselves also are full of goodness, having been filled with all knowledge, able also to be admonishing one another,”

Verse 14: “And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also have reached a settled

conviction that you yourselves also are full of goodness, having been filled with all knowledge, able also to be admonishing one another,”

Barclay says:

There are few passages which reveal Paul's character better.

1 Thessalonians 2:7 from The Living Bible: “But we were as gentle among you as a mother feeding and caring for her own children.”

In verse 14, we see the apostle's persuasion of their progress. He uses a note of warm affection by calling them “my brethren.” He believes the best about them. He is so positive, a real source of encouragement.

1 Corinthians 13:7: “[Love] bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.”

He is convinced they have a real hunger for the Word of God. Acts 17:11: “Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so.”

Paul says: “I myself also have reached a settled conviction.” This word “conviction” is the same word that is used back in chapter 8:38: “For I am convinced that neither death nor life nor angels nor principalities,” etc.

There are three wonderful things that he says about these Roman Christians:

1. They “are full of goodness.”
2. They have been “filled with all knowledge.”
3. They have reached a point in their spiritual maturity that they are “able to be admonishing one another.”

Ezra 7:10: “For Ezra had devoted himself to the study and observance of the law of the Lord, and teachings its decrees and laws in Israel.”

They are characterized as being “full of goodness.” It is Christ shining through them – their smile, their sweetness, their stability and their strength. They are thinking of others. This is a fruitage of the Spirit.

Secondly, they have been “filled with all knowledge.” This comes from feeding on the word of God.

The third thing said about them - they are “able also to be admonishing one another.”

Colossians 3:16: “Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.”

This is the biblical process toward Christ-likeness.

1. Full of goodness: our lives are changing
2. Filled with knowledge: “as newborn babes desire the spiritual milk of the word that they may grow thereby” (1 Peter 2:2-3)
3. Admonishing: accepting responsibilities for one another

Let's pay tribute to a wonderful Savior this morning by singing another Fanny Crosby hymn, **“He Hideth My Soul.”** Please join me in singing verse 1: *“A wonderful Savior is Jesus my Lord, A wonderful Savior to me; He hideth my soul in the cleft of the rock, Where rivers of pleasure I see. He hideth my soul in the cleft of the rock That shadows a dry, thirsty land; He hideth my life with the depths of His love, And covers me there with His hand, And covers me there with His hand.”*

August 10 — Let Me Say It Again (Romans 15:15)

Romans 15:15: “*but I wrote very boldly to you on some points, so as to be reminding you again, because of the grace which was given to me from God,*”

Verse 15: “but I wrote very boldly to you on some points, so as to be reminding you again, because of the grace which was given to me from God,”

Whereas yesterday we saw his persuasion of their progress in verse 14, we also see his zeal in ministering in verses 15-21.

“But I wrote very boldly to you on some points.” Paul says, I have written with very strong convictions. One writer said: the truth never hurts unless it ought to.

“I wrote very boldly to you on some points, so as to be reminding you again.” Not only very boldly, but he is doing it to remind them again – to bring back to their memory the truths that had been previously taught. We are reminded of the Lord’s Supper when Jesus told the disciples just before the cross, “This do in remembrance of Me.”

Barbara Johnson says:

My mind works like lightning. One brilliant flash and it’s gone!

Of all the things I miss the most is my mind.

Philippians 3:1: “Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things again is no trouble to me, and it is a safeguard for you.”

2 Peter 1:12: “Therefore, I shall always be ready to remind you of these things, even though you already know them, and have been established in the truth which is present with you.”

Paul is personal and parenting. Remember whose you are and who you represent.

Paul tells them that this reminder is coming from one who has been extended grace by God to carry out this function.

Romans 1:5: “through whom we received grace and apostleship with a view to [promoting] obedience which springs from faith among all the Gentiles, for His name’s sake,”

Stedman rightly states:

It is easy to get the idea that life is designed to be a pleasant picnic, that we can rightfully work toward the day when we can retire and just enjoy ourselves. That attitude is prevalent everywhere, but that is not what the Bible says.

The Bible says we are in the midst of a battle, a battle to the death, against a keen and crafty foe. He wants to discourage us and defeat us, to make us feel angry and hostile. He knows how to do it and he never lets up. This life therefore is not designed to be a time of relaxing. There are times when we need recreation and vacations, when we can slow down a bit. But you never see the apostle Paul talking about quitting the battle. You cannot quit, as long as you are alive. So Paul tells us: We need to be reminded, day by day and week by week, that we are in a battle and that we have a crafty foe. This life is not all there is, by any means. This is school time, a training ground, where we are to learn our lessons. This life is preparing us for the real thing yet to come.

Let’s worship the Lord this morning by singing verse 2 of Fanny Crosby’s “**He Hideth My Soul**”: “*A wonderful Savior is Jesus my Lord, He taketh my burden away; He holdeth me up, and I shall not be moved, He giveth me strength as my day. He hideth*

my soul in the cleft of the rock That shadows a dry, thirsty land; He hideth my life with the depths of His love, And covers me there with His hand, And covers me there with His hand."

August 11 — To Be a Servant of Christ Jesus (Romans 15:16)

Romans 15:16: "to be a servant of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, ministering as a priest the gospel of God, in order that the offering of the Gentiles might become acceptable, having been sanctified by the Holy Spirit."

Verse 16: "to be a servant of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, ministering as a priest the gospel of God, in order that the offering of the Gentiles might become acceptable, having been sanctified by the Holy Spirit."

Paul gives definition to the last phrase of verse 15, "the grace which was given to me from God." This "grace which was given" to him was a ministry, a ministry to be "a servant of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles." The whole focus of his ministry is to be "a servant of Christ Jesus."

In her book, *The Mark of a Man*, Elisabeth Elliot gave an excellent illustration of leading by serving:

She told of a relative who was the dean of a Christian college in the Midwest. One night some boys in a dorm had been rowdy, smearing the walls with shaving cream, peanut butter and jelly. When the dean heard about it, he wondered what action he should take. He could force the young men to clean it up or he could order the janitor to do it.

Instead, he proceeded to clean up the mess himself. Soon doors began to open, and before long the guilty ones were helping him wash the walls. Because he was willing to take the role of a servant, he solved the problem and taught the boys a valuable lesson at the same time.

Larry Crabb says:

Perhaps the hardest thing to get through our brain-damaged heads (when Adam fell, he must have fallen on his head) is that this painful point of nakedness and humility is not only where life begins, but also where joyful growth continues.

More than anything else, what gets in the way of getting along is self-centeredness that seems reasonable. God does his deepest work in making us more truly loving when we more clearly see how utterly ugly our selfishness is.

Getting along with each other requires that we stop making excuses for all the selfish things we do.

Paul says he is ministering as a priest of the gospel of God. Here, he is talking about 1 Timothy 2:5-6: "For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony borne at the proper time."

The purpose behind Paul's ministry is stated in the last phrase of verse 16: "in order that the offering of the Gentiles might become acceptable, having been sanctified by the Holy Spirit."

Paul wins in his ministry by presenting Christ effectively to the Gentiles, and then he offers them as a thank-offering to God. He wants them to "become acceptable, having been sanctified by the Holy Spirit."

Let's continue to worship the Lord with Fanny Crosby's hymn, "**He Hideth My Soul.**" Let's sing together verse 3: "*With numberless blessings each moment He*

crowns, And, filled with His fullness divine, I sing in my rapture, O, glory to God For such a Redeemer as mine! He hideth my soul in the cleft of the rock That shadows a dry, thirsty land; He hideth my life with the depths of His love, And covers me there with His hand, And covers me there with His hand."

August 12 — Boasting of What God Has Done (Romans 15:17-18)

Romans 15:17: *"Therefore in Christ Jesus I am having reason for boasting in things pertaining to God."*

Romans 15:18: *"For I will not venture to be speaking of anything which Christ did not accomplish through me, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed,"*

Verse 17: "Therefore in Christ Jesus I am having reason for boasting in things pertaining to God."

2 Corinthians 10:13: "But we will not boast beyond our measure, but within the measure of the sphere which God apportioned to us as a measure, to reach even as far as you."

Jeremiah 9:23-24: "This is what the Lord says: 'Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight,' declares the Lord."

Isaiah 26:12 "Lord, you establish peace for us; all that we have accomplished you have done for us."

Psalm 43:3: "Glorify the Lord with me; let us exalt his name together."

"Therefore in Christ Jesus, I am having reason for boasting in things pertaining to God." The things Paul is "boasting" about are the experiences of:

1. the stoning in Lystra and surviving it
2. being shipwrecked and, after 2 weeks of being tossed in the sea, all safely arriving on shore
3. suffering snakebite and being protected from death by venom poisoning
4. seeing the guy who fell out of the window while he was preaching, through God's sovereign intervention, restored to life.

Galatians 6:14: "but may it never be that I should boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world."

Verse 18: "For I will not venture to be speaking of anything which Christ did not accomplish through me, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed."

The reason Paul is "boasting in things pertaining to God" is the boasting is in what Christ has done, not in what he has been able to accomplish.

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

It is *Christ through me* - that is the key to Paul's ministry.

Barclay says:

Paul saw himself, in the scheme of things, as an instrument in the hands of Christ. He did not talk of what he had done; but of what Christ had done with

him. He never said of anything: “I did it.”

Hughes observes:

How contrary this is to the way things usually happen. More often we are like the Little Leaguer who put all his sixty pounds into a ferocious swing and barely connected. The ball scraped by the bottom of the bat, jiggled straight back to the pitcher, who groped and fumbled it. There was still plenty of time to nail the batter at first, but the pitcher’s throw soared high over the first baseman’s head. The slugger flew on toward second base. Somebody retrieved the ball. The next throw sailed wildly into the left field. The hitter swaggered into third, puffing along with a man-sized grin, then continued on to cross home plate. “Oh, boy,” he said, “that’s the first home run I ever hit in my whole life!”

That is so like us! We step to the plate for Jesus, barely tip the ball, but he arranges for us to get home—and we take all the credit!

Stedman points out:

That is the greatest secret God has to teach man – that man was designed, not to do something to make God happy, but to let God work through the man. God would do the work – that is what Paul said, “...Christ has accomplished through me.”

John 15:5: “I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing.”

Joe L. Wall says:

Nothing means nothing - like a zero with the rim knocked off.

It has resulted in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed. As a result of Christ working through the apostle Paul, the Gentiles came to obedience. This obedience manifested itself both (1) on their lips and in their lives, and (2) in their conversation and their conduct.

Let’s worship again this morning by singing verse 4 of Fanny Crosby’s “**He Hideth My Soul**”: “*When clothed in His brightness, transported I rise To meet Him in clouds of the sky, His perfect salvation, His wonderful love, I’ll shout with the millions on high. He hideth my soul in the cleft of the rock That shadows a dry, thirsty land; He hideth my life with the depths of His love, And covers me there with His hand, And covers me there with His hand.*”

August 13 — I Have Fulfilled My Commission (Romans 15:19)

Romans 15:19: “*in the power of attesting miracles and wonders, in the power of the Spirit; so that from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum I have fulfilled [my commission of preaching] the gospel of Christ.*”

Verse 19: “in the power of attesting miracles and wonders, in the power of the Spirit; so that from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum I have fulfilled [my commission of preaching] the gospel of Christ.”

Paul points out twice it is a ministry that is a result of God’s work on His behalf. The little phrase “in the power” is used twice:

1. In the power of attesting miracles and wonders
2. In the power of the Spirit

It’s His power flowing through him that has resulted in this ministry. I almost feel like stopping and singing that wonderful hymn, “*Channels Only.*”

*How I praise Thee, precious Saviour,
That Thy love laid hold of me;
Thou hast saved and cleansed and filled me
That I might Thy channel be.*

*Emptied that Thou shouldest fill me,
A clean vessel in Thy hand;
With no pow'r but as Thou givest
Graciously with each command.*

*Witnessing Thy pow'r to save me,
Setting free from self and sin;
Thou who boughtest to possess me,
In Thy fullness, Lord come in.*

*Jesus, fill now with Thy Spirit
Hearts that full surrender know;
That the streams of living water
From our inner man may flow.*

*Channels only, blessed Master
But with all Thy wondrous pow'r
Flowing thro' us, Thou canst use us
Ev'ry day and ev'ry hour.*

“In the power of attesting miracles and wonders, in the power of the Spirit.”

Acts 4:31: “And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak the word of God with boldness.”

Acts 16:25-26 “But about midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns and praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. And suddenly there came a great earthquake so that the foundations of the prison house were shaken, and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone’s chains were unfastened.”

J. Vernon McGee says:

“Through mighty signs and wonders” which were the credentials of the apostles and the ministers in the early church. These were given to establish the church on the right foundation before a word of the New Testament had been written.

“So that from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum, I have fulfilled [my commission of preaching] the gospel of Christ.” The result of this, according to Acts 1:8:

1. starting in Jerusalem
2. “Round about” would be in Judea and Samaria
3. “as far as Illyricum” would take us to the uttermost part of the earth.

Illyricum is sort of like Homer, Alaska – the end of the road.

Paul tells young Timothy just before he dies in 2 Timothy 4:6-8: “For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future

there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.”

While we are worshipping the Lord this morning and asking the question: Are we on track to be finishers? it would be good for us to sing a hymn that asks a lot of questions, **“Am I a Soldier of the Cross?”** Let’s sing all 4 verses: *“Am I a soldier of the cross, A follow’r of the Lamb? And shall I fear to own His cause, Or blush to speak His Name? Must I be carried to the skies On flow’ry beds of ease, While others fought to win the prize, And sailed thro’ bloody seas? Are there no foes for me to face? Must I not stem the flood? Is this vile world a friend to grace, To help me on to God? Sure I must fight, if I would reign; Increase my courage, Lord; I’ll bear the toil, endure the pain, Supported by Thy Word.”*

August 14 — My Aim (Romans 15:20-21)

Romans 15:20: *“And thus I am making it my aim to be preaching the gospel, not where Christ was [already] named, in order that I might not be building upon another man’s foundation;”*

Romans 15:21: *“but even as it has been written: ‘They who had no news of Him shall see, and they who have not heard shall understand.’”*

Verse 20: “And thus I am making it my aim to be preaching the gospel, not where Christ was [already] named, in order that I might not be building upon another man’s foundation;”

“And thus I am making it my aim.”

Philippians 3:10-14: “that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained it, or have already become perfect, but I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”

1 Corinthians 9:24-27: “Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. And everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we are imperishable. Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; but I buffet my body and make it my slave, lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified.”

We are scrutinizing Paul’s philosophy of outreach. He didn’t want to waste time preaching the gospel “where Christ was [already] named.” The purpose was “in order that I might not be building upon another man’s foundation.”

Verse 21: “but even as it has been written: “They who had no news of Him shall see, and they who have not heard shall understand.”

This is a quotation from Isaiah 52:15b: “For what they were not told, they will see; and what they have not heard, they will understand.” This is Paul’s life verse.

Jesus, in His resurrected body, said in John 20:21: “Peace be with you. As the

Father has sent Me, I also send you.”

This day, August 14, 2013, is a very special day for Pearl and me. It is our 60th wedding anniversary, and I think it would be fitting this morning for us to celebrate God’s faithfulness by singing that hymn that touched us very deeply early in our ministry – Margaret Clarkson’s great hymn, “**So Send I You.**” Please join us in singing verses 1, 3 and 4: “*So send I you to labor unrewarded, To serve unpaid, unloved, unsought, unknown, To bear rebuke, to suffer scorn and scoffing; So send I you to toil for Me alone. So send I you to loneliness and longing, With heart a-hung’ring for the loved and known, Forsaking home and kindred, friend and dear one; So send I you to know My love alone. So send I you to leave your life’s ambition, To die to dear desire, self-will resign, To labor long, and love where men revile you; So send I you to lose your life in Mine.*”

August 15 — Coming in the Will of God (Romans 15:22-24)

Romans 15:22: “*For this reason I have often been hindered from coming to you;*”

Romans 15:23: “*but now, having no further place in these regions, and having a desire to come to you for many years,*”

Romans 15:24: “*whenever I am going to Spain—for I am hoping to see you when we are passing through, and to be helped on my way there by you, when I have first enjoyed your company for awhile—*“

This morning, I think it would be good as we look at these three verses in Romans 15 if we stop for just a minute and review Paul’s life verse, Isaiah 52:15: “For what they were not told, they will see, and what they have not heard, they will understand. And then his life goal is in Romans 15:20: “And thus I am making it my aim to be preaching the gospel, not where Christ was [already] named, in order that I might not be building upon another man’s foundation.”

Verse 22: “For this reason I have often been hindered from coming to you;”

The reason Paul has been hindered from coming to them was because he needed to stay until the work was done on the present field of service.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

This is in the imperfect tense and could be translated “I was being hindered many times.” In other words, God is in control.

Galatians 5:7: “You were running well, who hindered you from obeying the truth?”

Verse 23: “but now, having no further place in these regions, and having a desire to come to you for many years,”

There are two important phrases in verse 23 in ascertaining the Lord’s direction.

1. Having no further place
2. Having a desire

Romans 1:10: “always in my prayers making request, if perhaps now at last I may succeed in the will of God to come to you.”

There are three outstanding phrases that we want to focus on in these first two verses to begin to understand how one ascertains the will of God:

1. Phrase 1: “I have often been hindered.”
2. Phrase 2: “Having no further place.”
3. Phrase 3: “Having a desire.”

The two things that have changed for Paul are (1) feeling finished in the area of ministry where he is, and (2) the desire to do something, to come to you for many years.

Verse 24: “whenever I am going to Spain--for I am hoping to see you when we are passing through, and to be helped on my way there by you, when I have first enjoyed your company for awhile—“

Romans 1:15: “Thus, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.”

Barnhouse says:

The Christian who grieves over broken plans does not comprehend the sovereignty of God. He can do with us exactly what He pleases, and when, and where. And in our total commitment to His will lies our highest joy.

I am reminded of Romans 12:2 in the Phillips translation: “Don’t let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould, but let God re-mould your minds from within, so that you may prove in practice that the plan of God for you is good, meets all his demands and moves towards the goal of true maturity.”

Welling up in my soul is a great old hymn, “**Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah.**” Let this be your prayer as we worship together in singing verse 1: “*Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah, Pilgrim thro’ this barren land; I am weak, but Thou art mighty, Hold me with Thy pow’rful hand; Bread of Heaven, Feed me till I want no more; Bread of Heaven, Feed me till I want no more.*”

August 16 — Jerusalem Calls (Romans 15:25-26)

Romans 15:25: “*but now, I am going to Jerusalem serving the saints.*”

Romans 15:26: “*For it was the good pleasure of Macedonia and Achaia to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem.*”

Verse 25: “but now, I am going to Jerusalem serving the saints.”

Back in verse 23 yesterday, we have the words: “But now, having no further place in these regions, and having a desire to come to you for many years.” In verse 25, we have the same couple of words: “But now, I am going to Jerusalem serving the saints.”

His *desire* that is mentioned back in verse 23 is being subjected to his *duty*. The key to his ministry is he is consumed with “serving the saints.”

We see the reason in Verse 26.

Verse 26: “For it was the good pleasure of Macedonia and Achaia to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem.”

In Macedonia, there are the churches in Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea. In Achaia, there is the church at Corinth. You will note that they make a contribution. It is not a tithe. It is good to note that it was voluntary, the good pleasure on their part to do so.

2 Corinthians 9:6-7 from the Phillips translation: “All I will say is that poor sowing means a poor harvest, and generous sowing means a generous harvest. Let everyone give as his heart tells him, neither grudgingly nor under compulsion, for God loves the man who gives cheerfully.”

This morning, I have an old familiar hymn on my heart that we used to sing in the young people’s group, “**Give of Your Best to the Master.**” Please join me in worship as we sing verse 3: “*Give of your best to the Master; Naught else is worthy His love;*

He gave Himself for your ransom, Gave up His glory above: Laid down His life without murmur; You from sin's ruin to save; Give Him your heart's adoration, Give Him the best that you have. Give of your best to the Master; Give of the strength of your youth; Clad in salvation's full armor, Join in the battle for truth."

August 17 — Spiritual & Material (Romans 15:27)

Romans 15:27: *"For it was their good pleasure [to do so], and they are indebted to them. For if the Gentiles shared in their spiritual things, they are obligated to minister to them also in material things."*

Verse 27: "For it was their good pleasure [to do so], and they are indebted to them. For if the Gentiles shared in their spiritual things, they are obligated to minister to them also in material things."

The Gentiles recognized their moral obligation to the saints in Jerusalem to share with them spiritually. Now that they had a material need, the Gentiles had an opportunity to share with them. The principle is that those who receive spiritually have material obligations to those responsible.

Galatians 6:6 "And let the one who is taught the word share all good things with him who teaches."

Stedman says:

If someone blesses you spiritually and the only way you can thank him is with material things, then do it!

The International Critical Commentary says:

The Churches of the Gentiles owed all the spiritual blessings they enjoyed to that of Jerusalem, "from whom is Christ according to the flesh," and they could only repay the debt by ministering in temporal things.

J. Vernon McGee says:

Now some of the saints in Jerusalem were having financial difficulties, evidently because of persecution. Macedonia and Achaia could now pay a spiritual debt in the coin of the realm. This is foreign missions in reverse! It is the missionary church helping the home church.

Let's worship the Lord this morning by singing **"In the Service of the King."**

Please join me in worship as we sing verses 1 and 4: *"I am happy in the service of the King. I am happy, O so happy! I have peace and joy that nothing else can bring, In the service of the King. I am happy in the service of the King. I am happy, O so happy! All that I possess to Him I gladly bring, In the service of the King. In the service of the King Ev'ry talent I will bring. I have peace and joy and blessing In the service of the King."*

August 18 — The Blessing of Christ (Romans 15:28-29)

Romans 15:28: *"Therefore, when I have finished this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will go on by way of you to Spain."*

Romans 15:29: *"And I am knowing that when I am coming to you, I will come in the fullness of the blessing of Christ."*

Verse 28: "Therefore, when I have finished this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will go on by way of you to Spain."

Back in verse 25, Paul said “but now, I am going to Jerusalem,” and now in verse 28 he says “Therefore, when I have finished this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will go on by way of you to Spain.” Once again, you notice Paul is going to complete what he started before he takes on any new projects. It is also important to note that he refers to their gift as “this fruit” and not their tithe.

Galatians 6:7-10: “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh shall from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit shall from the Spirit reap eternal life. And let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we shall reap if we do not grow weary. So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.”

Paul must mean when he says, “sealed to them this fruit,” that he is going to get a receipt for the fund that he has brought to them.

He wants to do all of this with integrity, decently and above board. “I will go on by way of you to Spain.”

How gracious of the Lord for Paul not to be aware of the riot, the prison, the shipwreck, the swim, the snake and all of the circumstances that finally get him to Rome in chains.

Isaiah 55:8-9: “‘For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,’ declares the Lord. ‘As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.’”

Verse 29: “And I am knowing that when I am coming to you, I will come in the fullness of the blessing of Christ.”

There is a big question that comes to our minds at this point: Is it possible that Paul can come to Rome “in the fullness of the blessing of Christ” and be doing this in the face of all kinds of unexpected adversity? The answer to this is “Yes.” He trusts the Lord who does all things well.

An unknown poet writes these comments:

CIRCUMSTANCES! HOW WE PET THEM;

HOW WE GIVE THEM RIGHT OF WAY!

BUT THE MASTER NEVER PLANNED

THAT WE SHOULD FALL BENEATH THEIR SWAY.

PAUL MADE CIRCUMSTANCES SERVE HIM,

MADE THEM GLORIFY HIS LORD;

TURNED EACH TRIAL INTO BLESSING

AS HE BOLDLY PREACHED THE WORD.

“THESE THINGS TURNED TO MY ADVANTAGE,”

THIS OLD WARRIOR OFT WOULD SAY.

“FOR OUR GOOD THEY WORK TOGETHER,”

THOUGH THEY SEEM TO SHROUD THE DAY.

I find that great hymn that Martin Luther wrote during the reformation welling up in my heart, “**A Mighty Fortress Is Our God.**” Please join me in worship singing verses 1 and 2: “*A mighty fortress is our God, A Bulwark never failing; Our Helper He, amid the flood Of mortal ills prevailing; For still our ancient foe Doth seek to work us woe; His craft and power are great, And armed with cruel hate, On earth is not His equal. Did we in our own strength confide, Our striving would be losing, Were*

not the right Man on our side, The Man of God's own choosing: Dost ask who that may be? Christ Jesus, it is He; Lord Sabaoth His Name, From age to age the same, And He must win the battle."

August 19 — Please Pray for Me (Romans 15:30-31)

Romans 15:30: "Now I am urging you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me,"

Romans 15:31: "that I may be delivered from those who are disobedient in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may become well-pleasing to the saints;"

Verse 30: "Now I am urging you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me,"

Here in verse 30 we have the Trinity:

1. the Lord Jesus Christ
2. the Spirit
3. and God the Father.

"Now I am urging you, brethren, by" two things: (1) "Our Lord Jesus Christ," and (2) "by the Love of the Spirit." This is probably love which is a fruit of the Spirit.

Dr. Mitchell says:

This is what Paul is asking – "that you agonize, that you strive, that you mean business together with me in your prayers to God for me."

What does he want? First, that he may be delivered from the unbelievers in Judea, from those that hate the gospel. He knows what he is getting into, and he asks to be delivered from the unsaved Jews in Jerusalem.

Stedman says:

Life is a struggle, and Paul sees prayer as a way of fighting in that combat. It is a great weapon which can batter down some doors and open others. It can remove obstacles, withstand tremendous pressure and forces, and uphold and sustain people.

Verse 31: "that I may be delivered from those who are disobedient in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may become well-pleasing to the saints;"

Paul has two requests:

1. I may be delivered from those who are disobedient in Judea
2. My service for Jerusalem may become well-pleasing to the saints

There were quite a number of Jews who were opposed to Paul's ministry. The second problem that Paul was making request for was that the Jews would be willing to accept Gentile money, that it would be "well-pleasing to the saints."

How different are the Lord's deliverances than what we expect?

1 John 5:14-15 from the Phillips translation: "We have such confidence in Him that we are certain that He hears every request that is made in accord with His own plan. And since we know that He invariably gives His attention to our prayers, whatever they are about, we can be quite sure that our prayers will be answered."

Earlier this morning in my personal devotional time, I found myself singing that very familiar hymn, "**Nearer, My God, to Thee.**" I feel it is most appropriate for us to sing verses 1 and 2 now: "*Nearer, my God, to Thee, Nearer to Thee! E'en though it be a cross That raiseth me; Still all my song shall be. Though like the wanderer, The sun gone down, Darkness be over me, My rest a stone; Yet in my dreams I'd be Nearer, my God, to Thee, Nearer, my God, to Thee, Nearer to Thee!*"

August 20 — In Joy By the Will of God (Romans 15:32-33)

Romans 15:32: “so that I may come to you in joy by the will of God and find [refreshing] rest in your company.”

Romans 15:33: “Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.”

Verse 32: “so that I may come to you in joy by the will of God and find [refreshing] rest in your company.”

The positive answers to the two previous prayer requests in verse 31 would be that Paul could come to Rome (1) “in joy by the will of God,” and when he gets there (2) “find [refreshing] rest in [the] company [of fellow believers].”

“That I come to you in joy” takes us back to verse 29, “And I am knowing that when I am coming to you, I will come in the fullness of the blessing of Christ.”

Dietrich Bonhoeffer said:

Nothing can make up for the absence of someone whom we love, and it would be wrong to try to find a substitute. It is nonsense to say that God fills the gap; He does not fill it, but on the contrary, He keeps it empty and so helps us to keep alive our former communion with each other, even at the cost of pain.

Verse 33: “Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.”

This is the third benediction in this chapter.

1. Benediction #1 – **verse 5:** “Now may the God of perseverance and encouragement give to you to be thinking the same thing with one another according to Christ Jesus.”

2. Benediction #2 – **verse 13:** “Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may be abounding in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

3. Benediction #3 – **verse 33:** “Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.”

What Paul says about God is that He is the God of “whatever you might need” – perseverance, encouragement, hope or peace. God is whatever He needs to be to meet your present need.

Psalms 112: 7-8 “He will have no fear of bad news; his heart is steadfast, trusting in the Lord. His heart is secure, he will have no fear; in the end he will look in triumph on his foes.”

No matter what happens in our lives, the God of Peace is still ruling in our hearts.

Proverbs 8:34 “Blessed is the man who listens to me, watching daily at my doors, waiting at my doorway.”

In his book, *The Upside of Down*, Joseph M. Stowell says:

Debbie left that crisis with a new song in her heart. I'll never forget hearing Christine Wyrzten sing the song that Debbie wrote. I listened. The words pierced my heart:

*I've been through a fire
That has deepened my desire
To know the living God more and more.
It hasn't been much fun,
But the work that it has done
In my life has made it worth the hurt.
You see, sometimes we need the hard times*

To bring us to our knees,
 Otherwise we do as we please and never heed Him.
 But He always knows what's best,
 And it's when we are distressed
 That we really come to know God as He is.

Speaking in college chapel when Daddy Bias came to town, he would always speak the whole week on one verse, and then he would begin his exposition with singing the chorus of **"My Wonderful Lord."** Let's conclude our worship time this morning by singing two verses of this beautiful hymn: *"I have found a deep peace that I never had known And a joy this world could not afford Since I yielded control of my body and soul To my wonderful, wonderful Lord. I desire that my life shall be ordered by Thee, That my will be in perfect accord With Thine own sov'reign will, Thy desires to fulfill, My wonderful, wonderful Lord. My wonderful Lord, my wonderful Lord, By angels and seraphs in heaven adored! I bow at Thy shrine, my Saviour divine, My wonderful, wonderful Lord."*

August 21 — In a Manner Worthy (Romans 16:1-2)

Romans 16:1: *"Now I am recommending to you Phoebe, our sister, who is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea;"*

Romans 16:2: *"that you receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and that you help her in whatever matter she may have need of you; for she herself has also been a helper of many, and of myself as well."*

Verse 1: *"Now I am recommending to you Phoebe, our sister, who is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea;"*

In the first 24 verses, there are 33 names that are mentioned. Nine of these people were with Paul – 8 men and 1 woman. There are 24 names of people who were in Rome--17 men and 7 women. There are two households mentioned, and two unnamed women--the mother of Rufus and the sister of Nereus--as well as some unnamed brethren. So there is quite a list of people the apostle knew personally in Rome though he himself had not yet visited that city.

Stedman calls this chapter "All in the Family."

The first person that we meet in chapter 16 is "Phoebe." She is the bearer of this letter to Rome. She evidently is making a business trip there from "Cenchrea." "Cenchrea" is just down the road from Corinth, about 8-9 miles east, and served as a seaport for Corinth. Paul calls Phoebe a "sister," "servant," and "saint."

She is a "sister" because she is in Christ. She is "a servant of the church." This is a word that is often used with the office of deacon. He was then recognizing her position. Her name means "bright," "radiant."

Verse 2: *"that you receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and that you help her in whatever matter she may have need of you; for she herself has also been a helper of many, and of myself as well."*

She is a "sister," but she is also "a servant."

Galatians 6:2: *"Bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ."*

Paul points out the reason for his admonition to support her: "for she herself has also been a helper of many, and of myself as well."

In *Our Daily Bread* some years ago, I read this concluding statement.

GOD TAKES NOTICE OF YOUR SERVICE
FREELY RENDERED IN HIS NAME;
EVEN THOUGH BY FRIENDS FORGOTTEN,
YOU HE'LL HONOR JUST THE SAME.

One way to do great things for Christ is to do little things for others.

There will be nine women mentioned here in these verses, seven of them are named and two are unnamed. There is Phoebe, Priscilla, Mary, Tryphaena, Tryphosa, Persis, Julia, and then Rufus' mother, and Nereus' sister also mentioned.

When people call your name, what do they think of? What will be your legacy after you are gone?

I find myself singing that great hymn, **"Find Us Faithful."** Please join with me as we sing verse 1: *"Surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, Let us run the race not only for the prize. But as those who've gone before us, Let us leave to those behind us, A heritage of faithfulness passed on through Godly light. O may all who come behind us find us faithful; May the fire of our devotion light their way. May the footprints that we leave Lead them to believe And the lives we live inspire them to obey. O may all who come behind us find us faithful."*

August 22 — My Fellow Workers (Romans 16:3-5)

Romans 16:3: *"Greet Prisca (Priscilla) and Aquila my fellow-workers in Christ Jesus,"*

Romans 16:4: *"who for my life risked their own necks, to whom I not only am giving thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles;"*

Romans 16:5: *"also [greet] the church that is in their house. Greet Epaphroditus, my beloved, who is the first convert to Christ from Asia."*

Verse 3: *"Greet Prisca (Priscilla) and Aquila my fellow-workers in Christ Jesus,"*

J. Vernon McGee says:

Priscilla and Aquila were a Jewish couple.

They are mentioned in Acts 18. They came from Rome to Corinth, fleeing the persecution, then they went with Paul to Ephesus. From there, they went back to Rome and then back to Ephesus.

Paul uses the term "fellow-worker(s)" three times in chapter 16:

1. Speaking of Priscilla and Aquila
2. Urbanus in [verse 9](#)
3. Timothy in [verse 21](#)

Every time you see Priscilla and Aquila in the scriptures, you see them together.

John Piper says:

Mature masculinity expresses itself not in the demand to be served but in the strength to serve and to sacrifice for the good of the woman.

Verse 4: *"who for my life risked their own necks, to whom I not only am giving thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles;"*

Stedman says:

This was probably the uproar that broke out in the city of Ephesus, recorded in the latter part of Acts, when the whole city was upset and a mob was intent on taking Paul's life. He reveals the fact that everywhere this couple went they had a church in their home.

Verse 5: “also [greet] the church that is in their house. Greet Epäenetus, my beloved, who is the first convert to Christ from Asia.”

“Greet Epäenetus, my beloved, who is the first convert to Christ from Asia.” Paul refers to four of these folks as “beloved”:

1. Epäenetus in verse 5
2. Ampliatius in verse 8
3. Stachys in verse 9
4. Persis in verse 12

Paul went into Asia on his third missionary journey and this man, Epäenetus, must have come to know the Lord in Ephesus, which is the capital of the area.

What joy and how special is the first fruit that comes as a result of faithful ministry in a given area.

I am reminded of John 15:16: “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain. That whatever you ask of the Father in my name, He may give to you.”

Psalm 126:5-6 “Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy. He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him.”

I remember as a child singing that old hymn, “**Bringing in the Sheaves,**” in the evening service. It was written after these particular verses in the hymn, “**Bring Them In.**” I would like us to sing these verses as we worship the Lord in celebrating the first fruit in Asia. Let’s sing together verses 1 and 2: “*Hark! ’Tis the Shepherd’s voice I hear, Out in the desert dark and drear, Calling the sheep who’ve gone astray Far from the Shepherd’s fold away. Who’ll go and help this Shepherd kind, Help Him the wandering ones to find? Who’ll bring the lost ones to the fold, Where they’ll be sheltered from the cold? Bring them in, bring them in, Bring them in from the fields of sin; Bring them in, bring them in, Bring the wandering ones to Jesus.*”

August 23 — Paying the Price (Romans 16:6-7)

Romans 16:6: “Greet Mary, who has worked hard for you.”

Romans 16:7: “Greet Andronicus and Junias, my kinsmen, and my fellow-prisoners, who are outstanding among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me.”

Verse 6: “Greet Mary, who has worked hard for you.”

Mary is now the third woman mentioned in this list. We had Phoebe and Priscilla preceding this verse, and here Mary is characterized as one “who has worked hard for you.” It is interesting to see that four of the women are related to hard work:

1. Mary “worked hard”
2. Persis “worked hard” in verse 12
3. and Tryphaena
4. and Tryphosa “labored to the point of exhaustion” in verse 12 as well.

There are seven Marys mentioned in scripture:

1. Mary the mother of Jesus
2. Mary Magdalene of whom seven demons were cast out, and she was the one who stayed at the tomb and saw the Lord that Easter morning
3. There was the other Mary
4. Mary the wife of Clopas

-
5. Mary who was the sister of Martha
 6. Mary the mother of John Mark
 7. This Mary is an unknown woman of Jewish descent.

J. Vernon McGee says:

What a change had taken place in her life! Before becoming a believer, she was in rebellion, but now she “knocks herself out” for the sake of other believers, because she is obedient to Christ.

Verse 7: “Greet Andronicus and Junias, my kinsmen, and my fellow-prisoners, who are outstanding among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me.”

There are four things that Paul is saying about these three Jewish Christians:

1. They are “my kinsmen”
2. “My fellow-prisoners”
3. They are “outstanding among the apostles”
4. They “were in Christ before me”

Paul uses the term “kinsmen” six times in the passage. Maybe this is a reference to them being of the tribe of Benjamin or that they are of Jewish descent. There are some that feel that Paul is speaking all six times of his relatives.

These two must have been part of the church of Jerusalem and possibly it was through their prayers that the apostle Paul became a believer in the first place.

Stedman says:

Andronicus and Junias were relatives of Paul, and since he says they were “in Christ before me,” this takes us back to the very first days of the church, back to the ministry of Stephen in Jerusalem. What it must have meant to the young Saul of Tarsus, who was breathing forth threatenings and slaughter against the Christians there, to learn that two of his own kinsmen had become Christians! Undoubtedly the prayers of Andronicus and Junias affected the apostle.

Let’s pay tribute to these wonderful folks who are willing to pay the price by singing verse 1 of **“Work, for the Night is Coming”**: *“Work, for the night is coming; Work through the morning hours; Work while the dew is sparkling, Work ’mid springing flowers; Work while the day grows brighter, Under the glowing sun; Work, for the night is coming, When man’s work is done.”*

August 24 — Tried & True (Romans 16:8-11)

Romans 16:8: *“Greet Ampliatus my beloved in the Lord.”*

Romans 16:9: *“Greet Urbanus, our fellow-worker in Christ, and Stachys my beloved.”*

Romans 16:10: *“Greet Apelles the tried and true in Christ. Greet those who are of the household of Aristobulus.”*

Romans 16:11: *“Greet Herodion my kinsman. Greet those of the household of Narcissus, who are in the Lord.”*

Verse 8: “Greet Ampliatus my beloved in the Lord.”

This was a common slave name.

J. Vernon McGee says:

He was evidently one of Paul’s converts and dear to his heart.

He reminds me of Onesimus, who was a runaway slave of Philemon, and came to

know Christ in a Roman prison.

Verse 9: “Greet Urbanus, our fellow-worker in Christ, and Stachys my beloved.”

J. Vernon McGee says:

“*Urbane*” means “*city bred*.” In other words, his name actually means “*city-slicker*.”

Urbanus joins Priscilla, Aquilla and Timothy in receiving this title of honor:

“*fellow-worker*.”

“And Stachys my beloved.”

J. Vernon McGee says:

“*Stachys*” has been found listed in the royal household. It is a masculine name.

He was beloved not only to Paul, but to the church.

Verse 10: “Greet Apelles the tried and true in Christ. Greet those who are of the household of Aristobulus.”

“*Apelles*” is a common name among the Jews. He is “the tried and true in Christ.” He is worn out, but he wears well.

Hughes says:

What a loving bouquet from the old soldier.

James 1:12: “Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.”

“Greet Apelles the tried and true in Christ.”

1. He is a man who was pressed and persevered.

2. He was a man who suffered and stood.

3. He was a man who hurt and hung in there.

4. He is a man who was troubled and he triumphed.

“Greet those who are of the household of Aristobulus.” “Aristobulus” is a very common name. He may have been the grandson of Herod the Great.

Verse 11: “Greet Herodion my kinsman. Greet those of the household of Narcissus, who are in the Lord.”

“Herodion” must have been a Jewish Christian, and again Paul uses the title “kinsman” referring to him.

“Greet those of the household of Narcissus, who are in the Lord.” This is third group of the five groups mentioned by Paul. We have seen:

1. Group #1 back in [verse 5](#): the home of Priscilla and Aquilla.

2. Group #2 in [verse 10](#): those who were of the household of Aristobulus.

3. Now, Group #3: the household of Narcissus.

Let’s worship the Lord this morning by singing verse 2 of “**Work, for the Night is Coming**”: “*Work, for the night is coming, Work through the sunny noon; Fill brightest hours with labor; Rest comes sure and soon: Give ev’ry flying minute, Something to keep in store; Work, for the night is coming, When man works no more.*”

August 25 — To the Point of Exhaustion (Romans 16:12-13)

Romans 16:12: “Greet Tryphaena and Tryphosa, those who are laboring to the point of exhaustion in the Lord. Greet Persis the beloved, who has worked hard in the Lord.”

Romans 16:13: “Greet Rufus, a choice man in the Lord, also his mother and

mine.”

Verse 12: “Greet Tryphaena and Tryphosa, those who are laboring to the point of exhaustion in the Lord. Greet Persis the beloved, who has worked hard in the Lord.”

This is the women’s verse. There are three women mentioned in verse 12. It is interesting that four of the women mentioned in our passage were said to have “worked hard.”

I remember a poster that had the following inscription, “We drench ourselves with the grace of exhaustion and the ecstasy of knowing that we are worthy to receive it.” Hanging here in the office is another poster. It says, “The runner who puts the last ounce of effort in the race feels the glorious satisfaction of having given everything to the moment.”

Tryphaena and Tryphosa might have been twin sisters. Their names mean “dainty” and “delicate.” I would call them dynamite in small packages.

“Greet Persis the beloved, who has worked hard in the Lord.” Persis joins Epae-netus, Ampliatus and Stachys as being called “beloved.” She also “worked hard in the Lord.”

Verse 13: “Greet Rufus, a choice man in the Lord, also his mother and mine.”

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

Rufus was mentioned in Mark 15:21 as the son of Simon of Cyrene. He was a North African. We remember Simon of Cyrene as the one who was compelled to carry the cross of Christ to Golgotha’s brow on that Good Friday morning. Rufus was “a choice man in the Lord” because he was a servant, sensitive, stable, submissive, and steadfast in the storm.

“Greet Rufus, a choice man in the Lord, also his mother and mine.” His mother was successful and satisfied, and her commitment showed up in her son.

Let us return to our hymn, “**Work, for the Night is Coming.**” Let’s sing verse 3: “*Work, for the night is coming, Under the sunset skies; While their bright tints are glowing, Work, for daylight flies. Work, till the last beam fadeth Fadeth to shine no more; Work, while night is dark’ning, When man’s work is o’er.*”

August 26 — Greet One Another (Romans 16:14-16)

Romans 16:14: “Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas and the brethren with them.”

Romans 16:15: “Greet Philologus and Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints who are with them.”

Romans 16:16: “Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ are greeting you.”

Verse 14: “Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas and the brethren with them.”

Here are five more of the men who are important individuals in the church at Rome. This also is the mention of Group #4: “the brethren with them.”

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

Evidently they had something in common. Maybe it was a house church and these were the 5 key leaders of the church.

Verse 15: “Greet Philologus and Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints who are with them.”

Philologus and Julia probably were another husband and wife team. The name “*Philologus*” has been found in the imperial house, both of slave and freedmen. It means “*lover of the word.*”

That makes two couples: Priscilla and Aquila, Philologus and Julia. This passage also mentions Group #5: “all the saints who are with them.”

We now have the full list of the nine women. I call them the Steel Magnolias of the early church.

Verse 16: “Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ are greeting you.”

Godet says:

Let us remark, in closing, the exquisite delicacy and courtesy which guide the apostle in those distinguishing epithets with which he accompanies the names of the servants or handmaids of Christ whom he mentions. Each of those descriptive titles is as it were the rough draft of the new name which those persons shall bear in glory. Thus understood, this enumeration is no longer a dry nomenclature; it resembles a bouquet of newly-blown flowers, which diffuse refreshing odors.

With all those names and biographies in our thoughts and minds, I feel like singing that fabulous hymn, “**When the Roll Is Called Up Yonder.**” Let’s sing all three verses of this hymn: “*When the trumpet of the Lord shall sound, and time shall be no more, And the morning breaks, eternal, bright and fair; When the saved of earth shall gather over on the other shore, And the roll is called up yonder I’ll be there! On that bright and cloudless morning when the dead in Christ shall rise And the glory of His resurrection share; When His chosen ones shall gather to their home beyond the skies, And the roll is called up yonder I’ll be there! Let us labor for the Master from the dawn till setting sun, Let us talk of all His wondrous love and care; Then when all of life is over, and our work on earth is done, And the roll is called up yonder I’ll be there! When the roll is called up yon-der; When the roll is called up yon-der; When the roll is called up yon-der; When the roll is called up yonder I’ll be there!*”

August 27 — Keeping Watch (Romans 16:17-18)

Romans 16:17: “*Now I am urging you, brethren, be keeping a watchful eye every one for those who are causing the divisions and the occasions of stumbling contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them.*”

Romans 16:18: “*For such men are not rendering service to our Lord Christ, but to their own appetites; and by their smooth and flattering speech they are deceiving the hearts of the unsuspecting.*”

Verse 17: “Now I am urging you, brethren, be keeping a watchful eye every one for those who are causing the divisions and the occasions of stumbling contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them.”

We are going to turn from the greetings to a warning in verses 17-20.

“Now I am urging you” reminds us of Romans 12:1 when Paul says the same thing. “Now I am urging you” also points back to verse 1 of this chapter: “Now I am recommending to you...”

Paul gives us a command: “Be keeping a watchful eye every one for those who are causing (1) the divisions and (2) the occasions of stumbling contrary to the teaching

which you learned, and turn away from them.” “Keeping a watchful eye” and “turning away” are the commands of the apostle Paul. This is a present imperative so it is something you are doing on a daily basis – keeping a watchful eye and turning away.

1. The “divisions” come as a result of pride. We see this in 3 John 9 as John speaks of Diotrephes who “loves to have first place.”

2. They are causing “occasions of stumbling.” Their creed, their convictions and their conduct are contrary to the teachings of scripture.

They are doing this “contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them.” They are doctrinal deviates.

Ephesians 4:14: “As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming;”

Verse 18: “For such men are not rendering service to our Lord Christ, but to their own appetites; and by their smooth and flattering speech they are deceiving the hearts of the unsuspecting.”

Paul gives the reason for why they are to be “keeping a watchful eye” and “turning away from them” in verse 18: “For such men are [negatively] not rendering service to Our Lord Christ, but [positively] to their own appetites.”

Their own appetites can be defined by their appetites for power, personal comfort and popularity. They come to *fleece the flock* instead of *feed it*. They come to get rather than to give. They come to sacrifice *you* rather than *themselves*. “And by their smooth and flattering speech they are deceiving the hearts of the unsuspecting.”

You just do not expect to be preyed upon by someone who has perverted the proclamation of the gospel for personal privilege.

Let’s worship and sing our response to this morning by singing “**Higher Ground**.” Let’s sing together verses 1, 2 and 3: *“I’m pressing on the upward way, New heights I’m gaining ev’ry day; Still praying as I’m onward bound, ‘Lord, plant my feet on higher ground.’ My heart has no desire to stay Where doubts arise and fears dismay; Tho’ some may dwell where these abound, My prayer, my aim, is higher ground. I want to live above the world, Tho’ Satan’s darts at me are hurled; For faith has caught the joyful sound, The song of saints on higher ground. Lord, lift me up and let me stand, By faith, on Heaven’s tableland, A higher plane that I have found; Lord, plant my feet on higher ground.”*

August 28 — Wise in What is Good (Romans 16:19-20)

Romans 16:19: “*For the report of your obedience has reached to all; therefore I am rejoicing over you, but I am wanting you to be wise in what is good, and innocent in what is evil.*”

Romans 16:20: “*And the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.*”

Verse 19: “For the report of your obedience has reached to all; therefore I am rejoicing over you, but I am wanting you to be wise in what is good, and innocent in what is evil.”

We have the reason for the warnings stated here in verse 19: “the report of your obedience has reached to all.” Because they have gone public with their obedience, they have become a prime target for Satan’s missiles.

Paul is saying because of your obedience:

1. I am rejoicing over you. You have made my day!
2. But I am wanting you to be wise in what is good.
3. I want you to be innocent in what is evil.

I want you to go for the good, and do not get involved in that which is evil and become guilty. I want you to be wise, not dumb and stupid.

Verse 20: “And the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.”

“And the God of peace” takes us back to Romans 15:33: “Now the God of peace be with you all.” “And the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.” This is the victory of Christ over every false teaching.

Satan is the one responsible for what is going on in verses 17 and 18. We see this clearly in 2 Corinthians 11:13-15: “For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their deeds.

“The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.”

This morning, let’s sing and worship verse 4 of **“Higher Ground”**: *“I want to scale the utmost height And catch a gleam of glory bright; But still I’ll pray till Heaven I’ve found, ‘Lord, plant my feet on higher ground.’ Lord, lift me up and let me stand, By faith, on Heaven’s tableland, A higher plane that I have found; Lord, plant my feet on higher ground.”*

August 29 — The Staff Greetings (Romans 16:21-22)

Romans 16:21: *“Timothy my fellow-worker is greeting you; and so do Lucius and Jason and Sosipater, my kinsmen.”*

Romans 16:22: *“I Tertius, who write this letter, am greeting you in the Lord.”*

Verse 21: “Timothy my fellow-worker is greeting you; and so do Lucius and Jason and Sosipater, my kinsmen.”

Timothy is called a “fellow-worker” along with Urbanus back in verse 9 and Priscilla and Aquila in verse 3. There is a Lucius in Acts 13:1 who is from Cyrene, and a prophet at Antioch. Jason was Paul’s host in Thessalonica in Acts 17:1-9. Sosipater could be Sophiter of Berea.

Paul has used the term “kinsmen” six times throughout the passage to refer to these fellow Jews who serve the Lord with him.

Verse 22: “I Tertius, who write this letter, am greeting you in the Lord.”

Stedman says:

The apostle must have said something to him, such as, “Tertius, you’ve written this whole thing and you must have writer’s cramp by now. Just write another line and send your own greetings.” The name indicates that he was a slave, because his name means *“Third.”* In slave families, they did not bother to think up names; they just numbered the children. First, Second, Third, Fourth, Fifth, and so on.

Let’s praise the Lord and lift up the name of Jesus with Bill & Gloria Gaither in **“There’s Something About That Name”**: *“Jesus, Jesus, Jesus! There’s just something about that name! Master, Saviour, Jesus! Like the fragrance after the rain; Jesus,*

Jesus, Jesus! Let all heaven and earth proclaim! Kings and kingdoms will all pass away, But there's something about that name!"

August 30 — Grace Be with You All (Romans 16:23-24)

Romans 16:23: *"Gaius, host to me and to the whole church, is greeting you. Erastus, the city treasurer is greeting you, and Quartus, the brother."*

Romans 16:24: *"(some ancient manuscripts add) The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen."*

Verse 23: "Gaius, host to me and to the whole church, is greeting you. Erastus, the city treasurer is greeting you, and Quartus, the brother."

"Gaius" is mentioned in Derby, Macedonia and Corinth. Paul lived with him in Corinth and baptized him. 1 Corinthians 1:14: "I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius." There is also a Gaius mentioned in 3 John. It is to Gaius that John writes his third epistle.

"Erastus, the city treasurer is greeting you." The literature which has been preserved from the time mentions an official named "Erastus." He is mentioned in Acts 19:22 and 2 Timothy 4:20. He is the "*city treasurer*" in Corinth.

"And Quartus, the brother." The name "*Quartus*" has been found in a Corinthian subscription and his name means "*fourth*."

Verse 24: *"(some ancient manuscripts add) The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen."*

Paul has made a similar statement in verse 20: "The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you." And now he repeats that in verse 24: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen." The whole focus of the epistle has been upon *the grace of God*.

It is the grace of God that has explained all of the beautiful people we have examined in Chapter 16. Let's celebrate and worship by singing verses 1 and 2 of **"Grace Greater Than Our Sin"**: *"Marvelous grace of our loving Lord, Grace that exceeds our sin and our guilt, Yonder on Calvary's mount outpoured, There where the blood of the Lamb was spilt. Sin and despair, like the seawaves cold, Threaten the soul with infinite loss; Grace that is greater, yes, grace untold, Points to the Refuge, the Mighty Cross. Grace, grace, God's grace, Grace that will pardon and cleanse within; Grace, grace, God's grace, Grace that is greater than all our sin."*

August 31 — The Doxology (Romans 16:25-27)

Romans 16:25: *"Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past,"*

Romans 16:26: *"but now has been made known through prophetic writings, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all nations, leading to obedience of faith;"*

Romans 16:27: *"to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever. Amen."*

Verse 25: "Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past,"

Now the focus is on the Lord Jesus Christ: "Now to Him." Jude 24, 25: "Now to

Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.”

“Now to Him who is able to establish you.”

1 Peter 5:10: “And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.”

We have already studied that mystery earlier in the epistle. The mystery is that a man can be declared righteous before God by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Verse 26: “but now has been made known through prophetic writings, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith;”

“But now [the mystery] has been made known through prophetic writings, according to the commandment of the eternal God, [the mystery] has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith;”

Verse 27: “to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever. Amen.”

Yes, to God be the glory. He gets it all.

Let’s conclude our study of the book of Romans by singing verses 3 and 4 of “**Grace Greater Than Our Sin**”: *“Dark is the stain that we cannot hide. What can avail to wash it away? Look, there is flowing a crimson tide; whiter than snow you may be today. Marvelous, infinite, matchless grace, Freely bestowed on all who believe; You that are longing to see His face, Will you this moment His grace receive? Grace, grace, God’s grace, Grace that will pardon and cleanse within; Grace, grace, God’s grace, Grace that is greater than all our sin.”*

SEPTEMBER

September 1 — Abundant Grace and Peace (Philippians 1:1-2)

Philippians 1:1: “Paul and Timothy, bondslaves of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, together with overseers and deacons;”

Philippians 1:2: “grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Verse 1: “Paul and Timothy, bondslaves of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, together with overseers and deacons;”

We begin our journey this morning through the most intimate and personal letter that Paul ever wrote – the book of Philippians. This is an epistle of the heart, a true love letter, full of friendship, gratitude and competence.

Paul is in prison in Rome. We have record of this in Acts chapter 28. Sometime later, he was released and then brought back here. His life was terminated on that occasion.

Paul and Timothy are introduced to us as bondslaves of Christ Jesus. Paul recognized that he did not belong to himself but to another, Jesus Christ. With the love of Christ controlling him, he turned over the controls to Jesus Christ. He now has no will of his own because his Master’s will must be his will.

Though Paul was in prison in Rome, Rome was not his master because his Master

was Christ, to whom he was enslaved.

“To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi.”

“Together with overseers and deacons” - Paul is recognizing the authority of the church that was founded back in 50 AD. The record of that founding is in the book of Acts chapter 16.

Verse 2: “grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

This is Paul’s traditional greeting, but they are never reversed. You must experience God’s grace before you have God’s peace.

Ephesians 2:8-9: “For by grace are you saved through faith - and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God - not of works, lest any man should boast.”

This morning for my devotional time, I was singing that hymn, **“Where He Leads Me I Will Follow.”** I was just 6 yrs. old, 74 years ago, in a little Baptist church in Burns, Oregon, when the people were singing that hymn. I answered the call by receiving Jesus Christ as my Savior. As a 6 year-old, I didn’t pay much attention to the words, but verse 4 really hit me this morning, *“He will give me grace and glory. He will give me grace and glory. He will give me grace and glory, and go with me, with me all the way. Where He leads me I will follow. Where He leads me I will follow. Where He leads me I will follow. I’ll go with Him with Him, with Him all the way.”*

I trust as we study this little book of Philippians, if you do not know Christ as Savior, you will come to know him by faith this very day and start your journey to glory.

Please join me as we begin our journey through Philippians by singing together and worshipping the Lord with one of the great invitation hymns, **“Softly and Tenderly.”** Let’s sing together verses 1 and 2: *“Softly and tenderly Jesus is calling, Calling for you and for me; See, on the portals He’s waiting and watching, Watching for you and for me. Why should we tarry when Jesus is pleading, pleading for you and for me? Why should we linger and heed not His mercies, Mercies for you and for me? Come home, come home, Ye who are weary, come home; Earnestly, tenderly, Jesus is calling, Calling, O sinner, come home!”*

September 2 — Joyful Prayer and Praise (Philippians 1:3-4)

Philippians 1:3: *“I am thanking my God upon every remembrance of you,”*

Philippians 1:4: *“always in every prayer of mine, making request in behalf of all of you with joy,”*

Verse 3: “I am thanking my God upon every remembrance of you,”

Paul is speaking of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ when he speaks of God being *our* Father in verse 2 and God being *my* God in verse 3.

He told the Thessalonians in 1 Thessalonians 5:18: “In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.”

It is because Paul had learned to be thankful for everything that he had such inextinguishable joy and was content in all circumstances.

Verse 4: “always in every prayer of mine, making request in behalf of all of you with joy,”

Paul is a firm believer that God intervenes in the affairs of men by invitation only.

John 16:24: “Hitherto have you asked nothing in my name. Ask and you shall receive, that your joy may be full.”

Note that his request is made with joy. He is a persecuted apostle and he is praying

for a persecuted people from a Roman prison. But is he unhappy? No, he is interceding with joy. Paul is a happy prisoner.

Acts 16:25 in the Philippian jail we read the record: "But about midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God. And the prisoners were listening to them."

2 Chronicles 7:14: "If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then, will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land."

If we expect God to intervene, to work and move on behalf of us as citizens and of our country, if we ask Him to bless us; He asks us to pray and to commune with Him.

Psalm 5:3: "Morning by morning, O Lord, you hear my voice. Morning by morning, I lay my requests before you and wait in expectation."

Psalm 143:8: "Let the morning bring me word of your unfailing love for I have put my trust in you. Show me the way I should go for to you I lift up my soul."

There is a very familiar hymn that we often sing around the subject of prayer. I would suggest that we worship the Lord this morning singing verses 2 and 3 of "**Sweet Hour of Prayer**": "*Sweet hour of prayer, sweet hour of prayer, Thy wings shall my petition bear, To Him whose truth and faithfulness Engage the waiting soul to bless; And since He bids me seek His face, Believe His Word and trust His grace, I'll cast on Him my ev'ry care, And wait for thee, sweet hour of prayer. Sweet hour of prayer, sweet hour of prayer, May I thy consolation share, Till, from Mount Pisgah's lofty height, I view my home, and take my flight; This robe of flesh I'll drop, and rise To seize the everlasting prize; And shout, while passing through the air, 'Farewell, farewell, sweet hour of prayer!'*"

September 3 — The Work Complete (Philippians 1:5-6)

Philippians 1:5: "*in view of your close relationship with the gospel from the first day until now.*"

Philippians 1:6: "*Being sure of this very thing, that He who began in you a good work will bring it to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.*"

Verse 5: "*in view of your close relationship with the gospel from the first day until now.*"

This verse takes us back to verse 3 and tells us why Paul is thanking his God upon every remembrance of them. They had continued in the things of the Lord from the time that they came to know him up to the present time.

Fellowship has in view their partnership in the gospel by sharing with him in a material way.

Verse 6: "Being sure of this very thing, that He who began in you a good work will bring it to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."

Paul is confident that the one who begins will continue on to completion His work in them. The Greek word has the idea of "*fully finishing*." When we go into God's great workshop, we find nothing that bears the marks of haste or incompleteness. We are confident that the work that has been begun in grace will be completed for His glory.

Ephesians 2:10: "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works."

"PLEASE BE PATIENT, GOD IS NOT FINISHED WITH ME YET."

Barclay says:

The words “*to begin*” and “*complete*” are technical terms for the beginning and ending of a sacrifice. Paul is seeing the life of every Christian as a sacrifice prepared to offer to Jesus Christ. From the moment we start out upon the Christian life, God’s grace begins to fit us to be the perfect offering to offer to Jesus Christ. The Lord is more interested in working in us than working for us.

John Calvin says:

We are the work of his hands. Therefore, he will complete what he has begun in us.

THE WORK THOU HAST IN ME BEGUN
SHALL BY THY GRACE BE FULLY DONE.

The good work of God is the making of men according to the pattern likeness of Jesus Christ.

The Lord doesn’t look upon us as we are now, but what we will look like when we are finished.

1 John 3:2: “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, though we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.”

Hudson Taylor said:

I used to ask God if He would come and help me; then I asked God if I might come and help Him; then I ended by asking God to do His work through me. In his book, *Shaped by God*, Max Lucado says of not being put to use:

To find me, look over in the corner of the shop, over here, behind the cobwebs, beneath the dust, in the darkness. There are scores of us: broken handles, dulled blades, cracked iron. Some of us were useful once, and then...many of us never were. But, listen, don’t feel sorry for me. Life ain’t so bad here in the piles...no work, no anvils, no pain, no sharpening. And yet, the days are very long.

In Jeremiah 18, Jeremiah is commanded to go down to the potter’s house and the Lord will give him a message: “Then I went down to the potter’s house, and there he was making something on the wheel. But the vessel he was making of clay was spoiled in the hand of the potter. So he remade it into another vessel as it pleased the potter to make.” What comfort and joy that the Lord does not give up on us, but He continues to work in the mold and to bear fruit through our lives. To God be the Glory, great things He is doing!

I remember many years ago when serving as a youth minister that one of our favorite songs we sang was “**Now I Belong to Jesus.**” Will you join me in worship please as we sing all three verses? “*Jesus my Lord will love me forever, From Him no pow’r of evil can sever, He gave His life to ransom my soul, Now I belong to Him, Once I was lost in sin’s degradation, Jesus came down to bring me salvation, Lifted me up from sorrow and shame, Now I belong to Him; Joy floods my soul for Jesus has saved me, Freed me from sin that long had enslaved me, His precious blood He gave to redeem, Now I belong to Him; Now I belong to Jesus, Jesus belongs to me, Not for the years of time alone, But for eternity.*”

September 4 — Holding Each Other in the Heart (Philippians 1:7)

Philippians 1:7: “*Even as it is right for me to be feeling this way about all of you,*

because you are holding me in your heart, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, all of you being sharers with me in this grace.”

Verse 7: “Even as it is right for me to be feeling this way about all of you, because you are holding me in your heart, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, all of you being sharers with me in this grace.”

The question that we ask ourselves is “How do you hold someone in your heart?” I think the answer is you love them and remain devoted to them, no matter what the circumstances might be. The Philippians are unmoved in their love and devotion towards him, whether in prison or out of prison.

It is the fair weather friends that fly when you fail.

Paul looks to the past in verse 5 and is joyful over their continued progress. He looks to the future in verse 6 with confidence of a continued work until the day of Christ. Here in verse 7, he looks at the present and is joyful with their sharing of his burden.

All of you being sharers with me in this grace. Paul looks on his ministry and suffering as a gracious provision of the Lord.

2 Timothy 1:9: “It is He who saved us and chose us for His holy work, not because we deserved it, but because that was His plan long before the world began, to show His love and kindness to us through Christ.”

Annie Johnson Flint writes a beautiful piece:

HAVE YOU COME TO THE RED SEA PLACE IN YOUR LIFE,
WHERE, IN SPITE OF ALL YOU CAN DO,
THERE IS NO WAY OUT, THERE IS NO WAY BACK,
THERE IS NO OTHER WAY BUT THROUGH?
THEN WAIT ON THE LORD WITH A TRUST SERENE
TILL THE NIGHT OF YOUR FEAR IS GONE;
HE WILL SEND THE WIND, HE WILL HEAP THE FLOODS,
WHEN HE SAYS TO YOUR SOUL, “GO ON.”

Paul had found he had grace for *salvation*, grace to *suffer*, and also grace to endure *testing* and *trouble*.

2 Corinthians 12:9: “And He said unto me, ‘My grace is sufficient for thee.’”

Join me in worship as we sing together “**A Shelter in the Time of Storm.**” Let’s sing verses 1 and 3: “*The Lord’s our Rock, in Him we hide, A Shelter in the time of storm; Secure whatever ill betide, A Shelter in the time of storm. The raging storms may round us beat, A Shelter in the time of storm; We’ll never leave our safe retreat, A Shelter in the time of storm. O, Jesus is a Rock in a weary land, A weary land, a weary land; O, Jesus is a Rock in a weary land, A Shelter in the time of storm.*”

September 5 — The Affections of Christ (Philippians 1:8-9)

Philippians 1:8: “*For God is my witness, how I am longing after all of you with the affections of Christ Jesus.*”

Philippians 1:9: “*And this I am praying, that your love yet more and more might overflow (grow) in knowledge and every experience,*”

Verse 8: “For God is my witness, how I am longing after all of you with the affections of Christ Jesus.”

God is my witness. He knows how I feel. Christ is manifesting His love for them

through the apostle. Christ Himself lives in him and loves through him.

1 John 4:12: “For though we have never yet seen God, when we love each other, God lives in us and His love within us grows ever stronger.”

There is a principle involved: when we have shallow love on the vertical, it will show up in shallow love on the horizontal. Our capacity to love increases as we deepen our relationship to our Heavenly Father. The closer we get to our Father, the more we love Jesus Christ.

John Oxenham wrote:

Love ever gives – forgives – outlives – and ever stands with open hands. And while it lives, it gives. For this is love’s prerogative – to give and give and give.

Verse 9: “And this I am praying, that your love yet more and more might overflow (grow) in knowledge and every experience,”

“That your love yet more and more might overflow in knowledge and every experience.” Christ producing this love in them will be a love that will overflow. It will grow with the increase of knowledge. The challenge of the Gentile Christians is for this love to flow even to the Jews, and vice-versa. Your love will pour over as a bucket standing under a little waterfall is running over on all sides. It’s almost like Jimmy Dean would say: “I am drinking from my saucer cuz my cup’s overflowed.”

Our objective at this point is to be challenged to deepen our relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ that the Holy Spirit might produce unhindered in our hearts and lives a visible demonstration of Christ living in us; a love which flows freely and powerfully toward those who do not know the Savior, by being constructively involved in their lives, and toward those whom we have hurt and who have hurt us in the free flow of forgiveness.

One saint prayed:

Lord, I want to love in such a way that I leave footprints on your heart.

Would it not be appropriate for us to sing that wonderful prayer hymn, “**More Love to Thee**”? Let’s sing all three verses: “*More love to Thee, O Christ, More love to Thee! Hear Thou the pray’r I make On bended knee; This is my earnest plea: More love, O Christ, to Thee, More love to Thee, more love to Thee! Once earthly joy I craved, Sought peace and rest; Now Thee alone I seek, give what is best; This all my pray’r shall be: More love, O Christ to Thee, More love to Thee, more love to Thee! Then shall my latest breath Whisper Thy praise; This be the parting cry My heart shall raise; This still its pray’r shall be: More love, O Christ to Thee, More love to Thee, more love to Thee!*”

September 6 — Filled with Fruit (Philippians 1:10-11)

Philippians 1:10: “so that you may be putting to the test the things that really matter, in order that you might be sincere and blameless for the day of Christ;”

Philippians 1:11: “having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which fruit is through Jesus Christ, for the glory and praise of God.”

Verse 10: “so that you may be putting to the test the things that really matter, in order that you might be sincere and blameless for the day of Christ;”

Now Paul gives us the reason why he is praying about their love back in verse 9: “that it will be overflowing in knowledge and experience.”

“So that you may put to the test” things differing.

Paul knows that if their love is right for Jesus Christ, they will know what is right and what is wrong for them to do.

As one falls more deeply in love with the Savior, he detects in himself habits, practices and ways of behavior which he once permitted, without seeing evil in them, but now puts them aside as unfit to follow only the good.

We can sense when things hurt the ones we love, and therefore because we love them, we do not do the things that will hurt. We want to please them, so we do the right things.

We reflect our love for the Savior by our conduct. It is learning to do the right thing at the right time, by the right way, and in so doing, becoming more like Jesus Christ.

Charles Wesley had it right when he said:

I want the witness, Lord, that all I do is right, according to Thy will and word, well-pleasing in Thy sight. I ask no higher state. Indulge me but in this, and soon or later then translate to my eternal bliss.

The purpose for putting these things to the test is seen in the final phrase “in order that you might be sincere (pure) and blameless (undamaged) for the day of Christ.” Paul wants them to be transparent through and through. It’s being real.

“For the day of Christ” refers to the rapture of the church.

1 John 3:3: “And every man that has this hope in Him purifies himself, even as He is pure.”

Verse 11: “having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which fruit is through Jesus Christ, for the glory and praise of God.”

The fruit Paul talks about is the fruit he spells out in Galatians 5:22-23: “But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance (self-control). Against such, there is no law.”

Jesus warned the disciples as they were leaving the upper room for the Garden of Gethsemane in John 15:5: “Without Him, we can do nothing.”

James 3:18: “And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.”

Proverbs 11:30: “And the fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and he that winneth souls is wise.”

“For the glory and praise of God.” The last phrase of our study this morning gives us the ultimate goal or reason for being concerned about the fruit of righteousness. This fruit is not for our glory, but for His glory.

The two questions I would ask you as we prepare to worship the Lord in song: (1) are you filled with the fruit of righteousness? and (2) is the love of Christ flowing through you right now?

Let’s sing and worship with George Matheson **“O Love That Wilt Not Let Me Go.”** Let’s sing together verses 1, 3 and 4: *“O Love that wilt not let me go, I rest my weary soul in thee; I give thee back the life I owe, That in Thine ocean depths its flow May richer, fuller be. O Joy that seekest me through pain, I cannot close my heart to thee; I trace the rainbow thro’ the rain, And feel the promise is not vain That morn shall tearless be. O Cross that liftest up my head, I dare not ask to hide from thee; I lay in dust life’s glory dead, And from the ground there blossoms red Life that shall endless be.”*

September 7 — God's Providence at Work (Philippians 1:12)

Philippians 1:12: "Now I am desiring you to know, brethren, that the things concerning me (my imprisonment) have turned out rather in the progress of the gospel,"

Verse 12: "Now I am desiring you to know, brethren, that the things concerning me (my imprisonment) have turned out rather in the progress of the gospel,"

God is getting glory through my imprisonment.

His report, basically, is the equation: prison = progress. Only God could work something out like this.

You see a very similar thing in the life of Joseph and his imprisonment for a time, in view of the incredible ministry that was ahead for him.

Proverbs 16:9: "In his heart, a man plans his course, but the Lord determines his steps."

Proverbs 19:21: "Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails."

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

Many times in our lives disappointment is His appointment. The secret lies in changing the letter "d" to the letter "h" that we might triumph in any circumstance.

Paul states that in the opposition, there had come an opportunity for the gospel. He had opportunities to share Jesus Christ with the men of the Praetorian Guard who were chained to him for six-hour intervals. He could care less about his condition as long as the gospel was progressing. Whatever happened to him was secondary to God's glory.

The apostle certainly is neither frazzled nor finished by his imprisonment. His *difficulties* have become *doors*; his *thwartings* have been turned into *thoroughfares*.

The question in Paul's mind wasn't, "What is going to happen to me?" but rather, "How is the gospel going to be affected by what happens?"

Roadblocks set up by Satan can become stepping stones as they have for Paul in this situation. May God help us to see that many times in *adversity*, there is *advantage*. In *persecution* and *peril*, there is *progress*.

It is Fenelon who says:

You have great need of the power of the Holy Spirit, both to sustain you in this time of trouble, and also to restrain you in your natural desire to find a way out.

Let's sing together and worship the Lord with Bill and Gloria Gaither's wonderful hymn, "**Because He Lives.**" Let's sing verses 1 and 3: "*God sent His son - they called Him Jesus; He came to love, heal, and forgive. He lived and died to buy my pardon; An empty grave is there to prove my Savior lives. And then one day I'll cross the river; I'll fight life's final war with pain. And then, as death gives way to vict'ry, I'll see the lights of glory and I'll know He reigns. Because He lives, I can face tomorrow; Because He lives, all fear is gone. Because I know He holds the future, And life is worth the living just because He lives.*"

September 8 — Snatching Victory from Defeat (Philippians 1:13-14)

Philippians 1:13: "so that it has become evident that my imprisonment (bonds) are because of Christ in the whole Praetorian Guard and to all the rest,"

Philippians 1:14: "and the great majority of the brethren, having become confident in the Lord through my imprisonment (bonds), are more abundantly bold to

speaking the word of God without fear.”

Verse 13: “so that it has become evident that my imprisonment (bonds) are because of Christ in the whole Praetorian Guard and to all the rest,”

The apostle is so excited about what is happening. No matter what happens, he still sees an opportunity. He never lets life get to him.

It is the attitude of acceptance that makes it that way.

The apostle Paul is excited about his new ministry he is able to have in these new circumstances.

The progress of the gospel had been so great that it is obvious his imprisonment is because of Christ. This thrills the apostle because his goal is the glory of Christ in every situation.

The Praetorian Guard was a group of 10,000 picked soldiers concentrated in Rome by Tiberius. They had double pay and special privileges. They were sort of like a Green Beret unit.

Make no mistake about it. Paul was not an ordinary prisoner, for the only charge against him was that in courage he followed in the steps of his Savior, no matter what the cost.

Verse 14: “and the great majority of the brethren, having become confident in the Lord through my imprisonment (bonds), are more abundantly bold to speak the word of God without fear.”

Here is the second reason Paul can see progress for the sake of the gospel. The first is in verse 13 that the guard recognizes his imprisonment is because of Christ. And now the second, many of the brethren are bold to speak the word without fear.

In this verse, the apostle has to say “the great majority of the brethren.” He cannot use the word “all.” There is always some stick-in-the-mud that says “no” on every issue. And here he has the great majority, but not all of the brethren united in what is happening to him.

F.B. Meyer points out:

It may seem as if your voice were being hushed in blood and tears, but others are being made bold.

Courage is a man who just keeps comin’ on. He may not get there himself, but he’ll open up a way for others to follow him.

Let’s join in worship by singing that hymn that has blessed the hearts of so many through the years, **“Faith is the Victory.”** We will sing verses 1 and 2: *“Encamped along the hills of light, Ye Christian soldiers, rise, And press the battle ere the night Shall veil the glowing skies. Against the foe in vales below Let all our strength be hurled; Faith is the victory, we know, That overcomes the world. His banner over us is love, Our sword the Word of God; We tread the road the saints above With shouts of triumph trod. By faith they, like a whirlwind’s breath, Swept on o’er ev’ry field; The faith by which they conquered death Is still our shining shield. Faith is the victory! Faith is the victory! O glorious victory, that overcomes the world.”*

September 9 — There is Opposition (Philippians 1:15-16)

Philippians 1:15: “Certain ones, indeed, are preaching Christ even because of envy and strife, but also certain others because of good will;”

Philippians 1:16: “some indeed out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the

defense of the gospel;”

Verse 15: “Certain ones, indeed, are preaching Christ even because of envy and strife, but also certain others because of good will;”

In these next few verses, Paul states that in presenting the gospel, a man may have one of two attitudes. Either it is out of love or it is for self.

Those who are presenting Christ out of love are doing it for His glory, which is the goal of the Christian that we are setting. Those who are being motivated by other reasons are doing it for self-glory.

Paul tells young Timothy in his final epistle, 2 Timothy 4:2: “Preach the word, be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with great patience and instruction.”

May we search the motives of our hearts and ask ourselves the question: Why am I a Christian? Is it to bring glory to Christ, or is there some personal advantage involved?

Verse 16: “some indeed out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel;”

The Philippians were those who were motivated out of love, as we have noted in verse 7: “Even as it is right for me to be feeling this way about all of you, because you are holding me in your heart, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, all of you being sharers with me in this grace.”

I CANNOT WORK MY SOUL TO SAVE,
FOR THAT MY LORD HATH DONE.
BUT I WILL WORK LIKE ANY SLAVE
FOR LOVE OF GOD’S DEAR SON.

We could say that Paul has a motto in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. His motto in the Old Testament is Job 13:15: “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in Him.” His New Testament motto is John 3:30: “He must be increasing, but I must be decreasing.”

Let’s continue to sing “**Faith is the Victory**” as our hymn of worship. Let’s sing verses 3 and 4: “*On ev’ry hand the foe we find Drawn up in dread array; Let tents of ease be left behind, And onward to the fray; Salvation’s helmet on each head, With truth all girt about, The earth shall tremble ’neath our tread, And echo with our shout, To him that overcomes the foe, White raiment shall be giv’n; Before the angels he shall know His name confessed in Heav’n. Then onward from the hill of light, Our hearts with love aflame, We’ll vanquish all the hosts of night, In Jesus’ conquering Name. Faith is the victory! Faith is the victory! O glorious victory, that overcomes the world.*”

September 10 — What Does it Matter? (Philippians 1:17-18)

Philippians 1:17: “*but others out of a self-seeking spirit are proclaiming Christ, not from pure motives, thinking to raise up additional afflictions to my imprisonment (bonds).*”

Philippians 1:18: “*What does it matter? Except that in every manner, whether in pretense or truth, Christ is being proclaimed; and in this I am rejoicing, and I shall certainly continue to be rejoicing.*”

Verse 17: “but others out of a self-seeking spirit are proclaiming Christ, not from

pure motives, thinking to raise up additional afflictions to my imprisonment (bonds).”

Some “out of love” in verse 16, but “others out of a self-seeking spirit” in verse 17. Their motives are not for the glory of Christ, but for their own advancement.

God, help us not to be numbered in the ranks of those who live just for the moment, and what we can get out of it, but may our goal in living be the glory of Christ.

Verse 18: “What does it matter? Except that in every manner, whether in pretense or truth, Christ is being proclaimed; and in this I am rejoicing, and I shall certainly continue to be rejoicing.”

In this verse, we get Paul’s attitude toward their motives: To preach Christ is better than not to preach Him at all.

I am sure that if this were most of us, we would spend a ton of emotional energy on bitterness and resentment toward these opponents. We would grab our guns and dig our foxholes and start firing our missiles on the enemy. We spend so much time firing our shots in the wrong directions. We love to cut up our brothers and the enemy is untouched.

Paul is not only rejoicing in his adverse circumstances, but also in the fact that Christ is being preached by those with hidden motives.

F.B. Meyer confirms this when he says:

When you are devoted to Christ, your very bonds will become electric chains, through which the pulsations of energy shall go to others, and your very problems will be pulpits from which you shall preach the unsearchable riches of Christ. Storms cannot shipwreck the gospel. They only waft it forward.

What does it matter? Except that in every manner, Christ is being proclaimed.

Here we have the key to Paul’s ability to rise above adversity and opposition in joyfulness: Because he was living for Christ’s glory. It is the Lord’s. “The Lord has given. The Lord had taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.”

Let’s worship the Lord this morning about our eternal destiny by singing that great hymn, “**Face to Face.**” Let’s sing together verses 1 and 2: “*Face to face with Christ, my Savior, Face to face—what will it be? When with rapture I behold Him, Jesus Christ who died for me. Only faintly now I see Him, With the dark’ning veil between, But a blessed day is coming, When His glory shall be seen. Face to face I shall behold Him, Far beyond the starry sky; Face to face in all His glory, I shall see Him by and by!*”

September 11 — Victory is on the Way (Philippians 1:19)

Philippians 1:19: “*For I am knowing that this shall turn out in deliverance for me through your prayer and support of the Spirit of Jesus Christ*”

Verse 19: “For I am knowing that this shall turn out in deliverance for me through your prayer and support of the Spirit of Jesus Christ”

Paul’s reason for rejoicing is he knows that the outcome of these things is he will be delivered, but not on his own. There are two things which will bring this about.

1. Through your petition

E.M. Bounds says:

The prayers of God’s saints are the capitol stock in heaven by which Christ carries on his great work upon earth.

I love David Jeremiah’s prayer in his book, *Prayer the Great Adventure*:

You are an omnipotent God! You indeed do have power! You can do anything! Nothing is too hard for you! There is no sickness that you cannot heal! There is no problem that you cannot solve! There is no challenge that you cannot meet! There is no financial deficit that you cannot overcome! There is no man who can overthrow your purposes! There is no committee that can thwart your work in the church of Jesus Christ. You are the all-powerful, magnificent, amazing, beyond comprehension God! Lord, you are more than anything that I could say about you. There are no words to describe the greatness and glory and majesty of Jehovah-God!

2. Support of the Spirit of Jesus Christ

The earthly support would be their prayers, and the heavenly support would come from the Spirit in answer to their prayers.

Paul S. Reese points out that Paul had two anchors of the soul (1) the prayers of the saints and (2) the power of the Spirit.

Let's continue the hymn that we sang yesterday, **"Face to Face."** This morning, we will worship by singing verses 3 and 4: *"What rejoicing in His presence, When are banished grief and pain; When the crooked ways are straightened, And the dark things shall be plain. Face to face! O, blissful moment! Face to face, to see and know; Face to face with my Redeemer, Jesus Christ Who loves me so. Face to face I shall behold Him, Far beyond the starry sky; Face to face in all His glory, I shall see Him by and by!"*

September 12 — Christ Glorified (Philippians 1:20)

Philippians 1:20: *"according to my eager expectation and hope, that in nothing shall I be put to shame, but in all boldness, as always, also now, Christ shall be glorified in my body, whether through life or through death."*

Verse 20: "according to my eager expectation and hope, that in nothing shall I be put to shame, but in all boldness, as always, also now, Christ shall be glorified in my body, whether through life or through death."

Paul wants nothing but the glory of Christ issued from this experience. He is dead to his ambitions and desires for life, and now all he wants is the glory of Christ, whether in life or in death.

Psalm 31:1-2: "In Thee, O Lord, do I put my trust. Let me never be ashamed. Deliver me in Thy righteousness. Bow down Thine ear to me. Deliver me speedily. Be Thou my strong rock for a house of defense to save me."

In Luke 1:46, Mary could say: "My soul doth magnify the Lord."

John the Baptist in John 3:30 said: "He must continually be increasing, and I must be decreasing."

David would say in Psalm 34:3: "O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together."

Paul S. Reese says:

Nothing matters if only the sheer greatness, the unutterable bigness of Jesus Christ, somehow breaks through and becomes luminous in this frail physical frame.

The hymn writer says it well:

I FOUND A FRIEND, O SUCH A FRIEND.
HE BLED, HE DIED TO SAVE ME.

AND NOT ALONE THE GIFT OF LIFE,
BUT HIS OWN SELF HE GAVE ME.
NOT THAT I HAVE MINE OWN I CALL.
I HOLD IT TOWARD THE GIVER.
MY HEART, MY STRENGTH, MY LIFE, MY ALL
ARE HIS AND HIS FOREVER.

Let's worship and praise the Lord this morning with singing verses 1 and 2 of "**Glorify to His Name**": *"Down at the cross where my Saviour died, Down where for cleansing from sin I cried, There to my heart was the blood applied; Glory to His Name. I am so wondrously saved from sin, Jesus so sweetly abides within; There at the cross where He took me in; Glory to His Name. Glory to His Name, Glory to His Name; There to my heart was the blood applied; Glory to His Name."*

September 13 — Whatever is His Choice (Philippians 1:21-22)

Philippians 1:21: *"For to me, to be living is Christ, and to have died, that would be a gain."*

Philippians 1:22: *"But if to be living in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and what I shall choose I am not knowing."*

Verse 21: "For to me, to be living is Christ, and to have died, that would be a gain."

Only one life will soon be passed, only what is done for Christ will last.

We have stated how Paul felt about life. For him, to live was not for self, but for Christ.

Life is wonderful because it is Christ, and death is wonderful because it is more of Christ.

Christianity is nothing less than all of Him in all of you. He simply becomes your *pilot* instead of a *passenger*; your *captain* instead of a *cargo*.

Hudson Taylor says it right:

Had I a thousand lives, China should have every one. No, not China, but Christ.

When Christ in his glory is our goal, we can sing with W.L. Thompson:

Jesus is all the world to me, my life, my joy, my all.

He is my strength from day to day, without Him I would fall.

When I am sad, to Him I go. No other one can cheer me so.

When I am sad, He makes me glad. He's my friend.

Verse 22: "But if to be living in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and what I shall choose I am not knowing."

The word "fruit" takes us back to 1:11 earlier in the chapter: "having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which fruit is through Jesus Christ, for the glory and praise of God." Fruit is born by what we are more than by what we do or say.

The process of fruit-bearing for here and now will be terminated at the time of physical death.

John 15:8: "Herein is my Father glorified, in that you bear much fruit."

"And what I shall choose I am not knowing." Because death to Paul would be a gain, and because he is living only for the glory of Christ, he doesn't know which of the alternatives he prefers, life or death.

This morning, let's sing verses 3 and 4 of the hymn we sang yesterday, "**Glorify to**

His Name: “O precious fountain that saves from sin, I am so glad I have entered in. There Jesus saves me and keeps me clean; Glory to His Name. Come to this fountain so rich and sweet, Cast thy poor soul at the Saviour’s feet; Plunge in today, and be made complete; Glory to His Name. Glory to His Name, Glory to His Name; There to my heart was the blood applied; Glory to His Name.”

September 14 — A Desire to Depart (Philippians 1:23-24)

Philippians 1:23: “But I am hard pressed between the two, having the desire to depart (break up camp) and to be with Christ, for it is much more better;”

Philippians 1:24: “but to be remaining in the flesh is more needful (necessary) for you.”

Verse 23: “But I am hard pressed between the two, having the desire to depart (break up camp) and to be with Christ, for it is much more better;”

For Paul, there is a pressure to live, but also a pressure to die and be with Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:8: “We are of good courage I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord.”

We ask ourselves the question, “How is death a gain?” or “Why is he having the desire to depart and to be with Christ?” There are two reasons for this:

1. Christ Himself. He is going to be with the One whom he loves and serves.

2. Cashing in on all of the benefits and investments that have been produced over the years.

Paul’s analysis of death is it is “much more better.”

The Greek word for “depart” is really interesting. It has the idea of breaking up a camp or taking down the tent.

Death to Paul was just like taking down the tent and going home or lifting the anchor and sailing on a journey. If we are going on a journey, then we’ve got to get ready.

Amos 4:12: “Prepare to meet your God.”

Verse 24: “but to be remaining in the flesh is more needful (necessary) for you.”

Again, we have the little word “but” forming contrast with the previous. “But to remain is more needful to you.”

Paul was more concerned about their needs and desires than he was about his own.

He says: If I had my way, I would just as soon break up camp and go home. But it’s not my needs and desires that we are considering here but yours. It’s more necessary for your sake that I remain in the flesh.

Let’s worship the Lord with that enthusiastic and inspiring hymn, “**When We All Get to Heaven.**” We’ll sing verses 1 and 2: “Sing the wondrous love of Jesus, Sing His mercy and His grace; In the mansions bright and blessed He’ll prepare for us a place, While we walk the pilgrim pathway Clouds will overspread the sky; But when traveling days are over, Not a shadow, not a sigh. When we all get to Heaven, What a day of rejoicing that will be! When we all see Jesus, We’ll sing and shout the victory!”

September 15 — God Isn’t Finished with Me Yet (Philippians 1:25-26)

Philippians 1:25: “And having confidence, I am knowing that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith,”

Philippians 1:26: “in order that your rejoicing (glorying) may abound in Christ

Jesus in me through my presence with you again.”

Verse 25: “And having confidence, I am knowing that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith,”

This brings us to the conclusion of the matter of life and death, and Paul’s future.

Paul is not only confident that God is going to continue his good work in them, but he will remain alive to aid in this good work.

The reason for his remaining is two-fold:

1. For your progress
2. For your joy in the faith

As Paul is experiencing more of God’s work in his life, he is confident this will result in their progress and joy in the faith.

Verse 26: “in order that your rejoicing (glorying) may abound in Christ Jesus in me through my presence with you again.”

In verse 26, the apostle states the purpose for their progress and joy: “In order that your rejoicing (glorying) may abound in Christ Jesus in me through my presence with you again.”

Galatians 6:14: “But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Michelangelo said:

The greater danger for most of us is not that our aim is too high and we miss it, but that it is too low and we reach it. We ought to live our lives waiting to hear God say, “Well done!”

Samuel Rutherford says:

Let Him make anything out of me, so being He be glorified in my salvation: for I know I am made for Him.

Let’s worship the Lord this morning by singing verses 3 and 4 of **“When We All Get to Heaven”**: *“Let us then be true and faithful, Trusting, serving ev’ry day; Just one glimpse of Him in glory Will the toils of life repay. Onward to the prize before us, Soon His beauty we’ll behold; Soon the pearly gates will open, We shall tread the streets of gold. When we all get to Heaven, What a day of rejoicing that will be! When we all see Jesus, We’ll sing and shout the victory!”*

September 16 — Living Up to Your Creed (Philippians 1:27)

Philippians 1:27: *“Only live as citizens in a manner worthy of the gospel of the Christ; in order that whether having come and having seen you or whether being absent, I am hearing things concerning you, that you are standing firm in one spirit, contending with one soul for the faith of the gospel;”*

Verse 27: “Only live as citizens in a manner worthy of the gospel of the Christ; in order that whether having come and having seen you or whether being absent, I am hearing things concerning you, that you are standing firm in one spirit, contending with one soul for the faith of the gospel;”

Paul turns to admonition and asks them to do something: “Only live as citizens in a manner worthy of the gospel of the Christ.”

Steadfastness in the difficult places is not nearly so hard as it is when all is going well.

The early Christians pointed out that facing the roaring beasts was not the hard

thing, but the steadfastness from day to day was the most difficult.

1 Corinthians 16:13: “Keep your eyes open for spiritual danger. Stand true to the Lord. Act like men. Be Strong.”

I have personally chosen this verse and verse 14 as the verses for the year for 2013.

Phillips paraphrases the first part of 27: “Make sure that your everyday life is worthy of the gospel of Christ.”

Christianity is not only concerned with what people believe, but also with what they are.

Colossians 2:6: “As you therefore have received Christ Jesus, the Lord, so walk in him.”

SO LET OUR LIPS AND LIVES EXPRESS
THE HOLY GOSPEL WE PROFESS.
SO LET OUR WORKS AND VIRTUE SHINE
TO PROVE THE DOCTRINE ALL DIVINE.
THUS SHALL WE BEST PROCLAIM ABROAD,
THE HONORS OF OUR SAVIOR GOD.
WHEN HIS SALVATION REIGNS WITHIN
AND GRACE SUBDUES THE POWER OF SIN.

The purpose for this admonition is seen in the next phrase: “in order that whether having come and having seen you or whether being absent, I am hearing things concerning you.” And what is he seeing or hearing? You are standing firm in one spirit. The language of the Roman amphitheater is in view. Like criminals or captives, the Christians are condemned to fight for their lives.

Ephesians 6:13: “So use every piece of God’s armor to resist the enemy whenever he attacks. And when it is all over, you will still be standing up.”

Contending with one soul for the faith of the gospel – this is the third thing in the admonition.

1. Live as citizens in a manner worthy of the gospel.
2. Stand firm in one spirit.
3. Contend with one soul for the faith of the gospel.

Elisabeth Elliot in her book, *Discipline: the Glad Surrender*, says:

Is there any image of freedom and joy more exhilarating than a full orchestra, everybody sawing, tootling, pounding, strumming, blowing, clashing, and hammering away for all they are worth, under the direction of the immense energy and discipline of a man who knows every note of every instrument in every concerto, and knows how to elicit that note exactly so that it will contribute most fully to the glory and the work as a whole.

Let’s worship the Lord this morning by singing verses 1 and 3 of **“Beneath the Cross of Jesus”**: *“Beneath the cross of Jesus I fain would take my stand, The shadow of a mighty Rock Within a weary land; A home within the wilderness, A rest upon the way, From the burning of the noontide heat, And the burden of the day. I take, O cross, thy shadow for my abiding place; I ask no other sunshine than The sunshine of His face; Content to let the world go by, To know no gain or loss, My sinful self my only shame, My glory all the cross.”*

September 17 — Don’t Be Intimidated (Philippians 1:28)

Philippians 1:28: “and in no way being intimidated by your opponents, which is to them clear evidence (proof) of utter destruction, but of your salvation, and this from God.”

Verse 28: “and in no way being intimidated by your opponents, which is to them clear evidence (proof) of utter destruction, but of your salvation, and this from God.”

“And in no way being intimidated by your opponents.” I am reminded of 1 Samuel 28:5: “When Saul saw the camp of the Philistines, he was afraid and his heart trembled greatly.” The word “*intimidated*” is used of a timid or scared horse.

It is good to remember that saints are immortal until their work on earth is done.

Proverbs 29:25: “The fear of man bringeth a snare, but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be saved.”

Isaiah 41:10: “Fear thou not, for I am with thee. Be not dismayed for I am thy God. I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee. Yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.”

Many a team is defeated on the field of conflict before they ever play because they are fearful and uncertain before they begin.

The children of Israel would not go into the Promised Land because they were afraid of the inhabitants. Joshua and Caleb spoke to them and said in Numbers 14:9: “Only do not rebel against the Lord, neither fear ye the people of the land, for they are bread for us. Their defense is departed from them and the Lord is with us. Fear them not.”

Swindoll in his book, *Three Steps Forward, Two Steps Back*, says:

Here is a practical way for you to handle your fears:

1. As they occur, admit them.
2. As you admit them, commit them to God.
3. As you commit your fears to God, release them.
4. Stand firm in God’s almighty invincible strength.

Isaiah 54:17: “No weapon forged against you will prevail, and you will refute every tongue that accuses you. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and this is their vindication from me” declares the Lord.”

This is clear evidence (proof) to them of utter destruction. Their opposition to the gospel of Christ is just proof of their destruction in the end.

The fact that they are fighting against God can only mean destruction and defeat. Romans 8:31: “If God be for us, who can be against us.” For if God be for us, you are up against it.

“But of your salvation and this from God.” Matthew 5:11-12: “Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven.”

Fenelon in *The Seeking Heart* says:

Live with God in the present moment. Live your daily life out in the presence of God. He will give you all that you need.

Let’s conclude our worship experience this morning by singing that wonderful hymn of confidence and joy, “**We Have an Anchor.**” Let’s sing verses 1 and 3: “*Will your anchor hold in the storms of life, When the clouds unfold their wings of strife? When the strong tides lift, and the cables strain, Will your anchor drift, or firm*”

remain? It will firmly hold in the straits of fear, When the breakers have told that the reef is near; Tho' the tempest rage and the wild winds blow, Not an angry wave shall our bark o'erflow. We have an anchor that keeps the soul Steadfast and sure while the billows roll, Fastened to the Rock which cannot move, Grounded firm and deep in the Saviour's love."

September 18 — Suffering for the Savior (Philippians 1:29-30)

Philippians 1:29: "Because to you it has been given in the behalf of Christ, not only to be believing on Him, but also to be suffering in His behalf,"

Philippians 1:30: "having the same struggle which you saw in me, and now you are hearing to be in me."

Verse 29: "Because to you it has been given in the behalf of Christ, not only to be believing on Him, but also to be suffering in His behalf,"

1 Peter 4:1 from the Phillips translation: "Since Christ had to suffer physically for you, you must fortify yourselves with the same inner attitude that He must have had."

Paul uses a negative and positive. The negative, "not only to be believing on Him," and the positive by contrast, "but also to be suffering in His behalf."

In this verse, we have the single condition of salvation and that is, "to be believing on Him."

It is also a gracious privilege to suffer for Christ in the plan of God.

Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego certainly had this courage in the fiery furnace, and the Lord walked with them through it.

Acts 4:29: "And now, Lord, behold their threatenings and grant unto thy servants that, with all boldness, they may speak thy word."

Hannah Hurnard says:

CAN LOVE BE TERRIBLE MY LORD?

CAN GENTLENESS BE STERN?

AH YES! – INTENSE IS LOVE'S DESIRE

TO PURIFY HIS LOVE – TIS FIRE.

A HOLY FIRE TO BURN

FOR HE MUST FULLY PERFECT THEE

TILL IN THY LIKENESS ALL MAY SEE

THE BEAUTY OF THE LORD.

My sweet Pearl says:

Sometimes when we walk closest to God, we seem to have the most difficulties.

Sacrifice is the ecstasy of giving the best we have to the One we love the most.

How willing are we to suffer for the cause of Christ?

Another question we ask ourselves, "What is our attitude toward suffering?" Paul accepted it as part of God's plan to conform him to the image of Jesus Christ.

Suffering is to ripen and beautify our Christian character.

Corrie ten Boom says:

Surrender to the Lord is not a tremendous sacrifice, not an agonizing performance. It is the most sensible thing you can do.

Verse 30: "having the same struggle which you saw in me, and now you are hearing to be in me."

The word for "struggle" has the idea of the amphitheater in it. It pictures the

struggle that goes on by the gladiator in combat for his life.

In verse 29, we are called upon to “suffer,” and in verse 30, we are called upon to “struggle.”

1 Timothy 6:12: “Fight the good fight of faith. Lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.”

Our Blessed Lord in the Garden of Gethsemane “his sweat became like drops of blood falling down upon the ground.”

There are three phases to our struggle:

1. Acceptance
2. Our Attitude
3. Our Action taken in light of what has been permitted

Tim Hansel faced many physical afflictions. One day he received a telegram that said: “Celebrate until Further Notice!” That really describes what our attitude needs to be as our Sovereign Lord forges out the curriculum for Christ-likeness in each of us.

As we have meditated upon suffering for the saints, I feel like it would be appropriate for us to sing that meaningful hymn, “**He Lifted Me.**” Let’s sing verses 1 and 3: *“In loving kindness Jesus came, My soul in mercy to reclaim, And from the depths of sin and shame Thro’ grace He lifted me. His brow was pierced with many a thorn, His hands by cruel nails were torn, When from my guilt and grief, forlorn, In love He lifted me. From sinking sand He lifted me, With tender hand He lifted me, From shades of night to planes of light, O praise His name, He lifted me!”*

September 19 — Make Full My Joy (Philippians 2:1-2)

Philippians 2:1: “*If there is therefore any encouragement in Christ, if there is any solace afforded by love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if there is any affection and sympathy*”

Philippians 2:2: “*make full my joy in order that you may be thinking the same thing, having the same love, united in spirit, thinking the one thing*”

Verse 1: “If there is therefore any encouragement in Christ, if there is any solace afforded by love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if there is any affection and sympathy”

In this first verse, we have four conditional phrases. “If there is (and I know there is).”

Probably the greatest things we need in the midst of our struggles are:

1. Encouragement
2. Love
3. Fellowship
4. Understanding

Paul probably felt many times so isolated in prison from the rest of the world, and he was going it alone.

The first one: “If there is therefore any encouragement in Christ.” The value of little words of encouragement in the midst of struggle: somebody understands, somebody cares, somebody believes in us. Encouragement adds to the incentive. Most of us seem to major on the exhortation phase, but are weak on the encouragement and example.

When was the last time you took time to encourage and praise someone for what

they had done.

It was Mark Twain who said:

I can live for two months on one good compliment.

The second one: “if there is any solace afforded by love.” The persuasion that someone loves you brings security. Just knowing that you are loved can make all the difference in the world.

The third one: “if there is any fellowship in the spirit.” I am sure one of the things Paul missed the most while he was in prison was just being able to have free fellowship with the brothers and sisters in the family.

The fourth one: “if there is any affection and sympathy.” Affection points to our sensitivity and sympathy to our service. In order to demonstrate the compassionate heart, one must be constructively involved in meeting the needs.

These four things Paul has outlined in this verse are the four greatest needs in our society today. Stop and think about someone to whom you can give encouragement, someone who needs to see your love, someone who wants fellowship, someone to be affectionate and sympathetic whose problems are too great for them to bear.

Verse 2: “make full my joy in order that you may be thinking the same thing, having the same love, united in spirit, thinking the one thing”

Here again, Paul states four things for us in this verse. He starts by giving a command “Make full my joy.” The way they can fulfill the command in verse 2 is by doing the four things outlined in verse 1.

“Make full my Joy” is a four-fold purpose:

1. In order that you may be thinking the same thing. There will be an identity of ideas and a harmony of feelings.
2. Having the same love. It is the love of the Spirit of God produced within us.
3. United in Spirit. Because we are each longing with the same purpose in mind of bearing fruit.
4. Thinking the one thing. If the mind of Christ is our mind, then the obvious conclusion is we will be thinking the one thing.

Agape love will demonstrate itself by a willingness to wait until the mind of Christ is revealed.

There is a wonderful hymn that has been written I would like for us to sing this morning. Let's sing both verses of **“The Bond of Love”**: *“Love thro’ Christ has brought us together, Melting our hearts as one. By God’s Spirit we are united, One thro’ His blessed Son. Now, dear Lord, we join in worship; Thank you for all You’ve done. Thank you for this love You gave us; Thank you for making us one. We are one in the bond of love; We are one in the bond of love. We have joined our spirits with the Spirit of God; We are one in the bond of love.”*

September 20 — Humility of Mind (Philippians 2:3-4)

Philippians 2:3: “doing nothing from selfish ambition or from empty conceit, but with humility of mind regarding one another as excelling themselves;”

Philippians 2:4: “not looking out each one for his own interests, but also each one the interests of others.”

Verse 3: “doing nothing from selfish ambition or from empty conceit, but with humility of mind regarding one another as excelling themselves;”

When the mind of Christ is manifested among us, it will be the direct result of the Spirit's leading. It will be demonstrated when God's glory is top priority.

1. Do nothing from selfish ambition. If we really are living for the glory of Christ, then self is out of the picture.

- 3 John 9 tells us of Diotrephes who was concerned about big #1: "I sent a brief letter to the church about this, but proud Diotrephes, who loves to push himself forward as the leader of the Christians there, does not admit my authority over him and refuses to listen to me."

2. Doing nothing from empty conceit.

Galatians 6:14: "But God forbid that I should boast about anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Edgar Guest says it so well:

I'D LIKE TO THINK THAT WHEN LIFE IS DONE
THAT I HAD FILLED A NEEDED POST,
THAT HERE AND THERE I'D PAID MY FARE
WITH MORE THAN IDLE TALK AND BOAST;
THAT I HAD TAKEN GIFTS DIVINE,
THE BREATH OF LIFE AND MANHOOD FINE,
AND TRIED TO USE THEM NOW AND THEN
IN SERVICE FOR MY FELLOW MEN.

Galatians 5:26: "let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another."

3. But with humility of mind regarding one another as excelling themselves.

Keith L. Brooks says:

Humility does not consist in thinking humbly of one's self so much as in not thinking of self at all, and in thinking of Christ more and more.

Verse 4: "not looking out each one for his own interests, but also each one the interests of others."

Paul has said three things so far:

1. Do nothing from selfish ambition

2. Do nothing from empty conceit

3. (In contrast to that) But with humility of mind regarding one another as excelling themselves.

Now, fourth [negatively], "not looking out each one for his own interests."

It is so easy for us to get wrapped up in our own affairs and not consider the things of others.

[Positively] "but also each one the interests of others."

To do this means to step beyond the little world we have made for ourselves and into the world of another.

Oliver Cromwell said to the Lord Commissioners of the Scottish kirk:

I beseech you, gentlemen, by the mercies of God to deem it possible that you may be mistaken.

James Garfield said:

There are men and women who make the world better just by being the kind of people they are. They have the gift of kindness or courage or loyalty or integrity. It really matters very little whether they are behind the wheel of a truck or running a

business or bringing up a family. They teach the truth by living it.

It is going to take a special touch from the Lord to fulfill these things that have been outlined for us in the verses we have considered this morning. I would suggest we worship the Lord by singing, **“He Touched Me.”** Let’s sing together verses 1 and 2: *“Shackled by a heavy burden, ‘Neath a load of guilt and shame Then the hand of Jesus touched me, And now I am no longer the same. Since I met this blessed Savior, Since He cleansed and made me whole, I will never cease to praise Him - I’ll shout it while eternity rolls. He touched me, O He touched me, And O the joy that floods my soul! Something happened, and now I know, He touched me and made me whole.”*

September 21 — The Mind of Christ (Philippians 2:5)

Philippians 2:5: “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,”

Verse 5: “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,”

Note this is a command. There are plenty who would sit on His right hand and on His left who will never be there because they will not appropriate the mind of Christ. Their only concern is the glory. They want the *glory without the glory*. They want the *throne without the thorns*. They want the *crown without the cross*. They want the *Savior without the sacrifice*.

Weymouth translates this verse “Let the very spirit which was in Christ Jesus be in you, also.”

Keith L. Brooks says:

Insofar as we yield to Him, the mind of the Master will become the master of our minds.

WITH LONGING ALL MY HEART IS FILLED
THAT LIKE HIM I MAY BE
AS ON THE WONDERFUL THOUGHT I DWELL
THAT CHRIST LIVETH IN ME.

Isaiah the prophet presented the problem in Isaiah 55:8-9: “‘For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways, my ways’, declares the Lord, ‘for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.’”

We need to recognize the mind is Satan’s mission field. 2 Corinthians 4:4: “In whom the God of this world has blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.”

My mind is changed by the Holy Spirit as He applies the Word of God to my life.

The mind of Christ is revealed in Philippians 4:8: “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.”

Bishop Andrewes says:

Take my mind and let it think thoughts that please and honor You. Let the mind of Christ my Savior show itself in all my ways. Show itself in all my ways. Teach me to do the thing that pleaseth Thee for Thou are my God; Let Thy loving Spirit lead me forth into the land of righteousness.

The Christian life is not an imitation of Christ, but the imparting of the life of

Christ to the believer, and then his living it out in daily experience. The living it out in daily experience is the result of right thinking. Herein is stated another goal for the Christian in that he is to let the mind of Christ be his mind. The way this is done is by prolonged, intimate fellowship with Christ and time spent in His Word.

Let's make a commitment by singing Bill and Gloria Gaither's song, "**Jesus is Lord of All.**" Let's sing verses 1 and 2: *"All my tomorrows, all my past - Jesus is Lord of all. I've quit my struggles, contentment at last! Jesus is Lord of all. All of my conflicts, all my thoughts - Jesus is Lord of all. His love wins the battles I could not have fought; Jesus is Lord of all. King of Kings, Lord of Lords, Jesus is Lord of all; All my possessions and All my life, Jesus is Lord of all."*

September 22 — He Emptied Himself (Philippians 2:6-7)

Philippians 2:6: *"who, existing in the form of God, looked not upon this being equal with God a prize to be grasped eagerly,"*

Philippians 2:7: *"but emptied Himself, having taken the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men."*

Verse 6: "who, existing in the form of God, looked not upon this being equal with God a prize to be grasped eagerly,"

The "who" in this verse ties in with verse 5 and tells us this is an illustration of the mind of Christ. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.

Jesus Christ looked on the things of others as He saw us plunged in sin and did not hold onto His prerogatives of being equal with God, but moved into action on our behalf.

The Son of God did not stand on His rights, but laid them aside to meet a need.

The word translated "grasped eagerly" has the idea of a treasure to be clutched and retained at all costs.

2 Corinthians 8:9: "For we know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes, he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich."

The mind of Christ is demonstrated in the act of letting go. It is yielding up rights for the sake of others.

Verse 7: "but emptied Himself, having taken the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men."

Lightfoot points out:

Jesus Christ in emptying Himself stripped Himself of the insignia of His majesty.

When Christ came into the Upper Room; He took off the outer garment and girded Himself with the towel of a servant, took a bucket and began to wash feet. At the moment when He divested Himself of the apparel of the Son, He took the apron of a servant.

Let's sing together Charles Wesley's wonderful hymn, "**And Can It Be That I Should Gain.**" Let's sing just verse 3: *"He left His Father's throne above, So free, so infinite His grace; Emptied Himself of all but love, And bled for Adam's helpless race; 'Tis mercy all, immense and free; For, O my God, it found out me! Amazing love! How can it be! That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me."*

September 23 — The Cross of Christ (Philippians 2:8)

Philippians 2:8: “*And being found in outward appearance as a man, He humbled Himself, having become obedient to the point of death, even death of a cross.*”

Verse 8: “And being found in outward appearance as a man, He humbled Himself, having become obedient to the point of death, even death of a cross.”

This is the depths of degradation. He went all the way to the death of a common criminal. He humbled Himself in the Garden of Gethsemane when there He said, “Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me. Nevertheless, not My will, but Yours be done.”

Jesus Christ came all the way down from the throne to the lowest death.

1 Peter 2:24: “Who His own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness by whose stripes you were healed.”

John 15:13: “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”

I think for our time this morning we should sing one of our Christmas songs, “**Thou Didst Leave Thy Throne.**” Let’s sing together verses 1 and 4: “*Thou didst leave Thy throne and Thy kingly crown When Thou camest to earth for me; But in Bethlehem’s home Was there found no room For Thy holy nativity: O come to my heart, Lord Jesus, There is room in my heart for Thee. Thou camest, O Lord, with the living Word That should set Thy people free; But with mocking scorn And with crown of thorn, They bore Thee to Calvary; O come to my heart, Lord Jesus, There is room in my heart for Thee.*”

September 24 — The Glorification of Christ (Philippians 2:9-11)

Philippians 2:9: “*Therefore also God exalted Him to the highest place, and graciously bestowed upon Him the name which is above every name,*”

Philippians 2:10: “*in order that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth,*”

Philippians 2:11: “*and that every tongue should confess (plainly and openly agree) that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*”

Verse 9: “Therefore also God exalted Him to the highest place, and graciously bestowed upon Him the name which is above every name,”

Because of His willing humiliation, God exalted Him to the highest place.

Luke 14:11: “For whosoever exalteth himself, shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”

Verse 10: “in order that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth,”

This universal bowing of the knee by all created creatures will be a glorious day of triumph for the Son of God.

Revelation 5:13: “And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea and all that are in them, I heard saying, ‘Blessing, and honor and glory and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever.’”

Verse 11: “and that every tongue should confess (plainly and openly agree) that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Not only will the knee bow in an act of worship, but the tongue will make confes-

sion that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Let's worship and affirm this glorious coronation of our King of Kings and Lord of Lords by singing **"All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name."** Let's sing verses 1, 2 and 4: *"All hail the pow'r of Jesus' Name! Let angels prostrate fall; Bring forth the royal diadem, And crown Him Lord of all; Bring forth the royal diadem, And crown Him Lord of all! Ye chosen seed of Israel's race, Ye ransomed from the fall, Hail Him Who saves you by His grace, And crown Him Lord of all. Hail Him Who saves you by His grace, And crown Him Lord of all! O that with yonder sacred throng We at His feet may fall! We'll join the everlasting song, And crown Him Lord of all; We'll join the everlasting song, And crown Him Lord of all."*

September 25 — Working Out Your Own Salvation (Philippians 2:12-13)

Philippians 2:12: *"So then, my beloved ones, just as you always obeyed, not as in my presence only but now much more in my absence, with a reverential fear and trembling be working out your own salvation;"*

Philippians 2:13: *"for God is the one who is working in you, both to desiring and to doing for His good pleasure."*

Verse 12: "So then, my beloved ones, just as you always obeyed, not as in my presence only but now much more in my absence, with a reverential fear and trembling be working out your own salvation;"

Paul wants these Philippian Christians to work out in their own lives the mind of Christ in their relationships one with the other. Notice the intimate terms he uses in referring to them: "my beloved ones."

He again returns to the negative and positive approach: "just as you always obeyed," negatively, "not as in my presence only," "but (positively) now much more in my absence."

"With a reverential fear and trembling be working out (present tense, daily) your own salvation." Fear has the idea of serious caution and trembling conveys the idea of having an anxiety to do that which is right.

Paul says work out, not work for. You can't work it out if you don't have it in.

The whole process is going to involve three things:

1. Discipline – 1 Peter 1:13: "Gird up the loins of your mind."
2. Focus – Isaiah 26:3: "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee."
3. Determination – 2 Corinthians 10:5: "Bringing every thought captive under the obedience of Christ."

Verse 13: "for God is the one who is working in you, both to desiring and to doing for His good pleasure."

God is doing a work within us and it is done in two areas of our lives:

1. Our desiring His good will
2. Our doing His good will

First, He has to work on our *wants*, and then on our *working*. Working first on our *pleasure*, and then on our *performance*.

God has a plan for each of our lives. To start, He gets us to desire that will or plan and then to actually accomplish it. To want to do His will is the problem of some of us. And how to do it is the problem of others of us. For some of us, it is a question of

submission, and for others, it is a question of service. For some, it's being willing, but for others, it is what.

Let's sing and worship **"I Know Whom I Have Believed."** Let's sing verses 1 and 2: *"I know not why God's wondrous grace To me He hath made known, Nor why unworthy, Christ in love, Redeemed me for His own. I know not how this saving faith To me He did impart, Nor how believing in His Word Wrought peace within my heart. But 'I know Whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I've committed Unto Him against that day.'"*

September 26 — Shining as Lights (Philippians 2:14-15)

Philippians 2:14: *"Be doing all things without secret complainings and inward questionings;"*

Philippians 2:15: *"in order that you may become blameless and innocent, children of God, above reproach in the midst of a crooked (dishonest) and depraved (distorted) generation, among whom you are shining as lights in the world,"*

Verse 14: "Be doing all things without secret complainings and inward questionings;"

Paul's first admonition in this section is in verse 12, "to work out your own salvation." Now, he says, "to be doing all things":

1. without secret complainings
2. without arguings

The children of Israel grumbled and griped at every turn, and God had to get severe with them.

My attitude toward my Father's will reveals my submission to that will or my resistance to it.

YOU ARE WRITING A GOSPEL, A CHAPTER EACH DAY,
BY DEEDS THAT YOU DO, BY WORDS THAT YOU SAY,
MEN READ WHAT YOU WRITE, WHETHER FAITHLESS OR TRUE,
SAY, WHAT IS THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO YOU.

You can do a job in one of two ways: (1) Oh my! I hate to do this or (2) Oh, boy! I get to do this!

Would that our prayer would be: Lord create within me a heart that can arise above secret complainings and arguings and do all things joyfully.

Verse 15: "in order that you may become blameless and innocent, children of God, above reproach in the midst of a crooked (dishonest) and depraved (distorted) generation, among whom you are shining as lights in the world,"

The purpose behind the admonition in the previous verse is given: "in order that you may become blameless and innocent, children of God." When there is griping and arguing, someone is to blame because all aren't innocent.

"Blameless and innocent children of God" are above reproach. They are not harboring attitudes and thinking thoughts that, if they were known, would defile us. Our lives are an open book. We are good through and through. What people see on the outside is what is on the inside.

Nothing will stop growth faster than broken relationships with other Christians. You cannot harbor an unforgiving spirit and still be in fellowship with the Lord.

"In the midst of a crooked and depraved generation, among whom you are shin-

ing as lights in the world.” We are in the world, but not of the world. The crooked and distorted generation in which we live does not mold us, but we mold it by the light we bear.

Christians are the light of the world. They shine and reflect the glory of their Savior, even as the moon reflects the light of the sun in the night hours.

God has placed us here as lights in this dark world to shine, but we won’t shine if our lives are filled with grumbling and broken relationships.

Matthew 5:14: “You are the light of the world.”

Their problem was they were growling and grumbling when they should have been glowing and growing.

Paul first says God’s salvation is yours. Work it out. And now he says God’s light is yours. Let it shine.

Let’s worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing verses 3 and 4 of “**I Know Whom I Have Believed**”: *“I know not how the Spirit moves, Convincing men of sin, Revealing Jesus thro’ the Word, Creating faith in Him. I know not what of good or ill May be reserved for me, Of weary ways or golden days, Before His face I see. But ‘I know Whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I’ve committed Unto Him against that day.’”*

September 27 — The Day of Christ (Philippians 2:16)

Philippians 2:16: *“holding fast (forth) the word of life, to the end that I may have a ground for glorying in the day of Christ, because I ran not in vain nor labored in vain.”*

Verse 16: “holding fast (forth) the word of life, to the end that I may have a ground for glorying in the day of Christ, because I ran not in vain nor labored in vain.”

Here is the positive admonition: “holding fast (forth) the word of life.” We have the negative in verse 14, “be doing all things without secret complainings and arguings,” and now the positive, “holding fast the word of life.” These two admonitions are just a part of working out our own salvation.

First, our attitude must be right in the way we do things. Secondly, our lights are to shine, holding forth the word of life.

Paul is saying, “The end in view of all these admonitions is that I may have a ground for glorying in the day of Christ, that I ran not in vain nor labored in vain.” The goal of the day of Christ kept Paul faithful to the end.

He said in 2 Timothy 4:7: “I fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith.”

The day of Christ is that time when as believers we are examined at the judgment seat of Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:10: “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to that he has done whether good or bad.”

This behooves and motivates us to be living each day as if it were our last and one day we are going to be right.

Romans 14:12: “Yes, each of us will give an account of himself to God.” Paul said of the Galatians in chapter 4:11: “I fear for you. I am afraid that all of my hard work for you was worth nothing.”

The day of Christ is out there at the finish line and it's this day of Christ that caused Paul to press on in the race of life. The ultimate goal was this day of examination and reward he was pressing toward.

This day of Christ is the rapture of the church. 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17: "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and thus we shall always be with the Lord."

Stuart Hamblen wrote a great song that is one of my favorites. Let's sing verse 1 of "Until Then": *"My heart can sing when I pause to remember, A heartache here is but a stepping stone Along a trail that's winding always upwards, This troubled world is not my final home. But until then my heart will go on singing, Until then with joy I'll carry on, Until the day my eyes behold the city, Until the day God calls me home."*

September 28 — Joying and Rejoicing (Philippians 2:17-18)

Philippians 2:17: *"But even if I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am joying and rejoicing with you all."*

Philippians 2:18: *"But you also, be rejoicing in the same thing and be rejoicing with me."*

Verse 17: "But even if I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am joying and rejoicing with you all."

Paul held no reservations. He was willing to go all the way. One is reminded of Chapter 1:20: "According to my eager expectation and hope, that in nothing shall I be put to shame, but in all boldness, as always, also now, Christ shall be glorified in my body, whether through life or through death."

The drink offering was a cup of wine poured on the burnt offering. He is like the Lord, for we have considered in chapter 2:7: "that He emptied Himself," and now Paul is willing to pour himself out.

If I am spent in service for your faith, I just rejoice with you all.

Jim Elliot said:

He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose.

Polycarp prayed in the flames:

I thank Thee, O Father, that Thou has judged me worthy of this hour.

Edgar Guest has written this great poem called, *FAILURES*.

'TIS BETTER TO HAVE TRIED IN VAIN,

SINCERELY STRIVING FOR A GOAL,

THAN TO HAVE LIVED UPON THE PLAIN

AN IDLE AND A TIMID SOUL.

'TIS BETTER TO HAVE FOUGHT AND SPENT

YOUR COURAGE, MISSING ALL APPLAUSE,

THAN TO HAVE LIVED IN SMUG CONTENT

AND NEVER VENTURED FOR A CAUSE.

FOR HE WHO TRIED AND FAILS MAY BE

THE FOUNDER OF A BETTER DAY:

THOUGH NEVER HIS THE VICTORY,

FROM HIM SHALL OTHERS LEARN THE WAY.

Verse 18: “But you also, be rejoicing in the same thing and be rejoicing with me.”

Paul didn’t want to be the only one who was rejoicing. He wanted them as well to rejoice with him. Paul was rejoicing in chapter 1 over the fact that Christ was being preached by those who had mixed motives.

Now, he is rejoicing, even in the face of his own death. One is reminded of John 15:11, spoken just a few hours before the Lord’s crucifixion: “These things I have spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.”

ONLY ONE LIFE TO OFFER. TAKE IT, DEAR LORD I PRAY.

NOTHING FROM THEE WITHHOLDING, THY WILL I NOW OBEY.

THOU WHO HAS FREELY GIVEN THINE ALL IN ALL FOR ME.

CLAIM THIS LIFE FOR THINE OWN TO BE USED, MY SAVIOR

EVERY MOMENT FOR THEE.

Let’s continue singing Stuart Hamblen’s song in our worship and praise time,

“Until Then.” Let’s sing verses 2 and 3: *“The things of earth will dim and lose their value If we recall they’re borrowed for awhile And things of earth that cause the heart to tremble, Remembered there will only bring a smile. This weary world with all its toil and struggle May take its toll of misery and strife The soul of man is like a waiting falcon, When it’s released, it’s destined for the skies. But until then my heart will go on singing, Until then with joy I’ll carry on, Until the day my eyes behold the city, Until the day God calls me home.”*

September 29 — Genuine Concern (Philippians 2:19-21)

Philippians 2:19: *“But I am hoping in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you quickly, in order that I also may be of good cheer having come to know the things concerning you.”*

Philippians 2:20: *“For I am having no one else of kindred spirit who will genuinely be concerned about the things concerning you.”*

Philippians 2:21: *“For they all are seeking their own things, not the things of Christ Jesus.”*

Verse 19: “But I am hoping in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you quickly, in order that I also may be of good cheer having come to know the things concerning you.”

Timothy was a young man who was raised by his grandmother, Lois, and his mother, Eunice. Paul felt if he could get a fresh report of the Philippians’ steadfastness, this would give him new courage there in Rome.

Verse 20: “For I am having no one who will genuinely be concerned about the things concerning you.”

Tiny Tim had become *Towering Timothy*, transformed by the grace of God.

Timothy is simply following in the steps of his teacher and leader, the apostle Paul. He is a man who is concerned for the things of others. All others seem to be wrapped up in their own affairs. They do not really care for the business of Jesus Christ.

Timothy was not like this, however. He was a man characterized by a willingness to go anywhere, to anyone, to do anything at any cost. He was content as long as he could serve.

“No one else of kindred spirit who will genuinely be concerned about the things concerning you.”

Verse 21: “For they all are seeking their own things, not the things of Christ Jesus.”

When we come to this verse, we ask ourselves the question, “What are their own things?” The answer probably is money, material things, power, prestige, position, pleasure, and possessions.

2 Timothy 4:10: “For Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica.”

In this verse, Paul states the reason why they are not sincerely concerned about them in Philippi. He does this with a positive and negative approach. Positively, “they all are seeking their own things” and, negatively, “not the things of Christ Jesus.”

There are basically two reasons why people aren’t willing to sell out completely to Christ:

1. They are too concerned about themselves.

2. They are too little concerned about the things of Christ.

Timothy was willing to face discouragement, loneliness and hardship because he was concerned about the things of Christ Jesus.

In defining the things of Christ, I would say first on his agenda is evangelism, second is growth in Christ, third is learning to become a servant, and fourth is expressing this in oneness.

Let’s take time this morning to worship and praise the Lord by singing that wonderful mission hymn, “**Joy in Serving Jesus.**” We’ll sing verses 1 and 2: “*There is joy in serving Jesus, As I journey on my way, Joy that fills my heart with praises, Ev’ry hour and ev’ry day. There is joy in serving Jesus, Joy that triumphs over pain, Fills my soul with Heaven’s music Till I join the glad refrain. There is joy, joy, Joy in serving Jesus, Joy that throbs within my heart; Ev’ry moment, ev’ry hour, As I draw upon His pow’r, There is joy, joy, Joy that never shall depart.*”

September 30 — The Proof of Him (Philippians 2:22-24)

Philippians 2:22: “*But you are knowing the proof of him, that as a child to a father, he served with me for the gospel.*”

Philippians 2:23: “*This one therefore I am hoping to send immediately, as soon as I see how things go with me;*”

Philippians 2:24: “*but I have a certainty in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly.*”

Verse 22: “But you are knowing the proof of him, that as a child to a father, he served with me for the gospel.”

Paul and Timothy were very close. Timothy had proved himself in service as he had served with Paul for the gospel. He had faced the hard places and the suffering in the things of Christ, and this was evidence to Paul of the work that had gone on in his heart.

2 Timothy 2:1: “Thou, therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.”

Someone said:

Sacrificial service is nothing but love in work clothes.

Here, Paul uses the word “served.” In the previous study, he has used the words “sacrifice,” “shining,” and “poured out.” In chapter 1, he used the words “struggle” and “suffer.” We will note in our next chapter he speaks of “sickness,” “fellow soldier,”

and “risked his life” as descriptions of the ministry. Make no mistake – it’s not an easy road, but it’s worth it. Ministry doesn’t pay much, but the retirement benefits are out of this world!

I am sure the Lord feels like saying to us many times – I never promised you a rose garden.

Must I be carried to the skies on flowery beds of ease, while others fought to win the prize and sailed through bloody seas?

Verse 23: “This one therefore I am hoping to send immediately, as soon as I see how things go with me;”

It is obvious from this verse Timothy has been doing a lot of things for the apostle Paul while he has been in prison.

Paul’s desire is to send him as soon as he deals with a few personal matters.

Timothy, evidently, ministered to Paul in prison, and there were some things that needed to be taken care of before he could go.

Verse 24: “but I have a certainty in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly.”

Oftentimes, the Lord gives us assurance through His Word or in our times of prayer that he’s going to do something. Paul has assurance that the day is soon coming when he too can go to Philippi because he has been delivered from prison.

Let’s continue our worship and praise of the Lord by singing verses 3 and 4 of **“Joy in Serving Jesus”**: *“There is joy in serving Jesus, As I walk alone with God, ‘Tis the joy of Christ, my Savior, Who the path of suffering trod. There is joy in serving Jesus, Joy amid the darkest night, For I’ve learned the wondrous secret, And I’m walking in the light. There is joy, joy, Joy in serving Jesus, Joy that throbs within my heart; Ev’ry moment, ev’ry hour, As I draw upon His pow’r, There is joy, joy, Joy that never shall depart.”*

OCTOBER

October 1 — Short Term Missionary (Philippians 2:25)

Philippians 2:25: *“But I thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow-worker and fellow-soldier, but your apostle and minister to my need;”*

Verse 25: “But I thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow-worker and fellow-soldier, but your apostle and minister to my need;”

In this verse, Paul uses five words to describe Epaphroditus, and we would do well to meditate upon them for a few moments.

1. My Brother. Epaphroditus was a child of God, and to Paul this meant that he was his brother. They were part of the same family.
John 1:12: “But as many as received Him, to them He gave power to become the sons of God, even to them that believed in His name.”
Through their fellowship together, Paul had been convinced that Epaphroditus was a man whom God had laid His hands upon.
2. Fellow Worker. Epaphroditus took hold in the city of Rome and labored for the sake of the gospel. He saw the work of Christ needed attention, and immediately gave himself to labor in accomplishing the task. As soon as Epaphroditus arrived, he plunged into the work where Paul was limited, for the sake of the gospel, by the very fact he was in prison.

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3. Fellow Soldier. Epaphroditus proved to Paul's satisfaction what he was made of and that he meant what he said when he gave everything to Christ and His cause.

2 Timothy 2: 3-4: "Take your share of suffering as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, just as I do. And as Christ's soldier, do not let yourself become tied up in worldly affairs, for then you cannot satisfy the one who enlisted you in his army."

"But (to you), (he was) your apostle and minister to my need." The 4th word Paul used to describe him was:

4. Apostle. The word simply means "sent one." Epaphroditus was the one sent by the church at Philippi on this mission to Rome. He was a man with a mission. This church sent him to help Paul and to bear a gift they had for him.
5. Minister. He was not only a missionary, but also a minister. He was a missionary from Philippi, but a minister in Rome to Paul's need. He engaged himself in service to the beloved apostle.

These five words are a great tribute to Epaphroditus. He was a man whose only desire was to be all God wanted him to be. How refreshing it would be to find a number of young people who would say: I want to be like Epaphroditus – that everything in my life is secondary to the work of Christ.

As a tribute to Epaphroditus and a hymn of praise and worship, let's sing together **"A Passion for Souls."** Let's just sing verse 1: *"Give me a passion for souls, dear Lord, A passion to save the lost; O that Thy love were by all adored, And welcomed at any cost. Jesus, I long, I long to be winning Men who are lost, and constantly sinning; O may this hour be one of the beginning The story of pardon to tell."*

October 2 — God Knows our Limits (Philippians 2:26-27)

Philippians 2:26: *"seeing that he was longing for all of you and was distressed because you heard that he was sick."*

Philippians 2:27: *"For truly he was sick near death, but God had mercy upon him, not only upon him, but also upon me, in order that I might not have sorrow upon sorrow."*

Verse 26: "seeing that he was longing for all of you and was distressed because you heard that he was sick."

The reason I deemed it necessary to send him to you at this time was he was longing for you and was concerned that you knew about his illness.

Epaphroditus knew what it meant to be homesick, and yet his comforts were secondary to the cause of Christ. He was also distressed with the fact they had heard he was sick. He wasn't concerned about his own comforts, but he was very concerned about others in Philippi.

He knew they would be anxious and worried when they had received word he was not feeling well. A mind without information has a tendency to really blow up the negative when there are just fragmentary pieces of information.

Verse 27: "For truly he was sick near death, but God had mercy upon him, not only upon him, but also upon me, in order that I might not have sorrow upon sorrow."

This is the reason stated by the apostle Paul for his longing and feeling of distress over the illness. During his service, Epaphroditus evidently got some fever in his

exhausted state, and nearly died.

The burning zeal in his heart for the work of Christ caused him to completely throw himself into the battle.

D.M. Panton expressed:

THE WORD IS SOLEMN, THEREFORE DO NOT TRIFLE.
THE TASK IS DIFFICULT, THEREFORE DO NOT RELAX.
THE OPPORTUNITY IS BRIEF, THEREFORE DO NOT DELAY.
THE PATH IS NARROW, THEREFORE DO NOT WANDER.
THE PRIZE IS GLORIOUS, THEREFORE DO NOT FAINT.

Our text tells us “but God had mercy upon him.” He was terribly sick, but God intervened in the situation and had mercy upon him.

The verse then has a negative and a positive statement: [negatively] “not only upon him (Epaphroditus), but [positively], also upon me.”

This mercy upon Epaphroditus has been exercised by God in allowing him to be well and continue his ministry. His mercy is also upon the apostle because Epaphroditus had been carrying such a heavy load of work and ministry. His purpose in having mercy upon Paul is stated in the last phrase: “in order that I might not have sorrow upon sorrow.”

God knows our limits when it comes to trials, testing and temptation.

It reminds me of 1 Corinthians 10:13. I love the way Phillips paraphrases: “No temptation has come your way that is too hard for flesh and blood to bear. But God can be trusted not to allow you to suffer any temptation beyond your powers of endurance. He will see to it that every temptation has a way out, so that it will never be impossible for you to bear it.”

God is always present there in the heat of our suffering and He controls the thermostat and the duration of the suffering.

Howard Hendricks says:

Let me speak about this from my own experience. I have to confess that, like many vocational Christian workers, I have been prone to become compulsively active. Perhaps you're familiar with the syndrome. The “barrenness of busy-ness” I call it. Activity becomes an anesthetic to deaden the pain of an empty life. But it's activity without accomplishment.

Like Elijah, I know that I'm a servant of the Most High, and part of my role is to wake up each day saying, “Lord, I'm just your suit of clothes. Put me on and wear me around and accomplish your purposes in any way you see fit.”

No matter how difficult or uncomfortable your circumstances become, you are free because you have come to accept them all from the hand of God. The greatest thing is to suffer without being discouraged.

Let's sing and worship the Lord this morning with that familiar hymn, “**What a Friend We Have in Jesus.**” Let's sing verse 1: “*What a Friend we have in Jesus, All our sins and griefs to bear! What a privilege to carry Ev'rything to God in prayer! O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear, All because we do not carry Ev'rything to God in prayer!*”

October 3 — Good to be Back Home Again (Philippians 2:28)

Philippians 2:28: “*With haste therefore I sent him, in order that having seen him*

again you might be rejoicing and I also may be less anxious”

Verse 28: “With haste therefore I sent him, in order that having seen him again you might be rejoicing and I also may be less anxious”

Because of his illness and concern about them, Paul sent Epaphroditus home with haste. His purpose in doing so is stated in the next phrase: “in order that having seen him again you might be rejoicing and I also may be less anxious.”

He wants them to be rejoicing, and because they are, Paul is going to be less anxious about the situation. Really, this last phrase “less anxious” could be stated in another way, “free from all anxiety.” Paul will have more to say about anxiety in Philippians 4:6.

Michael Horton says:

Like the wind and waves against the rocky coastline, suffering becomes one of God’s ways of shaping our spiritual topography, reshaping our character, disciplining our constitutions, and conforming us to the image or likeness of Christ.

It must be said at this point, however, that although “God works all things together for good” on behalf of His people, not all things are good. Sometimes people so emphasize God’s sovereignty in suffering and His good purposes that they give the impression that suffering itself is good. That is not what the “way of the cross” intends to convey.

Elisabeth Elliot said:

If God is in charge and loves us, then whatever is given is subject to His control and is meant ultimately for our joy.

The Lord knows wonderfully our human limitations and will not allow the pressure of sorrow to exceed those limits.

1 Peter 5:7: “Let Him have all of your worries and cares, for He is always thinking about you and watching everything that concerns you.”

Let us continue our worship by singing verse 2 of “**What a Friend We Have in Jesus**”: “*Have we trials and temptations? Is there trouble anywhere? We should never be discouraged; Take it to the Lord in prayer. Can we find a friend so faithful Who will all our sorrows share? Jesus knows our ev’ry weakness, Take it to the Lord in prayer.*”

October 4 — Honor the Returning Missionary (Philippians 2:29-30)

Philippians 2:29: “*Receive him therefore in the Lord with all joy, and be holding such ones in honor;*”

Philippians 2:30: “*because on account of the work of Christ he was near even to death, having risked his life in order that he might supply that which was lacking in your service to me.*”

Verse 29: “Receive him therefore in the Lord with all joy, and be holding such ones in honor;”

His command at this point is to receive him in the Lord with all joy and hold such ones in honor. Paul again and again is concerned about their attitude and that it be joyful. Having recovered their joyfulness over seeing him again, they are to receive him with all joy.

“I sent him” in verse 28 and you “receive him” in verse 29.

Holding such ones in honor. Treat him like a returning soldier from the field of battle that has represented you on the front lines, endangering himself for you. Honor

him because he deserves it. There is certainly a day soon coming when he will be honored by the Lord of glory for the job he has done. He will hear, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant. Enter into the joys I have prepared for thee."

Verse 30: "because on account of the work of Christ he was near even to death, having risked his life in order that he might supply that which was lacking in your service to me."

He is to be held in honor because he even gambled with his life to accomplish the work of Christ.

Each of us have been gifted by the Spirit of God to edify the body of Christ and to perform the acts of service that He longs for us to do in the center of His will.

The purpose for risking his life is given: "in order that he might supply that which was lacking in your service to me." There are so many in Christian work today that are going day and night to fill in for the missing ones who should be carrying their part of the load, but who are absent without leave.

CHRIST HAS NO HANDS, BUT OUR HANDS TO DO HIS WORK TODAY.
HE HAS NO FEET, BUT OUR FEET TO LEAD MEN IN THE WAY.
HE HAD NO TONGUES BUT OUR TONGUES TO TELL MEN WHY HE DIED.
HE HAS NO HELP BUT OUR HELP TO BRING THEM TO HIS SIDE.
WE ARE THE ONLY BIBLES THE CARELESS WORLD WILL READ.
WE ARE THE SINNER'S GOSPEL, WE ARE THE SCOFFER'S CREED.
WE ARE THE LORD'S SOLE MESSAGE GIVEN IN WORD AND DEED.
WHAT IF THE TYPE IS CROOKED? WHAT IF THE PRINT IS BLURRED?
WHAT IF OUR HANDS ARE BUSY WITH OTHER WORK THAN HIS?
WHAT IF OUR FEET ARE WALKING WHERE SIN'S ALLUREMENT IS?
EACH TIME WE FAIL OUR DUTY IN COUNTRY OR IN CITY,
WE HINDER GOD ALMIGHTY AND WHAT AN AWFUL PITY.

Let's sing verse 3 for our worship hymn this morning of "**What a Friend We Have in Jesus**": *"Are we weak and heavy laden, Cumbered with a load of care? Precious Savior, still our refuge Take it to the Lord in prayer: Do thy friends despise, forsake thee? Take it to the Lord in prayer; In His arms He'll take and shield thee; Thou wilt find a solace there."*

October 5 — Let Me Repeat and Give You Warning (Philippians 3:1-2)

Philippians 3:1: *"As for the rest, my brethren, be rejoicing in the Lord. To be writing the same things to you is not troublesome to me, but it is safe for you."*

Philippians 3:2: *"Watch out for the dogs, watch out for the evil workers, watch out for the mutilation;"*

Verse 1: "As for the rest, my brethren, be rejoicing in the Lord. To be writing the same things to you is not troublesome to me, but it is safe for you."

Paul states saying something over and over again is not a problem for him. Constant reminders are good for us.

He has many times mentioned in the letter to them to be rejoicing, and here he mentions it again. One of the devil's key tools is discouragement, and Paul knew this. So, in the midst of pressure and difficulties, he admonishes them to rejoice. Half of the battle is won in the attitude of the one experiencing the problem.

Psalm 16:11: "Thou wilt show me the path of life. In thy presence is fullness of joy."

At the right hand, there are pleasures forevermore.”

The problems may be greater than our strength; the pressures may be too much to bear, but we can always rejoice in the presence of Jesus Christ.

May God help us to live in His presence.

Notice Paul says, “Rejoice in the Lord.” Everything for Paul was “in the Lord.” In Him, he lived and moved and had his being.

Negatively, “To be writing the same things to you is not troublesome to me,” but positively, “it is safe for you.” In other words, I don’t mind repeating myself, if in doing so, it is making things safer for you.

Verse 2: “Watch out for the dogs, watch out for the evil workers, watch out for the mutilation;”

Paul gives a three-fold warning. Evidently, before verse 2 was written, Paul must have received some fresh report of uprisings by those who taught you have to keep parts of the law to be a Christian, and to perform certain rights and ceremonies under the law. We say this since Paul somewhat abruptly breaks off here and addresses this problem.

Warning #1: Watch out for the dogs.

Paul is talking about the Judaizers who use the term dogs when speaking about the Gentiles. In other words, anybody who wasn’t a Jew and wasn’t following all these legal requirements was considered a dog.

Lightfoot says:

These Judaizers were dogs because they greedily devour the garbage of carnal ordinances or laws, the very refuse of God’s table.

Warning #2: Watch out for evil workers.

2 Corinthians 11:13: “God never sent these men at all. They are phoney, who have fooled you into thinking they are Christ’s apostles. Yet, I am not surprised Satan can change himself into an angel of light.”

Warning #3: Watch out for the mutilators. These Judaizers were convinced there was value in circumcision.

Circumcision was the mark of the Abrahamic covenant, and they felt before you could experience the blessings of God, this had to be true of you.

Let’s worship the Lord by singing that hymn, “**We’ve A Story to Tell to the Nations.**” Please join me in singing verses 1 and 2: “*We’ve a story to tell to the nations That shall turn their hearts to the right; A story of truth and mercy, A story of peace and light, A story of peace and light. We’ve a song to be sung to the nations That shall lift their hearts to the Lord; A song that shall conquer evil And shatter the spear and sword, And shatter the spear and sword. For the darkness shall turn to dawning, And the dawning to noonday bright; And Christ’s great kingdom shall come on earth, The kingdom of love and light.*”

October 6 — My Record in the Flesh (Philippians 3:3-5)

Philippians 3:3: “for, as for us, we are the circumcision, those who by the Spirit of God are rendering sacred service and who are glorying in Christ Jesus and not having confidence in the flesh,”

Philippians 3:4: “although I myself could be having confidence also in the flesh, If anyone else is presuming to have confidence in the flesh, I far more:”

Philippians 3:5: “circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; according to the Law, a Pharisee;”

Verse 3: “for, as for us, we are the circumcision, those who by the Spirit of God are rendering sacred service and who are glorying in Christ Jesus and not having confidence in the flesh,”

Paul states the reason for his previous warnings. We are the true circumcision. Those guys are a bunch of phoney. Galatians 5:6: “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love.”

In this verse, Paul gives three ways to tell whether a person is for real or not. There are two positive statements and one negative.

1. “Those who by the Spirit of God are rendering sacred service” [Positive]

Matthew 7:20: “Wherefore by their fruits you shall know them.” Sacred service involves spending of ourselves.

This reminds us of verse 1:11: “Having been filled with the fruit of righteousness, which fruit is through Jesus Christ, for the glory and praise of God.”

2. “and who are glorying in Christ Jesus” [Positive]

Christ is at the center. Colossians 3:11b: “Christ is all and in all.”

3. “not having confidence in the flesh” [Negative]

John 15:5: “He that abideth in me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit, for without me you can do nothing.”

Paul saw himself as he really was, in the eyes of a holy God, and realized if God was going to do anything in his life, it would have to be done by the Spirit of God because he saw no possibility of accomplishing it in his own flesh.

Verse 4: “although I myself could be having confidence also in the flesh. If anyone else is presuming to have confidence in the flesh, I far more:”

In essence, Paul says if you want to have a little game and see who has grounds for confidence in the flesh, I’ll play along with you.

Let’s take a look at the records. Paul is fortifying his position here as having a right to speak because his life once was dependent upon these external things of the flesh to gain acceptance into the presence of God.

Verse 5: “circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; according to the Law, a Pharisee;”

What Paul is going to do in these next verses is give us a list of seven things which he could base his confidence in the flesh upon if this were still the way he was operating.

If salvation were by performance, Paul would have an inside track. Four of these things were given by his parents, and the other three by his own achievement.

1. **Circumcised the eighth day.** This was the custom for every male child that was born into a Jewish home. It was the sign of the Abrahamic covenant. Eight days after he was born, the child was to be circumcised.

2. **Of the Nation Israel.** This was putting one’s self in the nation of God’s chosen people. Being a member of the nation of Israel was assurance you were a partaker of the promises God had made to that nation.

3. **Of the Tribe of Benjamin.** The nation of Israel, in the beginning days, was divided into twelve tribes. Paul, even as Saul, son of Kish, in the Old Testament, was a member of the tribe of Benjamin. Benjamin was Jacob’s youngest son, and

the second born of Rachel.

4. A Hebrew of Hebrews. He says he was born a Jew of Jewish parents. In essence, he was saying he was a full-blooded Jew.

5. According to the Law a Pharisee. The Pharisees were a very strict group. There were never more than 6,000 of them at a time. They were known as the Brotherhood. They took a pledge in front of three witnesses that they would spend all of their lives observing every detail of the scribal law. So Paul is saying when it comes to the law, he was a bug for detail, being sure he observed it carefully.

Let's continue the hymn we sang yesterday morning, "**We've A Story to Tell to the Nations.**" Let's worship and praise the Lord by singing verses 3 and 4: "*We've a message to give to the nations, That the Lord who reigneth above Hath sent us His Son to save us, And show us that God is love, And show us that God is love. We've a Saviour to show to the nations Who the path of sorrow hath trod, That all of the world's great peoples Might come to the truth of God, Might come to the truth of God! For the darkness shall turn to dawning, And the dawning to noonday bright, And Christ's great kingdom shall come on earth, The kingdom of love and light.*"

October 7 — My Performance (Philippians 3:6-7)

Philippians 3:6: "*according to zeal, persecuting the church; according to righteousness which is in the Law, become blameless.*"

Philippians 3:7: "*But whatever things were gain to me, these things I have considered as loss for the sake of Christ.*"

Verse 6: "according to zeal, persecuting the church; according to righteousness which is in the Law, become blameless."

6. According to zeal, persecuting the church. In the book of Acts, we note Paul was the one who was tracking down the Christians for the sake of liquidating this group.

Acts 8:3: "As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering into every house and hailing men and women, committing them to prison."

Galatians 1:13: "You know what I was like when I followed the Jewish religion, how I went after the Christians mercilessly, hunting them down and doing my best to get rid of them all."

7. According to righteousness, which is in the Law, become blameless. Gaining a righteous standing before God by keeping the legal requirements was his goal before he became a Christian.

Galatians 1:14: "I was one of the most religious Jews of my own age in the whole country, and tried as hard as I possibly could to follow all the old traditional rules of my religion."

So Paul has listed for us seven attainments of the flesh he could have confidence in if he so desired.

Verse 7: "But whatever things were gain to me, these things I have considered as loss for the sake of Christ."

Paul states that everything, all seven of these things, he considers loss for Christ.

He could say with Isaac Watts:

NOT ALL THE BLOOD OF BEASTS

ON JEWISH ALTERS SLAIN,
COULD GIVE THE GUILTY CONSCIENCE PEACE,
OR WASH AWAY OUR STAIN.
BUT CHRIST THE HEAVENLY LAMB
TAKES ALL OUR SINS AWAY,
A SACRIFICE OF NOBLER NAME
AND RICHER BLOOD THAN THEY.

All of these gains I have listed, I have counted as loss for Christ. The several gains have been massed into one loss.

Jim Elliot said:

He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.

Isaac Watts had it right when he wrote this first verse. Let's turn our thoughts to this great hymn, **"When I Survey the Wondrous Cross."** Join me in worship as we sing all 4 verses: *"When I survey the wondrous cross On which the Prince of Glory died, My richest gain I count but loss, And pour contempt on all my pride. Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast, Save in the death of Christ, my God. All the vain things that charm me most, I sacrifice them to His blood. See, from His head, His hands, His feet, Sorrow and love flow mingled down. Did e'er such love and sorrow meet, Or thorns compose so rich a crown? Were the whole realm of nature mine, That were a present far too small. Love so amazing, so divine, Demands my soul, my life, my all."*

October 8 — My Greatest Asset is Jesus (Philippians 3:8)

Philippians 3:8: *"Yes, indeed I am considering all things to be a loss for the sake of the surpassing value of the knowledge (personal acquaintance) of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I forfeited all things, and I am considering them rubbish in order that I might gain Christ,"*

Verse 8: "Yes, indeed I am considering all things to be a loss for the sake of the surpassing value of the knowledge (personal acquaintance) of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I forfeited all things, and I am considering them rubbish in order that I might gain Christ,"

"Yes, indeed," let me repeat it. In verse 7, we have the past, "I have considered loss for Christ." In verse 8, we have the present, "Yes, indeed I am considering all things to be a loss."

Paul is restating what he had to say in verse 7, expanding on some of the implications that are involved.

"For the sake of the surpassing value of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." Paul had weighed these issues in his mind and considered everything loss for the surpassing worth of the knowledge of Christ, and then he acted upon it.

John 17:3: "And this is eternal life, that they may know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent."

Calvin says:

We cannot gain Christ otherwise than by losing everything that we have, for He would have us rich by His grace alone. He would have Him alone be our entire blessedness.

"And I am considering them rubbish in order that I might gain Christ." First, he was considering all things loss, and now he's considering all things rubbish. Rubbish.

or garbage, referred to the food that was left over at a feast.

Paul's purpose is stated in this last phrase, "in order that I might gain Christ."

GO THEN, AND LEARN THIS LESSON OF THE CROSS,
AND TREAD THE WAY THAT SAINTS AND PROPHETS TROD,
WHO COUNTING LIFE AND SELF AND ALL THINGS LOSS,
HAVE FOUND AN INWARD DEATH THE LIFE OF GOD.

Let's sing verse 1 of "**My Jesus, I Love Thee**": *"My Jesus, I love Thee, I know
Thou art mine; For Thee all the follies of sin I resign; My gracious Redeemer, my
Savior art Thou; If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, 'tis now."*

October 9 — Righteousness of Christ (Philippians 3:9-10)

Philippians 3:9: *"and may be found in Him, not having my own righteousness which is of the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, that righteousness which is from God on the basis of faith,"*

Philippians 3:10: *"that I might come to know Him (experientially, personally), and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship (sharing) of His sufferings, being conformed to His death;"*

Verse 9: "and may be found in Him, not having my own righteousness which is of the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, that righteousness which is from God on the basis of faith,"

Paul uses the positive and negative approach again. Negatively, "not having my own righteousness which is of the Law," but positively, "that which is through faith in Christ." The seven things he has listed in the previous verses are the attainments of human righteousness, which is the Law.

Paul knew the frustration of trying to gain acceptance in the presence of God by his own work, and he has found the secret that it's not his own righteousness, but Christ's.

It's not *human works*, but the *finished work*. It's not *church-ianity*, but *Christianity*. It's not *reformation*, but *re-generation*.

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

It's not what you've done, but who you know that makes the difference!

F.B. Meyer raises the question:

Where will you be found? In the cardboard of your own goodness or in the completed righteousness of Jesus Christ?

Isaiah 64:6: "But we all are as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. And we all do fade as a leaf and our iniquities like the wind have taken us away."

I AM CRUCIFIED WITH JESUS AND THE CROSS HAS SET ME FREE.
NOW I LIVE AGAIN IN JESUS AND HE LIVES AND REIGNS IN ME.
THIS THE SECRET OF THE HOLY, NOT MY HOLINESS, BUT HIM.
JESUS EMPTY ME AND FILL ME WITH THY FULLNESS TO THE BRIM.

Romans 1:16-17: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes. To the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For in it, the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, as it is written, but the righteous man shall live by faith."

Verse 10: “that I might come to know Him (experientially, personally), and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship (sharing) of His sufferings, being conformed to His death;”

Let’s look together at three things that stand out in this verse:

1. Knowing Him - “That I might come to know Him.” He wants to have personal acquaintance with Christ, to know Him by experience. Not that I may know about Him, but that I may know Him.

THERE ARE HEIGHTS OF SWEET COMMUNION THAT ARE ALL
AWAITING ME,

THERE ARE OCEAN DEPTHS OF MERCY THAT ARE FLOWING FULL
AND FREE,

THERE ARE PRECIOUS PEARLS OF PROMISE THAT CAN E’ER BE
PRICED IN GOLD,

THERE’S A FULLNESS IN MY SAVIOR THAT HAS NEVER YET BEEN
TOLD.

2. Experiencing personally His power in daily living – “the power of His resurrection.” Paul wanted to experience the power in his life that raised Jesus Christ from the dead. He wanted the power of Christ flowing through his life, giving him victory over sin and strength to endure the trials of the day.

3. Sharing His suffering – “the fellowship (sharing) of His sufferings.” This takes us back to verse 1:29: “Because to you it has been given on the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer in His behalf.”

Becoming like Him in His death, in the sense that we die to self and our desires, and our pursuit of righteousness and live in Christ and accomplish His desires and revel in His righteousness.

Let’s sing verse 2 of **“My Jesus, I Love Thee”** this morning: *“I love Thee because Thou has first loved me, And purchased my pardon on Calvary’s tree; I love Thee for wearing the thorns on Thy brow; If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, ’tis now.”*

October 10 — I am Pressing Onward (Philippians 3:11-12)

Philippians 3:11: *“if by any means I might attain unto the out-resurrection from the dead”*

Philippians 3:12: *“Not that I have already laid hold of (it), or already have been brought to spiritual maturity, but I am pressing onward (pursuing) if I may even lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.”*

Verse 11: “if by any means I might attain unto the out-resurrection from the dead”

Paul is anxious to be a part of the resurrection while still here on earth. He wanted to be alive and remaining when the Lord came.

The “out-resurrection”! He’s going to toot and I’m going to scoot. If we experience this, we’re going to go home to glory with our running shoes on.

Verse 12: “Not that I have already laid hold of (it), or already have been brought to spiritual maturity, but I am pressing onward (pursuing) if I may even lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.”

Paul uses the negative and positive again. In the first part, the negative is, “Not that I have already laid hold of (it), or already have been brought to spiritual maturity.” He states that in his Christian experience, he as yet had not reached a stage in his develop-

ment where he could no longer develop.

Paul's conversion was the beginning and not the end. He is not discouraged and continues to pursue. As he once pursued the Law and the keeping of it, so now he pursues the knowledge of Christ.

Romans 11:33: "O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God. How unsearchable are his judgments and unfathomable his ways."

He follows the negative with this positive statement, "but I am pressing onward (pursuing) if I may even lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus."

I'M PRESSING ON THE UPWARD WAY,
NEW HEIGHTS I'M GAINING EVERY DAY.
STILL PRAYING AS I ONWARD BOUND,
LORD, PLANT MY FEET ON HIGHER GROUND.

John Newton acknowledged:

I have ever to confess with sorrow that I am far from being what I ought to be, and far from what I wish to be, but also blessed be God's name, to testify that I am far, very far, from what I once was.

Please join me in singing verse 3 of "**My Jesus, I Love Thee**": *"I'll love Thee in life, I will love Thee in death, And praise Thee as long as Thou lendest me breath; And say when the death dew lies cold on my brow; If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, 'tis now"*

October 11 — Reaching Forward (Philippians 3:13-14)

Philippians 3:13: "*Brethren, I am not considering myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing: I am forgetting the things which are behind and reaching forward to what is laying ahead.*"

Philippians 3:14: "*I am pressing onward toward the goal for the prize of the call from above of God in Christ Jesus.*"

Verse 13: "Brethren, I am not considering myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing: I am forgetting the things which are behind and reaching forward to what is laying ahead."

Paul is passionate in his purpose.

Again, he is using the negative and the positive. Negatively, "I am not considering myself as having laid hold," - this does not discourage me however - but positively, "one thing: I am forgetting the things which are behind and reaching forward to what is laying ahead."

Paul says in the Phillips translation of 2 Corinthians 4:8-9: "We are handicapped on all sides, but we are never frustrated; we are puzzled, but never in despair. We are persecuted, but we never have to stand it alone: we may be knocked down but we are never knocked out!"

Forget what has gone on in the past because you can't do anything about it anyway. If you trip on the track, don't quit. Get up and finish the race. So you threw the ball away on that critical play. Don't let that affect the rest of your game.

What is Paul forgetting? Probably two things: (1) the old days when he used to persecute the Christians, and (2) the progress that he has made to this point.

F.B. Meyer says:

If we would press on, we must learn to forget. Don't look back and quote these

things as your highest, lest, like Lot's wife, you be petrified and unable to advance. Shakespeare said:

What's gone and past help should be past grief.

Longfellow expresses it:

LOOK NOT MOURNFULLY INTO THE PAST
IT COMES NOT BACK AGAIN.
WISELY IMPROVE THE PRESENT
IT IS THINE.
GO FORTH TO MEET THE SHADOWED FUTURE
WITHOUT FEAR,
AND WITH A MANLY HEART.

The terrible plight of many is they are doing nothing now because once they were doing so poorly. May God help us to see this terrible state and correct it by forgetting and stretching forward to the things that are in front.

Winston Churchill described it:

If the present quarrels with the past, there can be no future.

Verse 14: "I am pressing onward toward the goal for the prize of the call from above of God in Christ Jesus."

May we steadily move forward toward the goal of being made like Jesus Christ, and when men and women see us, may they be reminded of him.

RUN THE STRAIGHT RACE
THROUGH GOD'S GOOD GRACE.
LIFT UP THINE EYES AND SEEK HIS FACE
LIFE WITH ITS WAY BEFORE US LIES,
CHRIST IS THE PATH,
AND CHRIST IS THE PRIZE.

The picture before us is of one going flat out to the finish. He's in the home stretch and he's pouring it on for all he is worth.

We shall reach that goal when we stand in His presence.

The "call from above" refers to the "out-resurrection" we talked about in 3:11 – the coming of Christ to raise the dead and take home the living.

It is Simon of Cambridge who said in his old age:

I cannot but run with all my might, for I am close to the goal.

Let's worship the Lord together as we sing verse 4 of "**My Jesus, I Love Thee**":
*"In mansions of glory and endless delight, I'll ever adore Thee in heaven so bright;
I'll sing with the glittering crown on my brow; If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, 'tis now."*

October 12 — Hanging in There (Philippians 3:15-16)

Philippians 3:15: "*As many therefore as are spiritually mature, let us be of this mind; and if in anything you are thinking differently, God will also reveal this to you;*"

Philippians 3:16: "*only unto that which we attained let us be holding on to the same.*"

Verse 15: "As many therefore as are spiritually mature, let us be of this mind; and if in anything you are thinking differently, God will also reveal this to you;"

Joel Rosenberg in his book on discipleship says:

Look for people who are fat - "F.A.T." – faithful, available and teachable.

Job is teachable. Job 34:32: "Teach me what I cannot see; if I have done wrong, I will not do so again."

The mind the apostle is talking about is the mind of Christ back in 2:5: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."

We have the promise, too, that if in anything we are differently minded, He will reveal this to us.

Paul had this very experience dramatically on the Damascus Road as the Lord in a great light blinded his eyes and revealed unto him he was fighting against God's ultimate purpose in the persecution of the Christians.

A question we ask ourselves this morning, "Are we open and teachable before the Lord? Do we express that openness and teachability by our immediate obedience?"

Paul also refers to the attitude of heart and mind that is displayed in verse 14 of driving on, and as we do, God will reveal places where we would run the wrong direction.

Being in this position of total availability allows God to think and act through us. With the mind of Christ, our hearts become like film in a camera upon which God can place the imprints of his plan.

Proverbs 3:5-6: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight."

Verse 16: "only unto that which we attained let us be holding on to the same."

I love the Contemporary English Version of this verse: "But we must keep going in the direction that we are now headed."

This takes us back to 3:14: "I am pressing onward toward the goal for the prize of the call from above of God in Christ Jesus."

For some people, spiritual growth is hung up because they cannot *forget* and *forgive* the past, and therefore cannot move forward. For still others, there is the problem not so much of forgetting, but of *comparison*. When as believers we start comparing ourselves with those *behind* us, we become *self-righteous*, and those *ahead* of us, we become *discouraged*, and with those who are on our *same level*, we become *competitive*.

Paul is saying let us continue in the path on which we have been traveling. Colossians 2:6: "As you have therefore received Christ Jesus, the Lord, so walk ye in Him."

We are strangers and pilgrims here, marching through this land, and nightly pitching our moving tent a day's march nearer home. I'm a stranger here, and heaven is my home.

It was back a number of years ago that B.J. Thomas wrote a wonderful song called, "**Home Where I Belong.**" Let's sing this to the Lord this morning as our act of worship in preparation for this new day: "*They say that Heaven's pretty And living here is too But if they said that I would have to choose between the two I'd go home, going home, where I belong. And sometimes when I'm dreaming It comes as no surprise That if you look and see The homesick feeling in my eyes I'm going home, going home, where I belong. While I'm here I'll serve Him gladly And sing him all these songs I'm here, but not for long. And when I'm feeling lonely And when I'm feeling blue It's such*

a joy to know that I am only passing through. I'm headed home, going home, where I belong. And one day I'll be sleeping When death knocks on my door And I'll awake and find that I'm not homesick anymore I'll be home, going home, where I belong."

October 13 — Follow My Example (Philippians 3:17)

Philippians 3:17: *"Become imitators of me, brethren, and be observing those who are walking in this way even as you are having us for an example"*

Verse 17: "Become imitators of me, brethren, and be observing those who are walking in this way even as you are having us for an example"

Back in Chapter 1:20, the apostle makes the statement: "Christ shall be glorified in my body, whether through life or through death."

Paul is turning to these believers in Philippi and telling them to imitate his example. His example has been described back in Chapter 2 as one who is willing to have his life poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of their faith, and in Chapter 3 as being one who has counted everything but loss for Christ, forgetting those things which are behind, he is pressing toward those things which are in front.

Oswald Chambers in his book, *Christian Disciplines*, says:

Those of us who do know it have a gracious ministry to maintain, so abiding in Him that we reveal the truth as it is in Jesus in our going in and out among the devastated and distracted.

Paul sets up his own life and example as a pattern for them; as he has followed Christ, so should they.

Imitate me, Paul says, and look to those who walk like us.

I am willing to be poured out as a drink offering. I've counted everything but loss for the knowledge of Christ. I'm forgetting what is behind and stretching forward to the things that are in front. Now, you follow our example in your Christian life.

This morning, let's question, "Could you say to someone: Watch the way I do it and then follow me?" This is what the apostle tells us in this verse.

My mind is drawn by the spirit to Hebrews 12:1-2. Listen as Peterson paraphrases it in *The Message*: "Do you see what this means—all these pioneers who blazed the way, all these veterans cheering us on? It means we'd better get on with it. Strip down, start running—and never quit! No extra spiritual fat, no parasitic sins. Keep your eyes on Jesus, who both began and finished this race we're in."

It would be most appropriate for us to worship the Lord this morning by singing the hymn, **"When We See Christ."** Let's sing verse 1: *"Oft times the day seems long, our trials hard to bear, We're tempted to complain, to murmur and despair; But Christ will soon appear to catch His Bride away, All tears forever over in God's eternal day. It will be worth it all when we see Jesus, Life's trials will seem so small when we see Christ; One glimpse of His dear face All sorrow will erase, So bravely run the race Till we see Christ."*

October 14 — Enemies of the Cross (Philippians 3:18-19)

Philippians 3:18: *"For many are walking, of whom I was telling you often, but now also I am telling you with tears, they are enemies of the cross of Christ,"*

Philippians 3:19: *"whose end is destruction, whose god is their stomach, and that which they glory in is their shame, who are setting their minds on earthly things."*

Verse 18: “For many are walking, of whom I was telling you often, but now also I am telling you with tears, they are enemies of the cross of Christ,”

Paul tells us why he gave the admonition in verse 17 for them to pattern their lives after his life. The reason is “for many are walking” who “are enemies of the cross of Christ.” Paul is moved to tears when he thinks of them again. He makes mention of this in his warning to the Galatians.

Galatians 5:13: “For, brethren, you have been called unto liberty, only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.”

They are enemies of the cross of Christ because they will not conform to the demands of the cross.

William Barclay says:

It is a terrible thing to seek to trade on the mercy of God. It is a terrible thing to make the mercy of God an excuse for sinning. Think of it in human terms. How despicable it would be for a son or a daughter to consider himself or herself free to sin because he or she knew that a father or a mother would forgive. That would be taking advantage of love to break love's heart.

Verse 19: “whose end is destruction, whose god is their stomach, and that which they glory in is their shame, who are setting their minds on earthly things.”

In this verse, we get a description of these enemies of the cross of Christ. There are four things that are said about them.

1. whose end is destruction

Matthew 25:41: “Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, ‘Depart from me ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.’”

2 Thessalonians 1:8-9: “Dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus, and these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.”

Revelation 21:8: “But the fearful and unbelieving and the abominable and murderers and whoremongers and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”

2. whose god is their stomach

While most would eat to live, those would live to eat. There is no chapel in their life. It is all kitchen. They have no self-control. They are slaves to their appetites.

3. that which they glory in is their shame

They sing with great gusto the song Frank Sinatra made famous, “*I Did It My Way*.” Their ability to make it on their own and the temporary success without God in their lives is that which they glory in. They glory in their freedom to do anything, and the lives they are making for themselves, and this is their shame.

4. who are setting their minds on earthly things

Phillips translates it: “This world is the limit of their horizon.” Someone has said: “It is all earth and no sky.”

It is life completely on the horizontal, without the vertical.” Their philosophy is eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die. Or said another way: get all you can; can all you get; and poison all the rest. Finally, get the most out of life while

you're alive, for death is the end.

I WALKED LIFE'S WAY WITH AN EASY TREAD,
AND FOLLOWED WHERE COMFORTS AND PLEASURES LED,
UNTIL ONE DAY IN A QUIET PLACE,
I MET THE MASTER FACE TO FACE.
WITH STATION AND RANK AND WEALTH FOR MY GOAL,
MUCH THOUGHT FOR MY BODY BUT NONE FOR MY SOUL.
I HAD ENTERED TO WIN IN LIFE'S MAD RACE
WHEN I MET THE MASTER FACE TO FACE.

Please join me in singing verse 2 of **"When We See Christ"**: *"Sometimes the sky looks dark with not a ray of light, We're tossed and driven on, no human help in sight; But there is One in heav'n who knows our deepest care, Let Jesus solve your problem; just go to Him in pray'r. It will be worth it all when we see Jesus, Life's trials will seem so small when we see Christ; One glimpse of His dear face All sorrow will erase, So bravely run the race Till we see Christ."*

October 15 — When We See Christ (Philippians 3:20-21)

Philippians 3:20: *"For our citizenship (commonwealth) is in heaven, out from which also we are eagerly awaiting the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ;"*

Philippians 3:21: *"who shall transform the body of our humble state into conformity with His glorious body, according to the power which is enabling Him to put into subjection everything to Himself."*

Verse 20: "For our citizenship (commonwealth) is in heaven, out from which also we are eagerly awaiting the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ;"

This world is not the limit of our vision, for our home is in heaven, out from which we are eagerly awaiting a Savior, who said He would come.

Back in Chapter 1:27 Paul challenged the Philippians to "live as citizens in a manner worthy of the gospel." Now he tells us why in this verse: "For our citizenship is in heaven."

1 Corinthians 2:9: "But just as it is written, things which eye has not seen, and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love him."

The student knows in his course of study, a day of reckoning will come. He will face the examination; and by this examination will be revealed how he spent his time during the weeks that have passed.

Romans 14:12: "So then each one of us shall give account of himself to God."

To the Christian, the coming of Christ should cause us to press on; realizing that today may well be our last opportunity to labor for Him. Let me remind you there are two things unknown to us: (1) His coming, and (2) the hour of our death.

May God help us to make each day count so we won't be caught unprepared for His coming.

Consistent daily study of the subject makes examination time a joyous experience, and so it is in our walk with the Lord. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Consistency from day to day is what the Lord is looking for in us.

1 John 2:28: "And now, little children, abide in Him, so that if He should appear, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming."

Verse 21: “who shall transform the body of our humble state into conformity with His glorious body, according to the power which is enabling Him to put into subjection everything to Himself.”

Not only will we be like Him in our dispositions and actions, but, blessed thought, our bodies will be like the body of His glory. What Paul means is we will have bodies that will be like His resurrection body, which will no longer be subject to decay and death.

How is He going to do it? By the power that enables Him to put everything in subjection to Himself. The power He will use to cause every knee to bow and every tongue to confess will be displayed in the making of these temples of clay into bodies fit for glory. It is the power of the resurrection that allowed the Father to raise the Son to life on that glorious Easter morn.

O what a blessed thought and day of gladness!

1 Corinthians 13:12: “In this same way, we can see and understand only a little about God now, as if we were peering at his reflection in a poor mirror. But someday, we’re going to see him in his completeness, face to face. Now all I know is hazy and blurred, but then I will see everything clearly, as God sees into my heart right now.”

Let’s worship and praise the Lord by continuing to sing **“When We See Christ.”** Let’s sing verse 3: *“Life’s day will soon be o’er, all storms forever past, We’ll cross the great divide to glory, safe at last; We’ll share the joys of heav’n a harp, a home, a crown, The tempter will be banished, we’ll lay our burden down. It will be worth it all when we see Jesus, Life’s trials will seem so small when we see Christ; One glimpse of His dear face All sorrow will erase, So bravely run the race Till we see Christ.”*

October 16 — Standing Firm in the Lord (Philippians 4:1)

Philippians 4:1: *“So then, my brethren, loved and longed for, my joy and my crown, so thus be standing firm in the Lord, beloved ones.”*

Verse 1: “So then, my brethren, loved and longed for, my joy and my crown, so thus be standing firm in the Lord, beloved ones.”

Paul wants to talk to them about their convictions.

He has given them warnings about the legalists who live by the Law, and the Libertines who live without law, and now he tells his loved and longed for Philippians to stand firm in the Lord.

I want to admonish you in these areas on the basis of what I have had to say. In the area of your convictions: be standing firm in the Lord.

Daniel 3:16-18 in The New Living Translation: “Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego replied, ‘O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God whom we serve is able to save us. He will rescue us from your power, Your Majesty. But even if he doesn’t, Your Majesty can be sure that we will never serve your gods or worship the gold statue you have set up.’”

As you know, they were thrown into the fiery furnace. Daniel 3:24-25: “But suddenly, as he was watching, Nebuchadnezzar jumped up in amazement and exclaimed to his advisers, ‘Didn’t we tie up three men and throw them into the furnace?’ ‘Yes,’ they said, ‘we did indeed, Your Majesty.’ ‘Look!’ Nebuchadnezzar shouted. ‘I see four men, unbound, walking around in the fire. They aren’t even hurt by the flames! And

the fourth looks like a divine being!”

Paul had asked them in Philippians 1:27 to live as citizens in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ so he would hear they are standing firm in one spirit, contending with one soul for the faith of the gospel; and in no way frightened by their opponents.

Ephesians 6:11: “Put on all of God’s armor so that you will be able to stand safe against the wiles of Satan.”

Engraved upon a stone in the village of Lexington, Massachusetts, are the words of Captain Parker who commanded the colonial forces in the memorable battle fought there in 1776. “Stand your ground, don’t fire unless fired upon. But if they mean to have a war, let it begin here.”

1 Corinthians 16:13-14, Phillips titles these two verses, *A Little Sermon in a Nutshell*: “Be on your guard, stand firm in the faith, live like men, be strong! Let everything that you do be done in love.”

I think it would be meaningful this morning for us to worship the Lord by singing verses 1 and 4 of “**Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus**”: “*Stand up, stand up for Jesus, Ye soldiers of the cross, Lift high His royal banner, It must not suffer loss; From vict’ry unto vict’ry, His army shall He lead, Till every foe is vanquished, And Christ is Lord indeed. Stand up, stand up for Jesus, The strife will not be long; This day the noise of battle, The next, the victor’s song; To him that overcometh A crown of life shall be; He, with the King of Glory, Shall reign eternally.*”

October 17 — Settling a Fuss (Philippians 4:2-3)

Philippians 4:2: “*I am exhorting Euodia and I am exhorting Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord.*”

Philippians 4:3: “*Even so, I am requesting also, you true comrade (genuine yokefellow), assist these women who fought at my side with me in the gospel, and with Clement and the rest of my fellow-workers, whose names are in the book of life.*”

Verse 2: “I am exhorting Euodia and I am exhorting Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord.”

Paul is concerned about their unity and oneness. He mentions these two women who are having a problem. One of these women was probably chairman of the women’s association, and the other was probably a soprano in the choir. They had a run-in somewhere along the way, and a cleavage had come as a result. Pastor Paul isn’t there to referee, so he has to write and tell them what to do.

If they are going to stand firm, there can’t be dissension in the ranks. Above all, they can’t start shooting at each other. If they do this, they are just playing into the hands of the enemy.

Joe Bailey in his book, *Out of My Mind*, says:

THE STRIFE IS O’ER, THE BATTLE DONE.

OUR CHURCH HAS SPLIT, AND OUR SIDE WON.

If Christians don’t hang together, they’ll hang separately.

May I ask you this morning, if your life was to be summed up in one sentence, to be put down in the records of history, *What would that one sentence be?* Euodia and Syntyche will always be remembered as the two feuding women in the church at Philippi.

Verse 3: “Even so, I am requesting also, you true comrade (genuine yokefellow), assist these women who fought at my side with me in the gospel, and with Clement and the rest of my fellow-workers, whose names are in the book of life.”

1 Peter 4:8: “Keep love constant for love is covering a multitude of sins.”

Lord, help us to take time to listen, to give our attention to the ones around us, to be more aware of the sensitivities of others. Help us to see people as people, as real live people, with feelings and concerns just like ours. Help us, Lord, not to judge, and help us not to allow our cynicism to deprive others of joy. Teach us, Lord, to love in deed and in spirit.

“And the rest of my fellow-workers, whose names are in the book of life.” Paul doesn’t mention their names, but he knows they are in the book of life. When we receive Christ as our Savior, our names are inscribed in the Lamb’s Book of Life, never to be taken from its pages.

There have been many who were unknown in the eyes of men, who were missionaries in distant lands, who never made an honor roll or the newspapers and whose name never appeared in Who’s Who. But one thing that is most important of all, it appears in glory, along with those of Paul, Timothy, Epaphroditus, and a host of others.

Let’s worship the Lord by singing verse 1 of John W. Peterson’s hymn, **“Heaven Came Down and Glory Filled My Soul”**: *“O what a wonderful, wonderful day, Day I will never forget; After I’d wandered in darkness away, Jesus my Savior I met. O what a tender, compassionate Friend He met the need of my heart; Shadows dispelling, With joy I am telling, He made all the darkness depart! Heaven came down and glory filled my soul, When at the cross the Savior made me whole; My sins were washed away And my night was turned to day Heaven came down and glory filled my soul!”*

October 18 — Rejoicing in the Lord Always (Philippians 4:4-5)

Philippians 4:4: *“Be rejoicing in the Lord always; again I am saying, be rejoicing.”*

Philippians 4:5: *“Let your sweet reasonableness be known to all men; the Lord is near.”*

Verse 4: “Be rejoicing in the Lord always; again I am saying, be rejoicing.”

What is their reaction to difficulties and trials that beset them? Is it ‘Oh, woe is me!’ or is it an attitude of joyfulness, as something from the hand of the Lord for their good.

When you have joy in the midst of the traumatic trial, three things are true:

1. You have submitted to it.
2. You are seeking wisdom to respond to it.
3. You are accepting grace to triumph in the midst of it.

There is the joy of expectation: something good is going to come out of this. And there is the joy of anticipation: it is only temporary. If God is working it together for good, then the sorrow has to be temporary. This too shall pass. Your pain is eventually going to give birth to something pretty precious.

When you find yourself in the cellar of affliction, start looking around for the wine.

Verse 5: “Let your sweet reasonableness be known to all men; the Lord is near.”

Paul wants their sweet reasonableness to be known among all men. It is a willingness to be satisfied with less than one’s due. This characteristic is closely coupled with

joy in every situation, for one must learn to endure all things and bear all things to have the characteristic of sweet reasonableness.

Ephesians 4:32: "And be ye kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you."

Phillip Keller in his book, *A Gardener Looks at the Fruit of the Spirit*, says:

The truly kind person is one who does not flinch at the cost of extending kindness. He forgets his own personal preferences to proffer help and healing to another. At the price of inconvenience, labor and personal privation, he goes out quietly and without fanfare to bring pleasure to another. Sensitive to the sorrow and suffering of a struggling society, he undertakes to do what he can to alleviate the suffering.

The last phrase in verse 5 is "the Lord is near." It can be taken in one of two ways.

1. It can mean the Lord is present with us as He has promised to be, and He certainly is with us. The psalmist said in Psalm 119:151: "Thou art near, O Lord."
2. It can mean the Lord is nearer in His coming as certainly He is.

Let's worship the Lord this morning by continuing to sing **"Heaven Came Down and Glory Filled My Soul."** Let's sing together verse 2: *"Born of the Spirit with life from above Into God's fam'ly divine, Justified fully thru Calvary's love, O what a standing is mine! And the transaction so quickly was made When as a sinner I came, Took of the offer Of grace He did proffer He saved me, O praise His dear name! Heaven came down and glory filled my soul, When at the cross the Savior made me whole; My sins were washed away And my night was turned to day Heaven came down and glory filled my soul!"*

October 19 — Stop Worrying and Start Praying (Philippians 4:6)

Philippians 4:6: "In no respect be anxious (Stop worrying about even one thing), but in everything by prayer and petitioning (for personal needs) with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God."

Verse 6: "In no respect be anxious (Stop worrying about even one thing), but in everything by prayer and petitioning (for personal needs) with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God."

Paul commands them in "no respect to be anxious." A worrier is a potential failure because he is not adequate. At the bottom of anxiety is unbelief. It is unbelief in the fact we think God is not adequate for the situation, so we have the right to worry.

Worry is accepting a responsibility that God never intended for us to have. We are always faced with the problem of worry and anxiety when we get our eyes off the Lord and on our circumstances.

You can't change the past, but you can ruin a perfectly good present by worrying over the future.

Oswald Chambers said:

A great point is reached spiritually when we stop worrying God over personal matters or over any matter. God expects of us the one thing that glorifies Him – and that is to remain absolutely confident in Him, remembering what He has said beforehand, and sure that His purpose will be fulfilled.

The old cowboy said:

Worry is like a rockin' horse. It's somethin' to do that don't get you nowhere.
Mark Twain said:

I have been through some terrible things in my life, some of which actually happened.

Haddon Robinson says:

What worries you masters you.

Fulton Sheen said:

All worry is atheism, because it is a want of trust in God.

Corrie ten Boom said:

Worry does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow; it empties today of its strength.

You will note Paul uses the negative and the positive statement to say what he wants. Negatively, "in no respect be anxious," but positively, "in everything by prayer and petitioning with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God."

I love the way Phillips translates 1 Peter 5:7: "You can throw the whole weight of your anxieties upon Him, for you are his personal concern."

In this verse, we are told to be anxious for *no thing*, prayerful for *every thing* and thankful for *anything*.

Nothing is too great for His power or too small for His care.

Remember when a person fails to pray, he or she limits themselves to their own resources.

Please join me in singing verse 3 of "**Heaven Came Down and Glory Filled My Soul**": "*Now I've a hope that will surely endure After the passing of time; I have a future in heaven for sure, There in those mansions sublime. And it's because of that wonderful day When at the cross I believed; Riches eternal And blessings supernal From His precious hand I received. Heaven came down and glory filled my soul, When at the cross the Savior made me whole; My sins were washed away And my night was turned to day Heaven came down and glory filled my soul!*"

October 20 — The Peace of God (Philippians 4:7)

Philippians 4:7: "*And the peace of God, which is surpassing all comprehension, shall hold in custody your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*"

Verse 7: "And the peace of God, which is surpassing all comprehension, shall hold in custody your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

In verse 6, we have the command and in verse 7, we have the promise.

John 14:27: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you, not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

Fenelon in his book, *Let Go*, says:

Live in continued peace, but understand that peace does not depend upon the fervor of your devotion. The only thing you need to be concerned about is the direction of your will.

Learn to cultivate peace. You can do this by learning to turn a deaf ear to your own ambitious thoughts, or haven't you yet learned that the strivings of the human mind not only impair the health of your body, but also bring dryness to the soul. You can actually consume yourself by too much inner striving and to no purpose at all. Your peace and inner sweetness can be destroyed by a restless mind.

Peace is the quiet, potent, gracious attitude of serenity and good will that comes to

meet the onslaught of others with good cheer, equanimity and strong repose.

Colossians 3:15: "And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body and be thankful."

Thomas à Kempis said:

All men desire peace, but very few desire those things that make for peace.

William Gladstone said:

At the foot of my bed, where I can see it on retiring, and the first thing on arising, are these words: "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee; because he trusteth Thee" (Isaiah 26:3).

You will notice "the peace of God which surpasses all comprehension" operates in two ways: (1) the hearts and (2) the thoughts. The heart has to do with the feelings or the emotions. The thoughts have to do with the mind or the thinking process.

Peace is the sentinel that guards over our lives and keeps worry out.

Let's worship and praise the Lord by singing Thomas A. Dorsey's beautiful hymn, **"Take My Hand, Precious Lord."** Let's sing verses 1 and 2: "*Precious Lord, take my hand, Lead me on, help me stand; I am tired, I am weak, I am worn; Thru the storm, thru the night, Lead me on to the light; Take my hand, Precious Lord, lead me home. When my way grows drear, Precious Lord, linger near; When my life is almost gone; Hear my cry, hear my call, Hold my hand lest I fall; Take my hand, Precious Lord, lead me home.*"

October 21 — The Mental Menu (Philippians 4:8)

Philippians 4:8: "*Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is worthy of respect (honorable), whatever is righteous, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is appealing (attractive), if there is any virtue and if there is anything worthy of praise, let your mind be dwelling on these things.*"

Verse 8: "Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is worthy of respect (honorable), whatever is righteous, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is appealing (attractive), if there is any virtue and if there is anything worthy of praise, let your mind be dwelling on these things."

There are eight things to think about.

As Jesus Christ keeps our thoughts and tests them, and throws out the evil ones and fills our minds with thoughts of Himself; we will begin doing what is asked here.

This is letting the mind of Christ be in us. The mind of Christ is described for us in these descriptive words.

Paul has given us a *mental menu*, if you please, and we would do well to ask ourselves the questions: *What if all of my thoughts for the last 24 hours were flashed upon a screen? What would my reaction be? Would I be embarrassed?* Our thoughts determine our actions.

Mark 7:21-23: "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts and fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man."

William Barclay says:

Only a passionate love of purity can save a man from impurity.

C.S. Lewis said:

It is safe to tell the pure in heart they shall see God, for only the pure in heart want to.

Proverbs 23:7: "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he."

Let's look for a moment at these eight things that are outlined in our verse for meditation this morning.

1. Whatever is true - as opposed to that which is a lie or false.
2. Whatever is worthy of respect - as opposed to that which is disrespectful and defiling.
3. Whatever is righteous - as opposed to that which would be unrighteous.
4. Whatever is pure - in the moral sense, and not thinking immoral thoughts as implied in the command.
In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."
5. Whatever is lovely - as opposed to that which is ugly.
6. Whatever is appealing (attractive) - that which is praiseworthy, if it were known that you were thinking of it.
7. Whatever virtue there is - that which is honorable.
8. Whatever praise there is - those things which are positive and praiseworthy.

As the Spirit of God controls our minds and thoughts, this is going to be the result. When we have these other thoughts, we must recognize this is merely satanic attack to destroy us from within.

Let's worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing "**Take Time to be Holy.**" Let's sing verses 1, 2 and 3: *"Take time to be holy; Speak oft with thy Lord; Abide in Him always, And feed on His Word. Make friends with God's children; Help those who are weak, Forgetting in nothing His blessing to seek. Take time to be holy; The world rushes on; Spend much time in secret With Jesus alone. By looking to Jesus, Like Him thou shalt be; Thy friends in thy conduct His likeness shall see. Take time to be holy; Let Him be thy Guide; And run not before Him, Whatever betide. In joy or in sorrow, Still follow thy Lord And, looking to Jesus, Still trust in His Word."*

October 22 — Follow My Instructions (Philippians 4:9)

Philippians 4:9: *"The things also which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these things be practicing; and the God of peace shall be with you."*

Verse 9: "The things also which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these things be practicing; and the God of peace shall be with you."

This takes us back to 3:17: "Become imitators of me, brethren, and look to those who are walking in this way, even as you are having us as an example."

Principles are of very little value unless they can be demonstrated in people.

THE THINGS YOU LEARNED IN WATCHING ME WORK,
THE THINGS YOU RECEIVED FROM MY MINISTRY,
THE THINGS YOU HEARD ME SAY,
AND THE THINGS YOU SAW ME DO,
THESE THINGS YOU PRACTICE AND THE PROMISE IS:
THE GOD OF PEACE WILL BE WITH YOU.

We have had the promise of peace when we *pray*, and now the promise of peace

when we *practice*.

I would like for us to reflect on a poetic piece called "*The Oyster*."

THERE ONCE WAS AN OYSTER
WHOSE STORY I TELL,
WHO FOUND THAT SOME SAND
HAD GOT INTO HIS SHELL.
IT WAS ONLY A GRAIN,
BUT IT GAVE HIM GREAT PAIN.
FOR OYSTERS HAVE FEELINGS
ALTHOUGH THEY'RE SO PLAIN.

NOW, DID HE BERATE
THE HARSH WORKINGS OF FATE
THAT HAD BROUGHT HIM
TO SUCH A DEPLORABLE STATE?
DID HE CURSE AT THE GOVERNMENT,
CRY FOR ELECTION,
AND CLAIM THAT THE SEA SHOULD
HAVE GIVEN HIM PROTECTION?

NO-HE SAID TO HIMSELF
AS HE LAY ON A SHELL,
SINCE I CANNOT REMOVE IT,
I SHALL TRY TO IMPROVE IT.
NOW THE YEARS HAVE ROLLED AROUND,
AS THE YEARS ALWAYS DO,
AND HE CAME TO HIS ULTIMATE
DESTINY-STEW.

AND THE SMALL GRAIN OF SAND
THAT HAD BOTHERED HIM SO
WAS A BEAUTIFUL PEARL
ALL RICHLY AGLOW.
NOW THE TALE HAS A MORAL;
FOR ISN'T IT GRAND
WHAT AN OYSTER CAN DO
WITH A MORSEL OF SAND?

WHAT COULDN'T WE DO
IF WE'D ONLY BEGIN
WITH SOME OF THE THINGS
THAT GET UNDER OUR SKIN.

Let's worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing verses 1, 2, and 3 of "**Trust and Obey**": *"When we walk with the Lord in the light of His Word, What a glory He sheds on our way! While we do His good will He abides with us still, And with all who will trust and obey. Not a shadow can rise, not a cloud in the skies, But*

His smile quickly drives it away; Not a doubt nor a fear, not a sigh nor a tear, Can abide while we trust and obey. Not a burden we bear, not a sorrow we share, But our toil He doth richly repay; Not a grief nor a loss, not a frown nor a cross, But is blessed if we trust and obey. Trust and obey, for there's no other way To be happy in Jesus, But to trust and obey."

October 23 — Thanks for Giving (Philippians 4:10-11)

Philippians 4:10: *"But I rejoiced greatly in the Lord, that already once more you made alive your thought for me in which also you were thoughtful, but you were having no opportunity."*

Philippians 4:11: *"Not that I am speaking because of need, for I have learned in whatever circumstances I am to be content (self-sufficient)."*

Verse 10: "But I rejoiced greatly in the Lord, that already once more you made alive your thought for me in which also you were thoughtful, but you were having no opportunity."

Paul turns to the personal and thanks them for their gift in this section. Notice he "rejoiced greatly in the Lord," as he has admonished them to do in Chapter 4:4.

They thought of him again, even as they had many times before, but they hadn't had the opportunity to do anything about it until just now.

You caused your thinking of me to bloom afresh.

The opportunity presented itself with Epaphroditus going to Rome, so they sent him a gift.

Verse 11: "Not that I am speaking because of need, for I have learned in whatever circumstances I am to be content (self-sufficient)."

The apostle has learned by personal experience what it is to be content in every situation. This contentment is the opposite of anxiety described back in verse 4.

2 Corinthians 9:8: "God is able to make it up to you by giving you everything you need and more, so that there will not only be enough for your needs, but plenty left over to give joyfully to others."

1 Timothy 6:6: "But godliness with contentment is great gain."

Paul is not speaking of a need. He wants to make that quite clear. He is in prison and doesn't know for sure what the future holds, and still he can say he is content.

You do not find Paul murmuring at what God has provided. He was not only filled with joy, but also, he was content.

Contentment comes when we are in the center of His will, knowing that He is ordering the divine discipline to produce fruit through our lives.

Livingston said:

I'd rather be in the heart of Africa and be in God's will than be out of His will and be on the throne of England.

Contentment in our lives comes by the following three things:

1. *accepting ourselves.* We are valuable in the Lord's sight.
2. *accepting His plan.* So many times our thoughts are not His thoughts and by accepting His plan we come to contentment.
3. *accepting His provision.* Many times my wants and my needs are not together, and when they are brought together in His will; we are excited about His provision.

The lack of contentment can probably be revealed in the *unsundered will*.

My good friend, Bob Simmons, died of cancer a few years ago. The last time I saw him, he said, "You don't realize that Jesus is all you need until Jesus is all you have."

If you have Jesus Christ living in your heart, you have the world's greatest treasure. What else could you ask for?

Let's worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing verses 4 and 5 of "**Trust and Obey**": *"But we never can prove the delights of His love Until all on the altar we lay; For the favor He shows and the joy He bestows Are for them who will trust and obey. Then in fellowship sweet we will sit at His feet, Or we'll walk by His side in the way; What He says we will do, where He sends we will go, Never fear, only trust and obey. Trust and obey, for there's no other way To be happy in Jesus, But to trust and obey."*

October 24 — I Am Content in Whatever (Philippians 4:12)

Philippians 4:12: *"I am knowing how to discipline myself in lowly circumstances (to be humbled); I am knowing how to be having abundance. In everything and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, and to be having abundance and to be in need."*

Verse 12: "I am knowing how to discipline myself in lowly circumstances (to be humbled); I am knowing how to be having abundance. In everything and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, and to be having abundance and to be in need."

Paul uses the contrasts to show his contentment. The first is how to be "humbled" and "abundance." The second is "full" and "hungry." The third is "abundance" and "want."

In everything and all things, he has learned what it is to be content and to trust in the Lord for his gracious provision.

In verse 11, Paul has learned to be content, and in verse 12, he has learned to be full and to be hungry. He outlines for us six experiences that he has had in his lifetime. In all situations, Paul has learned to be content.

2 Corinthians 12:10: "I can even enjoy weaknesses, suffering, privations, persecutions, and difficulties for Christ's sake, for my very weakness makes me strong in Him."

Life could do nothing to him because he was trusting God. It was Job who said, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him."

Malcolm Muggeridge in a conversation with William Buckley said:

As an old man, Bill, looking back on one's life, it's one of the things that strikes you most forcibly – that the only thing that's taught one anything is suffering. Not success, not happiness, not anything like that. The only thing that really teaches one what life's about – the joy of understanding, the joy of coming in contact with what life really signifies – is suffering, affliction.

Fenelon says:

God never makes you suffer unnecessarily. He intends for your suffering to heal and purify you. The hand of God hurts you as little as it can.

Anxiety brings suffering. Sometimes you are simply unwilling to suffer, and you end up resisting God's work. If you put away all your restless longings and

your anxiety, you will experience the peace and freedom that God gives to His children. The yoke that God gives is easy to bear if you accept it without struggling to escape. You make life more painful for yourself when you resist God in the least way.

Let's sing that very familiar hymn, **"It is Well With My Soul."** Let's sing verse 1: *"When peace like a river attendeth my way, When sorrows like sea billows roll; Whatever my lot, Thou has taught me to say, 'It is well, it is well, with my soul.' It is well with my soul, It is well, it is well with my soul."*

October 25 — He Gives Strength to Cope (Philippians 4:13)

Philippians 4:13: *"I am having strength for all things in the One who is making me strong."*

Verse 13: "I am having strength for all things in the One who is making me strong."

F.W. Willett wrote:

I THANK GOD FOR THE BITTER THINGS
THEY'VE BEEN A FRIEND OF GRACE.
THEY'VE DRIVEN ME FROM THE PATHS OF EASE
TO STORM THE SECRET PLACE.
I THANK HIM FOR THE FRIENDS WHO FAILED
TO FILL MY HEART'S DEEP NEED.
THEY'VE DRIVEN ME TO THE SAVIOR'S FEET
UPON HIS LOVE TO FEED.
I'M GRATEFUL, TOO, THROUGH ALL LIFE'S WAY
NO ONE COULD SATISFY
AND SO I FOUND, IN GOD ALONE,
MY RICH, MY FULL SUPPLY.

Someone has said:

The task ahead is not greater than the power behind.

Phillips Brooks said:

Do not pray for easy lives, pray to be stronger men. Do not pray for tasks equal to your powers, pray for powers equal to your tasks.

2 Corinthians 12:8-9: "Three times I begged the Lord for it to leave me, but His reply has been, 'My grace is enough for you; for where there is weakness my power is shown the more completely.' Therefore, I have cheerfully made up my mind to be proud of my weaknesses because they mean a deeper experience of the power of Christ."

Colossians 1:11: "We are praying too, that you will be filled with His mighty, glorious strength so that you can keep going no matter what happens, always full of the joy of the Lord."

Isaiah 40:31: "But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings as eagles. They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint."

Paul says "I am having strength for all things." This means he is strong for living or dying, being full or hungry, to have abundance or want, to be free or to be in prison.

In the wonderful strength of the indwelling Christ, he could do anything that was in

the mind of God for him to accomplish.

The man who walks with Christ and lives with Christ can cope with anything. Spurgeon says:

God does not need your strength; He has more than enough of power of His own. He asks for your weakness; He has none of that Himself, and He is longing, therefore, to take your weakness, and use it as the instrument in His own mighty hand. Will you not yield your weakness to Him, and receive His strength?

How much we need to be reminded that our ever conquering Savior is still alive. He's still adequate and He has allowed the circumstances we face. Therefore, He has promised to provide the strength to triumph in the midst of them.

There are four things for us to think about when we think of our Savior.

1. He's alive
2. He's adequate
3. He has allowed the circumstances
4. He is available to give us the strength to face whatever curriculum He has designed.

Caleb, at 85 years of age, says in Joshua 14:11: "As yet I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me. As my strength was then, even so is my strength now."

The secret to availing ourselves of His strength and power is that, immediately when the storm hits, we need to follow the three "T's":

1. We need to TURN to Him.
2. We need to TRUST Him.
3. We can learn to TRIUMPH in the circumstances.

Let's worship the Lord together by singing verse 2 of "**It is Well With My Soul**":
*"Though Satan should buffet, tho' trials should come, Let this blest assurance control,
That Christ has regarded my helpless estate, And hath shed His own blood for my soul.
It is well with my soul, It is well, it is well with my soul."*

October 26 — You Did Well to Support (Philippians 4:14-15)

Philippians 4:14: "*Nevertheless, you did well when you shared with me in my affliction.*"

Philippians 4:15: "*But you also are knowing, Philippians, that at the beginning of the gospel, when I went out from Macedonia, not even one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving except you only;*"

Verse 14: "Nevertheless, you did well when you shared with me in my affliction."

Paul returns, once again, to the situation at hand and tells them they did well when they shared with him some of their gifts in his hour of need.

He wants them to know he really appreciates what they have done to take care of him in this time of his distress.

For over 40 years, Pearl and I have been trusting the Lord to supply our needs and God's saints have been generous and faithful to support us.

Pearl and I have made it a policy from the day we began back in 1972 until today that we would always acknowledge every gift, not only with a receipt, but with a note of thanks.

Here is a note I sent just the other day:

You are so special to think of us in such a generous way. It means so much to see your sensitivity to our need. Bless you for the sweet encouragement this gift brings.

Verse 15: “But you also are knowing, Philippians, that at the beginning of the gospel, when I went out from Macedonia, not even one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving except you only;”

Paul reminds them of the early days of the Gospel when he first came to them and the church was founded. During those days, not even one church was giving toward Paul’s support except Philippi. He didn’t gripe and complain about it, however, but patiently labored on and God supplied his needs.

1 Thessalonians 2:9: “Our struggles and hard work, my brothers, must be still fresh in your minds. Day and night we work so that our preaching of the Gospel to you might not cost you a penny.”

2 Corinthians 8:1-3: “Now brethren, we wish to make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches at Macedonia. That in a great ordeal of affliction, their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality. For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability, they gave of their own accord.”

Let’s continue to worship the Lord this morning by singing verse 3 of **“It is Well With My Soul”**: *“My sin, O, the bliss of this glorious thought, My sin not in part but the whole, Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more, Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul! It is well with my soul, It is well, it is well with my soul.”*

October 27 — Giving is Fruitful (Philippians 4:16-17)

Philippians 4:16: “for even in Thessalonica more than once you sent to meet my need.”

Philippians 4:17: “Not that I am seeking the gift, but I am seeking the fruit which is accumulating to your account.”

Verse 16: “for even in Thessalonica more than once you sent to meet my need.”

Paul reminds them of their past faithfulness which is a wonderful way to commend them and, also, to encourage them in what they are doing.

While I was ministering in the church at Thessalonica, you sent more than one gift to care for my need.

He left Philippi and went down the road to Thessalonica. He was gone for a few weeks, not very long, but during that time they sent more than one gift to care for his needs.

Verse 17: “Not that I am seeking the gift, but I am seeking the fruit which is accumulating to your account.”

Paul wants them to know he is not interested in the gift, particularly, but he is seeking the fruit which results from this that is abounding to their account.

Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 6:19-21: “Don’t pile up treasures on earth where moth and rust can spoil them, and thieves can break in and steal, but keep your treasure in Heaven where there is neither moth nor rust to spoil it and nobody can break in and steal. For wherever your treasure is, you may be certain that your heart will be there, too.”

In verse 11, he said, “Not that I am speaking as regards a need.” Paul uses the

negative and the positive in this verse. Negatively, “not that I’m seeking the gift,” then positively, “I am seeking the fruit which is abounding to your account.” Paul has mentioned fruit a couple of other places in the epistle.

Chapter 1:11: “Having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which fruit is through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.”

Chapter 1:22, when Paul is speaking of life and death he says: “But if to live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my work.”

John 15:16: “The Lord Jesus says, ‘You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you and ordained you that you should go and bring forth fruit and that your fruit should remain, that whatsoever you shall ask of the Father in my name, He may give to you.’”

John 15:8: “Herein is my Father glorified that you bear much fruit.”

Paul wanted the Philippians, who were being faithful in their giving, to know that fruit was abounding to their account in glory because of it.

Malachi in 3:10 says: “‘Test me in this,’ says the Lord Almighty, ‘and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of Heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.’”

Let’s continue our worship this morning with singing verse 4 of “**It is Well With My Soul**”: “*And Lord, haste the day when the faith shall be sight, The clouds be rolled back as a scroll, The trump shall resound and the Lord shall descend, ‘Even so,’ it is well with my soul. It is well with my soul, It is well, it is well with my soul.*”

October 28 — A Sacrifice Well-Pleasing (Philippians 4:18)

Philippians 4:18: “*But I am having all things and I am abounding. I have been filled full when I received from Epaphroditus the things from you, a fragrant aroma (pleasing smell), a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God.*”

Verse 18: “But I am having all things and I am abounding. I have been filled full when I received from Epaphroditus the things from you, a fragrant aroma (pleasing smell), a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God.”

Paul doesn’t ask for gifts because he is having all things and abounding.

Since your missionary, Epaphroditus, has arrived with your gift, I have been filled full. The things you sent were certainly a sacrifice that is well pleasing to God.

Hebrews 13:16: “Don’t forget to do good and to share what you have with those in need. For such sacrifices are very pleasing to Him.”

One cannot help but be reminded of Paul’s admonition in Romans 12:1: “And so dear brothers, I plead with you to give your bodies to God. Let them be a living sacrifice, holy, the kind He can accept.”

In Romans, it’s the giving of their bodies and in Philippians; it’s the giving of their means. In Hebrews, it’s called a “sacrifice of praise from the lips.”

The sacrifices of the believers are three-fold:

1. the sacrifice of Praise
2. the sacrifice of Possessions
3. the sacrifice of Persons

OR

1. the sacrifice of Lips
2. the sacrifice of Lives
3. the sacrifice of Lucre

OR

1. the sacrifice of Bodies
2. the sacrifice of Blessings
3. the sacrifice of Belongings

It's not so much the amount that concerns the Lord. It's the love and devotion that is reflected in the gift.

In Luke 21:1-4, in the Phillips translation, we read: "Then he looked up and saw the rich people dropping their gifts into the treasury, and he noticed a poor widow drop in two coppers, and he commented, 'I assure you that this poor widow put in more than all of them, for they have all put in what they can easily spare, but she in her poverty has given away her whole living.'"

The gifts of the rich go unnoticed because they can spare it without any problem. The gift of the widow was noticed by the Lord because of the love and devotion that was shown in her sacrifice.

Let's worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing "**Is Your All on the Altar?**" Let's sing verse 1: "*You have longed for sweet peace, and for faith to increase, And have earnestly, fervently prayed; But you cannot have rest or be perfectly blest Until all on the altar is laid. Is your all on the altar of sacrifice laid? Your heart, does the Spirit control? You can only be blest and have peace and sweet rest, As you yield Him your body and soul.*"

October 29 — God Will Meet Your Needs (Philippians 4:19)

Philippians 4:19: "*And my God shall fill to the full your every need according to His riches (wealth) in glory in Christ Jesus.*"

Verse 19: "And my God shall fill to the full your every need according to His riches (wealth) in glory in Christ Jesus."

Because you have "filled to the full" my every need, my God shall "fill to the full your every need." What they had done for him would be repeated by God for them.

You lend Him your boat for a pulpit and He will return it full of fish. You lend Him your lunch of five loaves and two fishes and He will feed 5,000 and give you back 12 baskets full.

In verses 7, 9 and 19, we have three great *shall*s:

1. In verse 7, "The peace of God *shall* keep under guard your hearts and thoughts."
2. In verse 9, "The God of peace *shall* be with you."
3. In verse 19, "God *shall* fill to the full your every need."

His peace shall be your *protection*. His presence shall be your *comfort*. His provision shall be your *contentment*.

In verse 7, we have the promise of the *peace of God*. In verse 13, we have the *power of God*. In verse 19, we have the *provision of God*. All of this is the cure for my worry.

Psalm 84:11: "For the Lord God is a sun and shield. The Lord will give grace and glory; no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly."

Matthew 6:33: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you."

Let's worship and sing verse 2 of the song we started yesterday, "**Is Your All on**

the Altar?”: *“Would you walk with the Lord in the light of His Word, And have peace and contentment always? You must do His sweet will to be free from all ill, On the altar your all you must lay. Is your all on the altar of sacrifice laid? Your heart, does the Spirit control? You can only be blest and have peace and sweet rest, As you yield Him your body and soul.”*

October 30 — To God be the Glory (Philippians 4:20-21)

Philippians 4:20: *“Now to God even our Father be the glory forever and ever. Amen.”*

Philippians 4:21: *“Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren with me are sending greetings to you.”*

Verse 20: “Now to God even our Father be the glory forever and ever. Amen.”

Paul breaks into a doxology of praise to God because of His wonderful ability to meet all of our needs, both physical and spiritual, in His Son, Jesus Christ.

With this verse, Paul closes his formal letter and in verses 21-23, he sends greetings.

Verse 21: “Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren with me are sending greetings to you.”

In Christ Jesus, we have become members of a community and the love in that community causes us to sense a unity with others who are in that same fellowship.

Greet the saints there in Philippi. Their brethren, here in Rome, send you greetings.

I remember in my childhood how the saints on Sunday night loved to sing with gusto and enthusiasm, **“Leaning on the Everlasting Arms.”** Let’s worship the Lord by singing verse 1: *“What a fellowship, what a joy divine, Leaning on the everlasting arms; What a blessedness, what a peace is mine, Leaning on the everlasting arms. Leaning, leaning, Safe and secure from all alarms; Leaning, leaning, Leaning on the everlasting arms.”*

October 31 — God Be with You (Philippians 4:22-23)

Philippians 4:22: *“All the saints are sending greetings to you, but especially those of Caesar’s household.”*

Philippians 4:23: *“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.”*

Verse 22: “All the saints are sending greetings to you, but especially those of Caesar’s household.”

All the Christians send their greetings, but there’s a special group: those of Caesar’s household that send you greetings.

Christians in the house of Nero? This is too good to be true. Paul, do you really mean it? Why, he’s the leader who has no time at all for Christians.

Oswald Chambers has a delightful little note on this:

A saint is a piece of rugged human stuff, remade by the atonement into oneness with God by the power of the Holy Spirit. Nero, the unprincipled, Nero, the jealous fiend who murdered his mother, his wife and his son, lest they snatch away his throne, Nero, the arch persecutor of Christians. Secular historians say that he sewed them in skins of animals and cast them out to be devoured by wild beasts. Others were crucified. Some were smeared with pitch, fixed upon sharp spikes in the imperial gardens, and set on fire to light up the night. Christians here? Yes, praise God!

The power of the gospel is not limited to a friendly climate, but it will go anywhere to transform lives, and those transformed lives will endure anything for the sake of what they have in Christ Jesus.

Verse 23: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.”

He ends the letter as he began, and that’s with grace. Chapter 1:2: “Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Paul recognized from beginning to end it was all of grace, and grace alone. God’s grace was fully sufficient for his every need.

John Newton said:

My never-failing treasury, filled with boundless stores of grace.

Let’s sing verses 2 and 3 of “**Leaning on the Everlasting Arms**”: “*O how sweet to walk in this pilgrimway, Leaning on the everlasting arms; O, how bright the path grows from day to day, Leaning on the everlasting arms. What have I to dread, what have I to fear, Leaning on the everlasting arms? I have blessed peace with my Lord so near, Leaning on the everlasting arms. Leaning, leaning, Safe and secure from all alarms; Leaning, leaning, Leaning on the everlasting arms.*”

NOVEMBER

November 1 — Greetings from Paul (2 Corinthians 1:1-2)

2 Corinthians 1:1: “*Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God and Timothy our brother, to the church of God which is in Corinth with all the saints who are in the whole of Achaia.*”

2 Corinthians 1:2: “*Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*”

Having completed the book of Philippians in our study, we now turn to one of the most personal and intimate letters – Paul’s second letter to the Corinthians.

J. Sidlow Baxter said:

While others of Paul’s epistles may be more profound, scarcely any could be more precious than this second heart-outpouring to the Corinthians. It was written with a quill dipped in tears, from the apostle’s “anguish of heart.”

Although the days may be bad, God is good and He has some purpose behind the circumstances that surround us. God uses all things to make us more like His Son.

We would do well to ask ourselves: What are God’s objectives?

1. Obedience
2. Trust
3. Holiness
4. Growth in Christlikeness
5. To Use Us to Bear Fruit

From the city of Philippi, Paul wrote the second letter to the Corinthians, which expresses so much of the anxiety and agitation of his heart.

What an exciting adventure awaits us as we will be spending our time making a verse-by-verse study of this beautiful book. In these verses, Paul will tell us how to handle the tough times in our lives.

Psalm 34:19: “A righteous man may have many troubles, but the Lord delivers him from them all.”

Verse 1: “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God and Timothy our

brother, to the church of God which is in Corinth with all the saints who are in the whole of Achaia.”

Paul uses his title “an apostle of Christ Jesus.” This is to lend authority to the message he gives in this letter. It has come about by the will of God.

“And Timothy our brother.” Timothy is a brother because of his relationship with Christ. Paul and Timothy are members of the same family, having been born again by the Spirit into God’s family. They are now spiritual brothers.

“To the church of God which is in Corinth with all the saints who are in the whole of Achaia.” Paul’s ministry during those 18 months he was in Corinth not only touched that city, but also the whole of Achaia, which is all of the surrounding area.

It is so exciting to see the gospel spread its tentacles around the world and touch lives in different lands and cultures.

Verse 2: “Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is the common greeting of the apostle. He never reverses this greeting. You can never know peace until you know grace. And grace is an experience of God’s unmerited favor towards us in the provision of Jesus Christ that provides the foundation of a relationship.

The result of that relationship is peace. This comes from the source of God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I love the way Plummer in the International Critical Commentary begins as he translates these first two verses: “Paul, an apostle by divine appointment, and Timothy, whom you all know, give greeting to the body of Corinthian Christians and to all Christians in the province. May the free and unmerited favor of God be yours, and the peace which this favor brings. May our heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus Christ grant them to you.”

I think it would be appropriate to praise the Lord this morning by singing “**Amazing Grace.**” Let’s sing verses 1 and 2: *“Amazing Grace, How sweet the sound That saved a wretch like me! I once was lost, but now am found, Was blind, but now I see. ‘Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, And grace my fears relieved; How precious did that grace appear The hour I first believed.”*

November 2 — The God of All Comfort (2 Corinthians 1:3-4)

2 Corinthians 1:3: “*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassionate mercies and God of all comfort (encouragement),*”

2 Corinthians 1:4: “*Who is comforting (encouraging) us in all our affliction so that we may be able to comfort (encourage) those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are being comforted by God.*”

Verse 3: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassionate mercies and God of all comfort (encouragement),”

Paul begins this epistle in the same way David begins the Psalter:

Psalm 1:1: “Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers.”

The apostle begins this letter the same way the Lord Jesus begins His public ministry:

Matthew 5:3-4: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.”

He begins by praising God and starts by singing the Doxology. A blessing ought to be given at the very beginning. It is a note of praise and thanksgiving.

Yes, Paul begins his letter praising God. The question of “why” never seems to come up.

David says in Psalm 34:1: “I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth.”

Job was able to say in Job 1:21: “The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.”

Let’s state a vital principle in the Christian life at this point:

Don’t lose your confidence in God no matter what. Keep on praising Him!

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassionate mercies and God of all comfort (encouragement).” Paul characterizes God in two ways:

1. He’s the Father of compassionate mercies.

2. He’s the God of all comfort.

There are some things about God you can only learn through suffering. And there are some things about yourself you can only learn through suffering. You get to know God and yourself in a new way through suffering.

He is a Father of compassionate mercies when He provides grace to endure, when He provides strength to go on. Lamentations 3:22-23: “Because of the Lord’s great love we are not consumed, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.”

He’s not only the Father of compassionate mercies; He is the God of all comfort.

How is it that He is the God of all comfort? Isaiah 63:9: “In all their distress He too was distressed.” He is the God of all comfort in that He comes offering peace. He is the God of all comfort because everything is under His sovereign control, nothing happens to us until it passes over His desk.

You will notice He is the God of “all” comfort. It is futile to try and find comfort anywhere else.

Ironside says:

There are two things of which God is said to have the monopoly: He is “the God of all grace” and He is “the God of all comfort.”

Verse 4: “Who is comforting (encouraging) us in all our affliction so that we may be able to comfort (encourage) those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are being comforted by God.”

The “comforting” is in the present tense so this is something going on continually. He is aware of our every concern and understands and knows of our every affliction.

The last part of verse 4 tells us the reason why He is encouraging us in all our affliction: “so that we may be able to comfort (encourage) those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are being comforted by God.”

The result of our comfort should be an increased sensitivity to the needs of others. God does not comfort us to make us comfortable, but to make us comforters.

Please join me as we continue to worship by singing verses 3 and 4 of “**Amazing Grace**”: “*Through many dangers, toils, and snares, I have already come; ‘Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far, And grace will lead me home. The Lord has promised good to me, His Word my hope secures; He will my shield and portion be As long as*

life endures.”

November 3 — Suffering and Comfort (2 Corinthians 1:5-6)

2 Corinthians 1:5: “*For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ.*”

2 Corinthians 1:6: “*But if we are being hard pressed by reason of affliction, it is for your comfort and salvation; or if we are being comforted, it is for your comfort, which is operative in the patient enduring of the same sufferings which we also are suffering.*”

Verse 5: “For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ.”

In verse 5, we have the reason for the statement in verse 4: “For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance.”

You will notice they are the sufferings of Christ. Colossians 1:24: “Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body (which is the church) in filling up that which is lacking in Christ’s afflictions.” We have lots of suffering; we have lots of comfort. The source of our comfort is through Christ. Our suffering is not only to break us, but to broaden our capacity as channels of comfort.

Verse 6: “But if we are being hard pressed by reason of affliction, it is for your comfort and salvation; or if we are being comforted, it is for your comfort, which is operative in the patient enduring of the same sufferings which we also are suffering.”

Whether we suffer or are comforted, it’s all for your benefit. What we are going through is for your benefit. Both suffering and comfort are for you.

The basic purpose we ask is “How is God going to use this in the lives of those who are close to us?”

To have comfort, we must have suffering. Paul understands a two-fold purpose for his afflictions: (1) for your comfort and (2) for your salvation.

Suffering opens the door for ministry to others: comfort for believers and salvation for the unsaved. The reason for suffering is to give comfort and salvation to others. Paul could say what I’m going through is for someone else’s comfort or salvation.

How does salvation fit into this picture? It is more by what they see than what you say that makes an impact on the unsaved.

1 Peter 3:1-2: “In the same way, you wives be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior.”

1 Peter 3:15: “but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to every one who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;”

We can share the lessons learned in tribulation. We are *bruised to bless*. The *hurts* come to make us *helpers*.

Paul concludes verse 6 by saying: “or if we are being comforted, it is for your comfort, which is operative in the patient enduring of the same sufferings which we also are suffering.”

It is patience with the process in forming Christ in us. You’ve got to hang in there if you’re going to experience God’s comfort. The fruit of God’s comfort is the patient en-

during of the same sufferings. Paul says: There needs to be *patience with the process*.

I feel one of the great motivations for hanging in there and persevering is knowing God never wastes a sorrow.

Let's continue singing "**Amazing Grace**" as we praise and worship our blessed Lord. Join me in verses 5 and 6: "*And when this flesh and heart shall fail, And mortal life shall cease; I shall possess, within the veil A life of joy and peace. When we've been there ten thousand years, Bright shining as the sun, We've no less days to sing God's praise Than when we first begun.*"

November 4 — Hope is on Solid Ground (2 Corinthians 1:7)

2 Corinthians 1:7: "*And our hope for you is firmly grounded, knowing that as you are sharers of our sufferings, so also you are sharers of our comfort.*"

Verse 7: "And our hope for you is firmly grounded, knowing that as you are sharers of our sufferings, so also you are sharers of our comfort."

The "and" connects us with the previous verse. Paul speaks words of affirmation. "Our hope for you is firmly grounded."

It reminds us of the way Jesus concluded the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 7:24-25: "Therefore, everyone who hears these words of Mine, and acts upon them, may be compared to a wise man, who built his house upon the rock; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and yet it did not fall; for it had been founded upon the rock."

"Our hope for you is firmly grounded." We are believing the best. It is because of your past performances. We have a lot of confidence in you. You aren't going to fold or melt in the furnace of afflictions.

Paul then gives evidence for this hope in the latter part of verse 7: "knowing that as you are sharers of our sufferings, so also you are sharers of our comfort." The picture we get is they are firmly grounded, sharing suffering and comfort together.

Walt Henrichsen says:

For most of us, the absence of pain is more important than the presence of character. For God, the presence of character is more important than the absence of pain. Trials and tribulations can be an expression of God's love and not His neglect.

Hebrews 10:24: "and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds."

Florence Littauer says the follow words from a little pamphlet, This is From Me:

Are you in difficult circumstances, surrounded by people who do not understand you, who never consult your taste, who put you in the background? "This thing is from Me. I am the God of circumstances. Thou camest not to thy place by accident; it is the very place God meant for thee." Have you not asked to be made humble? See, then, I have placed you in the very school where this lesson is taught; your surroundings and companions are only working out my will.

As we worship and praise the Lord this morning, let's ask Him to "**Fill My Cup, Lord.**" Let's sing verse 1: "*Like the woman at the well I was seeking For things that could not satisfy; And then I heard my Savior speaking 'Draw from My well that never shall run dry. 'Fill my cup, Lord, I lift it up, Lord! Come and quench this thirsting of my soul; Bread of Heaven, feed me till I want no more, Fill my cup, fill it up and make me whole!'*"

November 5 — Living on the Edge (2 Corinthians 1:8-9)

2 Corinthians 1:8: *“For we are not desiring you to be unaware, brethren, concerning our affliction which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of living;”*

2 Corinthians 1:9: *“indeed, we have had the sentence of death within ourselves in order that we should not be trusting in ourselves but in the God who is raising the dead,”*

Verse 8: “For we are not desiring you to be unaware, brethren, concerning our affliction which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of living;”

I love the way Phillips translates this: “At that time, we were completely overwhelmed. The burden was more than we could bear. In fact, we told ourselves that this was the end.”

Plummer in his commentary translates it: “When I speak of our sufferings, I mean something very real. I do not wish you, my brothers, to be in any uncertainty about that. Affliction so intense came upon us in Asia that it prostrated us beyond all power of endurance, so much that we despaired of preserving even life.”

Something took place while they were in Asia that nearly took their lives. It must have been the riots and opposition they experienced in Ephesus, recorded in Acts 19.

The satanic activity was very strong during this ministry in Ephesus. A real riot was stirred up by a man named Demetrius, who was a silversmith there, making silver shrines of Artemis. This was making the silversmiths a lot of money. Paul, with his ministry, was practically running them out of business by presenting the living God.

When the riot was at its height, we read in verse 29: “And the city was filled with the confusion, and they rushed with one accord into the theater, dragging along Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul’s travelling companions for Macedonia.”

There are three things said about this emergency:

1. They were burdened excessively.
2. It was beyond their strength.
3. They despaired even of living.

Stephen Brown said:

Did you hear about the man who went to his doctor and the doctor told him that he had some bad news and some very bad news? The man asked to hear the bad news first, and the doctor said, “The bad news is that I have examined your tests and you have 24-hours to live.”

“Man!” exclaimed the man. “That is really bad news. What in the world could be worse than that?”

“The very bad news is,” said the doctor, “I should have talked to you yesterday.”

Grant Howard in *Balancing Life’s Demands* says:

If life can be viewed as a battle, then here is the latest most appropriate communique: We are completely surrounded and totally outnumbered.

Verse 9: “indeed, we have had the sentence of death within ourselves in order that we should not be trusting in ourselves but in the God who is raising the dead,”

“Indeed, we have had the sentence of death within ourselves.” Paul then gives the

purpose behind all of this: “in order that we should not be trusting in ourselves but in the God who is raising the dead.”

This purpose is stated negatively and positively. Negatively, “not be trusting in ourselves,” but positively, “trusting in God.”

The apostle saw the hand of God in these circumstances. Trials come to teach us to trust in God. We are being taught to trust God in the midst of the circumstances. This all happened so that we might not be trusting in ourselves, but we might be trusting “in the God who is raising the dead.” Life and death are in His hands.

This is in the present tense, and so it is not just a reference to the resurrection of Jesus. We would say it is a reference to the *raising of Jesus* from the dead, but it is also a reference to the *raising of Paul* from the dead in Lystra, and the *raising of Eutychus* from the dead in Troas when he fell out of the window at midnight. Death is no big deal to God.

It must delight the heart of God to put us into situations where we have no alternative, but to trust Him if we are going to survive.

Ray Stedman says:

I think the major reason for suffering is it is the pressure designed to destroy our determined stubbornness.

Let’s worship the Lord again this morning by singing verse 2 of “**Fill My Cup, Lord**”: *“There are millions in the world who are craving The pleasure earthly things afford; But none can match the wondrous treasure That I find in Jesus Christ my Lord. Fill my cup, Lord, I lift it up, Lord! Come and quench this thirsting of my soul; Bread of Heaven, feed me till I want no more, Fill my cup, fill it up and make me whole!”*

November 6 — Your Prayers Make a Difference (2 Corinthians 1:10-11)

2 Corinthians 1:10: “*who delivered us out of so great a peril of death, and will deliver us, He on whom we have set our hope. And He will yet deliver us.*”

2 Corinthians 1:11: “*You also joining in helping us through your prayers, in order that thanksgiving may be given by many persons on our behalf for the favor bestowed upon us through the prayers of many.*”

Verse 10: “who delivered us out of so great a peril of death, and will deliver us, He on whom we have set our hope. And He will yet deliver us.”

There are four things we see about God in these verses:

1. As we saw in verse 9, He is the one “who is raising the dead.”
2. He is the one who “delivered us,” pointing to the past.
3. He is the one who “will deliver us,” that is, in the immediate future.
4. He is the one who “will yet deliver us,” in the indefinite future.

2 Timothy 4:17-18: “But the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me, in order that through me the proclamation might be fully accomplished, and that all the Gentiles might hear; and I was delivered out of the lion’s mouth. The Lord will deliver me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom; to Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.”

For Israel, it is the deliverance from the land of Egypt. For the church, it is deliverance that took place at Calvary.

Verse 11: “You also joining in helping us through your prayers, in order that thanksgiving may be given by many persons on our behalf for the favor bestowed

upon us through the prayers of many.”

I have titled verse 11 “Petition Issues in Praise.”

Make no mistake about it – when people pray, God responds!

John 16:24: “Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.”

The Corinthian contribution to the cause is “You (Corinthians) also joining in helping us through your prayers.” The purpose is “in order that thanksgiving may be given by many persons on our behalf for the favor bestowed upon us through (the instrument of) the prayers of many.”

Let’s worship the Lord this morning by singing verse 3 of “**Fill My Cup, Lord**”:
*“So, my brother, if the things this world gave you Leave hungers that won’t pass away,
My blessed Lord will come and save you, If you kneel to Him and humbly pray: Fill
my cup, Lord, I lift it up, Lord! Come and quench this thirsting of my soul; Bread of
Heaven, feed me till I want no more, Fill my cup, fill it up and make me whole!”*

November 7 — The Testimony of Our Conscience (2 Corinthians 1:12-13)

2 Corinthians 1:12: “*For our glorying is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we ordered our behavior in the world, and especially toward you.*”

2 Corinthians 1:13: “*For we are writing nothing else to you than what you are reading and understanding, and I am hoping you will understand until the end.*”

Verse 12: “For our glorying is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we ordered our behavior in the world, and especially toward you.”

“For our glorying is this” – we have something to be proud of. And that glorying is this: “the testimony of our conscience.”

1 Samuel 16:7: “But the Lord said to Samuel, ‘Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.’”

Psalms 119:165: “Great peace have they who love your law, and nothing can make them stumble.”

Acts 24:16: “In view of this, I also do my best to maintain always a blameless conscience both before God and before men.”

“For our glorying is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and godly sincerity.” The apostle Paul characterizes his ministry to the Corinthians in the following two ways: (1) holiness and (2) godly sincerity.

Holiness looks at *action* and godly Sincerity looks at *attitude*. Holiness looks *outward* and godly Sincerity looks *inward*. Holiness is from the heart, and as a result, it is real.

In this verse, Paul makes a negative and a positive statement. Negatively, this “holiness and godly sincerity” is “not in fleshly wisdom,” but positively, “in the grace of God.” Our behavior has not been unholy pretending or the wearing of a mask or living in the realm of hypocrisy.

Whereas this holiness and godly sincerity did not come in fleshly wisdom, it did come in the grace of God.

Paul's conduct is a result of a relationship. He has come to know Jesus Christ, and the work of the Spirit of God in his life transforming him into the image of Jesus Christ has brought about this holiness and godly sincerity in his life.

"Not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we ordered our behavior in the world, and especially toward you."

Verse 13: "For we are writing nothing else to you than what you are reading and understanding, and I am hoping you will understand until the end."

Paul says "we are writing nothing else to you than what you are reading and understanding, and I am hoping you will understand until the end." There are no selfish or ulterior motives in our writing.

Plummer translates verse 13 this way: "Do not believe for a moment that I write one thing at one time and another at another. I write nothing different from what I have written before. My meaning lies on the surface. You read it and you recognize it as true, and I hope that the time will never come when you refuse to recognize it as such."

For our worship this morning, let's sing verse 1 of "**Hiding in Thee**": *"O safe to the Rock that is higher than I, My soul in its conflicts and sorrows would fly; So sinful, so weary, Thine, Thine would I be; Thou blest Rock of Ages, I'm hiding in Thee. Hiding in Thee, Hiding in Thee, Thou blest Rock of Ages, I'm hiding in Thee."*

November 8 — We Are Proud of You (2 Corinthians 1:14-15)

2 Corinthians 1:14: "Just as you also partially did understand us, that we are your reason to be proud as you also are ours, in the day of our Lord Jesus."

2 Corinthians 1:15: "And in this confidence I was wishing at first to come to you, in order that you may be having a second grace,"

Verse 14: "Just as you also partially did understand us, that we are your reason to be proud as you also are ours, in the day of our Lord Jesus."

The problem in Corinth is a problem of partial knowledge. They didn't have the full picture.

Paul says we are in this together. "We are your reason to be proud" and you are also "our reason to be proud" at the judgment seat of Christ, that is, "in the day of our Lord Jesus."

Verse 15: "And in this confidence I was wishing at first to come to you, in order that you may be having a second grace,"

As the apostle Paul was planning his trip, he planned to go to the city of Corinth first and then to go north to Macedonia, returning to the city of Corinth on his way back. Basically, he was planning to see them on the front end and back end of the trip.

I wanted to see you going and coming. My purpose in this plan was so "you may be having a second grace." You may be having the privilege of seeing us twice. You need to know you were a priority on my trip and I wasn't trying to avoid you. I wanted to see you twice.

Let's worship the Lord by singing verse 2 of "**Hiding in Thee**": *"In the calm of the noontide, in sorrow's lone hour; In times when temptation casts o'er me its pow'r; In the tempests of life, on its wide, heaving sea, Thou blest Rock of Ages, I'm hiding in Thee. Hiding in Thee, Hiding in Thee, Thou blest Rock of Ages, I'm hiding in Thee."*

November 9 — We Want to See You (2 Corinthians 1:16-17)

2 Corinthians 1:16: “and to pass through your (city) into Macedonia and again from Macedonia to come to you, and by you to be helped on my journey to Judea.”

2 Corinthians 1:17: “Therefore having this desire, I was not vacillating, was I? Or that which I am purposing, am I purposing according to the flesh, that with me there should be yes, yes and no, no at the same time?”

Verse 16: “and to pass through your (city) into Macedonia and again from Macedonia to come to you, and by you to be helped on my journey to Judea.”

Now, the apostle explains the geography of this trip. He was going to come to Corinth first, and then go on into Macedonia, which is 200 miles northwest, to see the congregations in Berea, Thessalonica and Philippi. Then, from Macedonia in the northwest corner, he was going back to Corinth. He was going to stop off going and coming.

“And by you to be helped on my journey to Judea.” It was the purpose of the apostle, as we will see later in the epistle, to take an offering for the poor saints in Jerusalem. He wants to come back through Corinth on the way. He hopes they will help him on this journey to Judea.

This is 800 miles southeast of Corinth, 750 miles by water and 50 miles by land, to get to Jerusalem in the province of Judea.

You can just see Paul consulting his travel itinerary at this point so that he is carefully putting down with integrity, transparency, and a clear conscience the outline planned for this trip.

Some of the criticism that hurts the most comes from those who do not have all the facts.

Verse 17: “Therefore having this desire, I was not vacillating, was I? Or that which I am purposing, am I purposing according to the flesh, that with me there should be yes, yes and no, no at the same time?”

The word “therefore” points back to what has been said. These questions expose the critical spirit there is in Corinth.

“Therefore having this desire,” that is, to visit them on these occasions.

Question: I was not vacillating, was I? I was not uncertain, going back and forth. I was not fickle in the sense that I said one thing and planned on another. Paul is saying he wasn’t flittin’ and fluttering around from flower to flower like some butterfly in a haphazard fashion, was he?

Isaiah 50:7: “Because the Sovereign Lord helps me, I will not be disgraced. Therefore have I set my face like flint, and I know I will not be put to shame.”

In essence, Paul’s ministry in Corinth was in jeopardy because of his critics who were using this as an occasion to say that Paul is terribly uncertain. He is vacillating to and fro in his leadership, and you really cannot depend upon his word. They are saying he can make a statement, but his word doesn’t mean anything. He is saying yes, yes and no, no at the same time. It almost sounds like an answer from a subcontractor.

Let’s worship the Lord this morning by singing verse 3 of “**Hiding in Thee**”:
“How oft in the conflict, when pressed by the foe, I have fled to my Refuge and breathed out my woe; How often, when trials like sea billows roll, Have I hidden in Thee, O Thou Rock of my soul. Hiding in Thee, Hiding in Thee, Thou blest Rock of Ages, I’m hiding in Thee.”

2 Corinthians 1:18: “But as God is faithful, our word to you is not yes and no.”

2 Corinthians 1:19: “For the Son of God, Christ Jesus, who was preached among you by us--by me and Silvanus and Timothy--did not become yes and no, but in Him has become yes.”

Verse 18: “But as God is faithful, our word to you is not yes and no.”

The apostle Paul does not confront the Corinthians by himself, but rather turns their minds away from the criticism to God Himself and what He has done. The quicker you can bring God into the picture in the midst of your conflicts, the greater potential for solution to the problems. It brings stability. What God says and does can be cast in concrete!

“But as God is faithful.” In other words, you can depend upon His word. He keeps His promises. You can stake your life on what He says.

“But as God is faithful, our word to you is not yes and no.” That is, yes and no at the same time. Like God, you can depend on our word. When we say something, you can rely upon it. We will do what we promise.

Verse 19: “For the Son of God, Christ Jesus, who was preached among you by us--by me and Silvanus and Timothy--did not become yes and no, but in Him has become yes.”

Now the apostle beautifully brings the Lord Jesus Christ into the conflict. Before he is through, he will have the whole Trinity in the picture.

In verse 18, “God is faithful,” and now in verse 19, “the Son of God, Christ Jesus who was preached among you by us.” The Lord Jesus Christ was the message of the three of us: I, Paul, and Silvanus (Silas) and Timothy.

We were not uncertain in our preaching. It “did not become yes and no, but in Him has become yes.” There is no vacillating or flitting around back and forth in the realm of uncertainty when it comes to the Lord Jesus Christ. In Him, there is no “yes and no”, but in Him become “yes.”

In the Lord Jesus, there is a certainty. In the Lord Jesus, it is positive. In the Lord Jesus, there is acceptance.

John 14:6: “Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me.’” You can be assured when you come in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, you are going to get a “yes” answer.

When you die and ask the question in glory: Can I come in? In Jesus Christ, you’ll hear, “Yes!” Am I accepted? In Jesus Christ, “Yes!” Is there a place for me? In Jesus Christ, the answer is “Yes!”

Let’s sing and worship and praise the Lord this morning with one of my favorite hymns, “**Jesus, I Am Resting, Resting.**” Let’s sing verse 1: “*Jesus, I am resting, resting In the joy of what Thou art; I am finding out the greatness Of Thy loving heart, Thou hast bid me gaze upon Thee, And Thy beauty fills my soul, For by Thy transforming power, Thou has made me whole. Jesus, I am resting, resting In the joy of what Thou art; I am finding out the greatness Of Thy loving heart.*”

November 11 — Many Are the Promises (2 Corinthians 1:20-21)

2 Corinthians 1:20: “For as many as may be the promises of God, in Him they are yes; wherefore also by Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us.”

2 Corinthians 1:21: “Now He who is establishing us with you in Christ and

anointed us is God,”

Verse 20: “For as many as may be the promises of God, in Him they are yes; wherefore also by Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us.”

As the apostle continues his argument, he makes the simple statement: “as many as may be the promises of God (and they are numerous), in Him (that is, in Jesus Christ) they are yes; wherefore also by Him (the Lord Jesus) is our Amen (So be it!) to the glory of God through us.”

When I am walking daily with Jesus, exalting and glorifying Him; I am saying, “Amen! So be it to the glory of God!”

Numbers 23:19: “God is not a man that He should lie nor a son of man that He should change His mind. Does He speak and then not act? Does He promise and not fulfill?”

Joshua 23:14: “Now I am about to go the way of all the earth. You know with all your heart and soul that not one of all the good promises the Lord your God gave you has failed. Every promise has been fulfilled. Not one has failed.”

1 Kings 8:56: “Praise be to the Lord who has given rest to His people Israel, just as He promised. Not one word has failed of all the good promises He gave through His servant Moses.”

As a promise keeper, God has a perfect track record in this regard.

Verse 21: “Now He who is establishing us with you in Christ and anointed us is God,”

The first word that stands out in verse 21 is the word “establishing.” “Now He who is establishing us with you in Christ.” The foundation of our common relationship is on the Rock – even Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 3:11: “For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”

We are all in this together!

“And anointed us is God.” The anointing of the Holy Spirit is the evidence of regeneration. We are established in Christ when we receive Him by faith. We are then indwelt permanently by the Spirit of God, and the apostle uses the term “anointed” here to refer to this work of the Spirit of God.

1 Corinthians 12:13: “For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body.”

Let’s continue to worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing verse 2 of “**Jesus, I Am Resting, Resting**”: “*O, how great Thy loving kindness, Vaster, broader than the sea! O how marvelous Thy goodness, Lavished all on me! Yes, I rest in Thee, Beloved, Know what wealth of grace is Thine, Know Thy certainty of promise, And have made it mine. Jesus, I am resting, resting In the joy of what Thou art; I am finding out the greatness Of Thy loving heart.*”

November 12 — Calling God to Witness (2 Corinthians 1:22-24)

2 Corinthians 1:22: “*who also sealed us and deposited the first installment of the Spirit in our hearts.*”

2 Corinthians 1:23: “*But I am calling God as witness to my soul, that sparing you I came no more to Corinth.*”

2 Corinthians 1:24: “*Not that we are lording it over your faith, but we are workers with you for your joy; for in your faith you stand firm.*”

Verse 22: “who also sealed us and deposited the first installment of the Spirit in our hearts.”

Yesterday, we saw the two words “establishing” and “anointed,” “establishing us with you in Christ” and “anointed us is God.” Today, we see the word “sealed.” “Who also sealed us and deposited the first installment of the Spirit in our hearts.”

The fourth word we see out of these verses is “deposited.” As God did this good work in our lives of establishing us in Christ and anointing or indwelling us with the Spirit of God, sealing us by that selfsame Spirit, making it an eternal transaction and a guarantee of future destiny; He also deposited the first installment of the Spirit in our hearts.

Ephesians 1:13-14: “In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation – having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God’s own possession, the praise of His glory.”

The first installment is the *engagement ring*. There is more to follow!

We are brought into relationship with Jesus Christ. We become heirs and joint-heirs with the Lord Jesus. We have an inheritance to look forward to. And the Spirit of God is only the first installment of that inheritance. We are looked upon as the Bride of Christ, and the Spirit of God is the engagement ring. There is so much more to follow after the wedding feast.

Verse 23: “But I am calling God as witness to my soul, that sparing you I came no more to Corinth.”

God is my witness. He knows my heart. You Corinthians only look on the outside and form your own opinion and judgment. God looks on the inside. He knows my heart. You have already heard the testimony of my conscience, but now I am calling the next witness please. God is witness to my soul.

“That sparing you I came no more to Corinth.” The Corinthian church had been a real problem for the apostle Paul. One only needs to read the first epistle written to this church to understand how many problems of interpersonal conflict and party spirit were among these Corinthians.

Paul knew by his coming that he was going to have to be faithful to God and to confront and deal with these problems. And so he is pointing out that by his not coming, he was sparing them the pain of these confrontations.

Verse 24: “Not that we are lording it over your faith, but we are workers with you for your joy; for in your faith you stand firm.”

There is a negative and a positive in verse 24. He is not coming into Corinth as some pompous, pious, proud preacher to lord it over their faith. But he would be coming to Corinth, in contrast, as workers with them, for their own joy; for in their faith they stand firm.

“We are workers with you for your joy.”

At the end of chapter 15 in 1 Corinthians, we read these words in 1 Corinthians 15:58: “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.”

Please join me as we worship the Lord this morning by singing verse 3 of “**Jesus, I Am Resting, Resting**.”: “*Simply trusting Thee, Lord Jesus, I behold Thee as Thou art,*

And Thy love, so pure, so changeless, Satisfies my heart; Satisfies its deepest longings, Meets, supplies its every need, Compasseth me round with blessings: Thine is love indeed! Jesus, I am resting, resting In the joy of what Thou art; I am finding out the greatness Of Thy loving heart."

November 13 — I Am Not Coming in Sorrow (2 Corinthians 2:1-2)

2 Corinthians 2:1: *"But I decided this for my own sake, not to come again to you in sorrow."*

2 Corinthians 2:2: *"For if I am causing you grief, who then is making me glad except the one who is made to grieve by me?"*

Verse 1: "But I decided this for my own sake, not to come again to you in sorrow."

I couldn't take any more sorrow, and I decided for my own sake not to come again to you in sorrow. The apostle Paul recognized the one thing he did not need in his life at this point was more sorrow.

Whereas it was "sparing" in verse 23, it is "sorrow" in verse 1.

Verse 2: "For if I am causing you grief, who then is making me glad except the one who is made to grieve by me?"

The reason is in the form of a question. "If I am causing you grief, who then is making me glad except the one who is made to grieve by me?"

We need to move from repentance to rejoicing. As they would respond to Paul's message and grieve in conviction, it would then be that response which would make the apostle glad.

Please join me in singing verse 4 of **"Jesus, I Am Resting, Resting"**: *"Ever lift Thy face upon me As I work and wait for Thee; Resting 'neath Thy smile, Lord Jesus, Earth's dark shadows flee. Brightness of my Father's glory, Sunshine of my Father's face, Keep me ever trusting, resting, Fill me with Thy grace. Jesus, I am resting, resting In the joy of what Thou art; I am finding out the greatness Of Thy loving heart."*

November 14 — I Wrote With Many Tears (2 Corinthians 2:3-4)

2 Corinthians 2:3: *"And this is the very thing I wrote you, lest when I came I should have grief from those who ought to be making me rejoice; having confidence in you all that my joy is the joy of you all."*

2 Corinthians 2:4: *"For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you with many tears not in order that you may be made to grieve but in order that you might know the love which I am having especially for you."*

Verse 3: "And this is the very thing I wrote you, lest when I came I should have grief from those who ought to be making me rejoice; having confidence in you all that my joy is the joy of you all."

The apostle returns to what he had written them on the previous occasion. He was concerned that when he came, he would have grief from those who ought to be making him rejoice.

He has confidence in them, however, and concludes the verse with a word of affirmation: "having confidence in you all that my joy is the joy of you all."

It is obvious from that statement Paul is definitely a Southerner.

My joy would be that we are on the same page, singing the same song!

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

Paul never lost his joy! He kept his song! The joy of the Lord was his strength, and of course, joy is the first to go when there is unjudged sin in our midst. Joy is the fruit of the Spirit. Joy is also the going of the Spirit. It is manifested when we are in fellowship with the Lord.

Jesus said in John 15:11: “These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.”

Verse 4: “For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you with many tears not in order that you may be made to grieve but in order that you might know the love which I am having especially for you.”

The apostle describes his own situation as he wrote his previous letters to them. There are four things that really stand out in this verse: (1) Affliction, (2) Anguish of heart, (3) Many tears, and (4) Love.

We ask the question. Can there really be joy in the midst of this? Let’s look at the four things together.

1. “For out of much affliction” of which we have already seen recorded in the earlier part of this chapter that came upon the apostle during his ministry in Asia.
2. “Anguish of heart” – how he has been torn up inside by the lack of concern on the part of the Corinthians, their critical spirit, their carnality. It has literally wrenched the heart of the great apostle.
3. I wrote to you with “many tears.” As he wrote, he found many times the page blotted with tears. It had to be wadded up and thrown in the wastebasket and started all over again.
4. “Love.” There is a negative and a positive in the last part of verse 4. Negatively, “not in order that you may be made to grieve,” but positively, “in order that you might know the love which I am having especially for you.” It is a love that is caring enough for the Corinthians to confront and correct them.

We are told that the godly George Mueller prayed constantly:

Lord, keep me from becoming a cranky old Christian.

Let’s sing and praise the Lord with **“Jesus Is the Joy of Living.”** Join me in singing verses 1 and 3: *“I have found a wondrous Savior, Jesus Christ, The Soul’s Delight; Ev’ry blessing of His favor Fills my heart with hope so bright. Heav’nly wisdom He provides me, Grace to keep my spirit free; In His own sweet way He guides me When the path I cannot see. Jesus is the Joy of Living, He’s the King of Life to me; Unto Him my all I’m giving, His forevermore to be. I will do what He commands me, Anywhere He leads I’ll go; Jesus is the Joy of Living. He’s the dearest Friend I know.”*

November 15 — Discipline is Adequate (2 Corinthians 2:5-6)

2 Corinthians 2:5: “*But if any has caused sorrow, he has caused sorrow not to me, but in some degree - in order not to say too much - to all of you.*”

2 Corinthians 2:6: “*Sufficient for such a one is this punishment which was inflicted by the majority.*”

Verse 5: “But if any has caused sorrow, he has caused sorrow not to me, but in some degree - in order not to say too much - to all of you.”

Paul is saying: I don’t live there! I’m not so intimately involved. I don’t have to

deal with the situation day in and day out.

The proper results of disciplinary action should be:

1. Repentance
2. Reformation
3. Restoration

Paul uses a negative and positive. Negatively, “he has caused sorrow not to me,” but positively, “but in some degree - in order not to say too much - to all of you.”

The people who are really hurt in this situation are the people who are in Corinth.

Verse 6: “Sufficient for such a one is this punishment which was inflicted by the majority.”

J. Carl Laney says:

Church discipline is God’s loving plan for restoring sinning saints.

Kenneth Blanchard in his book, *The One Minute Manager*, describes the one minute reprimand:

1. Reprimand people immediately.
2. Tell people what they did wrong – be specific.
3. Tell people how you feel about what they did wrong.
4. Shake hands and let them know that you are on their side.
5. Remind them how much you value them.
6. Reaffirm that you think well of them, but not of their performance in this situation.
7. Realize that when the reprimand is over, it’s over.

“Sufficient for such a one is this punishment which was inflicted by the majority.”

It is obvious there was not a total oneness in this punishment. It was inflicted by the majority, which causes us to recognize there’s still a minority faction, which is often the case in these matters.

The verse starts with the word “sufficient.” It is a key word because human nature has a tendency to go overboard when it comes to the matter of discipline.

2 Samuel 24:14: “David said to Gad, ‘I am in deep distress. Let us fall into the hands of the Lord, for his mercy is great; but do not let me fall into the hands of men.’”

Satan delights when we go to one extreme or the other: (1) do nothing, or (2) do too much!

There are three steps Paul wants the Corinthian church to take in this situation:

1. Forgiveness
2. Comfort
3. Re-Affirmation

A most appropriate hymn for us to sing this morning in view of the subject is **“You Raise Me Up.”** Let’s sing verses 1, 2 and the chorus: *“When I am down and, oh my soul, so weary; When troubles come and my heart burdened be; Then, I am still and wait here in the silence Until you come and sit awhile with me. There is no life – no life without its hunger, Each restless heart beats so imperfectly But when you come and I am filled with wonder Sometimes, I think I glimpse eternity. You raise me up, so I can stand on mountains. You raise me up, to walk on stormy seas. I am strong, when I am on your shoulders. You raise me up... to more than I can be.”*

2 Corinthians 2:7: “So that on the contrary you should rather forgive and comfort him, lest possibly, such a person should be swallowed up (overwhelmed) by excessive grief.”

2 Corinthians 2:8: “Wherefore I am urging you to reaffirm your love for him.”

Verse 7: “So that on the contrary you should rather forgive and comfort him, lest possibly, such a person should be swallowed up (overwhelmed) by excessive grief.”

The result of their stopping the disciplinary action will be seen in verse 7 “so that on the contrary you should rather” (1) forgive and (2) comfort him.

It is forgiveness, not probation. Comfort - παρακαλέω in the Greek - means “*come along side!*” And the reason this is necessary is “lest possibly, such a person should be swallowed up by excessive grief.”

Colossians 3:21: “Fathers, do not exasperate your children, that they may not lose heart.”

Ephesians 6:4: “And, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger; but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.”

William Barclay says:

Paul’s insistence was that punishment must never drive to despair, and must never take the heart out of a man. The wrong kind of treatment often gives a man the last push into the arms of Satan. Over-severity may well drive him from the Church and its fellowship, while sympathetic amendment might well bring him in.

The questions this morning are: Where do we stand in our attitude toward repentant sinners? Do we condemn them as the self-righteous son? Or do we forgive and restore them as the loving father?

The greatest failure in church discipline is the matter of restoration. We are so quick to get on someone’s case and we just don’t let up!

The apostle has made it clear that the punishment has been sufficient, and now there needs to be a change. Since there has been a favorable response to the punishment, the responsibility of the Corinthians is to forgive and to comfort this individual “lest possibly, such a person should be swallowed up (overwhelmed) by excessive grief.”

Verse 8: “Wherefore I am urging you to reaffirm your love for him.”

In light of what I have just said, I am urging you to reaffirm your love for him.

Like the father in the prodigal son - get the robe, the ring and the shoes, and kill the fatted calf. We’re going to have a party.

Luke 15:24: “‘for this son of mine was dead, and his come to life again; he was lost, and has been found.’ And they began to be merry.”

There are four critical words in our passage. These words teach us our responsibility for restoration of relationships that have been either separated or strained by sin. The four words are:

1. Sufficient in verse 6
2. Forgive in verse 7
3. Comfort in verse 7
4. Reaffirm your love in verse 8

Let’s sing together a song that Selah has put together called “**Part The Waters**” then sing verses 2 and 3 of “**I Need Thee Every Hour**”: “*When I think I’m going under, part the waters, Lord. When I feel the waves around me, calm the sea. When I*

cry for help, oh, hear me, Lord, and hold out Your hand. Touch my life Still the raging storm in me. I need Thee ev'ry hour; Most gracious Lord; No tender voice like Thine Can peace afford. I need Thee ev'ry hour; Stay Thou near by; Temptations lose their pow'r When Thou art nigh. I need Thee; O, I need Thee; Ev'ry hour I need Thee! O bless me now, my Saviour, I come to Thee."

November 17 — Obedience is a Priority (2 Corinthians 2:9-10)

2 Corinthians 2:9: *"For to this end also I wrote in order that I might put you to the test, whether you are obedient in all things."*

2 Corinthians 2:10: *"But whom you are forgiving anything, I also am forgiving; for indeed what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, I have forgiven it for your sakes in the presence of Christ."*

Verse 9: "For to this end also I wrote in order that I might put you to the test, whether you are obedient in all things."

The reason they are to recognize the punishment is sufficient, to forgive, to comfort, and to reaffirm their love for this sinning brother is given in verse 9: "to this end also I wrote." My purpose in writing was "in order that I might put you to the test."

I wanted to see if you were real. I wanted to see if you are committed to the Lord.

The key phrase in verse 9 is: I wanted to see "whether you are obedient in all things." I wanted to see if you were doing the difficult. It is so easy to *pick* and *choose* in the realm of obedience, to *forget* some areas and to *try* to be obedient in others. This only leads to *frustration*.

The key to blessing is obedience in all things. God is in the business of blessing the obedient heart.

James 1:22: "But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves."

Verse 10: "But whom you are forgiving anything, I also am forgiving; for indeed what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, I have forgiven it for your sakes in the presence of Christ."

The words "forgiven" and "forgiving" are found five times in this particular verse. The apostle recognizes the whole problem centers around not only receiving forgiveness, but one of the big problems is being willing to grant forgiveness in the presence of Christ.

It was the Lord Jesus who was being nailed to the cross who prayed that classic prayer: "Father, forgive them for they are not knowing what they are doing."

Lewis B. Smedes in his book, *Forgive and Forget*, says:

When you forgive someone for hurting you, you perform spiritual surgery inside your soul; you cut away the wrong that was done to you so that you can see your "enemy" through the magic eyes that can heal your soul. Detach that person from the hurt and let it go, the way a child opens his hands and lets a trapped butterfly go free.

Then invite that person back into your mind, fresh, as if a piece of history between you had been rewritten, its grip on your memory broken. Reverse the seemingly irreversible flow of pain within you.

Then, do all of this in the presence of Christ.

How would you feel, sitting with the person you are unwilling to forgive at this

moment, and the Lord Jesus is sitting there with you – what is it you think He would want you to do in those circumstances?

The Greek word for “forgiveness” in scripture has the picture of carrying a huge pot of issues, and the word means “*let the pot drop*,” it means “*to send away*,” it means “*to release*.”

Please join me in worship as we sing verses 1 and 3 of “**His Eye Is on the Sparrow**”: “*Why should I feel discouraged, Why should the shadows come, Why should my heart be lonely And long for Heav’n and home When Jesus is my portion? My constant friend is He: His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me. Whenever I am tempted, Whenever clouds arise, When songs give place to sighing, When hope within me dies, I draw the closer to Him, From care He sets me free; His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me; I sing because I’m happy, I sing because I’m free, For His eye is on the sparrow, And I know He watches me.*”

November 18 — Satan and His Schemes (2 Corinthians 2:11)

2 Corinthians 2:11: “*In order that no advantage may be gained over us by Satan for we are not ignorant of his schemes.*”

Verse 11: “In order that no advantage may be gained over us by Satan for we are not ignorant of his schemes.”

The purpose for recognizing the discipline is sufficient; the purpose behind forgiving, comforting, and reaffirming their love; the purpose behind being obedient in all things; and the purpose behind forgiving in the presence of Christ is “in order that no advantage may be gained over us by Satan.”

Plummer translates verse 11 in the following way: “Satan is always on the watch to get an advantage over us. He did get an advantage when he caused this member of our body to sin so grievously. Are we to let him have another advantage over a sinner that has repented?”

The focus of the passage is on forgiveness. We see the word occur six times in these brief verses. Satan certainly has had a heyday in Corinth. He has had an advantage with the previous problems in the church there.

It is good for us to ask the question: How does he get advantage? And I note there are four ways that just come from this passage:

1. Over punishing – never allowing grace and love to return
2. Failing to forgive
3. Withholding comfort and love
4. Disobedience in some area of life

“In order that no advantage may be gained over us.” Paul includes himself here. He knows he is just as vulnerable as the saints in Corinth for Satan to get an advantage over.

We need to recognize and accept the fact we are in a real warfare. Satan is very real, and he does desire to get advantage over us. He will use any of numerous strategies and schemes to put us out of operation and render ineffective our lives and ministries. He has a game plan and wants to win!

Jesus says to Peter in Luke 22:31-32: “Simon, Simon, behold Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And you, once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.”

James 4:7: “Submit therefore to God, resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”

1 Peter 5:8-9: “Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world.”

2 Corinthians 12:7: “And because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, to buffet me – to keep me from exalting myself.”

The apostle says the reason I am suggesting you restore this sinning brother through forgiveness is “in order that no advantage may be gained over us by Satan for we are not ignorant of his schemes.”

We ask ourselves the question: What are some of his schemes? I have found seven that describe some of his numerous plans:

1. Division
2. Disobedience
3. Discouragement
4. Distance (withhold comfort and love)
5. Damage (both individual and corporate)
6. Deception
7. Distortion (makes worse and bigger, and distorts the Word of God)

Satan loves (1) to frustrate, (2) to fascinate, (3) to cause the believer to live in the world of fantasy, and (4) to believe the finality of failure. These are all parts of his schemes to destroy the life and ministry of the believer.

Ray Stedman says:

It is Satan who keeps bringing back to your mind the hurts of the past; he keeps interjecting them back into a situation. He is trying to get hold of you through the situation and wreak havoc with you and your loved ones.

John in his first epistle says, “Greater is He that is in us, than he that is in the world.”

Let’s sing together that wonderful hymn, “**Be Still, My Soul.**” We’ll sing verses 1 and 2: *“Be still, my soul: the Lord is on thy side; Bear patiently the cross of grief or pain. Leave to thy God to order and provide; In ev’ry change, He faithful will remain. Be still, my soul: thy best, thy heavenly Friend Thro’ thorny ways leads to a joyful end. Be still, my soul: thy God doth undertake To guide the future as He has the past. Thy hope, thy confidence let nothing shake; All now mysterious shall be bright at last. Be still, my soul: the waves and winds still know His voice Who ruled them while He dwelt below.”*

November 19 — No Rest for my Spirit (2 Corinthians 2:12-13)

2 Corinthians 2:12: “Now having come to Troas for the gospel of Christ and a door having been opened for me in the Lord,”

2 Corinthians 2:13: “I have had no rest for my spirit, not finding Titus my brother; but having bidden them farewell, I went on to Macedonia.”

Verse 12: “Now having come to Troas for the gospel of Christ and a door having been opened for me in the Lord,”

As the scene of our study opens this morning, it is a time of gloom as far as the

apostle is concerned. He believes the worse and feels he has possibly experienced a defeat in the city of Corinth. He has not heard anything from Titus, and his spirit has no rest as he anxiously awaits the response to his letters to the Corinthian church.

The word “now” gives us transition into the latter part of this second chapter. Paul left Ephesus and headed toward Troas, where he had made arrangements to meet Titus on his return trip from Corinth and the delivery of his letter. Troas is 183 miles north-west of Ephesus, so it has been a good trip.

Verse 12 concludes by saying: “and a door having been opened for me in the Lord.” When he got there, he found a great opportunity for ministry.

1. Encouragement and affirmation
2. Eager to learn
3. Excited about growth
4. Enthusiastic about spiritual things.

You could actually say the door has been opened for the apostle Paul for ministry in Troas, both in the Lord and by the Lord.

Verse 13: “I have had no rest for my spirit, not finding Titus my brother; but having bidden them farewell, I went on to Macedonia.”

“I have had no rest for my spirit.” Paul, start practicing some of your own stuff! Philippians 4:6-7: “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

We learn out of this chapter in 2:4: “For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you with many tears not in order that you may be made to grieve but in order that you might know the love which I am having especially for you.” There is really no inconsistency because Paul has no problem of inner turmoil with regard to his own relationship with the Lord. This inner turmoil and concern he is facing right now is for the spiritual condition of others in the city of Corinth.

Galatians 4:19: “My children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you.”

2 Corinthians 11:28: “Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure upon me of concern for all the churches.”

Paul was certainly not ignorant with regard to the schemes and strategies of the devil, and he was much aware of the fact he was in the battle for the souls of men.

He couldn’t concentrate on his work in Troas because his mind was on Corinth. Paul was concerned about Titus. The tension in his spirit intensified because Titus did not rendezvous with him in Troas as they had previously planned. Whenever there is a delay, we always believe the worst!

“I have had no rest for my spirit, not finding Titus my brother.” Paul evidently met the boat in Troas, but Titus wasn’t on it so Paul assumes he was killed in Corinth.

“But having bidden them farewell, I went on to Macedonia.” Paul rolled up the scroll, packed his bag and booked passage.

Ecclesiastes 3:11: “He has made everything beautiful in its time.”

I want to invite you to join me in singing verses 1 and 2 of **“In His Time”**: *“In His time, in His time; He makes all things beautiful in His time. Lord, please show me ev’ry day As You’re teaching me Your way, That You do just what You say In Your time.*

In Your time, in Your time; You make all things beautiful in Your time. Lord, my life to You I bring; May each song I have to sing Be to You a lovely thing In Your time. "

November 20 — Triumph in Christ (2 Corinthians 2:14)

2 Corinthians 2:14: *"But thanks be to God who is always leading us in His triumph in Christ and is making known through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place."*

Verse 14: "But thanks be to God who is always leading us in His triumph in Christ and is making known through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place."

How it blesses the heart of God for us to say "Thanks!" It is a God thing!

Obviously, between verses 13 and 14, Paul and Titus have gotten together and Paul has received a very good report from the city of Corinth. He is so overjoyed he has left out the meeting with Titus at this point in his writing.

There are two key phrases in verse 14: (1) "leading" and (2) "making known." "But thanks be to God who is always leading us in His triumph." There is a victory that has been won in Corinth. You will notice he is "always leading in triumph." It is not sporadic.

We just have to keep on letting Him lead because He knows where He's going and what He wants to accomplish!

The hymn writer had it right when he said:

*From vict'ry unto vict'ry His army shall He lead,
Till ev'ry foe is vanquished, And Christ is Lord indeed.*

Remembering "leading" and "making known." When He is the one who is leading, He will lead in ultimate victory "and is making known through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place."

It is God who is making known the message *through* us. The apostle says we are simply instruments in His hands to be used to make known the message of Jesus Christ.

He is "making known through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him." The sweet aroma of Christ is that which smells good. It is a fragrance, a sweet smell of deliverance.

Plummer translates verse 14 by saying: "But God be thanked, all has turned out for the best. God has always led us along in His triumphal train with Christ, using us as His instruments to diffuse the sweet odor of His gospel in every place."

Let's worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing verse 1 of **"Near to the Heart of God"**: *"There is a place of quiet rest, Near to the heart of God, A place where sin cannot molest, Near to the heart of God. O Jesus, blest Redeemer; Sent from the heart of God, Hold us, who wait before Thee, Near to the heart of God."*

November 21 — A Fragrance of Christ (2 Corinthians 2:15-16)

2 Corinthians 2:15: *"Because we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing;"*

2 Corinthians 2:16: *"to the one an aroma from death to death, and to the other an aroma from life to life. And who is qualified for these things?"*

Verse 15: "Because we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are be-

ing saved and among those who are perishing;”

“We are a fragrance of Christ to God.” The apostle Paul chooses to use a sacrificial word that speaks of the laying down of life, a fragrance might ascend to the nostrils of our Father.

Just as the flask of perfume is broken and the fragrance fills the air, the same is true of our lives. As we are broken before Him, the fragrance of the inner person fills the air.

Spending time with Jesus allows a sweet and pleasing fragrance to begin to come forth from our lives. Fragrance acceptable to God the Father exudes from our lives as we spend prolonged periods of time in His presence. It is the fragrance of Christ to God that is coming forth from our lives.

This fragrance exuding from our lives is the foundation of our witness. It is a fragrance that comes forth among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. The same fragrance spells *salvation* and *liberation* for one, but *death* and *defeat* for the other. Just like Joseph was in the prison with the cupbearer and the baker; the cupbearer was delivered and the baker was executed.

Jesus hung on a cross between two thieves. One heard the answer, “Today, you will be with me in Paradise.” The other never did respond and went out to his own doom and eternal darkness.

Verse 16: “to the one an aroma from death to death, and to the other an aroma from life to life. And who is qualified for these things?”

The apostle ends verse 16 with a question: “And who is qualified for these things?” The answer to this question is none of us are qualified if we make reference to the previous verses. It is God who is “leading us in His triumph,” and it is God who is “making known through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him (Christ) in every place.”

Won’t you join me in singing verses 2 and 3 of “**Near to the Heart of God**”?

“There is a place of comfort sweet, Near to the heart of God, A place where we our Saviour meet, Near to the heart of God. There is a place of full release, Near to the heart of God, A place where all is joy and peace, Near to the heart of God. O Jesus, blest Redeemer, Sent from the heart of God, Hold us, who wait before Thee, Near to the heart of God.”

November 22 — As From God We Are Speaking (2 Corinthians 2:17)

2 Corinthians 2:17: “*For we are not like the many who are peddling the word of God, but out of pure motives (sincerity), but as from God we are speaking in Christ in the sight of God.*”

Verse 17: “For we are not like the many who are peddling the word of God, but out of pure motives (sincerity), but as from God we are speaking in Christ in the sight of God.”

Here is the reason why the apostle Paul asks the question, “Who is qualified for these things?” - “For we are not like the many who are peddling the word of God.”

God has done a good work in the apostle’s life. He is not just peddling his wares and presenting the word of God. The word of God has worked in his life, and the indwelling Spirit is conforming him more in the image of Christ. Paul is not just a mouthpiece speaking the word of God.

The life is backing up the lip. We read: “but out of pure motives (sincerity), but as from God we are speaking in Christ in the sight of God.” Our motives are pure and our message is from God.

2 Chronicles 16:9: “For the eyes of the Lord range through the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to Him.”

Please join me in singing “**Lead On, O King Eternal.**” We’ll sing verses 1 and 3: “*Lead on, O King Eternal, The day of march has come; Henceforth in fields of conquest Your tents shall be our home, Through days of preparation Your grace has made us strong, And now, O King Eternal, We lift our battle song. Lead on, O King Eternal, We follow, not with fears; For gladness breaks like morning Where’er Your face appears; Your cross is lifted o’er us; We journey in its light: The crown awaits the conquest; Lead on, O God of might.*”

November 23 — You Are Our Letter (2 Corinthians 3:1-2)

2 Corinthians 3:1: “*Are we beginning again to be commending ourselves? Or, we are not needing, as some, letters of commendation to you or from you, are we?*”

2 Corinthians 3:2: “*You are our letter, which has been engraved in our hearts, which is being known and read by all men;*”

Verse 1: “Are we beginning again to be commending ourselves? Or, we are not needing, as some, letters of commendation to you or from you, are we?”

It is quite obvious as we get into chapter 3 the apostle is still dealing with some of the criticisms of the apostle and his ministry.

There are two questions in verse 1 to bring to the surface the attitudes of those in Corinth. We had a similar situation back in chapter 1:17: “Therefore having this desire, I was not vacillating, was I? Or that which I am purposing, am I purposing according to the flesh, that with me there should be yes, yes and no, no at the same time?”

Questions #1: **Are we beginning again to be commending ourselves?** The apostle has just spoken of the triumph of the gospel and the victory in the latter part of chapter 2. In his thinking, Paul can hear the Corinthians saying, “Here we go again.” Are we going to have to go back to square 1 in our relationship? Everything we did during the eighteen months we were in Corinth doesn’t count?

Question #2: **Or, we are not needing, as some, letters of commendation to you or from you?** Do we have to defend our position (1) by our word or (2) by the word of others?

Evidently, some of the critics in Corinth were requesting Paul get some letters of recommendation from Peter, James, John or one of the other apostles before coming again. It is just incredible they would have this critical spirit toward the apostle and his ministry in even suggesting this recommendation since Paul had led many of these Corinthians to Jesus Christ.

Verse 2: “You are our letter, which has been engraved in our hearts, which is being known and read by all men;”

You, Corinthians, are our letter. If we ever need any letter of recommendation, the work that has gone on in the city of Corinth is adequate recommendation for our ministry, and this letter has been engraved in our hearts.

These thoughts cause us to return to chapter 2:4: “For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you with many tears not in order that you may be made

to grieve but in order that you might know the love which I am having especially for you.”

His unconditional love for them is incredible!

“You are our letter, which has been engraved in our hearts.”

William Barclay talks about calling on a dying friend:

I did not know I was not to see him again, and as I left his bedroom, he put his hand on mine and said: “Willie, when I die, they’ll find your name written on my heart.”

Paul feels the same way about the Corinthians.

Jesus in the Upper Room just before Calvary said in John 13:34-35: “A new commandment I give to you: That you love one another. Even as I have loved you that you love one another. By this, all men will know that you are My disciples if you have love for another.”

Let’s worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing verses 1 and 2 of **“More About Jesus”**: *“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. More, more about Jesus, More, more about Jesus; More of His saving fullness see, More of His love who died for me.”*

November 24 — You Are a Letter of Christ (2 Corinthians 3:3-4)

2 Corinthians 3:3: *“who are openly being shown that you are a letter of Christ, having been cared for by us, not having been written with ink, but, with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone, but on tablets of human hearts.”*

2 Corinthians 3:4: *“And such confidence we are having through Christ toward God.”*

Verse 3: “who are openly being shown that you are a letter of Christ, having been cared for by us, not having been written with ink, but, with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone, but on tablets of human hearts.”

All men are openly being shown that you are a letter of Christ – a letter of Christ that has been engraved on our hearts.

The apostle uses the phrase “having been cared for by us.” How do you do this? How were the Corinthians cared for by the apostle Paul’s team? Here are three answers to that question:

1. to meet their needs
2. to minister the word
3. to make intercession

You could say (1) to provide, (2) to preach, and (3) to pray.

In the apostle Paul’s argument in these verses, he uses a series of four negative and positive statements:

1. The first ones are used in verse 3. Negatively, “not having been written with ink,” but positively, “with the Spirit of the living God.” This wasn’t the kind of letter to be written with ink, but it was written with the Spirit of the living God upon the human heart.

It is the Spirit of God who brings and gives life and who indwells the heart of the believer and who is the central member of the Trinity involved in the new birth.

2. The second negative and positive statements are in the latter part of verse 3. Negatively, “not on tablets of stone” like the Ten Commandments, but positively, “on tablets of human hearts.”

William Barclay speaks very personally about his wife:

I do not know how Kate has put up with me for forty years. All I know is that I have been cared for and protected for all my days with a care and a protection which no man could deserve, and for which no thanks are adequate, and which I can only acknowledge. One of the greatest sins in life is to take things for granted. I said that Kate did not read my books. I hope that she will read this one, for I want her to know, and I want everyone to know, that without her life for me would be impossible.

Verse 4: “And such confidence we are having through Christ toward God.”

In this verse, we get the answer to the question asked back in chapter 2:16: “And who is qualified for these things?” The answer being “And such confidence we are having through Christ toward God.”

One is reminded of Philippians 4:13: “I am ready for anything through the strength of the One who indwells me.”

Please join me in worship as we sing verses 3 and 4 of **“More About Jesus”**:

“More about Jesus in His Word, Holding communion with my Lord; Hearing His voice in ev’ry line, Making each faithful saying mine. More about Jesus on His throne, Riches in glory all His own; More of His kingdom’s sure increase; More of His coming, Prince of Peace. More, more about Jesus, More, more about Jesus; More of His saving fulness see, More of His love who died for me.”

November 25 — Our Adequacy is From God (2 Corinthians 3:5-6)

2 Corinthians 3:5: “Not that we are adequate in ourselves to evaluate anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God.”

2 Corinthians 3:6: “Who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter, but of the Spirit; for the letter is killing, but the Spirit is giving life.”

Verse 5: “Not that we are adequate in ourselves to evaluate anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God.”

3. These are the third negative and positive statements in this passage. (We saw two of them yesterday in the previous verses.) Negatively, “Not that we are adequate in ourselves to evaluate anything as coming from ourselves,” but positively, “our adequacy is from God.”

John 15:5: “I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing.”

John 12:24-25: “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains by itself alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. He who loves his life loses it; and he who hates his life in this world shall keep it to life eternal.”

David in the Valley of Elah facing Goliath the giant said in 1 Samuel 17:47: “All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the Lord saves; for the battle is the Lord’s, and He will give all of you into our hands.”

Hezekiah facing the army of Assyria says in 2 Chronicles 32:7-8: “Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or discouraged because of the king of Assyria and the

vast army with him, for there is a greater power with us than with him. With him is only the arm of flesh, but with us is the Lord our God to help us and to fight our battles.' And the people gained confidence from what Hezekiah the king of Judah said."

Dr. Stanley Jones was having a spiritual retreat for growth and said, "No one will see what you are about to write on this paper. I want you to write what your need is today." A woman said, "I don't have a need. What do you write down if you don't have a need?" Dr. Stanley said, "If you think you don't have a need, then that is your need."

If you're too proud (or too afraid) to admit you are hurting, don't be surprised if nobody seems to care.

"But our adequacy is from God." We see this in His Strength. The source is His Spirit and the Sword is the Scriptures.

Verse 6: "Who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter, but of the Spirit; for the letter is killing, but the Spirit is giving life."

How do you make adequate servants? I have four answers to that question:

1. By Example. Jesus did this by the words He spoke and the works He performed.

For instance, His words in Mark 10:45: "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many."

Then by His works as we see in John 13:4-5: "(He) arose from supper, and laid aside His garments; and taking a towel, girded Himself about. Then He poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded."

2. By Experience. The Lord gave them many opportunities to demonstrate their acts of service through ministry that He performed during the times He was with them.
3. By Exhortation. He made it clear that it's the servants who are the chief among them.
4. By Encouragement. Everyone has a gift and a job to do.

The Christian Life is like a game of tennis: the person who serves well seldom loses.

4. The apostle describes this new covenant with the fourth negative and positive statements. Negatively, "Not of the letter," but positively, "of the Spirit." In other words, it's not of the letter of the Law, but of the work of the Holy Spirit, as we read back in verse 3.

"For the letter is killing, but the Spirit is giving life." Life is always a gift. You didn't acquire it or earn it, God gave it to you.

John 6:63: "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life."

No one has ever been given life by keeping the Law, only in breaking life in prison.

Let's express our worship and praise by singing one of Stuart Hamblen's famous songs, "**It Is No Secret.**" Let's sing both verses 1 and 2: "*The chimes of time ring out the news, another day is through, Someone slipped and fell, Was that someone you? You may have longed for added strength, Your courage to renew, Do not be disheartened, For I bring hope to you. There is no night, for in His light you'll never walk alone, Always feel at home wherever you may roam. There is no power can conquer you, While God is on your side, Just take Him at His promise, Don't runaway and hide.*"

It is no secret what God can do, What He's done for others, He'll do for you. With arms wide open, He'll pardon you, It is no secret, What God can do."

November 26 — Ministry of the Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:7-8)

2 Corinthians 3:7: *"But if the ministry of death, which has been engraved by means of letters on stones, came with glory, so that the sons of Israel were not able to look intently at the face of Moses because of the glory of his face, fading as it was,"*

2 Corinthians 3:8: *"how shall the ministry of the Spirit fail to be even more with glory?"*

Verse 7: "But if the ministry of death, which has been engraved by means of letters on stones, came with glory, so that the sons of Israel were not able to look intently at the face of Moses because of the glory of his face, fading as it was,"

Paul points out the ministry of death, or the giving of the Law, which had been engraved by means of letters on stones, came with glory. The result of that glory was the sons of Israel were not able to look intently at the face of Moses because of the glory of his face, fading as it was.

Ironsides says:

OH, THE GLORY OF HIS GRACE
SHINING IN THE SAVIOUR'S FACE,
TELLING SINNERS FROM ABOVE,
GOD IS LIGHT, AND GOD IS LOVE.

The picture is of the veil covering the inevitable - the fading radiance on Moses' face. John 3:30: "He must increase, but I must decrease."

The Law = physical life. We are on a slow fade. The Spirit = spiritual life. The glory keeps getting greater and greater.

Verse 8: "how shall the ministry of the Spirit fail to be even more with glory?"

This verse contains a question: "how shall the ministry of the Spirit fail to be even more with glory?" The word "glory" occurs ten times in this passage. After the question is raised, there are three reasons given. Verses 9, 10, and 11 all begin with the word "for" with those reasons.

Let's express this glory as we worship and praise our Savior this morning by singing **"O That Will Be Glory."** Let's sing verse 1: *"When all my labors and trials are o'er, And I am safe on that beautiful shore, Just to be near the dear Lord I adore, Will thro' the ages be glory for me. O that will be glory for me, Glory for me, glory for me; When by His grace I shall look on His face, That will be glory, be glory for me."*

November 27 — Ministry of Righteousness (2 Corinthians 3:9-11)

2 Corinthians 3:9: *"For if the ministry of condemnation has glory, much more is the ministry of righteousness abounding in glory."*

2 Corinthians 3:10: *"For indeed what had glory, in his case has no glory on account of the glory that is surpassing it."*

2 Corinthians 3:11: *"For if that which is fading away was with glory, much more that which is remaining is in glory."*

Verse 9: "For if the ministry of condemnation has glory, much more is the ministry of righteousness abounding in glory."

The word “more” occurs in verse 8: “how shall the ministry of the Spirit fail to be even more with glory?” and the words “much more” are seen in verse 9.

The Law is given as a ministry of condemnation, and the ministry of the Spirit is the ministry of righteousness. The ministry of the Spirit is abounding in glory.

Verse 10: “For indeed what had glory, in his case (he is making reference to the Law) has no glory on account of the glory that is surpassing it.”

“For indeed (the apostle uses an exclamation here) what had glory, in his case has no glory on account of the glory that is surpassing it.” In essence, Paul says, there is no glory in comparison to the glory of the gospel.

The lesser light of the moon and stars fades into insignificance with the glorious rising of the sun.

Romans 8:18: “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.”

Revelation 19:6-7: “And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude and as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty peals of thunder, saying, ‘Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready.’”

Verse 11: “For if that which is fading away was with glory, much more that which is remaining is in glory.”

“If that which is fading” is the glory of the Law spoken of back in verse 7 (because of the glory of his face, fading as it was). “That which is fading away was with glory” is the Law. Once again, we have the use of the words “much more” as we did back in verse 9 (and “more” in verse 8).

“That which is remaining is in glory.” This references the gospel of Jesus Christ and the new covenant Paul spoke of back in verse 6, the covenant which is not of the letter, but of the Spirit.

There are several contrasts between law and grace that are given in these verses:

- Whereas the law is by the letter, grace is by the Spirit
- The law is killing, grace is giving life
- In the law is death, in grace is the Spirit
- The law is condemnation, grace is righteousness
- The law is fading away, grace is remaining

Let’s conclude our meditation this morning by singing verses 2 and 3 of **“O That Will Be Glory”**: *“When by the gift of His infinite grace, I am accorded in heaven a place, Just to be there and to look on His face, Will thro’ the ages be glory for me. Friends will be there I have loved long ago; Joy like a river around me will flow; Yet, just a smile from my Savior, I know, Will thro’ the ages be glory for me. O that will be glory for me, Glory for me, glory for me; When by His grace I shall look on His face, That will be glory, be glory for me.”*

November 28 — Our Hope is an Anchor (2 Corinthians 3:12-13)

2 Corinthians 3:12: *“Having therefore such a hope, we are using great boldness in our speech,”*

2 Corinthians 3:13: *“and not even as Moses, who was putting a veil over his face that the sons of Israel might not look intently at the end of what was fading away.”*

Verse 12: “Having therefore such a hope, we are using great boldness in our speech,”

Romans 15:13: “Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing that you may be abounding in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

“Having therefore such a hope,” we ask ourselves the question: *What hope?* The answer is “the glory of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

The hymn writer says it well:

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.

“Having therefore such a hope, we are using great boldness in our speech.”

Acts 4:31: “And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak the word of God with boldness.”

The opposite of boldness would be tentative, uncertain or unsure. The fact they are speaking in boldness means they are confident and assured. There is a certainty in what they have to say.

It does what it says it will. It works. They are sold on what they are doing.

Verse 13: “and not even as Moses, who was putting a veil over his face that the sons of Israel might not look intently at the end of what was fading away.”

Paul points out we are not like Moses who was putting a veil over his face for the purpose “that the sons of Israel might not look intently at the end of what was fading away.” He couldn’t speak with boldness because he was losing the glory. He was fading fast and trying to cover it.

We are not trying to hide something that is diminishing. The glory of the gospel grows and glows with greater intensity.

The purpose of this veil is stated in the last part of verse 13: “that the sons of Israel might not look intently at the end of what was fading away.” Moses was trying to cover the fading glory of the Law with the veil. It is like rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic for a better view. We are still going down!

The Law was not designed to get it done. It can’t cut it when it comes to life and it only brings death. It is dumb to live by the Law because God doesn’t grade on the curve.

What are the veils (masks) we wear?

1. Adequacy – Great! Go for it! I’ve got it together!
2. Acting – Trying to be somebody else
3. Arrogance – Self-righteous, sinless

Romans 3:19-20: “Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, that every mouth may be closed, and all the world may become accountable to God; because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.”

Let’s sing verse 1 of **“O to Be Like Thee”**: *“O to be like Thee! Blessed Redeemer, This is my constant longing and prayer; Gladly I’ll forfeit all of earth’s treasures, Jesus Thy perfect likeness to wear. O to be like Thee! O to be like Thee, Blessed Redeemer, pure as Thou art! Come in Thy sweetness, come in Thy fullness; Stamp Thine*

own image deep on my heart.”

November 29 — Hardened Hearts (2 Corinthians 3:14-15)

2 Corinthians 3:14: “*But their minds were hardened; for until this very day at the reading of the old covenant the same veil is remaining unlifted, because it is being removed in Christ.*”

2 Corinthians 3:15: “*But even today, whenever Moses is being read, a veil is laying over their heart;*”

Verse 14: “But their minds were hardened; for until this very day at the reading of the old covenant the same veil is remaining unlifted, because it is being removed in Christ.”

Whereas the apostle Paul focuses on “we” in verse 12, he is focusing on “their” in verse 14. “But (in contrast) their minds were hardened.” When we think of minds that are hardened, we think of minds which are calloused.

Mark 3:5: “And after looking around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, He said to the man, ‘Stretch out your hand.’ And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored.

We not only think of a *callus*, we think of *clay* which has been put in the furnace and made hard, or *concrete* that has been mixed and allowed to set, becoming hard. So the *callus*, the *clay* and the *concrete* all characterize the minds of the sons of Israel.

To have minds that are hardened means I don’t want to be confused with the facts, my mind is already made up. It is a manifestation of being unteachable. It is a mind which will receive no new truth, set in its ways, and built on traditions.

“But their minds were hardened;” – the reason: “for until this very day at the reading of the old covenant the same veil is remaining.”

1 Corinthians 2:14: “But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.”

They reject the Remover.

When Christ died upon the cross, the veil was torn from top to bottom, and we come by a new and living way.

Verse 15: “But even today, whenever Moses is being read, a veil is laying over their heart;”

We learn their minds are hardened and their hearts are covered.

Let’s worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing verses 2 and 3 of “**O to Be Like Thee**”: “*O to be like Thee! Full of compassion, Loving, forgiving, tender and kind; Helping the helpless, cheering the fainting, Seeking the wand’ring sinner to find. O to be like Thee! Lowly in spirit, Holy and harmless, patient and brave; Meekly enduring cruel reproaches, Willing to suffer others to save. O to be like Thee! O to be like Thee, Blessed Redeemer, pure as Thou art! Come in Thy sweetness, come in Thy fullness; Stamp Thine own image deep on my heart.*”

November 30 — There is Liberty (2 Corinthians 3:16-17)

2 Corinthians 3:16: “*but whenever a man turns to the Lord, the veil is being taken away*”

2 Corinthians 3:17: “*Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord*

is, *there is liberty.*”

Verse 16: “but whenever a man turns to the Lord, the veil is being taken away”

God is always facing toward us for reconciliation, and it is man who must turn to the Lord. This is graphically seen in the parable of the prodigal son as the young man comes to his senses and turns toward his father.

The word “*conversion*” means “*to turn around,*” and whenever a man turns to the Lord, “the veil is being taken away.”

Verse 17: “Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.”

It is the Spirit who brings conviction to our hearts. First of all, of sin to convince us of our need, then to show us the righteousness of Jesus Christ, and finally, the judgment or the consequences of rejecting Him as Savior.

“Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.”

John 8:32: “And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

What does it mean: “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty”? Perhaps this could mean one of three things:

1. It is a liberty since we have new life in Christ.
2. It is a liberty in that we are free from the Law and the shackles of sin and death.
3. It is liberty because we are able to behold His face, something Israel could not do.

Hebrews 10:19-20: “Since therefore, brethren, we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh.”

Let’s sing verses 4 and 5 as we worship the Lord this morning of “**O to Be Like Thee**”: *“O to be like Thee! Lord, I am coming Now to receive th’ anointing divine; All that I am and have I am bringing, Lord, from this moment all shall be Thine. O to be like Thee! While I am pleading, Pour out Thy Spirit, fill with Thy love; Make me a temple meet for Thy dwelling, Fit me for life and heaven above. O to be like Thee! O to be like Thee, Blessed Redeemer, pure as Thou art! Come in Thy sweetness, come in Thy fullness; Stamp Thine own image deep on my heart.”*

DECEMBER

December 1 — From Glory to Glory (2 Corinthians 3:18)

2 Corinthians 3:18: “*But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.*”

Verse 18: “But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.”

The word “but” forms a contrast, and the words “we all” also forms a contrast between the words “their” in verse 14 and in verse 15: “their minds” were hardened and “their hearts” are covered. Now the focus is upon “we all.”

“We all, with unveiled face.” As Christians, the veil has been removed in Christ. Whenever we turn to the Lord, the veil is taken away. With unveiled face – that’s what it means to be free! “We all with unveiled face beholding.”

The word back in verse 13 was “look intently.” Now it is “beholding the glory of the Lord.” We are beholding the glory of the Lord. By beholding, we recognize who He is, why He came, and what we have in Him.

Isaiah 60:5: “Then you will look and be radiant; your heart will throb and swell with joy;”

1 John 3:2-3: “Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, if He should appear, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is. And every one who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.”

“But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed.” We need to realize it is *transformation by contemplation*. It is not *imitation*, but *transformation*.

How do we behold Him?

1. In the written word
2. Focus on His person

Let’s hear A.W. Tozer pray:

O Lord, I have heard a good word inviting me to look away to Thee and be satisfied. My heart longs to respond, but sin has clouded my vision till I see Thee but dimly. Be pleased to cleanse me in Thine own precious blood, and make me inwardly pure, so that I may with unveiled eyes gaze upon Thee all the days of my earthly pilgrimage. Then shall I be prepared to behold Thee in full splendor in the day when Thou shalt appear and be glorified in Thy saints and admired in all them that believe. Amen.

Chip Ingram says:

What we are talking about is a metamorphosis of the heart that grows out of a love relationship with Jesus, and is empowered by grace and appropriated by faith.

I find myself already humming the tune of “**Battle Hymn of the Republic**.” Let us sing together verses 1 and 4: *“Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord; He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored; He hath loosed the fateful lightning of His terrible swift sword; His truth is marching on. In the beauty of the lilies, Christ was born across the sea, With a glory in His bosom that transfigures you and me; As He died to make men holy, let us live to make men free, While God is marching on. Glory! Glory, hallelujah! Glory! Glory, hallelujah! Glory! Glory, hallelujah! Our God is marching on.”*

December 2 — A Ministry of Truth (2 Corinthians 4:1-2)

2 Corinthians 4:1: *“Therefore since we are having this ministry, even as we were favored with mercy, we are not losing heart.”*

2 Corinthians 4:2: *“But we have renounced the things hidden because of shame, not walking around in craftiness or adulterating the word of God, but by the manifestation of truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.”*

Verse 1: “Therefore since we are having this ministry, even as we were favored with mercy, we are not losing heart.”

“Therefore” points us back to chapter 3:18, our verse from yesterday: “But we all with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being trans-

formed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.”

It is *transformation by contemplation*.

In view of this transforming ministry, we have a reason for living. We have a reason for going on. We have a reason for rejoicing. “Even as we were favored with mercy.” We are having this ministry and are favored with mercy.

Positively, “we are having this ministry,” then negatively, “we are not losing heart.”

We are not discouraged. We are not quitters when the difficult times come. Remembering we have been given this special ministry keeps us from discouragement. This ministry gives us something to live for, something to be excited about, something that makes us feel useful.

Verse 2: “But we have renounced the things hidden because of shame, not walking around in craftiness or adulterating the word of God, but by the manifestation of truth, commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.”

In the process of transformation, some things have to go! We note three things in the first part of verse 2:

1. We have renounced the things hidden because of shame.

A decision has to be made. The nerve has to be severed. The sin must be put away. This is deliberate action; renounce the things hidden because of shame.

2. Not walking around in craftiness.

This is subtly deceitful, sly or cunning.

Whereas we see “compromise” in the word “renounced,” and “craftiness” in the conduct; the third focuses on “confusion.”

3. Or adulterating the word of God.

How do you do this? By taking verses out of context, by avoiding any look at sin and judgment in the word of God, and by rationalizing away passages dealing with a specific problem of sin.

Some people have an awful skinny Bible!

Paul tells us to (1) cut, (2) come clean, and (3) be clear. When you do this, you commend yourself to every man’s conscience.

Let’s worship and praise our Savior this morning by singing verses 1 and 2 of **“Nothing Between”**: *“Nothing between my soul and my Savior, Naught of this world’s delusive dream; I have renounced all sinful pleasure, Jesus is mine; there’s nothing between. Nothing between, like worldly pleasure, Habits of life though harmless they seem, Must not my heart from Him e’er sever, He is my all; there’s nothing between. Nothing between my soul and the Savior, So that His blessed face may be seen; Nothing preventing the least of His favor, Keep the way clear! Let nothing between.”*

December 3 — Satan Blinds the Mind (2 Corinthians 4:3-4)

2 Corinthians 4:3: “And even if our gospel is covered, it is covered to those who are perishing.”

2 Corinthians 4:4: “In whose case the god of this world blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”

Verse 3: “And even if our gospel is covered, it is covered to those who are perishing.”

You can tell by the words “and even if our gospel is covered” the apostle has had to triumph over discouraging circumstances and the rejection of his message. The reason for discouragement is people’s failure to respond.

Paul is finding his way through the maze of confusing circumstances by remembering he has a ministry and has been favored with mercy by the father of compassionate mercies who granted it unto him.

I think one of the things that helps more than anything in the whole realm of discouragement is realizing we are not responsible for the response to the truth, but we are responsible for the communication of it.

“And even if our gospel is covered.” The apostle picks up on the word “veil” he had used back in chapter 3 when he was characterizing the Law and its fading glory regarding Moses putting a veil over his face.

We could read this verse: “And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing.”

Discouragement can only come into our lives when we put the blame for circumstances and happenings in our lives in the wrong place.

Verse 4: “In whose case the god of this world blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”

How does Satan blind minds? Here are five ways I know:

1. Never thinking of death or accepting one’s mortality
2. Unwilling to acknowledge one’s sinfulness
3. Living only for the here and now
4. Consumed with challenges and stresses of living
5. Denial of accountability in the hereafter

Isaiah 44:18: “They know nothing, they understand nothing; their eyes are plastered over so they cannot see, and their minds closed so they cannot understand.”

“In whose case the god of this world blinded the minds of the unbelieving,” the last phrase gives us the purpose behind this blinding, “that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”

What does light do? It does these three things: (1) illuminates, (2) gives insight, and (3) gives instruction.

Psalms 119:130: “The entrance of your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple.”

Psalms 119:105: “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.”

John 3:19-21: “And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who practices the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God.”

It seems most appropriate that we would sing verses 2 and 3 of **“The Light of the World is Jesus”**: *“No darkness have we who in Jesus abide, The Light of the world is Jesus; We walk in the Light when we follow our Guide, The Light of the world is Jesus. Ye dwellers in darkness with sin-blinded eyes, The Light of the world is Jesus; Go, wash at His bidding, and light will arise, The Light of the world is Jesus. Come to the Light, ‘tis shining for thee; Sweetly the light has dawned upon me, Once I was blind,*

but now I can see: The Light of the world is Jesus."

December 4 — We Are Preaching Christ (2 Corinthians 4:5-6)

2 Corinthians 4:5: *"For we are not preaching ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bondservants for Jesus' sake."*

2 Corinthians 4:6: *"For God, who said, 'Light shall shine out of darkness,' is the One who shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ."*

Verse 5: "For we are not preaching ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bondservants for Jesus' sake."

Paul says we are not preaching ourselves, but Christ Jesus is Lord. Our message is Jesus Christ and our method is one of being bondservant for Jesus' sake.

We have "light" and "love" wedded together here. The message is a *message of light* and the *method is one of love*.

We are there to serve you. We are ministering to the needs of others. Serving sacrificially is our calling.

The reason we are not preaching ourselves is given in verse 6.

Verse 6: "For God, who said, 'Light shall shine out of darkness,' is the One who shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ."

Jesus is the one "who shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ."

I am sure Paul is thinking back to his Damascus road experience in Acts 9:3-5: "And it came about that as he journeyed, he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; and 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?' And He said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.'"

This takes us back again to chapter 3:18: "But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit."

Join me in worship and praise as we sing verses 1 and 4 of **"The Light of the World is Jesus"**: *"The whole world was lost in the darkness of sin; The Light of the world is Jesus; Like sunshine at noonday His glory shone in, The Light of the world is Jesus. No need of the sunlight in heaven we're told, The Light of the world is Jesus; The Lamb is the light in the city of gold, The Light of the world is Jesus. Come to the Light, 'tis shining for thee; Sweetly the light has dawned upon me, Once I was blind, but now I can see: The Light of the world is Jesus."*

December 5 — Earthenware Vessels (2 Corinthians 4:7)

2 Corinthians 4:7: *"But we are having this treasure in earthenware vessels, in order that the extraordinary (quality of the) power may be of God and not from ourselves."*

Verse 7: "But we are having this treasure in earthenware vessels, in order that the extraordinary (quality of the) power may be of God and not from ourselves."

In verse 1 Paul says, "We are having this ministry," and now in verse 7, "We are having this treasure."

The treasure, of course, is the Christ of verse 6, and the earthenware vessels refer to our bodies.

Colossians 2:3: “in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”

“But we are having this treasure in earthenware vessels.” One translator translates this as “we’re having this treasure in cracked pots.” It is in clay jars that are broken the light begins to shine out.

One poet put it this way:

AN EARTHEN VESSEL IS THIS FRAME,
SO WEAK, SO FRAIL, SO WORN BY TIME;
YET THROUGH IT GOD RECEIVES ACCLAIM
WHEN IT SHOWS FORTH HIS GRACE SUBLIME.

Isaiah 64:8: “Yet, O Lord, you are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand.”

Jeremiah 18:1-4: “This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord: ‘Go down to the potter’s house, and there I will give you my message.’ So I went down to the potter’s house, and I saw him working at the wheel. But the pot he was shaping from the clay was marred in his hands; so the potter formed it into another pot, shaping it as seemed best to him.”

Ray Stedman says:

A pot or a vessel is made to hold something.

A vessel must be clean, empty and available.

“In order that the extraordinary (quality of the) power may be of God and not from ourselves.”

Isaiah 40:31: “but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.”

Betty Elliot says it so well:

We resist sentimentality. We know that it distorts our vision, weakens our purpose ... Time changes things we do not want changed. Death puts an end to our love, decays our dreams. We almost lift our hands in an involuntary gesture to stop them, hold them back. But we drop them again, knowing our impotence.

Let’s worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing **“The Blood Will Never Lose Its Power.”** Let’s sing verses 1 and 2: *“The blood that Jesus shed for me, Way back on Calvary; The blood that gives me strength from day to day, It will never lose its pow’r. It soothes my doubts and calms my fears, And it dries all my tears; The blood that gives me strength from day to day, It will never lose its pow’r. It reaches to the highest mountain, It flows to the lowest valley The blood that gives me strength from day to day, It will never lose its pow’r.”*

December 6 — Knocked Down but Not Out (2 Corinthians 4:8-9)

2 Corinthians 4:8: *“We are being hard pressed in every way, but we are not being crushed; perplexed but not despairing;”*

2 Corinthians 4:9: *“persecuted but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed;”*

Verse 8: “We are being hard pressed in every way, but we are not being crushed; perplexed but not despairing;”

In verses 8 and 9, we have four negatives and positives. There are eight present passive participles used to describe some of Paul's daily experiences.

Deuteronomy 8:2: "Remember how the Lord your God led you all the way in the desert these forty years; to humble you and to test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep His commands."

We are beholding Him and He is holding us.

Each of the participles is in the present tense so this is a daily portion for the apostle Paul. He is a *pressed, perplexed, persecuted* person. He describes this graphically in these eight words characterizing the present condition.

1. We are being hard pressed in every way. It means "to press," "to squash," "to rub," or "to hem in." I think of the line from the old country song: "I gave her my heart and she stomped that sucker flat."
2. But we are not being crushed. Crushed can also mean "to crowd" or "to cram" or "to confine."
3. Perplexed. It can mean "to be at a loss," "uncertain," or "in doubt."
4. Despairing. This word is just an intensification of the previous word. It means "to be in great difficulty," or "in doubt or despair." It is to be confused, but not calling it quits.

Verse 9: "persecuted but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed;"

5. Persecuted. It means "to persecute," "to press," or "to run after and pursue."
6. But not forsaken. Forsaken means "abandon," "forsake," "leave behind" or "desert."
7. Struck down. This means "to throw down" or "to knock down." I'm reminded of the country song: "You knocked me down and I'll be a little bit slow coming back this time."
8. But not destroyed. Destroyed means "to destroy," "to ruin" or "to perish."

I love the way Phillips translates "struck down, but not destroyed": "We may be knocked down, but we are never knocked out."

Stephen Brown says:

Our prayer ought to be the prayer of the sea captain in the middle of a hurricane: "O God, help us, and come Yourself because this ain't no time for boys."

The three questions to ask in the middle of a crisis are: (1) What can I learn from this? (2) How can I grow through this? and (3) How can God be glorified through this?

J.B. Phillips translates these two verses in the following way: "We are handicapped on all sides, but we are never frustrated; we are puzzled, but never in despair. We are persecuted, but we never have to stand it alone: we may be knocked down but we are never knocked out!"

Isaiah 43:1-2: "Fear not for I have redeemed you. I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you. And when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; flames will not set you ablaze."

Let's worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing "**God Leads Us Along**." Join me in singing verse 1: "In shady, green pastures, so rich and so sweet, God leads His dear children along; Where the water's cool flow bathes the weary one's feet, God leads His dear children along. Some thro' the waters, some thro' the flood, Some thro'

the fire, but all thro' the blood; Some thro' great sorrow, but God gives a song; In the night season and all the day long."

December 7 — The Life of Jesus Shows (2 Corinthians 4:10-11)

2 Corinthians 4:10: *"always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, in order that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body."*

2 Corinthians 4:11: *"For we who are living are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, in order that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh."*

Verse 10: "always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, in order that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body."

What does this mean: "always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus?"

Phillips translates verse 10 saying: "Every day we experience something of the death of the Lord Jesus, so that we may also know the power of the life of Jesus in these bodies of ours."

Paul says he carried Calvary with him. "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless, not My will, but Your will be done." The death of Christ is continually being reenacted in Paul. He is in living union with Christ as the branch is in the vine. It is the life of Jesus that is flowing through him.

We are to recognize that we have died with Christ.

John 12:24-25: "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains by itself alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. He who loves his life loses it; and he who hates his life in this world shall keep it to life eternal."

"Always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, in order that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body." The eight things we have seen in verses 8 and 9 produce the life of Jesus manifested in our body.

As long as I hang on and try to live it, the life of Christ cannot be seen. Basically, the principle in verse 10 is out of death comes life.

Verse 11: "For we who are living are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, in order that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh."

Our death means two things: (1) we are giving up control, and (2) we are surrendering in brokenness. When we do, the purpose is expressed in the latter part of verse 11: "in order that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh."

Let's praise the Lord this morning by singing verse 2 of **"God Leads Us Along"**:
"Sometimes on the mount where the sun shines so bright, God leads His dear children along; Sometimes in the valley in darkest of night, God leads His dear children along. Some thro' the waters, some thro' the flood, Some thro' the fire, but all thro' the blood. Some thro' great sorrow, but God gives a song; In the night season and all the day long."

December 8 — Death in Us, but Life in You (2 Corinthians 4:12-13)

2 Corinthians 4:12: *"So death is operating in us but life in you."*

2 Corinthians 4:13: *"But having the same spirit of faith, according to what has been written, 'I believed therefore I spoke' and we also are believing, therefore also we are speaking."*

Verse 12: “So death is operating in us but life in you.”

Paul says we are being spent, spilled out and used up in service to you. The result of all of this is: “death is operating in us” (the instruments which He is using), “but (in contrast) life in you.”

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

Galatians 4:19: “My children with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you.”

Verse 13: “But having the same spirit of faith, according to what has been written, ‘I believed therefore I spoke’ and we also are believing, therefore also we are speaking.”

Psalm 116:10: “I believed; therefore I said, ‘I am greatly afflicted.’”

Romans 10:9-10: “that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.”

Acts 4:19-20: “But Peter and John answered and said to them, ‘Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge; for we cannot stop speaking what we have seen and heard.’”

Let’s continue our worship and praise this morning by singing verse 3 of **“God Leads Us Along”**: *“Tho’ sorrows befall us, and Satan oppose, God leads His dear children along; Through grace we can conquer, defeat all our foes, God leads His dear children along. Some thro’ the waters, some thro’ the flood, Some thro’ the fire, but all thro’ the blood; Some thro’ great sorrow, but God gives a song; In the night season and all the day long.”*

December 9 — He Raised Jesus and He Will Raise Us (2 Corinthians 4:14-15)

2 Corinthians 4:14: *“Knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and will present us with you.”*

2 Corinthians 4:15: *“For all things are for your sakes, in order that the grace which is spreading to more and more people may cause the giving of thanks to abound to the glory of God.”*

Verse 14: “Knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and will present us with you.”

This verse starts with the word “knowing.” This is the assurance that forms the foundation for Paul’s confidence in that which he is speaking. “Knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and will present us with you.”

Jude 24-25: “Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.”

Verse 15: “For all things are for your sakes, in order that the grace which is spreading to more and more people may cause the giving of thanks to abound to the glory of God.”

Now, we have the reason: “For all things (everything we are doing is for your

benefit) are for your sakes (the purpose) in order that the grace (not the Law) which is spreading to more and more people may cause the giving of thanks to abound to the glory of God.” There is no self-interest involved in this ministry.

The purpose behind it all is God might be given thanks and glory might abound to Him.

Romans 8:18: “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.”

Let’s worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing verse 4 of **“God Leads Us Along”**: *“Away from the mire, and away from the clay, God leads His dear children along; Away up in glory, eternity’s day, God leads His dear children along. Some thro’ the waters, some thro’ the flood, Some thro’ the fire, but all thro’ the blood; Some thro’ great sorrow, but God gives a song; In the night season and all the day long.”*

December 10 — Renewed Day by Day (2 Corinthians 4:16)

2 Corinthians 4:16: *“Therefore we are not losing heart, but though our outer man is decaying yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.”*

Verse 16: “Therefore we are not losing heart, but though our outer man is decaying yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.”

“Therefore we are not losing heart” takes us back to the beginning of chapter 4:1: “Therefore since we are having this ministry, even as we were favored with mercy, we are not losing heart.” Paul says we are not discouraged in the face of these overwhelming circumstances.

Bishop Andrewes in his private devotion says:

Abide with me, O Lord, for even now it is towards evening with me, and the day is far spent in this travailing life. Let thy strength be perfected in my weakness. Bill Cosby in his book, *Time Flies*, says:

During these twenty years of competing with time, I have been forced to witness many other signs of defeat deep in the hide of me, and on the top as well. It distresses me to report that, at the half, the score is: Time – 37, Cosby – 0. For the man of fifty, it is always third and long yardage, with a nearsighted quarterback.

“Though our outer man is decaying yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.”

Isaiah 40:31: “but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.”

Ephesians 3:16: “that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man.” Our inner man is being renewed day by day. How is this happening? It is by the five “S’s”:

1. Suffering
2. Study
3. Submission
4. Service
5. Sensitivity to the Spirit.

Ephesians 4:23: “and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind,”

Let’s worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing verse 1 of **“In My Heart There Rings a Melody”**: *“I have a song that Jesus gave me, It was sent from*

heav'n above; There never was a sweeter melody, 'Tis a melody of love. In my heart there rings a melody, There rings a melody with heaven's harmony. In my heart there rings a melody; There rings a melody of love."

December 11 — Light Trials and Heavy Glory (2 Corinthians 4:17-18)

2 Corinthians 4:17: "For momentary, slight affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison."

2 Corinthians 4:18: "While we are not looking at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

Verse 17: "For momentary, slight affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison."

The apostle gives the reason our inner man is being renewed day by day. He speaks of this affliction in two ways: (1) it is momentary, and (2) it is slight. We need to remember that this takes us back to chapter 4:8-9: "We are being hard pressed in every way, but we are not being crushed; perplexed but not despairing; persecuted but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed;"

It is momentary. This too shall pass, and the trauma is temporary. Secondly, it is slight. Anything is slight when we compare it to Calvary.

This momentary, slight affliction which is external is "producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison."

There are light trails producing heavy glory.

Tim Hansel in his book, *Holy Sweat*, says:

I received a telegram one day. It said simply: "Until further notice – Celebrate Everything!"

Verse 18: "While we are not looking at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

The secret to victory here and now is seen in the apostles' negative and positive statement. Negatively, "we are not looking at the things which are seen," but in contrast positively, "at the things which are not seen." The reason is "for the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

Matthew 6:21: "for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

The challenge before each of us is to keep our focus on the eternal and not on the temporary.

As we worship and praise this morning, let's sing together verses 2 and 3 of **"In My Heart There Rings a Melody"**: "I love the Christ who died on Calv'ry, For He washed my sins away; He put within my heart a melody, And I know it's there to stay. 'Twill be my endless theme in glory, With the angels I will sing; 'Twill be a song with glorious harmony, When the courts of heaven ring. In my heart there rings a melody, There rings a melody with heaven's harmony. In my heart there rings a melody; There rings a melody of love."

December 12 — What Happens When We Die? (2 Corinthians 5:1)

2 Corinthians 5:1: "For we are knowing that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we are having a building from God, a house not made with

hands eternal in the heavens.”

Verse 1: “For we are knowing that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we are having a building from God, a house not made with hands eternal in the heavens.”

William Barclay says:

When I die, I should like to slip out of the room without fuss – for what matters is not what I am leaving, but where I am going.

The apostle in chapter 5 turns from difficulties to death. Death is the end of transformation. Soon we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is.

The word “for” points back to the end of chapter 4. We are answering the question: What is the ultimate demise of the outer man?

“For we are knowing.” This is not something we are uncertain about. It is something we have great confidence in. It is something we know by personal experience “if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down.”

The apostle Paul refers to physical death. It is the earthly tent as opposed to the eternal house in the heavens. The tent speaks to us of that which is temporary. “For we are knowing that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down.” Paul uses the term “torn down” to refer to physical death.

The little word “we” occurs twelve times in these verses. When physical death occurs, “we are having a building from God, a house not made with hands eternal in the heavens.” This verse tells us we are moving from the *temporary* to the *permanent*, from that *which encompasses time* to that *which is eternal*. It is the contrast between an earthly tent and an eternal house.

When I am pastoring the funeral for a Christian, it always thrills me to hear the congregation sing that old camp song, “**I’ll Fly Away.**” I think to celebrate and praise the Lord this morning; we need to sing this song together: “*Some glad morning when this life is o’er, I’ll fly away. To a home on God’s celestial shore, I’ll fly away. I’ll fly away, O Glory, I’ll fly away. When I die, Hallelujah, bye and bye, I’ll fly away. When the shadows of this life have flown, I’ll fly away. Like a bird thrown, driven by the storm, I’ll fly away. I’ll fly away, O Glory, I’ll fly away. When I die, Hallelujah, bye and bye, I’ll fly away. Just a few more weary days and then, I’ll fly away. To a land where joy shall never end, I’ll fly away. I’ll fly away, O Glory, I’ll fly away. When I die, Hallelujah, bye and bye, I’ll fly away.*”

December 13 — Dwelling from Heaven (2 Corinthians 5:2-3)

2 Corinthians 5:2: “*For indeed in this tent we are groaning, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven;*”

2 Corinthians 5:3: “*inasmuch as we, having put it on, shall not be found naked.*”

Verse 2: “For indeed in this tent we are groaning, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven;”

“For indeed in this tent (our temporary dwelling) we are groaning,” Paul says.

Romans 8:22-23: “For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.”

The apostle Paul longs to be clothed with this dwelling from heaven.

Are you so in love with Jesus that you are longing to see Him? The people who dread death are those who only know him casually.

Philippians 1:23: “But I am hard pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better;”

Psalm 116:15: “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.”

There is no problem with longing on the Lord’s side; it is a one-sided love affair.

Psalm 90:10: “The length of our days is seventy years – or eighty, if we have the strength; yet their span is but trouble and sorrow, for they quickly pass, and we fly away.”

Verse 3: “inasmuch as we, having put it on, shall not be found naked.”

In verse 2, the apostle says, “We are longing to be clothed,” and in verse 3, “we are putting it on so we shall not be found naked.”

One of the traumas of physical death is losing our body. It is like taking all of our clothes.

Death is like falling asleep in Mother & Daddy’s bed, and waking up in your own. It is the anesthetic God uses while He is changing our bodies.

Let’s worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing one of my favorite of Fanny Crosby’s hymns, “**Saved by Grace.**” Join me in singing verse 1: “*Some day the silver cord will break, And I no more as now shall sing; But O, the joy when I shall wake Within the palace of the King! And I shall see Him face to face, And tell the story, Saved by grace; And I shall see Him face to face, And tell the story, Saved by grace.*”

December 14 — Swallowed Up by Life (2 Corinthians 5:4-5)

2 Corinthians 5:4: “*For indeed we being in this tent are groaning, being burdened, because we are not desiring to be unclothed but to be clothed, in order that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.*”

2 Corinthians 5:5: “*Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge.*”

Verse 4: “For indeed we being in this tent are groaning, being burdened, because we are not desiring to be unclothed but to be clothed, in order that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.”

“For indeed we being in this tent are groaning, being burdened.” I asked myself the question: What does it mean – being burdened? I am sure there are three things which burden us about our physical demise:

1. Fear – of the unknown
2. Turning loose of the body
3. Floating around unclothed

Negatively, “we are not desiring to be clothed,” but positively, “to be clothed, in order that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.”

The purpose clause that concludes verse 4 is fantastic: “in order that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.” What a great definition of death: “that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.” Death is consumed by life.

1 Corinthians 15:54: “But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, ‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’”

Verse 5: “Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge.”

We have a change from “we” to “He” occurring in verse 5. We “are knowing,” “are having a building,” “are groaning,” “having put it on,” “being in this tent,” “are not desiring,” but now “He.”

The focus is now upon God. We have the same graphic change in Psalm 23:

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall lack nothing.

He makes me lie down in green pastures,

He leads me beside quiet waters,

He restores my soul.

He guides me in paths of righteousness for His name’s sake.

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,

I will fear no evil, for You are with me;

Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.

You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

“Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God.” God the Father has prepared the person and the place. In the upper room, Jesus promised to the disciples in John 14:2-3: “In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for 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.”

The word “prepared” focuses upon the fact that God has made all the arrangements. He has not only prepared the person and the place, but He has also given us a pledge.

Let’s continue worshipping and praising the Lord this morning by singing verse 2 of “**Saved by Grace**”: *“Some day my earthly house will fall, I cannot tell how soon ’twill be, But this I know my All in All Has now a place in Heav’n for me. And I shall see Him face to face, And tell the story, Saved by grace; And I shall see Him face to face, And tell the story, Saved by grace.”*

December 15 — Absent From the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:6-7)

2 Corinthians 5:6: *“Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord”*

2 Corinthians 5:7: *“for we are walking by faith, not by sight”*

Verse 6: “Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord”

Paul tells the folks on the ship in Acts 27:25: “Therefore, keep up your courage, men, for I believe God, that it will turn out exactly as I have been told.” It’s not time to crumble, to cry and to carry on.

Once again, we have the word “knowing” occurring in our text. Back in verse 1, “For we are knowing that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down,” and now in verse 6, “Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord.”

Verse 7: “for we are walking by faith, not by sight”

We have a positive and negative in this verse. Positively, “for we are walking by faith,” but negatively, “not by sight.”

2 Corinthians 4:18: “While we are not looking at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.”

Let’s continue our worship and praise by singing Fanny Crosby’s hymn, “**Saved by Grace.**” Join me in singing verse 3 this morning: “*Some day, when fades the golden sun Beneath the rosy tinted west, My blessèd Lord will say, ‘Well done!’ And I shall enter into rest. And I shall see Him face to face, And tell the story, Saved by grace; And I shall see Him face to face, And tell the story, Saved by grace.*”

December 16 — Our Aim is to Be Pleasing to Him (2 Corinthians 5:8-9)

2 Corinthians 5:8: “*we are of good courage, and we are preferring rather to be absent from the body, and to be at home with the Lord.*”

2 Corinthians 5:9: “*Therefore also, we are making it our aim, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him.*”

Verse 8: “we are of good courage, and we are preferring rather to be absent from the body, and to be at home with the Lord.”

“We are of good courage” occurs again, as it did back in verse 6: “therefore, being always of good courage.” “And we are preferring.” Back in verse 2, the word “longing” was used, and in Philippians chapter 1 “desiring” was used. The apostle says: “We are *longing* to be with the Lord.” We “*desire*” to be with the Lord and “we are *preferring* rather than to be absent from the body, and to be at home with the Lord.”

The wonderful thing about life down here is we are not home yet. We are just pilgrims passing through, looking for a city.

Death in the Old Testament is seen as:

Enoch walks with God “and the Lord took him and he was not.”

Elijah is caught up in a whirlwind.

Jacob drew up his feet into the bed and went to be with the Lord.

Moses went up the mountain and did not come back down.

Aaron, likewise, went up the mountain and into the presence of the Lord.

Death in the New Testament is seen as:

Jesus, as He commended His spirit into the hands of the Father.

The Thief on the Cross was promised he would be with Him that very day in Paradise.

In the story of The Rich Man and Lazarus Jesus told, we see Lazarus in Abraham’s bosom, and the rich man in the flaming fire of hell itself.

In Stephen, we see him praying to the Father as he is being stoned to death.

Verse 9: “Therefore also, we are making it our aim, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him.”

Pleasing Him here is transformation through suffering. Pleasing Him there is transformation complete.

Whether we are living or dying, it ought to be our goal to be pleasing to Him.

1 Corinthians 2:9: “But just as it is written, ‘Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which has not entered the heart of man. All that God has prepared for those who love Him.’”

Let's turn again to Fanny Crosby's hymn, "Saved by Grace," as we sing verse 4 in worship and praise of our Lord: *"Some day, till then I'll watch and wait, My lamp all trimmed and burning bright, That when my Savior opens the gate, My soul to Him may take its flight. And I shall enter into rest. And I shall see Him face to face, And tell the story, Saved by grace; And I shall see Him face to face, And tell the story, Saved by grace."*

December 17 — Test Time (2 Corinthians 5:10)

2 Corinthians 5:10: *"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, in order that each one may receive a recompense for what he has done during his life in the body, whether good or bad."*

Verse 10: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, in order that each one may receive a recompense for what he has done during his life in the body, whether good or bad."

Ecclesiastes 11:9: "Be happy young man while you are young, and let your heart give you joy in the days of your youth. Follow the ways of your heart and whatever your eyes see, but know that for all these things, God will bring you to judgment."

The word "for" gives us the reason for our goal and takes us back to chapter 5:9: "Therefore also, we are making it our aim, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him." Wherever we are, we want to be pleasing to Him because there will come a day of accountability.

"For we must all appear." Paul includes himself in using "we," and we must all appear. There are no excuses; no exceptions. This is one appointment you can't dodge!

The judgment seat of Christ is that time when believers will appear for their audit.

The "*what*" of the judgment seat of Christ is an examination of things that have been done from the moment of new birth until physical death.

The "*when*" of the judgment seat of Christ is probably during the seven years of tribulation on earth, taking place in heaven following the rapture of the church.

The "*why*" of the judgment seat of Christ is seen in the purpose clause: "in order that each one may receive a recompense for what he has done during his life in the body, whether good or bad."

The computer printout begins with the new birth and ceases with death. It is just like the computers that measure our heartbeat or brain waves – it ceases when the graph goes flat.

The verse ends with "whether good or bad." I would point you to 1 Corinthians 3:11-15: "For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man builds upon the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it, because it is to be revealed with fire; and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. If any man's work which he has built upon it remains, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire."

William Barclay says:

When we remember that life becomes a tremendous and a thrilling thing, for in life we are making or marring a destiny, we are winning or losing a crown. Time

has become the testing ground of eternity.

I think God expects us to receive truth where we are and then live life faithfully, a day at a time.

LIFE BY THE INCH IS A CINCH
AND BY THE YARD IT IS HARD.

I find myself singing with great joy the hymn, “**Great Is Thy Faithfulness.**” Let’s worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing verse 1: “*‘Great is Thy faithfulness,’ O God my Father, There is no shadow of turning with Thee; Thou changest not, Thy compassions they fail not; As Thou hast been Thou forever wilt be. ‘Great is Thy faithfulness! Great is Thy faithfulness!’ Morning by morning new mercies I see; All I have needed Thy hand hath provided, ‘Great is Thy faithfulness,’ Lord, unto me!’*”

December 18 — The Fear of the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:11)

2 Corinthians 5:11: “*Therefore knowing the fear of the Lord, we are persuading men, but we are well-known to God and I am hoping that we are well-known also in your consciences.*”

Verse 11: “Therefore knowing the fear of the Lord, we are persuading men, but we are well-known to God and I am hoping that we are well-known also in your consciences.”

“Therefore knowing the fear of the Lord,” knowing we are going to stand at the judgment seat of Christ and be held accountable. Just knowing we are going to get tested on this ought to make us crank it up a notch.

What is the fear of the Lord? I believe it is the three “R’s”:

1. It is the “R” of Respect – for His authority and our accountability to that authority.
2. It is the “R” of Responsibility – we have a responsibility to be obedient to Him.
3. It is the “R” of Relationship – He created us for a relationship with Himself. We reflect Him in the way we act as His children!

John 1:12: “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name.”

“Therefore knowing the fear of the Lord, we are persuading men.” We ask ourselves the question: How does Paul do this? (1) by his *life*, and (2) by his *lip* OR (1) by his *works*, and (2) by his *words*.

In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, the rich man is asking Abraham from the fires of hell, “I have five brothers, warn them! Do it while there still is time!”

2 Corinthians 4:2: “But we have renounced the things hidden because of shame, not walking around in craftiness or adulterating the word of God, but by the manifestation of truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.”

I find myself singing Ralph Carmichael’s hymn, “**The Savior Is Waiting.**” Please join me in singing verses 1 and 2: “*The Savior is waiting to enter your heart; Why don’t you let Him come in? There’s nothing in this world to keep you apart, What is your answer to Him? If you’ll take one step t’ward the Savior, my friend; You’ll find His arms open wide. Receive Him and all of your darkness will end, Within your heart He’ll abide. Time after time, He has waited before, And now He is waiting again. To see if you are willing To open the door. Oh, how He wants to come in.*”

December 19 — An Opportunity (2 Corinthians 5:12-13)

2 Corinthians 5:12: “We are not again commending ourselves to you, but are giving you an opportunity to be proud of us, in order that you may be having an answer for those who are taking pride in appearance and not in heart.”

2 Corinthians 5:13: “For if we were out of our senses, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you.”

Verse 12: “We are not again commending ourselves to you, but are giving you an opportunity to be proud of us, in order that you may be having an answer for those who are taking pride in appearance and not in heart.”

Plummer translates this first part of the verse: “Do not misunderstand me. I am not beginning again to praise myself, as some persons say that I am so fond of doing.”

Negatively, “We are not again commending ourselves to you, but” positively, we “are giving you an opportunity.” Whereas in yesterday’s verse, “we are persuading men,” now Paul says, “we are giving you an opportunity.” That opportunity is to be “proud of us” as your spiritual parents, as part of God’s family.

The purpose is stated in the last part of verse 12: “in order that you may be having an answer for those who are taking pride in appearance and not in heart.”

There’s a world of difference between *faking it* and *family, hypocrisy* and *holiness, flesh* and *the Spirit*. Once a person has a relationship with God through Christ, it is a matter of the heart and not of appearance.

The verse ends with a positive and negative. “For those who are (positively) taking pride in appearance and (negatively) not in heart.” What does it mean: “taking pride in appearance?” It is a life characterized by the three “S’s”: It is (1) show, (2) on the surface, and (3) characterized by stress.

Lord Jesus reminds us at the end of the Sermon on the Mount when He says in Matthew 7:23: “And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.’”

Verse 13: “For if we were out of our senses, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you.”

It seems a number of the Corinthians had accused Paul of being out of his mind in perpetuating the message of a personal relationship to Jesus Christ. Paul actually had this accusation by Festus when he was giving his testimony before King Agrippa in Acts 26:24: “And while Paul was saying this in his defense, Festus said in a loud voice, ‘Paul, you are out of your mind! Your great learning is driving you mad.’”

“For if we were out of our senses,” what does that mean? I think it means the three “E’s”:

1. Enthusiasm
2. Excitement
3. Eagerness for Evangelism

“If we are in our right mind, it is for you.” If these things we say are true, it is said for your benefit so you will come to your senses and flee to the cross.

Luke 15:17: “But when he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger!’”

Please join me in worship and praise as we sing verses 1 and 2 of “**Room at the Cross for You**”: “The cross upon which Jesus died Is a shelter in which we can hide;

And its grace so free is sufficient for me, And deep is its fountain as wide as the sea. Tho' millions have found Him a friend And have turned from the sins they have sinned, The Savior still waits to open the gates And welcome a sinner before it's too late. There's room at the cross for you, There's room at the cross for you; Tho' millions have come, There's still room for one, Yes, there's room at the cross for you."

December 20 — The Love of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:14-15)

2 Corinthians 5:14: *"For the love of Christ is controlling us, bringing us to this conclusion, that one died for all, therefore all died;"*

2 Corinthians 5:15: *"and He died for all in order that those who are living no longer are living for themselves but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf."*

Verse 14: "For the love of Christ is controlling us, bringing us to this conclusion, that one died for all, therefore all died;"

The reason we know we are in our right mind is the love of Christ is controlling us. What does this mean – "the love of Christ is controlling us"? Before you can really love, you must first die to selfishness.

The love of Christ is the fruit of the Spirit.

In Ephesians, Paul said husbands love your wives as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for her.

Song of Solomon 8:6-7: "Place me like a seal over your heart, like a seal on your arm; for love is as strong as death, its jealousy unyielding as the grave. It burns like blazing fire like a mighty flame. Many waters cannot quench love, rivers cannot wash it away. If one were to give all the wealth of his house for love, it would be utterly scorned."

"For the love of Christ is controlling us, bringing us to this conclusion, that one (Jesus Christ) died for all, therefore all died;"

Romans 5:6-8: "For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." He died for the sins of the whole world.

Someone asked George Mueller for the secret of his life. He replied with these significant words: "There came a time in my life when George Mueller died, utterly died. He died to all his selfish plans and ambitions. When he died, Christ lived through him. This is my secret."

Jesus said, "Except a corn of wheat fall to the ground and die."

Verse 15: "and He died for all in order that those who are living no longer are living for themselves but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf."

In verse 14, it was "one died for all, therefore all died," and now in verse 15, "He died for all." The purpose for that death is given: "in order that those who are living (negatively) no longer are living for themselves but (positively) for Him who died and rose again on their behalf."

The verse gives us an obvious choice of living for self or living for the Savior. Negatively he says, "no longer are living for themselves but for Him," for Jesus Christ.

How do you live for Him? There are two answers to the question: (1) submission

go where He tells you, and (2) obedience – do what He says. Die to what you want!

In view of death and judgment, we better get with the Program!

Let's worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing verse 3 of **"Room at the Cross for You"**: *"The hand of my Savior is strong, And the love of my Savior is long; Through sunshine or rain, through loss or in gain, The blood flows from Calv'ry to cleanse ev'ry stain. There's room at the cross for you, There's room at the cross for you; Tho' millions have come, There's still room for one, Yes, there's room at the cross for you."*

December 21 — From Now On (2 Corinthians 5:16)

2 Corinthians 5:16: *"Therefore from now on we are knowing no man according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we are knowing Him thus no longer."*

Verse 16: "Therefore from now on we are knowing no man according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we are knowing Him thus no longer."

"Therefore from now on we are knowing no man according to the flesh." We are not impressed by the flesh, and it is boasting. This takes us back to verse 12 where we read: "in order that you may be having an answer for those who are taking pride in appearance and not in heart."

1 Samuel 16:7: "But the Lord said to Samuel, 'Do not consider his appearance or his height for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.'"

Paul then says, "even though we have known Christ according to the flesh." There was a time when the apostle was fighting against Christ and His purpose, and desirous of liquidation of His program for the church.

"Yet now we are knowing Him thus no longer." There has been a dramatic change in his life. This change is graphically illustrated in tomorrow's verse. It all happened one day on the road to Damascus, recorded in Acts 9:3-6: "And it came about that as he journeyed, he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; and 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?' And He said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. But rise and enter the city and it shall be told you what you must do.'"

Let's worship the Lord this morning by singing John W. Peterson's hymn, **"Springs of Living Water."** Join me in singing verse 1: *"I thirsted in the barren land of sin and shame, And nothing satisfying there I found; But to the blessed cross of Christ one day I came, Where springs of living water did abound. Drinking at the springs of living water; Happy now am I, My soul they satisfy; Drinking at the springs of living water, O wonderful and bountiful supply."*

December 22 — A New Creation (2 Corinthians 5:17)

2 Corinthians 5:17: *"Therefore if any man is in Christ, He is a new creation; the old things passed away; behold new things have come."*

Verse 17: "Therefore if any man is in Christ, He is a new creation; the old things passed away; behold new things have come."

“Therefore if any man is in Christ, He is a new creation.” This helps us understand what Jesus meant when He was speaking to Nicodemus: “You must be born again.”

The old things passed away. We immediately ask the question: What are these?

Ephesians 2:1-3: “And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh, and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.”

“Behold new things have come.” We ask ourselves the question: What are these? This would be the Fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23.

David Needham in his book, *Birthright*, says:

God’s purpose in creating us is so that we, through a dependent relationship with our God, could receive and display the very life of God – the glory of God.

The big question that comes to us at this point of the study is: Have you made this decision? Are you truly in Christ?

Please join me in worship and praise as we sing verses 2 and 3 of “**Springs of Living Water**”: *“How sweet the living water from the hills of God, It makes me glad and happy all the way; Now glory, grace and blessing mark the path I’ve trod, I’m shouting ‘Hallelujah’ ev’ry day. O sinner, won’t you come today to Calvary, A fountain there is flowing deep and wide; The Saviour now invites you to the water free, Where thirsting spirits can be satisfied. Drinking at the springs of living water, Happy now am I, My soul they satisfy; Drinking at the springs of living water, O wonderful and bountiful supply.”*

December 23 — The Ministry of Reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18-19)

2 Corinthians 5:18: “Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.”

2 Corinthians 5:19: “Namely that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He entrusted to us the word of reconciliation.”

Verse 18: “Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.”

“Now all these things” refers to the new things that have happened when we receive Christ as Savior. They find their source from God and it is God who reconciled us to Himself. The instrument He used was “through Christ,” and He “gave us the ministry of reconciliation.”

The words “reconciled” and “reconciliation” occur five times in the last verses of the chapter. To be reconciled means the relationship is made right.

Colossians 1:19-20: “For it was the Father’s good pleasure for all the fulness to dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven.”

The first thing, “Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ,” and secondly, “gave us the ministry of reconciliation.” Once the relationship is established, the ministry of reconciliation is granted to Him and to us.

Verse 19: “Namely that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not

counting their trespasses against them, and He entrusted to us the word of reconciliation.”

He gave, and then He entrusted to us the word of reconciliation.

Negatively, “not counting their trespasses against them (cancelled at the cross),” and positively, “He entrusted to us the word of reconciliation.”

Matthew 28:18-20: “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teaching them to observe all that I commanded you, and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

I find myself singing in worship and praise this morning that very familiar hymn, **“Since Jesus Came Into My Heart.”** Please join me in singing verses 1 and 2: *“What a wonderful change in my life has been wrought Since Jesus came into my heart! I have light in my soul for which long I had sought, Since Jesus came into my heart! I have ceased from my wand’ring and going astray, Since Jesus came into my heart! And my sins, which were many, are all washed away, Since Jesus came into my heart! Since Jesus came into my heart, Since Jesus came into my heart, Floods of joy o’er my soul like the sea billows roll, Since Jesus came into my heart.”*

December 24 — Ambassadors for Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20-21)

2 Corinthians 5:20: *“Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ, since God as it were is making his appeal through us; we are begging you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.”*

2 Corinthians 5:21: *“He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, in order that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”*

Verse 20: “Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ, since God as it were is making his appeal through us; we are begging you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.”

In verse 11, Paul said, “we are persuading men.” In verse 21, we are “giving you an opportunity.” Now in verse 20: “we are begging you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.”

“Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ.” We are representatives of the King in a foreign country.

“Since God as it were is making his appeal through us.” We are merely channels for God to use to communicate His message.

Jesus’ last recorded words are in Acts 1:8: “but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”

“We are begging you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.”

Verse 21: “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, in order that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

We have a transfer of accounts taking place in verse 21. God the Father made God the Son, who knew no sin, to be sin on our behalf. The whole purpose behind that is in order that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

The new bottom line is (1) no debt, and (2) a deposit of His righteousness.

Isaiah 61:10: “I delight greatly in the Lord. My soul rejoices greatly in my God for He has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteous-

ness.”

Please join me in worship as we sing and praise the Lord by singing verses 3 and 4 of **“Since Jesus Came Into My Heart”**: *“There’s a light in the valley of death now for me, Since Jesus came into my heart! And the gates of the City beyond I can see, Since Jesus came into my heart! I shall go there to dwell in that City, I know, Since Jesus came into my heart! And I’m happy, so happy, as onward I go, Since Jesus came into my heart! Since Jesus came into my heart, Since Jesus came into my heart, Floods of joy o’er my soul like the sea billows roll, Since Jesus came into my heart.”*

December 25 — The Grace of God (2 Corinthians 6:1)

2 Corinthians 6:1: *“And working together with Him, we also are urging you not to receive the grace of God in vain.”*

Merry Christmas to you this day of Christ’s birth!

Verse 1: “And working together with Him, we also are urging you not to receive the grace of God in vain.”

“Working together with Him” takes us back to chapter 5:20-21: “Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ, since God as it were is making his appeal through us; we are begging you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, in order that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

Plummer translates this verse: “We are fellow workers with God in the work of converting the world.”

“We also are urging you not to receive the grace of God in vain.”

The top priority is the salvation of souls, and Paul says, “we also are urging you not to receive the grace of God in vain.” How do you do this?

1. Hear the message and not respond
2. Reject the message
3. Continue to perform a life by the Law

John 1:11: “He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him.”

At Christmastime when the Christ child came, there was no room. They did not recognize Him, and they did not receive Him.

As we worship and praise the Lord on this the day marked as Jesus’ birthday, listen to 2 Corinthians 9:15 from the New Living Translation: “Thank God for His Son, a gift too wonderful for words!”

Let’s sing one of the Christmas carols this morning as we worship and praise the Lord. Join me in singing verses 1 and 2 of **“Joy to the World”**: *“Joy to the world! The Lord is come; Let earth receive her King, Let ev’ry heart prepare Him room, And heav’n and nature sing, And heav’n and nature sing, And heav’n, and heav’n, and nature sing. Joy to the world! The Savior reigns; Let men their songs employ, While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains Repeat the sounding joy, Repeat the sounding joy, Repeat, repeat, the sounding joy.”*

December 26 — The Day of Salvation (2 Corinthians 6:2)

2 Corinthians 6:2: *“For He is saying: ‘At the favorable time I listened to you and on the day of salvation I came to your aid.’ Behold, now is ‘the favorable time,*

behold, now is ‘the day of salvation;’”

Verse 2: “For He is saying: ‘At the favorable time I listened to you and on the day of salvation I came to your aid.’ Behold, now is ‘the favorable time,’ behold, now is ‘the day of salvation;’”

The apostle takes a statement from the Lord recorded in Isaiah 49:8a: “At the favorable time I listened to you and on the day of salvation I came to your aid.” The NET Bible translates: “At the time I decide to show My favor, I will respond to You; in the day of deliverance I will help you.”

Paul then takes two phrases out of that verse to press home his message: (1) the favorable time, and (2) the day of salvation.

First, he says, “Behold (Look!), now is ‘the favorable time,’ then secondly, “behold (look), now is ‘the day of salvation;’”

2 Corinthians 5:20: “we are begging you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.”

Proverbs 27:1: “Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth.”

God is the one giving the opportunities. He schedules the appointments. You don’t drop by at your convenience. Maybe God scheduled this morning as your last appointment! The Lord only knows the dozens of prior opportunities we have had!

Let’s worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing “**Almost Persuaded.**” Let’s sing together verses 1, 2, and 3: “*‘Almost persuaded’ now to believe; ‘Almost persuaded’ Christ to receive; Seems now some soul to say, ‘Go, Spirit, go Thy way, Some more convenient day On Thee I’ll call.’ ‘Almost persuaded,’ come, come today; ‘Almost persuaded,’ turn not away; Jesus invites you here, Angels are lingering near; Prayers rise from hearts so dear, O wanderer, come. ‘Almost persuaded,’ harvest is past! ‘Almost persuaded,’ doom comes at last! ‘Almost’ cannot avail; ‘Almost’ is but to fail! Sad, sad, that bitter wail, ‘Almost,’ but lost.*”

December 27 — Commending Ourselves as Servants (2 Corinthians 6:3-4)

2 Corinthians 6:3: “*giving no cause for offense in anything, in order that the ministry might not have fault found with it.*”

2 Corinthians 6:4: “*But in everything commending ourselves as servants of God, in much endurance, in afflictions, in calamities, in difficulties,*”

Verse 3: “giving no cause for offense in anything, in order that the ministry might not have fault found with it.”

The apostle turns from the message to the messenger; from the lip to the life here. What we are and what we say are both important to God. Paul wants to be a person who is protecting the impact of the salvation message with his life.

This passage is the story of the ministry. In it, we have a message to proclaim and a manner of life to confirm the reality of it.

We are on display before a watching world.

How do you do this? How do you give cause for offense? I see this in the four “P’s”:

1. Pressure – This is pushing someone to a premature decision just so you can glory in the success of the encounter.
2. The presentation – By this, I mean a cold, factual presentation of the gospel

without sensitivity to where the person is coming from.

3. Presumption – Assuming the person is a hardened sinner rather than one who needs more information to make an intelligent decision.

4. The pattern of life doesn't validate the message we speak.

"Giving no cause for offense in anything."

Colossians 4:5 from the Phillips translation: "Be wise in your behavior towards non-Christians, and make the best possible use of your time." The purpose behind this statement is seen in the last part of verse 3: "in order that the ministry might not have fault found with it."

Man can find fault with the ministry when one of the three "M's" is violated: (1) Morality, (2) Money, or (3) Methods.

Verse 4: "But in everything commending ourselves as servants of God, in much endurance, in afflictions, in calamities, in difficulties,"

"In everything commending ourselves as servants of God."

How do we commend ourselves to people who are looking at our lives? I have come up with these four things:

1. Honesty

2. Integrity

3. The message that we speak

4. Servanthood – the submissive obedience we portray in our lives

How do we portray the fact we are servants of God? I believe the three "S's" best describe it:

1. Sensitivity to the needs of others

2. Sacrificial involvement in meeting those needs

3. The Spirit of God who energizes us in our Service

Paul outlines for us in these next verses the curriculum for Christlikeness. There are going to be eighteen statements that will tell us how to handle what life throws at us and how we play the hand we've been dealt. This is the way God shapes His servants.

Statement #1: In much Endurance or Perseverance. It is not just a little endurance involved, but it is much. How do we do this? By hanging in there and remaining under the stress, knowing that God is in control of our circumstances.

Statement #2: In Afflictions. It is the sheer pressure of the demands of life upon us.

Statement #3: In Calamities. Things such as fires, tornados, accidents, death, earthquakes, tidal waves, etc.

Statement #4: In Difficulties. This is life in the narrow place between a rock and a hard place.

As we worship and praise the Lord this morning, let's sing John W. Peterson's hymn, **"It's Not An Easy Road."** Join me in singing verse 1: *"It's not an easy road we are trav'ling to Heaven, For many are the thorns on the way; It's not an easy road, but the Saviour is with us, His presence gives us joy ev'ry day. No, no, it's not an easy road, No, no, it's not an easy road; But Jesus walks beside me and brightens the journey, And lightens ev'ry heavy load."*

December 28 — Proving Faithful (2 Corinthians 6:5-6)

2 Corinthians 6:5: "in beatings, in imprisonments, in disturbances, in labors, in sleeplessness, in hunger,"

2 Corinthians 6:6: “in purity, in knowledge, in patience, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit, in genuine love.”

Verse 5: “in beatings, in imprisonments, in disturbances, in labors, in sleeplessness, in hunger,”

Yesterday morning, we studied the first four of eighteen statements that describe the curriculum for Christlikeness. Those four for your reminder are (1) in much endurance or perseverance, (2) in afflictions, (3) in calamities, and (4) in difficulties.

Now, we pick up the fifth statement in verse 5.

Statement #5: In Beatings. Paul experienced physical sufferings as part of his ministry.

Statement #6: In Imprisonments. There were seven times that Paul was imprisoned.

Statement #7: In Disturbances. The riots in Ephesus and Jerusalem where Paul nearly lost his life. This was certainly true of Jesus’ ministry because it ultimately ended in crucifixion.

Statement #8: In Labors. Barclay says: “These describe toil to the point of sheer exhaustion, the kind of toil which taxes everything of body, mind and spirit that a man has to give.”

Statement #9: In Sleeplessness. The three P’s that often kept Paul from sleeping were (1) preaching, (2) praying, and (3) the perils of survival.

Statement #10: In Hunger. There were times when Paul’s physical needs for food came second to the work of the ministry.

Verse 6: “in purity, in knowledge, in patience, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit, in genuine love.”

At verse 6, there is a transition from the *outward* to the *inward*. It moves from the *public* to the *personal* or *private*. The first part of the list is what Man does, but the last part of the list is what God does.

Statement #11: In Purity. Matthew 5:8: “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”

Statement #12: In Knowledge. Colossians 2:3: “in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”

Statement #13: In Patience. Barclay says: “Patience is the quality of a man who may lose a battle but who will never admit defeat in a campaign.”

Statement #14: In Kindness. Ephesians 4:32: “And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.”

Statement #15: In the Holy Spirit. Zechariah 4:6: “‘Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,’ says the Lord Almighty.”

Statement #16: In Genuine Love. This is the first manifestation of the fruit of the Spirit. It’s love in Galatians 5:22.

Join me in worship and praise as we sing verses 2 and 3 of **“It’s Not An Easy Road”**: *“It’s not an easy road there are trials and troubles, And many are the dangers we meet; But Jesus guards and keeps so that nothing can harm us, And smooths the rugged path for our feet. Though I am often footsore and weary from travel, Though I am often bowed down with care; A better day is coming when Home in the glory, We’ll rest in perfect peace over there. No, no, it’s not an easy road, No, no, it’s not an easy road; But Jesus walks beside me and brightens the journey, And lightens*

ev'ry heavy load."

December 29 — Weapons of Righteousness (2 Corinthians 6:7-8)

2 Corinthians 6:7: *"in the word of truth, in the power of God; by the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and the left."*

2 Corinthians 6:8: *"By glory and dishonor, by evil report and good report; regarded as deceivers and yet true;"*

Verse 7: "in the word of truth, in the power of God; by the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and the left."

Statement #17: In the Word of Truth. Jeremiah 15:16: "When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight, for I bear your name, O Lord God Almighty."

Statement #18: In the Power of God. The picture in verse 7 is one of warfare. 2 Corinthians 10:4: "for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses."

Ephesians 6:16-17: "in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming missiles of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."

Philippians 4:13: "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me."

"By the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and the left." We have two weapons, one which is defensive and one which is offensive. One is for the right hand and the other is for the left.

We demonstrate our servanthood by the kind of battle we are fighting. We take up the sword (offensive) and the shield (defensive), and we begin to do battle.

Verse 8: "By glory and dishonor, by evil report and good report; regarded as deceivers and yet true;"

There are nine contrasts in these remaining verses.

1. By glory and dishonor.

We see this on Palm Sunday as the crowds shouted, "Hosanna the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" Then just a few short days later they are crying out, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!"

2. By evil report and good report.

There are those who criticized His every action, and others who responded to his message and were devoted to him in Christian love.

3. Regarded as deceivers and yet true.

This is regard by others in the response to his ministry.

Let's worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing **"Onward, Christian Soldiers."** We're going to sing verses 1 and 4: *"Onward Christian soldiers, Marching as to war, With the cross of Jesus Going on before: Christ, the royal Master, Leads against the foe; Forward into battle, See, His banners go. Onward then, ye people, Join our happy throng, Blend with ours your voices In the triumph song; Glory, laud, and honor Unto Christ the King; This thru countless ages Men and angels sing. Onward, Christian soldiers, Marching as to war, With the cross of Jesus Going on before."*

December 30 — Protected by the Power of God (2 Corinthians 6:9)

2 Corinthians 6:9: “*as unknown yet well-known, as dying and behold we are living, as chastened yet not put to death.*”

Verse 9: “as unknown yet well-known, as dying and behold we are living, as chastened yet not put to death.”

Now we continue with the list of nine contrasts. We considered three of them in the previous verse yesterday. Today, we look at three more.

4. As unknown and yet well-known.

The apostle was treated as some unknown upstart in some places, and yet his name and fame had spread over the then-existing Roman world.

5. As dying and behold we are living

Paul could well have in mind the many experiences where he stared death in the face and continued to live on to proclaim the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

6. As chastened yet not put to death.

This is discipline from the hand of the Father. Hebrews 12:5-7: “and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, ‘My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, Nor faint when you are reprov’d by Him; For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives.’ It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline?”

Let’s worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing all 4 verses of “**I Am Not Skilled**”: “*I am not skilled to understand What God hath willed, what God hath plann’d; I only know at His right hand Stands One Who is my Saviour. I take Him at His word indeed: ‘Christ died for sinners,’ this I read; And in my heart I find a need Of Him to be my Saviour. And was there then no other way For God to take? I cannot say; I only bless Him, day by day, Who saved me thro’ my Saviour. That He should leave His place on high, And come for sinful man to die, You count it strange? So once did I Before I knew my Saviour.*”

December 31 — Possessing All Things (2 Corinthians 6:10)

2 Corinthians 6:10: “*As sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing yet possessing all things.*”

Verse 10: “As sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing yet possessing all things.”

There are nine contrasts we face in ministry. The apostle began in verse 8 and now we have arrived at the last ones. We can only look at each of these to realize God uses everything at His disposal to accomplish His purposes in making us more like the Savior.

7. As sorrowful yet always rejoicing.

The Lord Jesus was called “the Man of sorrows” and He was acquainted with grief. Yet the night before He died upon the cross, it is recorded of Him in John 15:11: “These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.” The key is knowing God has everything under His control! Nothing should affect our rejoicing.

Philippians 4:4: "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!"

8. As poor yet making many rich.

Matthew 5:3 in the Sermon on the Mount the Lord Jesus said: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

"As poor (in spirit) yet making many rich (in grace, in the spiritual blessings that can be theirs in Jesus Christ)." Poor in material things, but making many rich in spiritual things.

Ephesians 1:18: "I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints."

9. Having nothing yet possessing all things.

As having nothing in the financial realm and yet possessing all things in the spiritual realm.

What we have in these nine contrasts is the story of the ministry. It is how we use our sword and shield as a witness for the Lord. This is what you can expect when you serve the Lord.

Psalms 126: 5-6: "Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy. He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him."

W. Glynn Evans says:

God leads me not in a comfortable way, but in a right way. And the Lord's right way means putting me through experiences that most clearly produce His Son's image in me, many of which will make no sense. Therefore, I must walk like a blind man, trusting the hand and heart of my heavenly Father.

If only I could see the finished product, as God now sees it, I would spend the rest of my days in unceasing, overwhelming praise. I would sing, "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord." Oh, let me begin, and continue that song by faith!

Since this is our final day of the year, I have saved the best for last. I love to worship and praise the Lord by singing "**How Great Thou Art.**" Let's sing together verses 3 and 4: "*And when I think that God, His Son not sparing, Sent Him to die, I scarce can take it in – That on the cross, my burden gladly bearing, He bled and died to take away my sin! When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation And take me home, what joy shall fill my heart! Then I shall bow in humble adoration And there proclaim, my God, how great Thou art! Then sings my soul, my Savior God to Thee; How great Thou art, how great Thou art! Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee; How great Thou art, how great Thou art!*"

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