

Study of Philippians

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Introductory to Philippians

I. The City

Philippi was a Roman colony, governed by Roman laws and subject to Roman rule. It was a little Rome in the midst of a Greek culture, just as the church is a “colony of heaven” here on earth (Phil. 3:20, where “conversation” means “citizenship”). The original city, named after King Philip, who had won it from the Thracians, was noted for its gold as well as its farming. Its soil was very fertile. Check your map to see its location in Macedonia.

II. The Church

The first church founded in Europe was planted by Paul in Philippi (see Acts 16) on his second missionary journey. After Paul moved on to Thessalonica, the Philippian believers sent him support (Phil. 4:15, and see 2 Cor. 11:9). Five years later, while on his third journey, Paul visited Philippi on the way to Corinth, and then on the return trip (Acts 20:1–6). There was a deep love between Paul and the people at Philippi. Certainly their church gave the apostle little trouble! No wonder he enjoyed fellowshiping with them!

III. The Letter

The church had heard of Paul’s house arrest in Rome and wanted to send him aid. They sent one of their men (perhaps an elder) named Epaphroditus to carry their offering to the needy apostle in Rome. The journey from Philippi to Rome usually took about a month. Epaphroditus remained with Paul in Rome and ministered to him and with him, so much so, in fact, that he became ill (Phil. 2:25–30). Apparently when Paul wrote his acknowledgment to the church, he mentioned his friend’s illness. The church then became concerned about him as well as Paul. It is also possible that Epaphroditus stayed with Paul a few months too long and was criticized by the church for his tardiness. At any rate, when Epaphroditus regained his strength, Paul sent him back home with the letter that we know as the Epistle to the Philippians. Paul had several purposes in mind when he wrote the letter: (1) to explain his circumstances to friends who were concerned about him; (2) to explain Epaphroditus’ situation and defend him to his critics; (3) to thank the Philippians again for their generous support; (4) to encourage them in the Christian life; (5) to encourage the unity of the church.

IV. The Emphasis

One of the key themes in Philippians is joy. “Joy” is mentioned in one way or another nineteen times in these four brief chapters. Another emphasis is the mind. As we read Philippians, note how many times Paul talks about remembering and thinking. We can summarize the theme of the book as “the Christlike mind that brings Christian joy.” In each chapter, Paul describes the kind of mind Christians must have if they are to enjoy Christ’s peace and joy. Certainly our thoughts have a great influence on our lives, and wrong thinking leads to wrong living. We should notice in our suggested outline that there are four minds described: the single mind, the submissive mind, the spiritual mind, and the secure mind.

Of course, we should not conclude that this is the only lesson to be gained from this wonderful letter. Paul teaches us much about Christ in this epistle: Christ is our life (chap. 1), our example (chap. 2), our goal (chap. 3), and our strength (chap. 4). The word “sin” is nowhere mentioned in Philippians, and the only suggestion of sorrow is in 3:18, where Paul weeps over the professed Christians who are worldly minded and thereby dishonor Christ.

Philippians 1

Certainly Paul’s circumstances were anything but joyful! He had been arrested illegally, taken to Rome, and was now awaiting trial. There was division among the Christians there (1:14–17), and some were trying to make matters worse for the apostle. How was he able to have such joy in the midst of uncomfortable circumstances? He had the “single mind”—his concern was not for Paul, but for Christ and the Gospel. Five times in this chapter he mentions the Gospel (vv. 5, 7, 12, 17, 27), and Christ is mentioned seventeen times! Paul looked upon these circumstances as sent by God (v. 13) for the purpose of exalting Christ (v. 20). If Paul had been double-minded, he would have complained because life was so uncomfortable. The single mind is concerned with three priorities.

I. The Fellowship of the Gospel (1:1–11)

To be “in Christ” and a part of the Christian fellowship is a source of joy when things become difficult. Here is Paul, a prisoner in Rome, yet rejoicing because of the fellowship of the Gospel. Three phrases summarize his joyful attitude.

A. “I have you in my mind” (vv. 1–6).

Paul was not thinking about himself; he was thinking instead about the dear saints (set-apart ones) in far-off Philippi. Every memory was a blessing to him—including the suffering he experienced in that Philippian jail (Acts 16). As he prayed for them, he rejoiced over their salvation and growth. He knew that what Christ had begun in their lives would be completed, for Christ is the Alpha and Omega, the Author and Finisher of our faith (Rev. 1:8; Heb. 12:1–2).

B. "I have you in my heart" (vv. 7–8).

The Philippian church was composed of a mixed group of people, but they were bound together by love. Among them were wealthy Lydia, the jailer, the slave girl (all found in Acts 16), plus other believers, mostly Gentiles. They had shared in the Gospel ministry with Paul; their hearts were united in their love for Christ and each other. How different they were from the Corinthian church! (2 Cor. 12:20–21)

C. "I have you in my prayers" (vv. 9–11).

Paul always took time to pray for people; his prayer here is that they might live full lives. An empty Christian is a tragedy! He prayed that they might be full of love and discernment; that they might be faithful in their daily walk; and that they might be fruitful in Christian service. This was a prayer for Christian maturity.

II. The Furtherance of the Gospel (1:12–26)

Notice how Paul describes all the suffering he had been through; he calls these trying events "the things that have happened unto me" (1:12). Most of us would have gone into great detail about shipwreck and chains, but not Paul. His desire was to honor Christ and promote the Gospel.

A. He put Christ first (vv. 12–21).

Were there chains on his wrists? These were his "bonds in Christ." Were his enemies causing trouble by their selfish preaching? "So what? They are preaching Christ!" Were his friends worried about him and praying for him? "Fine! This will exalt Christ!" Was there a possibility that he might die? "Then Christ will be magnified by life or by death!" This is the single mind—putting Christ and the Gospel ahead of everything else.

When we take Christ into every circumstance, we will have joy. Paul was not the prisoner of Rome; he was the "prisoner of Jesus Christ" (Eph. 3:1; 4:1). The soldiers chained to his wrist were not guards; they were souls for whom Christ died. Paul had a "captive audience," and from 1:13 and 4:22, we conclude that he won some of them to Christ. The single-minded Christian does not allow circumstances to overcome him; he or she turns those circumstances into opportunities to magnify Christ and win souls.

B. He put others second (vv. 22–26).

Selfishness always breeds unhappiness. Paul had joy because he loved others. He prayed for others, encouraged others, and sought to bring joy to others. Paul's "heaven on earth" was helping others! While he longed to be with Christ, he eagerly yearned to remain and help these believers grow in Christ.

C. He put himself last.

His body was not his own; his future was not his own; his reputation was not his own. In contrast, when we put ourselves first, it always brings misery.

Whenever difficulties affect our lives, we should always be sure that we have the single mind that says, "Lord, whatever comes, I want Christ to be glorified." This is the secret of Christian joy.

III. The Faith of the Gospel (1:27–30)

There are battles to fight in the Christian life, and Paul warns here about the enemies that would attack us. New Christians go through these three stages: (1) they become sons or daughters in the family (the fellowship of the Gospel); (2) they become servants (the furtherance of the Gospel); and then (3) they become soldiers (the faith of the Gospel). Satan is out to defeat the church, and Christians need to have the single mind to face him and “fight the good fight of faith.” Paul gives several encouragements here to help the Christian defend the faith of the Gospel.

A. *“You are not standing alone” (v. 27).*

How wonderful it is to know that others are standing right with us as we fight the battles of life. There is no substitute for the unity and harmony of the Christian church. Satan is the great divider and destroyer; Christ is the uniter and builder.

B. *“You are on the winning side” (v. 28).*

“Don’t let the enemy frighten you!” Paul counsels. “He knows he’s losing and you’re winning!” The unity and faith of the believers is an “evident token” (clear omen or sign) to the enemy that he is going to lose.

C. *“It is a privilege to suffer for Christ” (vv. 29–30).*

It is wonderful to believe on Christ and receive the free gift of salvation, but there is another gift: the gift of suffering for Jesus’ sake. Philippians 3:10 points out that our suffering is in fellowship with Him; see also Acts 5:41. What a privilege to follow in the train of such saints as Paul as we suffer for Jesus’ sake!

But, whatever happens, a Christian should always act like a Christian. “Let your behavior be such that it can be identified with the Gospel,” Paul warns in 1:27. Someone once asked Gandhi, “What is the greatest hindrance to Christian missions in India?” Gandhi replied, “Christians.” Such criticism may also apply to Christians in other lands besides India. Even in the midst of battle, we must behave like Christians.

In the midst of trouble, Paul showed quiet confidence. He was confident that the Philippians would continue in their Christian walk (v. 6); he was rejoicing that his trials had given the believers in Rome new confidence (v. 14); and he was confident that he would come through these trials and be restored to his friends again (v. 25). This is the blessing of the single mind—that joyful confidence in God, knowing that He is in control of circumstances.

Philippians 2

Circumstances may cause us to lose our joy, but *people* can also bring trials that rob us of joy. How many times we lose our peace and joy because of what people say or do. The best remedy for these trials is the submissive mind, the humble mind that seeks only to honor Christ. Pride is the cause of much unrest and contention (read James 4), but humility brings peace and joy. Paul gives four examples for us to follow so that we may achieve the submissive mind.

I. The Example of Christ (2:1–11)

There is the suggestion in this passage of disunity in the Philippian church (see also 4:1–3). Paul appeals to them on the basis of their Christian experience to have unity of mind and heart and to put others ahead of themselves. What motives are there for unity in the church? Christ is the greatest incentive; if we are in Christ, we ought to be able to live with one another! Other incentives include love, the fellowship of the Spirit, the deep-seated desires we have in Christ, and the joy we can bring to others. Paul saw strife and selfish ambition among the Roman believers (1:14–17), and he warns that it must not be present at Philippi. “Lowliness of mind”—this is the submissive mind that thinks not of itself but of Christ and others. “Humility is not thinking meanly of ourselves; it is just not thinking of ourselves at all.” Paul points to the attitude of Christ before His incarnation. Was He selfishly trying to hold on to His privileges as God? No! He willingly laid aside His glory and “put on” the form of a servant. He did not cease to be God, but He did lay aside His glory and the independent use of His attributes as God. His life as the God-Man on earth was completely subjected to the Father. “I do always those things that please Him” (John 8:29). Jesus humbled Himself to become flesh, and then to become sin as He willingly went to the cross.

But Christ’s experience proves that exaltation always follows humiliation. “Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time,” promises 1 Peter 5:6. The person who exalts himself will be humbled (Luke 14:11). Remember what happened to Pharaoh, King Saul, Nebuchadnezzar, Haman, and Herod? We do not worship a “babe in a manger” or a “sacrifice on a cross”; we worship an exalted Lord seated on the throne of the universe. Christ’s life, death, and resurrection proved eternally that the way to be exalted is to be humbled before God. There is no joy or peace in pride and self-seeking. When we have the submissive mind that Christ had, then we will have the joy and peace that He alone can give.

II. The Example of Paul (2:12–18)

Wherever there is the submissive mind, there will be sacrifice and service. This was true of Christ (vv. 7–8), Paul (v. 17), Timothy (vv. 21–22), and Epaphroditus (v. 30). The single mind leads to the submissive mind: as we seek to live for Christ, we live for others. How true this was in Paul’s life! The secret? Christians allow God to work in them. The flesh cannot “work up” humility or dedication; this must come from within by the power of the Spirit. God works in us before He works through us, and He uses the Word (1 Thes. 2:13), the Spirit (Eph. 3:16, 20–21), and prayer.

Paul gives us several pictures of Christians who have the submissive mind. He portrays them as obedient children of God, seeking to honor the Father; as stars shining in a dark world; and as athletes who hold out their batons to the next runner. In vv. 17–18, Paul describes himself as a drink-offering being poured out on the altar. Where there is the submissive mind, the humble mind, there must be sacrifice and service.

III. The Example of Timothy (2:19–24)

Paul called Timothy his “son in the faith” because he had won this lad to Christ. (See Acts 16:1–5; 2 Tim. 1:1–6; 1 Cor. 4:15–17.) Like Paul, Timothy lived for others, not for self. Too many Christians live in the way discussed in Phil. 2:21 instead of that in Phil. 1:21! Timothy was Paul’s helper and representative and had proved himself faithful to the Lord. Though a young man, he knew how to serve Christ and was willing to sacrifice for Him.

Paul did not call Timothy into service right away; he let him stay at home and grow for five or six years. Timothy had a good testimony of service at home when Paul added him to his missionary staff (Acts 16:2; 1 Tim. 3:6–7). It is dangerous to give new Christians important tasks right away.

IV. The Example of Epaphroditus (2:25–30)

A. *He was a balanced Christian (v. 25).*

He was a brother, which means he knew the fellowship of the Gospel; a companion in labor, which tied him to the furtherance of the Gospel; and a fellow soldier, which means he knew how to battle for the faith of the Gospel. How easy it is for Christians to get out of balance! Some Christians think only of the fellowship, the brotherhood, and have no time to win souls or fight the enemy. Others are so wrapped up in service that they forget fellowship. This was the mistake Martha made (Luke 10:38–42). Still others are always fighting, so much so that they neglect fellowship and service. We need to be balanced Christians.

B. *He was a burdened Christian (vv. 26–27).*

He had the submissive mind and thought of others, not self. Though he was sick, and almost died, his burden was for Paul and the church back at Philippi. We need more Christians who are burdened not only for foreign missions, but also for their own local churches.

C. *He was a blessed Christian (vv. 28–30).*

What a blessing Epaphroditus was to Paul! How he must have encouraged Paul in those difficult days as they prayed and labored together. He was also a blessing to his own church. He made it possible for the Philippians to share in Paul’s important ministry. Moreover, Epaphroditus is a blessing to us today! Here we are, centuries later, studying his character and benefiting from his life and ministry!

Faithful servants of Christ ought to be honored in the right way. “Receive him in the Lord” is Paul’s admonition. See 1 Thes. 5:12–13. “Hold such in reputation” (v. 29) in no way contradicts 2:7, “made Himself of no reputation.” The phrase in 2:7 literally means that Christ emptied Himself. Paul told the church to show proper honor to their leader because he “gambled his life” (v. 30, “not regarding his life”) for their service to Paul.

How different it is for us to exercise the submissive mind, the mind of Christ! Walking by sight as we do, we think that to humble ourselves means to lose; yet the Word teaches that the only way up is down. Christ had the submissive mind, and God highly exalted Him. Paul, Timothy, and Epaphroditus had the submissive mind, and they were honored for their sacrifice and service. The best way to get the victory over people and

pride is through the submissive mind, the mind of Christ. And we receive this mind only as we allow the Spirit and the Word to work in our lives (vv. 12–13).

Philippians 3

Too many Christians get wrapped up in “things” and lose the joy and peace they ought to have in Christ. They “mind earthly things” (3:19) and lack that spiritual mind of the dedicated believer. Notice how many times the word “things” is used in this chapter. Here Paul describes the spiritual mind—the mind that thinks God’s thoughts and is directed toward God’s goals. Read Rom. 8:1–17 for more about the spiritual mind. In this chapter, Paul describes his past, present, and future, a full biography of the Christian life.

I. **Salvation: The Christian’s Past (3:1–11)**

Paul was religious before he was saved, but his religion could not save him. He had to lose his religion in order to find eternal life! He begins this chapter by warning the believers against religion apart from Christ. The Jews called the Gentiles “dogs,” but here Paul uses the term “dogs” to describe the Jewish teachers who emphasized circumcision and keeping the Law. (We met those teachers in Acts 15 and Galatians.) In fact, he does not even call the rite “circumcision”; he calls it “concision,” which means “a cutting, a mutilation of the flesh.” True worship is in the Spirit (John 4:20–24) and not in the flesh; it honors Jesus Christ, not religious leaders; it depends on God’s grace, not on fleshly strength. How much of what passes for the Christian faith in this world is really only fleshly religion.

Paul had the best possible reputation as a Jewish rabbi. In birth and training, he far surpassed all of his friends (see Gal. 1:11–24). He was sincere too; his Jewish religion meant life and death to him. So sincere was he that he even persecuted those who differed with him. If any man could get to heaven on the basis of character and religion, it was Paul—and yet he was a lost sinner apart from Jesus Christ! When he met Christ, he considered all of his earthly and fleshly attainments mere rubbish! “I counted” (v. 7) is the way he puts it. He measured carefully, took stock of himself, and decided that all of his religion and worldly honors were not worth it. He wanted Christ!

What did Paul obtain through faith in Christ? Righteousness, for one thing (v. 9). Paul had plenty of legal righteousness (v. 6), but he lacked that true righteousness that God demands and that He alone can give. It is one thing to be religious enough to get into the synagogue, and quite another to be righteous enough to get into heaven. Paul also obtained a personal knowledge of Christ. Salvation is not knowing about Christ; it is knowing Him (John 17:3). Paul also experienced resurrection power (see Eph. 3:14ff) in his life. Added to these blessings was the privilege of suffering for Christ (Phil. 1:29). Finally, through Christ he was given a new promise: the “out-resurrection from the dead” (v. 11). The Jews believed in the resurrection, that is, a general resurrection at the end of the age; but Christ introduced a resurrection of the just out from among the dead.

This is called the first resurrection (1 Thes. 4:13–18; Rev. 20:5). When Paul says “If by any means ...” he is not suggesting uncertainty but humility. To think that he, a murderer, should share in that glorious resurrection!

II. Sanctification: The Christian’s Present (3:12–16)

In the previous section, Paul is a “spiritual accountant” figuring his gains and losses. In this section he is a runner, pressing toward the prize. The figure of a runner is a favorite with Paul (see 1 Cor. 9:25–27; 1 Thes. 2:19–20; Heb. 12:1–3; 2 Tim. 2:5). Of course, Paul is not suggesting that we run to get to heaven! The Olympic runners in ancient Greece had to be citizens of the nation they represented. They also had to be free men, not slaves. The unsaved sinner is a slave, but the Christian is a citizen of heaven (3:20) and has been set free by Christ. Each Christian is given a special place on the “track” for his or her own service, and each one has a goal established by Christ. Our task in life is to “lay hold of that for which Christ laid hold of us” (v. 13). Paul is not talking about salvation but sanctification—growth and progress in Christian life and service.

How do we reach the goal God has set for us? For one thing, we must be honest with ourselves and admit where we are: as Paul declared. “Not that I have already attained” (v. 12). Then, we must keep our eyes of faith on Christ and forget the past—past sins and failures, and also past successes. We must press on in His power. The Christian life is not a game; it is a race that demands the very best that is in us: “This one thing I do” (v. 13). Too many Christians live divided lives. One part enjoys the things of the world and the other part tries to live for the Lord. They get ambitious for “things” and start minding earthly ambitions. Our calling is a “high calling” and a “heavenly calling”; and if we live for this world, we lose the prize that goes with our high calling.

III. Glorification: The Christian’s Future (3:17–21)

Nothing will keep our minds spiritual more than looking for the coming of Christ. “Watch out for the worldly crowd!” Paul warns his readers. He expresses here great sorrow in a letter filled otherwise with joy. Paul is weeping over the professed Christians whose lives were bearing the fruit of worldly-mindedness. He describes them: (1) they mind earthly things, which means they think only of this world and what it has to offer; (2) they live for the flesh, for their god is their stomach; and (3) their end is destruction! These people are the enemies of the Cross of Christ. The Cross defeated the world and the flesh; the Cross speaks of sacrifice and suffering, yet these people live for the world and seek only to please themselves. What an awful thing, to be an enemy of the Cross, yet a professed Christian!

Our citizenship (“conversation”) is in heaven (v. 20). When people become members of God’s family, their names are written down in heaven (Luke 10:20). They become citizens of heaven. This means that they live for the glory of heaven and not for the praise of this earth. Citizens should honor their own countries, and surely the Christian will honor heaven! The people in Philippi were governed not by Macedonian laws, but by Roman laws; likewise, the church lives by heaven’s laws. Philippi was a colony of Rome in Macedonia, and Christians make up a colony of heaven on earth. Many times

the laws of heaven conflict with the laws of earth, but our responsibility is to obey God, not men.

What a blessed future the citizen of heaven has! Paul proclaims, “We shall be like Him!” This humble body (“vile” means “body of humiliation”) will be changed to be like His glorious body. Read 1 Thes. 4:13–18 to see what a happy event the return of Christ will be for the saint. Of course, this will be a day of resurrection and reunion, but it will also be a day of reckoning and reward. May we be found faithful to Him and not ashamed at His coming (1 John 2:28–3:3).

Philippians 4

Worry, worry, worry! How many Christians lose their joy and peace because of worry! In this chapter, Paul tells us that the secure mind—the mind that is guarded by the peace of God—frees us from worry. Of course, the believer who does not have the single mind (chap. 1), the submissive mind (chap. 2), and the spiritual mind (chap. 3) can never have the secure mind. We must first live what Paul describes in the previous three chapters before we can claim the promises and provisions of this final chapter.

What is worry? Our English word “worry” comes from an Anglo-Saxon word that means “to strangle”; worry certainly does strangle people physically, emotionally, and spiritually. The Bible term “be careful” or “be anxious” means literally “to be torn apart.” Worry comes when the thoughts in our mind and feelings in our heart pull in different directions and “tear us apart.” The mind thinks about problems, and these feelings weigh down the heart, creating a vicious circle that wrecks our emotional state. Our minds tell us we should not fret, but we often cannot control the anxiety in our hearts! We have to break this circle of worry before we can enjoy peace.

What causes worry? Wrong thinking and attitudes toward people, circumstances, or things. Notice here in chapter 4 that Paul has no worry about people (vv. 1–5), circumstances (vv. 10–13), or the material things of life (vv. 14–19). Of course, Paul had the single mind of chapter 1 and gained victory over circumstances; he had the submissive mind of chapter 2 and overcame troublesome people; and he had the spiritual mind of chapter 3 and triumphed over physical circumstances. So it was natural for him to have the secure mind of chapter 4. His mind and heart were at peace and could not be disturbed by people, circumstances, or things. In this chapter, Paul gives us God’s four-fold remedy for worry.

I. God’s Presence (4:1–5)

“The Lord is at hand” does not mean “His coming is soon,” but that He is near to help us right now. Euodia and Syntyche (v. 2) were two women in the Philippian church at odds with each other, and Paul encouraged them to make things right. Remember this: worry often comes when we do not make things right with people. We must face differences honestly and do what God wants us to do (see Matt. 18:15–17).

“Moderation” in v. 5 means “sweet reasonableness.” It is wonderful when Christians can have convictions and yet be easy to get along with! If we keep in mind that the Lord is with us in every circumstance, then it is easy to obey Him and get along with other people. If we would but rejoice in Him and get our eyes on Him instead of on people, we would have His joy and peace. Note the admonitions Paul gives: stand fast in the Lord; be of one mind in the Lord; rejoice in the Lord; the Lord is near at hand! This is “practicing the presence of Christ,” seeing Him in every situation of life, and letting Him work out His perfect will.

II. God’s Peace (4:6–9)

“Peace with God” is the result of faith in Christ (Rom. 5:1); “the peace of God” and the presence of “the God of peace” will come when the believer practices right thinking, right praying, and right living. Worry is tension between the mind and heart. The peace of God will guard (garrison) our hearts and minds if we but meet the conditions He gives.

A. *Right praying* (vv. 6–7).

Not just praying, but *right* praying. The Bible nowhere says that any kind of praying will bring peace to our hearts. What is right praying? It begins with adoration, for this is what the word “prayer” means in v. 6. This is love, enjoying the presence of God, honoring Him in worship. Rushing into His presence and begging for peace of mind will never get results. We must bow before Him in worship and let Him search our hearts and minds. Next comes supplication, which means the earnest, sincere desire of the heart. True prayer comes from the heart, not the lips. What a joy it is to present our requests to Him! Finally, there is appreciation or thanksgiving (see Eph. 5:20 and Col. 3:15–17). It takes faith to thank Him for uncomfortable circumstances or for requests not yet granted. How God loves to hear His children thank Him! Read Dan. 6:10 and you will see that this is the way Daniel prayed. No wonder he had such peace in that lions’ den!

B. *Right thinking* (v. 8).

Peace involves the mind (see Isa. 26:3 and Rom. 8:6). Thoughts are powerful; “as he thinketh, so he is” (Prov. 23:7). Wrong thoughts will lead to unrest and discouragement, but spiritual thinking will lead to peace. Paul tells us in this verse what to think about; if you compare these virtues to Ps. 19:7–9, you will see that the Word of God meets all of these requirements. Meditation on the Word of God will always bring peace (Ps. 119:165).

C. *Right living* (v. 9).

If there is something in my life I dare not pray about, then I will never have peace. Right living always brings peace; see Isa. 32:17 and 48:18, 22. It is not enough to use the Bible as a basis for praying and claiming its promises; we must also use it as a basis for our living, obeying its precepts. Read carefully James 4:1–11 and note that wrong praying (4:3), wrong living (4:4), and wrong thinking (4:8) produce war instead of peace!

III. God's Power (4:10–13)

Paul was never the victim of circumstances; he had learned by experience the secret of peace: "I can do all things through Christ who energizes me!" The J.B. Phillips translation says, "I am ready for anything through the strength of the One who lives in me" (v. 13, PH). Turn back to Phil. 2:12–13 and you will see that God cannot work through us until first He works in us; He works in us through His Word (1 Thes. 2:13), through prayer by the Spirit (Eph. 2:14ff), and sometimes through suffering (1 Peter 5:10). If we depend on our own power, we will fail; but if we depend on His strength, we can do all things through Him. This explains why Paul could rejoice even in prison: he had learned the secret of the secure mind through the power of God.

IV. God's Provision (4:14–23)

How easy it is to worry about "things"! Jesus warns us in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 6:19–34) that we must not worry about things, but we do it just the same. Paul had peace in his heart concerning his personal needs, for God had promised to supply all of them! Paul thanks the Philippians for their gifts and assures them that the spiritual meaning of their gifts is far more important to him than the gifts themselves. What a blessing it is to know that our gifts are looked upon as spiritual sacrifices to the Lord that rejoice His heart! Paul believed in the providence of God, that God was in control of events and that He was able to meet every need (Rom. 8:28). When the child of God is in the will of God, all of the universe works for him; but when the child of God is out of the will of God, everything works against him. This is the providence of God.