

***“Paul's Letter to the Philippians —
A Thank You Note Never to be Forgotten
Part 2”***

Introduction:

Last time we began an overview of Paul's epistle to the believers in Philippi. Today we will finish up that “view from the top”, as it were.

Again, as I said last time, we should think of this letter as very possibly the only letter from the hand of the apostle that these saints would have had available to them for years. In the ancient world written documents were exceedingly costly and only the wealthy and the government would be able to own them. So this letter would have been read over and over again many, many times, and would have been put to memory without question.

Review: “A Thank You Note Never to be Forgotten”

- ***Its Very Language, even the Words Themselves, Compel Our Careful Study — Take Special Note (and there are 12 of them as I count them today!) - TWELVE DIMENSIONS OF BLESSEDNESS ARE REFLECTED HERE SO POWERFULLY***

Does that make a difference to us students of the word of truth? WHAT IF THESE WORDS WERE THE ONLY WORDS FROM THE LORD GOD THAT YOU POSSESSED? WHAT IF . . ? WHAT A TREASURE INDEED THESE WORDS FROM GOD'S (AND PAUL'S) PEN ARE.

Last time we considered the first seven dimensions of our blessedness as believers today living under God's abundant grace:

- ***Its Very Language Compels Our Careful Study — Take Special Note:***
 - ***As we have seen, these words themselves provide the best outline of the letter. They provide a structure of truth intended for transforming our thinking and our living:***

1. Our Sanctification in Christ Jesus (1:1 & 4:21, 22)

Phil. 1:1 Paul and Timotheus, the **servants** of Jesus Christ, to all **the saints in Christ Jesus** which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:

- ***Paul and Timothy are bond-slaves of Christ and this letter is written to all the “saints” “in Christ Jesus” in Philippi. This is so Pauline.***

2. Our Abundant Grace (1:2, 7, 4:23):

Phil. 1:2 Grace [be] unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and [from] the Lord Jesus Christ.

Phil. 1:7 Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, **and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace.**

- ***We have here the salutation and its reaffirmation in verse 7. Grace abounds! This is a key teaching in this letter.***

3. Our Precious Fellowship (1:3-6 & 4:15-16)

Phil. 1:3-6

3 I thank my God upon every remembrance of you,
4 Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy,
5 For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now;
6 Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform [it] until the day of Jesus Christ:

- ***And though “good works” are needed and a blessing to many, and though the specific good work is identified here as financial, it says explicitly here that this good work is the work of God who has “begun it” and who will “complete it”. And this is a promise! The end point of this is at the Judgment Seat of Christ, it seems. Most blessed!***

4. Our Special Governing Relationships (1:27 & 3:20-21)

Phil. 1:27 Only let your **conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ:** that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind [soul] striving together for the faith of the gospel;

- *This word “conversation” speaks of the governing principles in the church regarding our living out of the faith. The constitution of our country is a valid illustration of this. Here it is the gospel itself that is the measure.*

5. **Our Striving Together, Standing Fast (1:27, 4:1-3)**

Phil. 1:27 Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye **stand fast in one spirit, with one mind [soul] striving together** for the faith of the gospel;

- *“Standing fast” and “striving together”. Those are God’s carefully chosen words here. What are ours? Note that it is the gospel itself that is the measure here.*
- *This means at the minimum a common purpose and passion. I assume Paul is thinking of the two women mentioned later regarding this. He uses similar wording in chapter 4.*
- *Paul exhorts strongly here but take note that his exhortation is not simply for unity. We often today hear such preaching and teachings as if unity is a be-all and end-all eclipsing all other goals for believers today. No. Paul exhorts that these dear ones be included with the others who are a witness of “one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel”. In fact, it is implied here that the ministry itself demands unity of purpose regarding the “faith of the gospel” itself. Without that unity there is no true and spiritual ministry at all. That is what the apostle implies here.*
- *This message is so very much needed today with the fallout of “ecumenical” evangelism of Graham and many others and the follow-ons of the “church growth” movement and the current Neo-liberal so-called “emergent” movement with its mega- and “seeker friendly” emphasis. These ministries are strangely lacking in true Bible teaching and the preaching and teaching of the gospel of the grace of God.*

6. **Our Gospel and Its Defined Faith** (1:5,12, 17, 27 (2), 2:22, 4:3, 15)

Phil. 1:27 Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for **the faith of the gospel**;

- ***“becometh the gospel” & “the faith of the gospel”: Our “motives” are everything, our “mind-set” is critical. This is a weighty matter indeed. If our gospel were one “of works”, then law and works of law would dominate everything (as in Gal. 3:12). But the gospel of grace is “of faith” and therefore that faith dominates (or should dominate) all of life.***

7. **Our Singleness of Mind** (The Examples of Christ & Paul) — many, many occurrences, “to think carefully” or “to mind”, used 10 times in Phil., (esp. 2:5) (1:7, 2:2 (2), 5, 3:15 (2), 16, 19, 4:2, 10)

Phil. 2:5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

- ***This is the “capstone” of this teaching here. It makes all the difference “how” we are thinking. That is the main focus of this entire letter, isn’t it? This letter is “correctional”, for the Philippians had failed to exemplify the heavenly teaching that they had received concerning the believer’s position and blessings “in Christ Jesus”. The REMEDY THEREFORE is in the realm of GODLY THINKING:***

Phil. 1:30 Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear [to be] in me . . .

Phil. 2:1-3

1 . . . If [there be] therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies,

2 Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, [being] of one accord, of one mind.

3 [Let] nothing [be done] through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.

- ***This is a “conflict” of mind bearing visible fruit. It is a highly positive and spiritual virtue carried out through holy living. And, the ministry of the gospel is its primary focus here.***
- ***The question we should ask: How important do you think Paul’s testimony was for the Philippians believers? How important is it to us? I should remind you that this is a very personal and serious question. Any testimonies?***

Today’s Teaching:

- ***Its Very Language [Still] Compels Our Careful Study — Take Special Note:***
 - ***The words themselves provide the best outline of the letter. As we shall see, they provide a compelling structure for our thinking and our living. AS WE HAVE SEEN ALREADY, WE FIND HERE TWELVE DIMENSIONS OF BLESSEDNESS AND WE FINISH UP TODAY WITH THE FINAL FIVE:***

8. Our Joining Together with One Spirit & Soul (1:27, 4:2)

[READ] Phil. 1:27 Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;

Phil. 4:2 I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord.

- ***Oneness in spirit, soul and mind is the opportunity and privilege of the saints. The apostle here exhorts two members of this assembly who have a problem in this area. Not many are named in this letter and some are named because of their good example for others. But not so with these two, for they are named because their disunity is harming not only themselves but others. In***

the churches today there is so much need for honoring this calling — a true unity of the spirit indeed.

9. **Our Blessings, Filled with the Abundant Supply — (1:11 [comp. 19] & 4:18-19)**

[READ] Phil. 1:11 Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

[READ] Phil. 4:18-19

18 But I have all, and abound: **I am full**, having received of Epaphroditus the things [which were sent] from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God.

19 But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

- *Our “filling” is very much the focus here in this letter as seen here. Without it believers are surely tossed to and fro and can have no sure purpose or direction, spiritually speaking. Their ministries may look good on the outside but inside is what the carnal nature is capable of — and that is evil. What is so needed always is the filling that is of God, our Lord Jesus and his spirit.*
- *Filling and supply. They go together. The latter exceeds the former. Without the supply there can be no filling in the daily course of life. See chapter 1 and verse 19, “the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ”. Indeed, so blessed is the thought expressed here. And so much more even would be the reality.*

10. **Our Shared Sufferings & Persecutions for Christ’s Sake (1:29, 3:10 with many refs. To Paul’s “bonds” and ours as well as in 1:7, 13, 14, 16)**

[READ] Phil. 1:29-30

29 For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;

30 Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear [to be] in me.

[READ] Phil. 3:10 That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death

- ***A major theme in this letter is suffering for Christ's sake. Paul is to be our example of suffering as chapter 1 and verse 30 make so clear. Chapter 3 and verse 10 records one of the most powerful statements in all of the word of God. His example of suffering is highlighted here by his desire to fully show in his body the very dying of his Lord Jesus and his glorious resurrection. Amen.***

“...That I may know him”:

“and the power of his resurrection”:

“and the fellowship of his sufferings”:

“being made conformable unto his death”:

- ***With that powerful testimony of Paul clearly in mind, the following verses compose what is probably the most important exhortation in the entire letter and also one that is quite distinctive indeed. May the apostle's full meaning here be realized in us as we come to understand clearly the power of this truth expressed here:***

11. Our Hope of “Out-Resurrection” & The Prize of Upward Calling (3:14)

[READ] Phil. 3:11-14

11 . . . If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

12 Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.

13 Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but [this] one thing [I do], forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,

14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

- ***“... if by any means . . . attain unto”: = “since by some means . . . reach the goal, receive the blessing”. It is clear Paul was not in any doubt of the possibility of this***

though he was also not assured of reaching it as the next verses indicate.

- *“... the resurrection of the dead”: Lit. The “out-resurrection”, the one “out from among” others who were “dead”, or, “dead while they liveth”.*
- *The race set before with its “mark” or “end point”, “finish line” and then the awarded “prize”: This analogy is central to this letter and others as we have seen.*
 - *Races may be won but the rules must be adhered to or there will be a disqualification. Have you considered the Christian life this way as a race to be won? You should. We are all assured of resurrection and the glory of heaven with Christ. We are not assured of the prize referred to here. But it is available. Paul greatly desired it. Do you? Or I?*
- *What does this all mean? Perhaps now, Lord willing, we may arrive at some certainty. There are not many possibilities to consider:*
 - *This is a new and different physical resurrection than what others would experience. Compare with the one promised to Daniel in Dan. 12:11-13.*
 - *This is not intended to be understood as physical at all, but is rather spiritual. Perhaps it is simply the “special” reward or prize (or crown?) that he is referring to.*
 - *Or, perhaps it is only an issue of “order” as in 1 Cor. 15 where the “orders” of the resurrection are mentioned and ours is distinguished as part of the “mystery” revelation given only to Paul.*
 - *My judgment on this is that the second meaning is far better than the first. Bodily resurrection is not in view here but resurrection life from the dead is at the heart of Paul’s teaching here:*

- *The near context is often key. Resurrection has already been mentioned in this letter, in the previous verse 10 in fact: “That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death”*
- *Of course there may also be a future component of this at the Judgment Seat of Christ when rewards will be given. See 1 Cor. 3:11-15 and 2 Tim. 4:6-8 for this among other references.*
- *So, bodily resurrection is most likely not in view here but rather resurrection life of the spirit apart from the dead ones all around us is at the heart of Paul’s teaching here.*

12. Our Example, Paul, with Christ Above All (3:17 [“type” and “followers”], and many, many, others by implication as 4:9)

SAVE FOR NEXT TIME - Paul’s example and its value

Conclusions:

It is so important that we have the time to properly consider this aspect of Paul’s teaching here. We and all saints today really do need to take it to heart. To do otherwise, and to follow in effect after false teachers in Paul’s rightful and Christ-ordained place is to do great damage to the gospel of grace and the cause of Christ. Following Christ today is not possible unless we do so by following Paul. Well, more on this next time.

For now, let us run the race and seek the prize of his high calling in Christ Jesus. Let us hope therefore for the out-resurrection, the one standing out from the dead ones. Let us like Paul come to know him well, “and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death”.

Rejoice always and enjoy his grace and his abounding peace, in the midst of a dead and dark world. May we surround ourselves with others who do the same.

There are two alternatives here stated and an additional one implied: Enemies of the cross of Christ or bond-slaves of Christ and his redeeming love and grace.

Those are our choices. Or, one can be in the race but not running it well or lawfully, like so many today. Uncompetitive in the greatest challenge of our lives — our living life to its fullest, filled to overflowing with the never-ending supply of God's grace in Christ Jesus.

Run well! So be it.