

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

AN EXPOSITIONAL STUDY OF THE LETTER TO THE PHILIPPIANS
WITH SPECIFIC APPLICATION TO CHRISTIAN WOMEN
SERVING VOCATIONALLY OR VOLUNTARILY
IN LOCAL CHURCH MINISTRY

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Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary
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DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

By

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LIBERTY UNIVERSITY BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

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ABSTRACT

AN EXPOSITION OF THE LETTER TO THE PHILIPPIANS WITH SPECIFIC APPLICATION TO CHRISTIAN WOMEN SERVING VOCATIONALLY OR VOLUNTARILY IN LOCAL CHURCH MINISTRY

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Liberty University Baptist Theological Seminary, 2013

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This thesis will reference the exposition, research, cultural background, and exegesis of over fifty Bible Commentaries, Bible Dictionaries, New Testament Greek word study texts, and additional writings on the Letter to the Philippians making specific application to Christian women serving vocationally or voluntarily in local church ministry. Currently, there is no resource providing both a synthesis of the writings of leading commentaries along with specific practical application for the vocational or volunteer Christian women in ministry regarding every unit of thought within the Philippians Letter. This thesis will fill this gap with a strong example of how a contemporary expositor can make specific and practical applications to Christian women, based upon sound biblical exposition of the Letter to the Philippians. Upon completion, this thesis will provide specific applications based upon sound biblical exposition and a valuable resource to encourage and guide women serving within a local church ministry.

Abstract Length: 148 words.

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CHAPTER 1

THE INTRODUCTION

For this thesis, this writer chose to exposit the Letter to the Philippians and make specific application to Christian women who are serving vocationally and voluntarily in local church ministry. This writer has chosen this approach and this specific audience for two major reasons: (1) She has experienced the power and relevance of the Word of God in her own life. Those defining moments have persuaded her to trust in the Word of God and allow it to guide her every action and decision as she has served in local church ministry. (2) In addition, this writer has observed the power and effectiveness of the Word of God in the lives of many women with whom she has had the privilege of ministering in local church ministry. Because she has seen the truths of the Word of God spiritually enhance, equip, and enrich many fellow Christians, she feels compelled to draw all believers to the Word of God prior to forming guiding principles for their lives.

The Word of God has proven itself to be a sure foundation of hope, peace, and comfort in this writer's personal life. That solid foundation motivates her to base all of her daily life and ministry decisions upon the Word of God. One example of how the Word of God provides a sure foundation in this writer's personal life is in raising her children. She makes it a habit to research the Word of God in order to show them how to have a God-honoring perspective on their life situations and to learn the moral reason "why" we as believers behave in a certain manner. As a mother, she finds herself

researching the Word of God many times regarding the issue of relationships with her children. She uses the Word of God as her guidebook in teaching them about life. And every time she approaches the Word of God on this issue, she has never been left without sound counsel to provide for her children. A welcomed result of this has been that as her children have witnessed her example, they have come to trust the Word of God themselves. In fact, now they require both her and her husband to teach them what the Word of God says regarding their various life situations.

The Word of God has also proven itself to be a sure foundation of hope, peace, and comfort in the lives of many women with whom this writer has had the privilege to minister in local church ministry. When she has been asked to personally offer counsel to Christian women who seek to know God's timing in a particular situation, the Word of God consistently provides the foundation for wise counsel. Through the years, several Christian women have approached this writer to ask for help regarding what the Word of God teaches when their desired timetable and God's timetable disagree. Just as she researched the Word of God in her personal life and with her family, she has also discussed her exposition of the Word of God regarding God's patience and perfect timing (e.g., John 11), so these women could make specific relevant application to their lives. Once again, this writer is persuaded that biblical exposition is the only sure foundation that can provide hope, peace, and comfort as it has provided such a foundation for many women in her ministerial experience.

For these two major reasons, she believes it is important to provide accurate and specific applications to any Christian based upon a verse-by-verse exposition of the Word of God. Making applications to one's life devoid of performing sound exposition prior to

the formation of the life application is like getting in the car and driving to a never-visited-before vacation spot without ever consulting directions via a map or a global positioning system prior to departing on the journey. And while there are helpful books and manuals that can show prototypes of how to conduct ministry in particular fields, this writer finds no substitute for application that is derived directly from sound biblical exposition.

A Statement of the Problem(s)

Unfortunately, many Bible studies make applications that are not based upon sound biblical exposition. In addition, there are not many Bible studies for Christian women in ministry which derive all of their applications directly from the Word of God. Rather, the majority of applications are based on personal experience alone. Knowing that the Word of God should be the tool that guides, directs, enlightens and admonishes the believer in their walk (cf. 2 Tim 3:16), it seemed appropriate and right to first exposit a portion of Scripture prior to deriving practical applications. To be sure, there are some Bible studies that strive to accomplish the same goal that this writer is striving to accomplish in this thesis, that is, deriving every application from sound biblical exposition, but she has not yet found any Bible study that focuses on this type of sound biblical exposition of the Letter to the Philippians and forms their application for Christian women serving either vocationally or voluntarily within local church ministry. This thesis will fill this gap with a strong example of how a contemporary expositor can make specific and practical applications to Christian women, based upon sound biblical exposition of the Letter to the Philippians.

A Statement of Limitations

This thesis will apply directly to Christian women serving vocationally or voluntarily within local church ministry. Even though every Christian could benefit from the biblical exposition provided in this thesis, all of the applications are framed specifically to address Christian women serving vocationally or voluntarily within local church ministry. Christian women serving vocationally or voluntarily within local church ministry is defined below.

Christian Women: The definition of “Christian” in the phrase “Christian Women” is an individual who has accepted Jesus Christ as her personal Savior by believing that: (1) Jesus is God; (2) Jesus lived a sinless life; (3) Jesus died physically upon a cross; (4) Jesus bodily rose from the dead; (5) Jesus’ death is the only sufficient and atoning payment for her sin. The word “women” in the phrase “Christian women” in this thesis refers to any woman that is post-high school age (approximately 18 years old and beyond).

Serving Vocationally: This phrase refers to Christian women who are compensated for the contractual services they provide in local church ministry (e.g., Women’s Ministry Director, Children’s Ministry Director, Youth Leader, Outreach Coordinator, etc.).

Serving Voluntarily: This phrase refers to Christian women who are not compensated for the services they provide in local church ministry. However, women who volunteer are equally as important as those who serve vocationally in local church ministry.

Local Church Ministry: Even though the author of this thesis appreciates para-church ministries, this phrase will restrict all applications to Christian women serving in local church ministry and not para-church ministry.

These succinct references should be understood as synonyms to the specific definitions regarding the audience provided above. From this point forward, the reader should understand that the specific audience will be referred to only as “Christian women,” “Christian woman,” or “Women in ministry,” or “We,” etc. In addition to directing all the applications in this thesis to specifically “Christian women serving vocationally or voluntarily within local church ministry,” this thesis limits its exposition to the Letter to the Philippians.

The Letter to the Philippians was chosen for three reasons: First, Paul makes many practical applications to the Christians who lived in Philippi that could easily be applied to local church ministry today. Second, Philippians was written in an informal, friendly manner which parallels the tone in which I desire to make specific applications in this thesis. Finally, Paul addresses Christian women serving in ministry in portions of the Letter to the Philippians, thus providing specific applications within the text.

In addition to the definition of “Christian women serving vocationally or voluntarily within local church ministry” as stated above, the following limitations serve as perimeters in which this study will conduct its research and present its findings and application.

1. While it is possible to provide a more thorough background and level of exegesis on verses, words, and unit of thoughts within the Letter to the Philippians, this thesis references only enough research comments in order to make clear, accurate, and

specific applications to Christian women serving vocationally or voluntarily in local church ministry.

2. While it would have been possible to perform the level of exposition defined within this thesis for every verse within the Letter to the Philippians, this thesis makes sufficient expositional comments in order to make specific application to Christian women serving vocationally or voluntarily in local church ministry on only the “main thought” of the unit of thought (which could include exposition of verses, words, or phrases), due to required space constraints. Likewise, some theologically substantive portions of the Letter to the Philippians were not commented upon if it required a level of exposition that would rival an existing technical commentary in order to understand its clear and full meaning.

3. This thesis will remain focused upon practical application to Christian women serving vocationally or voluntarily in local church ministry, based upon sound evangelical exposition. This thesis will not provide detailed theological exposition unless it will assist in making specific application to Christian women serving vocationally or voluntarily in local church ministry. See the Bibliography for a sample of commentaries that could provide strong expositional, exegetical, and theological comments on the Letter to the Philippians.

4. The applications related to Christian women serving vocationally or voluntarily within local church ministry are intended to be thought-provoking and to activate discussion. They are not to be considered exhaustive or the consummate conclusion on how a specific verse, word, or unit of thought can apply to Christian women serving vocationally or voluntarily within local church ministry. The applications are also

intended to be encouraging and to elicit positive applications as opposed to generating shame, negativity, misconduct, or implying any weakness or poor reputation of any ministry, minister, Christian author, or individual within local church ministry. The applications will be based upon previously presented exposition of a specific word, verse, phrase, or unit of thought within the thesis rather than introduce new exposition within the application section.

A Statement of Methodology

This thesis provides an exposition of specific verses, words within the verse, or unit of thought within the Letter to the Philippians from which specific application to Christian women serving vocationally or voluntarily within local church ministry. This thesis will follow the outline of the Letter to the Philippians provided by Dr. Harold Willmington.¹ In addition to referencing Willmington's outline for the Letter to the Philippians along with providing each of his comments on particular verses within the Letter to the Philippians, this thesis derives the remainder of the biblical exposition from over 50 Bible Commentaries, Bible Dictionaries, and New Testament Greek Word Study texts, and additional writings. More information regarding methodology can be seen in the statement of limitations.

A Review of the Literature

This thesis utilizes the following resources: (1) Bible Commentaries, (2) Bible Dictionaries, (3) New Testament Greek Word Study texts, and (4) additional writings.

¹ Harold L. Willmington, *Willmington's Bible Handbook* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 1997)

The uniqueness of each resource is defined below. For example, for an excellent summary of the background, purpose, occasion, etc. of the Letter to the Philippians, see Carson, Moo, and Morris, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, and Hendricksen, William, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon* (e.g., Carson, Moo, and Morris; Hendrickson).^{2 3}

Bible Commentaries

This thesis relies heavily upon Bible Commentaries. Bible Commentaries utilize a wide variety of approaches in elaborating on biblical texts. All commentators have a variety of resources available to them in forming their commentaries. Some resources that are available to commentators include historical background, cultural research, geographical data, extra-biblical writings as well as evangelical and liberal opinions. Commentaries can be of any length from one volume of the entire Bible to multiple volumes related to one book of the Bible.

There are four categories of Bible Commentaries utilized within this thesis: Exegetical, Expository, Devotional, and commentaries that emphasize theological themes. Each category is described below with examples provided.

Exegetical Commentaries

These texts take a scholarly approach to interpreting the biblical text. These exegetical commentaries focus on Greek and Semitic languages, etymologies, occasional

² D. A. Carson, Douglas J. Moo and Leon Morris. *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992)

³ William Hendricksen, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2004)

textual criticism, extra-biblical literature, and cultural relevance to the text, evangelical and liberal counterpoints. These exegetical commentaries do not emphasize practical application to the reader (e.g., Hawthorne & O'Brien).^{4 5}

Expositional Commentaries

These tools emphasize interpretation and occasional application. The author understands exegesis but intentionally does not belabor the reader with these fine details. Some expositional commentaries will provide exegetical thoughts in the form of foot notes and end notes, but they are rarely exhaustive (e.g., Silva, Bockmuehl).^{6 7}

Devotional Commentaries

These tools often outline the information from Scripture but their emphasis is on practical life application. Devotional (or sometimes called “inspirational”) commentaries are open to freely sharing testimonials of believers who have encountered similar situations, and they will elaborate upon certain topics that are touched within the biblical texts (e.g., MacArthur).⁸

⁴ Ralph P. Martin and Gerald F. Hawthorne. *Word Biblical Commentary: Philippians (Revised)* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2004)

⁵ Peter T. O'Brien, *The New International Greek Testament Commentary: The Epistle to the Philippians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991)

⁶ Moises Silva, *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Philippians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005)

⁷ Markus Bockmuehl, *Black's New Testament Commentary: The Epistle to the Philippians* (London; A & C Black and Hendrickson, 1998)

⁸ John MacArthur, ed., *The MacArthur Study Bible* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010), 1773

Commentaries that Focus on Theological Themes

These tools will often focus on portions of Scripture based upon units of thought from the biblical writer's perspective. In these commentaries units of thoughts can range from one verse to one chapter or more (e.g., John 13-17).⁹ These types of commentaries have the goal of conveying the comprehensive story and message that the original author intended to convey at the time of writing (e.g., Arnold).¹⁰

Bible Dictionaries

Bible Dictionaries are similar to encyclopedias in that they provide information on biblical terms and topics. They offer proper names for biblical words and definitions. They allow the reader to study the word within the cultural context of the biblical writing (e.g., Anchor Bible Dictionary).¹¹

New Testament Greek Word Study Texts

These tools offer the original Greek word and its pronunciations and meanings. In addition, these books provide various forms of the Greek word. They also provide synonyms along with the location in Scripture for easy cross reference. These texts also emphasize the use of the Greek word in its original historical context.

⁹ All scriptural references, unless otherwise noted, are taken from the New King James Version. *The Holy Bible, New King James Version* (Nashville: Nelson, 1982).

¹⁰ Clinton E. Arnold, ed., *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Romans to Philemon* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002)

¹¹ David Noel Freedman, ed., *Anchor Bible Dictionary Vol. I-VI* (New York: Doubleday, 1992)

CHAPTER TWO

EXPOSITION AND APPLICATION OF PHILIPPIANS ONE

Philippians 1:1-30

1 Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons: 2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

3 I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, 4 always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, 5 for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now, 6 being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ; 7 just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers with me of grace. 8 For God is my witness, how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ.

9 And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, 10 that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, 11 being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

12 But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel, 13 so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ; 14 and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

15 Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from goodwill: 16 The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains; 17 but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel. 18 What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice.

¹⁹ For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, ²⁰ according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. ²¹ For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. ²² But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. ²³ For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. ²⁴ Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you. ²⁵ And being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith, ²⁶ that your rejoicing for me may be more abundant in Jesus Christ by my coming to you again.

²⁷ Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel, ²⁸ and not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from God. ²⁹ For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, ³⁰ having the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear is in me.

Chapter Outline

Rejoicing in Christ's Service (1)

- I. Salutation: Appreciation for the Philippians (1:1-11)
- II. The progress of the gospel (1:12-26)
- III. Exhortation to faith and courage (1:27-30)¹²

Exposition of Philippians 1:1-6

Philippians 1:1-6

¹ Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons: ² Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ³ I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, ⁴ always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, ⁵ for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now, ⁶ being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.

¹² Willmington, *Willmington's Bible Handbook*, 710

In Phil 1:1-6, Paul introduces himself and his current companion along with identifying the recipients of this letter. Paul then shares some personal comments expressing his great affection and appreciation for these believers that he had played an integral part in developing approximately ten years prior to the writing of the Letter to the Philippians (cf. Acts 16). Harold Willmington in *Willmington's Bible Handbook* summarizes these verses in this fashion:

Rejoicing in Christ's Service

Phil 1:1-6 Our confidence in His completion.

“ expresses his thanks to God for the believers at Philippi (Phil 1:3-5) and his confidence that God would continue the work of sanctification He had begun in them (1:6; see exposition on Heb. 10:1-18). God never starts something He doesn't finish; Paul was confident that the Philippians were secure in their salvation “until . . . the day when Jesus Christ comes back again” (Phil 1:6; compare 1:10; 2:16; 1 Cor 1:8). See also exposition on Isa 2:5-4:1. [710]”¹³

Philippians 1:1-2. “The opening section sets the tone for the entire letter; it is personal, affectionate, and full of joy and gratitude.”¹⁴ Driver, Plummer, Briggs agree when they observe that “the character of the whole Epistle is reflected in this introduction. It is unofficial, affectionate, familiar, unlike the opening of the Galatian Epistle, and more nearly resembling the introductions to the two Thessalonian letters. At the same time it is solemn and deeply earnest.”¹⁵ “The warm, intimate relationship of Paul and Timothy to the church at Philippi is indicated in the absence of the apostolic

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ I-Jin Loh and Eugene A. Nida, *A Translator's Handbook on Paul's Letter to the Philippians* (Stuttgart, Germany: United Bible Society, 1977), 4

¹⁵ Marvin R. Vincent, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1977), 1-2

titles.”¹⁶ And Lightfoot says that it is thus predictable that in this type of letter contains many injections and repeated exhortations to cheerfulness between Paul and his close friends at Philippi.¹⁷

Loh and Nida observe that “Paul always opens his letters in the conventional Greek way of his time, starting with the name of the writer, followed by the name of the recipient, and then the greetings.”¹⁸ Paul also wanted to minister to any Greek and Jewish recipients that may find themselves reading or hearing the reading of this very encouraging letter.

This word ‘grace’ is the Greek word *charis*, which means *grace* but also carries the idea of *favor* . . . [but] as a Jew himself, he also wanted to greet the Jewish world that would be reading his epistle. When the Jews met each other, their customary way of greeting one another was to say, ‘Shalom!’ . . . [which is] still the customary greeting exchanged between Jews in Israel today. The Greek equivalent for the Hebrew word *shalom* is the word *eirene*, which is the word for *peace*.¹⁹

Marvin Vincent adds, “The combination of the Greek and Oriental salutations spiritualized: grace expressing God’s love to man, and peace the condition resulting therefrom.”²⁰

¹⁶ John Walvoord, *Everyman’s Bible Commentary: Philippians Triumph in Christ: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1971), 23

¹⁷ J. B. Lightfoot, Alistair McGrath, and J. I. Packer, eds., *Philippians* (Wheaton: Crossway Books), 174.

¹⁸ Loh and Nida, *A Translator’s Handbook*, 4.

¹⁹ Rick Renner, *Sparkling Gems from the Greek* (Tulsa, OK: Teach All nations), 848.

²⁰ Marvin Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament* (Peabody, Ma: Hendrickson, 1985), 416.

Paul makes an intentional and purposeful change to the standard format of a first century greeting. Clinton Arnold in the *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary* confirms that “Ancient letters began with the name of the sender, followed by the name of the recipient and the common salutation *charien* (greetings).”²¹ Most notably was Paul’s cognizant alteration of the typical words used in a First Century greeting in order to maintain a spiritual perspective throughout the letter. Arnold observes that “Paul changes *charien* to *charis*, the Greek word for grace, and adds the typical Jewish greeting, peace.”²² And while “these were rare in ancient times as they are today but they were not wholly unknown. The ancient moral philosopher Epicurus (341-270 BC) apparently modified the openings of his letters so that they reflected his belief that pleasure was the highest of life’s ideals. ‘Live well’ is what he sometimes wrote in the salutation.”²³

What is clear is that a first century writer would change the words of a custom greeting in order to make a point. Paul’s point was obviously to encourage the readers of his Letter to the Philippians to filter all they read with spiritual eyes that are provided through salvation in Jesus Christ.

Gordon Fee in the *IVP New Testament Commentary* makes some grammatical observations regarding Paul’s style of writing (and Timothy’s possibly offering some support as a transcriber) in order to support a “friendship” tone to the Letter to the Philippians:

²¹ Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Commentary*, 49

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*

This is one of six letters where Timothy, who was well known in Philippi (see 2:20-22), is included in the greetings. Since the rest of the letter clearly originates from Paul alone, (e.g., 1:12-26, 30), Timothy probably served as Paul's secretary. In other letters where it appears in the greetings, Timothy's name is separated from Paul's since Paul begins by identifying himself as "an apostle of Christ Jesus," and Timothy is not an apostle. But Timothy is a fellow servant (or slave), so here their names are linked: *Paul and Timothy, servants [slaves] of Christ Jesus*. Paul's reason for not identifying himself as an apostle in this case is most likely related to the matter of friendship (between equals) noted in the introduction which has no place in it for reminders of status.²⁴

Kenneth Wuest points out that because "there is no definite article in the Greek, [t]hey were servants by nature."²⁵

Regarding the word "slave" in Philippians 1:1, Paul chose to emphasize both his own unconditional commitment to serve the Lord Jesus Christ and to make sure the entire focus of the Letter to the Philippians is upon the Lord Jesus Christ. Regarding Paul's unconditional commitment to serve the Lord Jesus Christ, Fee emphasizes that the term chosen to describe Paul and Timothy is a term that conveys ownership (to God), their willing subservience to God. Fee says, "The word translated servants is actually the Greek word for "slaves" and probably carries a double connotation. Gentile hearers would have instinctively understood the word to refer to those owned by, and subservient to, the master of a household. Although the institution of slavery in antiquity was a far cry from the racial slavery that blighted American society-and the English society that made it possible by the slave trade-the slave in the Roman Empire was still not a free

²⁴ Gordon D. Fee, *The IVP New Testament Commentary Series: Philippians* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1999), 40

²⁵ Kenneth S. Wuest, *Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament (Volume II)* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 26

person but ‘belonged to’ another.’²⁶ W. Robertson Nicoll in *The Expositor’s Greek Testament* agrees when he observes that “There is genuine humility in the contrast between **douloi** [servants] and [**h**]agios [saint]. He only calls himself **apostolos** [apostle] when he assumes a commanding mood.”²⁷

Regarding Paul’s desire to make sure the entire focus of the Letter to the Philippians is upon the Lord Jesus Christ, he accomplished this by the use of the same word “slave.” In the Greek translation of the Old Testament, (the LXX), which would have been well known to the Philippians, since the church in Philippi was now 10 years old (cf. Acts 16), this word was also used to translate the term “servant of Yahweh {the LORD}.” “The slave of the Lord” thus carried a sense of distance from and dependence on God, while at the same time being a kind of honorific title for those in special service to God (e.g., Moses, 2 Kings 18:12; Joshua 24:29).²⁸ Fee brings the correlation of the word slave with our Lord and Savior. He states, “The designation anticipates a significant moment later in this letter, where Christ himself is said to have taken the very nature of a servant (Phil 2:7).”²⁹ He continues by saying “This is the closest thing to status one finds in our letter, and this is also the first of at least sixty-one mentions of Christ in the letter. Whatever else is said, everything has Christ as its cause and focus.”³⁰ Arnold agrees

²⁶ Fee, *IVP New Testament Commentary*, 40

²⁷ W. Robertson Nicoll, *The Expositor’s Greek Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), 415

²⁸ Fee, *IVP New Testament Commentary*, 40

²⁹ *Ibid.* 41

³⁰ *Ibid.*

when he observes that the outer parts of the Roman Empire and the larger cities would have had large populations of slaves, therefore “the Philippians would have inevitably heard in the term ‘slaves’ overtones of humility and submission.”³¹ Linking this word to other Pauline writings, Howard F. Vos provides a cultural perspective when answering his self-posed question,

But can we discover any deeper meaning from some parallel Greek term or concept? I think we can. A *Caesarianos* was an imperial slave or soldier belonging to Caesar. The comparable Greek from *Christianos* implies a slave or soldier belonging to Christ. The apostle Paul made the point that we are not our own because we have been bought with a price (1 Cor 5:19-20), the shed blood of Christ. He also spoke of being a bond slave of Christ (Rom 1:1; Phil 1:1; Titus 1:1). And he called on us to “fight the good fight of faith” (1 Timothy 6:12), and as we do so to “put on the whole armor of God” (Ephesians 6:11).³²

Paul then seemingly inserts a descriptive word (“saints”) intentionally, in addition to simply saying “to all . . . who are at Philippi” in order to emphasize the fact that we are in the world, not of the world, and we are different from the world. Motyer in *The Message of Philippians: Jesus Our Joy* agrees when he says,

The purpose in the implication to the Philippians was not to show their physical human title in the world, but who they are through the grace of God. Politically they are Philippians, and no small honor attached to this. But grace has made them partakers of the divine nature—conferring on them the honor of honors that the holy God should give them His title and His character and call them saints.³³

Motyer supports his position by observing that “behind the Greek word, *hagios* (which does duty as the noun “saint” and as the adjective ‘holy’)—and indeed, behind its

³¹ *Ibid.*, 50

³² Howard F. Vos, *Nelson’s New Illustrated Bible Manner & Customs* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1999), 470

³³ *Ibid.*, 26

Hebrew counterpart codes—there is the idea of being separate or apart.”³⁴ Motyer sums up the opening of Philippians with this comment, “He is defining what a Christian is, and that at the heart of the definition lays this familiar word, saints.”³⁵ Barclay applies this to believers by concluding that just as “priests were to be *different* from other people, for they were set apart from a special function,”³⁶ the people at Philippi, along with all believers, are to be “different” as the result of being children of God.

Philippians 1:3-4. Gordon Fee in the *IVP New Testament Commentary* observes that Paul consistently directs his thanksgiving for people “toward God on behalf of the people who are receiving the letter.”³⁷ In addition to directing his thanks to God, Paul emphasizes the fact that it is not a burden to continually thank God for his friends in Philippi. Fee concurs when he says that

The difference in our letter is the mention of making his prayer and thanksgiving with joy. Whatever else, the Philippians were for Paul a cause of great joy. The word order (“with joy the prayer making”) gives this phrase special emphasis; indeed this is the first of sixteen occurrences of this word group (joy) in the letter. While this is not as dominant a motif as many suggest, it is a reoccurring motif and can scarcely be missed. The very awkwardness of the phrase in this case forces it upon the Philippians’—and our—attention.³⁸

Karl Barth in his commentary *The Epistle to the Ephesians* agrees when he says, “Paul wishes to tell his readers that he rejoices over them. Not in order to give them

³⁴ J. A. Motyer, *The Message of Philippians: Jesus Our Joy* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1991), 25

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ William Barclay, *The Letters to the Philippians, Colossians and Thessalonians*. (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 2003), 13

³⁷ Fee, *IVP New Testament Commentary*, 46.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

something pleasant to hear, but because he would have them know (and take encouragement and warning from the knowledge) that when the apostle thinks of them he praises God.”³⁹ Jay Adams in *The Christian Counselor’s Commentary* observes that “Unlike the remembrance of the other congregations, in which there was little to give thanks for, Paul says also that he could pray for them joyfully, no matter what the nature of the request. Those words are evidence, together with what follows, of the great love that existed between Paul and this congregation.”⁴⁰ To illustrate the extent to which Paul himself feels deep appreciation for the people of Philippians, Robert Gromacki breaks down the multiple statements in the following verses he uses to express his feelings, “Each verse in [1:3-8] contains the mention of ‘you.’ There is ‘remembrance of you’ (1:3), ‘prayer of mine for you all’ (1:14), ‘your fellowship’ (1:5), ‘good work in you’ (1:16), ‘think this of you all’ (1:7), ‘I have you in my heart’ (1:7), ‘ye are all partakers’ (1:7), and ‘I long after you all’ (1:8).”⁴¹ Gromacki summarizes Paul’s selfless example by stating, “In his most dire need, he was benevolent, altruistic, and other-centered. He was thankful for their prayers, but more than anything he desired to pray for them.”⁴²

³⁹ Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Philippians: 40th Anniversary Edition* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 14

⁴⁰ Jay Adams, *The Christian Counselor’s Commentary* (Hackettstown, NJ: A Timeless Text, 1995), 141

⁴¹ Robert Gromacki, *Stand United in Joy* (Woodlands, TX: Kress Christian, 2002), 34

⁴² *Ibid.*

Philippians 1:5-6. In Phil 1:5-6, Paul shares some reasons why he continually and passionately thanks God for the people at Philippi. Silva captures the importance of this reason when he says,

most important, however, is the consideration that in verse 5 Paul has shifted attention from the fact of his prayer of thanksgiving to the reason for it. Silva perceptively emphasizes that the constancy of the Philippians' commitment to the gospel "is the very thing which not only supplies the motive for the apostle's thankfulness, but forms also the ground of his just confidence for the future."⁴³

Fee summarizes the reasons for Paul's genuine appreciation for the people at Philippi. Paul "*indeed every time* he thinks about them in prayer, he both thanks God for them—and for their lifelong *partnership* with him *in the gospel*—and prays for them with great *joy*, *confident* that God will bring his own *good work* in them to full fruition (vv. 3-6)."⁴⁴ Paul was grateful for their partnership and for God's continued work in their lives. The hospitality and charity of the Philippian church was motivated by an unconditional commitment to partner with Paul in his ministry. Ivan Havener in *Collegetown Bible Commentary* agrees and observes that Paul is grateful for "the mutual affection between Paul and the community; he has them in his heart, and they are partners in God's grace. While he is imprisoned, they share in the task of defending and establishing the gospel."⁴⁵ Havener summarizes Paul's overall feelings by saying, "Paul's warmth and

⁴³ Silva, *Baker Exegetical Commentary*, 43

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 45

⁴⁵ Ivan Havener, *Collegetown Bible Commentary: First Thessalonians, Philippians, Philemon, Second Thessalonians, Colossians, Ephesians* (Collegetown, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 30-31

depth of feeling for this community is underscored when he names God as witness to his longing for every one of them with the affection of Christ Jesus.”⁴⁶

Regarding this commitment to be partners with Paul in the ministry, Arnold comments on this obvious hospitable and ministerial focus that the believers of Philippi had towards Paul when he says, “Paul speaks of their partnership by saying, ‘speaking of their practical hospitality and material help that the Philippians had given to him ever since he first met them. The first Philippian convert, Lydia, had invited Paul and his companions to stay at her house during their visit to the city’” (Acts 16:15).⁴⁷ Arnold continues, “When Paul went along the Egnatian Way to Thessalonica, they sent him gifts to help him on the journey” (Phil 4:16). When he left Macedonia, even though they were poor they “contributed generously to the collection for the saints in Jerusalem (2 Cor 8:1-5), and they had most recently sent Paul both money and the companionship of Epaphroditus (2:25; 4:18).”⁴⁸

Fee comments that in 2:5-6, Paul “now indicates the basis of his joy, which serves as further reason for his thanksgivings; their partnership (*koinonia*) in the furtherance of the gospel.”⁴⁹ Fee continues by explaining that “*Koinonia* is usually translated into English as “fellowship,” the word primarily refers to participating in something rather than sharing something in common with others. Its basic sense here then, is participation in the spread of the gospel, “which in light of verse 7 very likely carries the further

⁴⁶ Ibid., 31

⁴⁷ Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Commentary*, 51

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Fee, *IVP New Testament Commentary*, 47

connotation of doing so in “partnership with Paul.”⁵⁰ “Pauls’ joy in prayer is prompted by their partnership in [the furtherance of] the gospel.”⁵¹

Paul and the church at Philippi took consolation in the fact that what God promises to do in the life of a believer will be brought to fruition. Paul was clear that nothing will be able to disrupt God’s developmental plan for a believer’s life. Silva makes this observation when he says, “In verse 6, Paul gives us a further, but closely related, reason for his joyful sense of gratitude—his assurance that God’s work cannot be thwarted.”⁵² Fee concurs when he says, “His mention of their participation in the gospel from the first day until now leads him to add, in a somewhat digressive way, that he is fully confident what was true from the first day and is still true now will be true at the end as well.”⁵³

Regarding the “good work” referred to in verse 6, Paul was probably referring to the process of spiritual salvation and subsequent sanctification that has begun in the lives of the believers in Philippi. Fee suggests this very point that the words “good works” probably “refer to God’s good work of salvation itself, of creating a people for his name in Philippi. If so, the sentence anticipates 2:12-13, where Paul urges them to keep working out their common salvation in the way they love together as God’s people in Philippi, since God is at work in them both to will and to do for the sake of his own good

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Silva, *Baker Exegetical Commentary*, 45

⁵³ Fee, *IVP New Testament Commentary*, 47

pleasure.”⁵⁴ Although there is room to interpret “good works” as their continued ability to financially support Paul, it seems that this would not be the most logical segue to the very spiritual topics in the following verses. Even when this position is presented by Martin and Hawthorne in the *Word Biblical Commentary*, their explanation is saturated with linkages to spiritual concepts and references:

Paul was certain that the Philippians would never waiver in their generosity, would never cease sharing their good gifts to help spread the gospel, until the *Parousia*, the return of Christ, took place—that final event of history, which he believed was near at hand (Phil 4:5).” This “day of Christ Jesus” (also referred to as “the day of the Lord” [1 Thess. 5:2]; “day of judgment” [1 John 4:17]; the “day” [1 Thess. 5:4]; “that day” [2 Tim. 1:12]; and the “day of wrath” [Rev. 2:5]; cf. Kramer, Christ, Lord, Son of God, 139) very likely brought the idea of judgment to Paul’s attention since it was an expression that had its origin in the OT concept of the day of Yahweh, a day of darkness and gloom and wrath (Joel 2:2; Amos 5:20), often thought of in popular expression as Israel’s promotion, but reinterpreted to mean judgment on Israel.⁵⁵

Martin and Hawthorne do allow for a prophetic (i.e. spiritual) sense in this verse. In doing so, they admit that it would then apply to spiritual salvation and sanctification that God himself provides a believer.

Paul perhaps has the prophetic sense in mind. This day would test the deeds of humankind with fire (1 Cor 3:13) and the work of the Philippian church as well. But Paul anticipated the day without alarm. Knowing the Philippians, he was confident that when their “work” was examined, it would be pronounced “good” (cf. Phil 2:16; 4:1). Otherwise, the adjective “good” refers not only to human character or responsibility but also to God’s sovereign work in grace (Gen 1:31).⁵⁶

Considering the context and the subsequent verses, it is probably best to interpret the comment as applying to spiritual salvation and sanctification that God himself provides a believer.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Martin and Hawthorne. *Word Biblical Commentary*, 25

⁵⁶ Ibid.

Application Taken from Philippians 1:1-2

Regarding the word “slave” in Phil 1:2, Paul chose to emphasize both his own unconditional commitment to serve the Lord Jesus Christ and to make sure the entire focus of the Letter to the Philippians is upon the Lord Jesus Christ. As Paul sets the proper spiritual tone upon the outset of this letter, so should Christian women start out in ministry with the proper spiritual perspective.

If a Christian woman personally maintains a strong spiritual perspective in life and ministry, she will be prepared to offer spiritual guidance to others within her ministry. For example, just as Paul in the opening verse esteemed the people at Philippi higher than himself by referring to them as “bishops” and “deacons” (as compared to the word “bondservant,” he was able to demonstrate that he himself was going to live according to the truths that he will soon preach to them (cf. Phil 2:3, “in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself”). Likewise, when Christian women first practice what they preach, they too will earn a hearing with those to whom they are ministering. For example, a topic that is often discussed among Christian women is the topic of identity. Many ask the question, “Who am I?” They feel that their title is only wife, mom, friend, or worker, never truly understanding that they are a child of God and their identity is in Him. And all true ministers greatly desire to minister to women who are dealing with identity. Christian women often pray to the Lord and say, “Lord, please help my friend and give me an opportunity to minister to her.” At that moment, they can know if they have even earned the right to speak to their friend regarding that issue, and they can know if she will even listen to them. How? If Christian women have demonstrated a pattern of living out what they desire to tell them (i.e. practice what they

preach). If Christian women are committed to personally maintaining a strong spiritual perspective in life and ministry, they will be prepared to offer spiritual guidance to others within their ministry, and they will have the best chance of their guidance being received.

Application Taken from Philippians 1:3-5

In Philippians 1:3-5, Paul emphasizes the fact that it is not a burden to continually thank God for his friends in Philippi. He customarily thanked God for people and offered praise to God for what they meant to him. Appreciating people and expressing as well as demonstrating his deep value for them was an obvious characteristic of Paul's interpersonal ministry personality.

Christian women find themselves engaging women frequently, if not on a daily basis. Even if they aren't extrovert personalities who are comfortable initiating verbal discussions, meetings, coffee-shop chats, public prayer, etc., each and every Christian woman is able to engage to the extent God has equipped her. It is also important to cultivate the ability to stretch oneself to go beyond current comfort zones to teach one how to "exceed, abundantly above all that we could ask or think according to power that works within us" (Eph 3:20).

Engaging people is essential to any successful discipleship ministry. In his book, *The Top Ten Mistakes Leaders Make*, Christian leadership theorist Dr. Hans Finzel says, "Experts confirm that the most effective leaders spend most of their time with people and solving people problems."⁵⁷ Finzel boldly (and in the opinion of this writer, correctly) claims that "every person who aspires to be used by God in His service must have as a

⁵⁷ Hans Finzel, *Top 10 Mistakes Leaders Make* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2007), 53

prime objective the same passion to see people’s lives changed into Christ’s likeness.”⁵⁸

In fact, Finzel himself responds to the following question that he encourages all aspiring leaders to ask of themselves, “As you look back over your past, what had the greatest impact on you, personally, in your growth as a leader or as a person?”⁵⁹ Finzel’s reply was, “A person, or a number of key people with whom we have had real-life personal contact, have been the primary change agents in our lives.”⁶⁰

The reason that engaging people is essential to any successful discipleship ministry is because “Christian growth is caught not taught.”⁶¹ For the edification of every leader, Finzel points out, “regardless of what orientation one has in leadership style—task or people—effective leaders make room for people.”⁶² And even though it may not be our primary personality strength, Finzel encourages leaders that “yes, we may tend toward one style because of our personalities. But no, we are not to use that as an excuse to ignore and avoid people.”⁶³

Just as the apostle Paul expressed his appreciation and demonstrated his deep value for people, we as Christian women should emulate this edifying characteristic as we minister to one another. “When all is said and done, the crowns of [your] achievements will not be the systems [you] managed, the things [you] wrote, the

⁵⁸ Ibid., 51

⁵⁹ Ibid., 53

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid., 51

⁶² Ibid., 49

⁶³ Ibid.

structures [you] built, but the people [you] personally, permanently influenced through direct contact.”⁶⁴

Application Taken from Philippians 1:6

Paul and the church at Philippi took consolation in the fact that what God promises to do in the life of believers will be brought to fruition. And even though this promise of reaching the spiritual “finish line” is encouraging to all believers, Christian women need to also keep in mind that every single person to whom they minister, including themselves, are currently ‘in process’ in their spiritual walk. Knowing this reality, Christian women should attempt to assess the spiritual condition of each woman to whom they minister. Furthermore, they should endeavor to encourage spiritual development in specific ways to meet the individual needs of each woman, and most importantly, remain patient with each and every woman with whom they engage, remembering that all are in the process of becoming the women God intends for them to be.

There is a reason why Paul, near the end of his long, seasoned ministry, stressed to ministers to remain patient with those to whom they taught, encouraged, and exhorted. He said, “Preach the word! Be ready in season *and* out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, *with all longsuffering* and teaching” (2 Tim 4:2, emphasis added). Paul understood that people are “in process” spiritually (Phil 1:6) and that God requires us to remain patient with the people to whom we minister.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 57

This can be accomplished by following some very practical leadership tips. In the *Church Administration Handbook*, Bruce Powers offers specific ways to deal with people that may seem difficult to you per your unique personality. The following is a summary of some points he presents in the section entitled, “Dealing with Difficult People.”

Several attitudes and actions provide a repertoire for re-involving difficult persons in the congregation:

1. Accept difficult persons as worthy of attention without approving their attempts to control.
2. Build and maintain an open and up-to-date relationship with difficult persons.
3. Try to look at the church through the difficult persons’ eyes and anticipate their behavior patterns.
4. Spare the entire congregation of unnecessary strife by working behind the scenes with difficult persons.
5. Use Christian love as an antidote form controlling behavior . . . Remember, love also includes firmness.

What is the most difficult group to work with?

1. All are tough to deal with, but the most difficult depends on YOU!
2. Generally, the most offensive persons to us reflect the darker, more shadowy sides of our own personalities. We often have difficulty with the same aspect of the behavior of others that we fear in ourselves.⁶⁵

Christian women must accept the reality that implicit in the word “ministry” is the expectation to minister to people, as opposed to a ministry being a vocation that will be devoid of engagement with people. Powers agrees and reminds them, “The choice is not whether to have relationships. The choice is what kind of relationships we will have!”⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Bruce Powers, *Church Administration Handbook* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2008), 278

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 82-84

Exposition of Philippians 1:7-11

Philippians 1:7-11

⁷ just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers with me of grace. ⁸For God is my witness, how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ. ⁹And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, ¹⁰that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, ¹¹being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

In Phil 1:7-11, Paul concludes his lengthy, personal salutation with some very affectionate language. He will not stop offering terms of endearment to his friends at Philippi, but this section will wrap up his personal sentiments for a brief moment. Harold Willmington in *Willmington's Bible Handbook* summarizes Paul's sentiments succinctly and effectively. "Phil 1:7-11 'Only God knows how much you mean to me.'—Paul felt a deep affection for this particular church, which had helped him so much (1:7-8; see Background). He prayed that they would grow in knowledge, wisdom, and righteousness. [710]⁶⁷

Philippians 1:7-8. After A.T. Robertson offers some alternative interpretive possibilities for the phrase "because I have you in my heart" (cf. "Or 'because you hold me in your heart'⁶⁸), he states that even though "there is no way to decide which is the idea meant except to say that love begets love."⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Willmington, *Willmington's Bible Handbook*, 710.

⁶⁸ Archibald Thomas Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament Vol. 4* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1931), 436

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 436

In Phil 1:7-8, Paul shares the basis upon which Paul's joy and confidence is grounded. Fee summarizes this basis presented by Paul in 2:7-8 when he says, "Paul's present joy and confidence stem from his deep sense of personal relationship with them, evidenced both by their *partnership* with him *in the gospel* and his profound affection for them (vivo 7-8). They share in *God's grace* with him even in his present *chains*."⁷⁰

In Phil 1:7, Arnold says that the word "defending" is a term for mounting a defense in court against legal accusations. And the word "confirming" is also a technical legal term; it refers to a legal guarantee that, for example, a piece of property to be sold has no liens against it.⁷¹ MacArthur captures the meaning of the words as "Two judicial terms referring either to the first phase of Paul's trial in Rome in which he defended his gospel ministry or in a general sense to his continual defense of the faith, which was the heart of his ministry."⁷² The word "defense" conveys Paul's passion to share the gospel with anyone in any circumstance and his desire that all believers do the same. John Phillips in his *Expository Commentary* says, "The word translated "defense" is *apologia*, from which we derive our English words "apology" and "apologetics." Phillips says that "apologia" is first used in the New Testament in Acts 22:1, where Paul began to defend himself, after the riot in the temple in Jerusalem. "Men, brethren, and fathers," said Paul, "hear ye my defense." There, Phillip's concludes, that "now in Rome, Paul had every intention, when his case came to trial, of seizing the occasion as an opportunity to make

⁷⁰ Gordon, D. Fee, *NICNT: Paul's Letter to the Philippians* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1995), 101

⁷¹ Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Commentary*, 51

⁷² MacArthur, *MacArthur Study Bible*.

the glorious gospel of the Lord Jesus known to the highest tribunal in the land.” Phillips concurs with Arnold that the word “confirmation” is also a legal term and elaborated that

The word ‘confirmation’ is bebaiosis, a legal term signifying a guarantee. The only other place the word is used in the NT is Hebrews 6:16: “An oath for confirmation [as a guarantee] is . . . an end of all strife.” Paul’s purpose in life was to confront people with the unconditional guarantee of pardon, peace, and power, a new life in Christ, a home in Heaven, and a place in the family of God.

Paul characterizes the unique partnership that he has with the church at Philippi in order to stress they will never cease to share the gospel regardless of my circumstances. Commentator John Phillips aptly states that “the Philippians were Paul’s partners in his defense. They were partakers of his grace. The same things that motivated Paul motivated them.”⁷³

In Phil 1:8, Paul expresses his deep affection for the believers at Philippi. Paul prefaces his comments with an oath by God’s name to further demonstrate to the people of Philippi that he truly means the following words of affection. Gordon Fee states, “this oath also brings into focus once more the three-way bond between him and them and Christ that holds the letter together. For his part he longs for them, not simply to see them again (Phil 1:24-25; 2:24) but for them, his dearly beloved brothers and sisters in Christ (see 4:1).”⁷⁴

Carolyn Osiek in the *Abingdon New Testament Commentary* elaborates upon the level of deep affection that Paul expressed for his friends at Philippi.

When in verse 8, Paul longs for them with the “compassion” of Christ Jesus, the Greek word so rendered is *splangchna*, literally the inner organs, including heart,

⁷³ John Phillips, *An Expository Commentary: Exploring Ephesians and Philippians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1995), 36

⁷⁴ Fee, *NICNT: Paul’s Letter*, 101

lungs, liver, and intestines. Its literal meaning appears in Luke's description of the death of Judas (Acts 1:18). Paul uses the term in its well-established secondary meaning of feelings, especially those of affection and mercy. This meaning reveals the awareness of ancient Mediterranean people that emotions produce a physiological effect felt in just those organs. The language in this verse is typical language of letters of friendship.⁷⁵

Philippians 1:9-11. Paul's articulation of his prayer for his friends at Philippi is more significant than simply weighty words that Paul utters on their behalf. The fact that Paul feels compelled to pray for his friends is significant because it shows what our spirit-controlled action should be after thinking about dear believers. This is evidenced by the oath in Phil 2:8, the timing of this prayer subsequent to his strong, personal sentiments he shares about them, and the weighty words within the prayer. Fee acknowledges that "as with the thanksgiving, and despite first appearances, the prayer is not 'in general,' but rather is full of items that anticipate the content of the letter."⁷⁶ He summarizes Paul's specific prayer which

is primarily for an increase in their *love* for one another, and thus that they be *filled with the fruit of righteousness* now and *blameless* at the coming of Christ (vv. 9-11). Thus through prayer and thanksgiving he anticipates the various concerns of the letter—their partnership with him in the gospel, his deep concern for them, and the need for love to replace internal bickering.⁷⁷

The key request of Paul's prayer is for his friends at Philippi to be people of love. Fee comments on the quality of love as mentioned in Phil 1:9, and he suggests it is a unique reference rather than a general term.

⁷⁵ Carolyn Osiek, *Abingdon New Testament Commentaries: Philippians, Philemon* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000), 37

⁷⁶ Fee, *NICNT: Paul's Letter*, 97

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 101

Love is such a common word to us that it is easy to miss Paul's concern. As used by Paul and following the lead of the LXX, 'love' first of all points to the character of God, and to God's actions toward his people based on that character. God's love is demonstrated especially in his "forbearance and kindness" (1 Cor 13:4), manifested ultimately in the death of Christ for his enemies (Rom 5:6-8). Its primary connotation is not "affection," as in the preceding phrase about Christ (v. 8) but rather "a sober kind of love—love in the sense of placing a high value on a person or things," which expresses itself in actively seeking the benefit of the one so loved. And this is what Paul now prays will "abound yet more and more" among the Philippian believers. The rest of the prayer, after all, emphasizes "love not as affection but as behavior," behavior that is both "pure" and stemming from right motives) and "blameless" (lacking offense).⁷⁸

Richard Melick in the *New American Commentary* suggests that Paul's ultimate vision for his friends at Philippi was for them to become mature, wise believers. "Paul envisioned mature Christians who had the ability to distinguish right from wrong. He directed his prayer toward that end. The NIV correctly translates what may be taken in several ways. The word "discerns" has the meaning of *test by trial*, and the term best "emphasizing" the result of that testing."⁷⁹

Melick continues, "since the context calls for wisdom related to life, the words suggest the ability to discern moral conduct and values so that life and energy are not misdirected. A growing love, fed by proper knowledge and moral insight, enables one to see the best way to live in light of the day of Christ."⁸⁰

Ultimately, Paul desired all believers to demonstrate their faith in action. Melick believes that this is captured in the phrase "fruit of righteousness."

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Richard R. Melick, *The New American Commentary (Volume 32): Philippians, Colossians, Philemon* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 2002), 66

⁸⁰ Ibid.

“The phrase ‘fruit of righteousness’ also demands interpretation. The primary concern is the use of the term “righteousness.” Most, however, understand the phrase to mean the result of righteous activity as Christians. It refers to an ethical righteousness. The OT supports this conclusion (Hos 10:12), and it fits Paul’s attitude expressed in Philippians.”⁸¹

More than a stylistic element, Paul intentionally offered praise to God for bringing this work of sanctification to fruition. Melick captures this intentional interjection to God when he says, Paul concludes this prayer with a reference to God’s glory. The day of Christ characterized Paul’s thoughts; the glory of God motivated Paul’s actions. He saw the entire scope of salvation as an outworking of God’s grace and as a contribution to God’s glory.

This is specifically clear in Eph 1:3-4 where three sections of the doxology are marked by some form of the phrase “to the praise of the glory of His grace” (1:6, 12, 14).⁸²

Application Taken from Philippians 1:7

In Phil 1:7, Paul expressed his deep appreciation for the people of Philippi because of their “partnership” in the gospel. Paul elucidates exactly what this partnership entailed, “defense and confirmation of the gospel.” Arnold reminds us that the word “defending” is a term for mounting a defense in court against legal accusations. And the word “confirming” is also a technical legal term; it refers to a legal guarantee that, for

⁸¹ Ibid., 67

⁸² Melick, *New American Commentary*, 67

example, a piece of property to be sold has no liens against it.⁸³ In essence, Paul valued the believers at Philippi for partnering in the sharing of the gospel whether they were in a convenient situation to share the gospel or in a tough circumstance as in Paul's current imprisonment.

Christian women should likewise foster great appreciation for those who partner with them in both defending the gospel and confirming that its truths are trustworthy to be obeyed and adhered to as they disciple women. They will often experience women who desire to volunteer to help them with activities, communications, planning events, etc., and this is very good, but they should also be diligent to encourage women to partner with them in sharing the gospel. In light of eternity, the priority of sharing (defending and confirming) the gospel is the greatest ambition they can have. Paul appreciated the physical contributions the Philippians made to him, but at the end of his letter, ultimately he desired spiritual fruit through the partnership they had with him: "Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account" (Phil 4:17). Christian women should never forget the encouragement from the seasoned Paul near the end of his life and ministry, "Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season" (2 Tim 4:2a).

Application taken from Philippians 1:9-11

Paul's articulation of his prayer for his friends at Philippi is more significant than simply weighty words that he utters on their behalf. The fact that Paul feels compelled to pray for his friends is significant because it shows what our spirit-controlled action should be after thinking about dear believers.

⁸³ Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Commentary*, 51

Christian women will have a lot of people with whom and to whom they minister. They trust that these women will partner with them in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, and they will look to them for encouragement when they themselves are in tough circumstances. Therefore, if such women are considered precious, Christian women ought to express their deep appreciation for them. And how can they best express their deep appreciation for them? Pray for them.

Just as Paul expressed his deep appreciation and love for his friends at Philippi with a passionate prayer for them, Christian women should feel compelled to pray intensely for those women to whom and with whom they minister. And not just any type of prayer, Christian women should pray for their spiritual wisdom in addition to their physical needs and wishes. Like Paul, what makes these people precious is their love for spiritual things and their partnership in God's kingdom. Therefore, Christian women should never cease to pray for their spiritual growth as described in Phil 1:9-11. If they love these women, they should passionately and specifically pray for their spiritual growth as well as their physical needs and the desires of their hearts.

Exposition of Philippians 1:12-18

Philippians 1:12-18

¹² But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel, ¹³ so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ; ¹⁴ and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. ¹⁵ Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from goodwill: ¹⁶ the former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains; ¹⁷ but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel. ¹⁸ What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice.

In Phil 1:12-18, Paul exposes the people at Philippi to some specific circumstances that he had the opportunity to witness first hand, but to the people of Philippi these factual events will be novel details. In sharing the stories of those who have come to salvation in Christ, Paul hopes to encourage the Philippians' hearts. He doesn't want the fact that he is currently in prison to cause any doubt in their minds regarding how the Lord is working behind the scenes. Paul is eager to share the impact he is still making so it will sink into their thinking and give them courage to keep spreading the gospel. And even though there are some who believe that Paul should no longer be supported, Paul focuses singularly on what really matters – the glory of God. In doing so, the people at Philippi will know that Paul is following God in the exact way he should. Harold Willmington in *Willmington's Bible Handbook* captures the essence of Paul's purpose for writing Phil 1:12-18 in the following way:

Phil 1:12-18 Want to Reach Hundreds? Go to Jail!

Paul rejoiced that, far from hindering his ministry, his imprisonment had actually enhanced it. Apparently even some of the soldiers guarding him had come to faith. (1:12-13). For different reasons, both friends and foes of Paul had stepped up their preaching activities following his imprisonment. Some of his timid believer friends had been jolted into greater boldness (1:14). Others, perhaps jealous of the impact of this newcomer to Rome, were stepping up their evangelistic outreach out of jealousy (1:15-17). Whatever the motivation, Paul rejoiced that the gospel was being heard (1:18). He knew, as did Asp the psalmist, that human opposition only enhances [God's] glory (Ps 76:10; see exposition on Ezra 6:1-12). [711]⁸⁴

Philippians 1:12-13. Arnold does acknowledge that “Ancient Roman society placed immense value on public honor, and therefore imprisonment was profoundly shameful. Thus when people of honor were let to prison, they sometimes tried to cover or hide their faces and were forced to lift or expose them in order to intensify their

⁸⁴ Willmington, *Willmington's Bible Handbook*, 710

shame.”⁸⁵ Nevertheless, “Paul mentally turns aside from his imprisonment and from his enemies to concentrate on God’s advancement of the gospel through these difficult circumstances.”⁸⁶ Fortunately, the gospel was penetrating an unlikely group of people who heard the clear message of the gospel because of Paul’s imprisonment. Melick summarizes Paul’s circumstances as presented in Philippians 1:12-13, “In this undesirable situation, the gospel spread through the ranks of the soldiers. Basically, Paul said that they knew he was a prisoner of Christ, not just of Rome.”⁸⁷ Melick also observes that “Paul’s joy came because what he lived for (the manifestation of Christ) was actually happening. Further, the principle he held so dear was clarified to those around. They understood his slavery to Christ. Paul said this knowledge spread in the praetorium.”⁸⁸

The fact that the whole palace guard was hearing the gospel is significant because they were a very influential group in first century society. Lawrence Keppie in the *Anchor Bible Commentary* gives a helpful overview and history of the Praetorian Guard that illustrates the influence and respected reputation with which they wielded:

[Praetorian Guard] is the name regularly applied to the substantial bodyguard maintained at Rome by the emperors. Under the Roman Republic, a magistrate on campaign often formed a cohort praetorian (‘headquarters’ or ‘household’ cohort) as his combined staff and bodyguard. During the civil wars which brought the Republic

⁸⁵ Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Commentary*, 58

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 52

⁸⁷ Melick, *New American Commentary*, 71

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 72

to a close, various generals each formed more than a single cohort as the threats to their security became more severe.⁸⁹

During the civil wars of the Late Republic, praetorian cohorts were recruited from among serving legionaries; they were thus a corps of elite, experienced troops. But Augustus and subsequent emperors drew recruits directly from the civil population. They served 16 years, in contrast to the 25 years expected of legionaries. Their splendid uniforms, much higher pay, and pampered lifestyle made them the envy of the legions, and while the latter came to be recruited increasingly from provincials, the Praetorians remained predominately Italians. The guard thus provided outlets for the military aspirations of Italians unwilling to contemplate long service far from home. Each cohort was commanded by a tribune, normally an ex-chief centurion of a legion; the cohort was divided into six centuries led by a centurion who was normally promoted from the ranks. The guard contained numerous specialists in artillery, surveying, and engineering who could be second to the armies on the frontiers.⁹⁰

The Praetorian also partook in ceremonial duties,

to guard the emperor at his palace in Rome, and on state occasions. The Praetorians [were] retained for ceremonial occasions and would wear the military equipment of the Late Republic (e.g., the oval shield), which was no longer used by the legions.⁹¹

[W]hen the apostle Paul, having appealed directly to Caesar, was brought to Rome, he was placed under house arrest, with a soldier to watch him (Acts 18:16). Often the Praetorians were entrusted with the guarding of such prisoners and the prefect might sign in judgment on them. Paul wrote to the Philippians, apparently from Rome, that he had made the gospel known not only in the praetorium but to the population at large (Phil 1:13). ‘Praetorium’ was the term used at Rome to describe the emperor’s military headquarters, to which the Praetorians were attached.⁹²

Palace guards or praetorians were the bodyguards of the Roman emperor.⁹³

⁸⁹ Lawrence Keppie, “Praetorian Guard,” in *Anchor Bible Dictionary Vol. V.*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York; Doubleday, 1992), 446

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 446-447

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² *Ibid.*, 447

⁹³ Phillips, *An Expository Commentary*, 52

Philippians 1:14-17. John Phillips in his *Expository Commentary* correctly observes that the negative preachers against Paul were not false teachers but rather believing preachers who were jealous of Paul's success.

The contentious crowds were not preaching a false gospel. Paul would not have taken any pleasure in doctrinal error. But since they were preaching the truth, they were delighting Paul instead of discouraging him. He could not applaud their motives—God would have to attend to those—but he could and did rejoice that the gospel was going forth.⁹⁴

Peter O'Brien comments on the

motives of the two classes of preachers are here stated and then amplified in vv. 16 and 17. Both groups preach Christ. For Paul the subject of preaching is Christ (2 Cor 1:19; 1 Tim 3:16; cf. Rom 10:14, 15; 2 Cor 11:4), that is, Christ crucified (1 Cor 1:23; cf. 1:21; 2:4; Gal 5:11) and risen (1 Cor 15:11, 12:14), now Lord (2 Cor 4:5).⁹⁵

Adding more vividness to the actions of these slanderous preachers, Daniel Wallace categorizes the Greek word for "preaching" as an action "that *repeatedly* happens" (i.e. "Iterative Present").⁹⁶

What is significant is that all the preachers in Phil 1:14-16 are believers (not false teachers). This turns the focus upon not so much their message as it does their motives for preaching the gospel. O'Brien highlights this point by saying, "although both groups are engaged in this activity of preaching Christ, their motives are very different. The first is moved by 'jealousy and rivalry' and governed by 'selfish ambition' while the second is

⁹⁴ Ibid., 54

⁹⁵ O'Brien, *New International Greek Testament Commentary*, 98

⁹⁶ Daniel Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 520-521

impelled by love for Paul as well as appreciative of the divine approval that attested his ministry.”⁹⁷

O’Brien elaborates on the different motives of the preachers by saying,

These two groups can be distinguished by their perspectives. Those who ‘know’ of Paul’s responsibility for advancing the gospel rightly interpret his imprisonment. They are aware that in his captivity he is discharging faithfully the gospel ministry (see Phil 1:7). What is more, they recognize that he has been ‘set’ for that defense by God. Originally in the Greek, a military term here indicates that Paul is under orders, issued by God. There is therefore no sense of divine disfavor in his captivity. Quite the reverse. Because he has been divinely appointed for the defense of the gospel, his captivity is entirely understandable. . . . They identify with him in proclaiming Christ, doing so out of true Christian love.⁹⁸

The motivation of the rival group of preachers is otherwise. They proclaim Christ from motives of selfish ambition because an arrogant spirit of self-seeking grips them . . . Aristotle denoted ‘a self-seeking pursuit of political office by unfair means. It is preferable to understand it as selfishness or selfish ambition’ (Rom 2:8, 2 Cor 12:20; Gal 5:20; Phil 2:3; Jas 3:14, 16). Further, their concern to proclaim the message is not free from ulterior motives.⁹⁹

Karl Barth, quoting Adolph Schlatter, in his *Epistle to the Philippians* provides some insight into the motives of these preachers by examining some of the adjectives that Paul uses to describe their motives.

The expression *phthonos* (envy) and *eris* (jealousy) in verse 15, and *eritheia* (contentiousness) in verse 17, make for the conjecture that it was to a great extent questions of prestige that brought part of the Roman Christians into opposition to him. The ‘afflicting of the man who is in prison’ in verse 17 will also be most simply explained to this effect: ‘They fight for their honor and their views, from a special group and set to work in order to be able to assert themselves alongside of Paul and over against him. And to this end they think they can now perhaps utilize also his hampered condition as a prisoner.’¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ O’Brien, *New International Greek Testament Commentary*, 99

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 101

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ Barth, *Epistle to the Philippians*, 31

Carolyn Osiek in the *Abingdon New Testament Commentary* made similar observations about the vivid words used by Paul to describe the sinful motives of the preachers he mentioned. “The first of these words, especially envy, carries with it a world for social connotation about resentment at the success of others. It is often associated with sorcery, the evil eye, and other ways of actually causing harm to the one envied.”¹⁰¹

After clearly recognizing the hypocritical motives of these preachers, David H. Stern in his *Jewish New Testament Commentary* does observe that truth can still change the lives of those who believe, while the preacher himself will be judged for the motive with which he preaches this truth.

“In God’s providence many have responded to the Good News of Yeshua the Messiah, proclaimed by a hypocrite. It is the Gospel that saves, not the preacher. The insincere evangelist is storing up for himself judgment, but those who have come to Yeshua because of his words have entered eternal life.”¹⁰²

Philippians 1:18. Osiek correctly interprets 1:18 as a dismissal of the effect the false preachers intend to inflict upon Paul, rather than a commonly held position that Paul ultimately concluded that the motive is not significant just as long as the gospel is preached. Osiek states, “Paul magnanimously overlooked the mean spirit of jealous men and rejoiced that the gospel was being preached. He was irrepressible. No one could get him down. He was a man with a single passion; it was the gospel that mattered. He

¹⁰¹ Osiek, *Abingdon New Testament Commentaries*, 40

¹⁰² David H. Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary* (Clarksville, MD: Jewish New Testament, 1992), 594

focused his attention on the preaching, not on the preachers. When anyone exalted Christ and one should, he could only say, ‘Hallelujah!’”¹⁰³

Elwell and Yarbrough agree and explain the purpose of Philippians 1:18 this way, “As long as they do not distort the message about Christ, Paul is content to be maligned. It is the gospel, not Paul’s reputation or feelings that matters.”¹⁰⁴ H.C.G. Moule also captures Paul’s sentiment accurately by summarizing Phil 1:18 in this manner,

Shall I give way to the trial and lose patience and peace? Must I? Need I? Nay; **what matters it?** Is not the fiery arrow quenched in Christ for me? Is it not thus nothing to me? Yes—yet not nothing after all; for it brings a gain; it spreads the gospel so much further; so that to my ‘**What matters it?**’ I may add, **Only, in every way, fair or foul, Christ is being announced; and in this I rejoice, yea, and rejoice I shall;** the future can only bring me fresh reasons for a joy which lies wholly in the triumphs of my Lord and can only bring fresh blessings to me His vassal.¹⁰⁵

Unfortunately, Phillips seems to convey that the gospel getting circulated trumped Paul’s serious condemnation against pure motives in ministry when he states,

Some of them seem to be building empires for themselves as they spend inordinate amounts of time pleasing for money and then spend large portions of that money on questionable things. Other people draw their circle of fellowship so wide that they raise serious doubts as to whether they have any real convictions at all beyond the bare facts of the gospel. But the gospel is being preached. God’s Word is being proclaimed, however uncertainly and unworthily. We can thank God for that anyway, and we can pray for these people.¹⁰⁶

Verlyn D. Verbrugge also seemingly phrases his comments on this portion of Paul’s letter by intimating that Paul’s concern was diminished about the false motives of

¹⁰³ Phillips, *An Expository Commentary*, 55

¹⁰⁴ Walter A. Elwell and Robert Yarbrough, *Encountering the New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 316

¹⁰⁵ H. C. G. Moule, *Philippians Studies* (Fort Washington, PA: CLC, 2002), 28

¹⁰⁶ Phillips, *An Expository Commentary*, 54

the preachers when he states, “Paul can be confident and rejoice even when Christ is preached with base motives. The important thing is that God is doing his gracious work and that as many as possible share in the gospel.”¹⁰⁷ And while we are indeed able to thank God that the gospel is spread at all times, no believer should diminish the obvious condemnation of performing in ministry with false motives.

Application Taken from Philippians 1:12-17

In Phil 1:12-17, Paul was in a tough circumstance as he was imprisoned and not permitted to travel and share the gospel. Not knowing the outcome of this imprisonment, Paul began to entertain possible scenarios and shared what he was thinking if each one were to take place. In every situation, he wished that Jesus Christ be exalted in all things. And even though he acknowledged which scenario would be better for him personally, he ultimately concluded that the scenario that most likely would bring the most glory to Christ would be the most inconvenient for him. Paul was practicing in Phil 1:13-17 what he would ultimately preach in Phil 1:21a, “for me to live is Christ.” In the meantime, he did not simply sit idle and have pity upon himself; he continually shared the gospel. And even though Paul acknowledged that his circumstances were hard (“affliction”), he still found joy in sharing the gospel with even the ones who were guarding over him in his imprisonment.

Christian women should take their direction from Paul’s example and remember that in their particular ministries, there will be times when they will be tempted to focus upon their own circumstances and be self-centered in their feelings, their thoughts, and

¹⁰⁷ Verlyn D. Verbugge, *The NIV Theological Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 1327

ultimately in their reactions. They will tend to become very active in their planning of how to get out of the tough circumstance and very inactive in following the Lord's mission for their personal lives and ministry. Just as Paul found great joy, and continued joy (cf. Philippians 1:18 "am rejoicing . . . will rejoice"), in sharing the gospel, they should fight the temptation to discontinue what God has called them to do.

When Christian women counsel other women during their ministry, it is wise to follow Paul's example and not react—even though the sin grieves their hearts. The best response is to maintain their joy, encouraging their counselees to leave the situation in God's capable hands. Jay Adams shares the application of these verses for those who counsel when he says,

here is the goal for you to set forth for the counselee who complains about unfair treatment. If others in any way are furthering the message about Jesus Christ, rejoice in that—regardless of what they do or say to you. In other words, Christ and His church must come before yourself. That is a hard pill for many counselees to swallow because of their pride, because according to self-love doctrine, they have been taught that they are to care about themselves first of all. Yet, it is an altogether important lesson to learn: you do not come before Christ and His kingdom.¹⁰⁸

Application Taken from Philippians 1:15-18

Christian women should always be prepared and willing to preach against the sin of performing good activities with false sinful motives. While it is true that God can receive glory through someone who is attempting to thwart His perfect plan (cf. Gen 50:20) and they should focus on the victory God will receive through the circumstance, they should never ignore the sin that is also occurring. Just because God can and will receive glory does not mean they should not speak up against evil. Paul

¹⁰⁸ Adams, *Christian Counselor's Commentary*, 148

demonstrated a fine balance of confronting the sin in Phil 1:15-17, then dismissing the effects upon him in Phil 1:18. Christian women should always maintain a stalwart confidence in the power of God to receive glory in any situation, but likewise must also maintain a strong commitment to address any sin that has occurred.

Christian women are in a position that wields a level of influence, either upon a few or a mass of people. Just like Paul, people are watching their reactions to get a read on how they themselves should respond. Christian women need to be prepared to have the same level of balance that Paul had as he encountered these slanderers in Phil 1:15-18. Just as Paul told the people at Philippi to watch him to get their read on how to respond in situations (cf. Phil 4:9), likewise Christian women need to realize that they are in the same position of influence.

Accomplishing this does not diminish the level of difficulty to approach such a situation with this degree of spiritual maturity and balance. It is very difficult indeed. But God has empowered Christian women (cf. Phil 2:1) to function in this manner in ministry. He will enable them to publicly dismiss the effects of another person's actions against them, so they are galvanized to telegraph stability to others while they are hurting inside. It is not easy, but God can empower them to do it. They are able to confront sin that is being committed, even though they may not think they have strong prophetic personalities. It is not easy, but God can empower them to do it. As believers, they are able to do "all things through Christ who strengthens [them]."

Exposition of Philippians 1:19-26

Philippians 1:19-26

¹⁹ For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, ²⁰ according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. ²¹ For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. ²² But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. ²³ For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. ²⁴ Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you. ²⁵ And being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith, ²⁶ that your rejoicing for me may be more abundant in Jesus Christ by my coming to you again.

In Phil 1:19-26, we are able to listen to Paul share his very personal thoughts regarding his desire to go to heaven and be with his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, or stay on the earth with his believing friends and offer support and guidance on how to better honor the Lord through their spiritual development. Certainly Paul is unable to control these types of details of life or death, but his dilemma, as described within these verses, is remarkable. His quandary should serve as a powerful example to encourage believers to deeply care for the spiritual well-being of others to the point that we would (if possible) postpone our entrance into the glories of heaven in order to remain with our believing friends to further edify them to grow in wisdom. Harold Willmington in *Willmington's Bible Handbook* captures the essence of Paul's purpose for writing Phil 1:19-26 in the following way:

“To be here or not to be here: That is the question.” Though apparently confident that he would be released from prison (1:19, 25), Paul's first choice would have been to die and be with Christ (1:23). His sense of duty, however, required him to remain here on earth (1:24). Whatever happened, Paul's overriding desire was that his life would “always honor Christ” (1:20). While death would be “better” for Paul, his goal in continuing to live was summed up in one word: Christ (1:21).¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁹ Willmington, *Willmington's Bible Handbook*, 711

Philippians 1:19-26. J. A. Motyer in *The Message of Philippians* provides a very clear and simple summary of Paul's perspective,

He, Paul, loved the Lord with an abounding love and yearned for his company. Yet, over against all that, he writes three words (two in Greek) which change the whole picture; "on your account" (verse 24). As far as personal enrichment was concerned, death would win hands down. But there is also the Philippian church and all the others who feel the loving imagination of Paul. What of them? They still need, as he sees it, his apostolic ministry. Paul believes it to be the will of the Lord that this need should be considered as paramount (verse 25). Furthermore, such is his love for his fellow-believers and his desire for their spiritual advantage that he is ready for it to be so. What a man the apostle was! The fruitfulness of remaining in this life could sway him as against the joy of living with Christ; the needs of the church were met by a love which, for the present, was willing to postpone heavenly glories. But for him, it all came down to two dominating motives: I live on so that others may grow in Christ and that Christ may be glorified in me.¹¹⁰

Fee in the *IVP New Testament Commentary* provides a viewpoint of Paul's thinking that conveys a perspective that is singularly focused on bringing honor to Christ in all things.

The striking words 'to live, Christ [Christos]; to die, gain [kerdos]' epitomizes Paul's life since Damascus. Once Paul was apprehended by Christ Jesus, 3:12, Christ became the singular pursuit of his life . . . much of what this means to Paul will be spelled out in 3:4-14. Such singular focus does not make Paul otherworldly; rather it gives heart and meaning to everything he is and does as a citizen of two worlds, his heavenly citizenship determining his earthly. Paul will pick up the metaphor of gain/profit again in 3:7-8 and there play it for all its worth.¹¹¹

Fee in the *New International Commentary of the New Testament* provides an Old Testament perspective to the dilemma that Paul is verbalizing of whether to go to heaven or remain on earth by saying

since Paul's spiritual life and theology are thoroughly imbued with OT realities, we should not be surprised that he not only quotes the OT but also at times borrows or echoes the language and setting of a specific OT passage (or motif) and refits it into

¹¹⁰ Motyer, *Message of Philippians*, 91

¹¹¹ Fee, *IVP New Testament Commentary*, 70

his own setting. In this sentence he echoes the situation of the “poor man” in the OT, especially Job and the Psalmists, who in their distress look to God for “vindication,” which will function as “salvation” for them. Paul’s first clause is in fact a verbatim borrowing from Job 13:16 (LXX); and the second clause with its collocation of “shame” and “magnifying” picks up the language of the “poor man” in such Psalms as 34:3-6 and 35:24-28. Thus, even though this is now Paul’s own sentence, and must be understood within its present context, it is best understood as intentionally echoing the analogous circumstances of Job.¹¹²

Job 13 contains one of the more poignant of Job’s speeches, where he abjures the perspective of his “Comforter,” who insists that his present situation is the result of “hidden sin.” Job knows better and pleads his cause with God, in whom he hopes and before whom he would plead his innocence. Indeed, the very hope of appearing before God in this way will be his “salvation” because the godless shall not come before God (v. 16). And ‘salvation’ for Job means ‘I know that I will be vindicated’ (v. 18), so with Paul, but in quite different circumstances.¹¹³

Arnold agrees saying that just as Job who uses a “metaphor of standing trial before God and says that he is confident that after God has cross-examined him he will be saved,”¹¹⁴ so does Paul feel vindicated even though other preachers feel he is to be shamed as a result of being in prison.

Osiek emphasizes Paul’s confidence level in that he was not ashamed about being in this imprisonment.

In the midst of this public shame, he speaks ‘with all boldness’ (en pase parresia) (v. 21). Parresia refers to the open, direct, and honest speech (“telling it like it is”) that was not permitted to women, slaves or certainly not to prisoners, but only to free men. It was a privilege for the freeborn, especially the elite male. Paul virtually ignores his shameful situation, caught up in the honor of Christ that is being won through his bold speech, and that will come through no matter what the outcome for himself. He is enabled to do this through the gift of the Spirit that is supplied by God (v. 19).¹¹⁵

¹¹² Fee, *NICNT: Paul’s Letter*, 131

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 131

¹¹⁴ Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Commentary*, 55

¹¹⁵ Osiek, *Abingdon New Testament Commentaries*, 40

Verse 26 literally reads “so that your reason for boasting (kauchema) might abound in Christ Jesus in me because of my coming (parousia) again to you.”¹¹⁶

Application Taken from Philippians 1:19-26

In Phil 1:19-26, we are able to listen to Paul share his very personal thoughts regarding his desire to go to heaven and be with his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ or stay on the earth with his believing friends and offer support and guidance on how to better honor the Lord through their spiritual development. Certainly Paul is unable to control these types of details of his life (or death), but Paul’s dilemma as described within these verses should serve as a powerful example to encourage believers to deeply care for the spiritual well-being of others to the point that we would (if possible) postpone our ability to enter the glories of heaven in order to remain with our believing friends to further edify them to grow in wisdom.

In order to get a real gauge how much Christian women really love the people to whom they minister, they would be wise to ask themselves a similar question that reflects Paul’s dilemma, “If we had the choice to go to heaven (a personal benefit) or remain on earth to further edify the women to whom we are currently ministering, which option would we choose?” After reading a question like this, most would probably assume the correct answer would be to remain on earth and minister to women. Even though that was Paul’s answer, what is really more important for Christian women is to assess how quickly they could answer the question. Meaning, would they actually have to pause and have the deep battle and internal debate that Paul demonstrated in Phil 1:19-26? Would it

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 45

be difficult to choose? Would they find themselves oscillating because of how deeply they care for those to whom they minister? It is this author's belief that any Christian woman who truly loves the people to whom she is ministering should demonstrate at least some level of internal struggle when answering this question.

Whether Christian women will ever be put into this position to have to wonder how their life situations will turn out, they should ask themselves, "In my current ministry, am I spending my time edifying the women to which I minister to grow in wisdom, knowledge, and obedience to God? Is there an urgency within my heart as if my time is short upon the earth?" James Montgomery Boice captures the heart of one who truly loves God and people when he says "So it must be with us. We must lift our minds to contemplate the joys of heaven, but if we see them rightly we will turn back once more to those for whom our life in Christ and our witness to him are needful."¹¹⁷

Application Taken from Philippians 1:21

Paul did not just share the gospel in his circumstance, he boldly shared the gospel. Even when Paul was being imprisoned while the officials were debating what should be done with him (cf. Acts 21-28), Paul was fearlessly sharing the gospel. In addition, Paul never cowered from obeying the will of God for his life. Just as in the founding of the church (cf. Acts 16) when Paul and Silas sang praises to the Lord while in their prison cell, Paul is now preaching God's praises to those who are holding him captive. He never cowered. He never apologized. And he never stopped.

¹¹⁷ James Montgomery Boice, *Philippians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 85

Christian women should never be ashamed if they are obeying God's will, even if there are some that slander them for doing so. The unbelieving world will be just as bold to mock them. They need to be equally as bold to obey what they know to be true.

Often times in ministry, this author is asked, "Am I saved, do you think? I don't know if I am saved." There are a number of ways the Bible tells us how to know if we are saved—resident conviction of sin, dependence upon God vs. credence to a faith statement, etc. But here in Phil 1:21, Paul shares a very unique way to know if you are saved. Paul says that if someone is being persecuted for her faith, that signals her lustiness and it is also a sign of her salvation. The key is if you are being persecuted for your steadfastness and are demonstrating a commitment to your faith. Therefore, Christian women need to set the example to those who follow their leadership as women who will stand boldly for truth and the adherence to it. Knowing that it will bring about slander for their faith feeds the desire to obey God all the more. Certainly they are to live peaceably among those with whom they interact (cf. 1 Tim 2:1-2), and they should lead the way to demonstrate that obedience to God will always supersede all culturally accepted norms and practices. In open discussions in coffee shops, public comments, praying before meals in restaurants, etc., they should demonstrate unequivocal obedience for those who are watching and learning from them.

Exposition of Philippians 1:27-30

Philippians 1:27-30

²⁷ Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel,²⁸ and not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from God.²⁹ For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to

believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake,³⁰ having the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear is in me.

In Phil 1:27-30, Paul once again stresses the importance of unity. He emphasizes his desire to “hear of [their] affairs” whether he is able to come see them or remains absent from them. This will be repeated in Phil 2:12-16 as Paul stresses the importance of remaining faithful to obey God regardless of the circumstance and regardless of whomever is watching. Harold Willmington makes the following summary comment regarding Phil 1:27-30.

“Wonderful news! You get to suffer for him! Paul exhorted the Philippians to be steadfast in their faith and bold before their enemies, counting it a privilege to suffer for Christ. Suffering is promised to all true believers (see 2 Tim 3:12).”¹¹⁸

Philippians 1:27. Homer Kent provides a summary of this portion of Philippians by saying,

As citizens of a spiritual realm, the Philippians should stand firm in one spirit. This should be true ‘whatever happens’ to Paul, for the responsibility for their spiritual growth rested ultimately with them and their appropriation of the riches in Christ. Whether Paul would be released and thus enabled to visit them in person, or be forced to remain away from them and learn of their progress through the reports of others, his exhortation was the same. They must conduct their lives in a manner appropriate to the gospel of Christ.¹¹⁹

John Ruemann identifies the specific steps that Paul listed within Phil 1:27-30 that will fulfill the words, “let your conduct be worthy of the Gospel” in Phil 1:27.

¹¹⁸ Willmington, *Willmington’s Bible Handbook*, 711

¹¹⁹ Homer A. Kent Jr. and Frank E. Gaebelien, eds., *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary with the New International version Ephesians through Philemon, volume 11* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 118

“Paul hopes to hear (and see, God willing) their exercise of *politeia* [conduct] in three ways; first, they stand steadfast (27c), secondly, engage together in the struggle (27d), and thirdly, not be intimidated in any way. This ‘catalogue of tasks’ (Schenk 167) pairs positive and negative examples (DA 262) to exemplify what *politeuesthe* [let your conduct] means.”¹²⁰

It is hard to believe that Paul did not have the unique citizenship of Philippi in mind when he wrote the words “let your conduct” (translated from the Greek word “*pliteuesthe*,” which at its core is the word for “city/citizenship.” Paul’s rhetorical reference to conducting themselves as good citizens of the gospel, undoubtedly made a profound point to the people at Philippi. Bockmuehl agrees when he says, “The rhetorical force of Paul’s language is to play on the perceived desirability of citizenship in Roman society at Philippi, and to contrast against this the Christian vision of enfranchisement and belonging.”¹²¹ Bockmuehl continues to elaborate upon the effect of Paul linking this spiritual teaching with their current situation as residents of a colony of Rome,

Christians, then, are to adopt a way of life that is in keeping with their corporate citizenship as constituted in Christ and the gospel. Against the colonial preoccupation with the coveted citizenship of Rome, Paul interposes a counter- citizenship whose capital and seat of power are not earthly but heavenly; whose guarantor is not Nero but Christ. Philippi may be a colony enjoying the personal imperial patronage of Lord Caesar, but the church at Philippi is a personal colony of Christ the Lord above all (Phil 2:10-11). The exercise of their common citizenship, therefore, must be worthy of his gospel, which is as it were the ‘constitution’ of that kingdom (cf. K Barth).¹²²

¹²⁰ John Ruemann, *The Anchor Yale Bible: Philippians* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 287

¹²¹ Bockmuehl, *Black’s New Testament Commentary*, 98

¹²² *Ibid.*

John Walvoord believes that this reference to citizenship actually instilled the sense of “responsibility” in the minds the church at Philippi.

The use of a political metaphor to illustrate spiritual truth comes out of the context that Philippi was a Roman colony where a Roman citizen such as Paul would be very conscious of civil responsibility. Paul uses the same metaphor in Phil 3:20 and Eph 2:10. Although Paul repeatedly was accused of violating Roman laws, actually he was subject to the higher law of the kingdom of God. He wanted the Philippians to likewise be good citizens of the heavenly kingdom.¹²³

Philippians 1:28-30. Regarding suffering as presented in Phil 1:28-30, Paul describes it as a gift for the believer to suffer for the sake of Christ. Mark Edwards in the *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture* (which provides a mass gathering of quotes from church fathers, patriarchs, and ancient church leaders) quotes Chrysostom who links the two concepts of suffering with living a life worthy of the gospel, All that he has said is for this single purpose, to exhort them to live a life worthy of the gospel. . . . What does only mean? This is the one thing looked for, and nothing else. Where this is, no hurt can befall us.”¹²⁴ Fred Craddock puts emphasis on the responsibility to live a life worthy of the gospel and how the Lord will deal with those attempting to instill fear and persecution upon the church of Philippi. Craddock believes that Paul was stressing the fact that they should concern themselves with their own relationship to God and allow God to concern Himself with the opponents of Christianity.

What Paul knows, however, is that united, firm, consistent living out the gospel of Christ will be an omen, a sign, a manifestation, a preliminary demonstration of the future; and the omen will be to the opponents (v. 28). To them, Christian conduct will be a sign of what will occur at the end: the destruction of the opponents and the

¹²³ Walvoord, *Everyman's Bible Commentary*, 44

¹²⁴ Mark J. Edwards, *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament, Volume VIII, Galatians, Ephesians, and Philippians* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 231

salvation of the believers. It is important to keep in mind that the omen is to the opponents, not the Christians. Were Paul referring to a sign from God to the Christians, he would be adding fuel to an already too prevalent motivation among the saints: delight in the destruction of the wicked. The church has received from Paul instructions on how to conduct their lives; what God makes of that among the persecutors is not the Church's concern.¹²⁵

Thus, a calm demeanor in the midst of persecution fostered by trust in God in the midst of suffering will serve as “an evidence, a sure token, an omen, of the perdition which awaits the obstinate foes of holiness, but to you of the salvation which awaits Christ's faithful witness.”¹²⁶

Fortunately, Paul offers encouragement to all believers who are going or will go through persecution. John Knight in the *Beacons Bible Exposition* provides encouragement to the believer who finds himself/herself consumed with fear due to persecution. Knight focuses upon Paul's emphasis on what he calls “Divine Enablement” (Phil 1:28-30). He states “Paul is concerned with the spiritual progress of the Philippians. He knows that timidity and fear are an impediment to advancement. Fear, particularly, may arise from lack of trust in God.”¹²⁷ Thus the Apostle in these verses points to a reservoir of divine strength—of God which will enable them to overcome all opposition and to accept the creative aspects of suffering for Christ's sake.”¹²⁸ Of course, this encouragement did not come from someone who was unaware of what it takes to endure through suffering and persecution. F. F. Bruce believes that the people at Philippi

¹²⁵ Fred B. Craddock, *Interpretation: Philippians* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985)

¹²⁶ Moule, *Philippian Studies*, 56

¹²⁷ Knight, John A. *Beacon Bible Exposition, (Vol. 9) Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*. (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1985), 28

¹²⁸ Moule, *Philippian Studies*, 56

accepted Paul's words more willingly because they knew of Paul's proven testimony of trusting the Lord through tough times, "The encouragement that Paul gave his friends was the more acceptable because it did not come from one who had no personal experience of suffering for Christ's sake."¹²⁹

Application Taken from Philippians 1:27-30

In Phil 1:27-30, Paul once again stresses the importance of unity. He emphasizes his desire to "hear of [their] affairs" whether he is able to come see them or remains absent from them. This will be repeated in Phil 2:12-16 as Paul stresses the importance of remaining faithful to obey God regardless of the circumstance and regardless of whoever is watching. And Paul stresses to all believers that we should continue to obey God, even when the accountability is gone or out of sight, and to continue to grow spiritually even in the absence of one of their biggest cheerleaders, Paul.

If there is ever a spiritual application that Christian women desire for all of the women to whom they minister, it is the spiritual discipline of being spiritually disciplined when no one is watching. If there is ever a spiritual discipline that Christian women should lead by example it is this spiritual discipline. The only way they will witness this in the lives of those to whom they minister will be if they themselves practice this spiritual discipline.

How can Christian women make this spiritual discipline true of them in their daily lives? This can be achieved through daily practice, with reverential fear of disappointing God, and with sobriety as to the consequences of failing spiritually. Interestingly, this is

¹²⁹ F. F. Bruce, *Understanding the Bible Commentary Series: Philippians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 58

the exact prescription to accomplishing this spiritual discipline in our lives that Paul instructs the people of Philippi to do in Phil 2:12, “Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.”

If it is indeed true that whatever Christian women say in secret will come out in the light (Luke 12:3), then they ought to be thinking, singing, meditating, and processing Christ-centered thoughts in secret. Only when they make this a daily practice in their own lives will they be able to confidently teach this truth to those to whom they minister.

CHAPTER THREE

EXPOSITION AND APPLICATION OF PHILIPPIANS TWO

Philippians 2:1-30

2 Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, ² fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. ³ Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. ⁴ Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

⁵ Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, ⁷ but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. ⁹ Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, ¹¹ and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

¹² Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³ for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.

¹⁴ Do all things without complaining and disputing, ¹⁵ that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, ¹⁶ holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.

¹⁷ Yes, and if I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. ¹⁸ For the same reason you also be glad and rejoice with me.

¹⁹ But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, that I also may be encouraged when I know your state. ²⁰ For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state. ²¹ For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ

Jesus. ²² *But you know his proven character, that as a son with his father he served with me in the gospel.* ²³ *Therefore I hope to send him at once, as soon as I see how it goes with me.* ²⁴ *But I trust in the Lord that I myself shall also come shortly.*

²⁵ *Yet I considered it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier, but your messenger and the one who ministered to my need;* ²⁶ *since he was longing for you all, and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick.* ²⁷ *For indeed he was sick almost unto death; but God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.* ²⁸ *Therefore I sent him the more eagerly, that when you see him again you may rejoice, and I may be less sorrowful.* ²⁹ *Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness, and hold such men in esteem;* ³⁰ *because for the work of Christ he came close to death, not regarding his life, to supply what was lacking in your service toward me.*

Chapter Outline

Rejoicing in Christ's Selflessness (2)

- IV. Christ's selflessness (2:1-11)
- V. Imitating Christ's selflessness (2:18-26)
- VI. Two imitators of Christ's selflessness (2:19-30)¹³⁰

Exposition of Philippians 2:1-11

2 Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, ² *fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.* ³ *Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.* ⁴ *Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.*

⁵ *Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,* ⁶ *who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,* ⁷ *but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.* ⁸ *And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.* ⁹ *Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name,* ¹⁰ *that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth,* ¹¹ *and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

¹³⁰ Wilmington, *Wilmington's Bible Handbook*, 710

Exposition of Philippians 2:1-4

Philippians 2:1. Paul begins Chapter 2 with a declarative question and answer.

He utilizes the word ‘if’ four times in verse one, “*any consolation in Christ, any comfort of love, any fellowship of the Spirit, and any affection and mercy.*” Of these four clauses beginning with “if,” Gordon Fee, in *The IVP New Testament Commentary*, observes that they offer “the basis of the appeal, which has to do (apparently) with their own Trinitarian experience of God: Christ’s comfort, God’s love and their common sharing in the Spirit.”¹³¹ These clauses assume that these spiritual blessings are realities of each and every believer. That is why many translations will translate this verse to convey a level of certainty that these are true of all believers. For example, the *Amplified Bible* version translates verse one with a level of certainty, “so by whatever [appeal to you there is in our mutual dwelling in Christ, by whatever] strengthening *and* consoling *and* encouraging [our relationship] in Him [affords], by whatever persuasive incentive there is in love, by whatever participation in the [Holy] Spirit [we share], and by whatever depth of affection and compassionate sympathy. (Phil 2:1 AMP)”¹³²

Paul reminds the Church at Philippi of four spiritual realities that can be enjoyed by every believer. Paul bases his call to obedience in the following verses to these spiritual blessings and logically asks the Church at Philippi to obey some commands in the following verses that will certainly honor God and be a strong testimony to those who look upon them.

¹³¹ Fee, *IVP New Testament Commentary*, 83

¹³² *Amplified Bible* (AMP) (The Lockman Foundation, 1987)

Paul says that believers have “consolation in Christ.” In the *Exploring Ephesians and Philippians Commentary*, Phillips states that “the word ‘consolation’ is akin to the word translated ‘Comforter’ in John 14:16, 26. One of the names of the Lord Jesus is ‘the consolation of Israel’ in Luke 2:25. Thus the word ‘consolation’ carries with it thoughts of both the Holy Spirit and the Lord Jesus. Perhaps Paul also had in mind Barnabas, the ‘son of consolation’ (Acts 4:36).”¹³³

In other words, God is the provider of wisdom and guidance that produces encouragement and comfort to a believer while living and ministering in this world.

Clinton Arnold notes that “the word translated ‘comfort’ used in Philippians 2 occurs nowhere else in Scripture,”¹³⁴ and it is different from the previous word “consolation” that is linked to the word that is translated “comforter” in John 14:16, 26. This word provides impetus to trust God and His consolation which He provides to all believers. Arnold agrees when he states that the original meaning of the word means “stimulating force, incentive. Paul appealed to his friends to keep the comforting, consoling power of the Lord Jesus and the stimulating power of love. The Philippians would bring joy to Paul’s heart if they availed themselves of this power and settled their disputes.”¹³⁵

And although Arnold phrases his comments on this verse to intimate that there is more conflict that probably resides within the Church of Philippi at this time, his comments do bring out the fact that Paul was saying that if the Church of Philippi lived

¹³³ Phillips, *An Expository Commentary*, 76

¹³⁴ Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Commentary*, 57

¹³⁵ Ibid.

their lives in the way in which God instructed them to live, they would experience a level of comfort, wisdom, and motivation to continue obeying God's commands.

Philippians 2:2. In Phil 2:2, Paul continues on to say that if those “if’s” are established then his joy will be satisfied by the Church if they are “*being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.*”

Arnold makes this comment in his book:

Paul wanted the Philippians to be likeminded in what they wrought—that is, he wanted them to have the same love worked out in them as had been wrought out in his life. He wanted them to be like-minded in what they sought. Paul was looking for absolute “unity of mind, heart and purpose in the Lord.”¹³⁶

The need for like-mindedness today in the Church is a concept that must start with leadership. The lead pastor of the local church must exemplify the attitude of unity among his parishioners. In turn, his staff must exemplify the attitude to the various ministries within the church. For the Christian woman in local church ministry, being likeminded with her ministry team, the church staff, and finally the lead pastor, is a must. Leadership must cast vision for the church. They must be on the same page and not be encumbered by the day to day peripherals. Balance must be evident.

Philippians 2:3. In regards to the contrasting words of selfish ambition vs. lowliness of mind (humility) in verse three, Arnold, quoting Walter Grundman, states that “the term *humility* often had bad overtones in ancient literature outside the New Testament. The Stoic Philosopher Epictetus (AD 55-135) for example, used it to refer to weakness of character.”¹³⁷ However, many times in the New Testament, the term

¹³⁶ Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Commentary*, 57

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

humility brings about a positive usage. Arnold also observes that “here Paul uses it to refer to a sacrificial willingness to give up one’s rights and work for the good of others. The supreme example of this was Jesus who ‘humbled himself’ in obedience to God and suffered death by crucifixion” (Phil 2:8).¹³⁸ And though Arnold incorrectly believes that the church at Philippi is experiencing a heightened level of disunity when he says, “the cause of their discords and the cure of the discords is the theme here. Selfish ambition and vainglory many times, all the time, devalues the work that is done for service. The effects of it is fleeting and lasts only moments.”¹³⁹

Jerry L. Sumney captures Paul’s intent of presenting a level of self-promotion that is unacceptable among believers. He lists “excessive ambition” as an optional translation for the word “conceit.”¹⁴⁰ In verse three, Paul offers both a directive to live a life of humility and a spiritual activity that one could practice in order to safeguard oneself from becoming prideful. Paul encourages the believers at Philippi to “esteem others better than himself” as a way in which to maintain a proper, humble perspective of oneself. Sumney offers grammatical justification to translate this phrase “consider others better than yourself.”¹⁴¹ Seemingly, Paul believed this spiritual activity would assist the believers at Philippi in keeping a proper humble perspective of their own standing within the Body of

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Jerry L. Sumney, *Philippians: A Greek Student’s Intermediate Reader* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007), 42

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

Christ and would assist them in maintaining a proper level of appreciation and respect for fellow believers.

Philippians 2:4. In verse 4, Paul instructs the believers at Philippi to continually be on the lookout for the needs and situations of other believers. This continual and focused attention on the needs of other believers is captured in the Koine Greek word that is translated “look.” Referencing multiple translations and lexicons, J. Harold Greenlee recognizes that this word has been translated, “to look to,” “to look out for,” “to be concerned about,” “to adopt as one’s aim,” and “to study.”¹⁴² John Phillips says, “to seek one’s own advancement is worldly. To seek the prosperity, good, and promotion of others is divine. Philippians 2:4 expresses the essence of the spirit of the Lord Jesus.”¹⁴³

It is significant that the teaching of selflessness is taught by Paul on many different occasions in the New Testament because it shows that these instructions to remain selfless in one’s ministry to other believers is applicable to all believers and not just those in the Church at Philippi.

Along with Phil 2:4, Rom 15:1-2 captures the importance and purpose of ministering in a selfless manner to others within the Body of Christ: “We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification.”

¹⁴² Harold J. Greenlee, *An Exegetical Summary of Philippians* (Dallas, TX: SIL International, 2001), 94

¹⁴³ Phillips, *An Expository Commentary*, 79

Application Taken from Philippians 2:1

Paul considers that our human offering of obedience to God is founded upon God's divine offering of spiritual blessing to us. Paul begins this chapter with the basis for our ministry: because we are blessed and empowered by God to function within the Body of Christ in the capacity in which we are ministering. Christian women in local church ministry will never have to fear falling into the trap of functioning in ministry for prideful and condemnable reasons if they always remember that they are blessed and empowered by God to be doing the things they are doing.

This author has found that when Christian women are publicly thanked for their ministry to other women, frequently they are tempted to forget that they are blessed and empowered by God for this specific area of ministry. God has given them this special niche where they can encourage women within the Body of Christ. It is important to remember that how they receive expressions of thanks from other people will give them the opportunities to either solicit more compliments for their own praise or redirect their thanks to the God who blessed and empowered them to function in this capacity in ministry. Once they receive the praise of man in a self-centered way, that human praise will become an insatiable drug—one that will never satisfy their prideful souls.

Therefore, leaders of Christian women should be diligent to remain mindful that they are blessed and empowered by God in their personal ministries within the Body of Christ.

Their motive is to serve Him, not bask in the praise of human beings.

Paul reminds all believers that they have God to guide them, and they have God's promise of comfort to those who obey His commands. As Christian women are led in living out biblical truths in their day-to-day lives, it is important to not only commit to

obey God's commands and specific instructions, but also to remain steadfast in personal obedience and a walk with Him. There will always be challenges to face and temptations to compromise or not follow-through thoroughly with commitments, or even to quit altogether. But they must never forget that they have been called to minister to this particular segment of God's church, and just as Paul encouraged the Philippians, his words apply to them as well. Through Paul's encouragement, God is urging them to remain steadfast in the mission He has given them.

Application Taken from Philippians 2:3

Paul reminds all believers to keep a proper humble perspective of our own standing within the Body of Christ and to maintain a proper level of appreciation and respect for fellow believers. Living a prideful life will be a constant temptation for Christian women in leadership positions because of their elevated level of service in various ministries. It is acceptable to desire a leadership status, and it is also possible for Christian women to honor God as they use their giftedness to lead and serve. Furthermore, it is completely acceptable for Christian women to inform senior leaders that they would like to be considered for a leadership position. However, if in the attempt to secure a leadership position, they exhibit "excessive ambition," or their hearts become prideful with a feeling of superiority over those to whom they are serving, at that point they've crossed the line. That attitude is in direct violation with Paul's firm warning, "Let nothing [absolutely nothing] be done through selfish ambition or conceit" (Phil 2:3).

The damage of serving with a prideful heart can be severe. For example, in ministries involving music (specifically vocalists), often individuals are invited to lead in worship on a Sunday and/or sing a solo. Immediately, it is evident how God tests the

hearts of the in-house music team to see if they will welcome and encourage the guest soloist or demean him/her with their words or actions. Unfortunately, some eventually make comments like, “I sing better than they do.” Or, “Why didn’t I get a solo? I have been here longer than they have!” These questions point directly to the motive of the person who has not adopted a heart of humility. Those who are likeminded with the leadership and their motives are truly for people to come to Christ so Christ is ultimately glorified; those believers usually do not make these kinds of remarks.

“What about me?” statements come out of selfish ambition and conceit. The applause that these people crave is brief and unsustainable. It is not eternal. However, the music minister who is heavenly minded understands that talents and giftings are given for the ultimate glory of God the Father and His Son. A truly humble minister finds great joy when God is honored, regardless of the person God chooses to use.

Application Taken from Philippians 2:4

Paul instructs all believers to continually be on the lookout for the needs and situations of other believers. For Christian women in local church ministry, this sounds relatively easy (and easy to proclaim that it should be done), but it is very difficult to practice. Why? Because it is not “self” focused. And unless they are intentional to watch over their hearts so they are controlled by the Spirit, they will be controlled by the lust of the flesh and the pride of their lives. However, when Christian women serve selflessly in local church ministry, it can make an indelible mark upon another believer. For example, here is the story of one Christian woman who displayed an act of selflessness. Try to imagine two very large rooms filled with 350 eager women who were ready to dive into a new Bible study. It was a sight to behold. The rooms were filled with round tables,

seating 10 at each table with a “host table leader.” The room was filled with chatter and welcoming hugs. Everyone appeared to be connected somehow to the large group, except for one lady. One middle aged woman stood there in the midst, looking very confused and looking very much rejected. As this author watched from across the room, she moved hesitantly from table to table asking if there was room for her. Each leader gave a polite answer and she moved on. Anyone watching would know that they must have said, “Oh, I am sorry but we are full.” As this author was moving across the room to help, someone else beat her to the rescue. Another table leader had been watching too. She put her arm around the woman and moved her toward her own table.

Through the weeks that followed, this author learned of her story. She had been rejected and abandoned by her husband and having moved into town recently, she knew no one. She was a believer and was seeking the fellowship of other believers. The beautiful ending to this story is that now, several years later, this beautiful woman is leading a table at the same Bible study. She is active in ministry and when you see her, she is the one welcoming new ladies to her table for Bible study. This situation made such a great impact upon her life that she has admitted that whenever she was tempted to think selfishly in a situation and not to minister to another, she thought about the selfless ministry of one person in her life. It forever motivated her to serve with the same level of selflessness.

Exposition of Philippians 2:5-8

Philippians 2:5-8

⁵ Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, ⁷ but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of

men.⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

Because of its deep theological teachings on the person of Christ, Phil 2:5-8 is often referenced to provide an extremely vivid portrait of Jesus Christ's example of living out unity, humility, and selflessness. Harold Willmington says that

Christ is the supreme example of selflessness. When the mighty Son of God became the lowly Son of Man, He did several things: He left heaven's glory for earth's poverty (see John 17:5; 2 Cor 8:9) [and] 'He made himself nothing,' or 'emptied' himself (Phil 2:7). He did not lay aside his deity. He was, is, and ever shall be the Son of God (see John 1:1; Col 1:15;2:9). He did, for a while, hide his heavenly fame in an earthly frame. Even though he retained every single attribute of deity while on earth, he surrendered the independent exercise of those divine characteristics (compare Mark 9:12 and Rom 15:3). He 'appeared in human form' (Phil 2:7-8; see John 1:14; Rom 8:3; Gal 4:4; Heb 2:14, 17). This simple fact can hardly be grasped by the human mind. The infinite, holy Creator suddenly came into the world in the likeness of his creatures. One might compare that to a human king voluntarily becoming a peasant. But a better comparison would be a human king becoming a lowly ant-though even that comparison would be inadequate! He 'took the humble position of a slave' (Phil 2:7). He did not come as a mighty human king or philosopher, but as a lowly servant. He 'humbled himself' (Phil 2:8): He talked our language, wore our clothes, ate our food, breathed our air, and endured our vicious treatment. Contrast Christ's humble statement in the Garden of Gethsemane (see Matt 26:39, 42) with the statement of arrogance that many scholars attribute to Satan (see Isa 14:13-14). Christ's ultimate humiliation came as he allowed himself to be killed (Phil 2:8; see Matt 26:39; John 10:18; Heb 5:8; 12:2). And this was not just any death but 'a criminal's death on a cross,' the worst kind of death both physically and judicially (see Psalms 22; Isaiah 53; Gal 3:13).¹⁴⁴

Philippians 2:5-8. Peter T. O'Brien in *The New International Greek Testament Commentary* concurs that verses 5-8 convey Christ's example of living out unity, humility, and selflessness when he states that this "Christ-hymn presents Jesus as the ultimate model for Christian behavior and action, the supreme example of the humble,

¹⁴⁴ Willmington, *Willmington's Bible Handbook*, 1997, 712

self-sacrificing, and self-giving service that Paul has just been urging the Philippians to practice in their relations one toward another [in] vv.1-4.”¹⁴⁵

Philippians 2:5-8 teaches that while here on earth, Christ exhibited how to remain unified amid challenging circumstances, how to remain humble when others mock you with disbelief, and how to think of others when you yourself are suffering. These verses were written so that we would mimic the attitude of Christ as we minister to the Body of Christ.

John Phillips agrees when he says that

Philippians 2:5 tells us that the mind of the Christ is to be the mind of the Christian. The word translated “let (this) mind be” is *phroneo*, which means to think of, to be mindful of (Paul used the same word in 4:2, where he told Euodia and Syntyche to “be of the same mind in the Lord”).¹⁴⁶

In verse 6, Paul uses the term bondservant to portray the depth of which Jesus himself exhibited humility and selflessness. Regarding the word “bondservant” Arnold comments that “many times in the NT the word servant can be translated as a common word, slave. How did Jesus take on the form of a servant/slave? (Paraphrase) . . . the Roman’s had ruled over the Jews for some time . . . rule by a foreign power was slavery—well-deserved punishment for breaking God’s law (Deut 28:68; Ezra 9:9). Jesus became just such a slave, sharing the curse of the law that had fallen on God’s people (Gal 3:10; 4:4) although he alone among God’s people had broken none of God’s laws.”¹⁴⁷ Craig Keener in the *IVP Zondervan Bible Backgrounds Commentary* agrees

¹⁴⁵ O’Brien, *New International Greek Testament Commentary*, 205

¹⁴⁶ Phillips, *An Expository Commentary*, 80

¹⁴⁷ Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Commentary*, 58

when he says, “The Servant of Isaiah 53 also was poured out or emptied himself, though not in incarnation but in death (Isa 53:12; cf. Phil 2:8). Paul, however, uses a more explicit Greek word for “slave” (NRSV) here than appears in the ‘XX of Isaiah.’”¹⁴⁸ This “slave” connotes a humbled individual at the service of others even to the point of exhaustion, or in Jesus Christ’s situation, to death.

Verse eight mentions that Jesus died the “death of the cross.” In the First Century, being nailed to a cross was the most horrific form of death a person could experience. A person would be the recipient of crucifixion as a result of rebellion against Rome. Arnold says, “Crucifixion was regarded as a slave’s punishment (*supplicum servile*)” and that “the person crucified was turned into a public billboard of sorts, warning all those who came by not to do the same crime or ‘rebel against their station in life.’ This was for literal slaves or a member of a conquered and therefore symbolically enslaved nation.”¹⁴⁹ Arnold describes that “Under Nero (emperor AD 54-68) a law was revived that allowed the crucifixion of all slaves within a household if their master had been murdered.”¹⁵⁰ Arnold continues to explain that “this punishment being reserved for slaves and the lower classes of conquered peoples, crucifixion was widely despised, and in many societies the idea of crucifixion was considered a vulgar insult.”¹⁵¹ Keener says, “Judaism prized obedience to the point of death in stories about its martyrs. Crucifixion was the most

¹⁴⁸ Craig, S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1993), 559

¹⁴⁹ Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Commentary*, 58

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

degrading form of execution, reserved for non—Roman criminals who were slaves or free persons of the lowest status.”¹⁵² Therefore, for Jesus Christ to be crucified is to imply both a servant’s willingness to suffer for others and to suffer in a seemingly dishonorable manner.

Richard Melick in the *New American Commentary* describes the digression of humility of Jesus Christ as seen in Phil 2:6-8 as it culminates in the crucifixion.

Jesus humbling Himself is the second stage in His humility. First when He was found in the fashion like a man, He chose humility. At this point, people can identify with Him. Second, He became obedient unto death. The text does not suggest to whom Jesus was obedient, though most obviously God willed such an action. As a true servant, Jesus chose to obey even when it cost Him His life. This could have made an impression on Pauls’ opponents . . . “Enemies of the cross of Christ.”¹⁵³

Application Taken from Philippians 2:5-8

In Phil 2:5-8, Paul reminds all believers of Christ’s example of living out unity, humility, and selflessness as He dwelt upon this earth. It is incumbent upon Christian women to follow Christ’s example of unity, humility, and selflessness for two reasons. First, we are commanded to obey the example of Jesus Christ in Phil 2:5, “Let this mind be in you that was also in Christ Jesus.” Second, people will judge us according to how we reflect the example of Jesus Christ. Unfortunately, I have seen the negative effects of this in my own city. We live in a region known for its churches and steeples. It appears that there is a church on every corner. You would think that all of the “church goers” would be sharing in the mindset of Christ, being unified, humble, and selfless. Sadly, that is not the case. Many drive around in our community with bumper stickers stating things

¹⁵² Keener, *IVP Bible Background Commentary*, 559

¹⁵³ Melick, *New American Commentary*, 105

like, “Honk if you love Jesus!” they display the plastic ICTHUS on the hatch of their cars. To unbelievers, this is a billboard calling out, “Follow me as I Follow Christ” or “I am not like everyone else, I love Jesus.” Many of the unbelievers are looking to see what that means, to follow Jesus. The unbeliever may begin to get intrigued with this idea, start forming questions in their mind, and decide to come to church. They may even see the same car in the parking lot of the church with the sticker, “I love Jesus.” They attend the service, see everyone welcoming each other, watch us praise and worship Jesus, and listen to the Bible being taught. The unbeliever begins to form an opinion about wanting to be a part of this. They decide to come back the next week to hear more. Later that day, they drive down the street and see the “I love Jesus” car at a stop light. The light turns green and a car in front of the “I love Jesus” car hesitates, maybe even not realizing the light has changed. All of a sudden the “I love Jesus” car lays on its horn and shakes its fist out the window. It is obvious to the unbeliever that this is not the kind of person they wish to be like. They question what they have heard in church that day and decide that Jesus is not for them. “If that is how those ‘Christians’ act, then I do not wish to be one,” they may say.

The flip side of this coin is that maybe grace and mercy are shown to someone who maybe didn’t deserve it. Possibly the commentary on their life is far from the mindset of unity, humility, and selflessness. But one day someone speaks kindly to them for no reason, or serves them with an act of kindness that they didn’t deserve. The kindness done to them changes them to the extent that they say, “That is how I want to be. I want what they have.” The fact is, each and every Christian women who follows

Christ's example of unity, humility, and selflessness can have either a positive or negative impact upon other believers in the Body of Christ.

Exposition of Philippians 2:9-11

Philippians 2:9-11

⁹Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, ¹¹ and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

In Phil 2:9-11, Paul describes the exaltation that Jesus Christ received from God the Father after having sacrificed His life on the cross for the sins of the world. Harold Willmington summarizes these verses in this fashion:

Because Christ humbly gave himself for our sins

- God has “raised him up to the heights of heaven” (Phil 2:9; see Isa 52:13; John 17:1; Acts 2:33; Heb 2:9).
- He has been given a name (a position and place of authority) above all other names (Phil 2:9; see Eph. 1:20; Heb. 1:4).
- Someday (Phil 2:10-11) he will be acknowledged as Lord by everyone:
 - “in heaven” (angels)
 - “on earth” (human saints and sinners)
 - and “under the earth” (demons)¹⁵⁴

Philippians 2:9-11. Richard Melick in the *New American Commentary* provides a similar and helpful summary of Phil 2:9-11. Regarding the role of God the Father, Melick says, “there is a hymnic character, however, God becomes the subject, rather than Christ, and the purpose of God’s actions becomes evident. God exalted Jesus. First He exalted

¹⁵⁴ Willmington, *Willmington’s Bible Handbook*, 712

Him to the highest place, and second He gave Him the name that is above every name. The two relate together so that they express God's action."¹⁵⁵

Regarding the level of exaltation Jesus Christ received, Melick says, "The word translated 'exalted to the highest place' actually means super exalted. This is in comparison to His lowliest of station of the humbling Himself to the cross."¹⁵⁶ Regarding the "name" that Jesus Christ received by God the Father, Melick says, "the second portion of the exaltations is that God "gave Him the name that is above every name." Though the introduction to this portion of the hymn suggests that God's blessings were the outcome of Jesus' humility, this verb implies a gratuitous giving of honor. Jesus was not paid for His servant hood; nevertheless as a consequence, God chose freely to grant Him a high name."¹⁵⁷

Melick continues by saying,

Most agree that the "name that is above every name" is the title "Lord." Most scholars also agree that the title refers to Jesus' character, as well as to His function. This corresponds to Peter's preaching at Pentecost (Acts 2:36) and to the view of the early church generally. The new factor is that, by virtue of Jesus' humility, He became the object of adoration in the Godhead, as well as the administrator of God's affairs.¹⁵⁸

Verse 10 uses unique First Century language that is important to know if appropriate application is to be made in the 21st Century. Arnold observes that "ancient people were greatly concerned with a fear of the supernatural powers in the heavens,

¹⁵⁵ Melick, *New American Commentary*, 105

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 106

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 105

under the earth, in water. Many sacrifices were made to ward off any type of evil that may fall on them.”¹⁵⁹ Arnold continues saying, “Peter puts it this way, Jesus has gone into heaven and is at God’s right hand—with angels, authorities, and powers in submission to him” (1 Pet 3:22; cf. Col 1:22).¹⁶⁰

Craig Keener agrees when he says,

Isaiah 45:23 (“every knee will bow . . . every tongue will declare”) refers to the final submission of all nations to God; that Paul applies the text to Jesus (especially with an OT divine title, ‘Lord,’ in v. 11) is telling. Those “in heaven” would include the angels, probably the rebellious angels who rule the pagan nations (see comment on Eph 1:19-23). Greeks worshiped gods in the heavens, earth, and sea and the underworld; traditional Greek mythology also placed the shadowy existence of departed souls in the underworld. Paul announces that whatever categories of beings there are, they must acknowledge Christ’s rule, because he is exalted above the heavens. One often bowed the knee in obeisance before a ruler or deity.¹⁶¹

Therefore, for Paul to reference that God the Father exalted Jesus Christ to such a level that “every knee will bow of thing in heaven, the earth, and under the earth” is to say that Jesus Christ has dominion over the spiritual realm in addition to simply the physical world in which mankind is accustomed to dwelling. As a result, Jesus Christ can be trusted in our everyday lives to provide both for our physical needs and our spiritual protection.

Regarding worshipping this exalted Christ, Melick observes that the “LXX of Isa 45:23, with its own additions, two parallel ideas express Jesus as the object of worship. They are every knee should bow and every tongue should confess. Employing

¹⁵⁹ Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Commentary*, 60

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ Keener, *IVP Bible Background Commentary*, 560

typical imagery of the part for the whole, the knee and the tongue stand for worship and confession that Jesus is Lord.”¹⁶²

He continues by saying that “the phrase ‘at the name of Jesus’ may mean that he is the object of worship, that he is the medium of worship, or that he provides the occasion and focus of worship.”¹⁶³ Melick also says that “the confession ‘Jesus Christ is Lord’ encapsulates this aspect of the Christian faith and may well have been the earliest Christian confession.”¹⁶⁴ Lastly, Melick states that

honoring Jesus in this way fulfills God’s plan. He elevated Jesus to the position of lordship. The church bears witness to Jesus’ lordship by confessing to the world ‘Jesus Christ is Lord’ and offering salvation to those who accept the reality that Jesus is Lord and participates in his reign of glory.¹⁶⁵

The most important allusion of all comes in Phil 2:9-11. Here Paul writes against the background of Isaiah’s defense of monotheism. There is only one Lord, before whom every knee will bow and by whom every tongue will swear (Isa 45:21-23). The effect of Paul’s allusion to Isaiah is to prove that Jesus of Nazareth must be worshiped as the Lord God of Israel.¹⁶⁶

Application Taken from Philippians 2:9-11

In Phil 2:9-11, Paul describes the exaltation that Jesus Christ received from God the Father after having sacrificed His life on the cross for the sins of the world. In addition, Paul described Jesus as “super exalted,” resulting from His death on the cross for the sins of the world. Therefore, Christian women in local church ministry should

¹⁶² Melick, *New American Commentary*, 107

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 108

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 107

¹⁶⁶ Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit, and Tremper Longman III, eds., *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1998), 642

always strive to make sure that the name of the Lord Jesus Christ is exalted with thanksgiving and praise, more than their own names.

Christian women can be tempted to create a spirit of false humility. They intentionally tout the name of the Lord Jesus Christ in order to masquerade their real motive of bringing attention to themselves. This is a very real temptation that will creep into a woman's ministry if she is not purposefully seeking to be spirit-controlled every day. This can happen in the biggest and smallest of ways. For example, a woman can act like she is honoring God in her ministry by saying the right words, but really the true motive of bringing glory to herself soon becomes evident. This author has seen this manifested many times in the realm of the church's music ministry. Musicians may say things like, "I am so humbled to be able to sing this solo" or, "Can you believe they have asked me to sing?" To some, these words would sound like they truly are humble. However, those who understand that singing is a gift from the Lord, there is nothing that they have done to create the gift, and that soloist will not draw attention to the opportunity to sing. The musician who is quick to give God the glory doesn't desire the glory for themselves.

Christian women should never feel comfortable in remotely coming close in our ministries to receiving the attention, thanks, and praise that is due to the Lord Jesus Christ. And even though many may not be able to see their hearts' true motive, God Himself is able to discern "the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb 4:12b). If they choose to function without reverential fear of stealing the glory intended for the Lord Jesus Christ, He has promised to put an end to the effectiveness of their ministry

(Jas 4:6). Fortunately, God will exalt all Christian women who exalt the Lord Jesus Christ to the highest level, and He will grant them favor to continue in ministry (Jas 4:10).

In addition, if Christian women who minister in local churches are willing to trust Jesus Christ in this manner, they can be assured that He will protect their testimonies, reputations, and ministries. If Jesus Christ is exalted over all things, all spiritual and physical beings, He is able to be trusted to protect us as we remain obedient to Him.

Exposition of Philippians 2:12-18

Philippians 2:12-18

¹² Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³ for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.

¹⁴ Do all things without complaining and disputing, ¹⁵ that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, ¹⁶ holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.

¹⁷ Yes, and if I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. ¹⁸ For the same reason you also be glad and rejoice with me.

Philippians 2:12-18 are encouragements from Paul to the believers at Philippi to work on developing their spiritual walk with the Lord Jesus Christ, knowing that the Lord Himself will assist them in this developmental process throughout their lives. Harold Willmington in *Willmington's Bible Handbook* accurately summarizes the teaching of Phil 2:12-18.

Christians are to 'put into action God's saving work in [their] lives,' knowing that God himself is at work within them (Phil 2:12-13). God gives us both the desire and

the ability to serve him. As we do this, we will ‘shine rightly’ before unbelievers (Phil 2:14-16; see Matt 5:14-16).¹⁶⁷

Philippians 2:12-18. Craig Kenner in *The IVP Background Commentary* agrees when he says,

Letters were often used as proxies for one’s presence; Paul thus entreats the Philippians through the letter to obey his teachings as if he were present. The reward of this obedience is implied by the parallel with Jesus’ obedience in Phil 2:8-9. The teaching that they are enabled to obey by God’s power is virtually unparalleled in pre-Christian literature except for OT teachings on the Spirit (cf. Gal 2:19-20).¹⁶⁸

Emphasizing the discipleship purpose of Phil 2:12-16, Moises Silva says that “the exhortation of Phil 2:12-16 takes on a certain forcefulness by focusing on the now of their Christian life.”¹⁶⁹ Silva goes one step further by pointing out that Paul used the reality of seeing Christ in the future to affect our lives today when he says, “Yet even here Paul does not fail to set his sight, and that of his readers, on ‘the day of Christ.’”¹⁷⁰

Elwell and Yarbrough put it this way, “‘Work out your salvation.’ This does not mean work to earn salvation. It means throw yourself wholeheartedly into serving the Lord who has loved you and saved you.”¹⁷¹

Philippians 2:14. In Phil 2:14, Paul emphasized that a unified body cannot be characterized by complaining and disputing. Arnold points out that the “Greek word for complaining is found in three other places in the NT. It can also be found in the Greek

¹⁶⁷ Willmington, *Willmington’s Bible Handbook*, 712

¹⁶⁸ Keener, *IVP Bible Background Commentary*, 561

¹⁶⁹ Silva, *Baker Exegetical Commentary*, 83

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁷¹ Elwell and Yarbrough, *Encountering the New Testament*, 316

translation of the OT in regards to the Israelites complaining under Moses' charge in the desert."¹⁷² Arnold adds that this type of "'Grumbling and disputing' (NASB) had characterized Israel in the wilderness and was condemned in the OT;" (see comment on 1 Cor 10:9-10).¹⁷³

Philippians 2:15. In Phil 2:15, Paul describes believers as "lights" and emphasized his desire for them to endure in this positive testimony. Arnold parallels Paul's comments to the Philippians to God's words to Israel, "Isa 49:6; cf. 42:6-7 Israel was to be a 'light to the Gentiles,' calling them to the worship of the one God." Jewish tradition often compared the righteous with "lights" in a dark world; cf. especially Dan 12:2 (the term Paul uses here was especially applied to heavenly bodies, reflecting an image like the one Daniel uses).¹⁷⁴ Arnold points out that unfortunately, "Israel failed in its vocation, however, and became itself a 'warped and crooked generation' (Deut 32:4-5). Here Paul calls on the Philippian church to drop their differences and to fulfill their calling as God's people."¹⁷⁵ Paul desired for the Philippians not to fail or drift into sin but rather to maintain their strong testimony.

Just as Paul emphasized the importance of proper conduct of the Philippians, Silva observes that "Paul describes the proper conduct of the Philippians with two

¹⁷² Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Commentary*, 60

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

clauses: ‘among whom you appear as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life.’”¹⁷⁶ Moises parallels this statement to the words of Jesus in Matt 5:14-16,

Undoubtedly, the best commentary on Paul’s words is Matt 5:14-16, where Jesus describes his disciples as ones who already are “the light of the world,” then proceeds with this implication for conduct; “let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”¹⁷⁷

Philippians 2:16. Paul emphasized both character and appropriate conduct of believers. In Phil 2:16 Paul referenced the concept of running throughout his writings. Silva believes Paul borrowed from the ancient athletic world around him. “He frequently used this kind of imagery to describe the strenuous nature of his apostolic labors and to stress that their reward lay in the future.”¹⁷⁸ Paul references athletic games also in 1 Cor 9:24-27 and 2 Tim 4:6-8, cf. Gal. 2:2. This is no surprise as “The Isthmian games were held every two years in Corinth, and Paul’s many months of ministry in that city may have overlapped with the celebration of these games.” Historically, the winner would win a wreath of dry celery.¹⁷⁹

Like a runner in these games, Paul wanted the Philippians to do what he himself did throughout his ministry, to expend all his energy on the goal that lay ahead (Phil 3:13). To Paul, the goal was the heavenly finish of his race (3:14) and the prize that awaited him he variously described as the imperishable crown of eternal life (1 Cor 9:25),

¹⁷⁶ Silva, *Baker Exegetical Commentary*, 126

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 127

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 126

the crown of the righteousness (2 Tim 4:8), or the crown of his churches whom he hoped to present to God, blameless and pure, on that final day (Phil 4:1; 1 Thess 2:19).¹⁸⁰ That is why Paul could confidently instruct the Philippians to endure in the Christian “race” because he himself had demonstrated that he had and was going to continue to endure to the end (cf. Phil 4:9).

Philippians 2:17-18. Regarding the reference to a drink offering in Phil 2:17, Clinton Arnold references ancient cultural practices to link this statement to the Old Testament references of a sacrifice that was pleasing to God. Arnold says,

Many ancient cultures practiced sacrificial rituals in which libations were poured over a slaughtered animal. In the OT (e.g., Num 15:1-10) libations are sometimes made in addition to other offerings rather than poured over them. Could Paul have had the OT sacrifice in mind? Possibly. Some examples of the mindset, (sacrificial sufferings) are found in Phil 1:28 and giving 1:7; 2:26; 4:15-18 of the Philippians to make a sacrifice pleasing to God.¹⁸¹

Arnold continues, “Ancient religions regularly poured out libations to the gods, usually wine but sometimes water or another substance. Paul is poured out (cf. Phil 2:7) as such a ‘drink offering’ to the true God, a willing offering on their behalf that joined the one sacrifice.”¹⁸²

Regarding the subject of how mentees effect the reputation of the work of a mentor and the co-laboring element of both parties in Phil 2:17-18, Silva says,

Paul’s reference in verse 16 about the toil of his ministry was in effect an appeal to the Philippians to consider the spiritual condition of their church as having weighty implications for his apostolic work. Was this apostle thereby manipulating the emotions of his converts by evoking feelings of guilt? On the contrary here in verse

¹⁸⁰ Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Commentary*, 59

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Ibid.

17 he manages to increase the intensity of that appeal . . . while at the same time encouraging his converts: happen what may, the Philippians' faith and ministry are already grounds for rejoicing.¹⁸³

Paul's commitment to ministering to the Philippians was sacrificial. Silva says, "In short, Paul realistically acknowledges that his apostolic toils and suffering could lead to martyrdom, but he was more than willing to 'spend and be expended' for the sake of his converts" (2 Cor 12:15).¹⁸⁴ Silva continues, "The opinions that Paul has in mind of his own sacrificial work can be defended by pointing to the emphasis on such a ministry in this context and to the fact that in Rom 15:16, the apostle refers to himself as leitoutgon . . . hierogounta minster . . . ministering as priest."¹⁸⁵

In these verses, Paul is seen practicing the principle of selfless sacrificial ministry that he preached in Phil 2:4 and he referenced in the life of Christ in Phil 2:7-8.

Application Taken from Philippians 2:12-18

In Phil 2:12-18 Paul offers encouragements to the believers at Philippi to work on developing their spiritual walk with the Lord Jesus Christ, knowing that the Lord Himself will assist them in this developmental process throughout their lives. And whereas many Christian women enjoy teaching others the importance of discipleship, mentoring, and accountability, those topics must be experienced first-hand by those who are leading the various women's ministries. In order to teach others about discipleship, mentoring, and accountability from an intimate point of view, they must evaluate their own discipline in

¹⁸³ Silva, *Baker Exegetical Commentary*, 128

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 129

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

these areas. They must be able to lead themselves in these spiritual disciplines before they attempt to lead others.

This requirement to remain spiritually strong by consistent daily development of our spiritual lives is not optional for Christian women, especially for those leading ministries. It is delusional to think that they will have a God-honoring ministry if they neglect to develop their faith through daily spiritual exercise. This responsibility should be considered an incumbent responsibility for all Christian women who want to have a spiritual impact on their sphere of influence. In Phil 2:12-18, Paul offers many examples of how he himself “practiced what he preached” to the believers at Philippi. It is safe to assume that the believers at Philippi were open and willing to accept his instructions, knowing that Paul was not hypocritical in his own testimony. If there is any misstep that can stifle the effectiveness of our personal testimony, it is hypocrisy.

Even though this is true of all ministers, this author believes that hypocrisy yields a more negative impact upon women because of their bent towards sociability. They desire to make a “connection” with those to whom they speak. Stephen Robbins states, “Women speak and hear a language of connection and intimacy, while men speak and hear a language of status, power, and independence. . . . For many women, conversations are negotiations for closeness in which people try to seek and give confirmation and support.”¹⁸⁶ Therefore, women are looking to make a connection that is trustworthy and not hypocritical. And if this connection is not hypocritical, women will be very trusting to follow this example.

¹⁸⁶ Stephen P. Robbins, *The Truth About Managing People* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: FT. Press, 2013), 140

This author has witnessed the power of Christian women in local church ministry who have created a trusted, non-hypocritical connection with other women, and it has afforded that minister to frequently speak into the lives of other women who are willing to listen to their instruction. The Women's Ministry at this author's church is a great example of this. As with any thriving church, the vision is cast by the Senior Pastor, and they have a commitment to prayer, worship, and service. The Women's Ministry runs with that vision and goes even further. They have outreach programs where the mission is to serve the community, but it doesn't end with their local community; they also reach out into the world and serve. For the past several years, The Women's Ministry has raised money, gathered clothing and shoes, as well as food for the remote villages in Guatemala. They have been active in digging wells, and setting up whole communities for survival. All the while, they give the Gospel of Jesus, and many have come to know the Lord as their personal Savior. Because they have served their fellow man, they have earned the hearing to tell these Guatemalans about the love of Jesus.

Just as in Phil 2:12-18 where Paul offers many examples of how he "practiced what he preached" to the believers at Philippi, it is safe to assume that Christian women who live a life devoid of hypocrisy will be able to frequently speak into the lives of other women who are willing to listen to their instruction.

Exposition of Philippians 2:19-30

Philippians 2:19-30

¹⁹ But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, that I also may be encouraged when I know your state. ²⁰ For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state. ²¹ For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus. ²² But you know his proven character, that as a son with his father he

*served with me in the gospel.*²³ *Therefore I hope to send him at once, as soon as I see how it goes with me.*²⁴ *But I trust in the Lord that I myself shall also come shortly.*

²⁵ *Yet I considered it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier, but your messenger and the one who ministered to my need;*²⁶ *since he was longing for you all, and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick.*²⁷ *For indeed he was sick almost unto death; but God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.*²⁸ *Therefore I sent him the more eagerly, that when you see him again you may rejoice, and I may be less sorrowful.*²⁹ *Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness, and hold such men in esteem;*³⁰ *because for the work of Christ he came close to death, not regarding his life, to supply what was lacking in your service toward me.*

In Phil 2:19-30, Paul offers two examples of men who demonstrated unity, humility, and selfless sacrificial ministry—Timothy (19-24) and Epaphroditus (25-30). Harold Willmington in *Willmington's Bible Handbook* summarizes these verses in this fashion:

Phil 2:18-30 Two Tremendous Spiritual Soldiers

Paul hoped soon to send Timothy to minister to the Philippians. He commended him as one who displayed something of the servant heart of Christ (2:19-24). Epaphroditus was also an example of selflessness (2:25-30).¹⁸⁷

In Philippians, Paul has special reasons for locating his comments on Timothy and Epaphroditus right on the heels of his admonitions to unity in 2:1-18. These two coworkers provide examples of what it means to put the interests of others ahead of one's own interest. Paul wants the Philippians to turn from their "grumbling and complaining" against each other and to follow the path of unselfishness that these two valued friends have chosen.¹⁸⁸

Philippians 2:18-24. In Phil 2:18-24, Paul describes the character and value of one of his co-laborers in ministry, Timothy. Paul offered very positive comments regarding Timothy's valuable character as Paul likens Timothy's character to his own

¹⁸⁷ Willmington, *Willmington's Bible Handbook*, 712

¹⁸⁸ Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Commentary*, 60

character. “With regard to Timothy, Paul says (twice, vv19, 23) that he wishes to send him soon; and the commendation focuses on Timothy’s devotion to and like-mindedness with, the apostle.”¹⁸⁹ Gordon Fee highlights the strong positive feeling that Paul has for Timothy when Fee aptly categorizes Paul’s description of Timothy’s character, “The sentences regarding Timothy, act as a letter of commendation for Timothy, of all things who is now coming with this letter, but will be coming later.”¹⁹⁰

Fee offers comments on the phrase used to describe Paul’s deep and positive feeling about Timothy’s “proven character” (v. 22). Fee suggests that a potentially more literal translation would be “His proven character you know.”¹⁹¹ The noun used in Greek (*dokime* which means proven character “refers to the quality of having remained faithful through difficult circumstances.”¹⁹² “The Jewish historian Josephus uses a verbal form of these words to describe how God put Abraham’s faithfulness to the test when he commanded him to sacrifice his son Isaac.”¹⁹³ Paul was not short of opportunities to observe Timothy in ministry situations in order to observe Timothy’s character. Carolyn Osiek observes that

Timothy is one of the most frequent characters in the Pauline accounts. According to Acts, he was from Lystra in Asia Minor, the uncircumcised son of a Jewish mother and Greek father, well thought of and chosen by Paul as a missionary companion, circumcised by Paul when his uncircumcised status was causing trouble (Acts 16:1-3). He appears with Paul in the prescript of several other letters (2 Cor 1:1;

¹⁸⁹ Silva, *Baker Exegetical Commentary*, 83

¹⁹⁰ Fee, *NICNT: Paul’s Letter*, 263

¹⁹¹ Silva, *Baker Exegetical Commentary*, 60

¹⁹² *Ibid.*

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*

1 Thess 1:1; Philemon 1 besides this one). He was a most trusted companion and assistant.¹⁹⁴

It is notable that Paul did not solely offer Jesus Christ (Phil 2:6-8) and himself (3:3-14; 4:9) as the examples of how to live a selfless, sacrificial life, but that he offered the example of other ministers, Timothy and Epaphroditus, who were equally committed to living out this selfless, sacrificial example before others. Osiek agrees when she observes, “For some scholars, Timothy and Epaphroditus together supply the second of three examples of self- submission for the good of the whole. The third will be Paul in chapter 3.”¹⁹⁵

Philippians 2:25-30. In the Letter to the Philippians Paul offers a man named Epaphroditus as an example of selfless sacrificial ministry toward other believers. Epaphroditus was “a Christian sent by the Philippians to help Paul and to take the collection from Philippi to Paul (Phil 2:25; 4:18).”¹⁹⁶

The sending of Epaphroditus . . . is described as something ‘necessary’; moreover: Paul emphasizes Epaphroditus’ relationship to the Philippians and evidently thinks it is important to request that this servant be given a warm and respectful welcome. Indeed Paul ends by raising the Philippians’ consciousness of their obligation to Epaphroditus.¹⁹⁷

Paul mentions Epaphroditus in order to encourage the Philippians that anyone can be an example to others of selfless sacrificial service and also to let the Church of

¹⁹⁴ Osiek, *Abingdon New Testament Commentaries*, 60

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 75

¹⁹⁶ John L. Gillman, “Clement,” in *Anchor Bible Dictionary Vol. I*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York; Doubleday, 1992), 533

¹⁹⁷ Silva, *Baker Exegetical Commentary*, 83

Philippi know that Epaphroditus had succeeded in completing the ministry mission for which the Church at Philippi had sent him. Epaphroditus' mission was

to bring a financial gift from the Philippians to Paul (4:18) and to stay with Paul to care for him in prison. Roman prison officials made little, if any provision for prisoner's food, clothing, bath or bedding, and the meager amount of basic necessities was at the prisoner's expense. Prisoners were sometimes allowed to keep a small amount of money on them for food and clothing from friends and family.¹⁹⁸

In fulfilling his mission, Epaphroditus had become greatly ill. In fact, Epaphroditus almost died in the process. Epaphroditus had heard that the Church at Philippi had learned of his illness and that they were very worried about him. Paul says in Phil 2:25-30 that he was sending Epaphroditus back to them so they could honor him for his selfless sacrificial service. In essence, Paul was declaring "mission accomplished."

It is unknown why or what caused Epaphroditus' serious illness. Arnold offers one insight that may have been the cause, "Ancient literature that refers to Roman imprisonment regularly mentions the 'squalor of long captivity' (Lucan 87, BC), 'the squalor of the dungeon' (Cyprian AD, 250) and 'the appearance of prisoners as foul and disfigured with filth and dirt' (Cyprian AD, 257)."¹⁹⁹ Of course, if Paul was permitted to stay within the house and receive visitors, his physical conditions might not have been so dire.

According to Phil 2:25-30, the Philippian church sent Epaphroditus to minister to the needs of Paul while in prison at Rome.

Epaphroditus was their "apostolos" (Gk) (Phil 2:25) and a minister to Paul's needs. Whether the term indicates that Epaphroditus was their "apostle" in the sense of being commissioned and sent out with a specific task of spreading the Gospel as was Paul,

¹⁹⁸ Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Commentary*, 60

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 61

or in the sense of being their messenger, envoy, or delegate, is not immediately clear. Epaphroditus serves as a minister to Paul's material needs by bringing the monetary gifts the Philippians entrusted him with, gifts described as 'a fragrant offering' and "an acceptable sacrifice" (4:18), which perhaps also were intended to aid Paul in other ways while he was imprisoned. Thus Epaphroditus was able to 'complete their service' (2:30) as they could not all come personally. Also, he was probably the one who made Paul aware of the disagreement between Euodia and Syntyche.²⁰⁰

Even a cursory reading of Phil 2:25-30 will show that Paul held Epaphroditus in high esteem.

Paul uses three significant terms to characterize his bond with Epaphroditus: "my brother" (Gk *adelphos*), "my fellow worker" (Gk *sunergos*), and "my fellow soldier" (Gk *sustratiotes*) (2:25). As a brother, Epaphroditus was one in faith with Paul in spreading the Gospel. Epaphroditus must have had a prior association with Paul, perhaps going back to the founding of the church at Philippi. As a fellow soldier, he had struggled side by side with Paul against adversaries of the Gospel (cf. 1:28, 30). This military metaphor suggests that Epaphroditus experienced suffering and conflict in his ministry.²⁰¹

In the course of carrying out his mission, Epaphroditus "risked his life" (2:30) and became so ill that he nearly died (2:27, 30). His illness may have developed during his journey to Paul, or later, when he was with Paul, doing the work of Christ. Paul says nothing about the nature of Epaphroditus' illness. But, later he regained his health—a turn of events explained by Paul as a merciful act of God. Thus, not only did Epaphroditus recover, but Paul was also spared from "sorrow upon sorrow" (2:27).²⁰²

The Philippians eventually heard of Epaphroditus' illness and began to worry, which in turn caused him further distress and a longing to be with them (Phil 2:26). Hence Paul thought it necessary to send Epaphroditus back to Philippi sooner than expected (2:25), in order to calm the anxiety raised there, to enable Epaphroditus to fulfill his desire to be with them again, and to relieve Paul's own concerns. Adding to this

²⁰⁰ Gillman, "Clement," in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 533

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*

²⁰² *Ibid.*

expanse of factual information about Epaphroditus, John Gillman comes to the conclusion that

Paul may also have been thinking that Epaphroditus, probably a respected leader in the church there, would be instrumental in leading the Philippians away from a misguided perfectionism and legalism (cf. 3:2-19). Also, because of the way he had risked his life in self-sacrificing service while with Paul, Epaphroditus was an admirable example of one who had the “mind of Christ” (cf. 2:5-11) which Paul asked all the Philippians to make their own.²⁰³

Epaphroditus probably delivered Paul’s letter to the church at Philippi (cf. Phil 2:25, 28). In sending him back, Paul includes a commendation, requesting that the Philippians “receive him in the Lord with all joy” (2:29). Paul explains that he takes sole responsibility for Epaphroditus’ return at that time, lest the Philippians suspect that Epaphroditus had not fulfilled his mission. Evidently Paul wanted no misunderstanding, no questioning of his character, no lessening of his authority. Epaphroditus was to be held in high esteem because of what he had done.²⁰⁴

Thus, Paul sends Epaphroditus back to Philippi with a strong commendation to esteem him. “If instead of understanding him as messenger, he is seen as an apostle, the meaning is clarified. Epaphroditus has gone off from Philippi, his home, to serve with Paul as an apostle. He is your apostle.”²⁰⁵

Was Epaphroditus always a passionate, selfless minister of Jesus Christ? John Gillman in the *Anchor Bible Dictionary* implies that Epaphroditus might not have grown up around a strong Christian influence.

“The name Epaphroditus, rather common in the First Century, suggests that his family may have been followers of the cult of Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love and fertility. It is interesting to note that after being converted from paganism to Christianity,

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 534

²⁰⁵ Osiek, *Abingdon New Testament Commentaries*, 75

Epaphroditus was not required to change his name in spite of its association with this cult.”²⁰⁶

There is no doubt that Epaphroditus honored the Lord Jesus Christ with his life and strove to model his life after the selfless sacrificial ministry of Jesus (see parallels between Phil 2:25-30 and Jesus’ example of selfless sacrificial ministry in 2:6-8).

Application Taken from Philippians 2:19-30

In Phil 2:19-30, Paul offers the example of two men named Timothy and Epaphroditus as an example of selfless sacrificial ministry toward other believers. Arnold is correct when he says, “These two coworkers provide examples—of what it means to put the interests of others ahead of one’s own interest. Paul wants the Philippians to turn from their ‘grumbling and complaining’ against each other and to follow the path of unselfishness that these two valued friends have chosen.”²⁰⁷ And we should conduct ourselves within our ministries as if we will be offered up as examples by which to learn how to live selfless, sacrificial lives.

Admittedly, many women may conclude, “Okay, I see how these biblical figures in the Bible can live selfless, sacrificial lives because . . . well, they must be ultra-spiritual people because they have been offered as examples in the Bible. But what about me? I’m no one special. Can I possibly offer this kind of profound an example to those to whom I minister?” Fortunately, the answer is “Yes!” God can use anyone.

²⁰⁶ Gillman, “Clement,” in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 533-534

²⁰⁷ Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Commentary*, 60

It is not the individual person that makes such a great example of a selfless sacrificial life; it is the God who empowers a person to live a life submitted to the Lord's will that makes an impactful example to others. Therefore, Christian women should focus their time and attention on what spiritual activities and attitudes produce a greater commitment in their hearts to submit to God. He, then, will empower them to submit to the Lord's will in their lives. Likewise, they ought to work diligently to shun anything that would distract them from cultivating a greater commitment to submit to God's will, each and every day.

Cultivating a selfless sacrificial life, a life that daily submits to God's will, requires that Christian women spend time with Jesus through the reading of His Word and prayer. This is not suggesting just a few sentences of prayer to help meet a prayer quota for the day. This daily time with Jesus is not something to be checked off of a list. Reading God's Word and time spent in prayer is preparation. It is preparation for the day, asking the Lord to temper thoughts towards Him, and preparation in getting the heart right before the Lord, being specific in asking for forgiveness for sin.

Christian women must have a complete God-consciousness. When they become close with someone, they begin to see what makes them tick; they discover their likes and dislikes. In order to develop a personal relationship with Christ, the more time they spend getting to know Him, the Holy Spirit enlightens them to see the big picture, Jesus. In having a relationship with Jesus and being found in Him, Christian women can begin to understand His mindset (Philippians 2). Unity, humility, and selflessness are the ways they are to think and serve. But coupled with those attitudes, they must ask the question, "Who gets the glory?" The answer is Jesus Christ.

What the Christian woman wants no longer matters, but what Jesus wants is everything. This would exclude pursuing self-promoting goals, engaging in service ministry only if it benefits them in some way, only performing their ministry activity in the sight of those who would be in a position to speak publicly of their service, refraining from turning down ministry opportunities just because they are not performed in front of the largest audience, etc. In a word, each of them, as believers, needs to kill “pride.” If they can do this, they can be that influential example of a selfless sacrificial life. And they can be confident that God will use them to make a positive impact upon those to whom they minister.

In Phil 2:25-30, Paul commended Epaphroditus for his selfless ministry and asked for the church at Philippi to esteem him for his service, even though Epaphroditus did not complete the task that the church had initially sent him to do. And though it was dishonorable not to complete a task in full, Paul reminded the believers at Philippi that they should focus on the mission that God has desired for them to fulfill. Epaphroditus fulfilled the will of God in his mission, even though the sending church believed he would have lasted a lot longer and without any interruptions related to his health.

The example of Epaphroditus should remind us that man’s plans change but God’s will is being fulfilled—even though it seems like a “change of plans” from our perspective. Believers should fight the temptation to feel anxious, worried, or even a failure. Proverbs 16:9 reminds all believers of the proper perspective that they should have regarding making plans and “sticking” to those plans, “A man’s heart plans his way, But the LORD directs his steps.” To put it another way, they should be flexible as to their specific plans of fulfilling God’s will for their ministries. They should not be

tempted to feel any anxiety if God changes their focus of ministry, the details regarding the designed execution, staffing changes, and even specific details to activities and events they may have planned with an enormous amount of energy. God honors the ones who remain faithful to minister in a selfless and sacrificial manner, not the ones who are proud and allow self-promotion to motivate their actions (cf. Phil 2:3; Jas 4:6).

CHAPTER FOUR

EXPOSITION AND APPLICATION OF PHILIPPIANS THREE

Philippians 3:1-21

¹ Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe.

² Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation! ³ For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh, ⁴ though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: ⁵ circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; ⁶ concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

⁷ But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. ⁸ Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; ¹⁰ that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, ¹¹ if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

¹² Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. ¹³ Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, ¹⁴ I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

¹⁵ Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you. ¹⁶ Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind.

¹⁷ Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. ¹⁸ For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even

weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: ¹⁹ whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things. ²⁰ For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.

Chapter Outline

Rejoicing in Christ's Suffering (3)

- I. The power of His death and resurrection (3:1-11)
- II. The purpose of His death and resurrection (3:12-21)²⁰⁸

Exposition of Philippians 3:1-16

Philippians 3:1-16

¹ *Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe.*

² *Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation!* ³ *For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh,* ⁴ *though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: ⁵ circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; ⁶ concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.*

⁷ *But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ.* ⁸ *Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; ¹⁰ that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, ¹¹ if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.*

¹² *Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.* ¹³ *Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, ¹⁴ I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*

²⁰⁸ Willmington, *Bible Handbook*, 712

¹⁵ *Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you.* ¹⁶ *Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind.*

In Phil 3:1-16, Paul introduces one of the most profound and yet a personal explanation of what is required in order for a person to experience salvation. Uniquely woven in the form of his personal testimony, Paul provides a portrait of his personal journey in discovering what the truth was about how someone is able to receive salvation and what was completely incapable of providing salvation. Then Paul appropriately describes what he is doing now that he has experienced this salvation. He then shares his anticipation of going home to be in heaven with his Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Harold Willmington captures the essence of these profound verses in his summary:

Phil 3:1-11 The choice: Circumcision or Christ.

Paul warned against the *Judaizers* who wanted to “mutilate” that is, circumcise them. Christians, he declared, are the ones who are truly circumcised (3:1-3; see Rom. 2:29; 9:6-8; Gal. 6:14-15). Few, if any, could match Paul’s credentials as a Jew (3:4-6), yet he considered those credentials nothing in light of God’s new revelation of salvation and eternal life through Christ (3:7-11).

Many Christians want the first half of 3:10, “to really know Christ and experience the mighty power that raised him from the dead.” But show little interest in the second half; to “learn what it means to suffer with him, sharing in his death.” But these go hand in hand, as saints throughout the ages can attest (see Rom. 8:17).²⁰⁹

Phil 3:12-16 “No, I’m not there yet, but I’m on my way.”

Paul wasn’t perfect in his walk with the Lord, but he looked toward that day (in Christ’s eternal Kingdom) when he would be. While perfection is not possible in this life, we should strive for spiritual maturity.²¹⁰

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

Philippians 3:1-8. With succinct precision, Clinton Arnold summarizes the false teaching that Paul reacts to in Phil 3:1-16, “Paul writes to several of his churches not be convinced by a group of itinerant teachers that they must add observance of the Jewish law to faith in Christ in order to be acquitted before God’s tribunal on the final day.”²¹¹ Motyer spends a little more time summarizing the nature of the false teachers and the way in which Paul specifically presented and refuted their false teaching,

Immediately Paul addresses a problem. Although he focused on the message of the false teachers—circumcision—Paul also discussed their methods. Paul’s writing revealed his concern that the church realizes the nature of its opponents. Both terms which describe the opponents and the definition of true Christians would appeal to a Jewish audience.²¹²

Paul uses three statements to warn the church about the false teachers. Three times the verb ‘watch out for’ (*blepete*) occurs. The objects of the verb also characterize the false teachers for what they really were, “dogs.” Eastern people generally hated dogs. Jews often described Gentiles that way. But here Paul applied the term to Jews.²¹³

The two other descriptions were direct plays on words with Jewish ideas. The second was ‘those who do evil.’ These Jews oriented to salvation by the good works of the law, had pride in their exemplary lives. Probably, like the Paul of the past, they considered themselves blameless. They hindered the gospel. Paul warns against their jealous activities.²¹⁴

Paul was clear that true believers put their complete faith in Christ and no confidence in the flesh. In verse three, “Paul uses this term ‘flesh’ here to mean any

²¹¹ Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Commentary*, 61

²¹² Motyer, *Message of Philippians*, 127

²¹³ Melick, *New American Commentary*, 126

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 127

human credential that one might use to try to gain God's acceptance on the final day. The emphasis of his opponents made it an especially appropriate metaphor."²¹⁵

Since Paul was refuting an incorrect view of how to obtain salvation through a works-based method, Paul offers his credentials in order to convey that if salvation was based upon works, he would be the natural recipient of salvation. But Paul's blunt and total rejection of such a theory and his acceptance of faith in Jesus Christ alone, makes a bold statement to these false teachers and believers alike. Arnold lists and briefly explains Paul's "credentials":

"Circumcised on the eighth day"(Phil 3:5). Paul's circumcision on this day shows that he was not a proselyte but the son of observant Jews. "Of the tribe of Benjamin"(3:5). We know from Acts that Paul also bore the Jewish name Saul. His namesake was the first King of Israel and the most famous member of the tribe of Benjamin. "A Hebrew of Hebrews"(3:5). In the fourth century the bishop of Antioch John Chrysostom took this phrase to mean that Paul was raised to speak Aramaic, the native language of first-century Judaism, and most modern scholars believe that this is correct. "In regard to the law, a Pharisee"(3:5). The Jewish historian, Josephus, tells us that the Pharisees had the reputation of excelling all other Jews in the painstaking accuracy with which they interpreted the traditional laws of Judaism. Some of the Pharisees placed their trust in themselves and not in God (Luke 18:9). "As for zeal, persecuting the church"(3:6). Paul identifies himself here and in Gal 1:13-14 with a tradition of zealotry in Judaism that stretches back to Simeon and Levi (Genesis 34), Phinehas (Numbers 25), and Elijah (2 Kings 1:18-19). Its chief characteristic was a concern for the Jewish law so intense that it could sometimes be expressed as violence against anyone who opposed it.²¹⁶

Paul repeatedly emphasized that words are unable to save a person's soul.

Regarding Paul's reference to "'gaining Christ,' [Paul's] remarkable past now looks like *skybala* (street filth/dung)."²¹⁷ Fee agrees when he says,

²¹⁵ Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Commentary*, 62

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 62-63

²¹⁷ Fee, *IVP New Testament Commentary*, 141

To gain Christ is immediately interpreted as being found in him, which is further interpreted as not having a righteousness of my own. To be found in Him implies divine initiative, to have a God-given righteousness in contrast to the righteousness of verse 6, which served as grounds for self-confidence.²¹⁸

Paul appropriately emphasizes the righteousness of God that can be gained by the one who puts their faith in Jesus Christ as these false teachers embedded in Old Testament teaching would acknowledge that Jeremiah referred to God in a similar way. “On the cross to use Jeremiah’s phrase, the Lord had become ‘Our Righteousness’” (Jer 23:6).²¹⁹

Philippians 3:7-9. But in Paul’s blunt and total rejection of such a works-based theory of salvation and in his acceptance of faith in Jesus Christ alone, he references his former life and seemingly meritorious works as “loss” and his faith as spiritually “profitable.” “Profit and losses are financial terms.”²²⁰ “They could be used in a legal setting to speak of the injured party’s loss that had become the criminal’s gain.”²²¹

Philippians 3:10-11. Arnold provides a succinct yet vivid summary of the teachings of Paul in Phil 3:10-11 as he identifies some links between the Old Testament teachings that these opponents would have been familiar with and the New Testament teaching of Paul.

In 3:10-11 Paul concludes his long sentence from v.8 by returning to the theme of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, now offering the primary reason for rehearsing the story. In keeping with his OT roots, knowing Christ is the ultimate goal of being in right relationship with God; and knowing Christ is both “already” and “not yet.” . . .

²¹⁸ Ibid., 145

²¹⁹ Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Commentary*, 63

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Ibid.

To know Christ begins with the power of his resurrection, the power that comes to believers on the basis of Christ's resurrection. Paul urges the Philippians that to 'rejoice in the Lord' in the context of suffering (2:17-18) makes sense only in light of the resurrection of Christ. Without the power—and guarantee—inherent in Christ's resurrection, present suffering can be both harsh and senseless.²²²

Next, knowing Christ involves sharing in his sufferings—and is cause for constant joy, not because suffering is enjoyable but because it is certain evidence of Paul's intimate relationship with His Lord.²²³

F. F. Bruce links the words "to gain Christ" in Phil 3:8 and the words "to know Him" in 3:10 for the purpose of gaining a fuller understanding of what it means to receive the benefit of knowing God once you receive salvation.

To know Christ and to gain Christ are two ways of expressing the same ambition. If Christ is the one "in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col 2:3), to know him means to have access to those treasures: but to know him for his own sake is what matters to Paul most of all.²²⁴

Paul had never known the earthly Jesus. If, during Jesus' ministry, Paul had learned anything about his teaching and activities, he would have disapproved. After Jesus' arrest and execution, Paul thought of him with repulsion as one on whom by the very nature of his death, the curse of God rested: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree" (Gal 3:1).²²⁵

The challenge of this passage, then, is not about whether we as Christians will make it to the resurrection. The challenge is whether we as Christians have caught enough of a vision of Christ that we will not be satisfied unless we know him more fully. And in knowing him more fully, are we just as ready to embrace his sufferings as we are his resurrection? Or do we want to try to get to glory without a cross?²²⁶

²²² Ibid., 147

²²³ Ibid., 149

²²⁴ F. F. Bruce, *New International Biblical Commentary* (Peabody, MA: Hendricksen, 1999), 11

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., Peter H. Davids, F. F. Bruce, and Manfred T. Brauch. *Hard Sayings of the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 650

Philippians 3:12-14. Paul’s mention of not having attained spirituality in full but rather he is still in the process spiritually was an intentional and purposeful statement in order to effectively communicate the process of spiritual growth to his first century leaders. “The idea of intellectual and spiritual enlightenment brought about perfect men since they received a complete mind, was prevalent during Paul’s time.”²²⁷

That’s why Paul used many phrases that convey striving, attempting, and pursuing spiritual goals to be reached. Relevant to the time in history, athletic games were a common analogy utilized by Paul in order to teach spiritual truth. And in this instance, the striving that takes place in athletic events would suit Paul’s purpose perfectly. In the first century, “runners would fix their eyes on the post that marked the end point of the race and winners received a prize. The term ‘goal’ was often used figuratively of an object on which one could fix his or her eyes and so be guided safely to a final destination.”²²⁸

Fee points out that not only is Paul striving daily to grow spiritually, “Everything in Paul’s life is drawn to a future. He is running with the prize in the distance. So strongly does Paul feel about this divine pull that makes him run full tilt toward it, that he says it twice (vivo 12 and 13-14).”²²⁹ And “Since Paul has not yet arrived, he does what he wants the Philippians to do, press on to take hold of (seize) that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.”²³⁰ “At the end of each race, officials had their heralds proclaim the

²²⁷ Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Commentary*, 63

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Fee, *IVP New Testament Commentary*, 153

²³⁰ Ibid., 154

winner and call him up to receive his prize (in Olympic games, a palm branch). In Paul's metaphor, the prize is the full revelation of Christ at the resurrection (3:10-11)."²³¹ Paul's point was exactly how Willmington summarized Phil 3:12-14, "[P]erfection is not possible in this life, we should strive for spiritual maturity."²³²

Philippians 3:15-16.

These verses consist of three sentences, each of which contains two clauses: As many as are perfect/let us think this. If you think differently/God will reveal this also to you. Only to what we have attained/by the same we should walk. Paul's point however is very clear: the Philippians must behave in a manner consistent with what truth they have already received. Lightfoot appropriately refers to John 7:17 where our Lord regards submissiveness to God's will as a condition for greater knowledge. Growth comes through obedience.²³³

After Paul's teaching on striving for daily spiritual growth once they have accepted Christ and remaining unified within the Body of Christ, he encourages them not to quit.

Verse 16 pleads with them by expressing the hope that all will keep going in the direction to which they have so far arrived. The first verb *phthanein*, translated "hold fast" in the NRSV, often means to go before, but here it has the more general meaning of arriving at a certain point. The sense of the whole statement is encouragement to keep from both backsliding and stagnating: "We have come this far; let's keep going."²³⁴

Application Taken from Philippians 3:1-16

In Phil 3:1-16, Paul introduces one of the most profound and yet a personal explanation of what is required in order for a person to experience salvation. Uniquely

²³¹ Keener, *IVP Bible Background Commentary*, 564

²³² Willmington, *Willmington's Bible Handbook*, 712

²³³ Silva, *Baker Exegetical Commentary*, 168

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, 100

woven in the form of his personal testimony, Paul provided a portrait of his personal journey in discovering what the truth was about how someone is able to receive salvation and what was completely incapable of providing salvation. Then Paul appropriately describes what he is doing now that he has experienced this salvation. He then shared his anticipation of going home to be in heaven with his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

In order to fulfill the teachings of these verses, believers need to ask themselves three very profound questions: Are they saved? Are they growing in their salvation? Are they ready to go home to heaven? They may be thinking, “I appreciate these questions and they are certainly important, but why do I have to ask them? After all, I am a leader in ministry! Shouldn’t I be asking these questions of the people to whom I minister?” On the contrary, Paul often presented these realities to very seasoned believers (including leaders) in order to remind them never to allow these important issues to slip. For example, Paul instructed a pastor named Titus (and his congregation) to preach, teach, and live out these three realities in his personal life. Each verse in Titus 2:11-13 speaks to one of these important questions. “For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.”

All three of these facets of salvation, maturation, and eternity were presented in Phil 3:1-16. Philippians 3:1-16 compels believers [as the audience] to ask themselves these three questions: Am I saved (Phil 3:1-9)? This is an important question to ask of leaders because you cannot bring the fullest honor to God in your ministry if you do not first become a believer. This is an important question to ask specifically of Christian

women in local church ministry because sometimes they fall in love with the activity of ministry, the positive feeling they get from helping others, the gratitude expressed from those they help, rare and unique opportunities to minister, etc. But it is possible to never have been truly saved by the God in whose name they are ministering. There is no shame in asking oneself this question. Performing spiritual examinations of one's life is both healthy and wise. The people to whom one ministers are undoubtedly asking this same question of themselves. The leader ought to know how to clearly answer the question of herself as well.

A Christian woman can ask herself, Has she acknowledged that any and all attempts to save herself are futile and that she is unable to save her soul? Has she been trying to perform righteous acts in order to persuade her soul that she is a good person and thus a saved person? Has she relied on her status as a leader in order to gain a level of status and acceptance among those with whom she ministers in order to feel secure in her faith? Or is she confident that there has been a time where she confessed the sin in her life, acknowledged her need for Jesus Christ alone to atone for her sins through His vicarious death upon the cross, and trusted in the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ for her salvation? Only until these questions can be answered with certainty will her ministry be truly honoring to the Lord Jesus Christ and her life have the utmost purpose.

Am I growing as a believer (Phil 3:10-14)? For some Christian women, this can be a very sobering question because it causes them to evaluate the activity they do and the motive behind why they do what they do. Are they in love with God's work or in love with God? Are they busy developing their skill set in order to be a valued logistical asset to the leadership of their church, or is their priority to grow in their walk with the Lord

and their understanding of God's Word in order to be a strong testimony of spirituality? Are they busy serving in the church or are they focused on being a passionate spiritual member of His church? Is their priority to be a valued worker of their church or to be esteemed by the One who made it possible to even be a part of His church?

Am I ready to go home to heaven (Phil 3:11, 14)? Of all people, those who minister to women should find joy in the thought of heaven as they anticipate the day they go home to be with the Lord Jesus Christ. As they minister, they continually seek direction from God, lifting their prayers up to Him. Their conviction comes from God, the Holy Spirit, and they strive to boldly preach the gospel of Jesus Christ so others will have confidence that heaven will also be their eternal home.

While many people feel justifiably anxious about the physical act of dying, it does not mean that they have to be scared about going home to heaven. Being ready to go to heaven is a testimony that they have pondered the Scriptures, understand the blessed hope of going to their eternal home, and have been anticipating this homecoming throughout their ministries. Furthermore, they have comforted many other women who have asked them about how to know they can have eternal hope in the Lord. If they are anxious about going home to heaven one day, they should ask themselves why this is. Is it a lack of understanding the Scriptures on this comforting topic? Is it that they have trusted other sources of information and speculation about heaven and not the Scriptures? Or do they really love the thought of being surrounded by the glory of the Lord? This is an interesting way to gauge true and sincere love of spiritual things.

All three of these facets of salvation, maturation, and eternity were presented in Phil 3:1-16. May all Christian women be compelled to ask themselves these three questions regularly as they serve in their ministries.

Exposition of Philippians 3:17-21

Philippians 3:17-21

¹⁷ Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. ¹⁸ For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: ¹⁹ whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things.

²⁰ For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.

In Phil 3:17-21, Paul begins with a sobering reality that there will be many people who seemingly claim to be followers of Jesus Christ but evidenced their disbelief by turning away from the truth and unabashedly embraced sin. After mentioning that many people no longer conduct themselves in Christ-honoring ways, Paul reminds all true believers that our home and thus our perspective on life is affected by a spiritual reality that Jesus Christ is our Lord and Savior. And we have a glorious hope in knowing that we will someday be with our Lord and Savior in heaven. Harold Willmington captures this essence in his summary of these verses:

Phil 3:17-19 “Follow me, not them.” Thinking of both this letter and the times he had taught the Philippians in person, Paul urged them to follow his example and teachings, and not those because of their wrong teaching, were actually “enemies of the cross of Christ.” Paul probably had in mind both the legalizers (3:2) and the hedonists or antinomians (meaning those “against law”) whom he described in these verses. . . . Phil 3:20-21 “The new you.” As an antidote to hedonism, Paul reminded

them of the promised resurrection, when our lowly bodies will be transformed and we will be citizens of Christ's eternal Kingdom.²³⁵

Philippians 3:17-19. Osiek effectively links Paul's comments about modeling those who practice obedient living in Phil 3:17-19 to other similar statements Paul makes within the Letter to the Philippians.

Paul is summarizing and concluding the appeal that he has been making throughout the chapter; to take himself as an example of how to let go of what seemed essential for the sake of a greater good, just as he had previously presented Christ in the same light in Chapter 2. This is not the only time that he has posed himself and others as a model (1 Cor 4:16; 1 Thess 1:6; 2 Thess 3:7, 9; Eph 5:1 which escalates to the imitation of God). The question is often raised of how putting oneself forward for imitation is inconsistent with Christian humility.²³⁶

Fee points out Paul's emphasis on the aspect of the need to cultivate spiritual development with and among other believers within these verses,

For Paul, correct thinking must lead to right living. Having thus concluded the first application by urging the Philippians to conform their behavior to what they have been doing in the past, he now presses that point again, but the repetition with vocative, "brother [and sisters]". At the same time he also returns his more standard language of "walking" (NIV live, see commentary on 1:27) and "imitation": (NIV following). Thus in keeping with his Jewish heritage, Paul urges his friends to join "together" (not with others; see note) "in imitating me," again emphasizes their being united in doing so by "walking" as Paul himself did.²³⁷

While Paul emphasized the importance of observing those who are living exemplary spiritual lives, he also cautions against modeling a pattern of living that will not benefit a believer. In fact, walking this path will be to conduct oneself similar to how one who is hostile towards Jesus Christ would act. Fee states,

²³⁵ Willmington, *Willmington's Bible Handbook*, 712-713

²³⁶ Osiek, *Abingdon New Testament Commentaries*, 100

²³⁷ Fee, *IVP New Testament Commentary*, 161

Whatever else, they exemplify a mindset (Phil 3:19) at odds with Paul's and therefore with that being urged on the Philippians. Rather than living cruciform (3:10-11), they "walk" as enemies of the cross of Christ (v. 18); and rather than pressing on to gain the final prize (vv.12-14) and thus eagerly awaiting a Savior from heaven (v. 20), their mind is set on earthly things and therefore their destiny is destruction.²³⁸

These "enemies" are both desensitized to spiritual truth and insensitive in their dealings with true believers. To illustrate this point, Arnold captures the sentiments of one such enemy, "Opponents of Christianity in antiquity regularly mocked Christians for their worship of a man who had died by crucifixion." The early Christian apologist Minicius Felix puts these words on the lips of an imaginary, but typical opponent: "To say that their ceremonies center on a man put to death for his crime and on the fatal wood of the cross is to assign to these abandoned wretches sanctuaries which are appropriate to them and the kind of worship they deserve."²³⁹

In Phil 3:17-19, Paul stresses that we must safeguard our hearts from ever becoming ashamed or embarrassed of the cross of Christ (i.e., anything and everything associated with Jesus Christ). Philippians 3:18 seems to imply that to be an "enemy of the cross of Christ" is to be ashamed or embarrassed of the cross of Christ. What would otherwise explain the desire to run so far and conduct oneself so opposite of the tenets of the Christian faith if one was not either ashamed or embarrassed of the cross of Christ?

Under such circumstances Christians succumbed to the temptation to play down the significance of Christ's crucifixion (see example 1 John 5:6). Paul's emphasis of the folly of the cross in 1 Cor 1:18-25 may mean that the Corinthians were moving in this direction, and here in Phil 3:18 he seems to be taking precautions against such influences among the Philippians.²⁴⁰

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Commentary*, 77

²⁴⁰ Ibid, 63

Philippians 3:20-21. Charles Cousar in his commentary on Philippians and

Philemon says,

The language of Phil 3:20-21 is striking. First our commonwealth is in heaven. The term commonwealth would have carried plenty of clout in the first-century world of Philippi, with its political aura and its imperial pride. This is the only appearance of the word in the New Testament. It denotes a colony of foreigners, whose allegiance is, in this instance, not to Rome, but to God in heaven.²⁴¹

Regarding the word “citizenship” in Phil 3:20,

The word translated ‘citizenship’ (politeuma) was sometimes used generally to speak of the political rights of a particular group. . . . The same word could also refer to a distinct ethnic group that lived away from its homeland and was governed by its own constitution—‘a city within a city’ (E. Mary Smallwood *The Jews under Roman Rule from Pompey to Diocletian* 1981).²⁴²

Stephen Ger comments that “Philippi’s main service was to act as a small entity of Rome. He stated that Philippi was a piece of Rome “*broken off and transplanted abroad.*”²⁴³ Knowing this cultural context about Philippi offers a natural explanation for why Paul would want to link this teaching to the current residency status of Rome with the people at Philippi.

Paul made a cultural link that was very vivid to the residents of Philippi in Phil 3:20-21. In these verses, Paul calls Jesus the “Lord Jesus Christ.” The people of Philippi latched on to the cultural connection Paul was attempting to make. In Paul’s day,

²⁴¹ Charles B. Cousar, *Philippians and Philemon; A Commentary*. (Louisville, KN: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 80

²⁴² Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Commentary*, 63

²⁴³ Stephen Ger, Mal Couch, and Ed Hindson, eds., *The Book of Acts: Witnesses to the World (21st Century Biblical Commentary Series)* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG, 2004), 228

“The Romans testified that Caesar (Claudius) is ‘Savior of the World.’”²⁴⁴ Gordon Fee in the *IVP New Testament Commentary* elaborates upon this cultural connection in his summary of these verses when he states, “Because heaven is our true homeland, we eagerly await our Savior from there; he goes on – in yet one more play on their Roman citizenship and clear attempt to encourage them in their present suffering. The primary title for the Roman emperor was ‘lord and savior’; Paul now puts those two words side by side; our Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ, who will not only transform our present humiliation into glory but do this in keeping with the power that enables him to bring everything under his control (including the Roman lord and savior, Nero Caesar!). All of this, was to reassure the Philippians that the heavenly prize is absolutely worth pursuing (vv. 12-14).”²⁴⁵

Elaborating on the reference to the authority of Christ, Fee also comments that

The phrase ‘able to subject all things to himself’ is Paul’s eschatological interpretation of Ps 8:7, where God will ‘subject all things’ to His Messiah, who in turn, according to 1 Cor. 15:28, will turn over all things to God the Father so that ‘God might be all and in all. Remarkably, in the present passage the subjecting of all things to himself is said to be by Christ’s own power.’²⁴⁶

It is with that authority and power of Jesus Christ that we await the promised return of Christ and home going to Christ. Fee offers this observation of Paul as a motivation for all believers to emulate, “With Paul we would do well not merely to await the end but eagerly to press on toward the goal, since the final prize is but the

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ Fee, *IVP New Testament Commentary*, 165

²⁴⁶ Ibid., 166

consummation of what God has already accomplished through the death and resurrection of our Savior, Jesus Christ the Lord.”²⁴⁷

As a result of knowing that our citizenship is in heaven, that the Lord Jesus Christ is the true authority in our lives, and that we will be protected and blessed as a result of living obedient lives to the Lord Jesus Christ, we should take great hope in knowing that we will ultimately be in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ in heaven forever. “The confession of Christ as Savior and the commitment of whose loyalties are (the present tense: *hysparchei*) in the heavenly commonwealth separate them from those whose allegiance is elsewhere. Unlike the citizens of Rome, whose commonwealth is Rome, the Philippian Christians eagerly await a Savior who is Christ the Lord.”²⁴⁸

Application Taken from Philippians 3:17-21

In Phil 3:17-21, Paul begins with a sobering reality that there will be many people who seemingly claim to be followers of Jesus Christ but evidenced their disbelief by turning away from the truth and unabashedly embraced sin. After mentioning that many people no longer conduct themselves in Christ-honoring ways, Paul reminds all true believers that our home and thus our perspective on life is affected by a spiritual reality that Jesus Christ is our Lord and Savior, and we have a glorious hope in knowing that we will someday be with our Lord and Savior in heaven.

One of the most disappointing situations that Christian women will experience in their ministries is when someone that they have ministered to for many years decides to

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ Cousar, *Philippians and Philemon*, 81

walk away from all that they have taught her, and she begins to conduct herself in a manner that both dishonors God and is inevitably going to devastate her own conscience and possibly her physical life. When this happens it is challenging to figure out why she chose to make this decision. They are tempted to take it personally as if they were the cause of her waywardness. They wonder if they did not teach her all the necessary truths that she needed to know. Or they believe that possibly they did not deliver God's truth in the spirit in which it should have been delivered.

There is certainly a lot of soul searching that takes place in the heart of a Christian woman when something like this happens. But there are a few things to remember when we experience this tragic event: First, it is a choice. Second, it should draw you to pray for her. Next, it is not a choice that she had to make. Lastly, let the soul searching happen.

They must remember that a woman's choice to follow a wayward path is just that, her choice, and regardless of how much they try to turn her towards Jesus Christ, ultimately they cannot make anyone do anything. Remember that the environment, regardless of how spiritually focused it may be, never changes a person. It's her heart that is the deciding factor in changing a person. It comes down to a choice.

If this occurs, they must immediately and incessantly drop to their knees in prayer for anyone who chooses a different path than the path of righteousness established by Jesus Christ in His Word. Remember that praying for a person is not a last resort but rather a very powerful tool of ministry one can use to support a person. So, whereas Christian women often use their words to teach the people to whom they minister and couple their efforts with prayer, prayer now becomes the primary ministry to that person.

When they do this, they realize how prayer should always be our primary focus when ministering to everyone, even those that are currently faithful to Jesus Christ.

After witnessing this level of spiritual destruction, it should promote within us a deeper commitment not to follow the sinning person's path, but to perform a spiritual soul search in order to see how close we ourselves are in making the very same mistake. In ministry, I have found that when sin makes a profound impact upon a particular congregation, God also makes a more profound impact in the lives of those who do sincere soul searching in order to identify anything that would come close to committing the same sin with which they are dealing (cf. Ps 139:23-24). Genesis 50:20a reminds us that God can receive glory out of "bad" things, "But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good." How can we avoid the temptation to run towards sin rather than towards righteousness? We live our lives knowing we are on the lists of future citizens in heaven; we must live our lives like we are already there.

CHAPTER FIVE

EXPOSITION AND APPLICATION OF PHILIPPIANS FOUR

Philippians 4:1-23

¹ *Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved.*

² *I implore Euodia and I implore Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord.* ³ *And I urge you also, true companion, help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the Book of Life.*

⁴ *Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!*

⁵ *Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand.*

⁶ *Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;* ⁷ *and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*

⁸ *Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.* ⁹ *The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.*

¹⁰ *But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your care for me has flourished again; though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity.* ¹¹ *Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content:* ¹² *I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.* ¹³ *I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.*

¹⁴ *Nevertheless you have done well that you shared in my distress.* ¹⁵ *Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you*

only. ¹⁶ For even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities. ¹⁷ Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account. ¹⁸ Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God. ¹⁹ And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. ²⁰ Now to our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.

²¹ Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren who are with me greet you. ²² All the saints greet you, but especially those who are of Caesar's household.

²³ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

Chapter Outline

Rejoicing in Christ's Sufficiency (4)

- I. Rejoicing in His peace (4:1-9)
- II. Rejoicing in His power (4:10-13)
- III. Rejoicing in His provision (4:14-23) ²⁴⁹

Exposition of Philippians 4:1-9

Philippians 4:1-9

¹ Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved.

² I implore Euodia and I implore Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. ³ And I urge you also, true companion, help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the Book of Life.

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!

⁵ Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand.

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

²⁴⁹ Wilmington, *Wilmington's Bible Handbook*, 710

⁸ Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things. ⁹ The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.

In Phil 4:1-9, Paul speaks directly but very lovingly to two ladies within the church and solicits the help of another individual to assist them in fostering unity among them. His reproof is soft yet direct enough to encourage the onlookers to take careful assessment of their conduct. He then encourages them to be people of peace, prayer and of pure thoughts. Harold Willmington in *Willmington's Bible Handbook* summarizes these verses very well:

Phil 4:1-3 Love Expressed, Love Needed

Paul expressed again his affection for the Philippians (see exposition on 1:7-11), then asked a mature believer in the church to help reconcile two quarreling women.

Phil 4:4-7 The Peace of God; Precious and Protective

Christians should be joyous and even-tempered (4:4-5). Instead of being anxious, they should be at peace (4:6-7). The peace of God (4:7) comes through prayer and transcends all understanding. Paul gave two golden rules for those who seek such peace.

“Don’t worry about anything” (4:6). The KJV translates this as ‘Be careful for nothing.’ The Greek word used here for worry or careful describes being pulled in different directions. It is not reasonable concern but panic (see Ps 55:22; 1 Pet 5:7).

“Pray about everything.” (4:6) Our prayers should be both definite and devotional. It has been said that there are only two things the Christian should worry about:

1. Those things he or she can change, in which case perspiration is the answer.
2. Those things he or she cannot change, in which case supplication is the answer.

All Christians enjoy peace with God (see Rom 5:1), but only those who have successfully substituted prayer for care can enjoy the peace of God, a peace that guards our hearts, protecting us from wrong feelings; guards our minds, protecting us from wrong thinking (Phil 4:7).

Contrary to the popular saying, prayer does not always change things. But sincere prayer does always change us, by protecting against those things that can drive us to despair (see Isa 26:3; 2 Cor 10:5).

Phil 4:8-9 The Real Power of Positive Thinking

Another key to peace is focusing our thoughts on positive things. We can do this in no better way than by focusing on the things we have learned by Paul concerning the person and work of Christ.²⁵⁰

Philippians 4:1-3. Paul, in his instruction to the people of Philippi regarding the importance of unity, has to address two ladies who were noticeably disrupting the unity of the church. But before Paul respectfully instructs them to be unified, Paul is careful to preface his firm statement with many expressions of love in verse one. For example, Paul called them “my crown.” “This is probably a metaphorical reference to the wreath of dry celery worn by athletes after they had reached their goal and won the race.”²⁵¹

After Paul simply tells these two ladies to be unified. Then Paul solicits the help of another person (“true companion”) to assist these two ladies in fostering unity among them. “The word ‘yokefellow’ [‘companion’] (syzgos in Greek) can mean ‘wife’ but that cannot be its meaning here since Paul qualifies the word with the masculine form of the adjective ‘loyal’ (gnesia). If Paul were referring to his wife, he would have used the feminine form of the adjective (gnesia).”²⁵²

Paul then asks for support of all his “fellow workers.”

This is the term Paul uses for Timothy, Epaphroditus, Titus, Prisca (Priscilla in Acts), Aquila, Apollos, and others who formed the inner circle of his helpers (see ‘Timothy among Paul’s Coworkers,’ above). Paul’s language implies that Euodia and Syntyche were members of this group. How did they have the leisure to contend at Paul’s side in the cause of the gospel? We cannot know definitely, but Euodia and Syntyche may have been wealthy women, like Lydia (Acts 16:14), who naturally assumed positions of preeminence in the Philippian church because they held some position of responsibility commensurate with their social rank in the political or religious institutions of Philippi prior to their conversion. Euodia and Syntyche are both Greek names, and at least in Asia, Greek women sometimes held important political

²⁵⁰ Ibid., 713

²⁵¹ Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Commentary*, 64

²⁵² Ibid., 65

positions. In Philippi, women probably occupied leading roles in the worship of Diana (Abrahamsen 46-56).²⁵³

Paul makes it a point to mention that the names of these fellow workers are in the Book of Life.

There are many places in Scripture from Moses, to David and Isaiah where the ‘Book of Life’ or records are referenced. ‘In the background of all those references is the civic practices of record-keeping; the names of citizens were commonly recorded on lists in antiquity’ (H. Balz). Thus, in the command of the Macedonian King Philip V . . . Philip tells the city officials of Larisa to report to the ‘community’ the names that they have erased, apparently from some list of citizens. By using the phrase ‘book of life’ here, Paul may be reminding his Philippian coworkers that although their status as good citizens of Philippi is in jeopardy, they nevertheless were enrolled on the citizen list of God’s heavenly society.²⁵⁴

Philippians 4:4-7. Paul calls for the unity of the church in order to be bold in the coming days and years ahead, in case the false teachers arrive in Philippi or a false worldview attempts to creep into their church. “In each case, Paul was insistent that only a united church can face the world without retreating . . . in calling for unity and unanimity within the local church fellowship, Paul starts with the quarreling individuals Euodia and Syntyche (verse 2), but then he proceeds with a general exhortation to all individuals.”²⁵⁵

If Christian women remain unified, they can “Rejoice in the Lord at all times! Once more I say it: rejoice!” This summons was already found in Phil 2:18, and then again at the close of the paragraph (3:1). In the light of these passages, “joy” in Philippians is a defiant “nevertheless” that Paul sets like a full stop against the

²⁵³ Ibid., 66

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

²⁵⁵ Motyer, *Message of Philippians*, 206

Philippians' anxiety (1:18 and 2:17-18) and their possible displeasure over Epaphroditus (3:1).²⁵⁶ As a result, Christian women are to live kind and peaceable lives before other believers and unbelievers. "The term 'gentleness' was often used to describe an attitude of kindness where a normal response would be retaliation. In 2 Cor 10:1, Paul implies that the origin of his own gentle conduct with the recalcitrant Corinthians is 'the meekness and gentleness of Christ.' Similarly, Paul wants the persecuted Philippians (Phil 1:28-29) to return evil with good (cf. Rom 12:21)."²⁵⁷

Therefore, to be worried about what will come our way next is to forget the power of the great God who both saved our souls and empowered us to grow spiritually. Thus in Phil 4:6-7, Christian women are able to pray to God and have peace knowing that God knows and God is in control. Karl Barth, commenting on the anxiety the prayer can release and the requirement to give thanksgiving to God during tough or unknown times, says that "to be anxious means that we ourselves suffer, ourselves groan, ourselves seek to see ahead. Thanksgiving means giving God the glory in everything, making room for Him, casting our cares on Him, letting it be His care."²⁵⁸

Philippians 4:8-9. A clearly stated yet profound verse that emphasizes the fact that we will be able to experience God if our thoughts are focused on the virtues that are listed in Phil 4:8. "Ancient moral philosophers often consoled those who were grieving or otherwise plagued with difficult circumstances to turn their minds away from their difficulties (avocation) and to turn them to pleasurable or virtuous thoughts (revocation).

²⁵⁶ Barth, *Epistle to the Philippians*, 120

²⁵⁷ Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Commentary*, 66

²⁵⁸ Barth, *Epistle to the Philippians*, 120

Epicureans advocated turning thoughts that were painful to pleasurable ones. Stoics, such as Cicero and Seneca, advocated replacing painful thoughts with the contemplations of virtue. Cicero's list of virtues for contemplation is similar to Paul's list here: 'All that is lovely, honorable, of good report' (Cicero). Could Paul have taken over this convention and varied the approach represented by Cicero and Seneca? He advocated that the Philippians commit the worries that accompany their persecution in prayer to God (4:6) and turn their minds to the contemplation of the virtues."²⁵⁹ What are these virtues and what do they mean?

Bockmuehl provides a clear summary of each of these virtues presented in

Phil 4:8:

First, the Philippians are to concentrate on *whatever is true*. Truth for Paul always has its focus in God (Rom.1:18) and the gospel of Christ (Rom 15:8; 2 Cor 4:2; 11:10; Gal 2:5, 14; Col 1:5; note Eph 1:13; 4:21). To deny the truth means to deny the Creator in favor of the lie of idolatry (Rom 1:25; cf. 1 Thess 1:9). Paul commends *what is noble* (*semnos*) which in Hellenistic Greek often carries an aura of the sublime, majestic, or sacred. Here, as in the Pastoral Epistles (1 Tim 3, 8, 11; Titus 2:2) and in LXX Prov 8:6, it probably signifies a personal moral quality of that which is dignified, upright, and worthy of honor and distinct from all that is vulgar or profane. Next, Paul urges reflection on *whatever is just* (*dikaïos*). This word tends elsewhere (e.g., Romans) to carry the theological meaning of 'righteous' before God, who alone is *dikaïos* in Himself and able to make people righteous by faith. But it could also mean just and right as is found in (Phil 1:7). The word *pure* (*hagnos*) relates in the LXX both to ritual purity and to personal integrity (Ps 11:7; Prov 20:9). In Paul's letters and in the New Testament, it is used in the transferred sense of moral purity and uprightness (2 Cor 7:11; 1 Tim 5:22; 1 John 3:3; Jas 3:17; 1 Pet 3:20). Purity of thought and deed is similarly commended in Polycarp's letter to Philippi (Pol. Phil 3:5) and Clément's to Corinth (1 Clem 1:3; 21:8; 29:1; 48:1). The term *prospiles*, here translated *pleasing*, occurs nowhere else in the NT. Nor, for that matter, is it found in contemporary Hellenistic lists of virtues (e.g., Wibbing 1959: 101, cited in O'Brien 505 n. 28 et al). It's meaning varies from lovely to pleasing and agreeable (cf. similarly the LXX usage: Esth 5:1b, Sir 4.7; 20.13; also Josephus Ant. 1.258). Of all the words in Paul's list, this one gives the clearest indication that the range of qualities that should shape a Gentile Christian mind includes a dimension of

²⁵⁹ Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Commentary*, 66

not just moral but of aesthetic truth as well. It extends to all that is beautiful in creation and in human lives. Lastly of Paul's six adjectives, he commends what is *admirable*, using a Greek word of various meanings (euphemos) that is found nowhere else in the NT or the LXX (see, however, Symmachus Ps 62.6 (=63.5); Josephus C.Ap. 2.248). Many translations and commentators assume that its meaning is something like attractive, of good repute, or well-spoken of (see 2 Cor 6:8). Paul's six parallel adjectives are now reinforced with a comprehensive exhortation using the two nouns *moral excellence* and *praise*. For all who adopt the 'mind of Christ', their thoughts are to be shaped by reflecting on whatever is intrinsically virtuous and worthy of praise. The Christian life in this respect is a pursuit of excellence. . . . Paul's uses of the word praise (epainos) usually denotes the praise given to human beings and (despite 1.11) seems to do so here—even in view of v.9 it remains possible that he has in mind the sort of righteous behavior that elicits God's praise.²⁶⁰

Application Taken from Philippians 4:1-9

Philippians 4:1-9 is very applicable to Christian women because it contains references to two influential women in the church who were not unified and as a result caused dissention within the church at Philippi. Disunity and the products of disunity were not uncommon themes throughout the New Testament as PHEME PERKINS points out:

NT writers spend a great deal of time addressing the problems of relationships between Christians. The gospel sayings about mutual forgiveness, reconciliation, and authority as service rather than 'lording it over subordinates' already point to such concerns.

Vice lists frequently point to anger, envy, malice, conceit, drunkenness, quarreling, and other sins of speech which also corrupt the love which is to exist between Christians (Rom 13:13; Gal 5:19-21; Eph 4:25-32; Col 5:9-10; Jas 3:1-18). Positive forms of speech include the mutual exhortation to virtue which was an ongoing part of Christian life (1 Thess 5:14).²⁶¹

What is uncommon is that Paul calls these two people out by name in front of everyone in this Letter to the Philippians. Why would Paul do such a thing? Was he overly upset? Did he not like them so he chose to embarrass them publicly? Did he

²⁶⁰ Bockmuehl, *Black's New Testament Commentary*, 254

²⁶¹ PHEME PERKINS, "Ethics (NT)," in *Anchor Bible Dictionary, Vol. II.*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 662

simply not care for women so is that why he asked a guy “true yokefellow” to help the ladies work out their problem of disunity?

None of these thoughts are accurate. The truth is that disunity is such a divisive sin that Paul had to risk all the above potential questions about his own character by following his conviction to address disunity immediately and not let it go any longer than what it already has.

Christian women ought to be diligent to be like Paul in the situation referenced in Phil 4:1-3 and not be like Euodia or Syntyche. They must be intentional to not be the cause of disunity, and they should strive to help the leadership boldly and confidently address even the beginning stages of disunity in their ministries. They need to endeavor to be wise in the Scriptures as to what attitudes cause disunity and what positive attitudes should be promoted and exemplified.

If a woman believes she can function as a Christian woman and foster gossip, think critical thoughts of others, contribute to malicious conversations about others that do not edify, or simply believe the notion that any of the above is acceptable, then she should give serious consideration to stepping out of her position of ministry. If she regularly engage in these sinful activities, she needs to reassess her heart’s condition. When she is alone with her Father, she should confess her sin and work on making righteous living her heart’s desire.

However, if a woman is committed to fostering a spirit of unity within the Body of Christ, she will consistently engage in the following practices: (1) edify those to whom she ministers with her words; (2) remain patient with all believers, acknowledging they are in process spiritually; (3) pray continually for those to whom she ministers, making

her requests known to God; (4) let her moderation be made known to everyone. As she exercises these disciplines, she will be working out her own salvation with fear and trembling. She can be assured that God will bless her efforts in ministry, whether physically or spiritually, and He will give her a peaceful heart because He is guarding her heart and mind in Christ Jesus.

Exposition of Philippians 4:10-23

Philippians 4:10-23

¹⁰ But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your care for me has flourished again; though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity. ¹¹ Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: ¹² I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. ¹³ I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

¹⁴ Nevertheless you have done well that you shared in my distress. ¹⁵ Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only. ¹⁶ For even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities. ¹⁷ Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account. ¹⁸ Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God. ¹⁹ And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. ²⁰ Now to our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.

²¹ Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren who are with me greet you. ²² All the saints greet you, but especially those who are of Caesar's household. ²³ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

In Phil 4:10-23, Paul concludes his brief letter to his friends in Philippi by thanking them for their past demonstration of support and their current desire to continue to help him. Paul expresses his conviction that God will bless them spiritually for their commitment to support the ministry of the gospel. Though grateful for their support, Paul reminds them that his sufficiency is in Christ who has taught him how to be content in

any situation as long as he has Jesus Christ to strengthen him. Paul ends the letter with praise to God for all His supply through the faithfulness of the people at Philippi. Harold Willmington offers a clear summary of the conclusion of the Letter to the Philippians:

Philippians 4:10-23 “Content and Strong in Feast and Famine.”

Because Christ abided in and empowered him (4:13), Paul could be content in any and all circumstances. There are two kinds of Christians:

1. Thermometer Christians, whose satisfaction is totally dependent on circumstances; they simply register the prevailing spiritual temperatures.
2. Thermostat Christians, whose satisfaction is totally independent of circumstances,. Not only are they not affected by circumstances, they themselves help shape those circumstances.

4:14-23 “By the way, thanks for the care package!”

Paul acknowledged the latest gift from the Philippians (4:10, 14) and recalled all their past generosity (4:15-16; see Background), adding that his main source of joy was the efforts and thoughts behind those gifts (4:17-18). He assured them of blessings in return and committed them to God’s grace. The greetings from people in Caesar’s household (4:22) show how effectively Paul had proclaimed the gospel from his involuntary confinement (compare 1:12-13).²⁶²

Philippians 4:10-20. In these concluding verses of the Letter to the Philippians, Paul revisits some familiar themes presented throughout the letter.

The end of the letter shows us Paul once more, as in 2:14ff. in concrete action, to a certain extent demonstrating in practice what was said in verses 8-9, a human picture, but Christian, Pauline humanity. Paul has been given support by the Philippians through their messenger Epaphroditus. The verses 10-20 express his thanks for it. But Paul shows his esteem and appreciation of the gift he has received by not using the word “*thanks*,” by treating it not as a matter of obligation between man and man but as a thing that is great and gratifying because it represents an offering well pleasing to God.²⁶³

The word “content” in Phil 3:11 “translates a widely discussed virtue in ancient Greek moral philosophy (autarkes). Aristotle defined contentment as “possessing all things and needing nothing.” Paul’s understanding of contentment could hardly have

²⁶² Willmington, *Willmington’s Bible Handbook*, 713

²⁶³ Barth, *Epistle to the Philippians*, 127

been more different from this. He was content because he was utterly dependent on a God who gave him everything he truly needed. Through his suffering, God had taught the apostle “My grace is sufficient for, for my power is made perfect in weakness (2 Cor 12:9).”²⁶⁴ Regarding Paul’s contentedness in any circumstance, Paul not only states that he is content but also offers what he focused on that helped him remained content.

Paul testifies to his contentedness he shows that three factors helped him to master his variable circumstances . . . Christian generosity, Christian disciple in, and Christian trustfulness. The Philippians generosity to Paul was an ever present sentiment; you were indeed concerned for me (literally, “keep on being concerned”). . . . The next factor in producing contentment is a Christian’s own attitude towards circumstances. As Christians we may start complaining when times are hard; or we may discipline ourselves to be content, reckoning that we have enough, no matter what. Paul is speaking personally in these verses, and he testifies that ‘enough’ and contentment’ are relative terms—relative to what we feel ourselves to need. There is a discipline of self whereby one does not need more than one has. . . . Lastly, the contented Christian, gives the sole glory to God. Verse 20 expresses such familiar ideas that we might easily fail to see the wonder of it. What is he giving glory to God about? The times when the Philippians could not help him (verse 10), the times of hunger and of plenty (verse 12), the churches who neglected him and those who remembered him (verse 15)—accepted his circumstances as from God, and glorified God in them all. Paul was contented because God was trustworthy and to be glorified even when (by the worldly standard) he seemed not to be! The apostle had learned to be content because he had learned to trust.²⁶⁵

Philippians 4:21-23. The Letter to the Philippians concludes in typical fashion of a first century letter. For example,

a letter written a few years within the time of Paul writing to the Philippians, Herennia concludes a letter to her father Pompeius with best wishes “to Charitous and her children” and greetings from Herennia’s younger brother, “Pompeius Junior.”

²⁶⁴ Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Commentary*, 67

²⁶⁵ Motyer, *Message of Philippians*, 219

(White) Paul follows the same custom in Philippians, sending greetings to all the Philippian Christians and greeting them on behalf of everyone with him (4:21).²⁶⁶

In the Letter to the Philippians, Paul makes intentional comments to once again bring attention to the gospel.

The phrase “Caesar’s household” refers to slaves and freed slaves who served the emperor or either as part of his entourage of personal attendants in Rome or as part of the more widely dispersed group of servants who supervised his financial affairs. Both groups were proud of their station and work for the emperor. Paul may have used these greetings as an encouragement to the persecuted Philippians.²⁶⁷

Then Paul “expanded [the customary format] to include a brief wish for the health of the recipient.”²⁶⁸

Paul began his Letter to the Philippians by addressing the saints and commending them to the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ (Phil 1:1-2), and he ends his letter in the same way by greeting the saints and commending them to the Lord’s grace. The verses with which Paul ends Philippians are, therefore, worth thinking about. They reveal in turn the people who have received the grace of the Lord Jesus (verses 21-22) and the Lord from whom the grace flows (verses 23).²⁶⁹

Application Taken from Philippians 4:10-23

In Phil 4:10-23, Paul speaks a great deal about contentment. His testimony to maintain a deep and abiding trust in Jesus Christ to protect his testimony, provide for his needs, and to receive glory in even the worst circumstances is impressive, inspiring, and convicting. When he addresses the Philippians (knowing they are willing to contribute once again to his needs), he explains to them that no matter if he has provisions or not, he

²⁶⁶ Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Commentary*, 68

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

²⁶⁸ Motyer, *Message of Philippians*, 219

²⁶⁹ Ibid, 222

is able to be content. How is he able to remain content? He trusts Christ who strengthens him to be content.

It is fitting that the subject of contentment is at the end of this very practical letter. It seems logical after Paul talks about “working out your own salvation” (Phil 2:12) and growing in our spiritual maturity that, in a practical sense, contentment would be the ultimate product.

This author would warn against falling into the temptation that ensnares so many Christian women. It’s the desire to want more ministry opportunities than what God has currently appointed for them. Or, they want something different, believing that contentment will come in a change of circumstances. Many ministers have been appointed to particular ministries that are thriving and they are reaping rich blessings from God, but they still have their sights set on something else. And so many ministers miss out on spiritual miracles that have yet to occur in the lives of those to whom they minister because they transfer to another ministry, not having fulfilled the necessary time at their current ministry.

Imagine what would have happened if Paul was given the option to leave the imprisonment upon the first week of being detained. We probably would not have read about all of the Palace Guard hearing the gospel (cf. Phil 1:13; 4:22). We probably would not have had the other three “prison epistles” (Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon) written. We probably would not have received clear instruction on how to deal with the false teachers that were making their way to Philippi (cf. Phil 3:1-14). We probably would not have had the powerful leadership example of how to both admit your weakness and pain, yet maintain a balance of how to dismiss the effects of sin upon a leader (cf. Phil 1:12-

18). We probably would not have been able to read such a powerful Letter to the Philippians, a letter we appreciate and are encouraged by the profound testimony of a man who had every reason to complain about his circumstances, but who lived his life as an unforgettable selfless, sacrificial servant.

Christian women must develop their spiritual maturity to where they can claim the very same thing about their life circumstances that Paul did in Phil 4:11-13.

Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

As believers, Christian women are too blessed and empowered by God (cf. Phil 2:1) to quit, divert from, or desire another plan for their lives than what God is placing right before them. He empowers them to serve Him and bring glory to His name. What they do is not about bringing attention to themselves, catering to their own needs, or fulfilling their personal dreams. Their ministry is about bringing glory to the God who strengthens them to do what they do. He is highly exalted and worthy of all praise.

Therefore, each and every Christian woman should be able to make this promise to the Lord: Knowing I CAN do all things through CHRIST who strengthens me. . . .

I WILL do all things FOR Christ who strengthens me!

CONCLUSION

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The thesis met all stated requirements of Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary and the focus, methodology, and limitations stated in the introduction chapter. While this thesis is a good sample of a well-crafted thesis for the Doctor of Ministry degree, there is still much room for additional expounding upon the work presented within it.

Recommendations for further research for future Doctor of Ministry candidates include:

1. Expounding upon every verse found within the Letter to the Philippians and making specific applications to Christian women who are serving vocationally and voluntarily in local church ministry. If there are imposed space limitations by the presiding educational institution, the candidate could consider focusing upon a verse-by-verse exposition and application for one chapter within the letter to the Philippians.

2. Categorizing the applications in this thesis, recognizing what emphasizes the author tends to focus upon and make additional applications that were left unaddressed in this thesis. For example, if the next researcher wanted to “fill in the gaps,” he would ask himself, “How many applications were made regarding discipling another believer vs. how many applications were made regarding spiritually developing oneself.” And if the researcher found that this thesis was heavy on applications regarding spiritually developing oneself, then the next researcher could draft specific applications that focus

upon discipling another believer. The applications are myriad as the researcher could inquire about applications regarding Christian women who are serving vocationally and voluntarily in local church ministry and how they relate to persons within their home, marriage, work relationships, etc.

3. Taking the exposition presented in this thesis and applying it to a different audience or to a specific segment of the stated audience within this thesis (e.g., Christian women who are serving vocationally in local church ministry, Christian women who are serving voluntarily in local church ministry, Christian men who are serving vocationally or voluntarily in local church ministry, wives of pastors who are serving a local church, Christian musicians who are serving vocationally or voluntarily in local church ministry, Bible teachers who are serving voluntarily in local church Sunday School/Small Group ministry, etc.). The exposition would be a fixed, sound standard for the countless applications that could be made.

4. Performing a similar study of another book of the Bible. A Pauline Epistle may be preferable, using this thesis as an example of how a study of this nature can be executed with another Pauline Epistle.

5. Expounding upon this thesis in creating practical action steps that instruct Christian women who are serving vocationally and voluntarily in local church ministry on how to specifically enact each and every application presented in this thesis. It would seem that the researcher pursuing this approach should further restrict his audience due to the fact that action steps would need to be specific to the particular situation/personality/scenario. A thesis that has the narrow focus of practical action steps

would possibly be irrelevant to a broader audience. Further research in this arena should target a very specific audience that would apply the particular action steps.

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CURRICULUM VITA

Tammy L. Gutierrez

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School of Religion
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EDUCATION

Doctor of Ministry – candidate

Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, Lynchburg, VA

*Thesis: An Expository Study of the Letter to the Philippians Making
Specific Application to Christian Women Who Serve Vocationally or
Voluntarily in Local Church Ministry*

Master of Divinity (2008)

Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, Lynchburg, VA

Cum Laude

Bachelor of Science in History (1997)

Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA

Associate of Arts (1993)

Central Virginia Community College, Lynchburg, VA

HIGHER EDUCATION EXPERIENCE

Instructor of Religion, Liberty University Online

School of Religion (2007-Present)

EVAN 101 – Evangelism & Christian Life

CHMN 201 – Introduction to Church Ministries

LOCAL CHURCH / MINISTRY EXPERIENCE

Youth Quest/Liberty University (1993-1995)

I traveled around the country with other students from Liberty University, ministering through evangelism and discipleship. Youth Quest served as recruiters for the University.

Sounds of Liberty/Liberty University (1995-1997)

The Sounds of Liberty was a ministry team that ministered through music, not only at Liberty University but also at its founding institution, Thomas Road Baptist Church. As a member of The Sounds of Liberty, I traveled extensively with the late Dr. Jerry Falwell and represented Liberty University at national events such as *Concerned Women for America Conventions*, *March for Life* rallies in Washington D.C. and *God Save America* rallies at some of the largest churches in America. I also recorded background vocals for Thomas Road Baptist Church and Liberty University.

**Single-Professional Department/Music Ministry
University Baptist Church, Jacksonville, FL (1997-1998)**

Served with my husband, Rev. Ben Gutierrez, Singles Pastor. I aided him in organizing events for the Single-Professional Department, as well as praise team/band rehearsals. I also aided the Director of the Women's Ministry Program in beginning a mentoring program called Heart to Heart. Our goal was to provide young women an opportunity to build relationships with older women in the Church according to Titus 2:4.

**Women's Ministry/Worship Ministry
Solid Rock Bible Church, Plymouth, MI (1998-2000)**

Served with my husband, Rev. Ben Gutierrez, Associate Pastor. I served as a member on the Praise Team, taught in the Pre-School Wednesday night program, and assisted the Director of the Women's Ministries Programs in planning quarterly events for outreach and discipleship.

Worship Ministry, Lake Pointe Church, Lyndhurst, IL (2000-2001)

Served with my husband, Rev. Ben Gutierrez, Executive Pastor. I served on the Worship team as well as fulfilling many ministry vacancies incumbent upon a church-plant ministry.

Worship Ministry, Living Word Baptist Church, Forest, VA (2001-2007)

Served with my husband, Dr. Ben Gutierrez, Executive Associate Pastor. I directed the Choir, planned worship service music selection for Sundays, appointed members to specific praise teams, and planned/executed musical events throughout the year. I also served as the church pianist during corporate worship. I also co-lead on the Women's Ministry Programs and taught several Bible Studies and assisted in planning special events for the women.

Worship Ministry, Thomas Road Baptist Church, Lynchburg, VA (2007-present)

Serving with my husband, Dr. Ben Gutierrez, Associate Pastor. I serve as a member of the praise team, co-lead a Sunday school class with the Shari Falwell, wife of the Senior Pastor, I serve in the women's Bible study program and I lead a small group within the women's Bible study ministry.