

## Philippians (Part Ten)

**Philippians 3:12 - 4:23**

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Let us go back to the book of Philippians. I suppose in the almost month since we had our last Bible study that most of us have forgotten what is in this book. Have you? I would not find any fault for anybody who forgot some of the things that are in here because it is really jam packed full of very important teaching for us. But we are going to pick up pretty much where we left off. I want to make sure that that we finished tonight so that next week we can start on something new.

We had just begun in chapter 4 when we left off there, I think it was 3 weeks ago. So I am going to go back a few verses because I want to pick up the beginning of chapter 4 in its context and that way it is a great deal more understandable. So let us go back into chapter 3.

Now remember that one of the primary reasons for writing this letter, not the primary reason, but a very big reason and something that just runs through the whole thing, is that apparently there were two ladies in the congregation who were having a personality conflict. It does not seem as though there was any doctrinal problem between these two ladies. But apparently there was something about the two of them and their personalities that rubbed each other the wrong way. So a great deal of the material that is in here has to do with resolving difficulties between people who are at odds with one another.

And of course, the major teaching on this begins in chapter 2, where he makes that very famous statement, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." The subject there is humility, and what he is inferring very strongly is that the resolution of this problem is going to be a mutual humility shown on the part of both of these ladies. That if they are going to overcome this thing, it is going to take both of them having the mind of Christ to resolve the things so that they both grow as a result of it. So he gives the example of the humility of Jesus Christ as what they should look to for how to resolve this problem.

He goes on from there with other things. And in chapter 3, he gets to that very famous section on the righteousness of man as contrasted to the righteousness of God. And he said that he wanted to be found having Christ's righteousness, and he gave as an example out of his own life in verse 12 that he had not "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." Now here one of the major things that we have to come to understand: that human righteousness, as good as it might be, *always* has a limit to it. In other words, it reaches a plateau and it can go no higher. But the righteousness of God is so far above human righteousness that there is just no comparison. God's own comparison of human righteousness is given there in Isaiah 66 as being like filthy rags as compared to His. Now I am sure that that is an apt comparison. Well, if human righteousness levels off at that level, that plateau, how much higher is God's righteousness? Why, it is so high above man's, there is no comparison.

Now what Paul is saying here is that this leaves us no room for thinking that we have hit the top. In other words, what we are in terms of character, what we are in terms of attitude, what we are in terms of personality, we might use righteousness here, is that there is unlimited perfectibility wherever God is involved. He is perfect, and we are to come to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. So in practicality, what it means to you and me is that we can never allow ourselves the privilege of being completely at ease with what we are. It is one thing to be at peace. It is another thing altogether to feel that we have reached as far as we can possibly grow. So that is why he said that he pressed on. As great of an individual as the apostle Paul was—I am thinking in terms of the responsibility that he carried as an apostle of God, the character that he developed, the amount of work that he did—he said that he had not yet apprehended. . .

**Philippians 3:13** 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, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

So Paul was saying that he was not going to rest on his laurels, and he did not want these people to rest on their laurels. Now you can tie this right into

the personality conflict between these two ladies. They might feel that the best thing to do here was to just let sleeping dogs lie, even though this difficulty was between them. And Paul is giving them a gentle nudge to help them to see that, well, it cannot always remain that way. Something is going to have to be done to resolve the problem. And if it takes humbling yourself, then you have taken another great step toward being more like God.

Remember the example of Christ. He gave up *all* to become a man and to do what He did, which culminated in His crucifixion. Can there be any greater humbling of a human being than what He went through? He gave up being God and ended up being put to death. And He did it, it says there, as a lamb being led to the slaughter. So I guess you might say, what do we have to lose to stick our neck out to try to make peace with with someone?

Then verses 15 and 16, he said that even if you somewhat disagree with this, or cannot quite see it, he felt that if they were mature, that eventually God would reveal it to them that they would see that he was right in this.

Then in verse 17, he once again encourages the people to follow his example, and what he undoubtedly meant was the example of Christ in him. Because he had just admitted several verses before that, that he had not yet attained what he was reaching for. So he was not the perfect example. But what he was saying was very similar to what he said in I Corinthians, to follow him as he followed Christ.

Then verse 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." Now, in the commentaries, they will tell you that they do not know who these people were. I think though that we would have to reach a conclusion that because of Paul's attitude about them they were most likely people who had, let us say, been converted and had fallen away from the faith. That something had happened, they lost their grip on reality, and they left the church. The weeping is what tends to push me in this direction because if they were unconverted, if they had never been converted, at least he would know that there was a second resurrection to look forward to, and though he may be somewhat saddened because they could not have the benefits of being converted and being Christians, and having God's Spirit now, at least he would have the consolation of knowing that that still lay before them. But his

weeping tends to indicate to me that these were people who had been part of the church, but were now enemies of the church.

He goes on to describe them in verse 19, "whose end is destruction." Now something I did not bring out the last time is that word destruction is the antonym for salvation, which further indicates to me that the people that he is speaking of in verse 18 are people who had left the faith and that they were headed toward the Lake of Fire.

"Whose God is their belly, whose glory is in their shame." Whose God is their belly is an expression indicating that they were being led by their carnal nature. In other words, they were following the appetites, following their senses, their feelings, and they were pandering to their feelings, rather than controlling them. Whose glory is in their shame; they took pride in the evil that they did. They should have been ashamed of it. They should have felt guilty but they did not.

"Who set their mind on earthly things." This is a very important statement. Now our mind has to be fixed on the Kingdom of God. And if we are doing things right, then what we do, or what we permit ourselves to do, is always decided with that thought in mind. How is it going to affect my relationship with God? How is what I am going to do going to affect whether or not I will be in the Kingdom of God. How is what I am about to do going to affect character? How is it going to affect others, you know, how is it going to impact on them? In other words, everything is decided with the principles of the Kingdom of God in mind. These people had slipped the cog somewhere along the line and now their thinking was determined by what they wanted to accomplish in relation to something that was merely material.

Now, in order to emphasize this, he says in verse 20—this is the reason that we have to think the way we do—"For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ." I mentioned to you before how that Philippi was designated by Rome as a colony. It is a designation that was not given to every city. And even much larger cities than Philippi were not designated as Roman colonies. Corinth was not one. Athens was not one. But Philippi, a small city by comparison to those, was one. And what it meant was that those people in Philippi were given Roman citizenship. And so their citizenship was in Rome. Even

though they were native Philippians, or they had been someone who had been serving in the Roman army, and had been sent there to help establish Roman culture.

There is an interesting thought here, and that is that because the Philippians were a Roman colony and their citizenship was in Rome, it is very likely that very few Philippians had ever actually been to Rome. Travel being the way it was, it was not a matter of just hopping in your car and zipping over to Rome, even though their citizenship was there. Now I want to see, how many of you people have ever been to heaven? And yet your citizenship is there. Now, what was required of the Philippian? It was required that in Philippi he should extend the culture of Rome. He represented Rome. He was an ambassador of Rome wherever he went, because Philippi was a colony.

The same principle applies to us. We have never been to heaven where our citizenship is, yet wherever you go, you are an ambassador of that Kingdom. And you are expected by your life to extend the culture of the traditions, of the beliefs and practices of that Kingdom wherever. You see, that should determine what we do with our life. That because we are a citizen of that Kingdom, then our decisions are made on that basis and they will not be made purely on the basis of earthly considerations. Now, if we are still tied to the earth, we are going to have trouble living by faith and it is going to cause spiritual problems. We will get to that just a little bit later because Paul addresses it, kind of in an oblique way in chapter 4, but he does address it again.

So here we are. We are waiting for our Savior who will transform our lowly body. I think the King James has our vile body. The implication is not sinful, but simply inferior by creation. See, He will transform our inferior body that it may be conformed to His glorious body. Here we have those two words that came up in chapter 2 again, *schema* and *morphe*. Remember those? What he is saying here is, that when He comes, He will change the outward appearance of our inferior body to conform with the inner character so that there is an agreement, I guess is the word that I think of right now, between what we are internally with the external.

Now, what we are today, hopefully what we are, is that because we have the Spirit of God and because we are pressing toward the mark of the high calling in Christ, because we take seriously that our citizenship is in heaven, and we are pressing toward the Kingdom of God, and we are filtering all of our thoughts with the Word of God, there is an inner transformation that takes place that belies what is on the outside. In other words, on the outside we have the inferior construction of a material body, but on the inside, the Spirit, you see, is becoming more and more glorious. So that when we die, or when Christ comes and we are resurrected, or we are transformed, then what is on the outside will also match what is on the inside. That is God's hope.

So where our citizenship is plays a large part in what we are going to do with our life if we really believe that. And of course, God is hopeful that we will make the efforts to conduct our life in that regard.

"Who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body." Now, there is something there too. What is Jesus Christ? Well, He is God. So what Paul is saying there, if we are going to be conformed to His glorious body, then we are going to share with Him divine life. There are little things like that all over the place that give indication of what our potential is. If we are going to be conformed to His glorious body and He is divine, then we must be going to be divine as well. At least that is the way I read it.

"According to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself," is a reference to the power and the authority that Jesus Christ has to carry these things out, and He *will* carry them out.

**Philippians 4:1** Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren,  
my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved.

I do not know whether it is the same way in your Bible, but verse 1 is kind of set off by itself. It looks like it is attached to the tail end of chapter 3, and then there is a paragraph break that begins with verse 2. I think the reason they did that is because they could not decide whether verse 1 really belonged with chapter 3, or whether it belonged with chapter 4. But regardless of which one it belongs with, it is a beautiful way of transiting

from one thought to another. The transition there is so smooth that he, in one fell swoop there, sums up what he said in the previous 5 or 6 verses and also makes the transition into what he is going to go to.

Now, what are he is saying in verse 1 there is, to stand fast. You know, plant your feet, be devoted to, is another way of saying it. Be devoted to this way of life that he has been talking about here, especially for the last two chapters, chapter 2 and chapter 3; that this is the way to conduct your life in humility and with a great deal of energy, pressing forward to the Kingdom of God. He is saying, do not stand still with what you are doing, but be devoted to it. You know, really throw yourself into it so that you can be accomplishing a great deal.

He is also saying that in our devotion to this, that we need to take into consideration that this Kingdom, see, where our citizenship is, it is worth sacrificing for. That it is worth every bit of effort. That it is worth every bit of whatever it is that we have to give up. That it is worth bearing our cross, whatever it happens to be for. So he is saying, do not let anything seduce you away from it. That is why he says "stand fast." You know, if you are standing on your two feet, you may shift your weight from your right foot to your left foot, and then you may go back and forth a little bit. But at least you are standing there holding your position. If you lift up both feet at the same time, you have made a decision to sit down on the job. But at least if you are standing up, there is a pretty good chance you are going to put your other foot down even though you might be shifting your weight back and forth. You can begin to see that he is implying here that we need to make an effort to do all we can to carry out the responsibilities of someone who has a citizenship in that Kingdom.

Now his fears for them regarding this are probably generated by his love for them. I think you can tell that there seems to be a special relationship between him and this Philippian church, that they felt exceedingly close to one another. In fact, so close, he calls them his crown. I do not know. I should have looked this up, but I do not believe that he did that in any other letter. He felt, I am sure, a special regard for them as well. It was not that he did not love others. But even as the apostle John was pointed out to be the one whom Jesus loved, where there was a special kind of warmth and friendship between the two of them, there seems to be something like that

going here, and it probably caused him a great deal of emotional strain to know that these two ladies had this conflict between the two of them and that that might be spreading out into the congregation and causing a division like he had had to deal with the Corinthian church. And he did not want to see that happen. And so he is very concerned about them.

Incidentally, this crown is not the kind of crown that a king would wear but rather, the kind of crown that a winner in a race would wear. Someone who had triumphed in a race, a festivity of some kind. It does not indicate rulership, like the olive branch that they entwined around the head of the winners of the Greek games.

Let us go on to verse 2.

**Philippians 4:2** I implore Euodia and I implore Syntyche [here are the two ladies who were having this difficulty between the two of them] to be of the same mind in the Lord.

He is telling them to bring their attitudes into harmony. Now, what would cause a conflict like this? I think we have to assume that both of these ladies were fine ladies. Maybe they were equally aggressive, let us say, in trying to carry out the will of God, trying to serve in the congregation. But you remember what I told you before that people who are zealous tend to get in one another's hair more often, more frequently than people who are passive. Where you have a group of passive people they have a tendency to be very tolerant toward one another, and they do not run into one another because nobody is trying to accomplish anything. But where you have people who are zealous, there is a tendency that in our zeal to try to accomplish something that we run headlong into each other. And irritations arise. The competitive nature begins to come out, and maybe the urge to triumph over the other is not controlled also begins to come out. That is what happens in business, is it not? The competition is stiffest among those who are most zealous about getting the most business.

Well, that is the same principle that would be at work, I think, with these two ladies. So they were fine ladies. I have no doubt at all about that. But they

had run headlong into each other, maybe trying to accomplish the same thing. Who knows? So there had to be a resolution of their problem, and it was going to have to be something resolved between the two of them.

**Philippians 4:3** [he says] I urge you also, true companion, help these women.

Now who is this person who is "true companion"? Well, nobody knows for sure because it is just kind of left hanging there except that there is some indication in the word companion. Other translations may translate that word comrade or fellow yokeman. Now, the reason is because that word companion is also a proper name, Syzygus. They undoubtedly translated it correctly because that is what Paul intended. But when he wrote it in the Greek, there was a person's name there. It is just like a play on words in which Paul asked this man Syzygus, his companion, his fellow yokeman, his comrade, to do what he could to help these ladies get their act together. He says, "Help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement." Now again, nobody knows who Clement is. But I think that it would be fairly safe to say that these four people were probably among the first ones converted in Philippi. Syzygus and Clement, Euodia and Syntyche. I think that I mentioned to you the last time that there are those who feel that maybe one of these ladies is the same as the Lydia of the book of Acts. Remember, Paul went up by the riverside in Philippi where prayer was wont to be made, and there he came in contact with Lydia. There is a possibility. Nobody knows for sure. But it is an interesting speculation.

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

A double emphasis. Now, how can we rejoice in view of the difficulties that we face? Look what he is addressing here. There was a small measure of persecution going on. We know that from earlier chapters because Paul mentioned that they were partaking of the same things that he was. In fact, this church had been under a measure of persecution, apparently ever since it was founded, because Paul ran into persecution there and perhaps it never ended. Now that persecution might have all kinds of hardships spin off from it. Maybe they had difficulty getting jobs because of that. And if they had difficulty getting jobs, then where was the money to earn a living to come

from? Undoubtedly, there were financial difficulties as well. If the persecution ever got bad enough, there might even be the threat of death that they had to face. Paul was certainly experiencing that kind of thing.

Now Paul is saying that in spite of all of this, that a Christian should maintain a spirit of joy. That does not mean that we are immune from sorrow. It does not mean that we are insensitive to what is going on around us or that we can just shrug things off and say that we are not bothered by what is going on. But there is something that you and I ought to be able to hang on to if we are living by faith that should give us a measure of joy regardless of the circumstance. And that is this: Do you not know enough about God to recognize that He is love and that His will is perfect? Now, if we really are in the hand of God, and we are part of the will, you see, that is being worked out here on earth, are we not, despite what is going on, in the best hands that we could possibly be in?

Maybe the reason that we do not have the measure of joy that we would like to have is 1) we may misunderstand what Christianity is. And 2) maybe we are not living by faith, and we really do not believe that God is with us. I think that the first is more excusable than the second. Because if we have the second, then I think we are going to overcome the first. We will understand.

Look, the apostle Paul undoubtedly had many failures that brought him sorrow. Do you think it was a happy experience for him to get beaten within an inch of his life? Do you not think that at times that he would feel that if he did not seemingly do well in a city and that there were not a lot of converts or there was a lot of persecution, that maybe he had been a failure there, that if he had done things just a little bit differently, said things a little bit differently, put more emphasis, less emphasis, had better arguments that those kinds of things might bring him sorrow? Did he not say in verse 18 of chapter 3, "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." Yet he was a man who rejoiced, and he had to be rejoicing because he knew that his life was in the hands of God, and he lived with a certain amount of pleasant anticipation of what was yet to be. You know, what surprises does God have ahead? I know that I can say that with authority because that is exactly what it says about Christ in Hebrews 12:1, that He did what He did because of "the joy that was set before Him."

Now, what Paul is saying here for you and me is that there is at least a measure of this available to us and it is something that we can grow in, see, as we go along. So Paul, he tells us right here in chapter 3, verse 12, "Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on for that which I lay hold of," and so forth. He says, "I press toward the goal." And he knew that God loved him. If God did not love Paul, Paul understood that he would have been nothing more than a grease spot on the road to Damascus. Maybe that is why Christ said (I just happened to think of this), that those who are forgiven much love much. Because they recognize what they have been forgiven of. They recognize what they were. And they also recognize what they can become. And I am sure that gives them a pleasant anticipation that life holds out great joy because God is involved. So life is going to work out.

Beginning in verse 4 he gives advice regarding how these things can be accomplished. Number one, "Rejoice in the Lord." The next thing is, "Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand." Now I think the King James says, let your moderation be known. My New King James says gentleness. It can also mean forbearance. What it implies is being fair-minded, a willingness to give and take rather than standing rigidly on one's rights. It means yielding; yielding one's personal rights in order to show consideration. In other words, he is saying, you may be right. But in being right, you might be wrong in standing so rigidly and keeping this other person from being at peace with you. He is still talking about these two ladies and their fight that is going on. It is always in the background of what he is writing here.

Now in order to reinforce this thing about being gentle, he says "The Lord is at hand." It is a statement that implies, hey, be urgent about this. You know, do not think you can just put it off. Now, why should they be urgent? Well, because the Lord is the judge. Did Jesus not say that all judgment has been given to the Son? Well, he says the Lord is at hand. The Judge is coming and He is going to settle all differences. And this fight that you are having now is going to seem so trifling. Why not get it over with? Then it is behind you.

You know, even as far as we have gone with that last statement, if you connect that in its context with, all the way back in chapter 3, verse 20 where

he is talking about our citizenship is in heaven, there is a continuous thought that is running through here. And that is that the key for Christian living is that we are living for something that is far greater than our carnal neighbors are. He is implying to you and me that if our hope is in this world, then we are going to divide, take up sides, and fight. But if our hope is in the Kingdom of God, if our hope is in God's will, if our citizenship really is in heaven, if we really believe that the Lord is at hand and the times are urgent, we are going to do something.

You can see a theme that is running through here, encouraging these ladies to not stand dead center, opposing one another. You see, a Christian's hope is in the will of God. That is what he wants to see carried out. Because the will of God is motivated by love, and all things work together for good, you see, to those who are the called of God, to those who love God, boy, things are going to work out good for them.

Then, how can we rejoice? Brethren, how can you lose trusting God? There is every reason why we can rejoice. There is every reason why we can be forbearing. Why we can give up on our rights. He is not talking about giving up on truth. He is talking about yielding so that there can be peace. He is showing that this is the will of God, and you cannot lose. Now this is what has to shape the life of somebody whose citizenship is in heaven. This thought, always. Not just the thought, it is the reality that we are a subject of that Kingdom, and our life is in the hand of God. And all things work together for good for them. Therefore we can have contentment and we can actually rejoice in the midst of difficulties. It does not mean we ignore them. It does not mean we are insensitive to them. But it does mean that all anxiety takes second place.

Let us go on a little bit further. That just leads to this next one:

**Philippians 4:6** Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.

He is saying, look, do not be fretful. Do not have undue concern about this that you are going through. Now again, he is not talking about being apathetic. He is not talking about no action at all. We can make plans with a

clear understanding that we can trust God to oversee them. That does not mean that we will not stumble and fall. Not that at all. But God hears and God sees. There is a proverb, is there not, that says (I am paraphrasing here), "Men propose, but God disposes." That is, He disposes in the lives of those people that are His. And He is involved there.

Now what is the answer to anxiety? Well, he is telling us right here in the verse. It is prayer. Now he is taking for granted that faith is also there, that we believe. That is why we are praying. But there is the answer to anxiety. That we can take our anxieties, we can take the problems that are causing us to be fretful; we can take those things to God and talk them over with Him in a full assurance that He is going to be involved. All things work together for good for those who love God and are the called of God. So, He is there. He is with us.

What is it that ties us to earthly concerns? Now there might be a lot of things, but I am thinking of one thing here right now. Well, we might say the fear of death. That ties us to earthly concerns. In fact, it says in Hebrews 2:14 that Satan holds us in bondage through the fear of death. That does a great deal to determine what we do with our life.

Well, I am going to make a little bit broader application, and that is, what holds us to earthly concerns is that, whether we will admit it or not, we think of our future as being earthly. Now we indeed are going to be on the earth in the future. There is no doubt about that. But that is where a person who is driven, you see, by earthly things thinks his future is on earth. That is, that is where he is going to experience the rewards, the fulfillment, and whatever else that that person wants to get. And I am becoming more and more convinced that the way to free ourselves from anxiety is to recognize that our future is not in that area. Our future is in the Kingdom of God. That is where we are going to be saved by, or from—I do not know what the word is right at this time. Those who are looking for, let us say, a carnal reward, are still tied to the earth. They are looking for praise, they are looking for money, they are looking for power, prestige, social status. All of those kinds of things fall into what I am talking about here, that our future is on earth and we will mind earthly things in that regard.

But that is not where our future is. God has called us to walk to the beat of a different drummer. Our future is in the Kingdom of God, even though we are going to be on earth. Therefore, we have to mind other things. Now if we do mind the other things, we are going to be fully assured that God is with us and the anxiety begins to leave. Because He has power even over death. Because He proved He can resurrect somebody from the dead. So if He is really involved in our life, then there does not need to be the kind of fretful concern, anxious concern the people whose hope is in this earth are going to be carrying with them.

Again, to me, the outstanding example of this is Christ. He allowed Himself, first of all, to be stripped of His life as a God being. Then when He was on earth, He gave up any hope of earthly reward for what He was doing. Now to epitomize this, remember Satan's temptation of Him. He said, "I'll give you all the kingdoms of the world if you'll just bow down to me." Christ saw right through that because His hope, His future, was not earthly. He was looking far beyond anything like that.

Now after turning down all the kingdoms of the world, He allowed His life to be taken away three and a half years later. But nonetheless, He was stripped of everything that could be called something like an earthly satisfaction, or hope. He received the ultimate in indignities in being crucified, though He was the Lord of glory. And He did all of it to submit to the will of God and to provide us with a Savior. Now there is an example of somebody who had no hope of an earthly future. Yes, His future is going to be here, but it is going to be in the Kingdom of God. His hope was not in any carnal reward, status, financial reward, power, authority, recognition, and so He was able to do those things that He did.

What this does, of course, is it allows anxiety to be put in second place. And prayer plays a major role in this because it allows us to break our absorption, our mental ties to our self and to the world.

Now why does he mention gratitude? Because it deepens a person's commitment. When you say thank you to somebody, are you not expressing your obligation to them? That you owe them something because they have done something for you? And so you feel committed to say thank you. See, it

deepens your sense of obligation. And so God wants us to be grateful to Him, not because it puffs Him up, but because it enables us to be more obligated to obedience to Him. And if we are feeling obligated that way, then we are going to receive the benefits of obedience to Him. You are going to be all the more eager to yield to Him because you consider your whole life as being an obligation to God.

Then he said, "let your requests be made known to God." Now this always has to be done in the light of God's will. In other words, there is nothing wrong with us taking our requests to God. But if we are really living within God's will, we know we are in His hands, then we also know that He has a view of life that is far better than ours. And He may have to, because of circumstances, even turn down our most unselfish of requests. In other words, I am saying to you, that you may be unselfish in what you are asking God for, but because He sees the whole situation that is going on, He still has to say no. So even in that most perfect of situations where you are asking completely unselfishly, you still have to understand that that too is subject to the will of God. It is not just our selfish prayers but even the unselfish ones that have to be subject to the will of God. Because remember, we have given our life to Him for Him to do with us as He wills.

So every prayer, all those requests that go up to Him, if we can ask them without anxiety, knowing that He might have to say no, and even when he says no, it is the right thing to do even in an unselfish request. I will tell you, that relieves anxiety. Because we may ask God for something that we feel we are doing it completely unselfishly, and nothing happens. And so then the first thing you know, we begin looking around, well, what's wrong with me? And we go through this rigorous examination of ourselves, looking into every minute crack of our character, trying to find out what is wrong. We begin to think, God is angry at me. And so we feel guilty, and we feel like crawling under the carpet. And we think that God is just standing there with a big mallet ready to rap us over the head at any moment.

Brethren, that is not on His mind at all! That is really unfair to think of God in those terms. That is not a loving thought toward Him, is it? If our will really is in His hands, then even if He says no, that is the right answer. And He is not angry at us. There are just things that He is working at that forbid giving us what we want, even though it is an unselfish request at that time.

Look at Christ in the garden of Gethsemane. He says, "Father, I'd like this cup to pass from Me." Now was that selfish? No, it was not. He never sinned. The Father said, "No. There is something far more important that has to be done." Even Christ had at least one prayer that was never answered in the way that He would have liked it to be. Even though it was unselfish, God still said no. Because there was a higher thing that had to be worked out.

Was He angry at Christ? Did Christ start examining Himself looking for all kinds of flaws? No. He just accepted God's will and the anxiety ended. You know, after He left the garden there is no indication of anything except utmost resolve to carry forward with what He was going to do. You see, He made His request known to God. The issue was decided. He accepted it and on He went. No anxiety, no fretting. Well, that is what Paul is talking about here. "Let your requests be made known."

And he says in verse 7,

**Philippians 4:7** and the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

What a beautiful promise is given there.

Let us consider Jesus and Paul again. Let us consider them together. Consider them in the presence of death. Both of them endured persecution, a great deal of suffering from the hands of people that they were only trying to help. Each one of them was rewarded with ingratitude, misunderstanding, blind opposition. One confronted a crucifixion. The other was imprisoned and he was waiting for a fatal verdict. And here is Paul, both of them actually. Both of them speak of joy and peace.

Brethren, what they did, what they had must have worked. See, here is Paul telling us how this can be accomplished. It is a matter of faith, certainly it is. But it is something that can be accomplished.

These words were not uttered by men who were on Easy Street. I want you to understand that. But they were uttered by men who had been stripped of

their self-centeredness. There is the key. Because that is what causes us the concern.

Now, this world offers peace. But the peace of God and the peace of the world are *not* the same. Jesus said, "My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you." Now the peace of the world is to be delivered from trouble. *The peace of God is to be delivered from self.* See, that is something that is God-given and comes as a result of the relationship. It is an offshoot of faith. It is something that is produced by the Spirit of God. It is a fruit; love, joy, peace. They follow right in that order and come as a result of that relationship. I am not saying here that the peace of the world is wrong. There is nothing wrong with being delivered from trouble. I am only saying that it stops short of the real problem. That is why Jesus said, "My peace I give unto you." That is something that only God can give. And what God does is He works to get rid of the self-centeredness in us, and as He gets rid of the self-centeredness, then the anxiety is able to take second place and we are really able to be at peace and joy regardless of the problems that surround us.

And I say this again, it does not mean that we are insensitive to them, but they do not make us worry to the extent that we think that our future is being cut off and that "whoa is me, all is lost!" kind of thing.

Now the peace of the world almost ensures that there is going to be further fighting. Because as you are delivered from one trouble, there is going to be another one brewing, and the reason is, is because everybody looks at a situation, a circumstance from a different perspective and we cannot help but be brought into conflict as a result of the different ways that we look at things. And so the kind of peace that the world gives is something that is never going to end. Is that right? Never going to be continuous. I mean, it will always be broken is what I mean because new issues are constantly going to arise.

Is it possible to accept the fact that we are never going to be without trouble on earth, and yet we can also have peace in the midst of that trouble? See, that is what God is shooting at. Because we are in the world, and there can never really be peace, that is, complete deliverance from trouble in the world, then we have to have something else that will give us the contentment that we need to live in this world and be at peace. Well, that is something

that only God can give, and it is deliverance from this self-centeredness that we have that motivates us always to have this surplus of concern about ourselves and about our future.

Well, let us jump on here and go to verse 8. Now this is tied into the peace and harmonizing these things between the two ladies.

**Philippians 4:8** 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, if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.

I will stop right there. Now verse 8 is given in this light. I just mentioned that as long as we are in this life we are never going to be free of disturbances. We are never going to be entirely delivered from them. That is a reality. You know, how do you deal with those things on a practical basis? I said that the overriding principle here to having peace is to be delivered from the self. And that is true. Now, what are some of the mechanics of being delivered from the self? That is what he is giving in verse 8. Anxiety is a result of thought processes that reach the conclusion that "I am in danger. My future is in danger." Now what has to be changed are the thought processes, see, the mechanics. And now he gives again in broad terms the way our mind has to be retrained in order not to be concentrated on the self all the time.

First of all, you think on things that are true. Let me interject something here. My Bible says at the end of verse 8, "meditate on these things." I think the King James says "think." Meditate is a little bit closer. But the word is more closely related to our English word "calculate." So, you add, subtract, multiply, divide. Now of course that does take thinking, that does take meditation. But in order to be a little bit more precise, he is actually saying to calculate.

Now what he is saying here is this. Use these broad principles to reach decisions as to what you are going to do with your life. In other words, you calculate it, you consciously think it through and determine, you make your decision based on things that are true. Now that means basing your decisions, let us say, on God's Word. That should be a major foundation.

See, God's Word is truth. Now that does not mean that that is the only truth that is available. But unfortunately in this world, much of what we get is not the whole truth. We get bits and pieces of truth. Now, if you only have bits and pieces of truth, it is hard to calculate correctly. So what he is saying here is to strive as much as possible to arrive at as much truth as you possibly can before you start calculating what your decision is going to be. Now if you have something from God's Word, that is an absolute. You do not have to look any further.

Then he says, whatever things are noble, or honest or worthy of respect or reverence. See, those things that adhere to a high standard. Then he says, whatever things are just. It means upright or conformable to God's standards. He is talking here about using these things and resolving one's daily business. Be fair, he is saying.

The next one is pure. It has to do with with moral purity, being chaste. He is telling a person that they need to rid their mind of bad habits which degrade a person. The next thing he says is lovely. That means to be worthy of love, to be charming, pleasing, attractive, agreeable, amiable. Good report means well spoken of, admirable, something that should be held in honor. Then he says, "If there is any virtue, if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things." Virtue means a strength or excellence. And again, praiseworthy means admirable.

Now what Paul is trying to get these people to do is to use discernment and then choose the right, the good, the just, the pure in what they are going to be thinking about.

**Philippians 4:9** The things which you have learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.

Paul was their teacher, he was their example, and they learned from him, received instruction from him. They saw his personal example. And this was especially important to them because there were a few Bibles extant. Not like you and me, we might have a half dozen Bibles in our house. I do not think

they had many things like that. They went to services on the Sabbath, and it is unlikely that very many of them had a Bible available to them, so they had to learn by observation.

**Philippians 4:10** 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 the opportunity.

Now, he is making reference there to the gift that they sent by Epaphroditus. And it is the first real mention of it in this book and he puts in the words there "at last," and it seems to indicate, "Well, you finally came to my rescue" kind of thing, but it is not his intention at all to give that impression. It is highly likely that he had already thanked them, maybe several times, because quite a bit of time had passed from the time that they sent the gift by Epaphroditus. Remember he was there. He had enough time to get sick near unto death, and this letter is going to be sent back with him. Now it seems unthinkable that other messages had not gone back and forth, so he probably had in all probability already thanked them. "At last" is an indication that up until this time that they sent the gift by means of Epaphroditus, they simply had not had the opportunity to help him. But when they did have the opportunity, then they did show that they cared and made sure that a gift was sent to him.

**Philippians 4:11-12** 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.

Now one of the more important things in these two verses is that he *learned* to be content. It is not a proclivity of human nature to be content. As a matter of fact, human nature is never content except for brief periods of time. But then the discontent comes right back again. And it is insatiable. We just want more and more. So Paul had to learn just like everyone else to be content. He had to *learn*. It was a matter of growth in understanding that his life really was in God's hands and that he was going to live as long as God wanted him to continue to preach, carry out his function within the body. And so he learned to be content.

It was a Stoic ideal that one should accept the trials and tribulations of life impassively. We know the word, the person is a stoic. Now Paul is not saying that we should be stoics at all. The Stoic accepted his lot and all of the resources for handling the situation came from within himself. Now Paul is not saying that we are to accept and be content in that manner. The resources for us dealing with these uncomfortable situations where we may indeed be in real need are in Christ. And so he shows them in,

**Philippians 4:13** I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

There is the source of our strength. Our resource is faith in God that He will provide.

**Philippians 4:14** Nevertheless you have done well that you shared in my distress.

I think he wrote that because he was concerned that what he had just written might give them the indication that Paul felt that their gift to him was unnecessary. But he is assuring them that they had responded properly and that he was grateful. But he was grateful not so much for the gift, what the gift did for him, but because of their willingness to share in his distress. Undoubtedly the gift helped. But it was the fact that they were sharing his problems that gave him the feelings of joy that he had. See, they had accepted his affliction as theirs. Did he not say in another place that we ought to bear one another's burdens, and they did.

**Philippians 4:15** Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only.

This is said in order to make clear he is not in any way minimizing their gift. And so he is recalling for them some of their earlier demonstrations of

sharing in his distress. Now he does not mean here that no other church of Macedonia ever helped him. But on the specific occasion that he is talking about, none helped but the Philippian church.

There is one thing that is hidden from us. It is in the Greek, but it does not show in the English. You see where it says that no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving. They are actually business terms and the language indicates that the Philippian church was actually keeping an account for Paul. Apparently something like a bank account that they contributed to regularly. And they contributed to it and then they dispersed from it and gave the gift to him. So apparently a percentage of what they took in tithes, offerings, or whatever was sent to him and an account was kept so that if he ever wanted to check up, why, there it was.

**Philippians 4:16** For even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities.

Now apparently that was on his first visit through. You remember he went to Philippi, and then from Philippi he went to Thessalonica. So they sent gifts two times there. But they must have been very small amounts because in both I Thessalonians and II Thessalonians, in those letters Paul mentions that he had to work while he was there. So they did not give him so much money that he did not have to work, he kept right on going.

**Philippians 4:17** Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account.

Here again, the language is the language of business. The fruit is the interest that one would earn on a bank account and the gift was the capital, the asset that was put in the bank. So he is saying that he was not so much interested in the capital amount that they invested as a gift to him as he was in the fruit, the interest, you see, that would accrue to them as a result of their sharing with him.

**Philippians 4:18** Indeed I have all and abound. [Again, the language of business, he is saying that I have received payment in full.] I am full, having received from Epaphroditus [see] the things

which were sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God.

So he is saying that he got over and above anything that he actually needed and the over and above part had to do with the feelings, the encouragement, the sympathy and affection, that he received as a result of the gift sent to him. That was more valuable than the money.

**Philippians 4:19** And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches and glory by Christ Jesus.

Now what he is saying here is that God will do what Paul is unable to do. There was no way that Paul could pay them back. But God would be working in their behalf and that he would supply their need. And it is almost as if Paul is saying that he is indebted to these people. That he has no money to pay back, but God would reimburse them for what they had done for him, for Paul.

**Philippians 4:20** Now to our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Now in verse 21, just to finish off the letter.

**Philippians 4:21-22** Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren who are with me greet you. All the saints greet you, but especially those who are of Caesar's household.

In verse 21, it is probably a note from the Philippian brethren who were with Paul. There was at least Epaphroditus there, there may have been a couple of others, and those ones wanted to be remembered to the people back in Philippi.

Verse 22, all the saints means those who are in the Roman church, the church at Rome, also send greetings to those in Philippi. And especially those who are of Caesar's household. Now many have wondered whether that means that any of Nero's family were converted. Well, it hardly seems likely. Possibility. But Caesar's household was a common term for anybody

who worked for the emperor. So it probably meant that there were government functionaries who were working in and around the capital city there in Rome and they were of Caesar's household. That seems far more likely than anybody in Caesar's family. I mean, it is a possibility, but it does not seem likely.

**Philippians 4:23** The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

A little benediction on their behalf from the apostle.

And thus we end what I think is a very, very interesting book. I hope you got some profit from that. I never expected it would take 10 Bible studies to get done with those four little chapters. But I am sure that we have just barely scratched the surface of the instruction that is there. But I hope what you did get was helpful.