

Contents

Chapter One	2
Chapter Two	78
Chapter Three	130
Chapter Four	178

© 2013, Revised 2018
Bert Esselink
Box 875
Three Hills, AB T0M 2A0
beselink@telusplanet.net
www.thenarrowtruth.com

Chapter 1

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



Paul includes his under-study, Timothy, as he writes this letter to the saints at Philippi. Timothy is also made a part of the identifying comments for the letters to the Corinthians (the second one), Colossians and the two sent to the Thessalonians.

Paul begins by openly declaring that both he and Timothy are slaves (*doulos*) of Jesus Christ; the word comes from the idea of being in subjection – whether involuntarily or voluntarily.¹ A slave, by definition, is “somebody who is forced to work for somebody else for no payment and is regarded as the property of that person.”² Within the physical realm, this involves ownership and forced labor, which are the primary aspects of slavery that come to mind when we hear the term. However, as a slave of Jesus Christ, there is no coercion, no force is applied to ensure that the work is being done; rather, we are *volunteer* slaves, committed to the One Who has purchased us out of the chains of sin. To the Romans, Paul wrote, “God be thanked, that ye were the servants [slaves – same Greek word] of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants [made a slave] of righteousness” (Romans 6:17-18).³ The reality, which Paul is explaining here, is that we are all slaves – “Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants [slaves/*doulos*] to obey, his servants [slaves/*doulos*] ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?” (Romans 6:16). It is not a question of slavery, but rather a matter of which master you want to serve; we are born as slaves to sin (it is who we are) – we must be reborn to become slaves to Jesus Christ and His righteousness.

The word *saints* is most often translated as *holy*, and provides a glimpse into who we are in Christ Jesus. As those who have been persuaded of the veracity of God’s provision through the Lord Jesus Christ (i.e., we are believing – present tense, not just past tense), we have received a very specific calling from God. “[God] Who hath saved us, and called *us* with an **holy calling**, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began [literally, before time eternal⁴] ...” (2 Timothy 1:9). “I ... beseech you that ye walk worthy of the [holy] vocation wherewith ye are called ...” (Ephesians 4:1). Peter understood the same thing: “as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation [conduct or behavior]” (1 Peter 1:15).⁵ If we are considering ourselves as being in Christ by faith, then we must strive to be holy in our daily living, for that is the calling that we have received from God.

¹ Strong’s Dictionary, *ESword*.

² EnCarta Dictionary, “slave.”

³ Strong’s Online.

⁴ Friberg Lexicon; Stephanus 1550 NT.

⁵ Strong’s Online.

It was not until about the fourth century that the word *saint* began to be used as a title for the Apostles and those who were considered to be spiritually worthy of veneration.⁶ It was during this time that many of the traditions of the Roman Catholic Church were being formulated, and this is a Catholic tradition that has found its way into our Bibles (not into the text, but into the uninspired names of several New Testament [NT] books). Today, the Catholics have a lengthy process for canonization (bestowing sainthood on someone), which they will, on occasion, fast track for those who are very popular among the general population – like Teresa of Calcutta and Pope John Paul II. Canonization universally (within the Catholic concept) identifies saints who are in heaven and are available to receive our petitions to intercede with God for us.



Pope John Paul II

The true origin of canonization and beatification must be sought in the Catholic doctrine of the worship (*cultus*), invocation, and intercession of the saints. As was taught by St. Augustine ..., Catholics, while giving to God alone adoration strictly so-called, honour the saints because of the Divine supernatural gifts which have earned them eternal life, and through which they reign with God in the heavenly fatherland as His chosen friends and faithful servants. ... And if St. Paul beseeches the brethren (Romans 15:30; 2 Corinthians 1:11; Colossians 4:3; Ephesians 6:18-19) to help him by their prayers for him to God, we must with even greater

reason maintain that we can be helped by the prayers of the saints, and ask their intercession with humility. If we may beseech those who still live on earth, why not those who live in heaven?

It is objected that the invocation of saints is opposed to the unique mediatorship of Christ Jesus. There is indeed "one mediator of God and man, the man Christ Jesus". But He is our mediator in His quality of our common Redeemer; He is not our sole intercessor nor advocate, nor our sole mediator by way of supplication. In the eleventh session of the Council of Chalcedon (451) we find the Fathers exclaiming, "Flavianus lives after death! May the Martyr pray for us!"⁷

The Catholics openly admit to worshipping dead "saints," but qualify it as not being to the same degree as their worship of God. As already noted, our Bibles carry this unbiblical, Catholic influence to this day. If we are alive in Christ by faith, then we are saints – there is no man on earth who can make anyone, dead or alive, into a saint; we are made saints through faith in Christ's sacrifice for our sinful souls – a provision made possible by God's infinite holiness, love, grace and mercy, and confirmed through the working of the Spirit of God producing the righteousness of the Law of God in our lives (Romans 8:1-4).

The Pharisees of Jesus' day feigned holiness – "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess" (Matthew 23:25). The Pharisee said, "We must appear righteous before our

⁶ <http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/saint.html>

⁷ <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02364b.htm>

fellow man”; by contrast, today’s Evangelical piously says, “It’s what’s in the heart that truly matters.” However, Jesus went on to say to the Pharisees, “*Thou* blind Pharisee, cleanse first that *which is* within the cup and platter, [in order] that the outside of them may be clean also” (Matthew 23:26). The Pharisees thought that if what was visible appeared to be holy, then they were fine; today’s Evangelical thinks that the inside can be cleansed and made holy without there being any external evidence – as long as he says that he is a Christian, then he is a believer and all is okay. Jesus destroys both heresies by explaining that the inside must be cleansed first, and then the outside will be clean as a result; if the heart has been made holy through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, then the life that is lived will also bear evidence of that holiness. The two, internal cleansing (faith) and external holiness (obedience), work together; they cannot and must not be separated. The Pharisees failed in that they sought to present a holy façade, even though there was no internal basis for any holiness; the righteous Evangelicals of today fail when they, in their ignorance, claim an internal holiness that is not affirmed by their lives – both neglect the necessity of first having the heart cleansed by faith in God, and a heart so cleansed must find expression through a holy life. The challenge that James makes to today’s Evangelical is this: “Shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works” (James 2:18); the presence of the Spirit of God, within the life of the believer, **must** result in the righteousness of the Law of God (those Ten Commandments once written upon tables of stone by the finger of God, and now written upon our hearts by that same finger [Jeremiah 31:33]) being exemplified (Romans 8:4). If the life of a professing Christian does not show forth the righteousness of God, then he has absolutely no basis for making his profession. Jesus said, “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 7:21); profession (“Lord, Lord”) is not enough to open the gates of heaven; there must be obedience to God, which will be demonstrated in how we live.



Paul addresses this letter specifically to the holy ones who are in Philippi. This was Paul’s first stop in what would be considered modern Europe, during what is called his second missionary journey. Philippi was a Roman colony fortified to stand as a guardian along the main east-west road through that region, the Via Egnatia constructed c. BC 130.⁸ Built for military reasons as a link between the western and eastern Roman Empire, it became a major route for travel. Evidently the population of Philippi did not include a large number of Jews (there was no synagogue), for Paul and Silas joined themselves to the women who met by a river to pray (Acts 16:13; cp. 17:1).



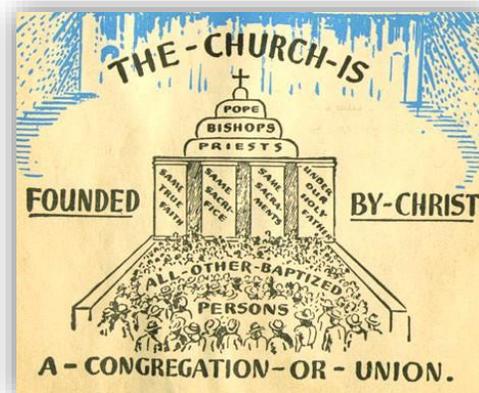
Interestingly, in his greeting, Paul draws special attention to the *bishops and deacons* at Philippi. *Bishop* is from the Greek word *episkopos*, which means overseer or superintendent.⁹ We learn from Titus 1:5 and 7 that the term is used interchangeably with *elder*

⁸ <http://www.abu.nb.ca/courses/NTIntro/Images/Egnatian.htm>

⁹ Strong’s Online.

(*presbuteros* – elderly, mature).¹⁰ Peter describes the role of the overseer (*elder*) within the *ekklesia*: “The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed [*poimaino* (*poymah'-ee-no*) - shepherd] the flock [*poimnion* (*poym'-nee-on*)] of God which is among you, taking the oversight [*episkopeo*] thereof, not by constraint [by force], but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over [hold in subjection] *God's* heritage, but being ensamples [a print – the mark of a blow] to the flock” (1 Peter 5:1-3).¹¹ Peter reflects, in his instructions, the words of the Lord Jesus: “...Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over [the same Greek word translated as *lords over* in Peter's instructions] them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not [absolute] be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:25-28).¹² Although the bishops, or elders, hold great authority and responsibility within the *ekklesia*, it is not a hierarchical or positional authority; there is no authority derived from one's position on an organizational chart, rather, it is an authority based on being appointed to the task of overseeing the spiritual wellbeing of an assembly and being found worthy of obedience. The bishops are among the flock, not over them; the critical consideration was the role that each person played within the local *ekklesia*. When Paul and Barnabas revisited the groups of believers throughout the area of Galatia, their purpose was to strengthen the disciples, exhort them in the faith, warn them of hardships to come, and ordain, or appoint, “elders [*presbuteros*] in every *ekklesia*” (Acts 14:23); it would have been the same with the elders, or bishops, of Philippi.

Of all the areas of error that have crept into today's churches and become well-established traditions, perhaps the one that has had the most far-reaching, negative impact is the typical top-down authority structure. First of all, and most significantly, it stands in direct contradiction to the words of the Lord; what could have a more negative impact than a direct violation of Jesus' commands? Jesus said that this was absolutely not to have any place among us, yet it has been accepted as the normal, golden-standard for running a church today. Secondly, this hierarchical structure finds its roots in the apostate Roman Catholic Church, which has, through the years, perfected it from the pope down. They created a clergy-laity separation to ensure that they maintained tight control over their people, and this model has been carried over into the Evangelical community with few exceptions (it's been in place for so many years that we accept it without a second thought). Even the Baptists, who are proud of never having been part of the Roman Catholic Church, have adopted this very Catholic tradition. One fundamental Baptist group declares, “The Pastor shall be the executive head of the church and the president of the corporation.”¹³ Not all churches will go that far and be that obvious about it, but the reality is that



Roman Catholic hierarchy as presented openly up to Vatican II

¹⁰ Strong's Online.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ <http://www.foundationbaptistchurch.com/about-us/what-we-believe/constitution.html>

the pastor (a title which also has Catholic roots) holds tremendous power in most local churches – whether it is specifically granted through the established structure and constitution, or simply assumed through both the clergy and the laity having learned their traditional place.

The typical, modern pastor expects the congregation to be in obedience to his leading and teaching. Too often Hebrews 13:17 is quoted to squelch any thoughts to the contrary: “Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you,” with careful emphasis placed on that first phrase, *obey them that have the rule over you*. The word *obey* bears the overarching meaning of being persuaded and then obeying; *rule* speaks of leadership, not dominance. Yet this passage is so often used as a stick to beat the laity into submission, after all, “the Bible says that we’re to do what the pastor says” – no, it doesn’t! As one Baptist leader put it, “... the congregation must *submit* (i.e. yield) to these leaders” (his emphasis).¹⁴ This verse, given its proper meaning, fits very well with Peter’s guiding words for the elders (1 Peter 5:1-3).

 *Deacon* is from the Greek word *diakonos*, meaning someone who carries out the commands of another, a servant;¹⁵ the relational view is of the servant to his work, his responsibility to accomplish the assigned tasks. The seven, chosen in Acts 6:1-6, are typically referred to as deacons simply because of the responsibilities that they were given, even though the term was not applied to them. *Diakonos* focuses on the relationship between the servant and his given task; by contrast, the Greek word *doulos* (slave), which we looked at earlier, focuses on the relationship of the servant to his master. Therefore, we have the deacons carrying out the activities prescribed by the elders or bishops. However, this is not a hierarchical relationship, but simply the functional relationship that exists within the *ekklesia*; both (the elders/bishops and deacons) are slaves (*doulos*) to the Lord Jesus Christ and fellow-members of the Body of Christ – they simply fill differing roles. “The elders which are **among** you I exhort ... Feed the flock of God which is **among** you, taking the oversight ... [not] as being lords over God’s heritage ...” (1 Peter 5:1-3). The bishops or elders are to exercise oversight, but not mastery, over the *ekklesia* under their care. God has carefully revealed His desire for His people, yet, how far the churches of today have departed from this standard.

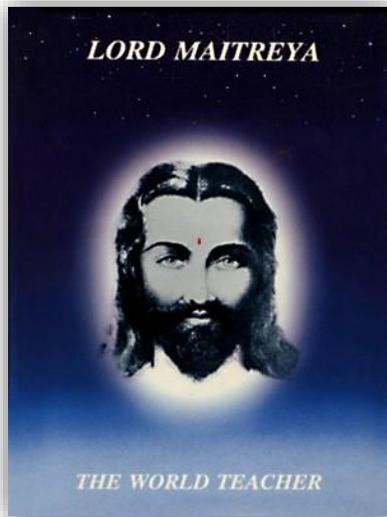
² Grace *be* unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and *from* the Lord Jesus Christ.

 This is the common greeting used by most of the writers of the epistles of the Scriptures. It is virtually used verbatim in most of Paul’s other letters, and, with some variation, is often used by Peter and John as well; this greeting underscores the equality of God the Father and God the Son (Galatians 1:3; Ephesians 1:2).

“Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son” (1 John 2:22). The Scriptures were not yet fully written, and there were already those who denied that Jesus was the eternal Logos (John 1:1,14). Ever since God pronounced His judgment upon him (Genesis 3:15), Satan has done his utmost to derail, dilute, and destroy God’s perfect plan to bring salvation to mankind. Paul forthrightly identifies the source of the *grace* and *peace* as being *God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ* – there is equality present here. The New Age twist to this is to say that Jesus had a Christ consciousness, and the coming Lord Maitreya

¹⁴ Bud Talbert, “The Pastor and His People,” Part 1, *The Whetstone*, May-June 2003.

¹⁵ Strong’s Online.



is referred to as the “Cosmic Christ”¹⁶ – “Christians know him as the Christ, and expect his imminent return. Jews await him as the Messiah; Hindus look for the coming of Krishna; Buddhists expect him as Maitreya Buddha; and Muslims anticipate the Imam Mahdi or Messiah.”¹⁷ What they will categorically deny is that Jesus is God; they would be much more supportive of the Jehovah’s Witnesses’ view of Jesus being “a god.” The modern global ecumenism (drawing all religions together, not simply those of a “Christian” orientation) portends the coming day of a universal religion (Revelation 13:15), and finds a willing leader in the Roman Catholic Church. In October of 1986, Pope John Paul II convened and led a multi-faith service in Assisi, Italy in which he brought Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, animists, the Orthodox and Protestants together.¹⁸

His words betray his blind, ecumenical spirit – “Christ, Redeemer of man ... the everlasting, invincible guarantee of universal salvation.”¹⁹ When you hold to a universal salvation, it only follows that the brand of religion embraced makes little difference. Teresa of Calcutta, that heretic being rushed into sainthood, wrote of this, “If in coming face to face with God we accept Him in our lives, then we are converting. We become a better Hindu, a better Muslim, a better Catholic, a better whatever we are. ... What God is in your mind you must accept.”²⁰ The Roman Catholics are well along in their preparations for the promised Antichrist.



Teresa of Calcutta

Of Satan we are told, “... thou wast upon the holy mountain of God ... Thou *wast* perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee” (Ezekiel 28:14-15). We read of God’s plan of salvation: “Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed [liberated] with corruptible things, *as* silver and gold, from your vain conversation *received* by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily **was foreordained before the foundation** [beginning] **of the world**, but was manifest in these last times for you, Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God” (1 Peter 1:18-21).²¹ As we look at history, it seems evident that Satan understood some of what God had prepared for the salvation of man.

Consider the paganism that grew out of Babylon. Babylon is viewed as being the progenitor of most of the pagan religious systems around the world; the religious systems of Egypt, Greece,

¹⁶ <http://www.ascension-research.org/maitreya.html>

¹⁷ http://www.share-international.org/maitreya/ma_main.htm

¹⁸ http://www.inplainsite.org/html/two_faces_of_catholicism.html

¹⁹ http://www.tentmaker.org/articles/universal_salvation_roman_catholic.html

²⁰ <http://www.rapidnet.com/~jbeard/bdm/exposes/teresa/general.htm>

²¹ Friberg Lexicon.

Phoenicia, and Rome are generally understood to have roots that reach back to Babylon.²² In turn, the beginnings of the Babylonian traditions are generally agreed to have originated with mighty Nimrod. We first read of Nimrod, the great-grandson of Noah, in Genesis 10:8-9, “And Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be a mighty one in the earth. He was a mighty hunter before [against] the LORD: wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the LORD.” The Jewish historian, Josephus, attributes the beginning of a tyrannical form of government to Nimrod, who made himself the focus as the provider of all things (the people under his control looked to him rather than to God), and he was the architect of the tower of Babel, which is seen as open rebellion against the Lord.²³ Nimrod’s wife, Semiramis, was the first deified queen of Babylon, and, in the descendant religious systems, was alternately known as Diana (Roman), Aphrodite (Greek), Astarte (Greek, in Jewish areas), Rhea (Greek), and Venus (Latin).²⁴ We read of Israel going after Ashtaroath (a plural form of Ashtoreth), which is a variation of Astarte (Judges 10:6); even Solomon pursued the worship of pagan Ashtoreth (1 Kings 11:5). With the untimely death of Nimrod, the son whom he had with Semiramis, Tammuz, was acclaimed to be the reincarnation of Nimrod – born at the time of the winter solstice (the pinnacle of important dates within the pagan calendar). It was at this time that pagan celebrations were held to encourage the sun to move higher into the sky, in order to bring another year of life. Tammuz, as the reincarnation of the provider god, Nimrod, became the Babylonian sun deity, and took on the role of a savior²⁵ – a counterfeit deliverer within a pagan culture. According to this Babylonian tradition, Tammuz died of a wound that he had received, but was raised to life again. What is evident, in these ancient, pagan cultures, is that Satan is neither blind nor stupid; he was present in the Garden of Eden when the Lord God proclaimed judgment against him (Genesis 3:15), and, in his diabolical plot to gain the mastery, he planted the concept of a savior and salvation within these pagan religions. However, it was outside of God’s plan and served only to salve man’s conscience and lull him into a false sense of security, resulting in a twisted and elevated view of his spiritual condition; it was Satan’s plan to derail God’s eternally devised salvation for mankind. If he could keep mankind thinking that everything was okay and that we are basically good, then there would be no desire on our part to seek after God. Amazingly, nothing has changed!

As the Lord spoke with Ezekiel, we find these words: “He said also unto me, Turn thee yet again, *and* thou shalt see greater abominations that they do. Then he brought me to the door of the gate of the LORD’S house which *was* toward the north; and, behold, there sat women weeping for Tammuz” (Ezekiel 8:13-14). It was common for the women of ancient Babylon to weep for the dead Tammuz (as part of their annual celebrations), and the Lord shows Ezekiel that the same pagan practice was taking place within Israel. Israel, chosen of God to be a royal priesthood to the nations, was mixing the pagan practices of the surrounding nations into the traditions that God had declared through Moses. When King Manasseh turned back to the God of Israel, repaired the altar of the Lord and removed the pagan gods and altars, we read, “the people did sacrifice still in the high places, *yet* unto the LORD their God only” (2 Chronicles 33:17). Here we have what is termed syncretism – the pagan and the holy brought together into one unholy alliance. This is not unique to Israel; it is very common today to mix the holy and the profane. Many of the North American Indians, for example, have “sanitized” their pagan traditions and carried them into what they call “Christianity.” The drum, eagle feathers, sweet grass and dancing are all given Christianized significance, and so they carry on with their pagan traditions convinced that they are now godly

²² Alexander Hyslop, The Two Babylons, p. 14.

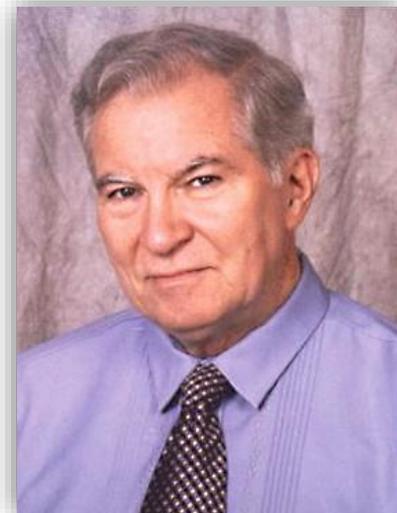
²³ Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, Chapter 4.2.

²⁴ <http://www.yrm.org/b-day-sun.htm>

²⁵ Ibid.

practices. Don Richardson, well known author of books regarding the pagans of Indonesia, offered this comment on the syncretism taking place within the Indian communities today: “I urge people who ask me, do not throw chilly water on these new emerging Native North American Christian leaders.”²⁶ There is an open and willing acceptance of this compromise of God’s truth. “The way of the wicked *is* an abomination unto the LORD: but he loveth him that followeth after righteousness” (Proverbs 15:9); “Thus saith the LORD, Learn not the way of the heathen ...” (Jeremiah 10:2). Adding a holy veneer does not make paganism acceptable in God’s sight, but rather, the holy is profaned by the pagan, and the union is an abomination to the Lord. The children of Israel sacrificed to the Lord God of Israel, but they did it in the pagan sites of worship; the natives of North America claim to worship God, but they do it using the traditions and instruments of paganism.

It is common fare for Christians to celebrate Jesus’ birth, death and resurrection within the framework of pagan traditions. The words of the Lord to Israel were, “I *am* the LORD your God, which have separated [*set apart* – a completed action] you from *other* people” (Leviticus 20:24).²⁷ God’s words to us are the same – “But ye *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: Which in time past *were* not a people, but *are* now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy” (1 Peter 2:9-10). Satan’s finger was present in Israel (and so today) ever seeking to dilute the words of the Lord by stirring in a dash of paganism; to him, anything is acceptable except the pure Word of God.



Don Richardson

We not only see this in syncretism, mixing man’s ways with God’s words, but this tactic is rampant today through ecumenism and the proliferation of modern translations of the Bible; flowing through these is a mindset of compromise and accommodation orchestrated by the devil. The saints of the Lord have always been called to stand against all forms of compromise and hybrid mixtures of truth and error. It is because of a lack of love for God’s untainted truth that many will be deceived by the Antichrist – “for this cause [they refused the love of the truth] God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie ...” (2 Thessalonians 2:10). “Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle” (2 Thessalonians 2:15). The Word of God must be our foundation from which we absolutely cannot deviate – we must continually persevere in the pure Word!

³ I thank my God upon every remembrance of you,



Literally this says, “I am giving thanks to the God of me at every remembrance of you” (the Greek includes the definite article *the*, thereby identifying this as the God of all creation).²⁸ It was at Philippi that Paul and Silas were jailed, yet that memory faded in favor of the

²⁶ Personal correspondence received October 15, 2000.

²⁷ Strong’s Online.

²⁸ Stephanus 1550 NT, *Bibleworks* 8.

people who came to know the Lord. This, too, is a very common part of several of Paul's letters, and appears right after the traditional greeting (Romans 1:8; Colossians 1:3; 1 Thessalonians 1:2; 2 Thessalonians 1:3). Paul, who received the New Covenant Gospel directly from God (Galatians 1:15-17), took comfort and encouragement from recalling his reception by these people as he brought this radically new Message of truth from God. We may often forget that Paul taught a Gospel message that the Jews of Jerusalem struggled to understand and accept. Faced with the destructive intentions of the Judaizers on those who were brought to faith in Christ alone (Acts 15:5), the weak response of the leadership of Jerusalem was that they never authorized their message (Acts 15:24). What is missing from their note to the Christians in Antioch is a forthright condemnation of what the Judaizers were teaching (which in turn, undoubtedly, led to the necessity of Paul writing to the Galatians and condemning this very same doctrine). The commitment of the Philippian believers to the Gospel message was a source of joy to Paul. With his background as a Pharisee, who persecuted the early believers, Paul must have never failed to marvel that God would use him to proclaim His Message of faith in Christ, and he never ceased to be amazed at the reception that God opened for this Message wherever he went. Paul faced much opposition everywhere that he presented the Gospel message (even the now favorable Philippi had included a beating and time in jail), yet the Word of God never failed to take root in the hearts of a few.

⁴ Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy,



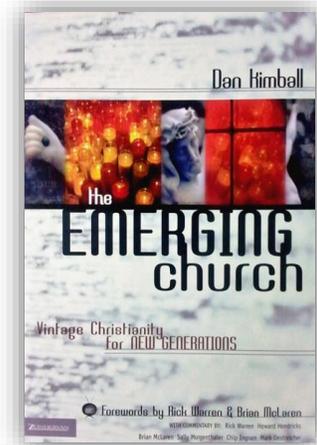
The words *prayer* and *request* are the same word in Greek. The literal translation would be “always in every prayer of mine in behalf of all of you with joy the prayer is being made.”²⁹ Paul is saying that whenever he prays for the believers at Philippi, he does so with joy or delight. Even though these people were a joy to Paul's heart because of their steadfastness in the faith of Christ (v.5), he still prayed for them. Paul was well aware of the activity of Satan to destroy the work of God within the heart of anyone who would give him any heed. The example given here is that we need to pray for those who are walking with the Lord, just as surely as we need to pray for those who are struggling. Today, the pressure to conform is intense – ecumenical unity is the accepted norm, and anyone who desires to walk under the guidance of the Spirit of God will face opposition (if you are not facing opposition on any front, check your walk – 2 Timothy 3:12). Even if we are walking with the Lord, we still stand in need of prayer for there is always room to grow in our understanding of the Lord's ways, and there is always the possibility of stumbling (1 Corinthians 10:12). “But grow in grace, and *in* the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” (2 Peter 3:18a); to *grow* is a command from God that requires us to feed upon His Word. “As newborn babes, desire the sincere [pure] milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby ...” (1 Peter 2:2).³⁰

What we must not lose sight of is that the Christian life is not a sprint but a marathon, and we must be prepared to persevere. Paul warned the Thessalonians that it would be those who did not have a love for the truth who would be taken in by the lies of the Antichrist (2 Thessalonians 2:10); he followed this warning with a command from the Lord: “Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle” (2 Thessalonians 2:15). Both *stand fast* and *hold* are in the present tense, which means that this must be a continual, ongoing action; we must always be persevering and have a firm grasp on the teaching of the Word of God. Ecumenical thinking will only flourish when this commanded action is being neglected.

²⁹ Stephanus 1550 NT.

³⁰ Strong's Online.

Evangelicals have become very casual about doctrine; as a matter of fact, in many circles, doctrine is very unpopular and has been replaced with experience. The Emergent Church's roots are firmly planted in personal experience, and doctrine (namely, the truth of God's Word) has been banished. The subjective has supplanted the objective; relativism has replaced any concept of absolutes – the new way is more positive, more accommodating, and less judgmental. Within the Emerging Church experience, the only thing that is considered to be absolute is that there must not be any absolutes; the focus of their thinking has become man, not God. The admonition to stand fast and tenaciously hold to the truths that we have received in God's Word, falls on deaf ears today.



⁵ For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now;



Here is the reason for Paul's joy as he prays for these saints of Christ Jesus: they have never faltered in their commitment to the Gospel message, which he proclaimed. *Fellowship* is from the Greek word *koinonia*, meaning *communion, close relationship, association*.³¹ The saints (holy ones) from Philippi exemplified diligence and steadfastness in their faith in Christ, unlike the saints in the assemblies in Galatia who were being tempted away from the truth by a false message. Paul's joy was a result of their perseverance in the Gospel message, and their fellowship (close communion) was centered in Christ; unlike today when Christians call simply visiting or eating together *fellowship* – superficiality thrives within today's Christianity (1 John 1:6-7).

The Philippian *ekklesia* sent Epaphroditus to Paul (2:25) along with a gift from them (4:18); Paul is now writing this letter, which is to be taken to Philippi in the hand of Epaphroditus. Rather than being a letter of reproof (like several other epistles), Paul takes this opportunity to instruct and encourage the Philippian believers, even as they have been a source of joy to him.

Paul would take little joy in most assemblies today, for they have wandered away from the Message of life that he brought. For example, the Emerging Church's rejection of absolutes has placed the Gospel message out of their reach. By embracing subjective reality, they have, by default, lost their grasp of the objective truth of the Word of God. One cannot uphold both subjectivism and objectivism as the ultimate determinism, for they stand in contradiction to one another. The philosophy of Emerging followers is inclusivism; as they proclaim: "We are committed to a 'generous orthodoxy' in faith and practice ..." ³² – which really means that they are completely ecumenical and very accommodating. Even while they might proclaim a love for God and His truth, they skew this to fit their philosophy by giving "priority to love over knowledge."³³ The message of Jesus, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6) is very **exclusive**, and one that does not fit well with their "generous orthodoxy." Although the remnants of Evangelicalism may not have gone quite as far as the Emerging Church in casting all vestiges of fundamentalism off, there is little resistance within most modern denominations against the feel-good approach of the inclusive mindset.

³¹ Friberg Lexicon.

³² <http://emergentvillage.com/about-information/values-and-practices>

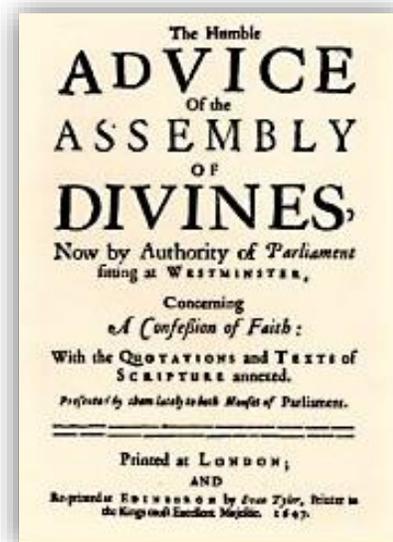
³³ Ibid.

⁶ Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform *it* until the day of Jesus Christ:



Paul expresses confidence as it relates to the believers in Philippi; the word means to be persuaded.³⁴ Paul said something very similar to the Galatians: “I have confidence in you through the Lord, that ye will be none otherwise minded ...” (Galatians 5:10). The words used (*confident* and *confidence*) are the same Greek word and bear the perfect tense, which means it is an action completed in the past, not needing to be repeated. What must also be noted in both cases is that Paul’s confidence is not based on anything within the saints of either Galatia or Philippi; the source for his assurance rests solely in the Lord. For the Galatians, Paul was persuaded that the Lord would draw them back to the perfect Gospel of faith in Christ, and for the Philippians, he is confident that the Lord will finish the work that He began in them.

History confirms that not everyone has walked in accordance with the Spirit of God; i.e., the Spirit may well have begun a good work, but He has not been permitted to complete that work. For example, the Westminster Confession of Faith declares, “They, whom God has accepted in His Beloved, effectually called, and sanctified by His Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace, but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved.”³⁵ In their support of what is commonly known as the “P” in the TULIP of Calvinism (Perseverance of the Saints), they use this text as their first point of proof. Since they view the saved as being “all those whom God hath predestinated unto life, and those only”³⁶ (man being “altogether passive” in this matter³⁷), it is therefore necessary that they also hold tenaciously to an immutable eternal security, otherwise the very fabric of their doctrine of election would unravel. So they use this text of Scripture to affirm that God will continue to work within the “elect” to secure their complete sanctification. Although it is understandable that they might use this verse to support their position, unfortunately they ignore the many Scriptures that obviously contradict their polished theology and wreak havoc with their doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. What is noteworthy is that even those who would not consider themselves to be Calvinists will use this text to support their own version of eternal security.³⁸ The warning of the Scriptures is clear: “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing [or withdrawing] from the living God” (Hebrews 3:12). So how do we rightly divide this portion of God’s truth so that it fits with the overall teaching of the Scriptures?



This verse (Philippians 1:6) is a great source of comfort for the believer. John wrote, “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but

³⁴ Strong’s Online.

³⁵ Chapter XVII, Article I; http://www.reformed.org/documents/wcf_with_proofs/

³⁶ Chapter X, Article I; http://www.reformed.org/documents/wcf_with_proofs/

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ The statement of faith for Emmanuel Baptist Church, Three Hills, makes this application.

we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure” (1 John 3:2-3). We look forward to the day when we will be like the Lord Jesus Christ. In the meantime, we struggle against the flesh, which we are to reckon crucified with Christ; in Romans 7:15-24, Paul reveals his struggle between what he wanted to do and what he saw himself doing. Following this, he explains the work of Christ and the role of the Spirit of God: “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally [fleshly] minded *is* death; but to be spiritually minded *is* life and peace” (Romans 8:2-6).³⁹

What an amazing truth! Through faith in Christ we are moved from the “law of sin and death” into the “Law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus”! Today, we are most likely to hear that we are not under law but under grace – a superficial misrepresentation of Romans 6:14 commonly used to justify carnality and a general disregard for the Law of God. If those, who glibly parrot this misunderstood reality, would simply continue reading in Romans 6, they would then discover the incredible truth of being slaves to a new Master – “Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants [*doulos* – slave] to obey, his servants [*doulos* – slave] ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?” (Romans 6:16).⁴⁰ The choice is not whether we will be slaves or not, but to what or to whom will we be subject?

When we refer to the Law, we must do so with understanding. Some use the word *Law* in very general terms to refer to all of the OT Law; however, that skews the reality of what God has given to us by lumping everything together, thereby opening the door to a greater rejection of the commands of God that are applicable to one’s self, personally. For clarity, and in an effort to remove any ambiguity, I refer to the Law of Moses (the statutes, ordinances, sacrificial system, Aaronic priesthood, etc. which Moses received while communing with God upon Mt. Sinai – outlined beginning with Deuteronomy 4:14), and to the Law of God (speaking of the Ten Commandments written by the finger of God upon tables of stone [Exodus 31:18; Deuteronomy 4:13], demonstrating a permanence that the rest of what Moses received does not have). We can easily see that the statutes and ordinances of the Mosaic Law pointed forward to the coming Messiah, the Savior of mankind, and understandably would have seen their completion in the sacrifice that Christ made on the cross. To the Ephesians, Paul carefully explained in detail how the Lord Jesus Christ brought the Jew and the Gentile together into one Body. “For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition *between us*; Having abolished [to cause to cease, do away with] in his flesh the enmity, *even* the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, *so* making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh.” (Ephesians 2:14-17).⁴¹ As Paul explained the Law of Moses to the Galatians (who were being persuaded to add some of the Law of Moses to their faith in Christ), he said that “it was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made” (Galatians 3:19); the Law of Moses was

³⁹ Strong’s Online.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

added until Christ (the Seed – Galatians 3:16) should come. However, none of this has any impact on the Law of God – those Ten Commandments written upon stone.

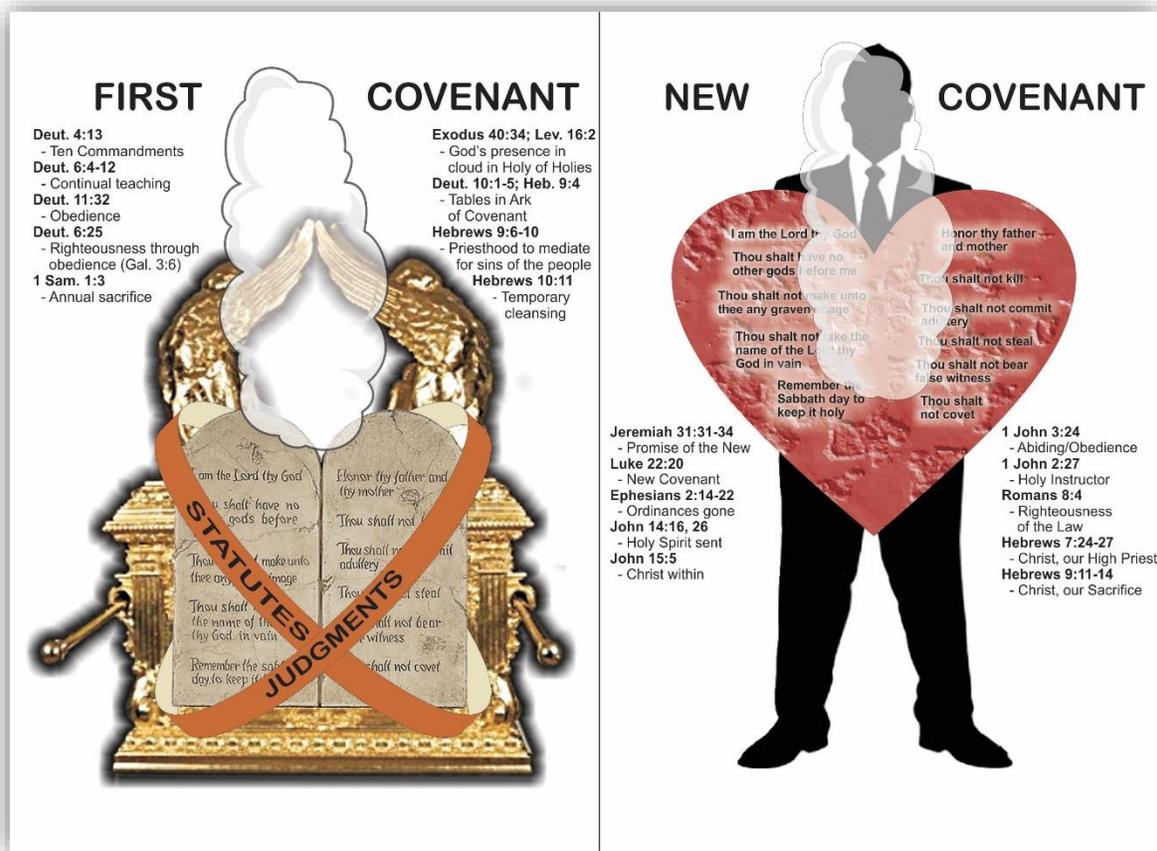
Jeremiah foretold a day when God would implement a New Covenant with Israel: “Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day *that* I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this *shall be* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people” (Jeremiah 31:31-33). As Jesus met with His disciples on the night of His betrayal, “... he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave *it* to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament [covenant], which is shed for many for the remission of sins”(Matthew 26:27-28).⁴² In this simple setting, Jesus fulfilled the word of the Lord (His own word) to Jeremiah. How does God write His Law upon our hearts? As we, by faith, accept what Christ has done for us, the Spirit of God abides within us (Romans 8:9) so that we may then walk according to His leading so that the “righteousness of the law [of God] might be fulfilled in us” (Romans 8:4). With this foundation, let’s consider this badly misunderstood quotation from God’s Word.

“We are not under the law” – through faith in Christ, we are no longer under the **condemnation** of the Law of God (Romans 8:1); the Mosaic Law of statutes and ordinances was forever removed by Christ taking them to the cross (Colossians 2:14). However, to say that we are not under obligation to be obedient to the Law of God is to contradict Scripture (1 John 2:3); therefore, we must understand this to mean that we are no longer subject to the penalty of the Law of God. The result of the Law of God on sinful man is death; “... for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin” (Romans 3:20), “... the wages of sin *is* death” (Romans 6:23), “for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law” (Galatians 3:21). Therefore, outside of faith in Christ there is no hope (Galatians 2:16b) – “... at that time ye were without [separate, apart from⁴³] Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ” (Ephesians 2:12-13). Our only hope is **in Christ**, but we must continue in Him (Hebrews 3:6). However, (and this is a caveat that most Evangelicals today refuse to acknowledge, despite the many times that it is repeated throughout Scripture) if we become faithless and turn away from Christ (Hebrews 3:12), there is no way to be restored, for we have spurned the only Way to life (Romans 11:22; Hebrews 6:4-6; 10:26; 2 Peter 2:20-21). If we abide in Christ (John 15:4), then we will obey His commandments (1 John 3:24) – those Ten Commandments that God has written upon our hearts (Jeremiah 31:33) by His Spirit. This in no way makes the keeping of the Law of God legalism – obedience is never legalism; neither can this be misconstrued to be a works-oriented salvation. James makes it very plain that works (obedience to God’s commandments) are a normal and required product of a living faith (James 2:18), for how can you provide evidence of faith in Christ except through a life that shows forth the righteousness of the Law of God (Romans 8:4)? Legalism is making personal works an essential part of salvation; our attention is to be given to walking in obedience to the Lord’s commands under the guidance of His Spirit – righteous living flows out of an active faith in Christ.

⁴² Strong’s Online.

⁴³ Friberg Lexicon

“We are under grace” – in truth, everyone who comes to God by faith in His promised One stands in His amazing grace. Whether for the saints who looked forward to the coming Fulfillment of God’s promise, which He made in the Garden of Eden, or those who look back on the deliverance that was accomplished by Christ on the cross, it matters not, for they are all, equally, recipients of God’s grace. God’s grace toward mankind did not begin at the cross – it began before the world was formed (Revelation 13:8), and found expression when Adam sinned (God’s provision of the coats of skins, and His expulsion of man from the Garden are both expressions of His grace – Genesis 3:21-23⁴⁴). Salvation has always been the same – by faith in the grace of God. Today’s average Evangelical stumbles at this simple truth, largely due to a dispensational view of the Scriptures, which has introduced artificial divisions within the Word of God. The Law of



Moses came to guide the children of Israel to faith in the promised Deliverer, so that they might be “justified by faith” – it was never intended to be incorporated into the New Covenant (Galatians 3:24; Jeremiah 31:31-32). Under the New Covenant, the wooing of God has taken on a different format. Jesus declared, “Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove [convict] the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on me; Of righteousness, because I go to my Father,

⁴⁴ Evangelicalism’s anemic concept of salvation based on praying a prayer in order to be eternally saved, seeks to undo the grace of God, which was expressed in expelling man from the Garden of Eden. God sent Adam and Eve out of the Garden lest sinful man should “put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever” (Genesis 3:22).

and ye see me no more; Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged” (John 16:7-11).⁴⁵ One of the tasks of the Spirit of God is to bring conviction of sin, conviction of righteousness, and conviction of judgment to the world – and Jesus explains what this means. The world (the men of this world) will be convicted of sin, because they are not believing (present tense) in the Son of God; they will be convicted of righteousness as they see the disciples of Jesus living righteously (present tense) even though the physical presence of the Son of God is no longer evident (Romans 8:4); they will be convicted of judgment because Satan’s promised judgment has been fulfilled (perfect tense, indicating an action completed in the past, once and for all, not needing to be repeated).⁴⁶ The pronouncement of judgment (recorded in Genesis 3:15) was absolutely sure, and it was fulfilled at the cross when Jesus said, “It is finished” (John 19:30); God’s final judgment of Satan (and all who fall for his deceit) will one day be implemented (Revelation 20:10,14-15).

We must not fail to grasp the reality of the Spirit of God seeking to work the righteousness of the Law of God into our lives (Romans 8:3-4). “The Law and the Spirit work together to conform us to the image of Christ. Without the Spirit we fall into legalism and bondage; without the Law we fall into mysticism and unbridled searchings, never able to come to the knowledge of the truth”⁴⁷ (2 Timothy 3:5). We are not *under* the Law of God (we have been freed from its condemnation through faith in Christ – Romans 8:1); the Law of Moses has been forever removed (Christ destroyed the ordinances by the cross – Ephesians 2:15); the righteous expression of the Law of God is to be the product of our walking through life in accordance with the Spirit of God (Romans 8:4).



The promise that we have in our verse is that God, Who has begun a good work in the saints of Philippi, will continue to accomplish (future tense) what has been started until a day of Jesus Christ. This is much like Jesus’ promise concerning His sheep: “My Father, which gave *them* me, is greater than all; and no *man* is able to pluck *them* out of my Father’s hand” (John 10:29). The ability of God to provide for His saints/holy-ones/sheep is beyond question, but this in no way renders idle the many warnings like: “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God” (Hebrews 3:12); “Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue [*epimeno* – persevere] in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee” (1 Timothy 4:16).⁴⁸ John declared, “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure” (1 John 3:2-3). Paul’s word to the Philippians is that God will work in them until “the day of Jesus Christ” (there is no definite article in the Greek).⁴⁹ As we consider John’s words about being like Him, we must also ponder Paul’s words to the Corinthians: “We are confident, *I say*, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord” (2 Corinthians 5:8). Assuming that we hold fast our faith in Christ, God will continue to work in us until we die or until Christ returns for His own. To the Thessalonians, Paul referred to the latter event as “the day of Christ” (2 Thessalonians 2:2, the definite article is present).⁵⁰ Therefore, this promise is that God’s working will continue until we see the Lord – whether at His coming (which would be *the* day of Christ), or when we leave this world behind and are in His

⁴⁵ Strong’s Online.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Albert James Dager, *Vengeance is Ours*, p. 275.

⁴⁸ Friberg Lexicon.

⁴⁹ A correct rendering of the Greek as found in Young’s Literal Translation.

⁵⁰ Stephanus 1550 NT.

presence (which would be *a* day of Jesus Christ). There is an end to this promise of God working in us.

As we understand this reality, we must recognize what it does to the Catholic doctrine of purgatory.⁵¹ The Catholics define purgatory as “a place or condition of temporal punishment for those who, departing this life in God's grace, are, not entirely free from venial [forgivable] faults, or have not fully paid the satisfaction due to their transgressions.”⁵² Within Catholic theology, there is a place (after death) where the soul can be punished for sins that were not forgiven in this life, until it is ready for heaven. It is very evident, despite any arguments to the contrary, that Catholic theology does not acknowledge that Christ paid the penalty for all of the sins of all mankind – Christ Jesus, “Who gave himself a ransom for all ...” (1 Timothy 2:6; Hebrews 10:15-18). There is tremendous sufficiency in the sacrifice that Christ made, but woeful insufficiency within Catholic theology. The writer of Hebrews declared, “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment ...” (Hebrews 9:27). There is no second chance in an unpleasant purgatory that might lead to heaven sometime – “now is the day of salvation” (2 Corinthians 6:2).

Paul's assurance to the Philippians is that God is faithful. “If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself” (2 Timothy 2:13); “And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him *was* called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war” (Revelation 19:11). One of the names of the Lord Jesus Christ is *Faithful*, He cannot be anything other than faithful – it is Who He is. We, on the other hand, are warned about failure in this area: “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief [unfaithfulness], in departing from the living God” (Hebrews 3:12).⁵³ Paul's expressed confidence to the Philippians is placed in the Lord, Who is called Faithful.

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



This is very closely tied to the previous verse. Paul has just expressed his confidence that the Lord will bring the work that He has begun in them to fruition (they had demonstrated consistency in holding to the Gospel message); he now declares that it is right that he should have this opinion of them all. Although the basis of his confidence in the Philippians is in the Lord, it seems evident that Paul's assurance is bolstered by the stability of the Christian walk of these believers (v. 5).

There is some debate over the next phrase – *because I have you in my heart*. Although this would naturally lend itself to Paul having the Philippians in his heart, there are those who feel it actually indicates that the Philippians had Paul in their hearts. The phrase is literally, *on account of the having me in the heart you*.⁵⁴ Although there might well be an element of both being true, it would seem that the KJV has taken the approach that best fits with the context. Additionally, the word for *heart* is singular, thus aligning more logically with the singular *me* rather than a plural *you*. In any case, there is a very close bond between Paul and these saints (holy ones) in Philippi.

⁵¹ This is only mentioned because of the great love that Evangelicals have for the Roman Catholic Church, which is fraught with all sorts of heresies.

⁵² <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12575a.htm>

⁵³ Strong's Online.

⁵⁴ Stephanus 1550 NT.

In Acts 16 we read of the first time that Paul was jailed because of his work in the Gospel, and this was at Philippi. He and Silas were beaten, bound and imprisoned (Acts 16:23-24). In the middle of the night, the Lord sent an earthquake and “immediately all the doors were opened, and every one’s bands were loosed” (Acts 16:26). The word *bands*, and our word *bonds*, are the same word in Greek. Undoubtedly, this is a recollection of the time that Paul was in the jail there in Philippi, an experience that the Philippians would also vividly remember. However, this also speaks to Paul’s present situation, a prisoner within the Roman system due to the pressure of his own people (the Jews) to see him eliminated (Acts 25:9-12; 26:30-32).

Defence and *confirmation* are legal terms, the former speaking of a verbal defense and the latter describing the provision of a guarantee.⁵⁵ Again, there would appear to be a double meaning to what is expressed here. Undoubtedly, this reflects on Paul’s position as a prisoner and his need to provide a defense that he is not a threat to Rome or to the Jews. However, in general terms, this also speaks to the various aspects of Paul’s ministry of bringing the Gospel to the people: there was suffering from those who were violently opposed to the Message (*bonds*), there was a verbal defense of the hope that was in him (preaching) and he was also involved in demonstrating how the Gospel message that he brought was founded upon the teachings of the prophets of Israel (Acts 17:1-3). What is unmistakable is the unity of the Scriptures (the OT and the NT). Philip understood this, and, from the writings of Isaiah, he preached Christ to the eunuch (Acts 8:26-35); Jesus set the example with the two men on the way to Emmaus (Luke 24:27). Among most Evangelicals today, there is a dispensational chasm between the OT and the NT where the OT only provides an explanation of how we received the NT, which must really be our primary focus; this chasm often goes unnoticed by most, for few take the time to test what they “believe” according to the Scriptures. “All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect [perfectly fit], thoroughly furnished [equip completely (perfect tense)] unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:16-17).⁵⁶ *All Scripture* is needed in order to provide the foundation for a life that is to reveal the righteousness of the Law of God through the working of the Spirit (Romans 8:4). Jesus is called *Logos* (John 1:1, 14), the *Word of God* (Revelation 19:13); we read, “For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven” (Psalm 119:89). If we would consider the reality that the Scriptures, which we hold, are a written expression of the eternal Son of God, Jesus, Messiah, our Deliverer from sin, then perhaps we would be less willing to accept the carnage that is heaped upon the Word of God by men who call themselves Christians. We seem more willing to accept theologies and theories of belief (no matter how isolated and skewed they might be) rather than the very evident truths of God’s Word. Why is that? The Spirit of God has been given to guide (or lead⁵⁷) us into all truth (John 16:13), but the Spirit will not cram that truth down our throats. We are warned, “And grieve [make sorrowful] not the holy Spirit of God ...” (Ephesians 4:30a); what would make the Holy Spirit, sent by God the Father at the request of the Son of God, more sorrowful than to show us the eternal truths of the Scriptures only to have us reject them for the miserable conjectures of men? Just before this warning to the Ephesians, Paul writes, “Let no corrupt [rotten or worthless] communication [*logos*] proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying [building up], that it may minister grace unto the hearers” (Ephesians 4:29).⁵⁸ We must live and speak those things that are of the Spirit (Romans 6:20, 22).

⁵⁵ Friberg Lexicon

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Strong’s Online.



Young's Literal Translation shows the last phrase of this verse as, "all of you being fellow-partakers with me of grace." Grace has been defined as "unmerited favor ... It is the product of God that is given by God, because of who He is, and not because of who we are."⁵⁹ *Grace* (*charis* – *khar'-ece*) is that which affords favor, or that which brings joy.⁶⁰ The grace, which Paul and the Philippians are sharing, is not Paul's grace (*my grace*, as in the KJV); the Greek actually declares it to be *the grace* (using the definite article). "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth ... And of his fulness have all we received" (John 1:14,16a). It is the means of our salvation – "For by grace are ye saved through faith ..." (Ephesians 2:8a); it is the expression of God's mercy by attributing Christ's sacrificial death to us so that we might live in His righteousness. Within the context of Scripture, the source of grace is always God; "Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God ..." (Romans 15:15). As such, it is something in which we should abide – "Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 2:1). The source of grace is God the Father, expressed in and through His Son, Jesus Christ, and ministered in our lives through faith in Christ and by the Holy Spirit. It is not our grace, but God's.

We need to bear in mind that this letter was most likely written while Paul was a prisoner in Rome and on the occasion of the assembly in Philippi sending a gift to Paul by the hand of Epaphroditus (4:18), who also ministered to Paul in his need (2:15). We have already been told of the joy that was brought to Paul's heart on hearing that they were remaining steadfast in the Gospel that he had preached to them; it is obvious that they were also prepared to associate with Paul in his imprisonment. As they identify with Paul in his work, and as he holds them in his heart, they will be co-participants in the grace of God.

⁸ For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ.



Within the Greek, the same word is used for a *god* of this world and the eternal *God*, creator of all things. The differentiation for translation comes through use of the definite article *the*, as in ὁ θεός (the God).⁶¹ This first phrase is literally, "a witness for me He is the God."⁶² Paul is calling on God to act as a witness to the accuracy of his next statement. The exact same Greek phrase is used in Romans 1:9, where it is translated as "God is my witness."

A little later in this letter (3:5), Paul describes himself as a "Hebrew of the Hebrews." Although sent by God as an Apostle to the Gentiles (Romans 11:13), Paul was a Jew and well-schooled as a Pharisee, fluent in Hebrew, and very familiar with Jewish customs. The word *bowels* specifically refers to the internal organs (the heart, liver, lungs and intestines), and is always used in the plural in the NT. The term is used once literally (Acts 1:18), everywhere else it is used figuratively. Within Greek tradition, it was considered to be the seat of violent passions, however, within the Hebrew as that of tender affections – and so it follows the Hebrew tradition in our Scriptures. The same Greek word is used in 2 Corinthians 7:15 to describe Titus' attitude toward the Corinthian believers – he had "inward affection" for them.

We read in Paul's letter to the Galatians, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me ..." (Galatians 2:20). This was Paul's testimony (and should be our

⁵⁹ <http://www.carm.org/dictionary-grace>

⁶⁰ Strong's Online.

⁶¹ Stephanus 1550 NT.

⁶² Ibid.

daily goal) – he lived under the influence and guidance of the Spirit of God to the extent that he declared that it was Christ Who was living in him. He understood what it meant to be free from sin and a slave to righteousness (Romans 6:18).

Paul’s deep longing for the holy ones at Philippi comes from the tender affections of the Lord Jesus Christ. His desire for them is as the desire of the Lord Himself.

⁹ And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment;



In verse 4, Paul spoke of praying for these people, and he now begins to elaborate on precisely that for which he is praying. The Philippians are those who are holding to the Gospel message that Paul brought to them; they are not falling away, nor are they being drawn to the latest heresy to hit the market, and here is Paul’s prayer for them. How do we pray for someone who is walking in spiritual victory? Here is the answer.

The first focus is on the *love* of these holy ones in Christ Jesus. The Greek word used is *agape*. This is the first in the attributes of the evidence of the Spirit of God (Galatians 5:22), and is used by Jesus to expound the greatest commandment (Matthew 22:37-40). This love is the product of choice, an act of the will. Therefore, when we are commanded to “love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind” (Matthew 22:37), it is something that we can do because this *agape* flows out of exercising our wills (albeit with the enablement of the Spirit of God).⁶³ By contrast, *phileo* is a love that speaks of tender affection, an emotional response, which will naturally flow in the presence of favorable or pleasing circumstances. This love is not wrong, but it cannot be substituted for *agape*. Paul warned Timothy, “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Timothy 3:12). In the face of persecution, *phileo* will not be the love that we have for God or man, yet the command to *agape* God and man remains – the emotional response to our situation will be guarded at best, but we can still determine, by an act of the will, to love God in the situation. *Phileo* will come and go depending upon what we are facing, but *agape* will remain steadfast through all circumstances.

Notice that Paul recognizes that this *agape* is active within the holy ones at Philippi, *your love* – literally, *the love of you*.⁶⁴ It is interesting to note in Paul’s letters, to the assemblies that he has visited, that all include such a recognition of *agape* being present – except Galatians. To the Corinthians, it came toward the end of his second letter (2 Corinthians 8:7), for each of the others, it was noted close to the beginning: the Ephesians (Ephesians 1:15), the Colossians (Colossians 1:4), and the Thessalonians (1 Thessalonians 1:3). Additionally, with the exception of the Thessalonians, Paul also refers to the recipients of his letters as *saints*, or holy ones – not because of anything they have done, but because of being *in Christ Jesus* (v.1). There is a connection – as we are in Christ Jesus, abiding in the Vine (John 15:4), so the Spirit of God will be in us (Romans 8:9); the first listed evidence of the Spirit of God is *agape* (Galatians 5:22). It is the fundamental ingredient in our relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ; “God is love [*agape*]; and he that dwelleth [abideth - *meno*] in love [*agape*] dwelleth in God, and God in him” (1 John 4:16b).⁶⁵

⁶³ Strong’s Online.

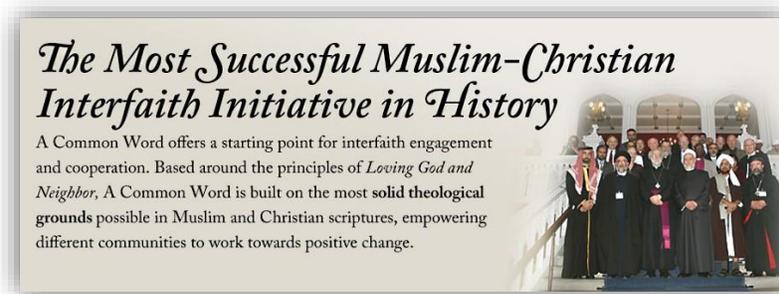
⁶⁴ Friberg Lexicon.

⁶⁵ Strong’s Online.

Paul's first request for the Philippians is that this love (*agape*), which they already have, *may abound yet more and more* – may it increase and grow abundantly.⁶⁶ What becomes evident as we consider the many admonitions in Scripture, is that no one is able to coast through the Christian life. We are to continually stand fast in the Word that we have received (2 Thessalonians 2:15), we are to be ever vigilant against the enemy of our souls (1 Peter 5:8), and we must grow in our manifestation of the evidence of the Spirit of God. “But grow in grace, and *in* the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18a); *grow* is in the present tense and a command (imperative mood) – it must continually be taking place within us; if we are not growing, then we are in decline. What we observe today (and often within ourselves, as well) is a general complacency with no desire to increase our spiritual understanding.

However, even this *agape* is not without its qualifications in Paul's desire for the Philippians. This ever increasing love is to be expressed in two ways: 1) *knowledge* and 2) *judgment*. When Jesus was asked to identify the greatest commandment, He made this declaration: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second *is* like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (Matthew 22:37-40). Jesus provides us with a summary of the Law of God (the Ten Commandments): *agape* God with all of your being (encompassing the first four Commandments), and *agape* your neighbor (the final six Commands). Jesus spoke of love, and did so by tying it to the keeping of God's eternal Law, once written upon tables of stone (Deuteronomy 4:13), and now written by the Spirit of God upon our hearts (Hebrews 10:15-17). This is an important correlation that we must not miss. The love of God is not without parameters; it flows out of His eternal holiness of character. His holiness (through which His love is expressed) cannot overlook the sin that clings to every one of us (Habakkuk 1:13; Romans 3:23).

Evangelicals today have done a horrible disservice to the love of God, even though you might find it difficult to determine this from their expressed doctrinal statements. Here is an extract from the “What We Believe” section of the website for Willow Creek Community Church (Bill Hybels): “People in a saving relationship with Jesus Christ are to live in holiness and obedience as they submit to the Holy Spirit ...”⁶⁷ There is little wrong with this statement, yet when you consider the work and walk of Hybels and his community of followers, there is little evidence to rejoice that this fine statement is being lived out within their gathering. Hybels' ministry is founded upon



the principles of the Church Growth Movement and incorporates all of the latest techniques and worldly attractions so as to draw the crowds in. The broad ecumenical position of Bill Hybels and Willow Creek is easily confirmed. For example, on October 13,

2007, 138 Muslim scholars prepared a document expressing the love of God that Muslims and Christians have in common, with the hope that this could become the basis for a mutual understanding. This paper was addressed to the pope of Rome, along with numerous other Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant leaders. Four Yale professors prepared a favorable response, in

⁶⁶ Strong's Online.

⁶⁷ <http://www.willowcreek.org/aboutwillow/what-willow-believes>

which they stated: "... they [the Muslim clerics] have identified the common ground between the Muslim and Christian religious communities ... love of God and love of neighbor"⁶⁸ One of the signatories of this document, of unspeakable Biblical compromise and failure, is Bill Hybels.⁶⁹ Professing Christians of great acclaim within the Evangelical community are using the love of God as a basis for spiritual disarmament with the Muslims. What both sides of this matter seem willing to overlook is that the God of Christianity and the god of the Muslim faith are not the same, and therefore, when Muslims speak of the love of God, they are speaking of something completely different. To further compound the confusion that many Evangelicals, like Hybels, have entered into, "Muslims may deny or misrepresent any aspect of their faith in order to help correct the negative image of Islam in non-Muslim countries."⁷⁰ The reality is that a Muslim will do whatever it takes to cultivate a positive image for Islam; deception and lies are common place within their culture, and they are even permitted to deny their faith in order to save their own skins.⁷¹ In the name of "love," much error has been entered into by those who profess to know God and His Son, Jesus Christ. Hybels, and the rest of Willow Creek, might well speak of holiness and obedience in their statement of faith, but their actions condemn them.

A recent example would be what Hybels had slated for July 17 and 18, 2010: "Senior Pastor Bill Hybels leads Communion and welcomes guest speaker Alise Barrymore. Resolving the conflict between faith and doubt is difficult at best. Can our faith be strong in the presence of our own doubts? The Reverend Alise D. Barrymore, a Yale graduate and one of the founding pastors of The Emmaus Community, teaches from Mark 9:14–29."⁷² Barrymore has been "a preacher in numerous churches including the Roman Catholic, African Methodist Episcopal (AME), Lutheran, Pentecostal and Presbyterian denominations."⁷³ Not only is she completely ecumenical (a violation of 2 Corinthians 6:14-17), she also stands in violation of Scripture as a teacher of men, of holding authority over men (1 Timothy 2:12), and, if you stretch the Word of God to equate "pastor" and "elder," she does not qualify for that, either (1 Timothy 3:2). We have already seen Hybel's great enthusiasm in joining with other faiths, and now he adds to that turning a blind-eye to the clear teachings of the Bible. He might well speak of "holiness and obedience," but it doesn't take long to realize that these are simply words that fit well within a statement of faith, but have little impact on what takes place from day-to-day.



Alise D. Barrymore

The statement of faith of Moody Church declares, "We believe that we are called with a holy calling to walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit"⁷⁴ Once again the declared position of a widely known edifice of Christianity appears to be Biblically sound. Erwin Lutzer, the senior pastor of this church, is a well-known and respected leader within the Evangelical community.

⁶⁸ <https://faith.yale.edu/common-word/common-word-christian-response>

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Joel Richardson, *The Islamic Antichrist*, p. 156.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 154.

⁷² <http://www.willowcreek.org/home1.aspx> (a short-term advertisement).

⁷³ <http://www.theemmauscommunity.org/contentpages.aspx?parentnavigationid=5162&viewcontentpageguid=602091f3-1038-43bb-8b89-321ce24ab99b>

⁷⁴ <http://www.moodychurch.org/information/doctrine.html>

Mark Driscoll, a founder and pastor of preaching and theology of Mars Hill Church in Seattle, Washington, on the other hand, has been criticized for his “vulgar and crass language in public,”⁷⁵ and few outside of his company would hold him up as a sterling example of Christianity. In addition to his language problems, Driscoll promotes the Emerging Church concept of contemplative prayer, using a mantra and solitude to enter into a state of mind where one can hear from someone thought to be God. The writer of the blog decrying Driscoll’s propensity to practice Emergent Church disciplines also points out that Driscoll was joined as a speaker at the Gospel Coalition National Conference by Erwin Lutzer. This demonstrates a lack of discernment on Lutzer’s part as to whom he will join with for speaking engagements. However, the problem goes even deeper. The Gospel Coalition organization, a group of pastors and teachers of Reformed persuasion, has a governing Council, which meets regularly – Lutzer and Driscoll are both members of that Council.⁷⁶ The common element of this group is their Reformed theology, not the Word of God, and, consequently, Anglicans, Baptists, Presbyterians and the Evangelical Free can all come together in unity – not because of faith in Jesus Christ, but through a shared theology. The words included in a statement of faith do not necessarily reflect the practice of those who purportedly subscribe to that document. A general willingness to be accepting of those who profess to be Christian is the basis for such compromise, and it flows out of a concept of love that is not Biblical.



Mark Driscoll

From Rick Warren’s Saddleback Community Church website we read, “The Holy Spirit ... provides the Christian with power for living ... and guidance in doing what is right. The Christian seeks to live under his control daily.”⁷⁷ However, we find Rick Warren working against the teachings of Scripture and those high-sounding words from his own organization. He invited Ken Blanchard to join his team, even though Blanchard is a known purveyor of New Age thinking and a heretic. In a foreword to a book titled, *What Would Buddha Do at Work?*, Blanchard gives us a glimpse into his broadmindedness, “Our folks [those within his company] get to hear words of wisdom from great prophets and spiritual leaders like Buddha, Mohammed, Moses, Mahatma Gandhi, Yogananda, and the Dalai Lama ...”⁷⁸; his position within his company is Chief Spiritual Officer – although he claims to be a follower of Jesus, it is clearly not the Jesus of the Bible. Again we see that Warren’s compromising practice does not necessarily align itself with the fine words of a declaration of faith. The question that Warren avoids is this: “what communion hath light with darkness?” (2 Corinthians 6:14). Their spirit of “love,” which leads them to contravene the Word of God, is not from the Spirit of God.



Paul, as he writes to the Philippians, is seeking to safeguard them against desecrating the love of God in the manner exemplified by Hybels, Lutzer and Warren. His desire is that their love would flourish in *knowledge*. The word in Greek is *epignosis* (*ep-ig'-no-sis*), and is an

⁷⁵ <http://www.discerningtheworld.com/2009/12/24/mark-driscoll-does-support-contemplative-spirituality/#more-7317>

⁷⁶ <http://thegospelcoalition.org/about/>

⁷⁷ <http://www.saddleback.com/aboutsaddleback/whatwebelieve/>

⁷⁸ F.A. Metcalf and BJ G. Hately, *What Would Buddha Do at Work?*, p. xi.

intensive form of the word *gnosis*, or knowledge; it is described as a “precise and correct knowledge,”⁷⁹ and what “one comes to know and appropriate through faith in Christ.”⁸⁰ This is much more than simply knowing about Christ. Within Evangelical circles today, there is a general understanding of the facts concerning the life of Christ, and even His death and resurrection, but it does not flow out of personally abiding in the Vine of life. Jesus said, “Abide [*meno*] in me” (John 15:4); the Apostle John writes, “God is love [*agape*]; and he that dwelleth [*meno*] in love dwelleth in God, and God in him” (1 John 4:16b), and “... he that keepeth his [God’s] commandments dwelleth [*meno*] in him ...” (1 John 3:24). As we abide in Christ (the *Word of God* – Revelation 19:13), we are abiding in His love, and, through this, we will live in obedience to the commands that we find in His Word. Herein is the failure of modern day Liberalism, Evangelicalism, and much of what is called Fundamentalism. If we do not heed the commands of the Lord, then we are not abiding in Him; if we are not abiding in Him, then we will be cast away from God and burned (John 15:6). This is not a complex matter – if we are *in* Christ Jesus, then our lives will be characterized by the righteousness of the Law of God (those Ten Commandments first written upon stone, and now written on our hearts by the Spirit of God – Jeremiah 31:33; Romans 8:4). Unfortunately, modern-day theology has obscured the Word of God in the same way that the teachings of the Pharisees circumvented the truths of God in Jesus’ day.

In our day of economic downturn, our faith in the Lord should become more precious because of the general instability all around us; we should cling to the Lord more closely, and trust Him to strengthen us through the trials that may well come our way. Popular Evangelical, Joel Osteen sees it differently. The Lord promised Jeremiah that the land of Israel would again be inhabited as it had been – “I will cause to return the captivity of the land, as at the first, saith the Lord” (Jeremiah 33:11b). Joel claims this verse for today, but uses the New International Version: “For I will restore the fortunes of the land as they were before,” says the LORD.” He then goes on to make his application:

That means when you wake up, praise God. Believe Him for restoration in your retirement and savings. Believe God for restoration in that business you lost. There is nothing too difficult for God to do. Everything that was stolen can be restored in your life. God always gives us double for our trouble, and He likes to outdo Himself. The question is do you believe He will?⁸¹



Joel Osteen

A promise by God that He would bring back the captivity of Israel has suddenly become a promise from God to give us double because of what we’re going through. The difficulty in this is not with God’s ability to do whatever He desires, but rather with the attitude that Joel presents. He gives no admonition to live in obedience to God’s Word, no challenge to remain steadfast in the Lord, no exhortation to hold tenaciously to the teachings of Scripture – just “believe” and God will double your wealth. If the wealth doesn’t come, then you’re not “believing” hard enough.

⁷⁹ Strong’s Online.

⁸⁰ Friberg Lexicon.

⁸¹ <http://www.joelosteen.com/HopeForToday/ThoughtsOn/Finances/KeepYourSong/Pages/KeepYourSong.aspx>

In his talk, which he calls, “Keep Your Song,” Osteen quotes Matthew 6:26-30 from the Amplified Bible, but omits the culmination of what Jesus said: “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.” Joel’s application of this text is this: “Supernatural things will happen when we praise.”⁸² In the passage, to which Joel refers, Jesus points out God’s care for the birds and the flowers, which are considered to be fleeting compared to man; on the basis of this example, we are not to be burdened by seeking after the necessities of life. Jesus completes His illustration by commanding us to be continually striving for God’s Kingdom and His righteousness – a righteousness that reflects God’s Law, being lived through us by the power of the Spirit of God (Romans 8:4). This is the focus of this passage! However, without a word about godly living or obedience to the commands of the Lord, Joel presents a hollow hope of believing God to double your wealth. It is so evident that Joel teaches out of the barrenness of his own dead spirituality. From the broad road of destruction, he calls to any who will hear, “This is the way to wealth and happiness,” and the applause heard in response comes from the devil. The time has come when many Evangelicals will no longer endure sound doctrine; after their own lusts, and desiring titillation, they have amassed to themselves teachers and have turned away from the truth and been consumed by lies (2 Timothy 4:3-4). By contrast, Paul declares that his desire for the Philippians is that they excel in their precise and correct knowledge of the Lord, something which is sadly lacking within modern-day Evangelicals and Fundamentalists alike; there is no place for compromise, accommodation of error, or tolerance of the fables.



Paul’s prayer for the Philippians is that their love would overflow in the full knowledge of God, and in *all judgment*. *Judgment* speaks of perception, insight⁸³ or discernment,⁸⁴ and the word *all*, as it is used here, makes this the highest degree of discernment. Paul wants their love to overflow with a precise and correct knowledge of God, and the capstone would be that this knowledge should be tempered with the utmost discernment. Of what value is knowledge if it is used indiscriminately? If there is one thing that runs contrary to the ecumenism of today, it has to be discernment. One of the elements of New Evangelicalism was an emphasis on education and learning, but not after the order of “study to shew thyself approved unto God . . .” (2 Timothy 2:15). Their pursuit of learning was so that they would be able to dialogue as equals with the scholarly Liberals, with no intention of coming to a more correct and thorough understanding of the Scriptures. As a matter of fact, their scholarly pursuits drew them away from the Scriptures, and brought them to question the inerrancy of the Word of God and some of the fundamental doctrines of the faith that they once held. They may have increased their knowledge (although arguably not about God), but they plowed ahead with their agenda to bridge the gap with the Liberals – discernment, of necessity, fell by the wayside.

Discernment is defined as “the ability to make good judgments.”⁸⁵ Hebrews 5:14 says, “But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age [mature], *even* those who by reason of use [habitual practice] have their senses [faculty of the mind for perceiving] exercised [exercised vigorously – perfect tense] to discern both good and evil.”⁸⁶ Notice that the exercising of our mind to be discerning is expressed in the perfect tense – completed in the past, once and for all, not needing to be repeated. When would this take place? The only time that fits is when we “became

⁸² <http://www.joelosteen.com/HopeForToday/ThoughtsOn/Finances/KeepYourSong/Pages/KeepYourSong.aspx>.

⁸³ Friberg Lexicon.

⁸⁴ Strong’s Online.

⁸⁵ Encarta Dictionary, “discernment.”

⁸⁶ Strong’s Online.

the servants of righteousness” (Romans 6:18); when we come to Christ by faith in His finished work on our behalf, we receive the Spirit of God, Who will guide us into all truth (John 16:13). Discernment, as described by the writer of Hebrews, will come once – at the entrance of the Spirit into our hearts. As we walk according to the leading of the Spirit of God, this important ability to discern will be sharpened; on the other hand, neglect of the Spirit will bring confusion where discernment once reigned or should reign, and faithlessness will see the Spirit of God depart and all discernment cease (Hebrews 3:12).

To the Corinthians, Paul speaks of the incredible things that God has prepared for those who love Him, and then goes on to say: “Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing [interpret, “of things brought together for explanation,”⁸⁷ *sugkrino* (*soong-kree’-no*⁸⁸), from the root *krino* meaning to choose or judge] spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth [believes⁸⁹] not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness [considered intellectually weak⁹⁰] unto him: neither can he know [*ginosko* – come to understand⁹¹] *them*, because they are spiritually discerned [scrutinized or studied carefully for determination (*anakrino*) with the aid of the Holy Spirit⁹²]. But he that is spiritual [a Spirit-filled person, “a person possessing and governed by the Spirit of God”⁹³] judgeth [carefully examines – *anakrino*⁹⁴] all things, yet he himself is judged [*anakrino*] of no man” (1 Corinthians 2:13-15; cp. Romans 14:12). What must not be overlooked in this passage is the central role of the Spirit of God in our need to examine everything that comes our way. The reason that the worldly (or *natural*) man cannot understand the things of God is because he does not have the Holy Spirit providing the required aid in order to comprehend the magnitude of all that God has for us. What Paul is explaining to the Corinthians comes before the *discernment* desired for the Philippians; there is the need to bring Scriptures together, with the aid of the Spirit of God, in order to understand the Word of God. As this finds root in the life of the Christian, the application of this will be the *judgment* or insight that Paul prays will become part of the Philippians’ lives.

As we consider this, we must ask ourselves the question, “What do I use to gain insight into the Word of God?” We must learn to compare Scripture with Scripture and allow the Spirit of God to illumine His Word for us. Unfortunately, within Evangelicalism and Fundamentalism, to a greater degree than anyone might like to admit, the Bible has suffered from neglect. It is the writings of the theologians that have gained popularity; there has been a wholesale capitulation of personal responsibility to understand what God has given to us in His Word. Too often we are satisfied with the platitudes and trite sayings of the latest Evangelical authors to hit the market, seemingly unaware of the poison that has been injected into their writings. Paul warns the Corinthians that the natural man cannot understand the things of God because they can only be known through careful examination (1 Corinthians 2:14), which will involve bringing the Scriptures together (v. 13) under the tutelage of the Spirit. Today, Evangelicals are rapidly descending into a new Dark Age because the Bible has been shelved in favor of the writings of men. The historical Dark Ages saw the Roman Catholic Church in control of the vast majority of Europe, and the Bible exclusively in the hands of the priests; the common people of that day were without the Word of God and only heard what the priests wanted them to hear. This new Dark

⁸⁷ Friberg Lexicon.

⁸⁸ Strong’s Online.

⁸⁹ Friberg Lexicon.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Strong’s Online.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Friberg Lexicon.

⁹⁴ Strong’s Online.

Age, which is sweeping over Evangelicalism, is voluntary – the common people have freely shelved their Bibles and confined their understanding (really, misunderstanding) of Scripture to what they hear and read from their accepted purveyor of “truth.” If we would personally avoid such a calamity, we must take the Bible and permit the Spirit of God to interpret the Scriptures by the Scriptures. This immediately eliminates being enamored with the smooth writings of men – whether they are modern fountains of philosophy like Charles Colson, the insightful writings of Chuck Swindoll, or the spiritual “giants” from yesteryear like John Owen. We cannot, and must not, substitute the writings of man for God’s Word – if we do, we will always come out the loser.



John Owen

Paul’s desire for the Philippian saints was that they would, in their love, flourish in a very accurate form of knowledge and the highest level of discernment. This would come through a careful study of the Scriptures and permitting the Spirit of God to open their understanding to

His truth. We will never achieve this understanding by simply reading the Bible – there must be a careful, and prayerful, examination of God’s Word. We read, “Study to shew thyself approved unto God ... rightly dividing the word of truth.” (2 Timothy 2:15). However, have we simply read this in passing, or do we really understand the thrust of this verse? In 1896, C.I. Schofield published a book titled *Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth*, in which he expounded the dispensational divisions that he saw within the Word of God.⁹⁵ Was this Paul’s intent in writing this to Timothy? Clearly not, since the dispensational view is fraught with many failures. *Study* comes from the Greek word *spoudazo* (*spoo-dad’-zo*) which means to give diligence or to exert one’s self.⁹⁶ That one word alone dismisses merely reading through the Bible as being sufficient – it calls for careful examination. *Approved* speaks of a “qualification that results from trial and examination”⁹⁷ – this places the standard for approval at a high level; not only is it God Who must approve, but the approval will only come through testing. This qualifies the diligence that we must take in order to attain this approval. Finally, the focus of this diligence and approval: we must *rightly divide* God’s Word. Literally, this means “cutting a straight road through difficult terrain,”⁹⁸ and later came to mean “rightly dealing with a thing”⁹⁹ – in this case, understanding and/or teaching the Scriptures accurately. How desperately this is needed within the lives of those who would promote themselves as Biblical Christians in our day. This underlies Paul’s prayer for the Philippians.

¹⁰ That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ;



As we read this verse in English, we appear to have two reasons for Paul’s prayer that the Philippians’ love would flourish in knowledge and judgment. The two *thats* (*that ye and that are*) seem to draw our attention back to what has just been presented, and indicate two equal

⁹⁵ <http://www.aomin.org/aoblog/index.php?itemid=4063>

⁹⁶ Strong’s Online.

⁹⁷ Friberg Lexicon.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Vine’s “divide.”

purposes for Paul's prayer. However, the first *that* would more fittingly be translated as *unto*,¹⁰⁰ which would indicate that what follows will be the expression of love overflowing in precise and correct knowledge and the highest form of discernment. The second *that* could be more clearly expressed as *in order that*,¹⁰¹ which then focuses the entire statement, up to this point, on the last phrase of this verse.

The first phrase provides the context for *love* overflowing in precisely-accurate *knowledge* and the highest form of *judgment* or discernment; it is that the Philippians might *approve things that are excellent*. *Approve* is from the Greek word *dokimazo* (*dok-im-ad'-zo*) and means "to test, examine, prove, scrutinise (to see whether a thing is genuine or not)."¹⁰² The word is in the present tense, which means that this is to be their continual practice; they (and we) are to constantly examine what is heard, read and seen against the true standard of the Word of God (the word *may* is not in the Greek). What is evident, as we consider this, is that the precise and correct knowledge and the highest level of discernment fit very well with this call to examine and test what comes our way. The *knowledge* and *judgment* of which Paul speaks, provides a firm foundation from which to carry out the careful scrutiny of that which we face on a daily basis. "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try [*dokimazo* – also present tense] the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1). A broad acceptance of anyone who professes faith in Jesus Christ, is not to be our practice; the command given by the Spirit of God, through the Apostle John, undermines the very essence of ecumenism – namely, acceptance without examination. We are to be students of the Scriptures, modern-day Bereans who are prepared to take everything back to God's Word in order to determine its credibility and acceptability (Acts 17:10-11).

Excellent comes from the Greek word *diaphero* (*dee-af-er'-o*).¹⁰³ Jesus said, "Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better [*diaphero*] than they?" (Matthew 6:26). The word generally means to differ, but also, as it is used in our verse, "the essential things,"¹⁰⁴ "be (more) excellent, be of more value"¹⁰⁵ – hence the translators' choice of the word *excellent*, and *much better* in Matthew. The call that we have in our verse is that we are to test, examine and scrutinize in order to determine "*the things that matter or are of greater value*."¹⁰⁶ We can easily see the critical importance of a complete understanding and a sharpened discernment so as to make this determination.

Now we come to the twofold pinnacle of Paul's prayer for the Philippians. As we've already noted, *in order that* would more clearly present the introduction of this phrase; this is the purpose of what has come before. The first part, of this twofold reason, is so that *ye may be sincere*. The *may be* bears the subjunctive mood, which reminds us that this falls into the realm of possibility but not predetermined certainty. So, as Paul presents this to the Philippians, and as we read it today, it expresses his desire for us, but there is also the realization that it will not be a reality for everyone who reads it. The word *sincere* is literally *judged by sunlight*,¹⁰⁷ and signifies being unalloyed or

¹⁰⁰ Strong's Online.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Friberg Lexicon.

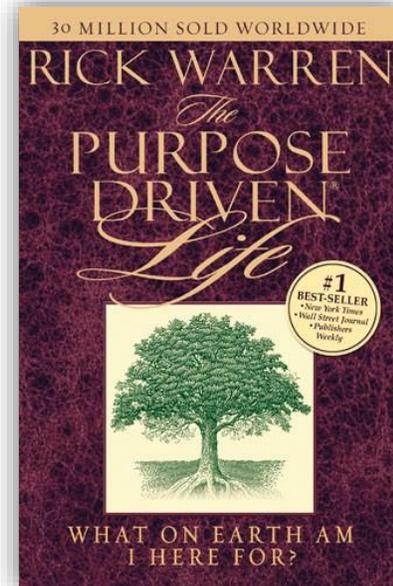
¹⁰⁵ Strong's Dictionary.

¹⁰⁶ Friberg Lexicon.

¹⁰⁷ Strong's Dictionary.

pure.¹⁰⁸ An alloy is made by mixing two or more elements to produce something that is different from any of the individual elements; even though the separate elements may have been pure, once they are combined, that purity is gone.

Let's review and bring together Paul's prayer expressed so far. His petition is that their *love* (*agape*) may be flourishing in a precise and correct *knowledge* and the greatest discernment or *judgment* as they are proving and examining things in order to determine what is of superior quality so that they might be pure! The reality is that spiritual purity demands a solid foundation – it does not just happen. The Galatians faced this dilemma, and Paul wrote to them warning of the significant decision that they faced. Paul and Barnabas had preached the pure Gospel to them and established them in their new-found faith (Acts 14:21-23). However, Jews came along who advocated the necessity of keeping the Law of Moses alongside of their faith in Christ (Acts 15:5); they sought to add another element to the pure Gospel message (i.e., create an alloy). Paul tells them, "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:8). In other words, retain the unalloyed message of the Gospel or be subject to the wrath of God. He goes on to say that if they accept the alloy, then "Christ is become of no effect unto you" (literally, you are abolished from the Christ), "ye are fallen from grace" (Galatians 5:4). There is no room for mixing anything with the truth of God's Word, and therefore Paul is so earnestly concerned that the Philippian Christians would lay the foundation of love, knowledge, discernment, and the habit of testing all things so that they would retain the unalloyed message of the Gospel. "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee" (1 Timothy 4:16).



Evangelicals today promote various versions of the truth, which have been thoroughly mixed with error, so that they no longer reflect the Gospel of God (Galatians 1:7). Today's theologies and Bible translations have done irreparable damage to what many perceive to be the truth of God's Word. It may be rightly argued that the theological thinking of today has sprung from that of the previous generation, but that in no way reduces the seriousness of the compromise that has taken place. Compromise unfolds with a very natural progression; it happens slowly over time so that, without personal diligence, it may very well occur unnoticed. The Bible translation fiasco has only intensified the departure in thinking; modern Bibles omit words, sentences and whole paragraphs from the text, and yet they are upheld as being so much easier to understand. Has anyone, who has poured himself into a modern translation, come out spiritually stronger and with a greater appreciation for the holiness of God? Modern versions provide support for the aberrant theologies of our day. Rick Warren, in his book, *The Purpose Driven Life*, used 15 different versions, and justified this with two very logically appealing reasons: 1) "... no matter how wonderful a translation is, it has limitations" and 2) "... we often miss the full impact of familiar Bible verses, *not* because of poor translating, but simply because they have become so familiar!"¹⁰⁹ Without entering into a full review of the Bible translation disaster that is ours today, it is evident that

¹⁰⁸ Vine's "pure."

¹⁰⁹ Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life*, p. 325.

Warren has ignored two other very important factors: the reliability of the text used in translating, and the method of translation. Supporters of the multitude of Bibles today use seemingly logical arguments to defend their position, thereby creating a smoke screen by which the truth of God's Word vanishes. "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish *ought* from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you" (Deuteronomy 4:2). There needs to be concern about the dependability of the underlying text of a translation, and the method of translation used – if we are to neither add to nor take away from God's Word, then we must be diligent in these two areas.



Constantin von Tischendorf

With few exceptions, the modern translations make use of a Greek text of the New Testament that is the product of primarily two later discoveries of old-manuscripts – the Sinaiticus and the Vaticanus. The Sinaiticus was brought to light by Constantin von Tischendorf in 1844 while he was visiting the Monastery of Saint Catherine at the foot of Mt. Sinai.¹¹⁰ Although he claimed to have discovered the manuscripts among garbage slated to be burned, the monastery has firmly denied this. The discovery included about half of the Greek Old Testament, several apocryphal books, the New Testament, the Epistle of Barnabas and part of the Shepherd of Hermas.¹¹¹ It is readily admitted that the Biblical text is "heavily corrected," yet modern scholars acclaim its incredible value.¹¹² It is interesting to note this manuscript's acclaim even though it is filled with corrections and changes to the text (something that a legitimate copy of the Bible would not include), and it was found with apocryphal books and the heretical Epistle of Barnabas and the Shepherd of Hermas. Tischendorf was a German textual critic who claimed, "I am confronted with a sacred task, the struggle to regain the original form of the

New Testament."¹¹³ What he, along with all of the rest of the textual critics, failed to realize is that he was on a pointless quest; he was looking for a phantom of his own creation. God's Word has never been lost: "The words of the LORD *are* pure words: *as* silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever" (Psalm 12:6-7). Not only did the Lord provide us with His Word, but He also promised to watch over it throughout time; His Word has not been lost, therefore there is no need to work to recover it. In his efforts to "regain" what he supposed was the missing form of the New Testament Scriptures, Tischendorf was "emboldened to depart from the received text as used in churches."¹¹⁴ This reveals the core effort of the textual critics – they always sought ways to pull away from the accepted text of Scripture; these men were used by the devil to create doubt in the minds of the general populace concerning the authenticity and reliability of the Word of God. Among those who supported Tischendorf's work were the Unitarians,¹¹⁵ a like-minded group who have always welcomed involvement in revision and translation committees. They have supported

¹¹⁰ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Codex_Sinaiticus

¹¹¹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sinaiticus>

¹¹² <http://codexsinaiticus.org/en/>

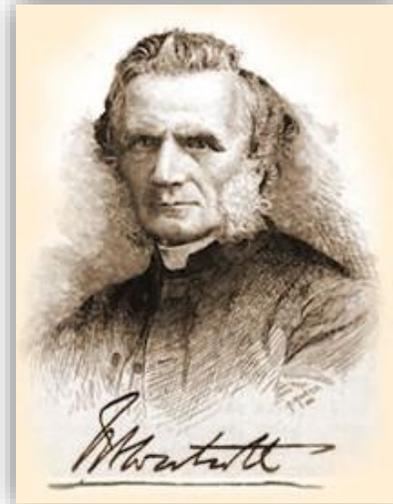
¹¹³ Philip Comfort, *Encountering the Manuscripts*, p. 99.

¹¹⁴ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tischendorf>

¹¹⁵ <http://www.wayoflife.org/files/e1db55f49d87a84760ac4208bb1fd06b-452.html>

every effort to draw the attention of Christians away from the true text of Scripture that has been in use for centuries.

The second manuscript, the Codex Vaticanus, surfaced around 1481, conveniently found in the Vatican library in Rome.¹¹⁶ It is comprised of most of the Greek Bible; it includes several of the apocryphal books but is missing most of Genesis, the epistles to Timothy, Titus and Philemon, the book of Revelation, and the book of Hebrews conveniently ends at chapter 9:14.¹¹⁷ Incredibly, “current scholarship considers the Codex Vaticanus to be one of the best Greek texts of the New Testament ...,”¹¹⁸ even though it is used as the basis for some 36,000 changes from the majority texts supporting the Received Text or Textus Receptus.¹¹⁹ Through the translating efforts of men like Wycliffe and Tyndale, and the production of the printing press, the Bible gradually became available to the general populace of the fifteenth century. The 1611 translation, authorized by King James, threw the door wide open for everyone to own their own Bible in the English language – it was no longer buried in Latin, or under the control of the Catholic Church; the restrictive grip on the Scriptures held by the Roman Catholic Church for centuries was gone. The devil brought men like Tischendorf (followed by Westcott and Hort) onto the scene to publish these corrupt Greek manuscripts (the Sinaiticus and Vaticanus) and provide a new, weakened foundation for Bible translation work. Opening the possibility for several readings of any one text, these men



Brooke Foss Westcott



Fenton J.A. Hort

created the thought of uncertainty as to how the text of Scripture should actually read, which, in turn, has provided man with license to wiggle his way through God’s Word and come out the other side unchanged, yet feeling somehow justified. Even though the majority of Greek text fragments supported the Received Text, this new corrupt Greek New Testament manuscript soared to high acclaim within the scholastic community, with no opposition from the Roman Catholic Church, the Unitarians, or any other group that sought to justify their departure from the long accepted and plain truths of Scripture.

With this early success, Satan opened the floodgates for new translations and translation techniques – every cult and deviant group could now have a Bible to support their particular persuasion. The Roman Catholic Church commissioned the Douay-Rheims Bible just prior to the translation of the King James Version; it is a translation into English from the RCC approved Latin Vulgate. The Catholics have commissioned other translations as well, including the *New*

¹¹⁶ http://www.1611kingjamesbible.com/codex_vaticanus.html/

¹¹⁷ I say “conveniently” because it is after this that Hebrews reveals the heresy of the Catholic priesthood and mass.

¹¹⁸ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Codex_Vaticanus

¹¹⁹ http://www.1611kingjamesbible.com/codex_vaticanus.html/

Jerusalem Bible completed in 1985.¹²⁰ The Jehovah's Witnesses use the *New World Translation*, specifically commissioned to uphold their theology. The gay and lesbian community has recently produced their *Gay and Lesbian Study Bible* – a translation done specifically to support their deviant, sinful lifestyle.¹²¹ Today, Evangelicals will use any translation that bolsters the point that they are trying to make; Rick Warren has become a master at this. To further skew the matter, most Bibles today, which are considered to be translations, are really paraphrases – they do not make use of word-for-word translation practices but have succumbed to translating ideas and thoughts, which requires interpretation to take place at the same time. The hugely popular *New International Version* uses both the corrupt Greek manuscripts and this interpretative translation technique called dynamic equivalence, yet it has become virtually the standard translation within Evangelical circles.



Paul's prayer for the Philippians (and us) is that they would have a firm foundation, which would prevent compromise and confusion from taking root in their midst. His desire was for their spiritual purity. Today the accepted word is that "we must strive for unity because it is the essence of the church."¹²² This essential doctrine of ecumenism has sailed through the churches without opposition; I've heard it declared from the pulpit of the Evangelical Free Church, of which we were formerly a part, without giving Colson credit for the thought. Paul's prayer for the holy ones of Philippi was that they would be pure. Alongside of spiritual purity will flow unity with Christ – the two are inseparable (John 15:4; Ephesians 4:23-24); out of unity with Christ will flow unity with those who also abide in Him. What the ecumenical fail to recognize is that true unity only comes by abiding in Christ (and all that that means); we do not strive for unity, we must strive to remain in Christ (Colossians 1:21-23). By turning this on its head, Evangelicals have generated a false unity through compromise and acceptance, and have lost any semblance of abiding in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The second aspect of this pinnacle of Paul's prayer is: in order that *ye may be ... without offence till the day of Christ*. The phrase *without offence* comes from the Greek word *aproskopos* (*ap-ros'-kop-os*) which is literally having nothing to strike against, not causing to stumble.¹²³ To the Romans Paul wrote, "It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor *any thing* whereby thy brother stumbleth [*proskopto* (*pros-kop'-to*)], or is offended, or is made weak" (Romans 14:21). We are to live in a manner that will not give our fellow believer cause to stumble in his walk with the Lord. Paul, who never minced his words when either proclaiming the truth or standing against those who would oppose the truth, declared: "And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence [*aproskopos*] toward God, and toward men" (Acts 24:16). However, we must be careful that we understand this correctly, for we are still called to "hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me ..." (2 Timothy 1:13). There is a required balance that is not evident within Evangelicalism today.

This is not to say that we are to be tactless and unfeeling. It's interesting how Evangelicals can spin this to support their ecumenism. Chuck Swindoll, that bastion of pithy quips and cute stories, has expressed this: "... the classic example of tactless humanity, I'm ashamed to declare, is the abrasive Christian (so-called) who feels it his or her calling to fight for the truth with little or no regard for the other fella's feelings. Of course, this is supposedly done in the name of the Lord—'to do anything less would be compromise and counterfeit.'"¹²⁴ What comes through Swindoll's

¹²⁰ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Jerusalem_Bible

¹²¹ <http://www.gayandlesbianbible.com/>

¹²² Chuck Colson, *The Body*, p. 102.

¹²³ Strong's Online.

¹²⁴ <http://www.insight.org/library/insight-for-today/tact.html>

comment is that it is more important to coddle the feelings of others than to stand for the truth; in other words, if our stance for the truth of God's Word causes someone to be offended, then we are to bury our understanding of the truth. Within modern Evangelicalism, it is anathema to cause anyone offense, and so the message of the Bible is only brushed over lightly lest someone might become upset or, perish the thought, convicted. What Swindoll is promoting is ecumenism – don't be hung up on the truths of Scripture; be easy to get along with!

“Unto you therefore which believe [to be persuaded] *he is precious*: but unto them which be disobedient [refuse to believe; disobedient], the stone which the builders disallowed [rejected], the same is made the head of the corner, And a stone of stumbling [stumbling block], and a rock of offence [a massive rock which impedes], *even to them* which stumble [*proskopto*] at the word, being disobedient [not persuaded]: whereunto also they were appointed” (1 Peter 2:7-8).¹²⁵ What we must not fail to recognize is that the truth of God will always be an offense to the ungodly (by this we must mean both the unbeliever who is steeped in the world's philosophies and the professing Christian, who, like Swindoll, simply wants to feel validated), but we must not be offensive in how we present His truth. “Let your speech *be* always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man” (Colossians 4:6). The first phrase is literally “the word of you always in grace.”¹²⁶ Our words must always be gracious, even when God's message of truth upon our lips will cause offense. “If it be possible [to be able], as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men” (Romans 12:18). The Word of God will cause offense, but we must not cause offense through tactless words.



Chuck Swindoll

Evangelicals today seek to be loved and accepted by everyone; however, this is accomplished, not by means of gracious speech, but by a message that is agreeable, and so they have diluted the message of the Gospel of Christ, thereby removing its offense. To the Galatians Paul declared: “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed” (Galatians 1:8). This would have undoubtedly offended the Jews who sought to persuade the Christians of the necessity to add some of the Law of Moses to their faith in Christ (Acts 15:1). However, the exclusivity and narrowness of God's truth needed to be clearly understood so that there was no question as to the proper course for the Christian life. Those who were part of the error (the Judaizers) would take offense; those who were trying to sort through the confusion would take heed. The pioneers of the Evangelical Free Church (EFC) summarized the modern attitude well: “if Scripture alone is the rule, and Scripture is open to various interpretations, and believers are free in conscience to interpret it as they feel ‘led’ by the Holy Spirit, it follows that they may be led to different views.”¹²⁷ Upon this premise, everything becomes acceptable because there is no longer a narrow truth; room has been made for every aberrant view that might come along – nothing is to be excluded. To this day the EFC prides itself on being “inclusive not exclusive,” by which they mean that the doctrinal position that they take will include only those things that are “biblically beyond dispute or debate and are accepted by all

¹²⁵ Strong's Online.

¹²⁶ Stephanus 1550 NT.

¹²⁷ David V. Martin, *Trinity International University 1897-1997*, (TIU, 1998), p. 19.

in the evangelical tradition.”¹²⁸ This is precisely the attitude of Chuck Colson, co-author of *Evangelicals and Catholics Together*, who wrote: “True unity is not sought by pretending that there are no differences ... but by recognizing and respecting those differences, while **focusing on the great orthodox truths** all Christians share” (emphasis added).¹²⁹ Colson refers to this lowest common denominator as the *orthodox truths* of our faith; the EFC calls them “essentials,” while they piously quote the fourth century heretic, Chrysostom – “In essentials, unity. In non-essentials, charity. In all things, Jesus Christ.”¹³⁰ Truly, the roots of ecumenism run deep.



Chuck Colson



There are two aspects to this concept of living a life “without offence.” What we have just looked at is the one that has taken over our thinking today – not to be an offense to others. The second consideration, and perhaps the

more important of the two, is that we are not to be an offense to God, “Who hath saved us, and called *us* with an holy calling ...” (2 Timothy 1:9). Within church circles today, this is of far less importance, and has for the most part slipped below the radar. Paul exhorted the Ephesians to “walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called ...” and to “put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Ephesians 4:1, 24). We have been called to holiness – “Ye shall be holy: for I the LORD your God *am* holy” (Leviticus 19:2; 1 Peter 1:15). Holiness has been defined as God’s “fundamental attribute,”¹³¹ and viewed as the one characteristic through which all other aspects of His divine character flow. It is only fitting, therefore, that if we are indeed His children, then we must seek to emulate His holy character.

The Greek word translated as *holy* is *hagios*, and bears the thought of purity and separation.¹³² This word appears 229 times in the Greek New Testament, and 161 times it is translated as *holy*, but, most interestingly, 61 times it is translated as *saints*.¹³³ God calls *us* saints – “... [absolutely] not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration [rebirth], and renewing of the Holy Ghost ...” (Titus 3:5).¹³⁴ Our salvation is entirely centered in God and is the expression of His mercy through the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, and His gracious provision of the Holy Spirit to lead us into all truth (John 16:13). As such we are called *saints* – *holy ones* in the eyes of God, as He views us through the blood of Christ, our High Priest Who shed His blood for the remission of our sins. Is it any wonder that Jesus said, “Abide in me” (John 15:4)? It is only as we abide in Him that we can occupy the one place where His blood will cover our sins. If we, through willful unbelief (or faithlessness), leave the security that we have in Christ, then we have forsaken the only Place where God can view our sins as being covered by the blood that Christ shed for the sins of the whole world (Hebrews 10:26; 1 John 2:2). “He that hath [or holds] the Son hath life; *and* he that hath not the Son of God hath

¹²⁸ Bill Taylor, “The Evangelical Free Church ...,” *the Pulse*, Fall 2001, p. 2.

¹²⁹ Colson, *Body*, p. 104.

¹³⁰ Taylor, *Pulse*, p.2.

¹³¹ Ernest Pickering, *Biblical Separation*, p. 166.

¹³² Strong’s Online.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

not [absolute] life” (1 John 5:12). If we forsake God’s only provision for salvation, then we will find ourselves without hope.

“And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed [marked for identification] unto the day of redemption” (Ephesians 4:30).¹³⁵ The promise of Jesus was that He, when He was gone from this earth, would send the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, so that He might “abide with you forever” (John 14:16). The word *abide* is in the subjunctive mood – the abiding with us forever is a possibility but not a certainty. Therefore, we must pay close attention when we are told to not *grieve* the Spirit. “... when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth ...” (John 16:13); the Spirit of God has come into the life of the believer with a very specific mission – to lead us into “all [the] truth” (the Greek includes the definite article). The word *truth* is singular (not plural) – there is only one truth; the Spirit of God will not lead different people to different truths (despite the opinion of the EFC pioneers). Since the Spirit’s presence in our lives is to lead us into the truth, then the grief that we might inflict upon the Spirit could well come from an unwillingness to accept the truth that He has shown us. We all know the old adage, “there are none so blind as those who will not see.” “And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind. And some of the Pharisees which were with him heard these words, and said unto him, Are we blind also? Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should [possibly] have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth [present tense - *meno*]” (John 9:39-41).¹³⁶ Self-sufficiency and stubbornness stand in opposition to permitting the Spirit to guide us into the truth of God; if we, like the Pharisees, self-righteously say, “I see,” then the Spirit will be grieved, and His illuminating guidance will be lost on us; we will continue in sin. This is the fruit of unbelief taking root in our souls (Hebrews 3:12).

“Now the Spirit speaketh [teaches, exhorts] expressly [explicitly], that in the latter [later or last] times some shall depart [become apostate] from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron ... (1 Timothy 4:1-2).¹³⁷ The reality is that God has confirmed that there will be those who will depart from, or fall away from, the faith. The standard thinking today is that these who fall away have never believed, and so they are simply acting in accordance with their unbelief. However, we must take care to compare Scripture with Scripture in order to determine if such a simplistic interpretation of this passage is Biblical. Support for this is most often sought from 1 John 2:19 – “They went out from us, but they were not [absolute] of [from] us; for if they had been of [from] us, they would *no doubt* [this should be *might* – a small Greek word is included which introduces the element of uncertainty] have continued with us: but *they went out*, that they might be made manifest that they were not [absolute] all of [from] us.”¹³⁸ The thrust of this is that not everyone who appears to be one of us (a believer) is in reality genuinely so (Jesus’ words in Matthew 7:21-23 confirm this); however, that must not be taken as a blanket rule that will apply to everyone who departs from among the faithful. John’s letter is intent on drawing on that which was from the beginning with a view to holding onto that first state of being; “Let that therefore abide [*meno*] in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain [*meno* – subjunctive] in you, ye also shall continue [*meno* - future] in the Son, and in the Father” (1 John 2:24). What John is stating is that if the true message that we originally heard

¹³⁵ Gingrich Lexicon.

¹³⁶ Friberg Lexicon.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

remains in us, then we will continue to abide in Jesus and the Father, but there will be a thinning of the ranks because of those who never truly believed in the first place.

However, Paul's instruction to Timothy is that there will be those who are of the faith who will depart from it. The Greek word used is *aphistemi* (*af-is'-tay-mee*), and means to go away, to desert, to fall away, become faithless, to withdraw one's self from.¹³⁹ Perhaps a couple of illustrations from Scripture in how this word is used will provide some clarification. At the end of Jesus' temptation by the devil we read, "And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed [*aphistemi*] from him for a season" (Luke 4:13); the devil was with Jesus during the temptation and, when he realized the futility of his efforts, he left Him. When Peter was imprisoned and the angel was sent to release him, the Scriptures tell us, "... and they [Peter and the angel] went out, and passed on through one street; and forthwith the angel departed [*aphistemi*] from him" (Acts 12:10b). Again, the angel and Peter are together, and the angel leaves him. Therefore, it is only consistent to conclude that Paul is telling Timothy that there will be some who have been in the faith who will fall away from it – they will become apostate. An *apostate* is someone "who renounces a belief or allegiance";¹⁴⁰ you cannot give up a belief that you've never held, consequently it is entirely consistent with Scripture and language to say that those who have been faithful are able to renounce their faith and fall away; it is unnecessary and totally inconsistent to claim that all of these who fall away, never truly believed. "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing [*aphistemi*] from the living God" (Hebrews 3:12). It is the *brethren* in the faith who are cautioned against giving place to a heart of faithlessness; addressing this to the unbelieving would render this warning meaningless.

If we would live and hold our faith in a manner that will not give offense to God, then we must very carefully take heed to what Scripture says; we must build upon a foundation of love expressed through a full knowledge and the utmost discernment, whereby we test all things so that we might be pure and without offense (or blameless) before God. The message that we bear will cause offense (1 Peter 2:8), but we must walk circumspectly (Ephesians 5:15). "But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if *any man suffer* as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf." (1 Peter 4:15-16). In other words, if we suffer because of improper conduct, then that is of our own doing and a shame to us, but if we suffer for the sake of righteousness, then it will be to the glory of God and our joy. "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations [trials] ..." (James 1:2). Of greater priority than our own comfort and acceptance must be obedience to the commandments of God's Word – if we walk under the guidance of the Spirit of God, then we will be without offense to God (Romans 8:14).



Our verse (Philippians 1:10) ends in similar fashion to verse six. Since there is no definite article in the Greek, this is not speaking of *the* day of Christ (the time of His return), but more generally to the day when we will see Christ – which could be either upon our death or upon His return; a time when we will no longer be able to change our status before God. If we have lived a life of offense to God, then we will remain offensive before Him – there will be nothing that we can do to change our condition once we have died. As noted before, there is no purgatory into which people enter so as to provide another opportunity to atone for unconfessed sins. Our spiritual condition at the time that we die, or when Christ returns, will leave our eternal destiny forever unchangeable. Paul's prayer for the Philippians (and for us) is that they (and we) will be without offense before God until that day.

¹³⁹ Strong's Online.

¹⁴⁰ Encarta Dictionary, "apostate."

¹¹ Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.



Here is the outward expression, or the product, of all that we've looked at in Paul's prayer. *Filled* means to be filled to the brim.¹⁴¹ The word is used frequently when speaking of the OT prophecies being fulfilled: "And he said unto them, These *are* the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be **fulfilled**, which were written in the law of Moses, and *in* the prophets, and *in* the psalms, concerning me" (Luke 24:44). It signifies that the OT prophecies were completely fulfilled in every aspect, more than just barely or close enough to call them fulfilled – they were satisfied to the utmost detail. This reality has suffered much at the hands of today's Evangelical theologians.

Jesus said, "For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matthew 12:40). It would seem evident that there should be no doubt as to how long Jesus would remain buried, particularly in light of what we just looked at from Luke 24. However, Hank Hanegraaff, director of the Christian Research Institute and the host of the *Bible Answer Man* radio broadcast, states: "The fact of the matter is he was dead for only two nights and one full day."¹⁴² Jesus made it clear that the Scriptures would be fulfilled to the minutest detail, yet Hank seeks to confuse Christians today with statements that contradict the words of the Lord and introduce an element of haze to what would otherwise be crystal clear. How we need the precise and correct knowledge and utmost discernment so that we are able to prove what is most excellent, and, thereby, we are capable of standing against those who cast the long shadow of doubt across God's unbreakable Word.



Hank Hanegraaff

 The word *filled* is also in the perfect tense; it has happened once in the past and does not need to be repeated. Consider some other contexts for this word. "And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; Being **filled** with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers ..." (Romans 1:28-29). Here we have the exact same Greek word and tense, which provides clear evidence of our status as a sinner. The Psalmist understood when we became sinners, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Psalm 51:5). Paul declared this same truth to the Ephesians: "And you ... who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we **all** had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by

¹⁴¹ Strong's Online.

¹⁴² Hanegraaff, Hank, "Three Days and Three Nights," Statement CP1402.

http://www.equip.org/site/apps/nlnet/content3.aspx?c=mu1LaMNJrE&b=4126497&content_id=%7B10478DBB-A024-42B1-9CAC-741D7B50DCB9%7D¬oc=1

nature the children of wrath, even as others” (Ephesians 2:1-3). We are all born sinners – it is not what we do that makes us sinners, but who we are. Today’s “good-within” philosophy is like applying a Band-Aid to Mt. St. Helens at the time of eruption – it does no good and doesn’t change anything. There is only one help for our sinful state, and that is faith in Christ Who purchased the salvation of our souls through His sacrifice (John 14:6). “For this *is* good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have [desires] all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge [precise and correct] of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:3-4).¹⁴³

In Christ, there is hope for us, and with this comes another use for this same Greek word that means to fill to the brim. “... That the righteousness of the law might be **fulfilled** in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Romans 8:4). In this case, the word is not in the perfect tense (it bears no reference to time); however, it is in the subjunctive mood, which speaks of possibility but not certainty. The condition upon which our lives will be filled to the brim with the righteousness of the Law of God (those Ten Commandments upon which all other commands hang) is that we must be living (present tense) according to the leading of the Spirit of God. Formerly, we were without hope and completely filled with sinfulness; now, we have died to sin (Romans 6:6) and are to be full of righteousness as we permit the Spirit of God to guide us.

We’ve noted that Paul used the perfect tense for the word *filled* in our verse, an indication of a past action not needing to be repeated. Inasmuch as this filling can only come through the presence of the Spirit of God (Romans 8:4), it is evident that the Spirit will only come once to occupy the believer, bringing with Him the potential for righteousness (Romans 6:18-22). Therefore, it is of great importance that we do not grieve the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:30) by refusing to accept the truth that He endeavors to reveal to us (John 16:13). “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing [to remove, to fall away, become faithless, to desert, to withdraw one’s self] from the living God” (Hebrews 3:12).¹⁴⁴ “For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge [precise and correct] of the truth [that which will only come through the presence of the Spirit of God – John 16:13], there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins ...” (Hebrews 10:26);¹⁴⁵ the Greek word translated as *no more* comes through joining the absolute negative *no* with reference to time – there is absolutely no further provision for sins. We are saved by the blood of Christ only once, and we are filled to the brim with His righteousness only once. Do we grow in our walk with the Lord? Of course! “But grow in grace, and *in* the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18a). Paul’s prayer for the Philippians outlines the foundation for a successful Christian life: love flourishing in a full knowledge and the utmost discernment, finding its fulfillment in examining all things in order to determine what is of utmost value. All of this takes place so that we might be pure and without offense before man and God, having been filled to the brim with righteousness by Christ Jesus through the abiding Spirit. What a calling we have! There is no place for idleness; we must be diligent in our study of the Word of God (2 Timothy 2:15) so that the Spirit of God may be able to guide us into the Truth (John 16:13), and do His work of sanctification.

This filling of the fruits (or evidences of righteousness) is by the Spirit of God, as we have seen; however, it is made possible by (or through) the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus paid the price for our sins on Calvary, and proclaimed from the cross, “It is finished” (John 19:30). *Finished* means to complete, and carries the perfect tense (done once in the past, never to be repeated). “[God] Who hath saved us, and called *us* with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according

¹⁴³ Strong’s Online.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began ...” (2 Timothy 1:9). The “It is finished” of Christ upon the cross was in place before the creation of the world (Revelation 13:8); therefore, Jesus’ choice of words is so fitting – His redemptive act was set in place before the world began, and it would only happen once! “And as it is appointed unto men once to die [no reincarnation], but after this the judgment [no purgatory]: So Christ was once offered [no Catholic Eucharist] to bear the sins of many ...” (Hebrews 9:27-28). Since we have been called with a *holy calling* (2 Timothy 1:9), which means that we are to live in holiness before God (1 Peter 1:15), we must occupy our time on this earth by seeking to live in obedience to the Lord’s commands (1 John 2:3) – which will serve to show forth His righteousness (Romans 8:4).



The capstone of Paul’s prayer for the Philippians is that everything will be to the glory and praise of God. Jesus said, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16). When Jesus performed His miracles while on earth, the response of the crowds was to consistently give glory to God (Matthew 15:31). Jesus has provided us with the supreme example of what it means to walk in holiness; He was sinless, yet lived among sinful men. As we “walk worthy of the vocation [or calling] wherewith [we] are called” (Ephesians 4:1), we will discover that the enabling, abiding presence of the Spirit of God will guide us into a life that will bring glory to God. We are challenged to fix our eyes upon the Founder and the Perfecter of the faith – Jesus (Hebrews 12:2); He is the One in Whom we are to abide (John 15:4). The Apostle John wrote of this necessary focus when he said, “Love [present tense command] not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love [subjunctive mood – possibility, not certainty] the world, the love of the Father is [absolutely] not in him” (1 John 2:15).¹⁴⁶ The phrase “if any man love the world” speaks of a choice that must be made; the command has been issued, now it is time to exercise the will and choose. Unlike so much of what is heard in churches today, this is not a decision to be made and then life carries on as usual; this demands a consistent and continual choice for godliness (the *love not the world* is in the present tense). “For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold [subjunctive mood] the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end ...” (Hebrews 3:14). Without perseverance in our commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ, there is no assurance of our eternal participation with Him in glory.

¹² But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things *which happened* unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel;



Paul now moves on with his letter. The English word *but* calls for a contrasting concept to be presented, but that is not the case here. The Greek word is not *alla* (*but*), which calls for a contrary idea, but the more general word *de*, which can also be translated as *and*, *now* or *moreover*.¹⁴⁷

The context for Paul’s comment is the fact that he is being held as a prisoner by Rome; he speaks of his *bonds in Christ* in the following verse. Paul wants the Philippians to understand that his imprisonment has proven to be another occasion used by the Lord to advance His truth. Even though, by all appearances, it might be considered to be a negative time, Paul used it as another opportunity to proclaim the Gospel message. “And when they had appointed him a day [to explain the message of the Gospel to interested Jews], there came many to him into *his* lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of

¹⁴⁶ Strong’s Online.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

the law of Moses, and *out of* the prophets, from morning till evening” (Acts 28:23). Paul may have been confined to his room but he was able to welcome everyone who wanted to hear the Gospel.

The Greek word translated as *would* is really a little stronger than that, and carries the idea of desire;¹⁴⁸ there is purpose or intent in what Paul *desires* them to know. He wants them to know that the Gospel message has not been hindered at all by his imprisonment. Even as he wrote to Timothy, “Wherein I suffer trouble [through proclaiming the Gospel], as an evil doer, *even* unto bonds; but the word of God is [absolutely] not bound” (2 Timothy 2:9).¹⁴⁹ Perhaps Satan thought to stifle Paul’s impact by having him confined, yet his influence and the message of God flourished. *Bound* is in the perfect tense (which says that this action happened once in the past but it will never be repeated). In this case, the single, past-action form of *bound* is tied to the absolute negative, *not*; this means that the Word of God has absolutely never been bound, not even once – nor will it ever be bound. The perfect tense limits the verb to one past action, and the negative means that that past action never happened; it places the Word of God outside of the possibility of ever being constrained. “So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper *in the thing* whereto I sent it” (Isaiah 55:11).

¹³ So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other *places*;



It is clear from this that Paul’s incarceration was not hidden, and it is also evident that he was being held because of his faith in Christ. It was the Jews, who sought to kill him, who pressured Paul into appealing to Caesar (Acts 25:11). It seems that Paul was largely under house arrest in Rome, for Luke tells us “And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him ...” (Acts 28:30). He might have been called a privileged prisoner for he evidently paid for a private room, rather than being kept in a cell with other prisoners. The Greek word translated as *hired house* speaks of that which is rented and could be a house, dwelling or lodging; in all likelihood, this would be a lodging (a room) rather than a free-standing house (as we might imagine it).

Palace is from the Greek word *praetorium* (*prahee-to’-ree-on*), which refers specifically to a Roman headquarters.¹⁵⁰ We’ve probably all heard of the Praetorian Guard, those elite soldiers who were specifically selected to be the bodyguard of the ruling Roman emperor. The Greek word for *palace*, used here, is in the neuter, and so refers to the building, not to those making up the ruling arm of Rome. Very often this facility might well be the palace of a former ruling monarch, which would be taken over by the governing Roman authorities and used as their headquarters. Paul makes it clear that everyone within this Roman facility was not only aware of who he was, but also that his imprisonment was because of Christ.

You’ll note that the word *places* has been supplied by the translators and there is no corresponding Greek word. However, *other* is not in neuter form and therefore is referring to other people. Everyone within the Roman headquarters knew of Paul’s situation, *and all the rest*. “And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence [boldness], no man forbidding him [freely]” (Acts 28:30-31).¹⁵¹ The only

¹⁴⁸ Strong’s Online.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

restriction on Paul's preaching was his location, but his door was always open to all who wanted to hear him speak; evidently, he was well known among everyone in the area where he was being kept.

¹⁴ And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.



The phrase *waxing confident* comes from the Greek word *peitho* (*pi'-tho*), which primarily means to be persuaded, and, secondarily, to have confidence.¹⁵² The confidence comes through having been persuaded of the veracity of something, which, in turn, provides a firm foundation for this confidence. Paul says that many of the believers in the Lord have become confident because of his bonds. As we have seen from Acts 28, Paul may have been confined, but he did not let that get in the way of his calling to teach the Gospel to everyone who would hear. As his confined quarters became the hub from which the Gospel flowed freely outward, so the brethren were encouraged and strengthened in their walk with the Lord. The result is literally, more abundantly to dare fearlessly the Word to speak.¹⁵³ Paul's perseverance through his confinement provided other Christians with encouragement to proclaim the truth without fearing the reprisal that might well follow.

This might seem somewhat foreign to our way of thinking, within our western culture. However, what we must not forget is that persecution is a promised result of living a godly life – “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Timothy 3:12). This is a promise of God that few within Evangelicalism today will accept. The emphasis has shifted to tolerance, but, as with so many words, it has been redefined to fit the modern New Age agenda. The 1828 edition of Webster's dictionary defined *tolerance* as, “the power or capacity of enduring; or the act of enduring.”¹⁵⁴ A century and a half later, this unencumbered definition was relegated to number four out of seven, with the primary definition being, “a fair and objective attitude toward those whose opinions, practices, race, religion, nationality, etc. differ from one's own; freedom from bigotry.”¹⁵⁵ This is still a somewhat tolerable definition, although it is evident that the ramifications of the term are beginning to grow, and the attitude toward those who hold differing beliefs has shifted from endurance to a fair attitude. An online Webster's Dictionary has moved the *enduring* to sixth place (out of eight), with the first definition, related to our subject, being, “A disposition to allow freedom of choice and behavior.”¹⁵⁶ Another modern-day dictionary definition is, “the attitude of someone who is willing to accept someone else's beliefs, way of life, etc. without criticizing them even if they disagree with them” (the concept of *enduring* is not even included in this definition).¹⁵⁷ However, the etymology of the word *tolerance* shows that it comes from the Latin word for endurance,¹⁵⁸ yet it seems evident that, with the passage of time, the etymological link has been broken. A decade ago, *tolerance* was defined as “the view that all values, beliefs, lifestyles, and truth claims are equal.”¹⁵⁹ This fits well with the last dictionary definition given (although a little more bold in leveling the playing field), but totally contravenes

¹⁵² Strong's Online.

¹⁵³ Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon.

¹⁵⁴ Noah Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English Language*, 1828 edition, “tolerance.”

¹⁵⁵ *Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language*, 1989 edition, “tolerance.”

¹⁵⁶ <http://www.websters-online-dictionary.org/definitions/tolerance?cx=partner-pub-0939450753529744%3Av0qd01-tdlq&cof=FORID%3A9&ie=UTF-8&q=tolerance&sa=Search#922>

¹⁵⁷ *EnCarta Dictionary* (2010), “tolerance.”

¹⁵⁸ <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?l=t&p=15> “tolerance.”

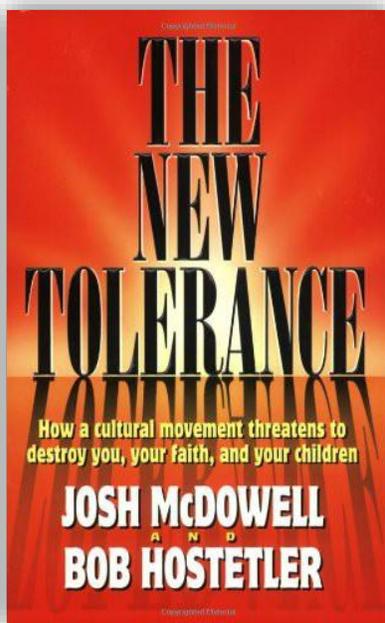
¹⁵⁹ John McDowell & Bob Hostetler, *The New Tolerance*, p. 19.

the historical understanding of the word. As a matter of fact, *enduring* is no longer acceptable because it suggests a standard, and one is merely putting up with those who contravene that standard; under the new definition, it is only acceptable to hold everyone's system of beliefs and lifestyle as being equally valid – there is no acknowledged objective truth, no acceptable standard.

Modernism, which was in vogue at the turn of the 20th century, flowed out of a man-centered view of life; it was rational and focused on facts and reality, and used reasoning to hold it all together. At the end of World War II, post-modernism grew out of a reaction to the failure of modernism to bring any utopian peace. In essence, they took the man-centered philosophy to a new level – since man is the creator of his own reality (based upon perceived facts), then it only follows that every person's outlook on life is equally valid, therefore, we need to love each other. However, modern philosophers are suggesting that even postmodernism is in the throes of death, citing the September 11, 2001 attacks as the basis for the realization that not all perceptions of life are equally valid.¹⁶⁰ The Islamic view of death to the Jews and Christians has some conflict with the prevalent western, New-Age philosophy of being one happy, global family. We have become information junkies, and carefully controlled media presentations are used to mold the opinions of the masses. We have seen this take place with society's shift to a positive, accepting attitude toward Muslims after the 9-11 attacks; what would have rationally been an impossibility (Islam being embraced by the victims of its attack) has proven to be a reality – largely through controlled media. We are entering a time when “media experts” control the information and consequently shape the social mind. We are being bombarded with eastern, mid-eastern and western ideologies all blended together – we are entering a new age of spirituality.

If we pause to consider the progression that has taken place within Christendom, we can see that it has kept pace with the world. Modernism, with its focus on man, formulated the liberalism that took root and flourished in many of the mainline denominations. By making man more than he was ever intended to be, the Liberals made God much less than Who He has always been – the result was a religion in which man could feel good about himself, even while he kept his god under

control. When New Evangelicalism hit the Evangelical world after WWII, it provided a new foundation for ecumenical thinking – all views of faith in God were given equal credence, and unity became the focal concern. Through this has come a general neglect of the Bible among professing Christians – a required precursor for ecumenism to flourish because the Scriptures speak against its inherent compromise and accommodation. The so-called experts in theology are flamboyantly touting their stuff to the masses, their propaganda machines are working overtime in order to convince the unsuspecting of their righteous position. However, the equality of ecumenism has also taken a hit in this age of war on terrorism, and so, out of this confusion, has come the Emergent Church philosophy – mystical experiences and experiential spirituality have now become the great unifier. What you believe (even the common faith of ecumenism) is now being downplayed in favor of gaining access to a super-spiritual experience. The Hindu, the Buddhist, the Jew, and the “Christian” can all practice deep



¹⁶⁰ “Post-postmodernism,” <http://www.scribd.com/mobile/documents/5710598>

breathing, and make use of a mantra or physical activity in order to gain access to an altered-state of mind where one can hear from another world – for the “Christian,” it is an opportunity to personally hear a voice that they like to call “God.” The Bible, God’s expressed Word to us, has become a closed Book; it is now more important to enter the mystical practices of those from a thousand years ago in order to really feel a part of what’s happening today. In fact, the Bible is viewed as being restrictive, divisive and altogether unnecessary; its use is limited to providing a hook for those Evangelicals who are hesitant to enter the mystic’s pathway. In the midst of all of this, tolerance of almost anything is preached – I say *almost*, because those who tenaciously hold to the Word of God will feel the intolerance of this very tolerant group. Jesus said, “If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before *it hated* you” (John 15:18). “And ye shall be hated of all *men* for my name’s sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved” (Matthew 10:22). If there was ever a time when Paul’s prayer for the Philippians (and us) was necessary, it is today; how we need that full knowledge and that highest form of discernment so that we might not lose sight of God’s truth in the midst of this flourishing error.

¹⁵ Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will:



Paul presents an interesting thought here regarding how Christ was being proclaimed. He refers to three motivations for the declaration of the good news of Christ: *envy*, *strife*, and *good will*. The message might be right, but the motives are what are under examination here.

Envy speaks of jealousy over the good success of another.¹⁶¹ This is one of the works of the flesh that Paul identified for the Galatians (Galatians 5:21), yet here it is noted as one of the motivations for preaching the message of Christ. “Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all *men* will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation” (John 11:47-48). “For he [Pilate] knew that for envy they had delivered him” (Matthew 27:18). The ruling, Jewish, religious leaders experienced this *envy*, and it became the foundation for their efforts to destroy Jesus. How can such a negative attitude be used to preach the Gospel?

Through Isaiah God declared, “So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void [empty or without effect], but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper *in the thing* whereto I sent it” (Isaiah 55:11).¹⁶² What seems clear is that there is a power to the Word of God that is totally independent of the messenger, but which is inherent within the *Logos*, the Word (Jesus Christ is identified as the Word of God – Revelation 19:13). As Paul addressed the problem of divisiveness within the Corinthian gathering, he declared, “I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase” (1 Corinthians 3:6-7). The flourishing of the message of truth is not attributable to the efforts of the laborers but only to God. There are those who endeavor to plant because they are envious of the work of someone whom God has called and equipped to plant; nevertheless, it is God Who will use His truth to accomplish His purposes. We are simply laborers (*doulos* – slaves) in the Master’s vineyard; we must strive to labor in accordance with God’s commands, and to be faithful to Him. If God can use the unfaithful efforts of a person, motivated by jealousy, to His glory, then it is a matter of God remaining faithful

¹⁶¹ Friberg Lexicon.

¹⁶² Strong’s Online.

in all things. “If we believe not [become unfaithful], yet he abideth faithful: he cannot [absolute] deny himself” (2 Timothy 2:13).¹⁶³ God is bigger than the jealous worker.

Strife, another work of the flesh, is identified in Galatians 5:20 by the word *variance*. It speaks of debate or discord,¹⁶⁴ contention, and “is the expression of enmity.”¹⁶⁵ This was someone who preached God’s Word, yet in a way that would show that Paul was wrong or inferior in some way, and, thereby, to draw people away from him. Both the *envy* and *strife* show that there will be those who will proclaim the message of the Gospel (at least to some extent) with an ulterior motive or hidden agenda; to a certain degree, the truths of God’s Word are being declared. However, this does not give anyone license to be careless with the Word of God. “But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine ...” (Titus 2:1); Titus was challenged by Paul to make sure that his teaching was without error. “Study [give diligence] to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing [to cut straight, to teach the Word directly and correctly] the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15).¹⁶⁶ Even though God is well able to use the fleshly-motivated declaration of His Word to accomplish His purposes, as those who have been born again by the Spirit of God, we are to take careful heed to what we teach.

However, there are also those who publicly proclaim Christ out of good intent. “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, [absolutely] not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual [bringing Scriptures together with the aid of the Spirit of God]. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned [examined, scrutinized]” (1 Corinthians 2:12-14).¹⁶⁷ Man’s knowledge and understanding will never uncover the spiritual truths that God has for us; herein is the difficulty with much of what comes our way within Evangelicalism today. The average Evangelical theologians have departed so far from the guidance of the Spirit so that all that they are left with is chaff – the Seed of the Word of God has long since slipped, unnoticed, through their fingers.

A friend recently admitted to me that he is a theological fixer-upper; he finds it easier to fix a teaching than to dig to the source and ensure that the doctrine is Biblically well-founded. The difficulty with this approach is that you are continually attending to window-dressing and overlooking the much more significant systemic problems, which can only be dealt with through much more effort (the diligent *study* of 2 Timothy 2:15). This is a glimpse into the Evangelical, theological nightmare that exists today. There has been much building upon the works of others, but little examination of the foundation upon which their theologies have been built; what you end up with is layers of Evangelical teaching, but the Biblical foundation might well be missing. The Bereans were commended for testing what they heard from Paul against the unquestionable standard of the Word of God (Acts 17:10-11), but today, the only examination seems to be on how the new teaching sounds, does it work, will it sell? Pragmatism rules supreme – if it works, then it must be right. Evangelicalism is filled with fixer-uppers, but no one is comparing Scripture with Scripture, under the guidance of the Spirit of God, in order to ensure that the foundation, upon which they are building, is sound. Like the Roman Catholic Church, and many of the mainline denominations that have sprung from its roots, Evangelicals, and even those of the Baptist

¹⁶³ Strong’s Online.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Vine’s “strife.”

¹⁶⁶ Strong’s Online.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

persuasion, have become enthralled with the traditions that they have inherited, to the extent that their traditions form the basis for their teachings, rather than the Scriptures. When they formulate doctrine, they refer back to their familiar traditions rather than the Word of God. A classic example would be the extra-Biblical doctrine of dispensationalism; this teaching has not only flourished within the Evangelical community, it has become the basis for many other teachings which, though well supported by dispensational doctrine, do not find the same level of support from God's Word. However, we still have the promise that the Spirit of God has been sent to guide us into all the truth (John 16:13), and He will carry this task out if we are diligent in our study of the Word of God (1 Corinthians 2:14).

16. The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds:



Contention speaks of ambition, self-seeking, and rivalry¹⁶⁸ – all of which point to activities that are self-promoting. However, the root of this word is not related to *strife* (as above), but comes from a Greek word that means to *serve for hire*, which, in turn, comes from another Greek word meaning *day-laborer*.¹⁶⁹ This individual has a greater commitment to his own welfare than to declaring the message properly; he is more concerned about the paycheck at the end of the day than he is about doing the task at hand. Inasmuch as there is little commitment to the truth (the essence of God's message), compromise and accommodation are easily acceptable.

Jesus contrasted His role as our Shepherd with those who are hired to attend sheep: "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth [layeth down] his life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine" (John 10:11-14).¹⁷⁰ Although the Greek word for *hireling* is not directly related to our word *contention*, there is a basis for comparison. The hireling, of whom Jesus spoke, was not committed to the responsibilities of a shepherd because he was only hired to do a job (the sheep were not his own), so when the challenge of the job became too much for him, he simply left. This is an apt description of today's Evangelical "pastor"; if things become complicated where he is working, he simply moves on. The average time for a pastor to stay with one congregation is less than ten years;¹⁷¹ he is a *hireling* and carries the commitment of a hireling.

Paul's point is that there were those who were preaching the Gospel but were doing so out of a desire to promote themselves. Today, we often hear of pastors who are building their own kingdoms within their churches; as long as things continue to follow their dictates and they remain the undisputed ruler, there is no problem. They desire the biggest church in town, to have the largest congregation, present the flashiest programs, hob-knob with the elite of the community, and generally live sumptuously on the support and adulation of their followers. Their position brings with it an element of prestige, and they thrive on it.

They do not preach Christ from pure motives, *not* (absolutely not) *sincerely*. There will always be a selfish edge to their "ministry," a need to enjoy the limelight, and to receive recognition (even if they feign modesty). Inasmuch as they appear to be a shining star, Paul says that they think to

¹⁶⁸ Vine's "faction."

¹⁶⁹ Friberg Lexicon.

¹⁷⁰ Strong's Online.

¹⁷¹ http://www.ellisonresearch.com/ERPS%20II/release_18_jobs.htm

increase the distress of his imprisonment. Through their envy of Paul, they seek to add to his misery by exalting themselves through the preaching of the Gospel. They were free, Paul was imprisoned; they could draw large crowds, Paul was limited to those who would come to him. The modern-day success of the applied principles of church growth demonstrates that there is still a push to be bigger, fancier, and more popular. Entertainment has become fashionable in an effort to attract the attention of the world, for the purpose of bringing them into the church. Is it successful? If you measure success by attendance, then there is an element of success; if you determine success by individuals committed to the Lord Jesus Christ and the truth of His Word, then these tactics are an abysmal failure. Since they have compromised the Word of God in order to draw the crowds, they have lost the true message of the Gospel – they have no message of life for the worldly, after they have lured them in. All that they can do is continue to entertain them.

¹⁷ But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel.



By contrast, others will preach Christ out of love (*agape*). Jesus said, “Thou shalt love [*agape*] the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love [*agape*] thy neighbour as thyself” (Matthew 22:37-39). This *agape* is directed by the will, not the emotions, which is why Jesus puts our call to love God with all our heart, soul and mind in the form of a commandment, however, not just any command; it is the chief commandment, the most important of all.¹⁷² A command is an order given to which we must comply if we are to be called obedient; “And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep [observe] his commandments” (1 John 2:3).¹⁷³ What John is declaring is that it is through our obedience to the commands of the Lord that we can know (present tense) that we have come to know (perfect tense, it happened once in the past, never to be repeated) Him.¹⁷⁴ The Word of God is marvelous, for, once again, we must realize that we can come to know God only once. By placing our faith in the finished work of Christ upon the cross, we come to know God – His Spirit takes up residence in our hearts, and we begin to abide in Christ. We are given spiritual life through the grace of God (Ephesians 2:8-9), and we are joined together with Christ (Ephesians 4:15-16) – this takes place only once, even as Christ died only once to make provision for our salvation (Hebrews 9:27-28). Out of this one-time event must flow our obedience to the commands of God from a heart of *agape* (that most important commandment); it is our obedience that confirms that we know God. “... that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but [who walk] after the Spirit” (Romans 8:4); “the Spirit itself beareth witness [to witness together] with our spirit, that we are the children of God” (Romans 8:16).¹⁷⁵ We will not have that joint confirmation that we are born of God unless we are walking in accordance with the Spirit of God. “For if we sin wilfully [willfully walking after the flesh] after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no [absolute *no*] more sacrifice for sins” (Hebrews 10:26). We come to know God only once (1 John 2:3); we can become apostate only once, and that with eternal finality.

Our love for others is not only to be as great as our love for ourselves, but it is also to be the same love as we have for God, and in fashion like unto that most important commandment. If we hold an all-consuming love for the Lord, there will be no place for self-promotion; we will echo the words of John the Baptist, “He must increase, but I *must* decrease” (John 3:30). As we come

¹⁷² Friberg Lexicon.

¹⁷³ Strong's Online.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

to understand that our love for others is founded upon our love for God (that most important command), then we must also begin to grasp that our love for others cannot include any



Ken Blanchard

Rick Warren

Rupert Murdoch

contravention of the commandments of God, which would demonstrate that our love for God is faulty, at the very least. We must **never** compromise the Word of God. Yet today we see men like Rick Warren embracing a Buddhist like Ken Blanchard,¹⁷⁶ tolerating the life of pornographer Rupert Murdoch,¹⁷⁷ and including Muslims in his global P.E.A.C.E. plan.¹⁷⁸

When the clear teachings for separation from godlessness (2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1) are blatantly ignored by leaders within Evangelicalism, is it any wonder that the Evangelical hoi-polloi live like the world? Rick Warren built the Saddleback Community Church upon the quicksand of church growth principles (give the people what they want), so it is not surprising that his approach continues to be pragmatic – if it makes sense, let’s try it; if it works, then let’s use it. The Word of God has been shelved except to be used to justify his activities for those who still like to think that the Scriptures are important (and then primarily through the use of multiplied, flawed, modern translations). We are called to holiness (1 Peter 1:15-16), and we must never compromise this calling for the sake of the approval of anyone or for the advancement of any cause; we might well be described as being narrow, but, praise the Lord, the way to life is narrow (Matthew 7:13-14) and it is only through a narrow faith in Christ alone (the only Way – John 14:6) that we can enter that narrow way.

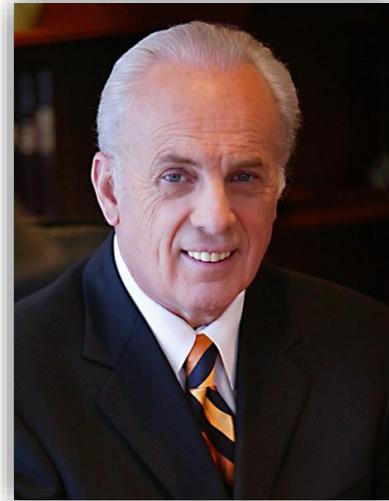
Paul says that some preach Christ out of selfish ambition with a desire to promote themselves, but others out of love. Evangelicals, for the most part, have lost their grip on the Word of God and preach a soft, accommodating gospel, which sees people deluded into thinking that they are on their way to heaven when they continue to walk the broad pathway to destruction. Ecumenism, by definition, requires the authority of the Bible to be shelved (whether the Bible is literally shelved or simply stripped of its significance, it matters little), so everyone teaches that with which they are comfortable (the range of spirituality available ensures a fit for everyone). No matter how the ears might itch, there will be a message that will tickle them to one’s satisfaction (2 Timothy 4:3-4). You have those who promote a feel-good, God-wants-you-to-prosper message (like Joel Osteen) all the way through to the comparative conservatives like John MacArthur, who, despite his in-depth expository teaching, refuses to practice Biblical separation from worldliness (evidenced in his acceptance of rock music) or error (he continues to teach alongside of heretics at conferences like Founder’s Week at Moody Bible Institute). It is safe to say that most Evangelical pastors will fall under the spell of one of the many high profile leaders, all of whom, to varying degrees, have left the Word of God for the “greener” pastures of pragmatism. “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Timothy 3:12); this is not a popular

¹⁷⁶ <http://www.crossroad.to/Quotes/management/blanchard.htm>

¹⁷⁷ <http://www.wnd.com/?pageId=41520>

¹⁷⁸ <http://www.bibleguidance.co.za/Engarticles/Peaceplan.htm>

promise from God, nor does it sit well with our comfort-driven lifestyles. “But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon [immediately] with joy receiveth it; Yet hath he not [absolute] root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by [immediately] he is offended [falls away]” (Matthew 13:20-21).¹⁷⁹ Spiritual failure is the order of the day. We are promised suffering and persecution if we live according to the Scriptures, yet the feel-good preachers of today do not include such “negativity” in their talks; persecution is something that is left to another part of the world. What Evangelicals fail to recognize is that those who fall away are permanently dead – they are now without hope (Hebrews 10:26). As a matter of fact, few Evangelicals will even acknowledge that it is possible for someone to fall away; no matter how withered the plant on the rocks might become, they insist that it is still alive and well. However, from the parable of the Seed, we see that the plant has no root, so when it withers, it is finished – a change from spiritual life to irreversible death, something that is supported by many other Scriptures.



John MacArthur

 The Greek word that Paul uses for *defence* is *apologia* (*ap-ol-og-ee'-ah*), from which we get our word *apologetics* – the defense of the truth of Christian doctrine. *Am set* is literally to lie (as in to *lie down*), and metaphorically means to be set down or appointed.¹⁸⁰ The word *knowing* means to see, to perceive or to understand.¹⁸¹ Those who preached the Gospel from the foundation of *agape*, have known that Paul was appointed by God for the defense of the Gospel message. Right after Paul was born-again, he immediately set out as an apologist, to the point that the Jews felt that since they couldn't accept his teaching, their only recourse was to kill him, because he certainly wasn't going to stop teaching (Acts 9:19-23). According to Evangelical standards today, Paul had it all wrong. He openly declared that persecution and trouble are going to come our way: “For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know” (1 Thessalonians 3:4). However, also unlike today's preacher, Paul could proclaim, “I have not shunned [to draw back] to declare unto you all the counsel of God” (Acts 20:27).¹⁸² The infiltration of compromise, accommodation of error, and a proliferation of flawed Bible translations have all contributed to the Evangelical preacher's failure to know and teach the pure truth of God's Word.

¹⁸ What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.

 Paul's life focused on the Gospel message that he had been given by God to bring to the world. Here is his summary of what he has just written: Christ is being proclaimed, and, whether out of wrong motives or in honesty and truth, he is not only rejoicing in that reality now, but he will also continue to rejoice. This is not a phase that he is just going through at the moment;

¹⁷⁹ Strong's Online.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Ibid.

he will always rejoice because the message of Christ is being proclaimed, and God will use His Word to accomplish His purposes. What we must be careful to note here is that the difference appears to lie in the motivation for the proclamation of the Gospel, and not variations in the message – *Christ is preached*.

This is not a comparable situation to what is taking place within Evangelical churches today. Although there were some teachers in Paul's day who taught the Word of God with wrong motives (*envy* or *strife*, *pretence*) and some from a genuine love for the Gospel (*in truth*), it was still the Word of God that was being declared. In our day, Evangelicals have so compromised their position that they are no longer proclaiming the truths of God's Word, i.e., Christ is not being preached. Paul's position is this – as long as Christ is being proclaimed, I will be glad, regardless of the motivation of the preacher. However, the moment that the message is compromised, you can rest assured that Paul would come out swinging, for he had no patience for those who would contaminate the pure message of the Gospel. "As we said before, so say I now again, If any *man* preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:9). Even if these men sought to add to Paul's misery through their preaching, Paul was happy to see them prosper in their work as long as their message remained pure. He was glad to see the Gospel proclaimed, and would continue to be glad for this reason: he understood that it was God Who would make His Word accomplish His purposes (1 Corinthians 3:7). However, he would be dismayed at what is taking place today, for the pure message of the Gospel has been compromised in a thousand different ways, and Evangelicals have become promoters of all of this error; ecumenical unity has become the accepted norm. There is absolutely no comfort for the ecumenist in these words of Paul, for they are not preaching Christ either in truth or in pretense, but only in compromise and deception.

¹⁹ For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,



The pure declaration of the message of God's Word was Paul's life; it was his one consuming passion. "For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!" (1 Corinthians 9:16). He was a chosen vessel of God to bear His name "before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel" (Acts 9:15). What is evident in Paul's life (as revealed in the book of Acts) is that he was very focused and driven, perhaps to a fault. You will recall the disagreement between Paul and Barnabas over John Mark (Acts 15:37-39), and yet when Paul neared the end of his life he said, "Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry" (2 Timothy 4:11). Paul was not perfect, but he was very zealous about retaining the Gospel in purity and proclaiming it without hindrance.

Paul says here that the clear teaching of Christ (from whatever motivation) will result in his deliverance. He's already said that his imprisonment has emboldened others to speak God's Word without fear of what might befall them, so it seems that Paul understands that there will be one of two possible results to the propagation of the Gospel – either it will lead to increased persecution and possible death, or to increased acceptance and a renewed freedom to preach and teach. Paul hints here that either result will be deliverance for him, but this will come through the Philippian's prayers on his behalf, and through the support of the Holy Spirit. The word *supply* speaks specifically of the "supply of spiritual benefits."¹⁸³ Part of Paul's prayer for the Ephesians fits well

¹⁸³ Friberg Lexicon.

here, "...That he [God] would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might [*dunamis* – power] by his Spirit in the inner man ..." (Ephesians 3:16).¹⁸⁴ The abiding Spirit of God is what is needed to endure.

²⁰ According to my earnest expectation and *my* hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but *that* with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether *it be* by life, or by death.



Here we have confirmation of the two options for deliverance that Paul envisioned.

Earnest expectation is from a Greek word that means “watching with the head stretched forward alertly”,¹⁸⁵ here is an eager expectation, an on-the-edge-of-your-seat anticipation. This expectancy is coupled with hope. To the Romans Paul declared, “For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?” (Romans 8:24). “Now faith is the substance [foundation] of things hoped for, the evidence [proof or conviction] of things not [absolutely] seen” (Hebrews 11:1).¹⁸⁶ The foundation of our hope is faith in Christ, and it provides us with the proof of what we cannot physically see (Romans 8:16). A natural product of our faith in Christ is hope; “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:27) is the mystery of the ages revealed through the Gospel. Jeremiah recorded God’s declaration about a coming day when “I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.” (Jeremiah 31:33). Lest we miss the mighty impact of these words, the writer of Hebrews explains the matter more fully:

Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, This *is* the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these *is*, *there is* no more [absolute] offering for [because of] sin.

Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated [“as opening a way not there before”¹⁸⁷] for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh [Matthew 27:51, the veil of the temple was torn, showing that, through His death, Christ opened a new way into the Holy of Holies]; And *having* an high priest over the house of God; Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled [purified – perfect tense] from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed [perfect tense] with pure water (Hebrews 10:15-22).

Quoting the passage from Jeremiah, and attributing it to the Holy Spirit, the writer of Hebrews goes on to declare the fulfillment of this through the blood that Jesus shed upon the cross. The hope of the believer is, and has always been, founded upon the surety of the prophesied purposes of God being fulfilled in the promised Deliverer, the Lord Jesus Christ. This is why Paul would accept absolutely no deviations from the Gospel message; if we are compromising or accommodating in even what may seem to be a minor matter, it could well set us outside of that

¹⁸⁴ Strong’s Online.

¹⁸⁵ Friberg Lexicon.

¹⁸⁶ Friberg Lexicon; Strong’s Online.

¹⁸⁷ Friberg Lexicon.

new and living way that Christ has purchased for us. Inasmuch as He is our High Priest, we can approach the holy God of all with confidence (v.22) because we have been cleansed in accordance with the prescribed process that was declared for the priests of Israel (Exodus 29:4, 21; cp. 1 Peter 2:9). However, we must not overlook the fact that our purification (sprinkling) and washing is done only once (the perfect tense is used for both operations, indicating that it is done once, never to be repeated). It is critically important that we count the cost of being Jesus' disciple (Luke 14:27,33), lest we begin well, and then fall away. "He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot [to spurn, treat with insulting neglect] the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified [made holy], an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto [insulted] the Spirit of grace?" (Hebrews 10:28-29).¹⁸⁸ Our faith in Christ must be accompanied by a resolve to remain true to Him despite adverse circumstances that might arise because of our faith (we must count the cost); we are called to endure. Unfortunately, counting the cost of following the Lord is no longer considered to be necessary; the Evangelical message is that you only have to believe in Jesus – it will cost you nothing. Jesus said, "...whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not [the absolute *not*] all that he hath, he cannot [absolutely is not able to] be my disciple" (Luke 14:33).¹⁸⁹ Once again, we find the words of Jesus and the proclamation of modern Evangelicals in sharp contradiction.

We see an example of Paul's determination to protect the purity of the Gospel as he deals with the Judaizers who spread their version of the Gospel into the region of Galatia; Paul wrote the Galatians a letter of stern warning against these teachings. Very early in his letter he forthrightly declared, "I marvel that ye are so soon removed [being removed – present tense] from him [God] that called you into the grace of Christ unto another [a different] gospel: Which is not another [of the same kind]; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert [transform into something that is opposite] the gospel of Christ" (Galatians 1:6-7).¹⁹⁰ These Judaizers taught that faith in Christ was fine, but that it was also necessary for new believers to observe the rite of circumcision and keep the Mosaic Law (Acts 15:1,5). Even though they had exercised faith in Christ, it is because of what they sought to add to the Gospel message that Paul called it a different gospel and a perversion of the truth. The Judaizers didn't mix faith in Christ with popular paganism or embrace worldly practices; they simply wanted to hold onto their Jewish traditions. However, Paul's hope (and ours) is in Christ alone by faith alone; He purchased our complete salvation, and we must not permit anyone or anything to taint this narrow truth. "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you" (Deuteronomy 4:2). This unmistakable command, which is reiterated and implied throughout Scripture, places all modern paraphrases, which present themselves as being the Bible, on the do-not-read list.

However, beyond that, it also places modern "translations" like the *New International Version* and *New Living Translation* on the same list. A common translation



Eugene Nida

¹⁸⁸ Strong's Online.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

technique that is used today is called dynamic or functional equivalence (it was developed by Eugene Nida in the early twentieth century, as he worked with Wycliffe Bible Translators, and it then flourished as he moved into working with some of the modern Bible Societies), which simply means that thoughts and ideas are translated rather than individual words, which in turn draws on the translator's interpretation of the thought or idea under consideration. The rationale is that some passages are difficult to understand within some cultures, and this method serves to contextualize the meaning of the passage within the terms of the culture (perhaps a sound, pragmatic thought process, but that does not negate God's command to not add to, or diminish from, His Word). Consider as an illustration John 1:14:

King James Version (a literal translation) – And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

American Standard Version (ASV) (a literal translation based upon the corrupted text of Westcott and Hort) – And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth.

New International Version (NIV) (a mixture of literal and dynamic equivalence) – The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

New Living Translation (NLT) (dynamic equivalence) – So the Word became human and lived here on earth among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the only Son of the Father.

The Living Bible (TLB) (a paraphrase of the *American Standard Version* of 1901) – And Christ became a human being and lived here on earth among us and was full of loving forgiveness and truth. And some of us have seen his glory – the glory of the only Son of the heavenly Father!



Kenneth Taylor

The Message (paraphrase) – The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood. We saw the glory with our own eyes, the one-of-a-kind glory, like Father, like Son, Generous inside and out, true from start to finish.

To compound the matter, the NIV, NLT and the TLB are all based upon the same corrupted source text as the ASV (Westcott and Hort), but even with that you can see the impact of the dynamic equivalence translation technique on this one text, and the further deterioration with the paraphrases. Despite God's admonition to not add to or take away from His Word, man continues to show disregard for God's Word by tinkering with it. Kenneth Taylor, the author of *The Living Bible*, has made the audacious claim that "God planted in my mind the concept of taking the Bible and rephrasing it";¹⁹¹ for God's admonition in Deuteronomy 4:2 Taylor wrote: "Do not add other laws or subtract from

these; just obey them, for they are from the Lord your God." The available option for dynamic

¹⁹¹ http://www.inplainsite.org/html/living_bible.html

equivalence translation and paraphrasing is that you can tweak the true sense of a passage sufficiently so as to hide your own disobedience of it.



The word *ashamed* means to dishonor, or to be made ashamed.¹⁹² The thrust of Paul's statement is: *in nothing will I be dishonored or made ashamed*. It's not that he will feel shame (as our English translation might suggest), but that he will not be dishonored or shamed. Keep in mind that he has just spoken of those who are preaching Christ from wrong motives; the implication is that these will be made to feel shame by the Lord because, even though they preached the true message, they did it for less than honorable reasons (seeking to add to Paul's trials). As Paul neared the end of his life he proclaimed, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7). All three verbs are in the perfect tense (done once, never to be repeated); there is no purgatory in which to continue the struggle for eternal life; there is no reincarnation by which to further advance in faith. Paul is confident in Christ that he will not be dishonored when he meets his Savior in glory.

We now come to an apt summation of Paul's ministry – *with (or in) all boldness, as always*. Paul was fearless in his declaration of the truth, even as a prisoner in the Roman system, and so there is no change from how he has always conducted himself as the servant of the Lord. After regaining his sight in Damascus, Paul was baptized and broke his fast, "And straightway [immediately] he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God" (Acts 9:20). We've all met someone who drew strong reactions from others, people either loved them or hated them – there were few in between. In all likelihood, Paul would have been one of these. He immediately preached Jesus Christ, as the Son of God, to the Jews, and proved from the Scriptures that this was true. There was a clarity and boldness to his discourse that left little room for ambivalence – you either accepted what he said as truth, or you were required to reject him as a heretic. Paul also demonstrated tenacity, for he pushed his case with the Jews to the point that their only perceived recourse was to kill him (Acts 9:23) – they wouldn't accept his teaching, and he wouldn't quit teaching, so they felt that there was only one option left for them. Even in his defense before King Agrippa and Festus, Paul balanced boldness with respect, so that there remained no doubt as to what his message was (Acts 26:25,28).

In his continued boldness, Paul is confident that Christ will be magnified, or made great, by his body, whether through life or through death. This flows out of his eager anticipation and hope; his faith in Christ did not flicker even in the face of death. With boldness, he will continue to proclaim the Gospel that Christ might be glorified in his life, or in his death, should it come to that.

²¹ For to me to live *is* Christ, and to die *is* gain.



Here is both Paul's summarizing statement and his introduction to the next section of his epistle: if I live, it will be for Christ; if I die, that will be to my advantage. He knew that his life was inextricably tied to the proclamation of the Gospel, and so, if he continued in this life, then that would be his consuming occupation. However, what is noteworthy is that, should he face death, he could look beyond the end of life to what would prove to be to his advantage. He now goes on to elaborate on this amazing truth.

²² But if I live in the flesh, this *is* the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not.

¹⁹² Strong's Online.



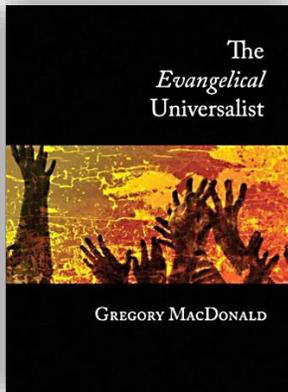
This is a difficult verse to determine exactly what Paul is saying. A transliteration of the Greek yields this: “And if living in the flesh, this to me the advantage of work: even what I will choose I not know.”¹⁹³ Considering the context, and the two options that Paul identifies in the previous verse, *this* must refer back to his preceding comment, *to live, Christ; to die, advantage*. If Paul continues in the flesh (with physical life), the effect or product of his work will be Christ; wherever he went, Christ was proclaimed, and even though he is now confined, Christ is still being proclaimed. Paul’s life is inextricably entwined with the preaching of the Gospel; “For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!” (1 Corinthians 9:16). Even in this, he does not know what he would choose (if he had a choice), whether life in Christ, or to die, which would be even better for him.

²³ For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better:



Paul now begins to elaborate on what he means. *Strait* comes from a Greek word meaning constrained or compressed;¹⁹⁴ he is being pressed by two desires. It is these two (to live, Christ; to die, gain) that have placed Paul in this difficult situation; in today’s jargon, he feels caught between a rock and a hard place, except, in this case, he is feeling the pressure of two blessed realities.

Interestingly, Paul begins his elaboration with the option that would be to his advantage (the second in his previous listing – v. 20). The word *desire* speaks of a craving, a longing,¹⁹⁵ or an eager passion;¹⁹⁶ *depart* includes the idea of departing from life.¹⁹⁷ Paul reveals his heart here – he has a longing to leave this life behind, and now explains why. This next phrase is literally, *and with Christ I am*; the words *to be*, in our text, are in the present tense. This brings up the matter of what happens for the Christian after death?



The Universalist says that everyone will eventually end up being reconciled with God; in extreme cases, this would include the devil and his angels. Origen, one of the early “Church fathers” (c. 185 – 254¹⁹⁸), held a nebulous, allegorical view of all things coming from God and returning to Him, and so held to this all-will-be-right universal concept of salvation.¹⁹⁹ Despite being condemned as a heretic, Origen’s philosophy has survived the centuries and finds a haven today in groups like the Unitarian Universalists as well as many pagan philosophies. However, not all Universalists are Unitarians, and there is a root of this philosophy that has found its

way into Evangelicalism. Karl Barth, a fairly well known theologian of modern times, was both a

¹⁹³ Stephanus 1550 NT; Gingrich Lexicon.

¹⁹⁴ Strong’s Online.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Friberg Lexicon.

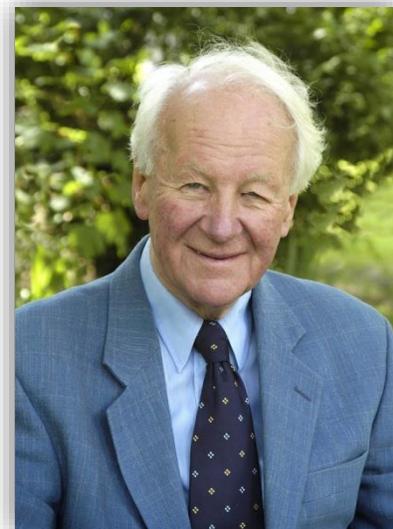
¹⁹⁷ Strong’s Online.

¹⁹⁸ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Origen>

¹⁹⁹ http://www.theologicalstudies.org.uk/article_universalism_bauckham.html

Trinitarian and a Universalist.²⁰⁰ Within modern thinking, this concept is typically couched within an overwhelming emphasis on the love of God. In 2006, Gregory MacDonald published a book called *The Evangelical Universalist*. By employing reason to the interpretation of the Bible passages dealing with hell,²⁰¹ he believes that he presents a Biblical alternative to the traditional concept of hell as being a place of eternal torment for the unsaved. Having skewed the relationship between God's essential holiness and His love for mankind, men like MacDonald cannot abide the thought of hell as a place of retribution, but instead view it more like the Catholic purgatory – a place of rehabilitation.²⁰² They still cling to salvation by grace through Christ alone, but simply hold that all people of all time will eventually come to God through Christ. We can see that the emphasis upon the love of God within modern Evangelicalism is playing right into the hands of a universalistic philosophy; already, in the minds of many, the criteria for heaven has been broadened to include liberals and heretics alike. Within this setting, a book like MacDonald's will undoubtedly find many receptive minds eager to have a studied basis for their universal salvation theories.

Then there are those who believe in some form of annihilation; those who are not saved will either not be resurrected at all, or they will be consumed after they are resurrected – in either case, they will no longer exist. Within this philosophy, hell is not an eternal destiny for anyone, for they will be consumed and cease to be. John Stott, an Anglican theologian respected by many within the Evangelical community, has tentatively stepped into this position simply because “I find the concept [of hell] intolerable and do not understand how people can live with it without either cauterizing their feelings or cracking under the strain.”²⁰³ It was during a debate with a liberal theologian that Stott made his first confession of leaning toward the annihilationist's view; once again, we see the product of one of the planks of New Evangelicalism – dialogue with the liberal heretics. The late Clark Pinnock, a Baptist heretic, was a strong advocate of annihilation, and openly declared, “How can Christians possibly project a deity of such cruelty and vindictiveness whose ways include inflicting everlasting torture upon his creatures, however sinful they may have been? Surely a God who would do such a thing is more nearly like Satan than like God, at least by any ordinary moral standards, and by the gospel itself.”²⁰⁴ What Stott has cautiously presented as his tentative belief, recognizing that the Scriptures speak against such a position, Pinnock openly declared with great zeal. The Jehovah's Witnesses have long believed in the annihilation of the wicked, and believe that this will be the end for Satan as well. They view hell as being synonymous with the grave, and the Biblical reference to the second death as being annihilation.²⁰⁵



John Stott

The Seventh-Day Adventists (SDA) also believe in the annihilation of the wicked, and promote a case for soul-

²⁰⁰ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trinitarian_Universalism

²⁰¹ http://liberalevangelical.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=153:the-evangelical-universalist-by-gregory-macdonald&catid=68:reviews-recent-a-relevant&Itemid=123

²⁰² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trinitarian_Universalism

²⁰³ <http://www.biblicist.org/bible/hell.shtml>

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ <http://www.watchman.org/jw/jwafterl.htm>

sleep, which they describe as a state of unconsciousness between death and resurrection (something that the Jehovah's Witnesses also claim). Since they are less cultish in their approach to the Scriptures (they believe in the inspiration of the Bible, the Trinity, Christ's bodily resurrection, His atonement for our sins, etc.), they appear to fit more closely with Evangelicalism, and there have been several who refuse to call them a cult (the late Walter Martin among them).

As the SDA present their case for soul-sleep, the foundation that they lay is largely built upon OT poetic Scriptures. For example, they quote Ecclesiastes 3:19-20, "For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast: for all is vanity. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again." From this they conclude, "Men have the same spirit or breath as do animals";²⁰⁶ they identify this quote from Ecclesiastes as God's instructive words on this matter. However, Ecclesiastes is the reflections of the wisest of men upon the trials of life, with the recurring theme of "all is vanity," yet the concluding comment is "Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this *is* the whole *duty* of man" (Ecclesiastes 12:13). The SDA hold that man is only dust and breath; he has no immortal soul. The immortality of the soul (which for the SDA is the body plus breath) will only be obtained for the righteous at the resurrection; this is termed a conditional immortality – the wicked will not see immortality but will be annihilated.

Since the SDA hold the body and the breath to be the soul of man, when James writes, "For as the body without the spirit is dead ..." (James 2:26), they hear that the soul is dead because the body and the breath (spirit) have been separated. "Separate one from the other and the soul no longer exists."²⁰⁷ On the one hand they present a dual nature for man (breath and body), on the other hand they say that man is "an indivisible unity of body, mind, and spirit, dependent upon God for life and breath and all else."²⁰⁸ The official position of the SDA is that there is a difference between *spirit* and *breath*, even though they merge these two when it serves the purpose of supporting their doctrine – the "spirit which returns to God when man dies is simply the breath of life."²⁰⁹ Genesis 2:17 poses a significant problem for the SDA if they retain their grasp of the body and breath (spirit) concept of the soul. The commandment of the Lord to Adam was simple, "...But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Genesis 2:17). When Adam and Eve ate of the tree, did they die that day? Physically they survived; their body and breath (equated with the spirit) stayed together, therefore, within SDA terms, their soul remained alive. "If they disobeyed the divine command, they would forfeit their allegiance to God, and become subject to Satan and lose their paradise home."²¹⁰ By linking the breath and the body to make the soul, SDAs have created a problem for themselves – God promised death in the day that Adam ate of the tree, yet within their restrictive framework, no death took place, and so they are forced to change what God said that He would do. God declared *death*; the SDAs say that Adam and Eve forfeited *their allegiance to God*. The breath and the body remained together, so their souls continued to live, although now they were subject to Satan. To sidestep a direct violation of the word of God, the SDAs are forced to fudge (a more politically correct spelling for *lie*) and change the Scriptures. Even though the SDA

²⁰⁶ <http://www.amazingfacts.org/FreeStuff/MoreResources/tabid/146/ctl/ViewMedia/mid/867/ IID/786/MT/AUD/7/Death-and-the-Soul---Part-1/TID/9/Default.aspx>

²⁰⁷ <http://www.amazingfacts.org/FreeStuff/MoreResources/tabid/146/ctl/ViewMedia/mid/867/ IID/787/MT/AUD/7/Death-and-the-Soul---Part-2/TID/9/Default.aspx>

²⁰⁸ <http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/fundamental/index.html>

²⁰⁹ <http://www.amazingfacts.org/FreeStuff/MoreResources/tabid/146/ctl/ViewMedia/mid/867/ IID/786/MT/AUD/7/Death-and-the-Soul---Part-1/TID/9/Default.aspx>

²¹⁰ <http://www.sdarm.org.au/ptcc/ptcc%20lessons%204.htm>

endeavor to present their position as being Biblically sound (actually as the only accurate position), they do violence to the Word of God and try to keep the evidence for their difficulty buried.

They go on, “The spirit returns to God and the body returns to the dust as it was, and so the life ends right there.”²¹¹ Within SDA doctrine, at the moment that the breath leaves the body, the soul is dead; their *soul sleep* is actually *soul death* or *soul oblivion*; the breath goes back to God, the body returns to the earth, and that person will remain non-existent until God calls them forth at the resurrection (at which time the breath and body will come together again). The breath is simply the air moving in and out of our lungs; “At death the soul ceases to exist.”²¹² Within SDA tradition, there is very little difference between the animals that God created, and man – indeed, they contend that man and animals have the same breath, only that man received his breath directly from God. Inasmuch as the breath (or spirit) is only the air that we breathe, and carries no intelligence or personality, the reality is that, at death, a person simply ceases to exist, except in the mind of God. At the resurrection, God then reunites the body (now dust) with the breath that returned to Him, and, voila, there you are again.



When Paul declares that he is “willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord” (2 Corinthians 5:8), we typically accept this as evidence that when a believer in Christ dies, he goes to be with the Lord. The SDA provide a different explanation. They hold that “... when the breath returns to God and leaves the body, there is no longer any **conscious existence** on the part of the individual. The soul is not in existence as long as the breath is not in the body” (emphasis added).²¹³ For the believer in Christ, the SDAs interpret Paul’s words this way: the last conscious thought while in this body will be followed by the next conscious thought when God has called the body and breath together in the resurrection – in between these two conscious thoughts could lie thousands of years of time. There are two noteworthy things about the word *absent*. It is in the present tense (which won’t shake the SDA interpretation), and literally means to be away from one’s country, or figuratively, to be away from.²¹⁴ Paul says that he is willing to be away from his body; if he was merely snuffed out at death (he ceased to exist), he would not be anywhere either with or without his body – which is the SDA doctrine. The word *present* is equally interesting; literally, it means to stay at home, or to be in one’s own land.²¹⁵ This word is also in the present tense, which means that he is at home with the Lord *now*. The thrust of Paul’s words here is simply: now away from the body, now at home with the Lord. If Paul taught the SDA doctrine of soul sleep, then he would not be able to make this declaration.

Jesus said, “And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matthew 10:28). Notice that Jesus separates the body and the soul; there are those who are able to kill the body (render it dead), but are not able to kill the soul – the soul lives on even after the body has been killed. The SDA only apply this verse after the resurrection of the saints, yet the context of Jesus’ words is not referring to this end-time event. It is also important to notice that Jesus uses two different words here: *kill* (*apokteino* – *ap-ok-ti’-no*), which means to render as dead, and *destroy* (*apollumi* – *ap-ol’-loo-*

²¹¹ <http://www.amazingfacts.org/FreeStuff/MoreResources/tabid/146/ctl/ViewMedia/mid/867/ IID/786/MT/AUD/7/Death-and-the-Soul---Part-1/TID/9/Default.aspx>

²¹² <http://www.amazingfacts.org/FreeStuff/MoreResources/tabid/146/ctl/ViewMedia/mid/867/ IID/787/MT/AUD/7/Death-and-the-Soul---Part-2/TID/9/Default.aspx>

²¹³ <http://www.amazingfacts.org/Radio/JoeCrewsRadioSermons/tabid/90/ctl/PlayMedia/mid/423/MDID/1815/Default.aspx>

²¹⁴ Friberg Lexicon.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

me), which means to ruin or render useless, possibly to the extent of death.²¹⁶ There is a difference between the two words. If a person is killed, then they are dead; however, if their life is destroyed, then it might be that they lose the function of their legs or are severely scarred, but their living has not ceased – they are not dead. We might not be able to comprehend eternal punishment in hell, but that does not mean that it is not true.

We might look at the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31) and make out the illustration of what took place in the afterlife at this time (before Jesus completed His redemptive sacrifice – Ephesians 4:8). The SDA look at this as being one among several difficult passages for them, but say that the only purpose for this parable was to show the Jews how they had failed to share God’s truth with the Gentiles. The SDA are quick to spiritualize everything that they read in the Scriptures that does not align with their theology, and, through such allegorical interpretation, they do their best to avoid the truth that might otherwise render their doctrine as heresy.



What seems evident, if we have eyes to see, is that Paul knew no such concept as soul sleep (which is really soul annihilation, if the SDA were to be honest). He held an eager longing to be with Christ – not to cease to exist. While in this life, Paul could commune with Christ through the abiding Spirit of God; his *far better* was not to be wiped out and become only a memory in the mind of God, but to be presently alive in the presence of Christ.

²⁴ Nevertheless to abide in the flesh *is* more needful for you.



Paul now balances his longing to be with Christ (not to enter a time of no existence) with his life focused on preaching Christ. *Abide* is from the Greek word *epimeno*, a strengthened form of *meno*, which means to continue in, possibly with the added thought of perseverance.²¹⁷ Paul’s words to Timothy demonstrate what the Christian life was for him – “I have fought a good fight [a contest of athletes], I have finished *my* course [a race], I have kept [to guard²¹⁸; watch over] the faith” (2 Timothy 4:7).²¹⁹ The *fight* indicates that there has been a struggle; Romans 7:19 gives us a glimpse of the internal struggle that we will all face if we desire to walk according to the Spirit, and 2 Timothy 3:12 tells us that we will face external enemies as well. Jesus warned us of difficulties that we must be willing to face if we would follow Him: “Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance [to cut into two parts] against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man’s foes [enemies] shall be they of his own household” (Matthew 10:34-36).²²⁰ Jesus then goes on to explain that unless we are prepared to take up our cross and follow Him, we are not worthy of Him; there is a price to be paid for following the Lord. Modern Evangelicals proclaim no such cost; they pride themselves on being accommodating of those who believe differently, covering all things with blind, ungodly love. Today’s society conditions everyone to think that there should never be problems or struggles; if there are, then we must run to a professional for help in order to regain the tranquil waters of ignorance, bliss, and blindness. “See no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil”²²¹ is the mantra

²¹⁶ Strong’s Online.

²¹⁷ Vine’s “abide.”

²¹⁸ Strong’s Online.

²¹⁹ Vine’s “fight,” “course,” “kept.”

²²⁰ Strong’s Online.

²²¹ It is uncertain as to the origin of this saying. A Japanese shrine has the three monkeys carved into it, but other indications are that it was brought to Japan from China by a Buddhist monk. Either way, it is a trite saying that is open to subjective interpretation and application, depending on how *evil* is defined. Today,

of our society, and that philosophy is echoed by ecumenical Evangelicals. Jesus declared, "...he that shall endure [*hupomeno* – to abide under suffering] unto the end, the same shall be saved" (Matthew 24:13).²²² We must be prepared for persecution, and we must persevere.

Even though Paul might long to be with the Lord, he recognizes that it is of greater importance to the Philippian believers that he perseveres in the flesh. Paul's ministry was not limited to teaching those who came to him; our Scriptures are living evidence of the ministry that he had through writing. He provided the various gatherings of believers with instruction on many subjects, sometimes specifically corrective, but, at the same time, providing both those Christians and us with vital teaching. Perhaps the Lord used Paul's incarceration in Rome expressly to bring us His instructions, His Word.

²⁵ And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith;



The word *confidence* is from the Greek *peitho* (*pi'-tho*) which means to be persuaded; this is a confidence that is based upon careful consideration.²²³ This word is also in the perfect tense (actually second perfect, but which is identical to the perfect tense – only a spelling difference in Greek), which means that the confidence or persuasion, to which Paul is referring, took place in the past and is presently continuing undiminished.²²⁴

Paul now spells out exactly that which forms his confidence. He begins with the word *know* – *oida*, which suggests fullness of knowledge, to be contrasted with *ginosko*, which signifies a progression in knowledge.²²⁵ As Jesus dealt with the Jews regarding His identity as the Son of God, He said, "Yet ye have not [absolute] known [*ginosko*] him [God]; but I know [*oida*] him: and if I should say, I know [*oida*] him not [absolute], I shall be a liar like unto you: but I know [*oida*] him, and keep his saying" (John 8:55).²²⁶ Jesus accuses the Jews of not having come to know God at all, while He has full knowledge of Who God is, being God in the flesh (John 10:30). Paul is saying that, in this matter, he has fullness of knowledge, and this, too, is in the perfect tense (it happened once, never to be repeated).

Paul's confidence has to do with his relationship with the Philippian believers. He says that he will *abide* and *continue* with them. The former is from the Greek word *meno*, the same as used by Jesus when He said, "Abide in me" (John 15:4). *Continue* comes from the Greek word *sumparameno*, which literally means *with near abide*, or to abide together with.²²⁷ Paul is saying that he has a confirmed confidence and a fullness of knowledge that he will continue with the Philippian Christians. To the Romans he declared, "That I should be [being – present tense] the minister [doing the work of a priest] of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering [performing a sacred service] the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified [made holy] by [in] the Holy Ghost" (Romans 15:16).²²⁸ Paul knew that his calling was to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15), and his ministry for the Lord would not end until the Lord determined

intolerance is considered to be a great evil, except when it is applied against the exclusivity of God's Word.
<http://wrytestuff.com/swa2800.htm>

²²² Vine's "endure."

²²³ Strong's Online.

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ Vine's "know."

²²⁶ Strong's Online.

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ Friberg Lexicon.

that he had finished his course (2 Timothy 4:7). In this assurance, he had confidence that he would continue with the Philippians. Paul's confidence did not rest in his own abilities or determination, but in the very specific calling that he had received of the Lord, and his assurance that the Lord would finish the work that He had prepared for him.

Paul sees that his continuance with the Philippians will be for their *furtherance ... of faith*; for their advancement in faith, and their *joy* or gladness *of faith*.²²⁹ Consider Paul's words to the Ephesians on this matter: "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting [equipping] of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying [building up] of the body of Christ: Till we all [may (subjunctive mood)] come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge [precise and correct] of the Son of God, unto a perfect [complete or mature] man, unto the measure of the stature [maturity] of the fullness [that which is filled] of Christ: That we *henceforth* be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind [tempestuous wind] of doctrine, by the sleight [deception] of men, *and* cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love [*agape*], may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, *even* Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint [connection] supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every [individual] part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love" (Ephesians 4:11-16).²³⁰ The spiritual gifts, which are given to the members of the Body of Christ, are there for the express purpose of edification, of building up those individual members, who are each uniquely gifted by the Spirit of God and placed within the Body to potentially provide maximum benefit. "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also *is* Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized [immersed] into one body, whether *we be* Jews or Gentiles, whether *we be* bond or free; and have been all made to drink into [cause to experience] one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many" (1 Corinthians 12:12-14).²³¹ As members together of the one Body of Christ, we do not exist in isolation – "whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it" (1 Corinthians 12:26). "Submitting [to place in subjection] yourselves one to another [mutually] in the fear of God" (Ephesians 5:21) is Paul's instruction to us. Notice that we are to place ourselves in submission to one another; this is a voluntary, mutual submission; we are to function according to the gift(s) that are given to us through the Spirit of God, ever aware of others who are also members of His Body. However, even in this, we cannot blindly accept what others say without testing it against the Word of God (1 John 4:1).

The words of Jesus are very clear on this matter: "But Jesus called them [His disciples] *unto him*, and said, Ye know [*oida*] that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over [subdue] them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not [absolute] be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:25-28).²³² What Jesus is advocating is that service to one another is to be carried out by everyone – serving one another to the benefit of the whole. Peter, as he wrote of the role of the elders within a local *ekklesia* (called-out ones), says that they are to "Feed the flock of God which is among [with] you, taking the oversight [overseeing] thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over [subduing] God's heritage, but being ensamples [a print or

²²⁹ Strong's Online.

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Friberg Lexicon.

²³² Strong's Online.

impression²³³] to the flock” (1 Peter 5:2-3).²³⁴ An open consideration of these instructions should make it abundantly clear that even those who bear the responsibility of overseeing the local gathering (the elders) are simply with us, not over us. However, the normal practice within churches today is securely founded upon those identified as the clergy (whether pastor or priest), and the rest of the church is called the laity (definitely not of the stature of the clergy). The Scripture knows no such designations; as a matter of fact, you find exactly the opposite. We have seen that Jesus said, “It shall not be so among you”; yet this hierarchical model thrives within the modern church movement; indeed, it is essential for the success of the programs and business operations of the churches. What Jesus condemned has become the backbone of what makes today’s churches function (albeit not Biblically).

It’s interesting to notice that Jesus used the governing authority of the Gentiles as an illustration in this case (Matthew 20:25-28), when He could have used the religious elite from within the Jewish tradition of His day. The context for Jesus’ instruction to His disciples was the occasion of James and John seeking to lay claim to the highest positions within His kingdom for themselves (through their mother). Jesus’ desire was to have His disciples understand their need to serve one another. One thing that the Jews of Jesus’ day understood was their domination by the Gentiles; at every turn they were reminded of the Roman control of their way of life, and so this example would prove to be the most readily understood. Yet, within their own structure of ruling scribes and Pharisees, there was a very similar oppression. “Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples, Saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat [Exodus 18:25]: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe [attend to carefully], *that* observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not. For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay *them* on men’s shoulders; but they *themselves* will not [absolute] move them with one of their fingers. But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries²³⁵, and enlarge the borders of their garments²³⁶, And love [*phileo*] the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi [transliterated from the Hebrew *my great one*²³⁷]. But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, *even* Christ; and all ye are brethren” (Matthew 23:1-8).²³⁸ The scribes and Pharisees knew the Scriptures, and Jesus says, “Do as they say, but do not do as they do.” They loved to be honored and given greetings, which acknowledged their superiority over the average Jew; they might well have known the Scriptures, but the Spirit of the Scriptures had never entered their hearts. We are



Phylacteries

²³³ The Greek word translated as *ensamples* is different from what is normally translated as *example*; the former is much more precise – an actual finger print compared to a drawing of a finger print.

²³⁴ Strong’s Online.

²³⁵ The Greek word is for an amulet or charm (Strong’s Online). The Jewish custom of making two small boxes, placing four texts in them, and then tying them to the forehead and arm came from a literal interpretation of Deuteronomy 6:8. The Lord desired the Israelites to remember His commands, but they forgot His commands and clung to an external tradition.

²³⁶ This is based upon Number 15:38-39, and, again, the Pharisees substituted the tradition for the spiritual reminder that the Lord intended for this outward expression.

²³⁷ Friberg Lexicon.

²³⁸ Strong’s Online.

not to receive the honor of being called the *great one*, or *pope* (originated from father,²³⁹ - Matthew 23:9²⁴⁰), or *reverend* (he who is worthy of respect²⁴¹) or *pastor* (shepherd – John 10:16); the Christ [definite article in the Greek] is our Master and Shepherd (1 Peter 2:25), and (don't miss it) we are ALL brethren in Christ. The moment that we define *clergy* and *laity* within our midst is the moment that we depart from a Biblical foundation for our gathering. This is so fundamentally important to the proper functioning of the Body, yet so completely ignored by most Christians today, whether they consider themselves to be Evangelical or Fundamental.



As Paul considers what is best for the Philippians, he sees that his continued presence with them will be to the growth, or progress, in their walk of faith in the Lord. We also know that Paul would not abide a departure from the truth of the message that he had received of the Lord, and so there would be no place for any compromise. Today's average, pew-warming Christian has settled into a smug complacency; their compromising leaders have assured them of their place in heaven, and they are too comfortable with that to ever check against the Word of God what they have been told. We must not let tradition cloud our judgment; if we have placed our faith in the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ, then we will be held accountable as to how we have handled the Word of God (2 Timothy 2:15), and not someone's constitution, creed, or statement of faith. "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment" (John 7:24). The words of Jesus ring true as a reminder to look beyond the visual and measure all things according to the Word of God (1 John 4:1).

²⁶ That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again.



The word *rejoicing* means to boast or to glory.²⁴² *Abundant* speaks of being filled beyond measure. As Paul anticipates being with the Philippians to strengthen them in their faith, he sees it as being to their increased glorying in Jesus Christ. The focus of the Gospel message is Christ crucified (1 Corinthians 2:2 – Paul never varied from this central theme), and in keeping with that focus, he sees the Philippians glorying even more in Christ with him, through his coming to them. The Apostle Paul had a very clear understanding of his responsibility within the *ekklesia*, and he brought to the nations a clarified Gospel message, which he had received from God (Galatians 1:15-17), a message that even the Apostles in Jerusalem had difficulty accepting (Galatians 2:9,14; 2 Peter 3:16). However, despite his high calling and God-given mandate, Paul loved to refer to the recipients of his letters as *brethren* (Philippians 1:12); even to those who received strong letters of correction, he never failed to address them as *brethren* (twenty times in 1 Corinthians, and nine times in Galatians). He was not superior to them, and they were not inferior to him; they were all members together of the Body of Christ, albeit with differing roles and responsibilities within that Body. He was not only one with them, but he recalled his past and identified himself as the chief of sinners (1 Timothy 1:15). There is absolutely no place for any form of hierarchy within the Body of Christ (Matthew 20:25-28); Christ is the Head, and all who have placed their faith in the finished work of Christ are members together of His Body (Ephesians 4:15; 5:23). As Paul anticipated rejoining the Philippians, he saw that their glorying would be in

²³⁹ <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?l=p&p=37> "pope."

²⁴⁰ The leaders of the Jews accepted the title of Father, which was not unlike being called Rabbi (Strong's Online).

²⁴¹ <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?l=r&p=23> "reverend."

²⁴² Strong's Online.

Christ, not in him; if any should think to rejoice in Paul's presence, then he is writing this to them so that they might rethink their position, and turn their focus onto Christ.

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



The word *conversation* speaks of living your life as a citizen, and, within this context, it is living in this world as a citizen of heaven.²⁴³ The first phrase is a command, which is literally, *only in a manner proper to the Gospel of Christ, live.*²⁴⁴ What does that mean for us? “For this is the love [*agape*] of God, that we [may (subjunctive)] keep his commandments: and his commandments are not [absolute] grievous [a heavy weight]” (1 John 5:3). Jesus said, “If ye love [*agape* (subjunctive)] me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15). It is evident that we are to actively obey the commandments that God has given to us, therefore, it is prudent that we do a careful review of what this command means, lest we fall short of living in a manner worthy of the Gospel of Christ.

We must begin with a proper understanding of Who God is. If we were to ask the average Christian what one word best describes God, they would undoubtedly respond, “Love.” We have become conditioned by our traditions and the modern emphasis that has been placed upon the love of God. Unfortunately, this has only served to change our view of God; as we harbor this over-emphasis upon the love of God, He becomes Someone Who is tolerant and accepting of our best efforts to please Him, and will welcome us if we simply do our best. However, this is not the God Whom we see if we look carefully into Scripture. There is only one characteristic of God that has received triple emphasis: “In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, **Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory**” (Isaiah 6:1-3; repeated by the four living creatures of Revelation 4:8). God is supremely holy, which means that He is separated from everything that would defile, and His love, grace, mercy, etc. flow out of His holiness. If we emphasize God's love to a greater degree than His holiness, it will then lead to tolerance and accommodation of error (which we see all around us today), but if we accept that His love flows through His holiness, then we can recognize that this love, tempered by holiness, requires Christ's sacrifice for our sins, for there is no other way for us to be reconciled to a holy God.

We must also understand who man is. In the Garden of Eden, God gave man only one commandment, “...of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Genesis 2:17). This one command had a very clearly indicated consequence for disobedience. When the devil entered the picture, he began with words that have been re-echoed throughout time, “Yea, hath God said ...?” (Genesis 3:1), thereby casting doubt upon God's word. “And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. And the eyes of them

²⁴³ Strong's Online.

²⁴⁴ Stephanus 1550 NT.

both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons” (Genesis 3:4-7). The devil was partly right; when they ate of the fruit, their eyes were opened (just as he said) and they knew that they had stepped from fellowship with God into evil. God said that they would die, and they immediately died spiritually (their fellowship with God was severed – Genesis 3:8), and they began to die physically as well. Through the ages, man has always sought to provide a covering for his sin, and it began in the Garden of Eden with fig leaves. However, this was a totally inadequate covering, and God provided Adam and Eve with coats of animal skins (Genesis 3:21). Hebrews 9:22 reminds us that “without shedding of blood is [absolutely] no remission [forgiveness of sins].”²⁴⁵ As God dealt with the sin of Adam, He did two things: 1) He promised a death blow to Satan (Genesis 3:15), and 2) He shed the blood of animals to provide acceptable coverings for Adam and Eve. From that day, Satan has aggressively been on the lookout for those whom he can destroy (1 Peter 5:8), beginning with Cain, the firstborn of Adam and Eve. The pattern, established by God, was that blood must be shed to cover the sins of man – foreshadowing the One Who would come to deal the death blow to Satan and be wounded in the process. Cain received the displeasure of the Lord by bringing fruit as an offering (after the manner of the aprons of fig leaves), while Abel brought a blood sacrifice according to the pattern established by God (Genesis 4:3-5).

Adam was created in righteousness, but, with his disobedience (sin), we are now all born in unrighteousness (sin). “Wherefore, as by one man [Adam] sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned [by which everyone sins²⁴⁶] ...” (Romans 5:12). Through Adam, sin became an inherited part of who we are; we sin because we are sinners, we are not sinners because we sin. Contrary to the modern philosophy that we are all innately good people and must look within to find and build on that goodness, we must recognize that we are by nature sinners, helplessly separated from God.

Into the midst of this impossible situation, God breathes good news. As Paul encouraged Timothy, he has also provided us with encouragement: “Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God; Who hath saved us, and called *us* with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world [time] began, But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel ...” (2 Timothy 1:8-10).²⁴⁷ God, from eternity past, was prepared for the redemption of mankind, and, by shedding blood to make coverings for Adam and Eve, He foreshadowed the sacrifice that would ultimately be made by Christ upon the cross.

We must recognize that it is faith in what God has already done for us that will see us step from spiritual death into life. “By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain ...” (Hebrews 11:4). Abel received God’s approval by exercising faith in what had been promised – namely, the Savior to come. John the Baptist recognized the Promised One when he saw Jesus and proclaimed, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). Here was the One Whom Abel’s acceptable sacrifice foreshadowed; the numerous details of the Mosaic sacrificial system all pointed to the One Who was to come, that Prophet of Whom Moses spoke (Deuteronomy 18:18 cp. John 12:49-50).

²⁴⁵ Strong’s Online.

²⁴⁶ Friberg Lexicon.

²⁴⁷ Strong’s Online.

Jesus declared, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by [through] me” (John 14:6). Jesus identifies Himself as being the only way of restoring our relationship with God, but He also warns us to count the cost before we commit to following Him. “And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot [absolute] be my disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish” (Luke 14:27-30). The thrust of Jesus’ words is this: consider the cost of bearing your cross and following the Lord before you make the commitment. Abel was acceptable before God through faith, and we, like Abel, must, by faith, accept what God has done for us through Christ. What most Evangelicals today don’t want to acknowledge is that, like Abel, we will also be called on to suffer for the Lord (1 Thessalonians 3:4). As a matter of fact, we have a promise in Scripture that “...all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Timothy 3:12). Therefore, it is important that we count the cost of following the Lord lest we turn away from Him when trials come our way. “For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge [a precise and correct knowledge] of the truth, there remaineth no [absolute] more sacrifice for sins ...” (Hebrews 10:26). It is a serious matter to turn away from the Lord. We will all fail in our walk with Him (Romans 7 spells this out very clearly), but there is cleansing for failure as we acknowledge our sin to God (1 John 1:8-9). This passage from Hebrews (and there are others just like it) is warning us to guard against giving way to a heart of unbelief (Hebrews 3:12) – not a misstep in our walk with the Lord, but a turning away from Him.



Paul declares here (Philippians 1:27) that we are to live our lives in a manner that is worthy of the Gospel of Christ. As we have looked at the Scriptures, we have seen the necessity of understanding our sinful condition before a holy God, and recognizing Jesus as the only way of restoring our fellowship with God. We have seen Jesus’ charge that, before we commit to following Him, we must count the cost, lest we turn away from Him and become an apostate with no hope. Like Abel of old, we must exercise faith in the salvation that God has put into place; Abel looked forward to the One Who would come, and we look back to the One Who came – but the faith is the same! Our faith must be in Christ, the only Savior for all of mankind (1 Timothy 2:3-6); He is the pivotal Point of history.

Evangelicals, broadly speaking, have failed to retain the understanding that faith cannot remain alone. For example, in the doctrinal statement of Faithful Word Baptist Church (which claims to be both independent and fundamental) it states: “We believe in the **eternal security** of the believer (once saved, always saved)” (emphasis in the original); within their realm, believing in Jesus is all that is required to claim and hold eternal life.²⁴⁸ They openly state that they are opposed to Calvinism, yet, clearly, they agree that there is no such thing as an apostate. On the other hand, we see that Abel expressed his faith in the promise of God by offering a sacrifice in accordance with God’s requirements (obedience), and, by doing so, he incited the anger of his brother, Cain, who knew the demands of God but thought that he had a better plan (disobedience). Christianity today is filled with men and women who are either bound up with their traditions or are satisfied with what they have been told, and have no desire to search out the truths of the Word of God. Jesus made a very simple, yet profound statement, “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15). The Apostle James astutely observes that, “... faith without works is dead” (James 2:26). Here is the balance of which many have lost sight: faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (and the work that He did on the cross to pay for our sins) must be followed by obedience to the Lord’s commands;

²⁴⁸ <http://www.faithfulwordbaptist.org/page6.html>

if there is no walk of obedience, then we have no basis for claiming to have faith in Christ! However, we must not place faith and our works of obedience on the same level, for we are “saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8); works, or good deeds, play absolutely no role in our salvation (Galatians 2:16), nor can we ever expect to win God’s approval by doing good deeds, for we are **not** saved by works. When Paul charges the Philippians to live in a manner worthy of the Gospel of Christ, he is commanding them to live in obedience to the commands of Scripture, an obedience that will flow out of their faith in Christ; today we must accept the same challenge.



With this as a foundation for living, Paul now goes on to spell out what he hopes to hear of the Philippian Christians, whether he comes to them or remains away from them. There are two things that he wants to hear of them; the first is that *ye stand fast in one spirit*. The words *stand fast* are only one word in Greek – *steko* (*stay’-ko*), and it means to stand firmly and to persevere.²⁴⁹ “Therefore, brethren, stand fast [same Greek word], and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle” (2 Thessalonians 2:15). The *traditions* spoken of here are “that which is delivered, the substance of a teaching”;²⁵⁰ this is nothing less than the truth of the Gospel as taught by Paul, either in person or through writing. Paul commanded the Thessalonians to be unmovable from what they had been taught. Traditions (properly defined) are not always bad, but they must be based upon the firm foundation of the Word of God, and not man’s thinking. Today, churches function within a plethora of traditions, and no one seems willing to examine them in the light of God’s Word in order to determine if they are Biblically founded or simply a habit that man has perpetuated through the years. Paul’s desire for the Philippians is that they would remain steadfast in the Word of God. Despite the teachings of the Apostles being very new, there were already many voices of error. You do not have to read far through the letter-books of the NT before it becomes very evident that correction was already necessary. Although Satan may well have been defeated at the cross, he did not slacken his attack upon believers. “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour [to swallow down, destroy]...” (1 Peter 5:8).²⁵¹ Satan is active today destroying lives – whether overtly, or passively, through convincing people that they are okay for eternity. We might well recognize his hand in the active destruction, but the more subtle approach, which might appear to be righteous Evangelicalism, is far more deadly. Jesus spoke of this when He said that He would declare to those who, in His name, had done many wonderful works: “I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matthew 7:23). How vitally important it is that we live in a manner worthy of the Gospel of Christ – in obedience to the Word of God under the guidance of the Spirit of God. Deception has been a primary tool in Satan’s arsenal since he first spoke with Eve, and it will continue to be what he uses to accomplish his destruction of individuals.

Referring to the Antichrist, called the *man of sin* (2 Thessalonians 2:3) and that *Wicked* (2:8), Paul wrote, “*Even him*, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness [deceitfulness] of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not [absolute] the love [*agape*] of the truth, that they might be saved [unto their salvation]” (2:9-10).²⁵² What does the *deceitfulness of unrighteousness* look like? Is it found within the gang violence that we see in our cities today, in the crimes committed against individuals? Both society and our legal justice system recognize these as illegal activities, and, therefore, unrighteous; there is no deceit within this context. The *deceitfulness of unrighteousness*

²⁴⁹ Strong’s Online.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Ibid.

will masquerade as that which is good. Ecumenism is one example of this and is very prevalent among Evangelicals today. It appears to be understanding and gracious toward those of various spiritual convictions; it presents a façade of love and acceptance of everyone. However, the foundation upon which ecumenism is built is a violation of the Word of God, which calls for us to separate from those who hold teachings that are not Scripturally accurate (Romans 16:17-18). Ecumenism, although really unrighteous, wears a cloak of apparent righteousness, thereby concealing its deceitful basis. Evangelicals, for the most part, have bought into the ecumenical mindset, and, even though they might be perceived as being very spiritually minded, they are really wolves in sheep's clothing; they have turned away from the narrow message of life, yet continue to proclaim a hollow message of partial-truths. Where does the *deceitfulness of unrighteousness* lie? – *in them that perish* (give over to eternal misery in hell²⁵³). Satan loves to disguise himself to appear to be a sheep (one of Christ's own), and may even, to an extent, speak the language of the sheep (but always with a satanic accent). Jesus warned us, "Beware of false prophets [one who claims to be a prophet or a spokesman of God when he is not], which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening [vicious, destructive] wolves" (Matthew 7:15).²⁵⁴ Therefore, we are to "try [examine, scrutinize] the spirits whether they are of God" (1 John 4:1)²⁵⁵; as we take time to so test what we are faced with on a daily basis, the Spirit of God will have opportunity to guide us into the truth (John 16:13).

Today we watch the war being waged against terrorism by the armies of the western world, and realize that they are fighting an enemy whom they cannot see. Traditional rules of engagement no longer apply. The terrorists will hide among the civilian population of their own people, and will cry, "Foul" when the innocent die because of attacks launched against them. They will even infiltrate the general population of their enemy and appear to be part of them until they have penetrated their desired target, at which time they will strike. These are tactics that Satan has used against the *ekklesia* of Christ from the very beginning. Eve was not repulsed by the serpent – Satan did not come to her as a vicious and threatening animal; on the contrary, he appeared to present some sound advice and a convincingly balanced view – that was the *deceitfulness of unrighteousness* in action.



Paul is very specific about the Philippians' perseverance – they are to *stand fast in one spirit (heis pneuma)*.²⁵⁶ To the Ephesians Paul wrote, "*There is one body, and one Spirit [heis pneuma], even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all*" (Ephesians 4:4-6).²⁵⁷ One thing that we must never lose sight of is that the message of the Gospel is very, very exclusive. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). There is one Lord, and Jesus identified Himself as being that Lord; there can be only one faith, faith alone in the one Lord Jesus Christ. Why must the Gospel be so exclusive? God is a holy God, and He has prescribed a way for man to be reconciled to Himself – a narrow way through His Son, Jesus Christ (Matthew 7:13-14). The holiness of God demands separation from everything that is not pure before Him; therefore, there can be no variation from the predetermined way of restoring fellowship with God – the way that He designed and set in place before time came into being (2 Timothy 1:9). At first glance, the ecumenically minded "Christian" might well appear to be gracious and loving, but the foundation of ecumenism lies within the territory of the devil;

²⁵³ Strong's Online.

²⁵⁴ Friberg Lexicon.

²⁵⁵ Strong's Online.

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

its feigned righteousness is really unrighteousness, and its unity only fits on the broad road that leads to destruction.

Before emphasizing to the Ephesians the exclusivity of the life of a follower of Christ, Paul wrote, "... walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called ... endeavoring [being diligent, with a sense of urgency] to keep [guard] the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:1,3). The charge is to attend carefully to the existing unity of the Spirit; we are to guard the unity of the Spirit, not try to establish it. This is very similar to *stand fast in one spirit*. What needs to be emphasized in our day of general ecumenical acceptance is that this unity is centered in the abiding Spirit of God. As we abide in Christ, and the Spirit of God abides within us (Romans 8:9-11; 1 John 3:24), we have true unity with Christ and with everyone who is like-minded. There is no need for emphasizing tolerance, and absolutely no place for compromising the narrow truth that leads to life. Yet we need to be aware that the ecumenical crowd also displays a unity; through de-emphasizing the truth of Scripture, by downplaying the historical Christian position on many doctrines, and through a progressive spiritual dumbing-down of the average churching individual, they have achieved a unity within their own rite. Nevertheless, the unity of the ecumenical community is accomplished at a tremendous cost – the Spirit of God has long since departed from them and they, like Samson of old, are totally unaware of His absence (Judges 16:20). We are now in the midst of a generation that has grown up with ecumenical thinking and knows nothing else; all the same, the Scriptures still call for us to stand fast in one Spirit – and that is not the spirit of ecumenism.

Paul goes on to elaborate on how he desires this *one spirit* to reveal itself - *with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel*. The words *striving together* come from one Greek word meaning to contend with.²⁵⁸ This word carries the connotation of entering the public games and working together with someone for the prize.²⁵⁹ If two, in a competition, are working together to achieve a desired goal, then there will be a common focus to their efforts. Paul's instruction here is that as the Philippians live in a manner worthy of the Gospel of Christ, they must do so with one mind. We have already established that the Gospel is a very narrowly defined message of life centered in the Lord Jesus Christ; the singleness of mind of the Philippians must have this as its focus, or it will have departed from the truth.

The Greek word for *mind* is *psuche* (*psoo-khay*'), from which comes our word *psyche*.²⁶⁰ This word is most often translated as *soul* or *life* (rather than *mind*), and, depending upon the context, can refer to the breath of life or "the nonmaterial inner life of human beings for which the body serves as a dwelling place."²⁶¹ The latter would be considered the dwelling place of the Spirit of God within the life of the believer – the Spirit confirming His presence: "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God ..." (Romans 8:16). "And hereby we know that he [Jesus Christ] abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us" (1 John 3:24b). It becomes evident, as we ponder this amazing reality, that, for the Philippians to be of *one soul*, they must be resting in the guiding presence of the Spirit of God. Their unity is in the Spirit of God – they have *one Spirit* abiding within them, *one Lord*, *one faith* (Ephesians 4:4-5).

Evangelicals would undoubtedly claim to be walking in accordance with this admonition to the Philippians. As a matter of fact, they would point the accusing finger at those who endeavor to hold fast to the Word of God as being dissenters and a fly in the "one-mind" ointment, a blemish

²⁵⁸ Vine's "labor."

²⁵⁹ Strong's Online.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

²⁶¹ Friberg Lexicon.

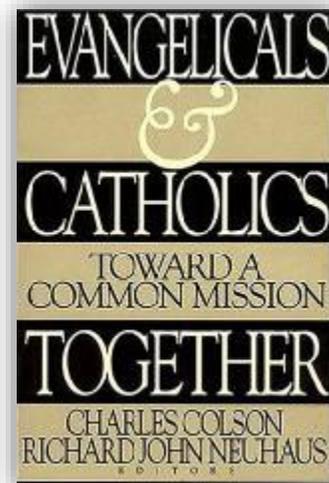
on the unity of Christianity that they attempt to put forward. However, we must not be caught unawares but understand that they have redefined the message of the Gospel of Christ into something that is a defilement of the truth (Galatians 1:6-7). Evangelicals have taken the admonition to be of *one mind* (rather than of one *soul*) and “changed the truth of God into a lie” (Romans 1:25); they have taken the *mind* to be the rational part of our being, and created their own



Richard Neuhaus

unity based upon their humanistic rationale. Charles Colson, that great purveyor of unity who did much to remove the barriers between Evangelicals and Catholics, identified the need to focus on the “great orthodox truths all Christians share” in order to achieve practical unity.²⁶² As he and Richard Neuhaus (a Lutheran who converted to Catholicism) labored together over the document *Evangelicals and Catholics Together*, it became a matter of negotiating what those “great orthodox truths” actually were. They were not using the *soul* under the guiding influence of the Spirit of God to make their determination (the Holy Spirit was clearly not present at all), but only the mind. To the Corinthians Paul wrote, “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know [*oida* – a fullness of knowledge] the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not [absolute] in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth [from the *mind*], but which the Holy Ghost teacheth [from the *soul*]; comparing spiritual things with spiritual” (1 Corinthians 2:12-15).²⁶³ Paul refused to depend upon the wisdom of man to present the truths of God, yet men like Colson go to great lengths to develop a carefully-crafted, rational basis for their belief system; claiming to do the work of Christ even while they transgress His Word.

We must be quick to point out that Paul was not diametrically opposed to the *mind* (*nous*), made up of “the faculties of perceiving and understanding and those of feeling, judging, determining.”²⁶⁴ As he outlined the inner struggle of the flesh against the Spirit in Romans chapter seven, he declared, “So then with the mind [*nous*] I myself serve the law of God ...” (Romans 7:25). It is possible, through understanding and determination, to walk in obedience to God; however, we must guard against our faith remaining in the shallows of our mind – it must penetrate into our soul. Keep in mind that the Seed that fell on rocky soil produced an immediate response, but, because there was no depth of root, the new life perished when it faced external challenges (Matthew 13:20-21). Paul issued the Romans a command concerning the mind: “... be not conformed [an outward or superficial change] to this world: but be ye transformed [inward, deep-seated change] by the renewing [a complete change for the better²⁶⁵] of your mind [*nous* – perception, understanding], that ye may prove [test,



²⁶² Colson, *Body*, p. 104.

²⁶³ Strong’s Online; see page 27 for more on this.

²⁶⁴ Strong’s Online.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

examine] what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Romans 12:2).²⁶⁶ The mind plays a very important role in the walk of the believer. We are to have our minds completely changed by the Spirit of God (there is no other way), which will produce a deep inner transformation. Together, these form a foundation for enabling us to carefully test, or examine, the will of God, an examination that is carried out within the mind. This will only be accomplished through a dramatically renewed mind; a worldly mind will not be suited for the task. “For they that are after the flesh do mind [to set one’s mind on] the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded [to have the mindset of the flesh] *is* death; but to be spiritually minded *is* life and peace. Because the carnal mind [the mindset of the flesh] *is* enmity against God ...” (Romans 8:5-7).²⁶⁷ It is absolutely essential that we permit the Spirit of God to carry out the work of renewing our minds.

As Paul charges the Philippians (and us) to live in a manner in keeping with the Gospel of Christ, it is with the understanding that this will only be possible through the Spirit of God occupying our soul and working a change in our thinking. It is impossible to keep this charge with a worldly mind.

²⁸ And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God.



Here is the second evidence that Paul wants to see in the Philippians living according to the Gospel of Christ. These two evidences counterbalance one another. In the first, Paul desired to see the Philippians firmly established and united in the Spirit; in this second, he desires to see no shrinking from the forces that will stand against them. The literal translation of this first phrase is, *and not frightened or intimidated in no way by those opposing*. Within English, such a double negative is poor grammar; however, in Greek, it provides emphasis – there is to be no fear of those who oppose their stand in Christ. Who would be *opposing*? The word *adversaries* means to lie opposite to or to be set over against something. Paul has just defined the Christian position as a life lived after the manner of the Gospel of Christ (v. 27a), therefore, anything or anyone who is in opposition to, or skews the message of Christ in any way at all, is *opposing*. As we have seen, this life in Christ is very narrowly defined within Scripture, and we must stand fast against any departure from it.

Evangelicals today are seeking to remove all adversaries, but we must not rejoice in their efforts. Rather than identifying and removing them from their midst, they have replaced the accusing finger with open arms as they welcome the former, spiritual enemies to become a part of their community of “believers”; they are removing that divisive fence in order to include the wolves within their new and broadened sheepfold. However, Jesus’ sheepfold has not changed, and the fences were not theirs to move; the fold, of which they perceive themselves to be a part, is actually outside of the sheepfold of our Lord and Shepherd, Jesus Christ. Jesus said, “And other sheep I have, which are not [absolute] of this fold [*aule (ow-lay)*] – the walled, roofless enclosures made in the open country into which flocks were herded for the night]: them also I must [need] bring [to lead], and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold [*poimne (poym'-nay)*] – flock], and one shepherd [*poimen (poy-mane)*]” (John 10:16).²⁶⁸ We might well claim to be believers in Jesus, but we must recognize that the criterion for being a part of His flock is to be led

²⁶⁶ Vine’s “transfigure.”

²⁶⁷ Strong’s Online.

²⁶⁸ Strong’s Online.

by His voice. Jesus is called the Word of God (Revelation 19:13), and therefore we must listen carefully to His voice, “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15); we must be led by the Word of God. Through compromise, accommodation and carelessness, Evangelicals have lost their hold on the Word of God.

When New Evangelicalism (or Neo-evangelicalism, as it is sometimes called) was first advanced in 1948 by Harold Ockenga, it was presented as a new wrapping on the traditional, fundamental approach to the Scriptures. In Ockenga’s own words, “while reaffirming the theological view of fundamentalism ... [we] repudiated its ecclesiology [basically the application of theology to the gatherings in Christ’s name] and its social theory.”²⁶⁹ He went on to say that this Neo-evangelicalism “differed from fundamentalism in its repudiation of separatism and its determination to engage itself in the theological dialogue of the day.”²⁷⁰ Even though he loudly claimed to embrace fundamentalism’s view of God, in his next breath Ockenga identified two areas where they were determined to step away from the Word of God – two areas where the Voice of God would not hold priority. The Apostle John spoke of just such a matter, “He that saith, I know him [i.e., God], and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not [absolute]



Harold Ockenga

in him” (1 John 2:4).²⁷¹ This might sound harsh to the sensitive ears of today’s ecumenist, but we must keep two things in mind: 1) the Word of God speaks to these matters and 2) there is no denying the rapid decline that took place within Evangelicalism after the platform of Neo-evangelicalism was put into action.

Consider, first of all, the Word of God. “Now I beseech [entreat or beg] you, brethren, mark [to fix one’s eyes upon, the word comes from *watchman*] them which cause divisions and offences contrary to [alongside of] the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid [turn away from] them” (Romans 16:17).²⁷² We are called upon to identify those who propound teachings that are different from the Scriptures; we are to “keep a watchful eye on, notice carefully, [to] watch out” for them, and then avoid them (this is a command).²⁷³ We might think that their teachings

will be in opposition to what God’s Word states, but *contrary to* simply means *alongside of*; their teachings could very well appear to be very close to the Word of God, but rather than being right on, they are *alongside of* the truth – their teachings might twist the Bible to suit their fancies (Peter recognized this problem [2 Peter 3:16]), or they might simply ignore essential doctrines in order to maintain their flawed positions. We must guard against being taken in by such subtle error; we are called upon to turn away, or to separate, from it. Ockenga, and the great following of Neo-evangelicals, rejected this Biblical command for separation; in his own words, he touted a *repudiation of separatism*.

We read in 2 Corinthians 6:14, “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?” The thrust of this is that those who are faithful to God’s Word are not to join together

²⁶⁹ Harold Lindsell, The Battle for the Bible, Foreword by Harold J. Ockenga.

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

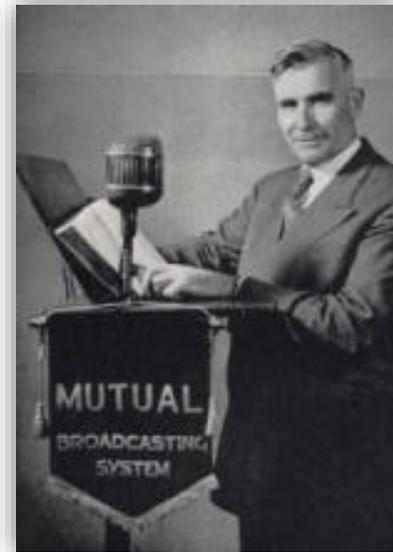
²⁷¹ Strong’s Online.

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ Friberg Lexicon.

with those who are faithless (*unbelievers*), because they have nothing in common. “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch [fasten to] not the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you ...” (2 Corinthians 6:17).²⁷⁴ When Ockenga declared that New Evangelicals were committed to participating in the *theological dialogue* of the day, his purpose was to engage the Liberals in theological discussions; they were intent on gaining academic credibility with their highly-educated, spiritually-dead counterparts within the apostate denominations. Nevertheless, the Lord still calls us to separate from them.

Consider the example of Fuller Seminary’s early years to see how Ockenga’s platform for Christianity played out. In 1947, Charles E. Fuller founded the Seminary, with Ockenga at the helm, for the sole purpose of providing an “excellent theological education” for men like his own son, Daniel Payton Fuller, who had found the teaching at Princeton less than satisfying.²⁷⁵ Although there was an understood commitment by the founders to the inerrancy of Scripture (Ockenga made his New Evangelical declaration in the spring of 1948), as early as December of 1948 discussions were underway to bring Bela Vasady onto the faculty of Fuller Seminary.²⁷⁶ Vasady was a Hungarian, educated in Europe’s atmosphere of critical thinking, who had filled a position as visiting professor at Princeton Theological Seminary²⁷⁷ and, prior to coming to Fuller for discussions, was one of the founders of the ecumenical World Council of Churches.²⁷⁸ Despite the seemingly obvious red flags of association with Princeton and the World Council of Churches, Ockenga was impressed with Vasady, and “thought that his presence on the Fuller faculty would lead West Coast Presbyterians to take Fuller more seriously.”²⁷⁹ By the time the fledgling school had approved a statement of faith that included the concept of Biblical inerrancy (they operated for several years without one), they already had among them a faculty member, Vasady, who refused to sign the statement. Within a scant 15 years from opening its doors with the expressed purpose of defending the inerrant view of the Bible, there were both faculty and board members of Fuller who no longer held to the inerrancy of Scripture.²⁸⁰ Ockenga might well have imagined that his Neo-evangelicalism would adhere to the theology of fundamentalism, but the reality, which soon became apparent, was that this was not the case. It is folly to attempt to proclaim a high view of Scripture even while promoting disobedience to what the Scriptures teach. “Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet *water* and bitter?” (James 3:11).



Charles E. Fuller

Fuller Seminary, founded upon the dream of Charles E. Fuller to have a Biblically sound school in which to train men like his son Daniel, was within a few years little better than Princeton Theological Seminary – that bastion of liberalism that gave rise to the dream. Even within a controlled environment like Fuller, the solid foundation of the

²⁷⁴ Strong’s Online.

²⁷⁵ Lindsell, p. 106.

²⁷⁶ Rudolph Nelson, *The Making and Unmaking of an Evangelical Mind*, p. 78.

²⁷⁷ Lindsell, p. 107.

²⁷⁸ Martin Emil Marty, *Modern American Religion*, p. 446.

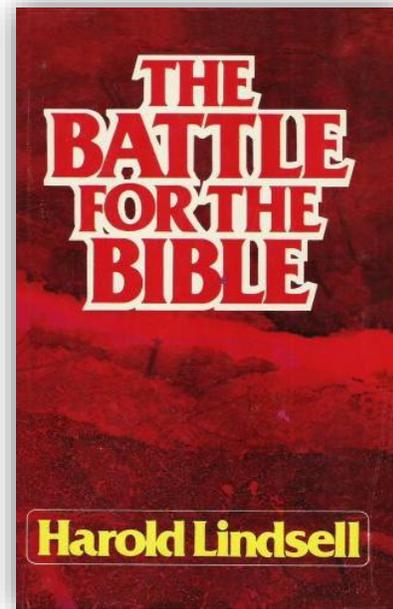
²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ Lindsell, p. 108.

inerrancy of Scripture was lost in a very short time – the bitter replaced the sweet! Ockenga missed a lesson from a child’s tongue twister: “Betty bought a bit of butter but the bit of butter Betty bought was bitter so Betty bought some better butter to make the bitter butter better. But the bitter butter made the better butter bitter.”²⁸¹ He could not promote disregard for the teachings of Scripture and at the same time expect to hold onto the inerrancy of the Bible; both sweet and bitter water cannot proceed from the same fountain (James 3:11). Harold Lindsell, heavily involved in the founding and early years of Fuller Seminary, saw the error of denying the inerrancy of Scripture; he wrote about it illustrating the disaster that lay ahead for all who subscribe to an errant Bible, and yet he could not muster the courage to separate from the error – he always hoped for a return to a better day.



Paul’s charge to the Philippians is that they are not to be intimidated by those who oppose them, and there will always be those who are opposing the way of Christ. The subtlety of the New Evangelical movement is that it is not overtly contrary to the Word of God; New Evangelicals (who are really no longer “new”) are not diametrically opposed to what the Bible teaches (after all, Fuller Seminary includes instruction in the Bible), they are simply *alongside of* the truth (Romans 16:17). Even though they profess to hold fast to the fundamentalist’s view of God, the reality is that their walk does not support such a profession. Consider a navigator, for example; if he is off by one degree when he plots his course, after one mile he will be about 92 feet away from his targeted position – not really all that far; however, after 100 miles, the error would amount to over 1.7 miles, and the difference between being on the mark, and one degree off, becomes more evident and significant. In other words, a small error can lead to major negative results. New Evangelicalism began with the intent of holding to the fundamental views of God; however, within short order, their own proponents were denying the Word of God. The shift in thinking might have appeared miniscule at the beginning (the enthusiasts would have said that they were holding to 99% of the fundamentalist’s position), but the effects of that seemingly minor shift have been disastrous – even as one of their own, Harold Lindsell, predicted.



Today, we might not fear New Evangelicals (what was originally termed *New* is now standard fare for all Evangelicals), but we could feel intimidated by them. They are so positive about everything (except in walking according to the Word of God), they are so heavily involved in doing much good in the world, and they hold a soundly logical basis for what they do and believe (their reasons for their actions might appear to be sound, but they will not follow the dictates of Scripture). However, we must “be sober [to be calm and collected in spirit – the opposite of being rattled and agitated], [and] be vigilant [to take heed lest through remission and indolence (or laziness) some destructive calamity suddenly overtake one]” because Satan is looking to trip us up and destroy us (1 Peter 5:8).²⁸² We must tenaciously hold onto the truth of God’s Word – something that the general Evangelical community has failed to do. “And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion [literally, a wandering], that they should believe [be persuaded of] a lie: That they

²⁸¹ http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/List_of_tongue-twisters

²⁸² Strong’s Online.

all might be damned [literally, judged – with a connotation of condemnation²⁸³] who believed not [persuaded not of] the truth, but had pleasure [to be well pleased with - willingly] in unrighteousness” (2 Thessalonians 2:11-12).²⁸⁴ Ecumenism is a *strong delusion* built upon a foundation that lies outside of the Word of God; it has swept through Evangelicalism and has become the accepted standard for “Christian” living. The spiritual devastation that took place within that first generation of New Evangelicals, stands as evidence of how quickly and completely those who embrace ecumenism will wander from the truth of God’s Word. Our focus must be the Word of God and obedience to God’s commands to us – therein we will find shelter from the onslaught of ecumenism.



This boldness in the face of opposition, we are told, will do two things: 1) it will serve as proof to those who are opposing the truth of God’s Word of their own destiny of destruction, and 2) within the heart of the persecuted, it will be evidence of salvation. To the Corinthians, Paul explained it this way: “Now thanks *be* unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest [to make evident] the savour [*osme* (*os-may*) - smell] of his knowledge [what is generally known or understood] by [through] us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savour [*euodia* (*yoo-o-dee’-ah*) – sweet smell] of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one *we are* the savour [*osme*] of death unto death; and to the other the savour [*osme*] of life unto life” (2 Corinthians 2:14-16a).²⁸⁵ If, through faith in Christ, you are committed to the truth of God, you will exude a fragrance that will be pleasant to those of like mind, but repulsive to those who take pleasure in unrighteousness (anything that is not the narrow truth of the Gospel). Our confidence in the Spirit of God is proof of the eternal destruction that is awaiting those who are opposing us (as we walk according to the Spirit of God). However, as we see this proof reflected in those who oppose us, we will be assured of the salvation that God has prepared for us.

The tone of Paul’s writing here gives evidence that this opposition will not be something unusual, but is to be expected. Once again, we must carefully reflect on Jesus’ words that we count the cost of being His disciples, lest having begun we fall away. Peter spoke of this, “For if after they have escaped the pollutions [defilement] of the world through the knowledge [a precise and correct knowledge] of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled [involved in] therein, and overcome [to be conquered], the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known [become thoroughly acquainted with] the way of righteousness, than, after they have known *it*, to turn [away] from the holy commandment delivered unto them” (2 Peter 2:20-21).²⁸⁶ The word *turn* is in the active voice; these people, of whom Peter is speaking, are deliberately turning away from God’s Word – they do not unwittingly fall into apostasy, but are actively turning their backs on God. “For if we sin wilfully [of one’s own accord] after that we have received the knowledge [the precise and correct knowledge] of the truth, there remaineth [to leave behind] no more [absolute] sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for [terrible expectation] of judgment [condemnation] and fiery indignation [jealousy], which shall devour [is about to be devouring] the adversaries [a strengthened form of contrary to²⁸⁷]” (Hebrews 10:26-27).²⁸⁸ There is a finality of destiny for those who fall away from God; we

²⁸³ Friberg Lexicon

²⁸⁴ Strong’s Online.

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

²⁸⁷ Vine’s “adversary.”

²⁸⁸ Strong’s Online.

must be committed to the truth and prepared to stand fast in the face of adversity (Philippians 1:27-28).

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



Given comes from a Greek word that means to show favor or kindness, and then to “give freely, bestow graciously,” and, within this context, it refers to that which is given by God.²⁸⁹ Paul speaks of a gift given by God on behalf of Christ; it is something that Christ desires us to have. It is Christ’s desire that we not only believe on Him (we are persuaded of Who He is) but also that we would suffer for Him.

When Paul and Barnabas established the gatherings of believers in the region of Galatia, they warned them that it would be “through much tribulation” (*thlipsis*) that they would enter into the Kingdom of God (Acts 14:22). The Greek word speaks of a pressing together, an oppression, and comes from the same root as the word *narrow* (*thlibo*), which describes the way that leads to life (Matthew 7:14). As Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, he commended them when he said, “... we ... glory in you in the churches of God for your patience [steadfastness, endurance] and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations [*thlipsis* – pressing together] that ye endure [bear]: *Which is* a manifest token [evidence] of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer ...” (2 Thessalonians 1:4-5).²⁹⁰ As the new groups of Christians were established, they were told that suffering and tribulation were to be expected. They were not to consider this as unusual, but normal.

Jesus told us, as His disciples, what we will face in our life on earth: “In the world ye shall have tribulation [*thlipsis*]: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33b).²⁹¹ He also spoke of a day coming: “Immediately after the tribulation [*thlipsis*] of those days ... the Son of Man ... shall send his angels ... and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds ...” (Matthew 24:29-31).²⁹² Have we not all heard that Christians will not go through this coming tribulation (*thlipsis*) because God promised us that we would not receive His wrath (*orge* [*orgay*'])? We read in 1 Thessalonians 5:9 “For God hath not appointed us to wrath [*orge*], but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ ...” Unfortunately, today’s Evangelical has equated the words *wrath* and *tribulation*, thinking that they are the same thing.

The word *wrath* speaks of “the divine reaction against evil, bringing judgment and punishment both historically and in the future,”²⁹³ and which will find its ultimate expression when the wrath of the Lamb of God will be poured out in the final days of God’s judgment on this world (Revelation 6:17). As we continue to abide in Christ by faith, we will not experience God’s wrath against sin (we have been pardoned and cleansed from sin) but we have been promised to go through times of tribulation. It seems apparent that most Evangelicals have been duped into believing that all of our troubles are past; however, it is clear from Scripture that this is not so, but we will only realize this if we are prepared to look at the whole of God’s instruction to us. In the parable of the Seed and the soils, the Seed that fell upon rocky soil is described as “he that heareth the word, and anon [immediately] with joy receiveth it; Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth

²⁸⁹ Vine’s “give.”

²⁹⁰ Strong’s Online.

²⁹¹ Ibid.

²⁹² Ibid.

²⁹³ Friberg Lexicon.

for a while: for when tribulation [*thlipsis*] or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by [immediately] he is offended [falls away]" (Matthew 13:20-21).²⁹⁴ Notice what causes this rejoicing believer to fall away – *thlipsis*, *tribulation*. Here is someone who failed to hear and heed the warning that in this world we will face *tribulation*, and when it came, they were unprepared; this could well describe most Evangelicals today – no one is ready for tribulation because today's theologians have confused *tribulation* with *wrath*, and teach that we will miss it all! None of us looks forward to tribulation, but all of us must be prepared to face such times because they were promised to us by the Lord Who paid our debt of sin.

"He that believeth [present tense – to be persuaded of] on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not [present tense – disobedient, an active refusal to believe] the Son shall not see life; but the wrath [*orge*] of God abideth [present - *meno*] on him" (John 3:36).²⁹⁵ Clearly, the one who has refused to be persuaded of the truth of Christ is subject to the wrath of God. "For the wrath [*orge*] of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness ..." (Romans 1:18). That last phrase is simply *the truth in unrighteousness holding back or suppressing*,²⁹⁶ and clarifies how the unrighteousness of the *men* is expressed. Within the context of Romans, it speaks of unregenerate men who have some knowledge of the truth, because God has shown it to them, yet they suppress that truth and will not acknowledge it. Paul goes on to explain that when these men came to an understanding of Who God is, they did not honor Him as God (v. 21) but, rather, suppressed the truth in favor of their own wisdom (v. 22). Jesus found this to be true within the religious Jews of His day: "But woe unto you, scribes [those who were skilled in the interpretation and instruction of the Law of Moses] and Pharisees [the separatists who would not mix the holy and the profane], hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against [in front of] men: for ye neither go in *yourselves* [they held the Word of God in high regard, yet did not believe it – they suppressed God's truth in favor of their own wisdom], neither [absolute not] suffer ye them that are entering to go in" (Matthew 23:13).²⁹⁷ The religious elite, the teachers of God's Word to the people, permitted their unrighteousness to overshadow the truth of God. This is very similar to the role of the priests and popes of the Roman Catholic Church, who, throughout the Dark Ages, suppressed the truth of God and fed the people the darkness of their own unrighteousness. However, is that any different from today's Evangelical theologians who mask and muzzle the truth of God's Word in favor of their own theologies? They downplay God's holiness and their own sinfulness in favor of a quick prayer to add Jesus to their lives – they do not enter the narrow path that leads to life, and they close the door to life for all who listen to them.

We have all had our day among those who are identified as being under the wrath of God – we have all been sinners headed for destruction. "Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath [*orge*], even as others [the rest]" Ephesians 2:3).²⁹⁸ Left to our own devices, we are children of wrath destined for hell – we are born sinners; by the mercy of God, we can become saints and part of His inheritance in Christ our Savior (Ephesians 1:18). Paul commended the Thessalonians for turning from idols "to serve the living and true God; And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath [*orge* NOT *thlipsis* (tribulation)] to come" (1 Thessalonians 1:9-10). What is so evident

²⁹⁴ Strong's Online.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

²⁹⁶ Friberg Lexicon.

²⁹⁷ Strong's Online.

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

from God's Word is that, when we are born anew by His Spirit, we are snatched away from being recipients of God's wrath (*orge*), but we will still suffer tribulation in this life.

Before we leave this subject, there is another Scripture that we must not miss. "For what glory *is it*, if, when ye be buffeted [literally, to strike with the fist] for your faults [sinning], ye shall take it patiently [*hupomeno* – to endure]? but if, when ye do well [good], and suffer *for it*, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable [*charis* – "that which affords joy"] with God" (1 Peter 2:20).²⁹⁹ Not all suffering that we bear comes as a gift from God – some of it is simply a product of our own failure to walk in keeping with the Spirit of God. There is to be no glorying in such suffering, only repentance before God and man. We have been called to suffering – to endure tribulation; we must not be caught unaware.

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

 Closely tied to the previous verse, Paul identifies himself with the suffering that he has just said will be a natural part of our Christian walk. The word *conflict* speaks of struggle, and comes from the Greek sports arena where men struggled to win the prize. Paul reminds the Philippians that they have seen this struggle in his own life (when he was with them), and they now hear that he continues to face such trials. However, Paul paints tribulation as a normal part of living under the guidance of the Spirit of God; what he has just emphasized for the Philippians is their need to be firmly planted in the Spirit and to show boldness in the face of those who will oppose them at every turn. "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy" (1 Peter 4:12-13).

²⁹⁹ Strong's Online.

Chapter 2

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



Keeping in mind that chapter breaks are a convenient feature added to the Bible by man, there is no break in thought from the previous section dealing with the need for the Philippians to stand fast, to not fear those who were bringing opposition to their Christian walk, and the call to suffer for the Lord. The word *therefore* signals that what follows is founded upon what has just come before.

The two words *if* and *any* appear together in the Greek. As such, they are frequently translated as *if any*, or *if any man* (Matthew 16:24; Mark 4:23), and may also be read as *whoever*.³⁰⁰ In the first phrase, *consolation* comes from a Greek word meaning to call to one's side, and speaks of exhortation, entreaty or that which affords comfort or refreshment.³⁰¹ When we are called to the side of Christ, it could be for exhortation or comfort. Bringing these together, the first phrase would read, *therefore whoever [has] an exhortation in Christ*. The focus of this verse changes somewhat with this consideration: from an uncertain *if* to *whoever* among you has these, thereby removing any doubt that these various things exist. There is no question as to whether there is an exhortation or comfort in Christ – He is our Head. The reminder here is that we are a Body, and, as such, we must function together; we are inter-related, and so if "... one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it" (1 Corinthians 12:26).

The word *comfort* is closely related to *consolation*, meaning to speak closely with someone, but with "a greater degree of tenderness,"³⁰² to encourage.³⁰³ Interestingly, the word that is used in Greek places an emphasis on the means of comfort used by the *whoever*. Not surprisingly, the Greek word for *love* is *agape* – not an emotional love, but a love based upon commitment.

The Greek word for *fellowship* speaks of intimacy and communion;³⁰⁴ *bowels* is the word used for the intestines and, within the Hebrew understanding (which would be very familiar to Paul), is considered to be the seat of the tender emotions of kindness and compassion;³⁰⁵ *mercies* is closely related to *bowels* and speaks of sympathy or pity.³⁰⁶

What we have in this verse is not an appeal for the Philippians to contemplate abstract concepts, but rather a call for them to consider those, within their gathering, who have been gifted in ways that will strengthen all of them as they face suffering. There will be some who have a word of exhortation, who will challenge others to remain firm in Christ; some will have a tender word of encouragement to bolster those who are becoming discouraged; there will be those who are having close fellowship with the Spirit of God, and will challenge and encourage others to such a walk;

³⁰⁰ Friberg Lexicon, Strong's Online.

³⁰¹ Strong's Online.

³⁰² Vine's "comfort."

³⁰³ Friberg Lexicon.

³⁰⁴ Strong's Online.

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

³⁰⁶ Friberg Lexicon.

still others will have the ability to reach out in tenderness and sympathy to those who are struggling with the load of life. As we are born-again of the Spirit of God, we are all placed within the Body of Christ and gifted according to the Spirit's desire (1 Corinthians 12:11). There is no mistake in our placement or in our gifting – it is by Divine appointment. Our circumstances in life might change dramatically over the years, but we can be confident that our gifting by the Spirit will always be appropriate for the needs that we face. Paul encouraged the Thessalonians, “Quench not the Spirit” (1 Thessalonians 5:19); we are not to suppress or constrain the Spirit of God Who is abiding within us, but we are to walk according to His leading so that we might see the righteousness of God lived out through us (Romans 8:4). “But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life” (Romans 6:22). We are to set aside the sinfulness from which we have been freed by the Spirit of God, and become slaves to God – servants of righteousness and holiness (1 Peter 1:15-16). There must be a change of focus and a transformation of living.

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



Paul now elaborates further on his admonition that they *stand fast in one spirit* (1:27). He has just identified the need for those, who have been given gifts, to exercise them, and to use them for mutual edification and growth in the Lord. Now he says to these people (made up of all who have been born-again by the Spirit of God, for we have all received something from the Spirit for the benefit of the Body), *fulfil ye my joy* – fill to the brim my joy.³⁰⁷ This is in the imperative mood; it is a command that they are to make his joy abound.

The next phrase provides a glimpse into the purpose of the expressed gifting of verse one and what will result in Paul's joy being filled to the limit – *that ye be likeminded*; literally, *in order that ye may the same think (autos phroneo)*.³⁰⁸ The Greek word for *think* bears the subjunctive mood, introducing the idea of possibility but not certainty (something that the KJV omits). As spiritual exhortation, encouragement, fellowship and compassion come together within the Body (verse 1), Paul charges them to make his joy flourish so that they might come to the same thinking or understanding. We must not limit this resulting single-mindedness to the fulfillment of Paul's joy – it is inextricably linked to the expression of the exhortation and compassionate gifting listed in the previous verse. It is through the exercise of the gifts of the Spirit that Paul's joy will be filled to the brim, and out of that will flow minds that are centered in the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God must be permitted to do the work for which He was sent, namely, to guide us into all truth (John 16:13). Those who will be deceived in the time of Antichrist, are not saved because they do not have a love (*agape*) for the truth (2 Thessalonians 2:10). The Spirit has been sent to guide us into all truth – if we do not have a love for the truth, then the guidance by the Spirit of God has been ignored. If we have a greater love for a creed, tradition, learning, unity or a theologian, then the Spirit will not open our understanding to the truth of God. However, as we exercise the gift that He has bestowed upon each one of us, the result will be spiritual like-mindedness. Nevertheless, we must recognize that it is only through the Spirit that this will be; we might well hinder the work of the Spirit in us and arrive at a very different understanding of His Word (Paul reflects that possibility here by using the subjunctive mood). We have already noted that the pioneers of the Evangelical Free Church believed that the Spirit of God could draw different people to differing

³⁰⁷ Strong's Online.

³⁰⁸ Friberg Lexicon; Stephanus 1550 NT.

interpretations of His Word, which then permitted them to exercise great liberty with those presenting different, or even conflicting, views of Scripture (those *alongside of* interpretations that are to be avoided – Romans 16:17). Through their failure to properly understand the Spirit of God, they gave themselves the latitude to be very ecumenical and accepting of other faiths – the product of which is evident in their churches today.

Paul now goes on to list three areas that he sees as the foundation for this *same thinking*. The first is having, or holding, the same love (*agape*), identical to the first evidence of the singular fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22). The second is to be *of one accord* – or harmonious.³⁰⁹ The Greek word used is *sumpsuchos* (*soom'-psoo-khos*) and literally means fellow-souled.³¹⁰ As we understand the basis for this *accord*, we readily recognize that it makes no room for the ecumenical unity that is so pervasive today; this is a unity that is centered in the abiding Holy Spirit. And, finally, *of one mind* – a literal translation from the Greek is: *the one thinking*.³¹¹ The central, pivotal essential for all of these is submission to the Spirit of God.

Once again, we must recognize that Biblical unity comes only through the free working of the Spirit of God within the hearts of believers; it does not come, nor will it ever come, through the efforts of men to arrive at a common basis for their faith by closing their eyes to the clear teachings of God in His Word. Chuck Colson and Richard Neuhaus might well have persuaded many to follow their lead through their *Evangelicals and Catholics Together*, but they did not do so with the blessing of God; the Evangelicals and Catholics are indeed coming together, but the Spirit of God has departed from among them. We read of King Saul that, as he cast off the Word of the Lord, so the Lord rejected him from being king over Israel (1 Samuel 15:26) – there is a correlation between our denial of the Lord and His rejection of us. In the same way, when Harold Ockenga renounced the Scriptures in matters of separation (and all Evangelicals have subsequently embraced his error) so the Lord departed from him (and them) (Matthew 7:21-23).

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



This does not begin a new thought, but actually carries on from the previous verse. A literal translation of the first phrase is this: *nothing according to selfish ambition or vanity*.³¹² After identifying *agape*, harmony, and unity of thought as being the products of the exercising of the gifts imparted by the Spirit of God, Paul now points to that for which there is to be no place. Another word for *vainglory* or *vanity* is self-esteem.³¹³ Here is a simple statement that runs contrary to much of modern thinking, even that which has found its way into Evangelical leaders. Robert Schuller, that great purveyor of heresy who still holds significant influence within the minds of many Evangelicals, has said that “sin is any act or thought that robs myself [sic] or another human being of his or her self-esteem.”³¹⁴ Besides demonstrating bad grammar, this statement by Schuller shows that he sees the focus of sin as being against *self*, rather than against God. “For all have sinned [missed the mark], and come short [to fail or lack] of the glory of God”

³⁰⁹ Friberg Lexicon.

³¹⁰ Vine’s “accord.”

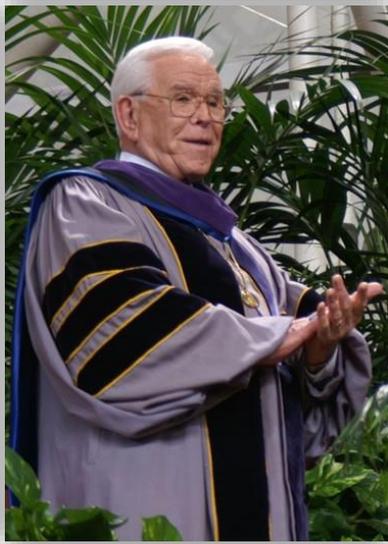
³¹¹ Stephanus 1550 NT.

³¹² Ibid.

³¹³ Strong’s Online.

³¹⁴ Robert Schuller, *Self-Esteem, the New Reformation*, p. 14.

(Romans 3:23); clearly, sin has to do with our failure before God, yet Schuller would propose that, through sin, we have failed ourselves. In typical, modern-day psychobabble, he has made man the



Robert H. Schuller

focus; he has fallen for the very same lie that caught Eve so very long ago – it’s all about me! “And when the woman saw that the tree *was* good for food [personal sustenance], and that it *was* pleasant to the eyes [personal pleasure], and a tree to be desired to make *one* wise [personal prestige], she took of the fruit ...” (Genesis 3:6). Schuller would have encouraged Eve to take the fruit, after all, look what it will do for you! Within his mind, to be born-again means to “be changed from a negative to a positive self-image – from inferiority to self-esteem, from fear to love, from doubt to trust.”³¹⁵ What is strangely missing is that we were once dead, but we are now alive in Christ (Romans 6:11). Schuller, with his false concept of sin and what it means to be a born-again Christian, has been a significant influence in the lives of men like Rick Warren (rated the most influential Evangelical in America in 2010 by *Time* magazine³¹⁶) and Bill Hybels (rated twelfth).

Someone else who promotes the concept of self-esteem, but within an even more commonly accepted forum, is psychologist James Dobson (rated the seventh most influential Evangelical by *Time* magazine). He has written, “If I could write a prescription for the women of the world, it would provide each of them with a healthy dose of self-esteem and personal worth”³¹⁷ Dobson views low self-esteem as “a threat to the entire human family”;³¹⁸ this is not a peripheral matter with him, but lies at the very heart of his philosophy for life. Dobson’s *Focus on the Family* (perhaps more appropriately identified as *Focus on Self*) broadcasts and literature, which are directed toward everyone from the child to the adult, have entered the homes of most Evangelicals today with little or no question; yet we must recognize that his philosophy runs contrary to the Word of God. He has been a great purveyor of the psychology that is based upon the musings of godless men, and he has done much to promote the agenda of New Evangelicalism and ecumenism. If we would be obedient to the exhortation of Romans 16:17, then Schuller and Dobson are two examples of very prominent Evangelicals whom we must avoid altogether – we must not support them in any way, nor fill our ears with their homilies.



The charge here is that nothing is to be done out of selfish ambition or with the intent of making us feel good about ourselves. Lest we somehow miss this, Paul goes on to elaborate on what this means. The contrast is this: in lowliness of mind, we are to mutually regard others as surpassing ourselves. Jesus said that we are to love our neighbors as ourselves (Matthew 22:39); we have a natural,



James Dobson

³¹⁵ Schuller, p. 68.

³¹⁶ <http://www.time.com/time/specials/packages/completelist/0,29569,1993235,00.html>

³¹⁷ Martin & Deidre Bobgan, *James Dobson’s Gospel of Self-Esteem & Psychology*, p. 99.

³¹⁸ Bobgan, p. 46.

intuitive self-preservation – without thinking, we do those things that will preserve our lives; we have an inborn defense mechanism against anything that would seek to cause us harm. There is no suggestion here to set this aside, nor is there any suggestion to be a flag in the wind when it comes to the teachings of Scripture. To the Ephesians, Paul declared that Christ has given gifts unto us “for the perfecting of the saints ... that we *henceforth* be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine ...” (Ephesians 4:12,14). The gifting that we have received from the Spirit of God will make us steadfast and stable within the teachings of the Scripture – well able to stand against the false teaching that continually surrounds us. It is very clear from the example of Paul’s life, that he would not permit anyone to promote any teaching that did not line up perfectly with the doctrine that he had received from God (his letter to the Galatians is a good example of how vigorously he defended the truth). The thrust of this is that we are not to promote ourselves – this harkens back to the original deception into which Eve fell (Genesis 3:5-6; cp. 1 John 2:16). Notice that the devil only presented Eve with the “pride of life” (*ye shall be as gods*), but, as she gave consideration to the devil’s lie, she conjured up the lusts of the flesh and eyes on her own.

In his lengthy explanation to the Corinthians on how the spiritual gifts are at work within the Body of Christ, Paul declares, “But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal [to bear together or at the same time³¹⁹, for the common good³²⁰]” (1 Corinthians 12:7). As we consider this, there are at least three things that we must acknowledge concerning spiritual gifts: 1) they are given by the Spirit of God (1 Corinthians 12:7), 2) they are given so that we might be spiritually strengthened and become like our Head, the Lord Jesus Christ (Ephesians 4:12-16), and 3) they are significant because they are varied by the Spirit of God to fit with the role that He has identified for us within the Body (1 Corinthians 12:12-13). There is nothing haphazard about the distribution of spiritual gifts! As each of us seeks to abide in Christ (John 15:4; 1 John 3:24), we are individually connected to Christ so that we might effectively utilize the gift that we have received for the benefit of the whole Body; by the same token, we must not resist the gifting and role that are designed for us by our omniscient God – to do so would be to grieve the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:30). “[Christ] From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted [held together] by that which every joint [connection – in the physical body, ligaments and sinew] supplieth [provides], according to the effectual working in the measure [or limit] of every [each one] part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love” (Ephesians 4:16).³²¹ We are each limited in what we can do (a natural part of being human), yet, as we are joined to Christ, we are equipped, in accordance with our limitations, for the role that He has prepared for us. “For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we *are* dust” (Psalm 103:14).

As we function within the Body, our focus is not to be on ourselves and how we can look out for “number one.” We have been gifted to function within the Body of Christ so that “the members should have the same care one for another” (1 Corinthians 12:25b) – literally, *each in behalf of one another may care for the members*.³²² We have differing roles and spiritual gifts so that we can function effectively as a Body; we are not all eyes, nor are we all ears (1 Corinthians 12:17); we are to occupy the place that we have been given within the Body, and do so to the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31). This all becomes clearer if we consider Jesus’ words to the religious lawyer who sought to test Him: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it,

³¹⁹ Strong’s Online.

³²⁰ Friberg Lexicon.

³²¹ Ibid.

³²² Ibid.

Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (Matthew 22:37-40). The focus of our *agape* must first be upward toward God, then outward toward others. Modern philosophy would have us believe that we must learn to love ourselves before we can love others; the Scriptures declare, “For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church (*ekklesia*) . . .” (Ephesians 5:29). What could be more clear? The care that the Lord takes for His *ekklesia*, His called-out ones, is compared to how we take care of our own bodies. We work to preserve our lives and do those things that will make life pleasant and enjoyable. We do not need to learn to love ourselves, but we do need to learn how to love God and others (hence Jesus’ commands).



Paul presents the contrasting situation to this self-aggrandizement, and that is *lowliness of mind*. Here is the opposite of an inflated self-esteem. The phrase used comes from a compound Greek word bringing together a word meaning “not rising far from the ground” and another one meaning *understanding*.³²³ This is not a feigned humility, but one that comes from a clear understanding of who we are before God. Unless this awareness has penetrated our hearts, we might well be enamored by the words of Robert Schuller and James Dobson. When we are convinced that we are sinners, not because we have robbed ourselves or anyone else of esteem, but because we were born in sin (we are by nature the children of wrath – Ephesians 2:3), then we begin to recognize, to some degree, the full extent of the sacrifice that Christ made to buy us out of sin. Left to our own devices, we will sin – it is who we are; *for all sin and are coming short of the glory of the God* (the literal translation of Romans 3:23).³²⁴ When Adam sinned, the glory of God departed from him, for he now knew both good and evil (Genesis 3:5); to that point in time, Adam and Eve enjoyed full fellowship with God; they were pure and sinless before Him. With the entrance of sin, the glory departed, and every child of Adam has been born in that un-glorified state – a sinner (Romans 5:18a). However, God had prepared a plan for the redemption of mankind so that man might choose to be restored to the glory that was lost in the Garden of Eden. Jesus, God incarnate, became the central figure in mankind’s redemption, and, through His death and resurrection, He purchased salvation for everyone (1 Timothy 2:5-6). Foreshadowed in the sacrifices prescribed by God from Adam until the cross, faith in God’s Provision for our release from the bondage of sin has always procured salvation. Hebrews 11 plainly tells us that an active faith is pleasing to God, and that “without faith *it is impossible to please him*” (Hebrews 11:6). This One Who cried, “It is finished,” God raised from the dead and gave glory (1 Peter 1:21), to the extent that He is now seated at the right hand of the Father in Heaven (Hebrews 10:12). From this, Paul taught the Corinthians about the resurrection of the bodies of the saints of God; “it is sown in dishonour (the body dies and is buried); it is raised in glory . . .” (1 Corinthians 15:43). On that day of resurrection, we will receive glorified bodies – that final step in our salvation; the restoration of the glory, which Adam lost, will be accomplished. However, it will not be our glory, but the glory of Christ Jesus, for our salvation will only be accomplished as we remain *in Christ* – He is our substitute so that we might receive the mercy and grace of God extended through Him. There will come a day when Jesus will “come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe” (2 Thessalonians 1:10). What we must not miss is that the word *believe* is in the present tense; therefore, we must endure, we must remain *in Christ*, and we must “hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end” (Hebrews 3:14). We must not be cavalier about God’s provision for our salvation; it is marvelous beyond description, and we must remain steadfast in the faith, lest we permit a heart of unbelief (faithlessness) to creep in and we wriggle free of Christ’s grip on us (Hebrews 3:12). This does not contradict Jesus’ words: “My sheep **hear**

³²³ Strong’s Online.

³²⁴ Stephanus 1550 NT.

my voice, and I **know** them, and they **follow** me: And I **give** unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish [the Greek negatives *ou* and *me* along with the subjunctive mood of *perish* makes this the strongest negative possible in Greek,³²⁵], neither shall any *man* pluck them out of my hand” (John 10:27-28). The highlighted verbs are all in the present tense (not an action in the past, but an ongoing reality that thereby holds the promise to *never perish*), and it is important to understand that these all support the concept of endurance and perseverance. Most notable is the promise that no one, or nothing, will ever be able to seize us out of the hand of the Lord – but that does not nullify the warning that we not give way to a heart of unbelief and remove ourselves from the Lord’s protective hand.

We must not forget that “by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8). The word *not* used here is the absolute form; there is absolutely nothing in us that contributes in any way to our salvation – it is entirely of God, and it’s a gift! If we hold a proper understanding of our salvation, then we will have little difficulty exemplifying a lowly humility toward our fellow members of the Body of Christ.

⁴ Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.



The first phrase of this verse provides the basis for the second phrase. Literally, this reads: *not of themselves each contemplating*; the word *things* is not in the Greek.³²⁶ In our



Lilies arrayed in more splendor than Solomon

possession-obsessed society, we understand this to mean that we are not to look at what we own – house, car, lands, money, etc. The word *look* is the Greek *skopeo* (*skop-eh'-o*), which carries the idea of contemplating or directing one’s attention to.³²⁷ In essence, we are not to be consumed with ourselves; Paul used the imperative mood for the word *look* – this is not a suggestion but a command. Jesus said, “Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If then God so clothe the grass, which is to day in the field, and to morrow is cast into the oven; how much more *will he clothe* you, O ye of little faith? And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. For all these

things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. But rather seek [present tense, imperative mood] ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Luke 12:27-31).³²⁸ We do not need to be consumed with ensuring that we are adequately looked after, for our Father in Heaven is very aware of all of our needs – the consuming passion of our minds is to be the kingdom of God. We will not learn of this kingdom by following men like Rick Warren who seek to build God’s kingdom on earth; our seeking must focus on the Word of God, for therein are the words of life.

On the other hand, I cannot lay back with the attitude that the Lord will provide me with everything that I need – that I don’t have to do anything. To the Thessalonians Paul declared, “For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but

³²⁵ https://www.ntgreek.org/pdf/subjunctive_uses.pdf

³²⁶ Stephanus 1550 NT.

³²⁷ Strong’s Online.

³²⁸ Ibid.

are busybodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread” (2 Thessalonians 3:10-12). There is a balance between being obsessed with working, and laziness. We will automatically look after ourselves; therefore, we do not need to make the process of providing for our needs (or wants) the primary focus of our existence. If we would shift our focus from self-absorption to a love for the truth (Jesus said that He is the truth – John 14:6), then we would discover the abundant spiritual provision that God has for us.

The latter phrase of this verse also does not include the word *things*; there is nothing here for the materialistic mind. Literally, this is: *but also each of others*.³²⁹ Rather than being focused on ourselves, we are to turn our attention to those around us. If we consider the metaphor of the body used to describe our relationship with fellow believers, then we must recognize that all of the parts of a body must work together in order to be healthy. With Christ as our Head, and with our life-giving connection to Him (Ephesians 4:16), we are adequately prepared to provide service for the Body – there is no need for self-contemplation, for our needs are met by Christ – by looking upward, not inward. We have been equipped with, and by, the Holy Spirit according to our place within the Body, and the role that God has designed for us.

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



This, too, takes the form of a command; this is not an option, or a suggestion for us to consider, and then either accept or dismiss. The word *mind* means to *think in such a way*.³³⁰ What Paul is referring to is what he has just delineated – namely, we are to regard one another in all humility and not be self-absorbed. This was the mindset of Christ; Paul then proceeds to outline how that was exemplified in the life of Christ.

⁶ Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:



The first thing that must be noted is that what follows refers, in its entirety, to Christ Jesus – the *Who* is Jesus.

The first phrase begins to give us a glimpse into Who Jesus is in respect to God. The literal translation is *in nature being God*.³³¹ *Form* comes from the Greek word *morphe* (*mor-fay*), and is used only three times in the NT. In Mark 16:12 we read, “After that he appeared in another form [*morphe*] unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country.” Here it refers to how Jesus physically appeared to the two disciples walking to Emmaus. Jesus appeared but not so as to be recognized by them; Luke says “their eyes were holden [restrained] that they should not know him” (Luke 24:16).³³² However, in the other two instances (in our verse and the one following), the word carries the thought of the nature, or essence, of Who Jesus is, rather than His physical appearance.³³³ The reason for this is very simple: God is a spirit (John 4:24), and it is understood that a spirit does not have a physical body. Here we have Jesus described as being God in His very essence. The word *being*, or *existing*, is in the present tense and active voice – Jesus presently

³²⁹ Stephanus 1550 NT.

³³⁰ Friberg Lexicon.

³³¹ Stephanus 1550 NT.

³³² Strong’s Online.

³³³ Vine’s “form.”

exists in His very essence as God; He is not God because of the actions of someone else, no one made Him God, He **is** God and exists as such.

As Paul penned these words, Jesus was in His glorified body at the right hand of God the Father in heaven. Does this mean that it is only in His glorified body that Jesus, in His very essence, is God? In His discussion with the Jews as to His identity, Jesus said, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am” (John 8:58). The Jews fully understood Jesus’ forthright declaration that He was God, for “they took up stones to cast at him” (John 8:59) because He identified Himself as being “I AM.” When Moses asked God who he should say sent him to the Israelites, God said, “Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you” (Exodus 3:14). Jesus’ declaration to the Jews places His ever-present existence before Abraham, and He uses the same identifier (*I AM*) as Jehovah used with Moses. God is always in the present (there is no past or future with Him, He bears no such time restraints). “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord ...” (Revelation 1:8); *am* is in the present tense – the Lord is in the present both at the beginning of time and at the end of time, and at all points in between. Just as we might look at a foot ruler, so God views time. Jesus, Who made this declaration to the Apostle John, is, in the very essence of His Being, God – from eternity past He is God.

Open theism denies God’s eternal, every-present existence, perhaps not openly, but the very premise for their position requires that God be restrained by time going forward. They hold that God knows the present and the past “with exhaustive definite knowledge and knows the future as partly definite (closed) and partly indefinite (open).”³³⁴ In other words, God does not know all of the future because man still has to make decisions that will impact the future, and God doesn’t know what man will decide. Interestingly, open theists hold strongly that God’s primary attribute is love; they also believe that He is learning along with man, He can make mistakes, and He will



Greg Boyd

consequently change His plans to mesh with the decisions that man freely makes, without any influence from Him.³³⁵

Greg Boyd, ranked fourth most influential Christian scholar in 2010³³⁶ and a promoter of this doctrine, claims that the God of open theism knows far more than the omniscient God of traditional theology. He sees God as having infinite intelligence, able to see the future as an infinite series of possibilities to which He holds a decided response for each one. They speak of God’s omniscience, but with a difference, “He knows EVERYTHING exactly as it is,”³³⁷ but not as it will be. Within their thinking, God’s omniscience is limited to what is past and present; as for the future, God is learning about it along with man; they place God within the confines of time along with man – the only difference is that God has infinite intelligence. When we speak of God being all-knowing, we understand that God is the ever-present One Who observes the span of time from

the perspective of eternity. However, His omniscience does not make Him deterministic (i.e., men live out what God has predetermined), but simply that He knows all of the decisions that men will freely make and the consequences of those decisions. Calvinism leans toward making God

³³⁴ <http://www.opentheism.info/>

³³⁵ <http://carm.org/what-are-basic-tenets-open-theism>

³³⁶ <http://www.superscholar.org/features/20-most-influential-christian-scholars/>

³³⁷ <http://marcdav.wordpress.com/2006/08/28/greg-boyd-explains-his-open-theism/>

deterministic – all of men’s actions have been predetermined by God in the same way that it clings to all men being born predestined for either heaven or hell.

The priesthood of Jesus follows the pattern of Melchisedec, who was “without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth [present tense] a priest continually [eternally]” (Hebrews 7:3).³³⁸ The writer of Hebrews, through the inspiration of the Spirit of God, shows this statement to speak of the Lord Jesus Christ: “... Thou *art* a priest for ever [eternally] after the order of Melchisedec” (Hebrews 7:17, 21; cp. Psalm 110:4). God announced the One to come, through the Psalmist David, a thousand years before Jesus took on the form of man for the purpose of finalizing God’s plan of salvation. “[God] Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began [time eternal] ...” (2 Timothy 1:9).³³⁹ Jesus’ sacrifice for the redemption of mankind was prepared before time began; from eternity past, Jesus was our High Priest after the likeness of Melchisedec. “But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman ...” (Galatians 4:4); when the time was right in God’s schedule, Jesus, in His very essence as the eternal God, entered this world to fulfill God’s plan for His everlasting priesthood on our behalf.



Paul continues – Jesus *thought it not robbery to be equal with God*. The word *robbery* speaks of grasping onto something; Jesus did not reckon His equality with God as something to be seized and held onto; the word includes the thought of some desperation. *Not*, used here, is the absolute form of the word – Jesus has absolutely no desperate grasp on His Godhood; it was not something to which He clung in the hope that He would not lose it. He is God; He has always been God, and always will be God. “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever” (Hebrews 13:8); He is the “Alpha and Omega, the first and the last ...” (Revelation 1:11). This can only mean that the deity of Christ has never changed – it did not change when He took on the form of man; He is forever a member of the Godhead.

When Jesus healed a lame man on the Sabbath and told him to pick his bed up and walk, the Jews were incensed at this blatant violation of their Sabbath rules. “And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the sabbath day. But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God” (John 5:16-18). The religious leaders of the Jews fully realized that Jesus declared Himself to be God, but were unwilling to accept Him as God because of what it would have meant to them. They would have had to rescind all of the detailed laws that they had added to the Law of Moses; they would have had to remove the burdens that they heaped upon their own people, yet would not so much as lend a finger to lighten their load (Luke 11:46). This great burden of minute laws placed upon the Jews could be laid at the feet of the Pharisees, the scribes and the religious lawyers; each of these were involved in the interpretation and instruction of the Law of Moses, and each loved to complicate the commands of God with their own rules for life. Jesus entered the scene and demonstrated a perfect application of the Law of Moses before the Pharisees, which exposed them as being charlatans. Frequently their accusations against Jesus involved a miracle that Jesus had performed, but which they would choose to ignore in favor of a violation of one of their own rules. In the case cited above, Jesus healed a man who had been lame for 38 years by telling him to “rise, take up thy bed, and walk” (John 5:8). The Pharisees

³³⁸ Friberg Lexicon.

³³⁹ Ibid.

completely ignored the fact that this man, who had been totally helpless for so long, was completely whole; they might not have known what to think about such a miracle, but they did know how to apply their version of the Law – and that is precisely what they did. Their great fear in all of this was that they would lose their influence over the people. At Jesus’ trial, Pilate recognized that the Jewish religious leaders sought His demise out of their fear of His growing popularity: “For he knew that for envy they had delivered him” (Matthew 27:18). Their control of the Jewish people depended upon keeping them in ignorance; Jesus “taught them as *one* having authority, and not as the scribes” (Matthew 7:29); the people recognized the difference. The difference was really quite simple: Jesus spoke the words of God as God; the scribes taught the words of God through their own legalistic grid, in order to maintain their superiority and control over their own people.

Evangelicals have slipped into the same ditch as the scribes and Pharisees of Jesus’ day, except instead of promoting legalism, they promote liberalism. Jesus said, “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted [to leave or abandon] the weightier [more important³⁴⁰] *matters* of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith [the essence for redemption]: these ought [it is necessary] ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone” (Matthew 23:23).³⁴¹ Jesus did not condemn the Pharisees’ diligence in tithing of their herbs, but chastised them for neglecting the matters of eternal consequence; the Pharisees had created a theological framework through which they interpreted God’s Word for the people, and it was a grid of legalism. Evangelicals today have created a theological grid of their own – it is one of liberalism, where the terms essential to salvation have been redefined in an effort to broaden the narrow way and make it socially acceptable. Although claiming to uphold the important elements of the Gospel message, they have desecrated God’s Word and make their converts “twofold more the child of hell” than themselves (Matthew 23:15). Jesus still speaks with the same authority that He used in Galilee, but His Word today has been either shelved or decimated by the godless translators of corrupted texts; His name is The Word of God (Revelation 19:13); He is the eternal Logos – the Truth – we must seek Him!

⁷ But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:



Paul has just clarified that Jesus is God, and now comes a contrast identified by the word *but*; he will now present Jesus in His manhood.

The words *made of no reputation* mean to empty;³⁴² the phrase is *he emptied himself*.³⁴³ The next phrase tells us how He emptied Himself – He took on the form (*morphe*) of a slave (*doulos*). Being in nature and essence God, Jesus now also became in nature and essence a slave. Even though He did not cease to be God, He set His glory aside in order to identify with His creation, man. What must not be overlooked is that the words *emptied (made of no reputation)* and *took* are in the active voice – Jesus is the One Who emptied Himself; Jesus took on the form of a slave. He came willingly, with the intent of procuring complete redemption for mankind; this was not forced

³⁴⁰ Friberg Lexicon.

³⁴¹ Strong’s Online.

³⁴² Ibid.

³⁴³ Friberg Lexicon.

upon Him, but He came in accordance with the plan that He, as part of the eternal Godhead, had established before creation began.

The word *form* is used in the same way as in the previous verse; it refers to the nature or essence – Jesus took upon Himself the very essence of a slave (*doulos*). “And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant (*doulos*): Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:27-28). Jesus set the example of what it means to serve. However, in His case, the service was much more costly. “For scarcely [hardly] for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure [perhaps] for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet [still being] sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:7-8).³⁴⁴ Slaves are generally regarded as property, and, although not as disposable as a piece of furniture, they were considered dispensable – hence, there were those who made a living through the buying and selling of slaves – slave traders. The eternal Son of God left the unimaginable glories of heaven with the express purpose of coming to earth to die for the sins of mankind. Keep in mind, man was not on good terms with God at this time – man was a sinner condemned to death, doomed to eternal separation from God. Jesus came “to give his life a ransom for many³⁴⁵” (Matthew 20:28); this ransom, the payment required for sin, was considered paid before the creation of the world (Revelation 13:8). Jesus said, “For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me” (John 6:38); He came in the very essence of a slave to do the will of the Father – even while He remained fully God. We cannot begin to fathom the sacrifice that Jesus willingly made so that He could fulfill His eternal plan of redemption.

The last phrase says that Jesus *was made in the likeness of men*. *Likeness* is not the same Greek word as *form*; it does not speak to the nature and essence of Jesus but rather to Him bearing the resemblance of a man, “such as amounts almost to equality.”³⁴⁶ “For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the **likeness** [same Greek word] of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled [filled to the brim] in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Romans 8:3-4).³⁴⁷ The word *likeness* speaks of the appearance, the image, but not the essence; Jesus took on the flesh of man, but He was entirely without sin (not being born of Adam). “For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as *we are*, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15). Jesus identified Himself with mankind; God became a man so that He might purchase man from his sin. “Forasmuch then as the children [small children, as young as an infant just born] are partakers [*koinoneo* – to share in] of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise [in the same way] took part [became a partaker] of the same; that through death he might destroy [*katargeo* – put an end to] him that had the power [dominion or control] of death, that is, the devil; And deliver [to set free] them who through fear of death were all their lifetime [living (verb)] subject to bondage. For verily he took not on *him the nature of* angels; but he took on *him* the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved [under obligation³⁴⁸] him to be made like unto *his* brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things *pertaining* to [with] God, to make reconciliation [appeasement³⁴⁹] for the sins of

³⁴⁴ Strong’s Online.

³⁴⁵ Friberg Lexicon: “the Semitic inclusive sense is to be understood, i.e. Jesus died for all.”

³⁴⁶ Strong’s Online.

³⁴⁷ Ibid.

³⁴⁸ Friberg Lexicon.

³⁴⁹ Within Greek paganism, it was the people who had to appease the gods, or try to make them look favorably upon them through sacrifices; within God’s economy, it is God Who made a sacrifice to appease His own

the people” (Hebrews 2:14-17). Jesus, physically, became a descendent of Abraham so that He might, in mercy, stand between a holy God and sinful man. Inasmuch as He is God, He can identify with God; because He became man, He can reach out to men and bring reconciliation with God – “For *there is* one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus ...” (1 Timothy 2:5).

The religious Jews could not think of Jesus as being anything more than just a man, and absolutely refused to accept His deity. Evangelicals, for the most part, will accept the deity of Christ. Even Robert Schuller, that great fountain of heresy, includes the following in his statement of faith for the Crystal Cathedral: “Jesus Christ is fully God, and the only begotten Son of God, born of the Virgin Mary.”³⁵⁰ We must exercise caution when it comes to taking such high sounding



Crystal Cathedral

words at face value. Very often, within the life of a leader such as Schuller, the statements are drafted to follow mainstream Evangelicalism lest they immediately be branded as a heretic; or, often the faith of the leader does not remain steadfast, and, what they once held as truth, they have since repudiated, but conveniently neglected to update their declared basis for faith. Just as often, terms are redefined along the way so as to provide freedom of expression; liberal theologians will use many of the same terms as Fundamentalists, but they do not mean the same thing – we must be cautious. John commanded us, “Beloved, believe not [do not be persuaded by] every spirit, but try [examine, prove, scrutinize] the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1).³⁵¹ Jesus commanded, “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves” (Matthew 7:15). We

must exercise caution as we face anyone who professes to be a Christian, and we must make the time to examine what they say, what they do, and with whom they associate, according to the unchanging Word of God. The prerequisite for this examination is that we are right with God ourselves; if we hold a skewed view of the Scriptures, it will only follow that our assessment of others will likewise be skewed. We must do much more than simply read God’s Word; “Study [to exert one’s self, give diligence] to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing [to cut straight; to teach the truth directly and correctly] the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15).³⁵² This will only happen if we make time for the Word of God and permit the Spirit of truth to open our understanding to God’s truth (John 16:13). We must not give place to theological grids by which to interpret the Scriptures, lest we fail to *rightly divide the Word of Truth*.



just requirements. We are reconciled to God by God; our reconciliation comes through faith in the sacrifice that Christ (eternal God come in the flesh) made for us on Calvary.

³⁵⁰ <http://www.crystalcathedral.org/about/beliefs.php>

³⁵¹ Strong’s Online.

³⁵² Ibid.

Jesus came, fully God and fully man; it is because of this that He was qualified to bring redemption to mankind.

⁸ And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.



The word *fashion* speaks of Jesus' outward appearance. We have seen that He was in His very essence God (v. 6); we've seen Him add to this the heart of a slave and the body of a man (v. 7). The word used here rounds out His manhood – in all aspects, He appeared to be a man; looking at Him, you would not have noted anything that would have told you that He was the eternal God in the flesh. As Isaiah begins, perhaps his most notable Messianic passage, he declares, “For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant [sapling or young plant], and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form [outline or appearance] nor comeliness [splendor]; and when we shall see him, *there is* no beauty [view, as in what is seen] that we should desire him” (Isaiah 53:2).³⁵³ Jesus took on the form of a baby – He did not come as a full-grown man; He was a young, living Plant growing out of an arid, lifeless place. This is a word picture of God taking the form of man on this sin-drenched earth; He was life in the midst of death. Jesus, eternal God, was, by all appearances, man – and so the religious leaders of His day refused to believe that He was anything more than simply a man; they focused exclusively on where He violated the laws that they had added to what God had given to Moses, so that they would not have to bow before Him and acknowledge Him as their God.

We might be highly critical of these religious leaders – how could they see the miracles that Jesus did and hear the wisdom of His discourses, without knowing that He was much more than just a man? Today the focus may have changed, but the result is the same. We, too often, are bound by our traditions (whether things that we do or believe – it matters not); they become the focus of our thinking and living, and we miss the more important matters of justice, mercy and faith (Matthew 23:23). We might speak loudly of what is right, of the need to show compassion to the downtrodden, and of our conviction for the truth of the Word of God, but our lives, like the Pharisees of old, may well raise questions as to the depth of our proclaimed convictions. If it comes to a choice between a favored tradition or view, and a clear declaration in the Word of God, which will we choose? Does expediency play a part in our choice? Are we influenced by the convenience, or inconvenience, of what God's Word is stating? Are we selective in our Biblical obedience; do we pick and choose which commands of God that we will obey? If we firmly believe that the Word of God is truth, and if we are committed to that Truth, then there is no question as to what we must do – we must always obey the Scriptures ahead of our traditions and long-held beliefs. The Pharisees refused to see the deity of Jesus by directing their attention to the maintenance of their own theology; if we refuse to obey a life-altering, or theology-shifting, truth in Scripture, we are no better than the worst Pharisee. Our love (*agape*) for the truth (wherein is salvation – 2 Thessalonians 2:10), which is a love that springs from an act of the will and not the emotions, must be greater than our own discomfort at having to change how we think or how we conduct our lives. “Therefore to him that knoweth to do good [commendable], and doeth *it* not, to him it is sin” (James 4:17);³⁵⁴ what could be more commendable than obedience to God's Word? How great is our commitment to the truth of God's Word? If we only obey the Scriptures when they do not

³⁵³ Strong's Online.

³⁵⁴ Ibid.

impinge upon our routine of life, then we do not hold a proper view of the Word of God. “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves” (2 Corinthians 13:5a).



Jesus, eternal God, set His glory aside to take on the body of a man, and, having done so, *He humbled Himself*. The eternal plan of God required more than Jesus simply taking on the flesh of mankind. From the day of man’s sin in the Garden of Eden, God demonstrated that the shedding of blood was necessary for the remission of sin, for “without shedding of blood is [absolutely] no remission [forgiveness of sins]” (Hebrews 9:22b).³⁵⁵ Jesus humbled Himself even further and *became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross*.

The word *obedient* comes from the idea of giving ear to someone or to be submissive.³⁵⁶ Jesus came on a very specific mission from the Father; “For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me” (John 6:38). He was attentive to say all that the Father told Him (John 12:49-50); there was a plan in place for the salvation of man’s soul, and Jesus was very careful to follow that eternally devised plan (2 Timothy 1:9; Revelation 13:8).

Jesus’ obedience to the will of the Father led Him *unto death*. *Unto* means *as far as* or *until*.³⁵⁷ Within many modern translations, this particular phrase has been rendered as *to the point of*, which would indicate, up to the point of, but not including *death*.³⁵⁸ This interpretation easily makes room for the swoon theory, which claims that Jesus never really died – He simply lost consciousness for a while. If we consider the sacrifice that Jesus (being eternally God) made for us, His submission to death would be the capstone or pinnacle (or the depth, depending on your perspective) of His sacrifice. Other applications of this particular word in Greek always include the object to which it refers; for example, Matthew 13:30 – “Let both grow together until [same Greek word] the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.” It would make no sense to let the tares grow, and then, just before harvesting the grain, to walk through the field and remove them (thereby trampling and destroying the good grain); it was the harvest-time (the time when everything is cut) when the tares are cut and bundled separately from the good grain. The use of the word *until* shows that the tares will be attended to during the harvest operations; the word *until* includes the object (*the harvest*). It was at the moment of Christ’s death that the veil of the temple was torn from top-to-bottom signifying that He had opened the way into the Holy of Holies (Mark 15:37-38; Hebrews 9:24). Paul is underscoring here that Jesus (both human flesh, albeit without sin, and eternal God) fulfilled the plan of God, which was established before man was even created.

However, He not only humbled Himself to be obedient to death, in fulfillment of the plan for mankind’s redemption, but it was death on a cross. Considered by many to be one of the cruelest forms of punishment, frequently preceded by whippings, where death, itself, often took many hours. The victim’s demise would come by way of suffocation – the pain experienced in lifting the body, to get a breath, became greater than the need for breath, or there simply was no strength left to lift the body. If death came too slowly, the legs would be broken with an iron club, thereby eliminating the ability to lift the body for a breath, and hastening suffocation. However, what we must not miss is that Jesus did not succumb to suffocation: “And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the

³⁵⁵ Strong’s Online.

³⁵⁶ Ibid.

³⁵⁷ Ibid.

³⁵⁸ This phrase is used in the New American Standard, New King James, New Revised Standard and English Standard; amazingly, the New International renders it *obedient to death*; other modern texts, such as the New Century and the Message skew the phrase out of existence.

ghost [He breathed out]” (Luke 23:46); Matthew says that He *let go the spirit* (Matthew 27:50); John writes that Jesus delivered His spirit to another for keeping (John 19:30).³⁵⁹ In each case, the verb is in the active voice – Jesus was the One Who took the action of relinquishing His breath. He was not a victim of Roman crucifixion. From the cross He declared, “It is finished,” and then He released His breath (John 19:30); His mission to that point was now complete. The Greek word translated as *it is finished* is used only twice in the NT; just before the above declaration we read: “Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished [same Greek word]” (John 19:28). In both cases, the word is in the perfect tense, which “describes an action which is viewed as having been completed in the past, once and for all, not needing to be repeated.”³⁶⁰ Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross is a one-time action – planned from before the beginning of time and foreshadowed numerous times by the sacrifices of the OT, but His sacrifice was made only once. The writer of Hebrews declares that “Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many ...” (Hebrews 9:28).

The Roman Catholics do not accept this marvelous truth (one of many areas where they have seriously departed from the Scriptures). This should not be entirely surprising since they grant their traditions equal weight with the declarations made by God in His Word.³⁶¹ They have ascribed to their popes the ability to speak words that they claim are unalterable, and equal in strength to the Scriptures. According to the Vatican II Council, which closed in 1965: “We believe in the infallibility enjoyed by the Successor of Peter when he speaks *ex cathedra* as shepherd and teacher of all the faithful, an infallibility which the whole Episcopate also enjoys when it exercises with him the supreme magisterium [authority to teach].”³⁶² Their teaching, as it pertains to the one-time sacrifice that Christ made on the cross for our sins, has become convoluted through being intermingled with their own customs. Within their traditions (and also those of many Reformation denominations), the celebration of Christ’s sacrifice is called the Eucharist (which comes from the Greek word for thanksgiving).³⁶³



Vatican II

In truth, the Eucharist performs at once two functions: that of a sacrament and that of a sacrifice. Though the inseparableness of the two is most clearly seen in the fact that the consecrating sacrificial powers of the priest coincide, and consequently that the sacrament is produced only in and through the Mass, the real difference between them is shown in that the sacrament is intended privately for the sanctification of the soul, whereas the sacrifice serves primarily to glorify God by adoration, thanksgiving, prayer, and expiation. The recipient of the one is God, who receives the sacrifice of His only-begotten Son; of the other, man, who receives the sacrament for his own good. Furthermore, the **unbloody Sacrifice of the Eucharistic Christ is in its nature a transient action**, while the Sacrament of the Altar [another name for the Eucharist] continues as something permanent after the sacrifice, and can even be preserved in monstrance and ciborium (emphasis added).³⁶⁴

³⁵⁹ Strong’s Online.

³⁶⁰ Ibid.

³⁶¹ <http://www.loyolapress.com/scripture-and-catholic-tradition.htm>

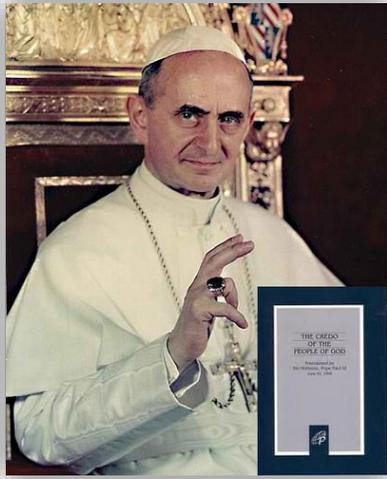
³⁶² <http://www.allaboutreligion.org/pope-john-paul-ii.htm>

³⁶³ <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?l=e&p=23>, “Eucharist.”

³⁶⁴ <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10006a.htm>

However, there is more involved than simply a need to celebrate the Eucharist over and over. Toward the end of 1968, Pope Paul VI published what has been called *The Credo of the People of God*, a reworking of the Nicene Creed for today. Included within this credo is the following:

Christ cannot be thus present in this sacrament except by the change into His body of the reality itself of the bread and the change into His blood of the reality itself of the wine, leaving unchanged only the properties of the bread and wine which our senses perceive. This mysterious change is very appropriately called by the Church transubstantiation. Every theological explanation which seeks some understanding of this mystery must, in order to be in accord with Catholic faith, maintain that in the reality itself, independently of our mind, **the bread and wine have ceased to exist after the Consecration**, so that it is the adorable body and blood of the Lord Jesus that from then on are really before us under the sacramental species of bread and wine, as the Lord willed it, in order to give Himself to us as food and to associate us with the unity of His Mystical Body (emphasis added).³⁶⁵



Pope Paul VI (inset - *Credo*)

Therefore, from their own words, it is clear that the Roman Catholic Church sacrifices the Lord Jesus Christ over and over again in their celebration of the Eucharist. We know that this is contrary to Scripture because it explicitly states that Christ died once, and only once, for the sins of mankind (Romans 6:10; Hebrews 9:28; 1 Peter 3:18). What

the Catholics practice is in violation of the Word of God, but wholly in keeping with their traditions – even though they might proclaim that their traditions are given equal weight with the Scriptures, their practice tells another story. This significant error originated with their literal view of the Scriptures describing the Lord’s last meal with His disciples. “And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake *it*, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat: this is my body. And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave *it* to them: and they all drank of it. And he said unto them, This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many” (Mark 14:22-24). They fail to read a little farther where Jesus clarifies that the cup contained grape juice, not His blood: “Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God” (Mark 14:25). Incredibly, a passage that uses figurative language, they take literally, and those that speak plainly of Christ’s single sacrifice for mankind are spiritualized away to make room for their traditions.

However, let us not gloat over the failure of the Roman Catholics to see through their many errors when the plain text of Scripture makes it so clear that their practices are wrong. Evangelicals are not immune to this virus. Evangelical tradition dictates that when a group of believers becomes large enough, they must meet in a building (whether owned or rented), they must draft a constitution, they must be registered with the government so that they can issue tax receipts, they must have a pastor, or pastors, to provide the spiritual leadership, and they must elect a board of elders to provide governance for their group. This happens over and over again; it doesn’t matter whether the group is Baptist, Alliance, Evangelical Free, Pentecostal – the identity makes no difference – the process will basically follow the same plan. Where do you find the basis for this tradition? You might think that it comes from Scripture, but therein is the rub. There is no

³⁶⁵ <http://www.ewtn.com/library/papaldoc/p6credo.htm>

foundation for any of this from Scripture; it is simply tradition leading the way. Is all tradition wrong? No, obviously not. However, when Scripture is set aside, without a backward glance as to how we, His people, should function as a group, this is not only a serious oversight, but a significant failure on our part. Christ, eternal God, took on the body of man, thereby becoming the perfect Lamb of God, able and willing to die a cruel death on a cross for our salvation from sin; surely we should consider what He might desire for our gatherings, and be willing to set our traditions aside in favor of His guidance.

⁹ Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:



The word *wherefore* provides a direct link between the previous thoughts and what follows; the former provides the basis, or the foundation, for what will come. What has come before? Jesus, being in His very essence God, took on the similitude of man and then humbled Himself even further to die on the cross for the sins of mankind. *For this reason (wherefore)* God has given Him the highest position.³⁶⁶ How could this be since Jesus was always God and is declared to always be the same (Hebrews 13:8)?

The writer of Hebrews declared Jesus as being forever the same. However, if we pause to consider this, we realize that, at the appropriate time, Jesus came to this earth as a baby. The eternal Logos was now born of a woman; eternal God was experiencing, to some extent, the limiting factors of manhood – He emptied Himself of His blazing glory that would have caused men to fall at His feet as dead (Revelation 1:17). In accordance with His eternal plan, Jesus wore the robe of flesh so that He would qualify as the supreme and promised Deliverer for mankind. From those first coats that God made for Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:21), the sacrifices of perfect animals all pointed forward to one great day when God would once and forever provide for man’s salvation. Even though Jesus laid the glories of heaven aside, He was still in His very essence God. When the Jews pressured Him to clarify whether or not He was the Messiah, He said, “I and *my* Father are one” (John 10:30). Jesus, standing in Solomon’s porch speaking to the Jews, was, at that moment, one with God the Father. As Jesus spoke with Nicodemus, He made this remarkable statement, “And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, *even* the Son of man which **is** [present tense] **in** heaven” (John 3:13);³⁶⁷ even as He spoke with this ruler of the Jews, Jesus was in heaven with the Father. We will never comprehend the marvel of this Deity-Humanity merger.

If we consider that Jesus always has been, is, and will be God, then how could God the Father raise Him to supreme majesty?³⁶⁸ As the eternal Logos, we read of Jesus, “For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether *they be* thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist [are upheld³⁶⁹ or continue³⁷⁰]” (Colossians 1:16-17). He was active in the creation of this world, and He is active in the preservation of the world. However, when He was resurrected from the dead and received His glorified body, He took on the new role as our Intercessor and Mediator with God.

³⁶⁶ Strong’s Online.

³⁶⁷ Ibid.

³⁶⁸ Ibid.

³⁶⁹ Vine’s “consist.”

³⁷⁰ Friberg Lexicon.

Initially, every man was his own priest before God, offering the acceptable sacrifice before Him. Abel brought an acceptable offering (Genesis 4:4); Noah sacrificed offerings upon an altar (Genesis 8:20), and Abram prepared an altar and sacrifice for the Lord (Genesis 12:7). However, at Mt. Sinai, God gave Moses the details for a new priesthood and a new sacrificial system (all part of the Law of Moses). God set Aaron and his sons apart to be priests within this new system (Exodus 30:30; 40:13-15), and the tribe of Levi was dedicated to serve the priests in their responsibilities to God (Numbers 3:6). Within the Mosaic Law, of which the priesthood and sacrificial laws were only a part, it was the priests who were mediators between the people and God. The people, when they would sin in ignorance, would bring a perfect, female goat or lamb to the tabernacle, they would identify with their offering (place their hand upon the head of the animal), kill it, and the priests would then make the required sacrifice before the Lord on their behalf (Leviticus 4:27-35). The individual would acknowledge their sin (Numbers 15:17-31); placing their hand upon the animal was the prescribed way of making the offering efficacious for the sinner (Leviticus 1:4) – as a repentant sinner, they identified with the offering. With the slaying of the offering, the sinner’s part was then complete (symbolically he was dead to the sin), for his sin died with the lamb or goat. The priest then took of the shed blood to the altar and, with his finger, applied some to the four horns of the altar of burnt offering, and poured out the rest of the blood at the base of the altar; the fat from the sacrifice was burned on the altar as a sweet savor before the Lord (not as a wonderful smell, but as a sign of a repentant heart before God – it was pleasing to Him). It was the priest who made atonement with the Lord on behalf of the penitent sinner; the priest filled the role of mediator between the sinner and God.

The Hebrew word translated as *fat* (*cheleb - kheh' leb*) figuratively speaks of the choicest part of anything.³⁷¹ When Abel brought his offering to the Lord, it says, “... he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof” (Genesis 4:4); he brought the best from his flock – that perfect lamb or goat. Within the sacrificial system that was implemented through Moses, the instruction was, “...all the fat *is* the LORD’S. *It shall be* a perpetual statute for your generations throughout all your dwellings, that ye eat neither fat nor blood” (Leviticus 3:16b-17). The fat of the animal belonged to the Lord; that which was a sign of the Lord’s blessing was given back to Him in offering. On the other hand, the blood was off-limits because it was the means for making atonement for the soul of the sinner (Leviticus 17:10-11). Within the Mosaic traditions, the sacrificial procedure was carefully laid out by God, and was to be followed with precision.

Of Jesus we read, “... now hath he obtained [literally, hit – as in an arrow striking a target;³⁷² to become the master of] a more excellent [superior] ministry [specifically refers to a priestly work], by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established [a legal term, to enact] upon better promises” (Hebrews 8:6).³⁷³ To answer the obvious question as to what these better promises were, the writer quotes from Jeremiah 31, “... For this *is* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people ...” (Hebrews 8:10; Jeremiah 31:33). In the first covenant, God wrote His Ten Laws upon tables of stone (Exodus 31:18; Deuteronomy 4:13); with the new or fresh covenant, He will write His Laws upon our hearts – the Laws have not changed, Who does the writing has not changed, but the object upon which God writes has changed from unresponsive tables of stone to our impressionable and responsive hearts now occupied by His Spirit. The Lord’s Supper, an ordinance that we celebrate, commemorates the occasion when Jesus implemented the fresh covenant spoken

³⁷¹ <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=60&letter=F>

³⁷² Friberg Lexicon.

³⁷³ Strong’s Online.

of by Jeremiah (Luke 22:20; 1 Corinthians 11:25). However, not only has God written His Ten Commandments upon our hearts, He has also given us His Spirit to abide within us and guide us into all truth (John 16:13). To the extent that we submit to the guidance of the Spirit of God, that is how much we will express the righteousness of His Law through our lives (Romans 8:4; the Law that He has written on our hearts – Jeremiah 31:33). How much better is the new covenant? Under the first covenant, the Ten Commandments were written upon stone tables, which were kept in the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies, visited but once per year by the High Priest. Faith in God's promises would make the intermediary work of the priest efficacious for the temporary atonement of sin; God was holy and approachable with sacrifices, but only through the priests. When we enter the new covenant by faith in Christ (God), we are no longer left to our own devices but have the Spirit of God within us to be our Guide and Intercessor with God (Romans 8:27), and Christ is our High Priest at the right hand of the Father (Ephesians 2:18; Hebrews 7:25).

Through Jesus' incarnation, death and resurrection, He became the Savior of men. Being a perfect Man (the Lamb of God without blemish) He could stand between man, the sinner, and God, the righteous and holy One. "For *there is* one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ [the anointed, like to the high priest] Jesus [Jehovah is salvation] ..." (1 Timothy 2:5).³⁷⁴ Within the confines of time, the superior work of Jesus, of which He became the master, was being our High Priest and Mediator with God. This is why it is so essential that we be found *in Christ*; "And be found in him [Christ], not having mine own righteousness [Isaiah 64:6], which is of the law [the Law of Moses], but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness [of the Law of God (Romans 8:4)] which is of [from] God by faith" (Philippians 3:9). If we are *in Christ*, He not only is our Mediator and High Priest (Hebrews 4:14), but also our Intercessor (Romans 8:34); both the Spirit and the Son of God intercede with the Father on our behalf. Christ has not changed; He always has been, and always will be, eternally God, but, within the framework of time, He has received a new high-priestly ministry. In His ministry, Jesus declared, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). In His role as our High Priest, He has opened the way for us to come to the Father (Ephesians 2:5-6), He has provided us with the Spirit of God to guide us into all truth (John 16:13), and He has offered His own life as a sacrifice in payment for our sins, thereby purchasing new life for us (Hebrews 9:11-12). The way is narrow (Matthew 7:14), for it is Christ – there is salvation in no other (Acts 4:12); we must be found *in Christ* for that is the only place of spiritual safety (Romans 8:1; Hebrews 3:14).

Inasmuch as Jesus was obedient to the eternal plan of reconciliation, God has raised Him up into His presence in a glorified body of flesh. I do not understand how this fits within the span of eternity, but we are told that He has become the "firstfruits [always singular in Greek; the first to be resurrected never to die] of them that slept" (1 Corinthians 15:20).³⁷⁵ As such, we have the promise that "when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2). However, we must not miss that this promise will only be to those for whom He is the Firstfruit – to those who persevere to remain faithful to Him (Matthew 24:13; Hebrews 3:14).



Paul now states that Christ has been given *a name which is above every name*. Speaking of Jesus, Peter declared at Pentecost, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Paul described to the Ephesians some of what God did for us when His eternal purposes were accomplished in raising Christ from the dead, and how His mighty power is reflected in Christ

³⁷⁴ Strong's Online.

³⁷⁵ Vine's "firstfruit."

when He “set *him* at his own right hand in the heavenly *places*, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come ...” (Ephesians 1:20b-21). It is clear that Jesus has been exalted far above anything that this world can imagine; He has been given a name, and this name is greater than anything that we know. Isaiah looked forward to the coming Messiah and wrote: “... his name shall be called Wonderful [John 7:15], Counsellor [Matthew 11:29], The mighty God [Matthew 1:23], The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace [John 14:27]” (Isaiah 9:6). Isaiah said that Jesus would be called the *everlasting Father*. “Philip saith unto him [Jesus], Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou *then*, Shew us the Father?” (John 14:8-9). The mystery of Christ’s divinity will not unfold within our finite minds. Jesus, fully God, walked among men with His eternal glory under such restraint that men did not fall at His feet as dead, yet His response to Philip shows that God the Father was evident in Him, just as Isaiah declared. However, before we leave this, there is one more evidence that supports what Paul has declared about the Lord: when Jesus comes as Conqueror and Judge, we read, “... he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself.” (Revelation 19:12). With the myriad of names given to the Lord, He has another name that only God knows; this truly must be a *name above every name*.

¹⁰ That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of *things* in heaven, and *things* in earth, and *things* under the earth;



Once again, the first word (*that*) is a linking word and ties what follows to what came before. God has exalted the Lord Jesus and given Him a name *above every name* so that at His name *every knee may bend* in worship.³⁷⁶ *Bow* is in the subjunctive mood which introduces an element of doubt – it may or may not happen. This makes bowing before Jesus a deliberate and willing act on the part of some, even though the option of bowing is available to everyone.

We read elsewhere, “I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth *in* righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear” (Isaiah 45:23). This is a forthright declaration that there will come a time when every knee will bow before God. Looking forward to the judgment of God, we see the wicked, who would not willingly bow before the Lord Jesus Christ, stand before God. “And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is *the book* of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire” (Revelation 20:11-15). Although we do not read of the wicked being willing to bow before God, their judgment and imposed sentence by God clearly evidences their submission, or bowing, to His authority. The reality is that we all have the option of willingly bowing before Jesus Christ now, or the certainty of submitting to the judgment of God on a day still coming.

³⁷⁶ Strong’s Online.

What was the sin of Lucifer, that favored angel? His heart was lifted up because of his created beauty, and he sought to make himself like unto God (Isaiah 14:12-15; Ezekiel 28:13-17). As Lucifer was filled with pride, he was no longer willing to bow before God, his Creator; as pride flowed in, humility and a proper understanding of who he was, flowed out. We must recognize and accept our lowly position before our almighty, holy Creator. “Pride *goeth* before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall” (Proverbs 16:18); the reality of that proverb has been lived out over and over again. “Yea, all *of you* be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time ...” (1Peter 5:5b-6). We are commanded to humble ourselves under the powerful working of God (symbolized by His hand), so that God might exalt us in His time. This is entirely in keeping with Jesus’ words, “And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased [same Greek word as *humble*]; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted” (Matthew 23:12).³⁷⁷ This applied to Lucifer, it fit with Israel of old, and it also applies to us: “For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name *is* Holy; I dwell in the high and holy *place*, with him also *that is* of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite [crushed] ones” (Isaiah 57:15).³⁷⁸



Paul then elaborates on the extent of what is meant by *every knee*; you’ll note that the word *things* appears in italics, which means that the translators have supplied it for sentence flow. Literally we read, *of heavenly and of earthly and of subterranean*.³⁷⁹ The Greek word translated as *under the earth* is unique, in the entire NT, to this passage; it means *subterranean*, but is generally accepted to refer to the realm of the dead.³⁸⁰ “And many [the multitudes] of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame *and* everlasting contempt” (Daniel 12:2).³⁸¹ The dead are all physically below ground level and have returned to dust (Genesis 3:19) – the *subterranean*. The *heavenly* refers to things celestial, to the dwelling place of God and the angels, not to the earthly heavens. All creatures should bow before the Lord Jesus – whether heavenly, earthly, or departed; as we have seen, all will ultimately submit to the Lord, but not everyone will do so willingly. “And every creature [created thing (not man)] which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth [not the same Greek word as used by Paul], and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, *be* unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever” (Revelation 5:13).³⁸² Everything created will offer up praise to the Lord Jesus Christ – a willing expression of glory to God, a willing choice to bow before God.

¹¹ And *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.



This is a continuation from the previous verse. Not only should every knee bow, but *every tongue should confess* Jesus as Lord. *Confess*, like *bow*, bears the subjunctive mood.

As we considered bowing before Christ (in the previous verse) we saw that there will come a day when everyone will submit to the rule and judgment of God – either willingly now in this day

³⁷⁷ Strong’s Online.

³⁷⁸ Ibid.

³⁷⁹ Stephanus 1550 NT.

³⁸⁰ Friberg Lexicon.

³⁸¹ Young’s Literal Translation.

³⁸² Strong’s Online.

of salvation (2 Corinthians 6:2), or when judged by God for their failure to acknowledge Him as God (Revelation 20:11-15). The thrust of this verse is somewhat different because what is referred to here is a confession, or acknowledgement, of Jesus as Lord of all. Our verse says: *confess that Jesus Christ is Lord; is* has been supplied by the translators. The word *that* is used within the Greek to identify the object of the confession, and what follows is literally *Lord Jesus Christ*. Therefore, the confession is *the Lord Jesus Christ*, and it is this confession that **should come** from *every tongue*. Within these three names is the core of salvation: *Lord* acknowledges that we are owned, or purchased, by Jesus Christ; *Jesus* means Jehovah is salvation – here is the only means of our salvation; *Christ* means anointed, the Messiah, God’s promised One.³⁸³ This confession is really much more than simply three names that can so easily roll off our tongues. To the Romans Paul wrote, “... if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Romans 10:9-10). Paul is presenting here his desire that *every tongue* would come to confess that, in Christ, they have salvation. “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). There are those who mock the return of the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:3-4), but Peter shows that this is an extension of God’s mercy by providing man with time to repent before Him; God is extending the opportunity for salvation to *every tongue*. However, there will come a time when the day of opportunity will be passed and the door of salvation will be closed (Matthew 24:36-39).

Paul wrote to Timothy that we should pray for all men, “For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:3-4). It is God’s desire that all human beings (men - *anthropos*) should be saved by Him (*saved* is in the passive voice – it is something that we receive), and equally, He desires that all should come (active voice) to a precise and correct knowledge of the truth (Jesus Christ).³⁸⁴ *Come* is in the active voice (as noted), which means that we must expend the energy and make the commitment to acquire the specified degree of knowledge of the truth. Jesus openly declared, “... I am the way, the truth and the life ...” (John 14:6); the Spirit of God has come to guide us into all truth (John 16:13); therefore, if we permit the Spirit to be our Guide, there will be no question that we will come to that precise and correct knowledge of the Truth – Jesus Christ. We recognize again that salvation is a gift from God (Ephesians 2:8), but with salvation comes a need to “study [give diligence] to shew [ourselves] approved [pleasing] unto God” (2 Timothy 2:15).³⁸⁵ Jesus charged us to “Strive [to endeavor with strenuous zeal – a present tense command] to enter in at the strait [narrow] gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not [absolute] be able [to have power]” (Luke 13:24); not only is the entrance to eternal life narrow, but the way is also *narrow*, or compressed (Matthew 7:14). Jesus described *the way* like this: “I am the way ...” (John 14:6); He is also called the *Word* (John 1:1) and the *Word of God* (Revelation 19:13); therefore, the way is reduced to what is described in God’s Word. Unless we labor to live Biblically and place the text of Scripture on a higher plane than our theologies and traditions, we might well depart from that narrow way, or be unable to enter into it. The Psalmist recognized his need to limit his walk through life to what the Word of God illuminated for him: “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Psalm 119:105). Within Evangelicalism, to limit your living to the words of Scripture will draw forth accusations of being legalistic, narrow-

³⁸³ Strong’s Online.

³⁸⁴ Ibid.

³⁸⁵ Ibid.

minded, or, perhaps, even being Pharisaical. Nevertheless, we must be prepared to confess, like the Apostle Peter, “Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life” (John 6:68).

After John witnessed the sealing of the 144,000, he wrote, “... lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations [every nation], and kindreds [tribes], and people, and tongues [languages], stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb” (Revelation 7:9-10).³⁸⁶ After witnessing the sealing of the OT saints,³⁸⁷ John sees a host of people standing before the throne of God in heaven. Every language group, every tribe, every nation will be represented in heaven. These people are identified for John as being “they which came out of great tribulation [*megas thlipsis*; NOT God’s wrath (*orge to theos*)], and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (Revelation 7:14). Daniel beheld God upon His throne, and He was dressed in a white garment, depicting His purity and holiness (Daniel 7:9). John was told that this great multitude was clothed in white – garments that had been washed in the blood of the Lamb; the whole host appeared before God in purity and holiness, but it was not their own. Christ is our salvation and so we must be found in Him, clothed with the righteousness that comes through faith in Him (Romans 8:4; Philippians 3:9).



We are told that such a confession will be *to the glory of God the Father*. I am reminded of the ministry of Jesus on this earth. When He healed the sick man, after declaring his sins forgiven, the people *glorified God* (Luke 5:26); when He raised the dead man in the funeral procession, the people *glorified God* (Luke 7:16); when He raised up the woman who could not straighten up, she *glorified God* (Luke 13:13); when Jesus healed the ten lepers, and the Samaritan recognized what had transpired, he returned and *glorified God* (Luke 17:15); when the centurion saw how Jesus died on the cross, he *glorified God* (Luke 23:47). When Jesus performed a miracle of release from some physical ailment, the recorded response was glory to God; we might expect the glory to go to Jesus (for He performed the miracle), but He evidently had such a manner of performing these miracles that the glory went to God the Father. Therefore, when we make a confession of the Lord Jesus Christ, we are giving glory to God the Father, for we, in that confession, acknowledge our inability and His ability to bring about our reconciliation with Him.

¹² Wherefore, my beloved, as ye 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.



Again, we have a link to what has come before (as in v.9). However, this *wherefore* is broader, and encompasses all that Paul has included to describe Who the Lord Jesus Christ is, beginning at verse five: *Let this mind be in you*. Now comes the application to our personal lives of the astounding truth of Who Jesus is; because of all that Paul has described, we must now give consideration to what follows.

Paul calls the Philippians his *beloved*, his *agapetos* (*ag-ap-ay-tos*'), derived from *agape*.³⁸⁸ Although we might think this a term reserved for believers who were faring well in their walk with the Lord, it is actually very commonly applied to believers throughout the epistles by all of the

³⁸⁶ Stephanus 1550 NT.

³⁸⁷ A more in-depth study is made of this in Revelation 14.

³⁸⁸ Strong’s Online.

writers; Paul even uses it in writing to the dysfunctional Corinthians; however, it did not find its way into his corrective letter to the Galatian believers – he calls them *brethren*, but never *beloved*.

What follows is a directive with a parenthetical comment. Paul writes of the obedience of the Philippians to his words, not only when he is present with them, but also when he is not there. The adage is that when the cat is away, the mice will play – the thought being that, under masterful observation, there will be order and compliance, but, when the monitoring is removed, the order and compliance will also disappear. When this happens, it is clear that the conformity was under duress or through fear of negative consequences, and not from any internal motivation. Similarly, we are told that a man, convinced against his will, is of the same opinion still – unless there is a willing acceptance of a new concept, no matter how good or true that new thought might be, it will not find root in the unwilling mind. Paul has found the Philippians to be motivated – they accepted the Gospel message when he brought it to them and, even after leaving them, they have continued to grow in their understanding of God and what He requires of them. There was no stagnation or falling away because Paul was not there; the truth of God’s message was personally theirs, and they grew in their walk with the Lord.

If we remove this parenthetical comment, we have “... as ye have always obeyed, ... work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” The word *obeyed* means to listen or to hearken.³⁸⁹ This is more than simply hearing; it involves a positive response to what has been heard. James clarified this, “For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth *therein*, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed” (James 1:23-25). A *hearer* and a *doer* is one who hearkens to what he hears; he is obedient to the Word. Notice that the *doer* does more than just glance at the Word – more is required than to simply read through the Bible. The *doer* “looketh into the perfect law of liberty”; *looketh* literally means to stoop to look at, and metaphorically speaks of examining carefully.³⁹⁰ Here is someone who looks carefully into the law of liberty or freedom – not a freedom from restraint, as some might think, but a freedom to live as we ought. Man has always been under the Law of God. Within the Garden of Eden, because man was in full communication with God, the law was simply: do not eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:16-17). Abraham was commended by God, for we read, he “...obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws” (Genesis 26:5); this was generations before God provided the descendants of Abraham with the Ten Commandments and the Mosaic Laws of statutes and ordinances. At Mt. Sinai, God wrote Ten Commandments on stone, signifying their permanency, so that there would never again be a question as to what He requires of us (Deuteronomy 4:13). Jeremiah wrote of a day when a fresh covenant would see this Law written by God upon our hearts (Jeremiah 31:33) – a covenant that was implemented by Jesus at the Last Supper (Luke 22:20). When we believe (are persuaded) that Christ’s sacrifice was for us, we are then in Christ by faith, and receive the Spirit of God Who will guide us into all truth (John 16:13) – the truth that God writes upon our hearts as we enter into the new covenant in Christ (the Law of God). The liberty that we have in Christ is freedom from the condemnation of the Law, and the freedom to live out the Law of God by the enablement of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:1-4); Paul wrote to the Corinthians “where the Spirit of the Lord *is*, there *is* liberty [same Greek word as used by James]” (2 Corinthians 3:17). As Paul clarified to the Galatians, this liberty speaks of being born of the freewoman, Sarah, and not of the slave woman, Hagar (Galatians 4:22-5:1), thereby demonstrating to the Galatian believers that

³⁸⁹ Strong’s Online.

³⁹⁰ Ibid.

they were no longer under the bondage of the Law of Moses, but were freeborn, to live in the liberty of the Law of God through the working of the Holy Spirit. However, we must not stop with simply seeing the law of liberty, for James says that the *doer* must *continue* in it; the Greek word is *parameno* and means to continue always near³⁹¹ – this must become a pattern for life. “For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end ...” (Hebrews 3:14); we are called to perseverance!

As Paul describes the Philippians here, it is with the commendation that they have always walked in accordance with his teaching of the Gospel. Now he says, even as you have always obeyed, now *work out your own salvation* (a command). Contrary to the doctrine of many sects, this does not say to *work for your salvation*; there is nothing that we can do to merit salvation – it is a gift from God, and there is nothing that we can do for it (Ephesians 2:8-9). However, as we have said before, once saving faith has settled into our hearts, there is much work to be done. “According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love ...” (Ephesians 1:4); “For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness” (1 Thessalonians 4:7); “I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk [live] worthy [in a manner worthy] of the vocation [calling] wherewith ye are called ...” (Ephesians 4:1).³⁹² Paul’s plea with the Ephesians was that they would live in a manner worthy of God’s high calling – namely, unto holiness of life. God has declared, “For I *am* the LORD your God: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for I *am* holy ...” (Leviticus 11:44); and, lest we miss it, Peter reiterated, “But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation ...” (1 Peter 1:15). This is the established goal for everyone who comes to God by faith in Christ, no matter when they live. Christ is the only means of salvation – from Adam to Jesus, faith was placed in the One Who was promised by God; since Jesus came, we look back to His sacrifice and place our faith in His finished work on our behalf – either way, salvation has always been by faith, and always in Christ.

As we come to Christ in faith, we must begin the life-long process of accounting ourselves dead to sin but alive unto God through Christ (Romans 6:11); this is a present-tense command: we are to be continually reckoning, or considering, ourselves dead to sin (on the one hand), and continually alive to God (on the other hand);³⁹³ the command applies to both! Here is our occupation: we have to *work out* our salvation. Being sinners by nature, this command is entirely contrary to who we are, and so it is that the Spirit of God, Who comes to abide within us at the time that we place our faith in Christ, will provide enablement as we desire to walk in holiness (1 John 4:13). Consider this carefully: the Holy Spirit will not force us to live a life of holiness. “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof” (Romans 6:12). The word *reign* is very significant, not only in its meaning (to control completely), but also grammatically; it is in the present tense, active voice and imperative mood.³⁹⁴ This is a **command** (imperative mood) that **we** (active voice) are to **continually** (present tense) work to ensure that sin does not have control of our lives. This is where we might say that the rubber of Christian living meets the road of life. As we endeavor to act in obedience to this command, the Spirit of God, abiding within us, will become an active participant in this effort. Theologically, this is called sanctification – the process of becoming holy, even as we have been called.

³⁹¹ Strong’s Online.

³⁹² Ibid.

³⁹³ Ibid.

³⁹⁴ Ibid.

Paul's admonition is that this work is to be done *with fear and trembling* – a warning following the charge to grow spiritually. We must not lose sight of the context for the qualification to this command. It was given to the Philippian believers who were growing in their walk with the Lord, even after Paul had departed from them; they were showing signs of growth, not atrophy. All of the positive signs of spiritual growth among this group of believers did not remove this warning from Paul's words to them. On one occasion when Jesus met privately with His disciples, He said to them, "Take heed [be discerning] that no man [may – *deceive* is in the subjunctive mood, which indicates possibility but not certainty] deceive [to lead away from the truth] you" (Matthew 24:4).³⁹⁵ This warning is given so that they might be vigilant, lest someone come along with a credible philosophy and lead them into error. Within the same conversation with His disciples, Jesus declared, "he that shall endure [*hupomeno* – a strengthened form of *abide*, to bear up courageously (under suffering)] unto the end, the same shall be saved" (Matthew 24:13).³⁹⁶ Jesus warns His disciples to be alert lest they be led away from the truth, and then, subsequently, gives them a warning that they must be prepared to endure suffering and, through it all, remain steadfast unto the end (of life or the Lord's coming in the clouds, whichever comes first) in order to be saved. Clearly, enduring for a short time is not sufficient; it must be an endurance that carries through the hard times right to the end. This is not new (Ezekiel 18:24).

A little later in the same conversation, Jesus said, "For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if *it were* possible, they shall deceive [same Greek word as used in Matthew 24:4] the very elect" (Matthew 24:24). Here we have the Greek phrase translated as *if possible* (leaving out the words supplied by the translators). There are those who declare this to mean that it is not possible to deceive those who are in Christ (the *elect*),³⁹⁷ thereby providing a sense of security and comfort to disregard Jesus' earlier warnings. However, consideration of other texts, where this exact phrase appears, places this assurance in the category of our need to be discerning lest we be led astray. "For Paul had determined to sail by Ephesus, because he would not spend the time in Asia: for he hasted, **if it were possible** for him, to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost" (Acts 20:16). This is exactly the same phrase (the *it were* is not in the Greek, although we have no indication that the translators inserted it) and clearly Paul hoped that it was indeed possible for him to be in Jerusalem by Pentecost. "**If it be possible**, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men" (Romans 12:18); once more, the same phrase (the *it be* is supplied), and, again, there is obvious hope that we will be able to live peaceably with all men. It would make no sense to say that the implication is that we cannot live peaceably with all men; the context demands that this be viewed as a possibility. Therefore, returning to Matthew 24:24, we must recognize that there will come some who will perform great feats with the aim of convincing us of their veracity, and, as those who have been redeemed by faith in Christ (the *elect*), we must be on our guard lest we be led away from the truth. Right after giving the disciples this warning, Jesus says, "Behold, I have told you before" (Matthew 24:25); in other words, I've told you before this seduction takes place so that you might be warned and take heed! There is no time off from being a Christian; we can never totally relax and take everything in that we hear without holding it against the Word of God. Yet we must not lose sight of the fact that our discernment must be in accordance with God's Word. It appears that today's Evangelical is more prepared to weigh what they hear against their own theology (or that of their selected Evangelical hero) than they are to use the Scriptures. With ecumenism rampant within Evangelicalism today, it would be impossible for them to justify their actions based on Scripture

³⁹⁵ Strong's Online.

³⁹⁶ Vine's "endure."

³⁹⁷ A.T. Robertson, Word Pictures in the New Testament, Matthew 24:24.

(2 Corinthians 6:17); they are confined to using their own theologies. We must guard against being dragged into such a trap, which could easily result in even the faithful being led away from the truth.



Paul's words to the Philippians are a warning; they are to produce the works of salvation with an attitude of *fear and trembling*. There is no room for pride within the Christian walk, no place where we can rest on our past accomplishments. "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12). We are in Christ, if we have come to God by faith in the work that Christ did for us, and we must remain continually faithful; it is not good enough to be faithful for a while.

Jesus told a parable that exemplifies this truth very clearly. We've considered it before, but it bears repeating at this juncture. Jesus said, "A sower went forth to sow [the seed being the Word of God (Luke 8:11)] ... he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon [immediately] with joy receiveth it; Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by [immediately] he is offended [falls away]. He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke [crowd out, cause to die³⁹⁸] the word, and he becometh unfruitful [barren]" (Matthew 13:3,20-22).³⁹⁹ Here are those who received the Word of God with joy but fell away, and those who received the Word but allowed the busyness of life to render it lifeless. Unless we have a commitment to actively remain in the Word of God, we will be like the stony and weedy soils. The fact that we may have received the Word with joy at one time is of no value if we fall away in the time of testing. Peter made this observation: "For it had been better for them not to have known [to be thoroughly acquainted with] the way of righteousness, than, after they have known *it*, to turn [active voice, it is they who have known the way who are doing the turning] from the holy commandment delivered unto them" (2 Peter 2:21). Why would this be? Most, today, would assume that it is better to have known the way of righteousness in order to provide a basis for returning to it someday. We are to be exhorting one another in the faith, for "if we sin wilfully [willingly] after that we have received the knowledge [a precise and correct knowledge] of the truth, there remaineth [continues to exist] no more [absolute] sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful [terrible] looking for [expectation] of judgment [condemnation] and fiery indignation, which shall devour [is consuming] the adversaries [those who are contrary]" (Hebrews 10:26-27).⁴⁰⁰ He who has released his grip on his knowledge of, and love for, the truth, has also lost his hold on the hope that he once had in Christ; he is one who has "trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, **wherewith he was sanctified** [made holy], an unholy thing" (Hebrews 10:29).⁴⁰¹ These are strong words of challenge to us, so that we might "Hold fast the form of sound words ..." (2 Timothy 1:13).

We would do well to heed the warning that Paul gives to the Philippians, that we exercise diligence in living out our salvation with *fear (phobos) and trembling (tromos)*. Jesus said, "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back [at what has been left behind], is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62). "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable [firmly persistent], always abounding in the work of the Lord ..." (1 Corinthians 15:58).⁴⁰²

³⁹⁸ Friberg Lexicon.

³⁹⁹ Strong's Online.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁰¹ Ibid.

⁴⁰² Ibid.

¹³ For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of *his* good pleasure.



What we see here is not a new thought, but one that is closely tied to that at which we have just looked.

The word translated as *work out*, in the previous verse, is an emphatic form of the Greek word for *work* meaning to effect through toil.⁴⁰³ We are to expend energy in accordance with our calling to be holy as God is holy (1 Peter 1:15). The word used here means to be operative or active or effective; God is active in us.⁴⁰⁴

As we step into the new covenant in the Lord Jesus Christ, things change in us. God declared through Jeremiah that with the new covenant, “I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people” (Jeremiah 31:33). God has written His Law (the Ten Commandments) upon our hearts – one of the first works of God in the life of a new believer. Jesus said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another [another of the same sort] Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; *Even* the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with [or near] you, and shall be in you” (John 14:15-17).⁴⁰⁵ Jesus promises that the Holy Spirit of truth (Who at that time was near to the disciples within the person of Jesus) would come so that He **might** abide within them forever; Jesus’ purpose is that the Spirit would be with us forever, but He does not state that to be a certainty. At the time that we enter into the fresh covenant in Christ, the Spirit comes into us, prepared to take up permanent residence and to work out the Law of God, which has been written upon our hearts – “That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk ... after the Spirit” (Romans 8:4). Here is how God is operative within the heart of a believer: His Law is written upon the heart, and His Spirit of truth is present to enable us to live righteously. “Now the God of peace ... Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working [doing] in you that which is wellpleasing [acceptable] in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom *be* glory for ever and ever. Amen” (Hebrews 13:20-21).⁴⁰⁶ It is God working in us to do that which is acceptable to Him; the righteousness of His Law is worked out in us as we walk in accordance with the Spirit of truth Who is abiding in us.

There are those who will say that our verse is confirmation that God does it all – we are totally without any ability or will to do anything in obedience to God. For fallen mankind, this is true – there is nothing that can be done to merit eternal life; however, this is not written to fallen man but rather to those who are living godly lives in keeping with the Gospel message that Paul delivered. We must also remember that the previous verse commanded us to *work out* our salvation with fear and trembling; therefore, we must not be simplistic in our understanding of this verse. You will recall that when the Word (the Seed) fell upon the rocky soil, it was received with immediate joy (Matthew 13:20). We are told that when we come to faith in Christ, we receive the Spirit of God (Romans 8:9) and God places His Law into our hearts (Hebrews 10:16); at that moment, we have received the Word with joy, and God is operative within our hearts so that we will desire to do (*to will and to do*) those things that are pleasing to Him. The Holy Spirit within the heart of the believer

⁴⁰³ Vine’s “work.”

⁴⁰⁴ Strong’s Online.

⁴⁰⁵ Vine’s “another.”

⁴⁰⁶ Strong’s Online.

will always exercise influence toward those things that are pleasing to God – after all, walking in accordance with the Spirit will result in the righteousness of the Law of God being lived out through us. What we must be equally aware of is that we can squelch the influence of the Spirit; to the Thessalonians Paul wrote, “Quench [to extinguish; to suppress] not the Spirit” (1 Thessalonians 5:19).⁴⁰⁷ Even as the life of the Word was short lived, in the face of trials, on the rocky soil, so we must guard against suppressing the influence of the Holy Spirit, Who would have us walk in holiness (Romans 8:4). “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God” (Hebrews 3:12). God is operative in our hearts (as believers) to give us the intent to do that which is pleasing to Him; we must ensure that we apply ourselves to be responsive to His guiding Spirit. We must heed Paul’s command to the Ephesians, “... grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed [marked] unto the day of redemption” (Ephesians 4:30).

¹⁴ Do all things without murmurings and disputings:



Another simple command: do everything without complaints or doubts (or questioning).⁴⁰⁸ Lest this be misunderstood, we must give heed to the context. The Philippians have just been challenged to work out their salvation with fear and trembling and to give special attention to their walk with the Lord; this was followed by a reminder that God is in us, encouraging us to walk in a manner pleasing to Him. Within this context, the command given here is completely justified and very clear; we must willingly walk in obedience to the commands in God’s Word. However, the context further narrows the application of this verse specifically to those things done as we work out our salvation through submission to God’s commands.

Jesus said, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second *is* like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (Matthew 22:37-40). The primary command is the first (*love the Lord thy God*), and the second in order is as great as (*like*) the first one, but is directed toward our fellow man.⁴⁰⁹ Here are two foundational commands from which, Jesus says, *hang all the law and the prophets*. Everything that the OT prophets proclaimed fits within these two commands, and the Law of Moses (those numerous statutes and regulations, the sacrificial system and the carefully established priesthood) finds its fulfillment within these two overarching commands. However, not only that, but the Law of God (the Ten Commandments written by God upon tables of stone, and now upon our hearts) also fits within these two commands: 1) *love the Lord thy God* – ¹no other gods, ²do not make idols to worship, ³do not use the Lord’s name without purpose, and ⁴remember the Sabbath day (Exodus 20:3-11); 2) *love thy neighbor* – ⁵honor your parents, ⁶do not murder, ⁷do not commit adultery, ⁸do not steal, ⁹do not lie against your neighbor, and ¹⁰do not covet anything (Exodus 20:12-17). The writer of Hebrews declares that Jesus came to establish a *better covenant* in fulfillment of Jeremiah’s prophecy of a day when God would write His Laws upon our hearts (Hebrews 8:6-10) – these same Ten Laws that find expression under the two summary commands given by the Lord. Therefore, if we are to love the Lord with all of our heart, soul and mind, we must attend to those first four Commandments – and, Paul writes, do so without complaint or questioning. Therefore, if we fail to keep one of those first four Commandments, we have clearly fallen short of loving the

⁴⁰⁷ Strong’s Online.

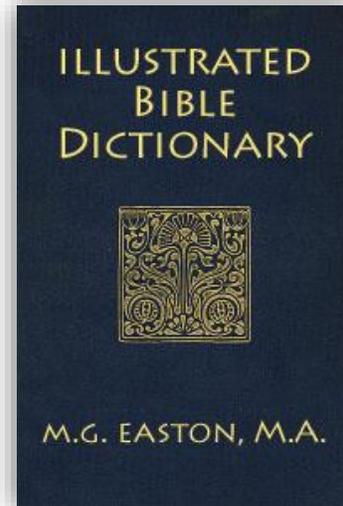
⁴⁰⁸ Friberg Lexicon.

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid.

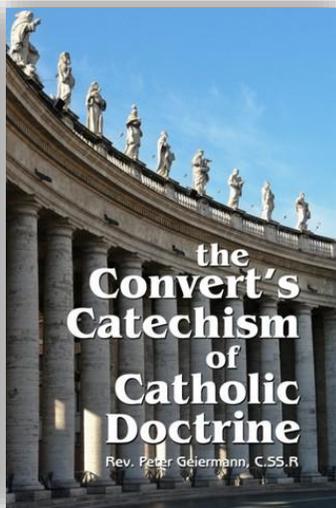
Lord with all of our heart, soul and mind. James declared, “For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all” (James 2:10).

Most Evangelicals will express little difficulty with the Law of God – with the exception of that fourth Commandment; what are we to do with this Sabbath commandment today? It remains a part of the Ten Commandments, which God wrote with His finger upon tables of stone (Deuteronomy 4:13) – the same Laws that God now writes upon the hearts of those who come to Christ by faith (Hebrews 10:16). Within Evangelical circles today, keeping the seventh-day Sabbath is nigh unto anathema, and they are quick to point out that Jesus rose on the first day of the week and, for them, that changes it all. However, if you press them for supporting Biblical evidence, if they are honest, they will admit that there is none. Matthew G. Easton noted this in his Bible Dictionary:

Originally at creation the seventh day of the week was set apart and consecrated as the Sabbath. The first day of the week is now observed as the Sabbath. Has God authorized this change? ... The question ... as to the change of the day in no way affects the perpetual obligation of the Sabbath as an institution. Change of the day or no change, the Sabbath remains as a sacred institution the same. It cannot be abrogated. If any change of the day has been made, it must have been by Christ or by his authority. ... It was originally a memorial of creation [actually, it was set apart by God (Genesis 2:2-3)]. A work vastly greater than that of creation has now been accomplished by him, the work of redemption. We would **naturally expect** just such a change as would make the Sabbath a memorial of that greater work. True, we can give no text authorizing the change in so many words.⁴¹⁰ (Emphasis added)



Easton then goes on to seek to justify the change to the first day of the week based upon when Jesus met with His disciples after the resurrection, etc. – a change that he looks for because of his *natural expectation*, and not because of anything Jesus said. As Easton admits, the change would have required the authority of Jesus Christ (the Lord of the Sabbath – Mark 2:28); in reality, the most natural expectation would be to have a directive from Christ authorizing such a significant departure from the clearly declared Law of God. Why would we expect to have a change from the seven-day Sabbath to the first-day just because Jesus rose on the first day of the week? The event of Jesus’ resurrection took place after the Sabbath was ended; it would seem more likely that Christ demonstrated His support for the seventh-day Sabbath; even in His sacrifice for mankind, He kept the Sabbath day.



A quick scan of history shows two things regarding this contentious issue: 1) the Roman Catholic Church (in some of its sources) claims to be the change agent. In Peter Geiermann’s *The Convert’s Catechism of Catholic Doctrine*, he openly states: “We observe Sunday instead of Saturday because the Catholic Church transferred the

⁴¹⁰ Easton’s Bible Dictionary, “Sabbath.”

solemnity from Saturday to Sunday.”⁴¹¹ 2) The change was largely legislated by the governing powers of the day. “Constantine in 321 forbade the sitting of courts and all secular labor in towns on ‘the venerable day of the sun’ ...”⁴¹² Constantine was the Roman emperor of the day, and, in keeping with the growing anti-Jewish sentiment in the West and under the influence of leading bishops, he enacted a law effectively marginalizing Jews and those who sought to keep the Sabbath according to God’s Command. With this beginning, it has always been either secular or papal authority that has imposed restrictions for the observance of the “venerable day of the sun” or Sunday, but never has this come through the expressed authority of the Lord Jesus Christ.



The challenge placed before the Philippian Christians was this: do what the Word of God commissions you to do – and do it without questioning. God’s Word tells us to “try [examine, scrutinize] the spirits [not non-physical beings, but that by which a person is influenced] whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1).⁴¹³ The intent of this is that we are to continually examine the purveyors of doctrine who cross our paths (*try* is in the present tense, imperative mood). Therefore, in keeping with the challenge given by John, we must be continually examining what we hear, read and see by the standard of the Word of God. Notice that the intent is to determine if they are *of God*, not whether they are Evangelical, Pentecostal, or Catholic; that is why the measure that we use must be God’s Word, which, in turn, demands that we know His Word, and not simply a statement of doctrine hammered out by a particular denomination. It is our responsibility to know the Scriptures (2 Timothy 2:15) and, by the Spirit of God abiding within (given to guide us into all truth – John 16:13), to apply what the Scriptures declare to our daily living without hesitation.

¹⁵ That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world;



Paul now provides the reasons for doing what God says without question, the prescribed method for *working out* our salvation with fear and trembling.

The word *may* is correct here, and an important element as we give what follows our consideration. There is no written guarantee that what follows will describe who we are, yet it remains a real possibility if we permit the Spirit of God to work in us to do those things that are honoring to Him. However, it also remains within us to *grieve* the Spirit of God (Ephesians 4:30), to *quench* His working in us (1 Thessalonians 5:19), and so we must guard against a heart of unbelief (Hebrews 3:12), lest we fail to realize our potential in the Spirit (Romans 8:4). Isaiah spoke of this reality: “In all their affliction he [the Lord] was afflicted, and the angel [messenger] of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old. But they rebelled [to be disobedient], and vexed his holy Spirit: therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them” (Isaiah 63:9-10).⁴¹⁴ Here is the full impact of this small word *may* – the will of man plays an active role in his relationship with his Creator, even after he has placed his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. Jesus said, “Abide in me” (John 15:4) – a command that we are to obey by being ever vigilant that we remain *in Him*. “For we are made partakers of Christ [being *in Christ*], **if** we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end ...” (Hebrews 3:14). We must be prepared to hold fast our

⁴¹¹ Peter Geiermann, The Convert’s Catechism of Catholic Doctrine, p.50.

⁴¹² Philip Schaff, History of the Christian Church, Volume III, Chapter III, p. 75.

⁴¹³ Strong’s Online.

⁴¹⁴ *Ibid.*

faith in Christ through the trials and tribulations that will come in this life (John 16:33); believing for a while is not sufficient – the example of Israel should adequately remove this fallacy from our minds. Yet the hope of many Evangelicals today is resting on a little prayer for salvation that they uttered at one time; the Scriptures are clear, praying a prayer and then living for the devil or yourself is not acceptable to God. Since we cannot know the heart of anyone else, we can only be assured that these people fall into one of two groups:



Reinhard Bonnke

1. **Not Known** – At the end of life they will hear from Lord, “I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matthew 7:23). *Never* means *not at any time*;⁴¹⁵ there was no apostasy here, only delusion. These people never believed in the first place; they were only duped into believing that they were saved, and did all kinds of marvelous deeds *for the Lord*, Whom they did not know. Look at what they have done (v. 22) – they have prophesied in the name of the Lord, they have cast out demons, and they have done mighty things (miracles). Consider the “ministries” of Benny Hinn, Peter Popoff and Reinhard Bonnke (as examples) – they demonstrate all of these works that Jesus listed; yet even those who have done all of these things may well hear that they were “not at any time” known by the Lord. However, closer to home, I fear that this will be the case for many of Billy Graham’s “converts”; they did something, but they neither understand what it was that they were supposed to have done, nor has it made any difference in how they live their lives. For the most part, Evangelicals have lost the saving core of the Gospel message and have accepted a social gospel, which Paul would vehemently declare to be a perverted gospel, and those who proclaim it as being anathema (Galatians 1:7-8).

2. **Apostate** – Perhaps, they may have believed for a while, and then fell away in a time of testing (in other words, they are apostate). These are condemned even as they live; they can only look forward with a terrible expectation to condemnation because they have spurned the only Sacrifice for sins, the Lord Jesus Christ (Hebrews 10:26-27). It is of the apostate that Peter says that it would have been better for them to have never known the truth, because they now stand condemned, with no hope (2 Peter 2:21; Hebrews 10:29). For the unbelieving, there is always the hope that they will heed God’s Truth and be saved; the apostate has turned away from the only Truth and is without hope of reconciliation.

Jesus’ command is, *you* abide in Me (John 15:4); it is in the active voice, which means that *we* are the ones who are to do the abiding. Evangelicals have accepted a version of the Calvinist’s doctrine of the perseverance of the saints (the P of Calvinism’s TULIP); once you have “believed” you are kept for all of eternity. They look to passages like John 10:27-28 for support; Jesus said, “**My sheep** hear my voice, and I know [present tense – am knowing] them, and they follow [present tense – are following] me: And I give [present tense – am giving] unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish [ou and me are two Greek negatives with perish in the subjunctive mood, which means: they absolutely will not perish⁴¹⁶], neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.” Two things stand in the way of this supporting the matter of eternal security (as it is called). First of all, Jesus is speaking of *My sheep* who are known by Him and are following Him; this speaks of being *in Christ* and walking faithfully with Him – the one who is in this relationship with the Lord will

⁴¹⁵ Friberg Lexicon.

⁴¹⁶ https://www.ntgreek.org/pdf/subjunctive_uses.pdf

not perish. Then we have the remaining promise that nothing will be able to snatch us out of His hand, and this is truly marvelous. However, we must not read more into it than what Jesus said; it is assuring us that nothing (no outside force) will ever be able to take us away from the Lord. This is confirmed by passages like, “For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:38-39). Once again, all of these things are external to us; what we must not lose sight of is our deceitful heart (Jeremiah 17:9). “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God” (Hebrews 3:12). This is a warning addressed to *brethren*, those who were earlier called *holy brethren* (Hebrews 3:1). We must be ever vigilant lest the enemy of our souls destroy us; the foundation of our faith must rest in the pure Word of God, not in the creeds or theologies of men.



The first basis for obedience to what God has declared is that we might be blameless and pure.⁴¹⁷ Before whom are we to be blameless, or without fault, and pure? Jesus came to earth as the perfect Son of God, and, as such, was eternally pure and without blame (being God) – yet, among the Jews, He was accused of many things (albeit falsely) and regarded as a violator of their laws and theology.⁴¹⁸ Through faith in what Christ has done for our salvation, we are brought to abide in Him; through Him we are sanctified, or made holy, before God (Hebrews 10:10). As we walk in obedience to God’s commands (in accordance with the Spirit of God), we will remain pure and blameless before Him – part of the holy Bride Whom He will present to Himself one day (Ephesians 5:27). Our purity before God is because of what Christ has done in paying the debt of our sin; we will remain in this state before God only by walking in obedience to His commands by the power of His indwelling Spirit (Romans 8:1-4). Our salvation is all of God (Ephesians 2:8-9), but we must work in conjunction with the Spirit of God abiding within us in order to retain our salvation – this is the essence of working out our salvation with fear and trembling. As we remain in Christ, here is the heavenly perspective: we are pure before God.

Now we are told of the earthly perspective. We will be the blameless children of God in the midst of a crooked and corrupt generation. *Blameless*, and the phrase *without rebuke*, come from the same Greek word, only their forms differ (the former is masculine, the latter – neuter).⁴¹⁹ The Greek word for *nation* is normally translated as *generation* – this is the only instance where the translators chose to use the word *nation*. We have just seen that we, as those who are *in Christ*, are pure and without blame before God; this is emphasized here in calling us blameless (*without rebuke*). However, although we are blameless before God through Christ, we live among a people who are wicked and twisted. Jesus prayed to the Father, “I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil” (John 17:15). He also said, “In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33b). The tribulation (*thlipsis*) will come as we live as the blameless children of God in a world where He is unknown and often unwanted.⁴²⁰ We must be prepared for tribulation (often from those who profess to know God), lest we fall away in the face of the trials of life – this is part of counting the cost before we commit to following the Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 13:20-21; Luke 14:27). Unfortunately, this warning no longer finds its way into the Evangelical message; having embraced ecumenism, they have broadened their pathway, marginalized any persecution or

⁴¹⁷ Friberg Lexicon.

⁴¹⁸ Here is the pattern for our living – we might well be regarded as violators of man’s religious laws and his carefully drafted theology, but our concern must always be that we stand blameless before God.

⁴¹⁹ Stephanus 1550 NT.

⁴²⁰ Strong’s Online.

tribulation, and, unbeknownst to them, they have also removed the eternal life promised by the Lord. They give the appearance of upholding the Word of God even while they disobey the commands of God at every turn; to complicate the great Evangelical problem even further, in most cases, they only hold a stained and corrupted form of God's true Word. They might vehemently deny that it makes any difference, but their compromised living stands as testimony to the compromised text that they uphold.

Within this generation, we *shine* (present tense) *as lights in the world*.⁴²¹ Early on in Jesus' ministry, He spoke of being lights: "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle [lamp], and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick [lampstand]; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:14-16).⁴²² Jesus declared that those who did not believe in Him were already condemned, and went on to say, "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved [*agape* – love as an act of the will] darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd [exposed]." (John 3:18-21).⁴²³ As we read John's Revelation, we come to understand the depth of this love for the darkness, for men will blaspheme God because of an inflicted plague of hail, rather than repent before Him (Revelation 16:21). We live in a generation that is committed to the darkness of sin; it is within this generation that we are to shine forth the light of God – how can we do this? The Psalmist understood the necessity of being in the Word of God – "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Psalm 119:105). Once again, the absolute necessity of being in the Word of God is so clear; **not** for the purpose of confirming our theological bent, but rather for Jesus, the eternal Word, to speak to our hearts as we permit the Spirit of God to guide us into all truth (John 16:13). "He that saith, I know [understand] him, and keepeth [to attend to carefully] not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is [absolutely] not in him" (1 John 2:4).⁴²⁴ We must *study* (to apply ourselves with diligence) to show ourselves approved unto God (2 Timothy 2:15); we must expend the effort to abide in Christ, the eternal Word of God (Revelation 19:13). We are to be a light by walking in obedience to His commandments; we have no light within ourselves, we can only shine forth God's light through our obedience to Him – we are to be a lamp, permitting God's light to shine through us by the working of the oil of the Spirit of God (Romans 8:4).

¹⁶ Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.



This first phrase is tied directly to the previous thought of being lights in the world, for it concludes the thought of how this light is to be shown. The words *holding forth* also include the idea of holding fast.⁴²⁵ The *word of life* is clearly the Gospel of Jesus Christ, for there is no life outside of Him (John 1:1; 14:6; Revelation 19:13). The light will shine forth into a dark world only as we hold securely to the message of the Bible, and then hold it forth so that all may

⁴²¹ Strong's Online.

⁴²² Vine's "lamp." "There is no mention of a candle in the original, either in the O.T. or in the N.T. The figure of that which feeds upon its own substance to provide its light would be utterly inappropriate. A lamp is supplied by oil, which in its symbolism is figurative of the Holy Spirit."

⁴²³ Strong's Online.

⁴²⁴ Ibid.

⁴²⁵ Friberg Lexicon.

see God's light. We must have both the true message and a firm grasp of it; if either is missing, there will be no light, or the light will fail. This is where the illustration of the lamp shines. The light of the lamp finds its source in a fuel that is external to the lamp; our spiritual light will only exist through the working of the Spirit of God; in ourselves, we have no light, nor anything that could produce a light. The light is all of God; however, we must not quench the Spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:19), thereby abandoning our only Fuel for light.

Paul now provides a personal result of the Philippians shining forth. The word *rejoice* is actually a noun and speaks of that in which one might glory;⁴²⁶ therefore, this phrase could be rendered, *regarding my glorying in a day of Christ*. Paul's anticipation is that the Philippians will provide him a reason to glory when he sees the Lord (this does not refer to Christ's return [by contrast, 2 Thessalonians 2:2, which does refer to His coming, includes the definite article *the* (*the day of Christ*)], but rather to when Paul is joined with the Lord after death). His concern is that he will not have run, or labored, in vain among the Philippians. What is being exposed here is Paul's concern that all of the work that he has done among the Philippian believers would be for naught – that they would turn their backs on his teaching of the Gospel, and fall away. As these Christians work out their salvation with fear and trembling and shine as lights in a darkened world, Paul's glorying will find its foundation. To the Galatians Paul makes a similar, but less positive, comment: "I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain" (Galatians 4:11). He is not expressing his fear of the Galatians, but rather that he is afraid that his labor in their midst has been for nothing. Unlike the Philippians who were growing in their walk with the Lord, the Galatians were being tempted to fall into the trap of the Judaizers, thereby forsaking faith in Christ alone, for their salvation.

"If a man abide not in me, he [singular] is cast forth as a branch [singular, neuter], and is withered [dried up]; and men [they – plural, neuter, see Matthew 13:41-42] gather them [together], and cast *them* into the fire, and they are [it is - singular] burned" (John 15:5-6).⁴²⁷ For clarity in our English language, the last phrases would read: *they are gathering and casting into the fire, and it is burning*.⁴²⁸ The barren branch is being burned; there is a significant danger of losing everything by not being prepared for trials or temptations – we must abide (*meno*) in Christ (John 15:4), and endure (*hupomeno*) unto the end in order to be saved (Matthew 24:13). To Nicodemus Jesus said: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth [is persuaded – present tense] in him **should not perish**, but [might] have everlasting life" (John 3:16) – being persuaded must be coupled with endurance to ensure eternal life (Matthew 13:20-22).



Billy Graham

We must recognize that there is only one way that Paul's work among the Philippians could be for nothing – if they fell away (or apostatized). We have already noted that Evangelicals have imbibed deeply of the error that promises eternal life even to those who may have only prayed a

⁴²⁶ Strong's Online.

⁴²⁷ Stephanus 1550 NT.

⁴²⁸ Ibid.

prayer and then departed to live in sin. Billy Graham has been a great purveyor of this heresy, which is now thoroughly embedded in the hearts and minds of most Evangelicals. “Conversion” was accomplished by repeating a simple prayer at the close of his crusade message, and then these “converts” were turned over to whomever for teaching – many going back to their apostate denominations. Any true conversions coming out of this scenario are by the mercy of God, and not through the integrity of Billy Graham. Paul taught the Philippians the full Gospel message and yet feared that his work might be in vain; by contrast, Billy, who has consistently proclaimed a diluted message of believe-it-receive-it, never questions his spiritual “success.” Apostasy is a very real threat to those who have been persuaded, who have believed in Jesus Christ; we must continually be on guard against failing in our walk with the Lord – “Take heed, **brethren**, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God” (Hebrews 3:12).

17 Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all.



This is more closely tied to what just came before than our English translation would indicate. The primary thought in the previous verse speaks of Paul’s anticipation of the Philippians providing him with a basis for rejoicing in Christ, being fully aware of the possibility of apostasy. This now picks up on that, and begins with the Greek word for *but*, signaling that a contrast will follow. *But if also I am being poured out* (as a drink offering) *on the sacrifice and service of your faith ...*⁴²⁹ The word *offered* speaks of being poured out – a common offering under the Mosaic tradition, since a drink offering was required with many sacrifices (Exodus 29:40). Paul declared to the Corinthians, “And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved” (2 Corinthians 12:15). He was completely committed to seeing the truth of God embedded in the hearts of the Corinthians, and he shows the same commitment here with the Philippians. If he is poured out for the establishment of their faith, he will rejoice even in this. Here is a glimpse into Paul’s heart: he is willing to sacrifice himself in order to see these people firmly rooted in the faith of Christ; he says, “I rejoice and I rejoice with you all.” *Joy* and *rejoice* are the same word in the Greek, except that the second has the prefix *with* added.⁴³⁰ Paul will personally rejoice, and he will also rejoice with the Philippians; he has seen and knows of their faithfulness in the Lord – his sacrifice would only be cause for celebration.

18 For the same cause also do ye joy, and rejoice with me.



What is not obvious in our translation is that these two phrases are commands; both *joy* and *rejoice with* are in the imperative mood.⁴³¹ A closer translation would read: *For this also ye are to rejoice and ye are to rejoice with me.*⁴³² There is a tight correlation with the previous verse where Paul says that, even if his life is poured out as a drink offering for the establishment of their faith, he will rejoice and he will rejoice with the Philippians. In like manner and for the same reason, Paul instructs the Philippians to rejoice, and to rejoice with him (a similar reciprocal rejoicing). He considers the expenditure of his life to be cause for joy because of the spiritually fruitful lives of these believers; rather than feel sorrow for Paul in his imprisonment, he commands

⁴²⁹ Stephanus 1550 NT.

⁴³⁰ Strong’s Online.

⁴³¹ Ibid.

⁴³² Stephanus 1550 NT.

them to be joyful, and to rejoice with him. Paul held an eternal view of life; what took place in this life was of less consequence than being prepared for eternity, and therein was his cause for rejoicing in the Philippian Christians.

Something that was never far from Paul's mind was the calling that we have received of God, and it was this focus that served to raise his eyes above the trials of this life to the glory that awaited him with God, which, in turn, permitted him to rejoice in seeing faith in Christ established in the hearts of the Philippians, despite his trials. This is not a natural view of life, something that will not easily become a pattern for us; we are in the world, and it will continually demand our attention unless we are prepared to fight against its allurements. Consider some aspects of the calling that we, who have been persuaded, have all received (not just Paul) so that we might be better motivated to claim, and hold fast to, our commitment to God:

1. We are *called of Jesus Christ* (Romans 1:6). We are called by the eternal God become flesh; the One Who died to make our eternal reconciliation with God possible; it is our Savior Who is calling us. All other voices that we might hear are sent from the devil to cause us to turn away from the Giver of life.
2. We are *called holy* (Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:2). Like the faithful ones in Rome, we are called holy – not by anything that we have done, but because of being found in Jesus Christ. As we come to faith in Christ and continue to abide in Him and He abides in us, God sees us as being holy – however, we must remain **in Christ**.
3. We are *called the children of the living God* (Romans 9:26). To those who were outside of the chosen people of Israel, God declared through Hosea: “Ye *are* not my people, *there* it shall be said unto them, *Ye are* the sons of the living God” (Hosea 1:10). God's mercy has always been expressed to a people without hope; His desire was for Israel to be a nation of priests to intercede with God on behalf of the people of the world (Exodus 19:6) – this never happened. Through faith in Christ, and with the indwelling Holy Spirit, that is now our lot in life (1 Peter 2:9-10).
4. The call of God will not change or be retracted (Romans 11:29).⁴³³ In a day when everything seems to be very subjective and malleable, God's call upon our lives has not changed – we must still attend to His Word, lest we miss what He has for us (the way to life is still narrow). Nor will He withdraw his calling, but that is not to say that His calling will never cease (2 Corinthians 6:2; Psalm 95:7-8).
5. We are *called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord* (1 Corinthians 1:9). Jesus said, “Abide in me, and I in you” (John 15:4); here is the key to having fellowship with the Son of God – continually abiding in Him (Hebrews 3:14). We have been called into fellowship with our Creator.
6. God has *called us to peace* (1 Corinthians 7:15). Taking this verse out of context, the ecumenist lays his weapons down and sits with his enemy. Jesus said, “These things I have spoken unto you, that **in me** ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation [oppression, affliction, distress]: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).⁴³⁴ The Greek word for *peace* used by Jesus is exactly the same as the one used by Paul; we are to have inner peace (being children of God) in the midst of promised distress.
7. We have been called *into the grace of Christ* (Galatians 1:6). In His eternal love and mercy, God made a way for sinful man to be restored to fellowship with Him; man was created

⁴³³ Friberg Lexicon.

⁴³⁴ Strong's Online.

for fellowship with God (made in the image of God) and it is through His grace (that which brings Him joy) that we can be reconciled unto Him.

8. We have been *called unto liberty* (Galatians 5:13). Ignoring the context for this statement, modern Evangelicals heave a sigh of relief and proclaim freedom to live as they please. Our liberty lies in our new birth after the manner of Isaac – we are children of promise, not subject to the statutes and ordinances of the Law of Moses. We are freeborn, free to live in accordance with the leading of the Spirit of God in obedience to the commandments of God, no longer bound by the chains of sin (Romans 6:18). We are free from condemnation if we walk after the leading of the Spirit of God (Romans 8:1-4).
9. We are *called in one hope* (Ephesians 4:4). Paul declared to Timothy Who our hope is: “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, ... our hope” (1 Timothy 1:1). We have only one Hope, and that is Jesus Who is the “one mediator between God and men” (1 Timothy 2:5) – the One Who declared Himself to be the Way, the Truth and the Life (John 14:6).
10. We have received a *high calling* of God (Philippians 3:14). There can be no higher calling, for we have been called into fellowship with our Creator and Savior.
11. We have been *called in one body* (Colossians 3:15). Jesus said, “I will build my *ekklesia*” (Matthew 16:18); He has made “both [the Jew and the Gentile] one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition” (Ephesians 2:14). Hebrews 11 makes it clear that by faith all people of all times will be together in one; the saved of today are part of the same *ekklesia* as Enoch and Abraham of old. Jesus said that there would be only one flock and one Shepherd (John 10:16).
12. God has called us *unto his kingdom and glory* (1 Thessalonians 2:12). Preceded with the charge to walk worthy of God, here is a present reality and a future anticipation as we hold steadfast in our walk with God. We are now members of His kingdom, anticipating a time when we will live in His glory forever.
13. We have been called *unto holiness* (1 Thessalonians 4:7). Not only are we called holy, but we are to be holy; we must live a life of holiness. This is a command from the Lord: “Ye shall be holy: for I the LORD your God *am* holy” (Leviticus 19:2; 1 Peter 1:15).
14. We are called unto *eternal life* (1 Timothy 6:12). Timothy is charged to take hold of this eternal life to which we have been called; earlier, he is counseled to remain in the teaching of Paul, for salvation is possible by doing so (1 Timothy 4:16). Jesus declared eternal life to be for those who remain steadfast in their belief in Him (John 3:16 – the expression is that eternal life *may* be for those who believe); the deciding criteria is that we continue in the faith of Christ until the end (Hebrews 3:14).
15. We have received a *holy calling* (2 Timothy 1:9). Not only are we called holy, and not only are we called to a life of holiness, but the calling itself is holy. This is not surprising when we consider that it comes from a holy God.
16. We have received a *heavenly calling* (Hebrews 3:1). Not only is our calling from God Whom we think of as residing in heaven, but our calling looks forward to an eternal future with God. Indeed, our final salvation will come when Jesus returns from the heavens (Philippians 3:20) and changes our bodies into the likeness of His glorious body (3:21), if we stand fast in the Lord (4:1).

This is the amazing calling that we have of God, which deserves our careful attention so that we might walk worthy of His calling upon our lives (Ephesians 4:1). If we respond to His calling, then we must walk carefully and with determination, for if we fall away from our walk in the Lord, then we will forfeit all of the blessings of our holy calling. “And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: That ye [may] be not

slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience [endurance] inherit the promises” (Hebrews 6:11-12).⁴³⁵ Paul’s charge is that the Philippians rejoice, and that their rejoicing will find fruition as they endure in the marvelous calling of God. The Lord will support us in our enduring (He has given us His Spirit Who is prepared to abide with us forever – John 14:16), but the commitment to endure remains with us. Paul commanded the Corinthians to continually be “stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord ...” (1 Corinthians 15:58); the command is directed to the Corinthians (and us) – it is our choice, but the enablement to endure will come through the abiding presence of the Spirit of God.

¹⁹ But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state.

 *But* is not the best word with which to begin this verse, since there is no contrasting thought presented; probably *and* or *now* would have fit the context better. The word *trust* means hope; Paul is hoping to presently send Timothy quickly (*shortly*) unto the Philippians.⁴³⁶ The stated reason for this trip is so Paul might hear of all that is taking place within this gathering, and that he might be encouraged. Keep in mind, Paul was imprisoned at this time and he was dependent upon those whom he trusted to assess the condition of the various gatherings and report back to him. With the Philippians, he is confident that he will be encouraged (*comfort*) with Timothy’s report. The word *know* (*ginosko*) speaks of becoming acquainted with, or of getting to know something.⁴³⁷

²⁰ For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state.

 Here is that word *likeminded* again. In 2:2 we saw that it meant to think the same way, and came from two words: *autos phroneo* (literally, *same think*). It is not the same in this verse, even though we can’t tell the difference from our English translation. The single Greek word used here is *isopsuchos* (*ee-sop’-soo-khos*) and means like-souled.⁴³⁸ Paul says that he has no one like Timothy whose soul is like his own – someone who will be genuinely, or sincerely (the correct translation for the word *naturally*) concerned about them.⁴³⁹ Although Paul had many who labored faithfully with him, it would seem that his affinity for Timothy was unique; this is the only place that we find the concept of being *like-souled*.

²¹ For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ’s.

 This is very much a part of the previous verse. Paul has just described Timothy as being the only one who genuinely cares for them as he does. The reason for this is that everyone else is seeking (present tense) their own; I would understand this to be a general statement of the condition of the hearts of many in his day. As he looked about him, Paul had great difficulty finding those who had a heart for the truth of God like unto his own; everyone was preoccupied with the

⁴³⁵ Strong’s Online.

⁴³⁶ Ibid.

⁴³⁷ Ibid.

⁴³⁸ Ibid.

⁴³⁹ Friberg Lexicon.

cares of life, whereas Paul's burning passion was making the Gospel known (1 Corinthians 9:16). Others were seeking their own, and (literally) *not that of Christ Jesus*.⁴⁴⁰

In Paul's instruction to the Corinthians, he makes it very clear that the Body of Christ is made up of many members (1 Corinthians 12:12) – we are individually gifted by the Spirit to do different things, thereby the mutual care of the Body is enhanced (since we do not all have the same needs). Earlier, Paul taught the Corinthians to not seek to change their station in life simply because they had placed their faith in Christ. If you're a servant, don't worry about it (if you can be freed, great – if not, you are Christ's freeman); if you are born free, remember that you are Christ's slave (1 Corinthians 7:20-22). There is a great equalizing that takes place *in Christ* (Ephesians 4:16). What seems evident is that our position in Christ overshadows whatever else might be expected of us in this life. To the Ephesians, Paul exhorted the thief to be diligent to work at what is good so that he may provide for those in need (Ephesians 4:28). He called on the Thessalonians to “study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you...” (1 Thessalonians 4:11). The balance in this is that we are to work to support ourselves and our family; “... if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel [unfaithful]” (1 Timothy 5:8).⁴⁴¹ This is a responsibility placed upon the man by God – “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground ...” (Genesis 3:19). Yet, although we are all to have our work, that is not to be our primary focus; it is to be more the means to an end, than the end itself. Paul's criticism here is that he sees in others a focus away from the things of the Lord to attending to their own personal welfare and making that their priority for living. Paul's concern would be expressed in Jesus' words: “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things [the necessities of life] shall be added unto you” (Matthew 6:33). Above all, we must strive to live in keeping with God's commands, beginning with those simple and clear Ten Commandments now written upon our hearts by the finger of God (Jeremiah 31:33); “... hereby we do know [present tense] that we know [perfect tense] him, if we keep [attend to carefully; present tense, subjunctive mood (hence *if*)] his [God's] commandments” (1 John 2:3).⁴⁴² The reality expressed here, but often overlooked, is that we come to *know* God only once (perfect tense – a once and for all past action not needing to be repeated⁴⁴³), and if we continually and carefully attend to doing what He has commanded us, then we will always *know* that we are His.

If we attend carefully to God's commandments, then we will continually *know* that we have come to *know* Him (1 John 2:3). There is a very strong correlation between the assurance that we *know* God and our obedience to His commandments. God's message to Israel is the same as to us today – repentance and obedience (Deuteronomy 4:30-31).

It is, therefore, expedient for us to consider what this means. John goes on to expand on the importance of our obedience, “He that saith, I know [perfect tense – the one-time coming to know God] him, and keepeth [to attend to carefully] not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is [absolutely] not in him. But whoso keepeth [to attend to carefully] his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected [made complete]: hereby know we that we are in him” (1 John 2:4-5).⁴⁴⁴ Since obedience is such a significant factor in our assurance that we are *in Christ* (that we *know*

⁴⁴⁰ Stephanus 1550 NT.

⁴⁴¹ Strong's Online.

⁴⁴² Ibid.

⁴⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid.

God), it would only follow that it is of utmost importance that we know the commands of God so that we can walk in obedience to Him.

When the lawyer came to Jesus to test Him regarding the Law, “Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love [*agape*] the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first [the most important of all⁴⁴⁵] and great commandment. And the second [second in order⁴⁴⁶] *is* like unto it [of equal value], Thou shalt love [*apage*] thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (Matthew 22:37-40).⁴⁴⁷ Here are two general, overarching commandments upon which all of the other commands of God hang. The foremost, or chief commandment comes from Deuteronomy 6:5 – “And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might”; the second is found in Leviticus 19:18 – “Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: *I am* the LORD.” As we consider this, it would seem that nothing has changed – what God expected of the children of Israel with Moses, spiritually, Jesus reiterated to the lawyer – and rightly so. What we must not misunderstand is that the Word of God has been unalterably established forever (Psalm 119:89), and God has declared, “My covenant will I not break [dissolve], nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips” (Psalm 89:34).⁴⁴⁸

God spoke Ten Commandments, which He then wrote upon two tables of stone with His own finger (Exodus 31:18; Deuteronomy 4:13), and, now, under the New Covenant instituted by Jesus, He writes them upon the hearts of all who place their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Since our obedience to God’s commands is so vitally important to our assurance of knowing Him and remaining in Christ, a beginning for us should be these Ten Commands:

1. “*I am* the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me” (Exodus 20:2-3).

This establishes, without question, that God must hold the highest commitment in our lives. This forces us to consider what holds our primary loyalty; this is subtle, for what may well appear to be spiritual could be a mask for personal pride. Evangelical pastors might be guilty of basking in the prestige of being the spiritual focus of their church; church members, in turn, may hang on the words of their spiritual hero, losing sight of the Scriptures. A *god* does not need to take the form of a pagan deity, an idol that has been carved and painted – it might merely be someone, or something, that controls our lives.

2. “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness *of any thing that is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God *am* a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth *generation* of them that hate me; And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments” (Exodus 20:4-6).

Here God deals with the visualization of a god; we are a visually-oriented people, and this deals with a very real temptation. When Moses led the people of Israel out of Egypt to Mt. Sinai, he went into the mountain to meet with God. During his time away, the people became restless and thought that something had happened to him; their first request of Aaron (Moses’ brother) was

⁴⁴⁵ Friberg Lexicon.

⁴⁴⁶ Vine’s “second.”

⁴⁴⁷ Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

⁴⁴⁸ Strong’s Dictionary, ESword.

“make us gods, which shall go before us” (Exodus 32:1). Aaron fashions a calf from gold (like unto what they would have undoubtedly seen in Egypt), builds an altar before it and declares, “To morrow *is* a feast to the LORD [Jehovah]” (Exodus 32:5); evidently he saw the calf as being representative of God. This second commandment deals specifically with this kind of situation; we are not to make anything that we ascribe as being God.

There are those, like the Hutterites, who have said that because of this commandment they cannot comply with the laws of the land regarding having their picture on their driver’s license. This is not a correct interpretation of God’s Second Commandment, which has two interrelated parts – don’t make an image for worship, and don’t worship an image. Some, like the Hutterites, take this to mean that we should not have pictures, but this would only be true if our purpose is to worship those pictures.

Roman Catholic version of Commandments:

- #1 - I am the LORD your God: you shall not have strange Gods before me.
- #9 - You shall not covet your neighbor's wife.
- #10 - You shall not covet your neighbor's goods.⁴⁴⁷

The Roman Catholics and Lutherans bring Commandments One and Two together and make it the first Commandment.⁴⁴⁹ Considering the Catholic’s prolific violation of God’s Second Commandment, this is not surprising. By merging these two, they seek to deflect their contravention of God’s Law by linking the forbidden *graven image* to *other gods*; thus their images are deemed to

be acceptable, for they are not of other gods, but only “tools” to enhance their worship of God.

We also have a glimpse here of the continuity of unconfessed sin from generation to generation, as well as the ease with which the cycle can be broken through repentance (turning from hatred to love for God) and obedience to God’s commands. Again, we see the correlation between repentance before God and obedience to God.

3. “Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain” (Exodus 2:7).

If there is one Law that is being violated with great abandon in the world today, it has to be this one. For the world, this is of little consequence because they already rest under the condemnation of the Lord (John 3:18). However, this carelessness of the tongue has been steadily infiltrating Evangelical circles in recent years, even among those who would consider themselves to be conservative Christians. This command states that the Lord will not acquit the one who is so careless.

4. “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day *is* the sabbath of the LORD thy God: *in it* thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that *is* within thy gates: For *in* six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them *is*, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it” (Exodus 20:8-11).

This is the final Commandment (of the Ten) that relates specifically to our relationship with the Lord (“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind” – Matthew 22:37), and it is the only one to include the word *remember*.

⁴⁴⁹ http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/command.htm

This Commandment deals specifically with the Sabbath, the seventh day of the week, patterned after the last day of God's week of creation. Like unto the pattern, which God established in creation, this day is to be kept holy, or set apart, as a day of rest. "And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified [same Hebrew word translated as *holy* in the Fourth Commandment] it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made" (Genesis 2:3). The thrust of this Commandment is that this seventh day of the week is to be kept in the same way it was established by God at the end of creation. It is to be a day of rest, a day set apart unto the Lord.

At this point, we must remind ourselves of God's words to us through the Psalmist: "My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips" (Psalm 89:34). Of all of the Ten Commandments, this is the one that is violated most prolifically today among those who profess to be Christians – even the Fundamentalists. The pattern that God established at creation and confirmed through this Commandment has been set aside because the apostate Roman Catholic Church determined to shift the day of rest from the seventh-day Sabbath to the first day of the week. There is no Biblical basis for this change; as a matter of fact, there is ample evidence that God would not endorse such a contravention of His holy covenant. For most Evangelicals, this has probably never been a matter for any concern or question – the theological experts have evidently deemed it acceptable, so, for whatever reason, it was changed and it doesn't matter. Biblical evidence would support the retention of the seventh-day Sabbath, and confirm that it, in fact, does matter.⁴⁵⁰

5. "Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee" (Exodus 20:12).

This begins the first of six Commandments that deal with our relationship with those who are our neighbors. This Commandment calls for the respect of parents, an increasingly rare commodity in our modern society. We learn to honor God, governing authorities, etc. by honoring our parents.

6. "Thou shalt not kill" (Exodus 20:13).

This relates specifically to murder, and would fit with, "O LORD God, to whom vengeance belongeth; O God, to whom vengeance belongeth, shew thyself" (Psalm 94:1), and "Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I *am* the LORD" (Leviticus 19:18).

7. "Thou shalt not commit adultery" (Exodus 20:14).

8. "Thou shalt not steal" (Exodus 20:15).

9. "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor" (Exodus 20: 16).

10. "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that *is* thy neighbour's" (Exodus 20:17).

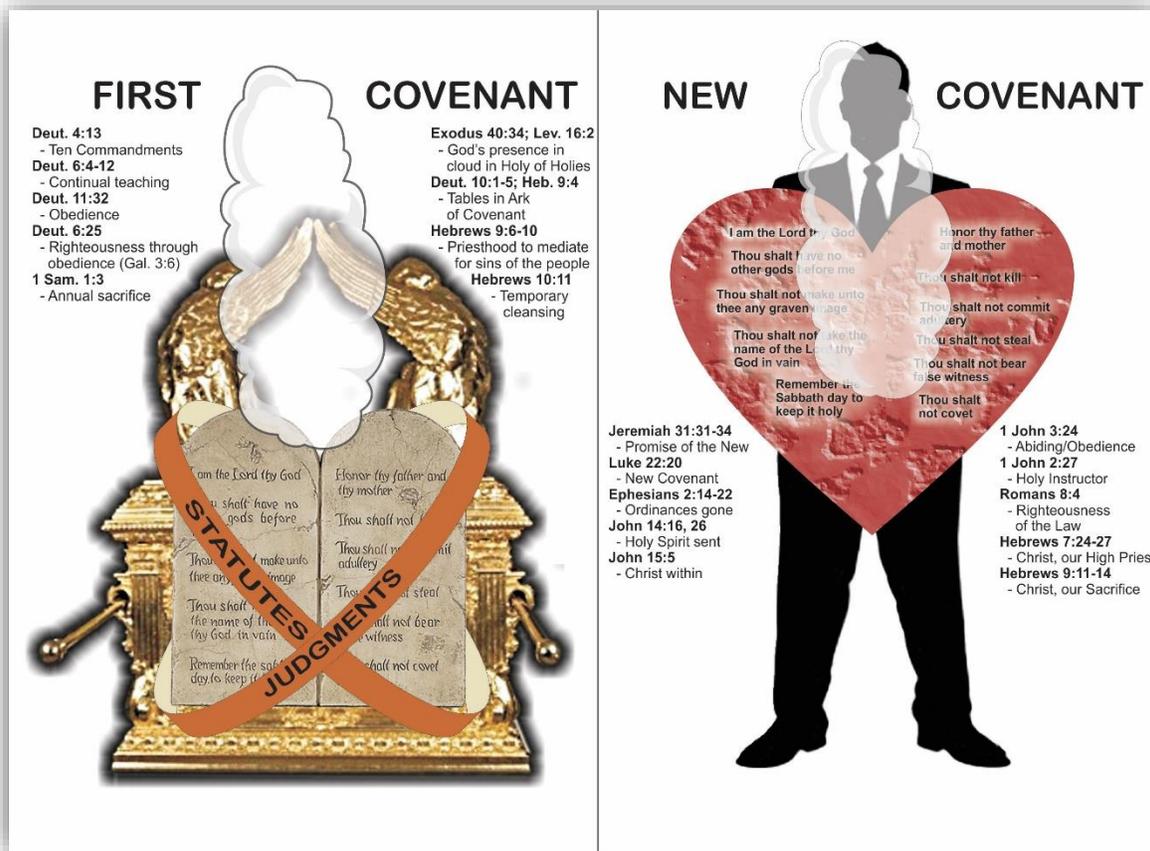
This final command is split into two by the Roman Catholics and Lutherans so that they can still have Ten Commandments (since they combined the first two). The separation is between not coveting your neighbor's wife (nine) and not coveting your neighbor's goods (ten).⁴⁵¹ To *covet*, means to desire to have for yourself.⁴⁵²

⁴⁵⁰ For more on this matter: <http://www.thenarrowtruth.com/what-of-the-sabbath.html>

⁴⁵¹ <http://www.the-ten-commandments.org/romancatholic-tencommandments.html>

⁴⁵² Strong's Online.

Here are Ten Commandments, spoken by God and written with His finger upon tables of stone. “And he [Jehovah] declared unto you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, *even* ten commandments; and he wrote them upon two tables of stone” (Deuteronomy 4:12). These Ten



Commandments formed the basis for the First Covenant that God made with those whom He desired to be a kingdom of priests for Him (Exodus 19:6). It is important to note that this is called a *covenant* (Psalm 89:34). Consider now the words of Jeremiah: “Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a **new** [or fresh] **covenant** with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day *that* I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this *shall be* **the covenant that I will make** with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, **I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts**; and will be their God, and they shall be my people” (Jeremiah 31:31-33). This is the promise of a fresh covenant – what makes it new? God declares that He will write His Law (the same Law that He used in the First Covenant) in their *inward parts* (the seat of thoughts and emotions) and upon their *hearts* (the seat of the will); the Law of God, His Ten Commandments, will no longer be written on stone and kept in the Holy of Holies – it will be written upon the hearts of those who enter into this New Covenant; we are the temple of the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:16).

When Jesus met with His disciples on the occasion of what is called the Last Supper, He made this revealing statement: “This cup *is* the new testament [fresh covenant] in my blood, which is

shed for you” (Luke 22:20b).⁴⁵³ Here is the fulfillment of the prophecy that the Lord made through Jeremiah! As we appropriate the shed blood of Christ as the covering for our sins, God writes His Laws in our *inward parts* and upon our *hearts* in accordance with His promise through Jeremiah. What Laws are these? They are the Ten Commandments that we have just reviewed – formerly written upon stone, now resident within us (see the illustration above).

As we come to faith in Christ, the Spirit of God comes to abide within us (John 14:16), and He comes for a very definite purpose: “... when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide [lead] you into all truth ...” (John 16:13a).⁴⁵⁴ Not only has God placed His Ten Commandments within us, He has also given us His Spirit to abide within us (1 Corinthians 3:16), and to lead us in our understanding of His Word (John 17:17). As wonderful as this is, there’s more: “*There is* therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Romans 8:1-4). As we walk in obedience to the Spirit of God, the righteousness of the Law of God (those central Ten Commandments) will be lived out through us. Once again, obedience is the key. “He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him” (1 John 2:4-5).



Returning to our verse (v. 21), Jesus identified such a situation (showing greater concern for our personal welfare than for the work of the Lord) in His parable of the Seed and the soils. “Some [Seed] fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith [immediately] they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. And some [Seed] fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them ...” (Matthew 13:5-7).⁴⁵⁵ Jesus carefully explained this parable to His disciples (and to us), “But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth [to understand] the word, and anon [immediately] with joy receiveth it; Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by [immediately] he is offended [falls away]. He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth [to understand] the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, [utterly] choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful [barren of spiritual fruit – Galatians 5:22-23]” (Matthew 13:20-22).⁴⁵⁶ We must not miss the tragedy of these situations. In both cases, the Seed (the Word of God) found root within the heart of this person; this is that one-time action of *knowing* God as seen in 1 John 2:3. However, either 1) when they were faced with distress because of the Word of God, they immediately fell away, or 2) the demands of this life and the dreams of wealth rendered the Word of God of no effect. In both cases, the result is exactly the same – the Word of God no longer has any place in their lives; they began well, but did not endure in the face of trials or temptations (Matthew 24:13). We must embrace the holy calling that we have from God; we must be moved to lift our eyes to the glories that await us and not be overwhelmed by the world, which may be crowding in around us.

⁴⁵³ Strong’s Online.

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid.

²² But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel.



Timothy stands in contrast to what Paul has just said about those who seek their own rather than the Lord Jesus Christ – the word *but* makes that very clear.

Proof speaks of being approved, having prevailed through a time of testing.⁴⁵⁷ Paul and Timothy had worked together long enough for Paul to be convinced of the stability of Timothy's walk with the Lord. He uses the word *served* to describe their labor together, a word that comes from the Greek root *doulos* (slave).⁴⁵⁸ Paul took Timothy into his service for the Lord as a father would teach his son his trade. Within our society, this is a lost tradition; our western culture has morphed into a monster that is out of control, and we are captive to an inundation of rapidly changing information. Specialization is the name of the game today, which is complicated by living among an upcoming generation that regards their elders with disdain. Anyone five years out of the loop is considered to be a dinosaur. Not long ago, those working in the trades were called "blue-collar" workers, and those who held the upper hand were of the "white-collar" class. Today the collar doesn't matter, because some of the most influential people take great pride in being no-collar workers. Although mentoring has not been totally lost, it is rare in today's rat-race of intellectual pursuits; yet Paul reveals this as being the relationship that he had with Timothy. He also calls Timothy his *beloved* or his *agapetos* – the root of this word being *agape*, love as an act of the will (1 Corinthians 4:17). Paul considered Timothy as his son and invested heavily in him to perpetuate the ministry that he had begun.

²³ Him therefore I hope to send presently, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me.



Paul assures the Philippians that he hopes to send Timothy to them right away, but he wants to first evaluate his own situation. *Shortly* (used in verse 19) means quickly (*tacheos*); *presently*, used here, means at once or immediately (*exautes*).⁴⁵⁹ The thrust is that Timothy will be on his way just as soon as he is able – as soon as Paul *may ascertain the things around him*.⁴⁶⁰ *See* means to find out or to ascertain, and is in the subjunctive mood, hence the necessity of the word *may*.⁴⁶¹

²⁴ But I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly.

⁴⁵⁷ Friberg Lexicon.

⁴⁵⁸ Strong's Online.

⁴⁵⁹ Friberg Lexicon.

⁴⁶⁰ Stephanus 1550 NT.

⁴⁶¹ Friberg Lexicon.



Here we have (in English) a repeat of the beginning of verse 19. However, the phrases are not the same. Earlier we saw that the word *trust* spoke of hope (*elpizo*); here, it means to be convinced or persuaded (*peitho*).⁴⁶² Paul is convinced in the Lord that he will come to the Philippians shortly, or quickly (same Greek word as in verse 19); he is persuaded that he will soon be released from prison.

²⁵ Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labour, and fellowsoldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants.



Supposed, in our English language, carries with it a great deal of doubt as to the certainty of a matter. However, the Greek word so translated is of a very different flavor; it is based on a careful consideration of all the relevant facts – this would be more like our word *considered* or *deemed*, and then only after meticulous thought.⁴⁶³ After weighing the matter carefully, Paul determined that it was necessary that he send Epaphroditus to them.

Epaphroditus, whose name means a devotee of Aphrodite,⁴⁶⁴ obviously came out of paganism (or at least his parents were pagans when he was born). Paul calls him his brother, his fellow worker, and fellow soldier. However, to the Philippians, Epaphroditus is their *messenger* (the Greek word is *apostolos*, but rather than *apostle*, he would be considered to be their delegate, or representative, to Paul).⁴⁶⁵ He is not an apostle, like unto Paul (or the other eleven), but is a *sent one* from the Philippians. He not only represented the Philippians to Paul but he also ministered to his needs (the Greek word is *chreia* (*khri'-ah*), and this is the only place in the NT where it is translated as *wants* – the word actually means necessities or needs).⁴⁶⁶ *Ministered* speaks of a self-sacrificing service, and, within Greek culture, referred to the work of those who provided a public service at their own expense; in the NT context, it is used of those who do service for God.⁴⁶⁷ Epaphroditus, sent as a representative of the Philippians, served Paul in the areas of his needs. It is this one, who ministered so capably to Paul's needs, whom he now considers it to be necessary to send back to the Philippian gathering – to those who commissioned him to go to Paul.

²⁶ For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick.



Here are some reasons why Paul felt compelled to send Epaphroditus back to Philippi. Evidently the Philippians had heard that Epaphroditus had been ill and they were concerned for him. When Epaphroditus heard this, he became distressed (*full of heaviness*) and longed to see them so that he could set their minds at rest that he was okay. A distance of over 1300 kilometers (using today's route) impeded relaying information quickly and would have required many days of travel.

⁴⁶² Strong's Online.

⁴⁶³ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁵ Friberg Lexicon.

⁴⁶⁶ Strong's Online.

⁴⁶⁷ Vine's "minister."

²⁷ For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.



Paul confirms that Epaphroditus was indeed so sick that he almost died, but God, in His mercy, restored him to health. Paul then affirms that God's mercy to Epaphroditus also extended to himself; with Epaphroditus' restoration to health, Paul was spared adding sorrow to sorrow. If Epaphroditus had died, he would have had the sorrow, or grief, of losing a fellow worker, but, added to that, he would have had the painful task of breaking the news to the Philippian gathering that their representative had died.

We might wonder at this situation, for when we look at the beginning of Paul's ministry, we notice something different. "And there sat a certain man at Lystra, impotent in his feet, being a cripple from his mother's womb, who never had walked: The same heard Paul speak: who stedfastly beholding him, and perceiving that he had faith to be healed, Said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped and walked" (Acts 14:8-10). Even at the time when Paul was shipwrecked on his journey to Rome as a prisoner, we see him healing those who came to him with various ailments (Acts 28:7-9). What changed?

Today we have many ministries that include "healing" as a significant part of their platform. Benny Hinn declares in his statement of faith, "Deliverance from sickness is provided for in the atonement and is the privilege of all believers (Isaiah 53:4-5; Matthew 8:16-17)."⁴⁶⁸ Isaiah wrote many things about the Promised One, and, in the reference indicated, declared, "Surely he hath borne [carried] our griefs [sicknesses], and



Benny Hinn



Peter Popoff

carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he *was* wounded for our transgressions, *he was* bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace *was* upon him; and with his stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:4-5).⁴⁶⁹ Matthew, in his writing, made application of this passage: "When the even was come, they brought unto him [Jesus] many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with *his* word, and healed all that were sick: **That it might be fulfilled** which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare *our* sicknesses" (Matthew 8:16-17). Jesus fulfilled the prophecy recorded in Isaiah; Benny Hinn presumptuously shoulders this Messianic promise for himself and seeks to heal people at will. Peter Popoff promotes his ministry with these words: "God's positive message of healing, salvation, blessing and success has reached literally millions of people."⁴⁷⁰ It's interesting to notice that healing is mentioned first, even before

⁴⁶⁸ <http://www.bennyhinn.org/aboutus/articledesc.cfm?id=1392>

⁴⁶⁹ Strong's Online.

⁴⁷⁰ <http://peterpopoff.org/>

salvation; he, like Hinn, desires to be known, personally, more than to make God's true Gospel message known.

We might readily acknowledge the charlatans, like Popoff and Hinn, working their claims today for their own benefit, but what about Paul? The healings accomplished through him were genuine, yet, when it came to Epaphroditus, it seems evident that Paul did not raise him to health as he did those on the island of Melita. What's the difference?

What we learn from 1 Corinthians 12 is that it is the Spirit of God Who distributes the gifts to "every man severally as he will" (v. 11); the gifts are given individually as the Spirit determines. What follows is a clarification that we are not to question the gift/gifts that the Spirit has given to us (vs. 15-17), nor where God has placed us within the Body; rather, we must understand that it has been done according to His pleasure (v. 18). Then we must recognize that, because gifts are given by the Spirit of God as He determines, our gifting might well change depending on where the Lord places us throughout life, and it will always be at His pleasure.

If we consider Jesus' ministry on earth, we are aware that healing the sick was a major part of His daily activity. This was used as a sign for those who would have eyes to see; it affirmed that Jesus bore the authority of God, as the Creator. The healed blind man, in his testimony before the ruling Jews, declared, "If this man were not of God, he could do nothing" (John 9:33). The difficulty that the religious Jews found themselves in was that the miracles were undeniable and easily verifiable, yet Jesus chose to annoy them by healing on the Sabbath, which contradicted their interpretation of the Law of Moses, and the people flocked to Him because He taught as One having authority, not like unto the scribes (Matthew 7:29). Nevertheless, Jesus authenticated His ministry, and Who He was, through the miracles that He performed.

As the Apostles began to preach Christ resurrected, they performed many "signs and wonders," and healing was a significant part of this flow of power (Acts 5:12,16). Keep in mind, this was at the discretion of the Spirit of God; the result was that multitudes of men and women were persuaded of (i.e., they came to believe in) Christ (v. 14). The miracles performed by the Apostles served to authenticate their message of salvation through Jesus Christ. Although the miracles were secondary to the preaching of Christ, they served to convince those who looked on of the God-given authority of these men, and it greatly increased the numbers of the disciples of Jesus Christ in preparation for the persecution that would soon follow. When the persecution hit (Acts 8:1), thousands of believers were scattered in all directions. When Philip ventured into the region of Samaria (probably due to the persecution), he preached Christ and performed miracles, including healings (Acts 8:6-7), and there was a great turning to God – to such an extent that it caught the attention of the Apostles who were still in Jerusalem (Acts 8:14). Both with the Apostles in Jerusalem and Philip in Samaria, the miracles resulted in many coming to faith in Christ; in the latter case, it also served to remind the Apostles that Jesus' commission was to go beyond Judea.

Within Paul's ministry, we find only two occasions when healing is mentioned. The first was the healing of a lame man in Lystra (referred to earlier), which ended badly. The people who witnessed the miracle mistook Paul and Barnabas for their pagan gods and sought to worship them; then, with a little persuasion from unbelieving Jews, they reversed their position and stoned Paul leaving him for dead (Acts 14:8-9,19). The other occasion (also noted earlier) followed the shipwreck, while Paul was being taken to Rome as a prisoner, and we read nothing of multitudes on the island of Melita coming to faith in Christ. As Paul seeks to turn the Corinthians away from coveting the showy gifts, he makes this observation: pursue *agape*, be zealous to be spiritual, but to a greater degree that you may prophesy, or proclaim what God wants to make known (1

Corinthians 14:1).⁴⁷¹ In this summarizing statement, there is no mention of gifts at all, rather the command to strive for love, to be spiritual (not in the modern sense, but to live according to the Spirit of God), and, above all, to seek to proclaim the truth of God.

What Scripture seems to support, without overtly stating it, is a cessation of the prolific manifestation of the gifts of healing, languages, miracles, etc. Even within Paul's ministry, we see far less expression of the miraculous than in the early days of the Apostles in Jerusalem. Although Paul does not say that the gifts are forever removed, he does teach by example that they are not central to the message of the Gospel. His charge to the Corinthians was that they should be zealous to prophesy, or to proclaim the Word of God fully, but they were not to forbid those who were gifted with languages (1 Corinthians 14:39); this is after he explained to them that he would rather say five words with his understanding than 10,000 words in a language that he did not understand (v. 19). There is recognition of the gift of languages as given by the Spirit of God, but Paul tempers that with the need to focus on the more ordinary gift of declaring God's truth; it may be less showy and spectacular, but it is more needful (1 Corinthians 14:1). Jesus said that when the Spirit came, He would guide us into all truth (John 16:13); it is this truth (the Word of God – John 17:17) that forms the basis for the gift of prophecy – to “proclaim what God wants to make known.”⁴⁷² To the Corinthians, Paul said that he wishes that they all spoke languages, but even more that they might prophesy so that the whole *ekklesia* might be edified and be a beneficiary of their gifting (1 Corinthians 14:5).



What is evident from Paul's words about Epaphroditus is that he did not have a permanent, at-will gift of healing from the Spirit of God; although he exercised the gift on occasion, this situation was a time for dependence upon the Lord to work as He willed. We must be on guard against those who promote the indiscriminate use of what they call “gifts of the Spirit.” “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1). Jesus said, “Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied⁴⁷³ in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? [all of those things that are commonly considered as the gifting of the Spirit] And then will I profess unto them, I **never** knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity (Matthew 7:22-23). The workers of these deceptive works were never known by the Lord; these are NOT believers carrying out the activities of God in the arm of the flesh, but rather they are Satan's counterfeits seeking to deceive those who are not alert!

²⁸ I sent him therefore the more carefully, that, when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful.



The first phrase is Paul's declaration that he will send Epaphroditus as quickly as possible to the Philippians;⁴⁷⁴ our English word *sent* gives the wrong impression (of a past action). Paul clarifies that he will be the more diligent, or eager, to send him quickly. Inasmuch as he was very ill, Paul will see him on his way as quickly as possible, so that the Philippians may rejoice

⁴⁷¹ Stephanus 1550 NT.

⁴⁷² Friberg Lexicon.

⁴⁷³ The same Greek word is used in 1 Corinthians 14:1 – even the declaration of the Word of God does not exclude spiritual failure.

⁴⁷⁴ Friberg Lexicon.

over him when they see him again, and Paul, for his part, may be free from all anxiety in this matter.⁴⁷⁵

²⁹ Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation:



Paul lays out two commands for the Philippians regarding Epaphroditus: 1) receive him with all joy, and 2) hold men such as this in high regard.⁴⁷⁶ He then goes on to provide the basis for making these commands.

³⁰ Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me.



Epaphroditus' illness, which brought him close to death, was because of his commitment to the work of Christ. His service for Christ was without concern for his personal welfare. The last phrase in English makes it sound like the Philippians had been deficient in their support of Paul in his ministry, but the thrust of this is that what the Philippians could not do, because Paul was absent from them, Epaphroditus did on their behalf, because he was sent by them to minister to Paul in his needs (v. 25). This is the only feasible understanding, for Paul later commends them for their bountiful care for him, which simply lacked opportunity while he was away from them (4:10).

⁴⁷⁵ Friberg Lexicon.

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid.

Chapter 3

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



This is another call, by Paul, for the Philippians to *rejoice*. In 2:18 he calls on them to *joy* (same Greek word as used here) and to *rejoice with him*. The rejoicing here is in the Lord, the One Whom Paul so carefully spoke of in the previous chapter (2:5-8); *Lord* is a title that implies authority and ownership, and is applied equally to God and Jesus Christ. Paul says that *henceforth (finally)*, or from this time forward, you are to continually rejoice in the Lord.

It is not clear what Paul is referring to when he speaks of the *same things*. Some feel that he is harkening back to the earlier admonition to rejoice (2:18), and of which he will speak again (4:4). Whether it is this, or perhaps that he is telling them the same things that he told them when he was with them, he assures them of two things: 1) it is not troublesome (*grievous*) for him to do so, and 2) the repetition is for their spiritual benefit. Paul has no fear of reiterating truth to establish the point that he wants to make, therefore, I would be inclined to think that the repetition that he is drawing their attention to is much larger than simply the charge to rejoice in the Lord.

² Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision.



Before going further, we must clarify what is meant by *dogs* within this context. There are those who adamantly claim that this refers to the four-legged, furry creatures, often referred to as man's best friend. They unwaveringly declare that God hates dogs, declaring it with sufficient emphasis so as to assume the authority of Scripture. However, if we consider God's instructions to the children of Israel, light will be shed on this matter. "There shall be no whore [female temple prostitute] of the daughters of Israel, nor a sodomite [male temple prostitute] of the sons of Israel. Thou shalt not bring the hire of a whore [harlot or prostitute], or the price of a dog [the wages of a male prostitute (the parallel between the whore and the sodomite being carried forward); this is a name given to a male prostitute⁴⁷⁷], into the house of the LORD thy God for any vow: for even both these *are* abomination unto the LORD thy God" (Deuteronomy 23:17-18).⁴⁷⁸ The abomination of the Lord is that the pagan religious custom of male and female prostitution under the guise of spirituality, prostitution as a livelihood, and anything associated with this evil practice, would fall under the same condemnation.

Beware is repeated three times in our verse, each one is the same Greek word and means to see with the thought of discernment.⁴⁷⁹ Each is a command in the present tense; we are to be continually discerning of the three things itemized here.

We have established that the first area of warning is not against the four-legged creatures, which might either lick or bite us. The warning is to be on the alert against those who practice

⁴⁷⁷ Brown, Driver, Briggs Lexicon, *Bibleworks 8*; Strong's Online.

⁴⁷⁸ Strong's Online.

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid.

fornication (sexual sin) in the name of spirituality. Our initial response might be that this is not happening within Christian circles today. However, within Evangelicalism, the prevalent attitude is that we are not to judge what someone else is doing because we cannot see their heart – and it is with the heart that we believe unto eternal life. For example, Rick Warren accepted a two million dollar donation from Rupert Murdoch for his P.E.A.C.E. project, even though Murdoch makes most of his money from the pornography industry.⁴⁸⁰ To this we would apply Jesus' words to the scribes and Pharisees: “*Thou* blind Pharisee, cleanse first that *which is* within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also” (Matthew 23:26). The Pharisees had the exact opposite problem from today's Evangelicals – they thought that as long as their outward appearance was impeccable, then they were okay. Jesus tells them to clean the inside first so that the outside might be clean as well – He saw into their hearts and recognized the hypocrisy of their ways; the principle at work here is that the inside must be clean first, and once the inside has been cleansed, then the outside will also be clean. Within the Evangelical mind, it is important to retain a pretext of having cleansed the inside (they hold to the necessity of a prayer for salvation – however, claiming to be a Christian is all that is really required; we must not look for evidence of actual cleansing lest we be considered to be judgmental). Nevertheless, they are unwilling to expect a cleansed heart to result in a cleansed life (which is the principle that Jesus taught). Today's Evangelical youth will dance with the world, indulge their appetite for the world's music, alcohol, smoking, and fornication (shacking-up) – often without condemnation of any kind from the church leadership. When I found out that the youth from our local Evangelical Free Church (of which we were a part at the time) were attending the local school dances, I went to see the youth pastor about this worldliness; he was shocked that I had a problem with it, and I later learned that the Board of the church was fully aware of his position on this matter before they hired him. Within the Evangelical community, worldliness and fornication may not yet be a generally accepted means to enhance spirituality (as may be the case within gross paganism), but it is certainly not frowned upon with the same fervor as it is in the Scriptures; in essence, today it is part of what is often considered tolerable. We must all be discerning of *dogs* – those who appear to be “spiritual” but who only seek to spiritually prostitute us, those who would draw us away from the truth with their high-sounding, yet subtly anti-Biblical, philosophies. “Take heed that no man deceive you” (Matthew 24:4); “Beware lest any man spoil you [lead you away from the truth] through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ” (Colossians 2:8).⁴⁸¹

However, I would be remiss to leave this subject here. There is a growing element within the Evangelical community who are drawing Eastern mysticism, sexuality and spirituality together. Chuck MacKnee, an associate professor of psychology at Trinity Western University, is just one of many who profess Christianity while working to philosophically make sex a spiritual experience. He says, “... ultimately in sex we're going to meet God,” and goes on to describe God as being “big and mysterious and way beyond us”,⁴⁸² this stands in sharp contrast to 1 John 2:3. MacKnee, when questioned on the subject, would condemn neither homosexuality nor sex outside of marriage; when queried further about his employer's stance that “requires students and faculty to restrict sex to heterosexual marriage,” his only comment was that these were “guidelines.”⁴⁸³ The astute observation of the *Vancouver Sun* was, “The Catholics and mainline Protestants who are today joining evangelicals such as MacKnee in teaching about spiritual sex are in some ways

⁴⁸⁰ http://www.inplainsite.org/html/rick_warren_new_age.html#RW-Murdoch

⁴⁸¹ Strong's Online.

⁴⁸² “Sex Brings Christians Closer to God,” *The Vancouver Sun*, July 26, 2008,

http://www.canada.com/vancouver_sun/columnists/story.html?id=c8cd77ac-b993-4bbb-963d-7cb4dc07e5de

⁴⁸³ *Ibid.*

catching up with Eastern-influenced New Age spirituality.”⁴⁸⁴ In this one simple statement, a worldly observer has identified MacKnee as having entered into the tantric traditions of Hinduism



Chuck MacKnee

and Buddhism (in a “sanitized” manner), and also as being well situated within New Age spirituality; by contrast, the supposedly “Christian” leadership of Trinity Western can’t see the error that they are promoting! MacKnee is someone who is spoiling the hearts of many (his classes are always full) through his philosophy (which flows out of godless psychology), “after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ” – yet he continues to propagate his error through Trinity, a highly-acclaimed, supposedly Christian university associated with the Evangelical Free Church. Paganism will always seek to infiltrate Christianity, which is why we are warned to stand against it. To the messenger of Pergamos, Jesus said, “But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication” (Revelation 2:14); Balaam could not curse the children of

Israel (as Balak desired), but evidently he counseled Balak on how to use fornication to get the Lord to judge Israel. MacKnee might not speak a curse upon God’s people, but he has learned how to cast a spiritual stumbling block before them. We must remain alert to error, for it is everywhere!



Beware of evil workers; we are to be discerning of those who might appear to be Christians but are not. “Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matthew 7:22-23). These claim to have done marvelous things in the name of the Lord, yet they did not do them under the authority of the Lord; in other words, they were messengers of Satan sent forth to deceive those who would desire to follow the Lord. “[Absolutely] not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth [is doing] the will of my Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 7:21).⁴⁸⁵ The importance of obedience to God’s Word cannot be emphasized strongly enough; yet our propensity to pick and choose what we will obey knows no bounds. Ecumenism is man’s answer to God’s call to holiness – the philosophy is: God is love, and everyone who professes Christianity is considered to be sanctified by God’s love; thereby they think that they have eliminated the difficulty of knowing God’s Truth and adhering to it. The modern ecumenists are *evil workers*, for they dilute the warnings of Scripture against men like themselves. Ecumenism holds unity to be of greater importance than obedience. We read of the first ecumenical decision in Genesis: “And when the woman saw that the tree *was* good for food, and that it *was* pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make *one* wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat” (Genesis 3:6). Adam chose to remain united with his wife in sin, rather than to obey the commandment of the Lord – Adam’s sin was the result of the first ecumenical decision (unity before obedience), and today’s ecumenism is no less a sin against the Lord. Even if it is as simple as participation in a local ministerial alongside of those who question the authority of the Scriptures, Satan loves ecumenical

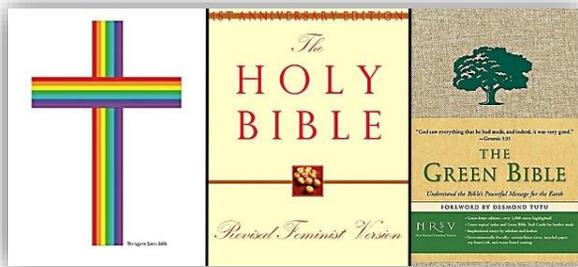
⁴⁸⁴ <http://www.canada.com/vancouversun/columnists/story.html?id=c8cd77ac-b993-4bbb-963d-7cb4dc07e5de>

⁴⁸⁵ Strong’s Online.

thinking because it appears to be so good, so loving, and so gracious; this only makes it a more dangerous sin, which lures people away from the holiness of God. God will just as surely judge the ecumenist as He did Adam. We must be discerning!

Beware of the concision. *Concision* means *cutting into* or *mutilation*,⁴⁸⁶ and speaks here of those who still held to the Jewish tradition of circumcision. In Jerusalem, Paul had faced the Jews who advocated faith in Christ along with keeping the traditions of the Mosaic Law (those numerous statutes, ordinances, and regulations that were done away with at the cross of Christ – Ephesians 2:15). “And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, *and said*, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved” (Acts 15:1); “But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command *them* to keep the law of Moses” (Acts 15:5). In his letter to the Galatians, Paul dealt extensively with the error of these Judaizers and called their gospel message a perversion of the truth (Galatians 1:7). Although the Philippians were following the teachings of Paul with integrity, here he sounds a warning against the Judaizers. Once again, we are reminded that Satan will use (or, more accurately, abuse) the truth; however, he will ensure that it is always mixed with at least a small amount of error, perhaps not enough to be readily discernible to the unsuspecting, but sufficient to render the truth lifeless. Paul warned the Romans to avoid those who promoted teachings that were not in keeping with the Scriptures (it is their false teaching that causes division from the truth of God), for “by good words and fair speeches [they] deceive the hearts of the simple” (Romans 16:17-18). The warning that is sounded in our verse (Philippians 3:2) against the *concision*, speaks against man’s propensity to add to what God has given us in His Word, or to “graciously” extract from His Word that which would cause a troubled spirit in the mind of a sinner.

There has always been a temptation to pick and choose what we will adhere to in God’s Word – over the last 150 years this has been dramatically increased through the introduction of numerous Bible translations. Through the acceptance of the principles of higher criticism, scholars (even so-called *Bible scholars*) have come to view the Scriptures as they would any other piece of ancient literature (God’s inspiration of the Bible has either been downplayed or denied), along with the concept that the oldest texts are the most accurate (the basis for this argument is that they are the closest to the original source). The former removes the basis for the Bible’s authority, opens the door to scholarly subjectivism, and denies God’s promise to preserve His Word (Psalm 119:89,160; Matthew 5:18). Out of this has flowed a profusion of translations and easy-reading texts that have departed from the Word that God promised to preserve; the additions, deletions and subjective re-wording of the text of Scripture have known no bounds. Today there are “Bibles” for



Gay - Feminist – Environmentalist Bibles

the Bereans were commended for taking Paul’s teaching back to the Scriptures to determine if he

homosexuals, feminists and environmentalists; they have become gender neutral, politically correct, and spiritually hollow. Yet Evangelicals choose to embrace the modern translations – for example, Rick Warren used 15 different translations and paraphrases of Scripture in his book *The Purpose Driven Life* – it becomes a matter of finding a perversion that supports your opinion. In this menagerie, the standard of the Word of God has been lost;

⁴⁸⁶ Friberg Lexicon.

was right (Acts 17:10-11). Today's "Berean" must first discern which Bible contains the preserved text of God's Word before he can carry out this important task. The King James Version stands out within the confusion of texts today – not necessarily because it is a superior translation, but because it is based upon superior texts of Scripture, free from the influence of the devil's higher critics.

We are commanded to be continually discerning so that we might not be caught unaware by those who would draw us into a perverted spirituality, those whose work is after the manner of the wolf disguised as a sheep, and those who would add to, or subtract from, God's Word. This is presented as a three-pronged warning, yet each is simply a variation of Satan's ploy to draw the child of God away from the truth. "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour [destroy] ..." (1 Peter 5:8);⁴⁸⁷ Satan is a destroyer, and he cares not how he plies his trade. We must be ever vigilant, ever discerning, lest we succumb to his wiles.

³ For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.



Paul now begins to expand on his warning to *beware of the concision*, from the previous verse. Clearly, Paul does not want a repeat of the problem that he faced with the gatherings in Galatia; even though the Philippians were obedient to the Word of God, he wants to ensure that they understand and avoid the error of the Judaizers – perhaps something that he warned them against when he was with them; this could well be part of what he is repeating for them, for their own spiritual benefit (v.1).

He begins his explanation with the phrase *we are the circumcision*. The *we* is not Paul as a member of the Jewish community, rather it is Paul as numbered among the Christians. "For he is our peace, who hath made both [the Jew and the Gentile] one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition *between us*; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, *even* the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, *so* making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby ..." (Ephesians 2:14-16). Through His finished work on the cross, Jesus has brought the Jew and the Gentile together into one Body – we are made one in Christ. To the Galatians, Paul declared, "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love" (Galatians 5:6). As he dealt with the error of the Judaizers in Galatia, he made it abundantly evident that it is faith in Christ alone that is necessary, and not the keeping of Jewish traditions; there is no saving grace in circumcision, nor any condemnation in uncircumcision.

"For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither *is that* circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he *is* a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the spirit, *and* not in the letter; whose praise *is* not of men, but of God" (Romans 2:28-29). What is obvious is that the circumcision of which Paul is speaking (both to the Romans and to the Philippians) is a spiritual act, not a physical one. To the Colossians, Paul provides further clarification on this matter: "In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision **made without hands**, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ ..." (Colossians 2:11); this means to continually reckon yourself to be dead unto sin as Paul declared to the Romans (Romans 6:6,11).

⁴⁸⁷ Strong's Online.

The spiritual application of this word (*circumcision*) should not have been unfamiliar to the Jews, for one of the promises that God gave to Israel through Moses was that if they would repent and turn to Him, He would then give them life: “And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live” (Deuteronomy 30:6). The spiritual application recognizes a turning away from sin and a turning to God in obedience to His commandments (Deuteronomy 30:8). How are Christians “the circumcision”? It is through faith in Christ as our Savior that we are able to continually reckon ourselves to be dead unto sin (we are cut-off from sin – therein is the spiritual circumcision) and alive unto God (Romans 6:11). It is through this saving faith that we are grafted into Christ (Romans 11:17; John 15:4), that the commandments of God are written upon our hearts (Hebrews 10:16), and that the Spirit of God indwells us in order to guide us into all truth (John 16:13). If we are alive unto God (being grafted into Him), then we will strive to live in obedience to the commandments in His Word (1 John 2:3-5), beginning with the Ten Commandments that He has written upon our hearts (Jeremiah 31:33). God has provided us with all of the resources necessary to live for Him; however, we must have the will to permit His Spirit to guide us so that we might live out the righteousness of the Law of God that has been written upon our hearts (Romans 8:4).

Paul goes on to enumerate three characteristics of those who have embraced this spiritual *circumcision*: 1) they worship God in the spirit, 2) they rejoice in Christ Jesus, and 3) they place no confidence in the flesh.

Those who are reckoning themselves dead to sin (i.e., we who have placed our faith in Christ) will first of all *worship God in the spirit*. The Greek word *latreuo* (*worship*), used here, speaks of active service; its primary meaning is service for hire,⁴⁸⁸ which includes sacred service to God. The word refers to a practical and continual service to God through the Spirit – in other words, obedience! Our obedience to God’s commands is our service to Him! John declared, “And hereby we do know [are knowing] that we know [have known] him, if we keep [are keeping] his commandments” (1 John 2:3).⁴⁸⁹ If we would do service to God, we must know Him, and if we know Him, then we must then obey Him. As we account ourselves dead to sin and alive unto God, the Spirit of God abiding within will be able to guide us in our understanding of His truth so that our walk will bring glory to His name. “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is your reasonable service*” (Romans 12:1); the words *service* (as used here) and *worship* (as used in Philippians 3:3) come from a common Greek root. Our spiritual service for God (i.e., our obedience) is evidenced by living a life of sacrifice and holiness.

We will *rejoice in Christ Jesus*. The Greek word translated as *rejoice* is most often translated as *glory* (it is not the same Greek word that we looked at earlier); it means to boast or to glory in, therefore, our *boast*, or *glory*, will be in Christ Jesus. “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast [same Greek word as for *rejoice*]. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:8-10).⁴⁹⁰ The *good works* is nothing other than our obedience to what God has established for us; however, this does not include empty ritualistic activities (Isaiah 1:10-17; Matthew 7:21-23). Our obedience to God’s commands does not enhance our justification before Him, but our faith in Christ demands that we obey the

⁴⁸⁸ Strong’s Online.

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid.

commands of the Lord, for it is for that purpose that we have been created in Christ Jesus. Our conformity to God's ways is the evidence that we have a living faith in Him (James 2:18). We have no basis for glorying in ourselves; our salvation is entirely of God. Our glorying must be in Christ, for it is only through Him that we find ourselves regarded as holy by God; it is only as we remain in Him that we are able to retain our holy standing before God (Hebrews 3:14). "Where is boasting [glorying (in ourselves)] then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without [apart from] the deeds of the law" (Romans 3:27-28).⁴⁹¹ What we must understand is that even though we are not justified by keeping the Law or Commandments of God (not even the Ten Commandments), nevertheless, as we place our faith in Christ, the Spirit of God will seek to guide us to live out the righteousness of the Law (Romans 8:4). Inasmuch as we are justified before God by faith only (there is only one faith [Ephesians 4:4-6] which is effective from Adam to today), we have no basis for glorying, except in the One through Whom our justification is procured – Jesus Christ. From Adam to the cross, faith was exercised in the Promised One (the promise of a Deliverer was first made in the Garden of Eden – Genesis 3:15); since the cross, we place our faith in the Promised One Who came to fulfill the promised redemption of mankind. As those who have been purchased out of sin by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ (and thereby made participants in the *spiritual circumcision*), we are to glory in Christ and walk in obedience to the commands of Scripture.

We will also place *no confidence in the flesh*. We have just seen that the foundation for our glorying is the Lord Jesus Christ, and that our justification before God comes only through what He has accomplished for us. Our salvation is entirely of God; we have no part in it whatsoever, therefore, it only follows that we will place absolutely no trust in ourselves. Although we must resolutely commit to faith in Jesus Christ (He commanded us to abide in Him – John 15:4; He admonished us to count the cost before we commit to following Him – Luke 14:26-27), He has also promised to abide in us, and has sent His Spirit, Who is prepared to abide with us forever (John 14:16). As we live in submission to the Spirit of God (placing no confidence in our own abilities) the righteousness of God will be lived out through us (Romans 8:4). We have been called to holiness of life (1 Peter 1:15) in obedience to what God has commanded us to do (1 John 2:4); this is a life entirely outside of anything that we could ever hope to accomplish through our own efforts. Paul recorded the end of our labors: "For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do" (Romans 7:19) – this is the flesh at work.

Paul reminds the Philippians that those who have reckoned the flesh to be crucified with Christ (Romans 6:6) are those who do service for (or, walk in obedience to) God, who glory in the Lord Jesus Christ, and who place absolutely no trust in their sinful flesh. It is our lot to make a commitment to follow the Lord (something that most Evangelicals have conveniently forgotten); this is an exercise of the will and comes at a cost, which we must be prepared to pay (Luke 14:26-33).

⁴ Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more:

⁴⁹¹ Strong's Online.



After stating that we place no trust in the flesh, Paul makes the statement that he might have had confidence in the flesh; if anyone thinks that they can trust in the flesh – he would have more reasons for such. The word *confidence*, as used in both verses (vs. 3 and 4), includes the idea of persuasion; this is not an empty, poorly placed dependency; rather it is a reliance or trust on something that gives the appearance of being trustworthy.⁴⁹² Paul uses this to introduce a list of credentials, which would put him at the top of the list of those who might be tempted to place their trust in the flesh – namely the Jews who were propagating the heresy of faith in Christ and the keeping of the Law of Moses (the traditions of the Jews given by God through Moses at Mt. Sinai; this would include the laws for daily living, the festivals and the rite of circumcision, the sacrificial system, the priestly order, but excludes the Ten Commandments).

⁵ Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee;



Paul lists here all of the things to which a Jew would look, in order to affirm their high standing within the Jewish community. He was born into a family where it was important to follow the Mosaic traditions; he came from solidly Jewish roots and knew his heritage. However, not only was he of solid Jewish stock, but concerning his religious commitment, he was a member of the strictest sect of the Jews. The Pharisees were those who were set apart from the average Jew (which is the meaning of the word *Pharisee*⁴⁹³), and they considered themselves to be the authority for interpreting the Scriptures and defining the daily regimens for the rest of their people.⁴⁹⁴ Paul had been schooled in the strictest of Jewish traditions – if anyone could claim any confidence before God because of their pedigree and training, it would have been Paul.

⁶ Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.



For the Pharisees, the *ekklesia* (the called-out ones being built by Christ) was a problem. Jews who were joining this group were no longer keeping the Jewish traditions as generations of Pharisees had determined that they should be. Such disregard for the righteousness of the Pharisees incensed Paul so that he went about destroying these gatherings: “As for Saul, he made havock of [to ravage or devastate] the church, entering into every house, and haling [dragging] men and women committed *them* to prison” (Acts 8:3).⁴⁹⁵ As a Pharisee, he was zealous to protect their interests; probably of all of the Pharisees of his day, he was the most zealous, for we do not read of anyone else entering into such a program of persecution in an effort to stop the new faith from spreading.

As a Pharisee, Paul says that he kept the Law of Moses with precision; among the Pharisees, he would have been considered a stickler for detail. If there was any righteousness to be obtained through keeping the Law, it would have been his.

⁷ But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.

⁴⁹² Strong's Online.

⁴⁹³ Strong's Online (from Hebrew root).

⁴⁹⁴ Friberg Lexicon.

⁴⁹⁵ Strong's Online.



Here is the culmination of Paul's boasting. All of the things that he has just delineated, which would have firmly established his importance in the eyes of the Jews and secured his advantage within the Jewish community, those things that would have assisted him in his advancement within the school of the Pharisees, all of this he accounts, or considers, as loss for Christ. The word *counted* is in the perfect tense, which means that Paul, at one time in the past, considered all of his Jewish advantages to be of no value – it was a one-time decision under which he continued to live. Everything that placed him among the elite within the Jewish community he has turned away from, or forsaken, for Christ. All of this fits with his warning: *beware of the concision* (v.2). The Judaizers sought to draw Christians into keeping the Mosaic traditions (Acts 15:5); Paul says that he has set all of that aside for Christ. He is a living illustration of what Jesus' fulfillment of the Mosaic Law really means; what cannot be missed is that Paul saw the importance of making this truth very, very clear to the Philippians. Incredibly, as we look at Paul's writings, this theme dominates his letter to the Christians in the region of Galatia, it receives a complete explanation in his letter to the Ephesians, we see it here in Philippians, and it shows up in his epistle to the Colossians, as well. Clearly, the lure to all things Jewish was very strong during the early years of the Apostles; the Jews desperately tried to cling to their traditions, and impose them upon those with a Gentile background (Acts 15:1).

However, today we are not altogether immune to this very same temptation, for there are groups of Christians who are doing this very thing. There is a broad movement within Evangelicalism to return to those patterns of life from yesteryear, and among these are those who, while professing faith in Christ, desire to learn about and celebrate all of the Jewish traditions. It is one thing to learn about the Jewish festivals and practices, and quite another to seek to make them a part of daily living. They look at the Jewish roots of Christianity and consider this journey back into the customs of Judaism to be a very spiritually-positive part of their faith in Christ. By contrast, Paul, who had full knowledge of all of these Mosaic traditions, and had practiced them for many years, calls them a disadvantage.⁴⁹⁶ The push in Paul's day was to meld these traditions into faith alone in Christ alone – something that he bluntly called a perversion of the Gospel (Galatians 1:6-7). What seems evident is that those who seek to undo what Paul so clearly states was ended at the cross (Galatians 3:19; Ephesians 2:15) have not carefully read his letter to the Galatian Christians – if they had, they might be less enthusiastic about adding these Jewish traditions to their faith in Christ.⁴⁹⁷

Here are the words of the Spirit of God, through Paul, to the Colossians, on this matter: “And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh [our helpless state without Christ], hath he [God] quickened together with him [Christ], having forgiven you all trespasses [our redeemed state through faith in Christ]; Blotting out [to obliterate] the handwriting of ordinances that was against us [namely, the Law of Moses], which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; *And* having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it. Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath *days* [literally of *Sabbaths*]: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body *is* of Christ” (Colossians 2:13-17).⁴⁹⁸ Paul refers here to the *handwriting of ordinances that was against us*; he is writing to a group of

⁴⁹⁶ Friberg Lexicon.

⁴⁹⁷ For an in-depth study of Galatians see: <http://www.thenarrowtruth.com/galatians.html>

⁴⁹⁸ Strong's Online; Stephanus 1550 NT.

believers who would have been made up of both Jews and Gentiles, yet he uses the inclusive word *us*. A small digression will make it clear as to why he does this.

It is often our thought that the Mosaic Laws were for the people of Israel only, but that is not correct. They may well have been delivered to the children of Israel through Moses at Mt Sinai, but their application was to be much broader. God expressed His desire that Israel would be “unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation” (Exodus 19:6a); His yearning was that they would be an example to the nations around them, and a means (*priests*) to bring the lost peoples to Himself. Israel may have received the Mosaic laws and statutes, the priesthood and the sacrificial system from God, but the reality is that these were made for all people. “One ordinance [statute] shall be both for you of the congregation, and also for the stranger that sojourneth *with you*, an ordinance for ever in your generations: as ye *are*, so shall the stranger be before the LORD. One law and one manner [ordinance] shall be for you, and for the stranger that sojourneth with you” (Numbers 15:15-16).⁴⁹⁹ Israel might well have been the Lord’s chosen people, but they were not to be His only people – He chose them to be a conduit of His grace and mercy to those around them (and the family through whom the promised Messiah would come). Therefore, when Paul applies the Mosaic ordinances to Jew and Gentile alike (by using the term *us*), he is doing so with the full support of Scripture and God’s original desire for the people of Israel.

The Mosaic Law, with all of its statutes, ordinances, and finely-detailed instructions concerning the priesthood and the sacrificial requirements, served a dual purpose: 1) to underscore, very emphatically, the holiness of God, and 2) to demonstrate, beyond a shadow of doubt, the sinfulness of man. To the Galatians Paul declared, “... the law was our schoolmaster *to bring us* unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith” (Galatians 3:24). The thrust of this is that the Mosaic Law was like unto a tutor given for the express purpose of pointing the way to Christ (the Anointed One, the Promised One, the Messiah) and, subsequently, justification by faith through Him. The work of the priests, and all of the requirements of the sacrificial system, provided salvation for no one (Galatians 2:16); it was faith in the promised One that brought salvation (the sacrifices were an illustration of the salvation that was to come) – salvation has always been by faith alone (Hebrews 11 makes this abundantly obvious), and the sole purpose of the Mosaic Law was to open the eyes of faith in the one who saw God’s holiness, his own sinfulness, and his need for God’s saving work on his behalf. This applied not only to the Jew, but also to the Gentile, for man has always been under the Law of God. Adam, in his sinless state, lived under the Law of God (Genesis 2:16-17), and it was his failure to be obedient to that Law that plunged all of mankind into sin. Paul reminds the Colossians that the Mosaic ordinances were against us – they were *contrary to us* (Colossians 2:14). *Contrary* is a strengthened word in the Greek, and is much stronger than merely *contrary* – it speaks of these ordinances as being *hostile* toward us.⁵⁰⁰ How were they so strongly against us? They confirmed for us that we can do nothing to gain merit in the sight of God; in effect, they left no doubt that we are sinners before God and, therefore, destined for destruction. Inasmuch as we are all sinners by birth, both the Law of God and the Mosaic Law are a source of condemnation to us – unless we have been born anew by the Spirit of God and have placed our faith in the gracious salvation wrought through Jesus Christ, the promised Deliverer (Romans 8:1-4). Every descendent of Adam stands condemned before God, yet every descendent of Adam can (and always could), by faith, avail themselves of the provision that God has always had available for their salvation from sin.

⁴⁹⁹ Strong’s Online.

⁵⁰⁰ Friberg Lexicon.

Returning to Colossians 2:14, we see that Christ took the condemning ordinances of the Law of Moses to the cross – and that’s where they were nailed (v. 14). The cross of Christ not only signaled the end of the Mosaic traditions, but also sealed the defeat of Satan (v. 15) as promised so long ago in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:15). All of this provides a backdrop for Paul’s comments that follow: because the Mosaic ordinances have been ended, *therefore* (on this basis), no one is to judge you according to your lack of activities respecting Jewish traditions. The Mosaic Laws, which served to set Israel apart from all other peoples, were ended – this included the laws that closely regulated the Jews’ daily living, the many festivals (many of which included days that were to be kept like unto the seventh-day Sabbath), the priesthood, and the sacrificial system with its multitude of regulations. What is carefully excluded from this listing is the seventh-day Sabbath (which is part of the Ten Commandments). The KJV reads: “... or of the sabbath *days* ...,” however, a correct, literal translation of the Greek reads, *or of Sabbaths*, which refers to the plurality of feast days that were kept like unto the seventh-day Sabbath.⁵⁰¹ All of these were only a foreshadowing of the One Who was to come, bringing the promised salvation with Him – of Christ, Who came to fulfill everything within these carefully prescribed activities.



It is because he understands that all of these Jewish traditions were fulfilled in Christ that Paul considers them loss for Christ. It is in Christ that he now holds everything that these traditions foreshadowed; what was a seasonal activity within the Jewish calendar is now a constant reality for him in Christ. For the Jew, the Passover lamb was slain every year on the fourteenth of Nisan (which, through faith, spoke of his spiritual salvation); for the Christian (whether Jew or Gentile) Christ is our Passover Lamb, Who died once for our sins (which we appropriate by faith) – clearly there is no need to perpetuate the Passover, for Christ died in fulfillment of it. All of these traditions, which Paul had as a Jew, and which spoke to him of the Redeemer Whom God promised to mankind, he now sets aside for Christ – Who is the completion of these traditions. Today, those who so enthusiastically delve into the Jewish traditions, and add them to their faith in Christ, have failed miserably to understand what Paul has so carefully delineated to the Philippians (and to the Galatians, Ephesians and Colossians). Christ fulfilled all of these traditions and nailed them to the cross (Colossians 2:14); what Christ died to put an end to, we must not seek to resurrect and perpetuate! Paul thoroughly condemned the teachings of the Judaizers to the Galatians (comparing the acceptance of their doctrine to a return to paganism – Galatians 4:9), yet their heresy continues to live to this very day. What Paul counted as loss, these people consider their gain; what a contradiction of the Word of God!

⁸ Yea doubtless, and I count all things *but* loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them *but* dung, that I may win Christ,



This flows out of the summary statement that Paul has just made, and he now provides a greater emphasis, adding more details to what he has just said. The phrase *yea doubtless* is literally *but even more*.⁵⁰² In the previous verse, Paul declared his Jewish advantage to be loss for Christ; now he states that what he considers loss for Christ goes well beyond his impeccable and enviable heritage as a Jew. He says, “I consider all things loss for the surpassing understanding of Christ Jesus my Lord.”⁵⁰³ Paul received the Gospel of God through special revelation (Galatians

⁵⁰¹ Stephanus 1550 NT.

⁵⁰² Friberg Lexicon.

⁵⁰³ Strong’s Online.

1:12, 15-17; 2 Corinthians 12:1-4); he would have held a much clearer understanding of Who Christ is than most. Regarding Paul, the Apostle Peter wrote, “And account *that* the longsuffering of our Lord *is* salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; As also in all *his* epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest [literally, to twist or torture; figuratively, to pervert], as *they do* also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction” (2 Peter 3:15-16)⁵⁰⁴ – thereby acknowledging that those who are spiritually ignorant and unstable are twisting Paul’s words (as they do the rest of Scripture) to their own destruction. Peter, whom Paul had to challenge for his failure to be consistent in his fellowship with the Gentile Christians (Galatians 2:11-12), openly admits that some of Paul’s writings are difficult to understand, even while he is careful to include them within the Scriptures as part of God’s Word to us.

Paul goes on to declare that he considers all things to be loss for the sake of Christ; this is a living illustration of Jesus’ words, “... whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:33). Probably the greatest sacrifice that Paul made was to turn from his own people; everywhere he went he spoke to the Jews, but everywhere he went they were the source of his troubles. Shortly after his conversion we read, “... the Jews took counsel to kill him” (Acts 9:23); on his journey with Barnabas, it was the Jews who “raised persecution” against them (Acts 13:50), and years later it was the Jews of Jerusalem who sealed Paul’s arrest by the Romans and forced him to appeal to Caesar (Acts 22:27; 25:2-3). However, despite this persecution, he so longed for his people to understand the Gospel of God that he would have even exchanged places with them spiritually: “For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh” (Romans 9:3). As much as he longed for the salvation of his fellow Jews, Paul knew that God had sent him to proclaim the Gospel to those outside of the family of Israel (Romans 11:13). Nevertheless, he considers all that he has given up for the Lord as garbage, or refuse, by comparison – that which is of no value but to be thrown out.

Now comes a difficult statement: Paul has forfeited all so that he might *win*, or gain, *Christ*.⁵⁰⁵ To the Corinthians Paul said, “But I keep under [strictly control] my body, and bring *it* into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway [disqualified or fail to meet the test]” (1 Corinthians 9:27).⁵⁰⁶ This is the Apostle Paul working out his salvation with fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12), recognizing that he, like everyone who has placed his faith in Christ, bears in himself the propensity to apostatize. This is not works in order to obtain salvation; this is works of obedience for the purpose of retaining fellowship with, and abiding in, the Lord of salvation (“If ye love me, keep my commandments” [John 14:15]) – this is the cost of enduring (abiding with courage⁵⁰⁷) unto the end (Matthew 24:13). There is no place for pride within the heart of the Christian; in this life, we will never come to the place where we can relax our guard because we have it made – coasting spiritually can only lead downward into apostasy. Someone asked Jesus if those being saved were few, to which He replied, “Strive [a present tense command to expend energy, to make every effort – the opposite of coasting] to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek [to look for] to enter in, and shall not be able” (Luke 13:24).⁵⁰⁸ The *strait gate* is the means of gaining access to the narrow way of our Christian walk (namely, salvation); many today are seeking to find salvation, but they are looking

⁵⁰⁴ Strong’s Online.

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁶ Friberg Lexicon.

⁵⁰⁷ Vine’s “endure.”

⁵⁰⁸ Friberg Lexicon.

for it in all of the wrong places. The salvation that has been prepared by God is very narrowly defined (Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” [John 14:6]) and it is a gift (Ephesians 2:8); we can only accept the proffered gift by faith; we can do nothing to earn it. The continual striving, of which Jesus speaks, refers to man’s need to continually and diligently seek for the narrow gate of salvation; because few will find it, there are obviously many obstructions barring the way – probably the chief of which will be man’s unwillingness to see himself as a sinner. Today the mantra is “look within yourself” and build upon the good that you find there (i.e., you are not a sinner, you are a good person). The Islamic faith says that you are a sinner only by what you do; it is not who you are (thereby denying that, through Adam, everyone is born a sinner). Every religion of the world provides a means for man to gain his own *salvation*; the Christian faith is alone in declaring that you can do nothing to inherit eternal life – you must accept what God has done for you. However, even professing Christians today are missing the narrow gate because they place their faith in the church, or the pastor, or the priest, or the liturgy – but not in Christ as the only Way.

Matthew writes, “Because strait *is* the gate, and narrow *is* the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Matthew 7:14). Matthew and Luke describe the gate in exactly the same terms – it is narrow, but Matthew adds Jesus’ words concerning the journey that opens up after the gate, namely, “restricted is the road that leads to life.”⁵⁰⁹ Paul is expressing to the Philippians that he has left all his Jewish advantage behind so that he might ultimately be received by Christ; the narrow gate and the restricted path did not permit him to hold onto his Jewish heritage. The writer of Hebrews declared, “Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:1b-2). The word *looking* means “to turn the eyes away from other things and fix them on something.”⁵¹⁰ Paul has turned his eyes away from all that made him a Jew of some renown, and he has fixed his gaze upon his Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Are we trying to walk the restricted road to life cumbered with the cares of this world and the accumulation of wealth? If we are, we are doomed to failure (Matthew 13:22)! We must determine to “lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset [literally – standing well around⁵¹¹] *us*” (Hebrews 12:1), lest we fail along the narrow road to eternal life. Failure is a very real possibility – the word *win* (as used by Paul in our verse) is in the subjunctive mood, which means that it is not a confirmed certainty; we all bear the propensity for failure, for apostasy (Hebrews 3:12).

⁹ And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:



This carries right on from the previous verse. Paul has just looked at the casting off that he has done so that he might gain Christ for all of eternity, now he outlines the hope that is his as he considers his Jewish heritage (his advantage) as loss in this present life.

Found (like the word *win* in the previous verse), is in the subjunctive mood; so we really have, *And I may be found in Him*. This is Paul’s expressed desire, to be found abiding in Christ; herein

⁵⁰⁹ Friberg Lexicon.

⁵¹⁰ Strong’s Online.

⁵¹¹ Vine’s “beset.”

is the essence of the Christian life and of living according to the leading of the Spirit of God (John 15:4; Romans 8:4). He now goes on to elaborate on what this means.

Paul begins with a negative statement – namely, he will not have his own righteousness. His desire is to be found in Christ, but it won't be through a righteousness that will come from keeping the Law in his own strength. The Pharisees considered themselves to be righteous, and they held this opinion on the basis of their strict adherence to their interpretation of the Law of Moses. Prior to his conversion, Paul was part of this sect, which religiously kept their traditions. However, Jesus said, "...except your righteousness shall exceed *the righteousness* of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case [certainly not (*no* being absolute)] enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:20).⁵¹² The scribes and Pharisees filled the position of Moses to the people – they were the interpreters of the Law, therefore Jesus acknowledged that they "sit in Moses' seat" (Matthew 23:2). For that reason, Jesus counseled His disciples to give heed to their teaching, but warned them not to follow their example – "All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, *that* observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not" (Matthew 23:3). To the Galatians, Paul plainly stated, "...by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified" (Galatians 2:16); however, the Pharisees, of whom Paul was once a part, viewed themselves as being justified through their works. The Psalmist David understood man's position before a holy God, for he said, "... in thy sight shall no man living be justified" (Psalm 143:2b). Man, on his own, stands condemned before God; we have no righteousness within us – we are inherently sinful. Isaiah knew this truth: "But we are all as an unclean [literally, now we are like the (absolutely) unclean] *thing*, and all our righteousnesses *are* as filthy rags; and we all do fade [droop] as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken [carried] us away" (Isaiah 64:6).⁵¹³ However, we often need to be reminded of this, for we, like the Pharisees, are prone to pride and to think more highly of ourselves than we ought.

Paul flatly declares that he will not have a righteousness that comes from keeping the Law of Moses – that Pharisaical righteousness received Jesus' condemnation because it cannot survive God's scrutiny. Therefore, since we have no hope of righteousness within ourselves, it follows that there must be another Source. Paul now elaborates on the only Source of righteousness Who will stand the test: (literally) *but through the faith of Christ from the righteousness of God on the basis of the faith*.⁵¹⁴ God provides us with His righteousness through Christ by faith. "But now the righteousness of God without [apart from] the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets [both the Law of Moses and the OT prophets looked for the day of Messiah's redemption]; Even the righteousness of God *which is* by faith of Jesus Christ unto [into] all and upon [on] all them that believe [are believing (having been persuaded) – present tense]: for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God ..." (Romans 3:21-23).⁵¹⁵ There is only one way for me to receive the righteousness of God, and that is through being convinced of the truth of Jesus' death, burial and resurrection for my sin; this is the basis for faith in Christ, through which comes the righteousness from God. "*There is* therefore now no condemnation to them which are **in Christ Jesus** [this is the fundamental criteria for what follows], who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us [this is the

⁵¹² Strong's Online.

⁵¹³ BDB.

⁵¹⁴ Stephanus 1550 NT.

⁵¹⁵ Strong's Online.

righteousness which Paul is speaking of in Philippians], who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Romans 8:1-4). If we remain *in Christ*, then we will be clothed with His righteousness – however, we must be careful to continue in Him, lest we fall from grace and lose all that being *in Christ* brings. This was the warning that Paul sounded to the Galatians: “Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law [really, *think* that you are justified by the Law, since this is impossible – Galatians 2:16]; ye are fallen from grace” (Galatians 5:4). The Galatians were being tempted to add the necessity of keeping the Law of Moses to faith in Christ in order to be saved (the error of the Judaizers – Acts 15:1,5); Paul makes it very clear that if they do so, then Christ is of no effect for them – they are fallen from the grace; they have become apostate! Herein is the significant reason why we must endure (to abide with perseverance) in Him (Matthew 24:13).

Paul’s desire is that he should be found in Christ, clothed with the righteousness of God, which comes through obedience to the indwelling presence of the Spirit of God (Romans 8:4). “If ye love me, keep [attend to carefully] my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another [of the same kind⁵¹⁶] Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever [we must recognize that this is not a confirmed certainty]; *Even* the Spirit of truth ...” (John 14:15-17)⁵¹⁷; “... when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth ...” (John 16:13). If we refuse to accept the truth, then we are guilty of grieving the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:20). Through Christ’s provision of salvation, we put on the righteousness of God (Ephesians 4:24), but we must take heed lest we lose out through unbelief (Hebrews 3:12-14).

¹⁰ That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;



Paul now presents three things that he will come to *know*, all of which flow directly out of the previous verse where he desires to be found in Christ and clothed with His righteousness. The first phrase is literally, *to come to know Him*.⁵¹⁸ The word *know*, used here, is the Greek *ginosko*, which means to come to understand or to ascertain.⁵¹⁹ It is through a close relationship with the Lord (being found *in Him*) that we will begin to know Him. The use of the word *may*, in our English translation, would make this thought appear to be uncertain; however, there is no such uncertainty in the Greek. If we are found to be in Christ and clothed with His righteousness, then **we will** come to know Him.

Once more we see the absolute importance of being found *in Christ*; Jesus commanded, “Abide [or remain (*meno*)] in me, and I in you ...” (John 15:4).⁵²⁰ John clarified this for us: “And he that keepeth [to attend to carefully – present tense, active voice – it is something that we are to be continually doing] his [God’s] commandments dwelleth [to remain or abide (*meno*) – something that we are to always be doing] in him, and he in him” (1 John 3:24a).⁵²¹ There is an unmistakable correlation between obedience to the commands of God, and remaining in Christ. If we consider that when we come to Christ in faith, God writes His Laws upon our hearts and gives us His Spirit to enable us to live in obedience to His commands (Jeremiah 31:31-33; Romans 8:4), then there is

⁵¹⁶ Friberg Lexicon.

⁵¹⁷ Strong’s Online.

⁵¹⁸ Stephanus 1550 NT.

⁵¹⁹ Friberg Lexicon.

⁵²⁰ Strong’s Online.

⁵²¹ Ibid.

no need to wonder that obedience and abiding in Christ are inextricably linked. We must remind ourselves: “And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep [attend to carefully] his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him” (1 John 2:3-4).⁵²² The profound truth of these words runs contrary to the ecumenical mind; you cannot fly the white and yellow flag of ecumenism⁵²³ and, at the same time, be obedient to the Word of God! In this metaphorical, ecumenical flag, the white represents their profound willingness to surrender at every turn, and yellow reveals their fear of standing on the truths of Scripture; interestingly, the flag of Vatican City (arguably the world headquarters for modern ecumenism, since the Roman Catholic Church is unabashedly a huge promoter of ecumenical thinking) bears these very colors (however, in their interpretation, the gold represents spiritual power, and the white, worldly power⁵²⁴). Evangelicalism has lost sight of this significant truth: ecumenism and obedience to God are mutually exclusive! Within the Evangelical movement, the concept of Biblical separation is no longer believed, taught, or even remotely practiced. What is Biblical separation? It is the Biblical mandate that keeps obedience to God and ecumenism apart.



Flag of Vatican City

The principle upon which Biblical separation is built is the holiness of God. Twice in Scripture we read of heavenly beings proclaiming the God’s holiness: “And the four beasts [living beings] had each of them six wings about *him*; and *they were* full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come” (Revelation 4:8; cp. Isaiah 6:2-3).⁵²⁵ “The holiness of God is that attribute which governs the exercise of all His other attributes ... It is extremely important to recognize the preeminence of God’s holiness.”⁵²⁶ Moses declared of God, “*He is* the Rock, his work *is* perfect: for all his ways *are* judgment [just]: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right *is* he” (Deuteronomy 32:4).⁵²⁷ God’s holiness, by definition and for our example, excludes even a tinge of iniquity or compromise with evil. Therefore, when we speak of God’s love for mankind, we must understand that this love is flowing out of His holiness. Evangelicals today have placed a heavy emphasis upon the love of God, but they have failed to view that love being compatible with His holiness; rather, they desire to see His love being expressed in tolerance for one another (the root of ecumenism). God’s love expressed through His holiness will not permit me to sidle up to those who teach or practice error; however, love expressed outside of God’s holiness will easily become tolerant and accepting of teachings that are contrary to Scripture.

A quick review of recent history proves this reality beyond question. When Harold Ockenga unveiled what he termed the “New Evangelicalism” in 1948, he did so through a “ringing call for a repudiation [rejection] of separatism and the summons to social involvement.”⁵²⁸ The fundamental change with New Evangelicalism versus the Evangelicalism of the day, was a shift

⁵²² Strong’s Online.

⁵²³ This is used metaphorically only; the ecumenical movement, per se, has no flag.

⁵²⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flag_of_Vatican_City

⁵²⁵ Strong’s Online.

⁵²⁶ Ernest Pickering, *Biblical Separation*, p. 165.

⁵²⁷ Strong’s Online.

⁵²⁸ Harold Ockenga, *Foreword* to Harold Lindsell’s *The Battle for the Bible*.

in its strategy from “one of separation to one of infiltration.”⁵²⁹ As one of the founders of Fuller Seminary, Ockenga made this decision, not on the basis of Scripture, but from a pragmatic response to a looming loss of influence within a larger constituency. He recognized that taking this new position would isolate the school from those on the right who held to Biblical separation, but he harbored a greater fear that to fail to take this position would result in a “conflict with the left that might cut the seminary off from wider influences.”⁵³⁰ Pragmatism swayed Ockenga to neglect the Word of God: “And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in *them*; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you...” (2 Corinthians 6:16-17). New Evangelicalism’s newly formulated tolerance for the teachings of liberal theologians has resulted in the wholesale commitment of Evangelicals to ecumenism in less than sixty years. The popularity of men like Rick Warren has thrived on the concept of infiltration; he, like Ockenga before him, views those who hold to Biblical separation as the enemy. “Warren predicts that fundamentalism, of all varieties, will be ‘one of the big enemies of the 21st century’”⁵³¹ – and he careful to affirm that he meant Christian fundamentalists as well. Clearly, pragmatism has become the driving force among Evangelicals today; the Word of God has been relegated to the back seat, if not tossed out altogether.

If Evangelicals have turned away from Biblical separation to their own detriment, then what does it mean to hold to foundational doctrine? We’ve already established that God’s holiness forms the basis for Biblical separation, and, flowing out of this, we can see that God’s call to holiness is for our spiritual purity. Recognizing that we are all sinners by birth (Psalm 51:5), God calls us into faith in Christ for the express purpose of establishing His righteousness in us (Romans 3:21-23; 8:1-4). As those who have been born-again by the Spirit of God and called by God with a holy calling (2 Timothy 1:9), it is incumbent on us to live in obedience to God’s Word, and this includes the unpopular doctrine of Biblical separation. There are three primary areas where we see the Scriptures deal with the matter of separation, and we will briefly look into each of these.

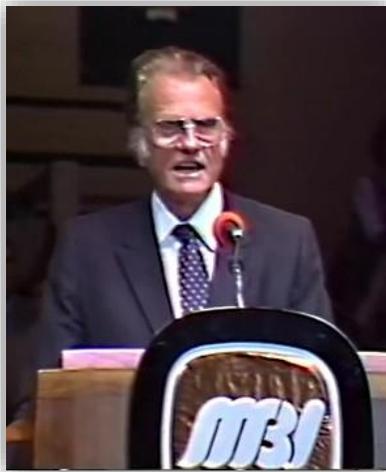
First is the area of separation from the world; this is the least controversial of the three, and one on which some Evangelicals will agree, although often with some qualifications. This is a significant theme throughout Scripture and one that cannot be easily ignored. Before Israel entered the land promised to them by God, He warned them, “When the LORD thy God shall cut off the nations from before thee, whither thou goest to possess them, and thou succeedest them, and dwellest in their land; Take heed to thyself that thou be not snared by following them, after that they be destroyed from before thee ...” (Deuteronomy 12:29-30a). God desired Israel to be a holy nation before all of the peoples of the world (Exodus 19:6), even as He desires us to be a holy people (1 Peter 2:9). James does not mince his words on this matter: “Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God” (James 4:4). Separation from the world is identified with God’s acceptance of us – “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you ...” (2 Corinthians 6:17). This principle is very clear in Scripture, and so most Evangelicals will accept this level of separation (although they may like to have some discussion as to what the *world* might really be).

⁵²⁹ Charles Woodbridge, *The New Evangelicalism*, p. 14.

⁵³⁰ George M. Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*, p. 65.

⁵³¹ Paul Nussbaum, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 8, 2006, “The Purpose-Driven Pastor.”

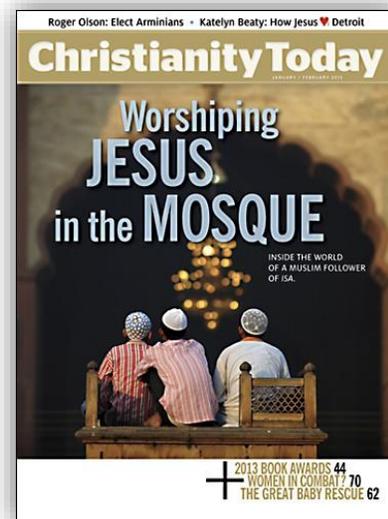
Then we are to separate ourselves from those who are apostate, those who have believed but no longer hold to the truth of Scripture. To Timothy, Paul wrote: “For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent [without self-control], fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady [reckless], highminded [literally, to wrap in smoke or mist; to be stupid from a sense of one’s own importance⁵³²], lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away” (2 Timothy 3:2-5).⁵³³ Notice that these men will have “a form of godliness”; these are not those who profess atheism, but rather those who hold to **a form** of Christianity! By holding ecumenical Evangelicalism (today there is really no other) up to the light of Scripture, you will see these traits become evident – not that all Evangelicals will display all of these characteristics, but a panoramic view of the Evangelical landscape will reveal all of them. Paul’s capping admonition is: turn away from such as these, avoid them, and do not mix with them.



**Billy Graham speaking at
Founder’s Week 1986**

more gracious and accepting than their former separatist brethren; within a few decades, the barriers had been removed, the bridge was no longer necessary, and most of those who once held fundamentalist positions had succumbed to the lure of ecumenical brotherhood – the pure view of the Word of God had been relinquished in favor of fellowship with a broader so-called Christian community. One example is Moody Bible Institute, which at the turn of the twentieth century was known “for its conservative fundamentalism and opposition to liberal theology and the social gospel.”⁵³⁵ However, less than forty years after Harold Ockenga made his proclamation of New Evangelicalism, Moody had forsaken its fundamentalist

This can be a difficult thing, and something that modern Evangelicals refuse to practice. When Harold Ockenga took his New Evangelical stance back in the late 1940s, he did so with a declared refusal to separate from those who professed Christianity but held a skewed view of the Scriptures. Today, Evangelicals have adopted all of what Ockenga proposed and more; his Evangelicalism is no longer “New,” but common. The platform of New Evangelicalism became the springboard for rampant ecumenism. Ecumenism was not a new concept in Ockenga’s day, but was primarily limited to those viewed as being spiritually liberal. The Federal Council of Churches (which was formed in 1908) brought the mainline Protestant denominations together into ecumenical cooperation.⁵³⁴ What Ockenga’s leadership provided, was a bridge over which Evangelicals could travel in order to join with those who were



⁵³² Friberg Lexicon.

⁵³³ Strong’s Online.

⁵³⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Council_of_Churches

⁵³⁵ <http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/841.html>

moorings and embraced Billy Graham, the public face of this new, ecumenical Evangelicalism. It is interesting to note that many of the Bible schools in North America were founded by fundamentalists as a means of training men against the errors of modernism (even Fuller Seminary was established with this ideal, but, with Ockenga at the helm, it never accomplished this goal). However, as virtually all of these schools, which were formerly fundamentalist in their Biblical position, began falling into the heresy of ecumenism, it was a very short time before thousands of young men and women were being turned out with the New Evangelical perspective. As many of these men became the spiritual leaders of churches, it is easily seen how quickly the doctrines of New Evangelicalism flooded across the Christian landscape, encouraged by Billy Graham's crusades and the publication of *Christianity Today*.

Despite the virtual landslide into ecumenism and compromise with the liberal theologians, God still says, "Be ye holy; for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:16; Leviticus 11:44). It is only as we neglect the Word of God that we can embrace modern Evangelicalism, which has become synonymous with ecumenism. Something as seemingly innocent as a local-community ministerial association is an expression of the ecumenical mind, and we must avoid it. John wrote, "And hereby we do know that we know him [God], if we keep his commandments" (1 John 2:3). It is impossible to mix the compromise of ecumenical thinking with obedience to God's commands – the two simply will not mix. If we embrace the brotherhood of ecumenism, then we have already failed to keep God's commands; if we, through faith in Christ and the aid of the Spirit of God, determine to walk according to what God desires, then we will immediately fall out-of-step with the ecumenical crowd. We must avoid those who have fallen from the faith as expressed in the Scriptures – spiritually, we have nothing in common; we must not sit under their teaching, whether through preaching, literature, radio or television.

As we have seen, this second area of separation is not without its difficulties within the minds of most who would call themselves *Christian*. Separation from those who merely hold a form of godliness is not a popular stance to take. However, there is another area where the Scriptures call on us to exercise separation – we are to separate from those brethren who would practice or propagate error. These would be brethren who, like the Galatians, are in the process of being removed from God (apostatizing); "I marvel that ye are so soon removed [present tense *transpose* – one thing in place of another] from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another [a different] gospel ..." (Galatians 1:6).⁵³⁶

To the Corinthians, Paul wrote, "I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators ... But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. ... Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person" (1 Corinthians 5:9-13). Notice that this is a "brother" who is carrying on in this way; this is not the world, nor is it someone who is apostate. These errors might appear to be so obvious, but perhaps they are actually more subtle than we might think. Within Evangelicalism, someone who might be covetous or an idolater could be superficially viewed as being blessed by the Lord in material things. Living together before marriage or having a child out of wedlock no longer holds the stigma that it once did, and so fornication is marginalized through a perceived commitment to marry or a youthful slip; however, what about the mindset that led to this? John says that if someone claims to know God but doesn't do what He says, then he is a liar and His truth is not there (1 John 2:4). We are not to abide such a person within our fellowship.

⁵³⁶ Strong's Online.

Paul wrote to Timothy, “If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness ... from such withdraw thyself” (1 Timothy 6:3-5). To the Corinthians, Paul wrote of a life that is not lived according to the commands of Scripture; here, Paul speaks of those who teach things that are not Biblically sound, yet they would not necessarily be numbered among the apostates. This is not advocating abandoning someone the first time that you hear something that might be construed as error; rather, if someone is unwilling to change their teaching based upon an explanation of the appropriate Scriptures, then you must withdraw yourself from them. Keep in mind that the purpose of Biblical separation is spiritual purity. When you sit under someone’s teaching, you bear the responsibility to weigh what you hear against the Scriptures. If what you hear and what you read in Scripture are not the same, then you must point out where you see the departure from the Word of God. Should their response be, “I cannot accept that” (or some other equally profound response) and they cannot justify their position based upon Scripture, then you must withdraw from their instruction.

In his letter to the Romans, Paul sliced this situation even a little thinner: “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark [keep a watchful eye on] them which cause divisions and offences contrary to [alongside of] the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid [turn away from] them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly [desires]; and by good words [plausible speech] and fair speeches [flattery] deceive [deceive completely] the hearts of the simple [the naïve or innocent]” (Romans 16:17-18).⁵³⁷ First of all, notice that the divisions are caused by the one who propounds a teaching that is not completely in line with the Word of God. Those who adhere to the truths of Scripture are often accused of causing division; this clear word from God tells us that that is not the case. Secondly, it is noteworthy that our English word *contrary* does not pick up the correct meaning of the Greek word *para*. We might speak of Bible Schools as being *para-church* organizations (which is very telling if you ponder that thought), by which it is



generally meant that the school functions independently of any church; not that the school is *against* the church (as the word *contrary* would lead us to believe), but that it is *alongside of* it. Therefore, this admonition is not addressing those who teach a doctrine that is in clear opposition to Scripture, but one that is alongside of Biblical truth – perhaps very close to it, but not quite correct. We are to avoid, or turn away, from such as these.

The question that might come from all of this is, “Will we be able to fellowship with anyone?” The answer is, “Yes” – but what we must unearth with this answer is one of the fundamental problems with the “church” today (as we know it). Every church has its constitution, creed, or statement of faith that provides it with its standard for conduct and operations. Some years ago now, the Prairie Tabernacle (the church originally associated with, and operated under, the Prairie Bible Institute) had a constitutional policy that they would not perform the marriage of anyone who was divorced; in other words, their constitution was based on the premise that remarriage after divorce was contrary to Scripture (as Romans 7:2-3 would indicate). When they were faced with a request to marry someone who had been divorced, and the leadership favored the remarriage, they were reminded that this was contrary to Scripture, and that it was also forbidden by their constitution. The solution was very simple: they changed their constitution (neglecting the Scriptural basis for

⁵³⁷ Friberg Lexicon.

this restriction), and carried on to marry many more divorced people. All of this to illustrate one of the fundamental problems with churches – they use a man-made document to govern their activities, rather than permitting the Scriptures, with the aid of the Spirit of God, to be their Guide. Constitutions, creeds and statements of faith will all bear the marks of those who work to compile them; i.e., they are a subjective interpretation of the Scriptures, and, therefore, do not hold the same authority. When a church runs into a difficulty with their governing document, they simply focus on redrafting it in order to permit their desired course of action. The Word of God might be acclaimed as being the final authority for faith and practice, nevertheless, typically the church will not get beyond its own constitution, creed or statement of faith (whatever they want to call it) in resolving problems that come its way – this is, in reality, making the interpretive document the final authority for faith and practice, and not the Scriptures.

If we determine to hold to Biblical separation, very obviously our fellowship will be limited. However, if we consider that God’s desire is for us to live in holiness, then it should be obvious that our fellowship needs to be limited to those who likewise adhere to the Scriptures alone. Through the guidance of the Spirit, we will be able to enjoy the unity that is found in Christ, in His Word, and in the *ekklesia* that He is building; therein is the reality of coming to know Christ – faith in Him lived out through obedience to His Word. “And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments” (1 John 2:3). Biblical separation is one aspect of working out our salvation, as it pertains to the area of spiritual purity (Philippians 2:12).



The second thing that Paul will certainly come to know, if he is found in Christ, is the *power of his resurrection*. “Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; And declared [appointed] *to be* the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead ...” (Romans 1:3-4).⁵³⁸ Christ’s resurrection was the capstone event that confirmed that He was God. When Jesus first cleansed the temple of the profanity of merchandise, the Jews queried Him as to the authority that He had to do this; Jesus’ response was, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up ... When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said” (John 2:19-22). Early in His ministry, Jesus identified His coming resurrection as the foundation for His work. To Martha, on the death of Lazarus, Jesus declared Himself to be the resurrection and the life (John 11:25); He is the One Who brings life to the dead and causes them to live – physically for Lazarus, but spiritually for us. Jesus’ resurrection from the dead forms the foundation of the Gospel of God: “... if Christ be not risen, then *is* our preaching vain [empty, devoid of truth], and your faith *is* also vain [same Greek word]” (1 Corinthians 15:14).⁵³⁹ The resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ not only identified Him as being the Son of God, but it is also the key to our faith in Him as our Savior. It is little wonder that the devil has ensured that Jesus’ resurrection should be clouded by many false teachings and practices.

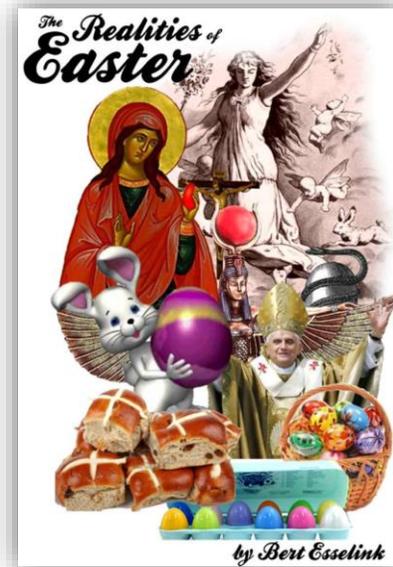
The first lie, concerning Jesus’ resurrection, originated with the chief priests and elders of the Jews, the religious leaders of Israel. When they heard that Jesus was no longer in the tomb, despite sealing it and posting a guard (Matthew 27:66), they bribed the guards, “saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night and stole him away while we slept” (Matthew 28:13). A guard who fell asleep at his post was severely punished, often resulting in his death; the guard posted by the religious Jews would have been comprised of four to sixteen soldiers who were now paid well

⁵³⁸ Friberg Lexicon

⁵³⁹ Strong’s Online.

enough for them to say that they had all fallen asleep,⁵⁴⁰ and, despite being asleep, they had seen the disciples steal Jesus' body out of the tomb and didn't stop them. The result of this far-fetched lie was that it became "commonly reported among the Jews" that the body of Jesus had been stolen out of the tomb by His disciples and, therefore, the resurrection never happened (Matthew 28:15). However, it is obvious, after the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, that this lie was very ineffective, and Satan was forced to come up with new and varied ways of discrediting what Jesus had done for mankind.

When Jesus spoke of His death, burial and resurrection, He said, "For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matthew 12:40). Today we have the highly acclaimed Evangelical, Hank Hanegraaff, stating: "The fact of the matter is he was dead for only two nights and one full day."⁵⁴¹ By saying this, Hanegraaff places Jesus' words into question on this matter, but the larger implications are much more devastating. If Jesus, Who is the Creator of time, didn't get it right concerning this simple matter, He must have undoubtedly made errors in other areas as well – thereby openly casting doubt on the Scriptures. By continually adding to, and taking away from, God's preserved Word, Evangelicals have virtually destroyed the authority of the Bible (which is a contradiction of terms, since being *Evangelical* means to hold to the authority of the Scriptures⁵⁴²). Hanegraaff literally twists Jesus' own words to make them say something other than what He said, and, as a result, he stands in jeopardy of God's judgment for his actions: "Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove [judge] thee, and thou be found a liar" (Proverbs 30:6);⁵⁴³ "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death" (Revelation 21:8). Satan has cast such doubt upon the three days and three nights leading up to Jesus' resurrection, that it is commonly held by professing Christians (Evangelical and Fundamental alike) that Jesus died on Friday and rose again on Sunday. This might fit well with the schedule manufactured by the Roman Catholics, but it does not fit with Jesus' words.⁵⁴⁴ Although not denying the resurrection, this casts a shadow of doubt over the Word of God – the interjection of "Yea, hath God said?" (Genesis 3:1).



One of the charges that Joshua gave to the children of Israel was, "That ye come not among these nations, these that remain among you; **neither make mention of** [the Hebrew word used means to remember or recall⁵⁴⁵] **the name of their gods**, nor cause to swear by them, neither serve

⁵⁴⁰ Strong's Online.

⁵⁴¹ Hank Hanegraaff, "Three Days and Three Nights," Statement CP1402.

http://www.equip.org/site/apps/nlnet/content3.aspx?c=mu1LaMNJrE&b=4126497&content_id=%7B10478DBB-A024-42B1-9CAC-741D7B50DCB9%7D¬oc=1

⁵⁴² Encarta Dictionary, "evangelical."

⁵⁴³ Strong's Online.

⁵⁴⁴ I deal with this in greater detail in *The Realities of Easter*; <http://www.thenarrowtruth.com/realities-of-easter.html>

⁵⁴⁵ Strong's Online.

them, nor bow yourselves unto them: But cleave unto the LORD your God, as ye have done unto this day” (Joshua 23:7-8). The Israelites were to completely forget the names of the gods of the peoples whom they destroyed at God’s command. Incredibly, Satan has used the Roman Catholic Church to identify the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ by the name of a pagan deity – Easter! Today the word rolls off the tongues of Christians with great reverence and piety; meanwhile, harbored under this pagan name is a distorted ruin of the culminating act of God in accomplishing the redemption of mankind. What could be more nauseating to God than to hear those who profess to believe in Him use the name of a pagan deity in reference to the sacrifice of His only Son on the cross and His power demonstrated in Christ’s resurrection from the dead?

The resurrection of Christ – that culminating proof of His deity – has been the target of Satan from the day that it happened; if he can raise doubts in our minds concerning this critical element of God’s redemptive plan for us, he will then have placed us under the shadow of his destructive ways. Our salvation through Christ is dependent upon His resurrection; “if Christ be not raised ... ye are yet in your sins” (1 Corinthians 15:17) – it could not be clearer than that! If we are found to be in Christ (Philippians 3:9), then we will come to know the power of His resurrection; it is through this mighty resurrection power that we can walk in newness of life (Romans 6:4). Is it any wonder that Satan has focused his efforts so particularly on this event? We must be careful to hearken to the command to reckon ourselves “dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:11), and we must also be vigilant to examine all things in the light of Scripture, lest we become guilty of learning the way of the heathen (Jeremiah 10:2).



If we are found to be in Christ (Philippians 3:9) then we will know *the fellowship of his sufferings*. The Greek word for *fellowship* is *koinonia*, which means association, communion or joint participation.⁵⁴⁶ *His sufferings* speak to the many afflictions that Christ endured throughout His time on earth, including the cross. If we are found to be in Christ, then we will experience troubles and sufferings. Peter’s perspective was, “... rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers [verb form of *koinonia*] of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy” (1 Peter 4:13).⁵⁴⁷ What seems evident from both Paul and Peter is that being joined together with Christ in His sufferings is to be expected; this is not to be viewed as an aberration, but the norm.

To Timothy Paul wrote, “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Timothy 3:12); everyone desiring to live a godly life in Christ (i.e., in obedience to His commands) will be persecuted (a definite form of affliction). Jesus said: “In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33b); and Paul wrote, “If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men” (Romans 12:18). Evangelicals have neglected Jesus assurance that we will have tribulation, and have embraced living peaceably, as being of primary importance; ecumenism is the fruit of compromise in an effort to remove all conflict with everyone – as you lower your expectation of what it means to be a Christian (through the neglect of God’s Word), your fellowship will broaden. The crux of the matter is this: will we have a limited message or a limited fellowship?⁵⁴⁸ Paul’s declaration was, “I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God” (Acts 20:27); through his ministry, people came to know what God expected of them – he did not pare his message down in an effort to increase his audience. To the Romans, Paul says that we should not go out of our way to find

⁵⁴⁶ Strong’s Online.

⁵⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁸ This is the title of an article written by David Nettleton and published in *The Baptist Bulletin*, December 1955.

trouble, because (as he notes to Timothy) if we will live in a godly manner, trouble will find us. The reconciliation of these two seemingly conflicting statements (you will have tribulation, and live peaceably with all men) is that our first priority must be to never compromise the Word of God, even as we make every effort to be at peace with those about us; peace must never come at the cost of obedience to the commands of God. “For what glory *is it*, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer *for it*, ye take it patiently, this *is acceptable with God*” (1 Peter 2:20).

Paul now adds a phrase of further explanation to the sufferings that we are to expect: *being made conformable unto his death*. This speaks of our identification with the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also *in the likeness of his resurrection*: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with *him*, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin” (Romans 6:3-6). Many will accept that Jesus died for us (Romans 5:8), and that is a marvelous truth that speaks to God’s mercy and grace being extended to mankind. However, if we desire to be found in Christ, and, thereby, come to know Him, we must identify with His death. “Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:8,11). When Jesus died, He died for my sins; therefore, when I come to Christ in faith, believing that He has made atonement for my sins, then I must no longer live under the rule of sin but in the life that He imparts through His indwelling Holy Spirit. As we identify with Christ in His death, we will recognize that our sin nature, which we all bear about with us, is what died with Christ on the cross – it is our responsibility to continually reckon our sin nature to be dead (this is the present-tense command of Romans 6:11). To the Ephesians, Paul wrote, “... put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Ephesians 4:22-24). To *put off* the former way of life is to reckon our sin nature as being dead in Christ (this is something that we are to do); the *new man*, whom we are to put on, is accounting ourselves as alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Savior. This is not a once-for-all-time act; we are to continually reckon ourselves as being dead unto sin, and we are to be constantly renewed in the spirit of our minds (this is something that we must permit the Spirit of God to work in us). “*There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit*” (Romans 8:1); *no condemnation* comes with a condition – we must be living according to the Spirit of God. We cannot live for the world (which is enmity against God – James 4:4) and still presume to claim the liberty of this promise; the essence is this: we must walk in obedience to what God has given to us in the Scriptures – regardless of the consequences. We must not be “fair-weather Christians” – those who willingly obey God’s commands when it is favorable to do so. “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God” (Hebrews 3:12); this warning is addressed to *brethren*, and we must continually take heed lest our hearts deceive us!

There is a purpose to identifying with Christ in His death, and it is that we might also live in Him. When Evangelicals adopt the position that we must not judge the lives of those who profess to be Christians, for God sees their hearts, they are denying the necessity of dying with Christ so that we might also live in Him. They might well believe that Jesus died, but too often they refuse to die with Him. If we are in Christ, then there **must be** a change in how we live; after all, the new

man is created by God “in righteousness and true holiness” (Ephesians 4:24). This is not the hypocritical façade of righteousness practiced by the Pharisees, but a genuine righteousness that flows out of being in Christ and walking according to the Spirit of God (Romans 8:4). “For if ye live [are living] after the flesh, ye shall die [are dying]: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify [continually putting to death] the deeds of the body, ye shall live” (Romans 8:13).⁵⁴⁹ The Christian life is a battle: the devil is always ready to destroy us (1 Peter 5:8), our sin nature is ever with us and must be continually reckoned as dead (Romans 6:11), and compromisers, professing to be Christians, will be everywhere tempting us to release our tight grip on the truths of God’s Word (Acts 20:30). How do we protect ourselves from becoming victims in the battle? – through continual obedience to God’s commandments! “... he that keepeth [to continually attend carefully to] his [God’s] commandments dwelleth in him, and he [God] in him” (1 John 3:24a);⁵⁵⁰ Jesus commanded us to abide in Him (John 15:4) – if we would abide in Him, then we must live in obedience to His commands, which will, of necessity, bring a change in how we live.

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



This verse is somewhat obscure and difficult to understand. However, we must recognize, first of all, that Paul cannot be speaking of the physical resurrection of the dead, which is a surety for all of mankind (John 5:29).

The word *attain* means to arrive at or to reach a goal.⁵⁵¹ Paul has just spoken of coming to know the power of Christ’s resurrection and being made conformable unto His death. His desire is to arrive at a place in his walk with the Lord where he will continually live in His resurrection power. Paul declared to the Romans, “Neither yield ye your members *as* instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead [resurrection power], and your members *as* instruments of righteousness unto God” (Romans 6:13); yet a little later he confessed, “For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do” (Romans 7:19). This is the battle of every Christian who desires to walk according to God’s Word; Paul’s desire, expressed here, is that he might enter that place where he is always walking in the resurrection power of Christ. The key is to permit the Spirit of God to lead us (Romans 8:1,14).

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



Paul begins by confirming that he has not now *attained*, or taken possession, nor is he now perfect. This can only relate back to his previous statement that he desires to arrive at a place of living in the resurrection power of Christ; yet he openly admits that he has not come to that place where he continually abides in this power. Yes, we are to put on the new man (Ephesians 4:24), but the old man carries on, challenging our walk with the Lord; the old man might well be crucified with Christ (Romans 6:6), but we are called upon to continually reckon him to be dead (Romans 6:11). Paul readily acknowledges that he has not yet attained that level of

⁵⁴⁹ Strong’s Online.

⁵⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁵¹ Friberg Lexicon.

victory (evidenced by Romans 7). On the other hand, the devil has made it his job to look for those who are vulnerable so that he might destroy them (1 Peter 5:8).

We must not miss that Paul is speaking of our present, earthly, daily living, and not our standing before God. When we come to faith in Christ, what we must not overlook is that we are *in* Christ. When God looks at us, He sees the righteousness of Christ (we are sinners clothed with the righteousness of Christ), for it is in Him that we find cleansing before God; not that we are presently perfect in this life, but God sees where we will be when this mortal will put on immortality (1 Corinthians 15:53). “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is” (1 John 3:2) – therein is the hope of every true believer, and the state to which Paul aspires. When we “shall be like Him,” then our old man will have fallen away and we will fully abide in the new man, created by God in righteousness and true holiness (Ephesians 4:24). Earlier, Paul expressed this longing of his heart: “For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better ...” (Philippians 1:23).

But I follow after is a rather anemic translation of the Greek at this point – the *follow after* sounding rather passive and lethargic. The Greek word *dioko* (*dee-o’-ko*) means to press forward, to hasten, or run,⁵⁵² which calls to mind an urgency and the expenditure of energy to achieve something. This word is in the present tense and active voice, which means that Paul is continually expending energy in order to press forward in his spiritual growth in the Lord; he is not content to, some day, stand before God in the righteousness of Christ, but longs to experience growth in that righteousness while still in the flesh. He wrote of this same longing to the Romans: “For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Romans 8:3-4).

Among Evangelicals, there is no such spiritual urgency. There is a general lethargy when it comes to personal, Biblical spirituality; there is very little interest to live according to the dictates of God’s Word – even many older Evangelicals are generally apathetic about Biblical principles. There may well be an enthusiasm for a spirituality based on a more inclusive and ecumenically-oriented philosophy, but to be Biblically enthusiastic, one is considered to be overly zealous and far too narrow. Therefore, we might find Evangelicals who have a spiritual enthusiasm for the feel-good philosophy of Joel Osteen, the do-good philosophy of Rick Warren, or the we’re-all-good philosophy of Billy Graham and Chuck Colson; but none of these philosophies will stand the test of Scripture. Such enthusiasm will never focus on my spiritual wellbeing before God; rather, it will speak to my emotions, to my need to be involved in a movement to make a difference, or my loyalty to a man who is held in high regard. Today’s average professing Christian has been conditioned to be passive – you do the best that you can everyday based on what you have learned from your “pastor,” whom you listen to once a week (perhaps two or three times, if you’re really spiritual). The Scriptures were not written for “pastors” – they were written for **our instruction** (Romans 15:4). The present-day scenario in churches is contrary to what God intended and, I believe, much has been contrived by Satan for the spiritual demise of professing Christians.

There is one significant area where modern churches are in violation of the Scriptures to the spiritual detriment of their people – that is their clergy-laity structure. Paul wrote against holding certain men in higher regard than what is Biblical, and condemned the Corinthians for causing divisions by elevating men (1 Corinthians 3:4-7). Peter wrote of the elders (the spiritual watchdogs

⁵⁵² Friberg Lexicon.

of the assembly) as being “among” the flock (1 Peter 5:2). However, most importantly, Jesus said, “Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:25-28). Within the *ekklesia* (the called-out ones) of Christ, there is to be no hierarchy of authority; we are all equally joined to the Head (i.e., Christ – Ephesians 4:15), and have all been gifted by the Spirit of God for the mutual edification of the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:11). Jesus said to His disciples, “You [plural] ‘abide in Me’”; but then He goes on to say, “I am the vine, ye *are* the branches [plural]: He [singular] that abideth in me, and I in him [singular], the same bringeth forth much fruit ...” (John 15:5). When it comes to spiritual fruitfulness, Jesus draws the responsibility down to the individual (in keeping with the analogy of every part of the Body having a connection to the Head [Ephesians 4:15-16]). However, Jesus goes on to apply the individual responsibility even further: “If a man [singular] abide not in me, he [singular] is cast forth as a branch [singular], and is withered [singular]; and men [more properly *they* – see Matthew 13:37-40] gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are [this is singular – *it (the branch) is*] burned” (John 15:6).⁵⁵³ We are individually accountable to God (Romans 14:12); we cannot hide behind what we learn from a pastor who might well be misdirected in his understanding of the Scriptures. We must individually measure what we hear and read according to the Scriptures – if it agrees, then we may learn from it; if it does not agree, then we must set it aside.

The reality for today’s average pew-warming Christian (whether Evangelical or Fundamental Baptist – it matters little) is that they follow their pastor, or denomination, but do not take the time to examine that to which they adhere according to the Word of God. When a Fundamental Baptist pastor says, “I am a Baptist by conviction. I believe our faith and practice is absolutely in line with what the Word of God teaches,”⁵⁵⁴ it seems clear that his teaching begins with a huge presupposition – that Baptist traditions are Biblical. Any pastor with charisma will be able to lead the people as he sees fit and, being enamored by his personality, they will follow; the Scriptures will not be consulted – whatever the pastor says will be taken as truth. If he teaches Baptist theology, no one will question its validity, for the individual’s responsibility to check all things according to the Scriptures will not be taught. Others may have a strong loyalty to their denomination; if there is ever a question or dispute, the founding documents will be consulted in order to bring resolution – again, the Scriptures are left out of the picture. There is a general sense that the ordinary individual must not attempt to understand the Bible; such study must be left to those of higher learning. However, we must not forget that it was the religious elite (the scribes and Pharisees) who caused the Lord the greatest grief during His ministry, and ultimately sought for His death; of all of the Apostles called by the Lord, Paul was probably the only one who had substantial formal training – and he turned his back on all of it, because it did not fit with the Gospel message that he had received from the Lord Jesus Christ (Philippians 3:7). When we fear to question the teachings of anyone because of their superior education, we have failed in our responsibility as a follower of Christ, and opened ourselves to potential deception. We must be prepared to expend energy as we follow Christ; “But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full

⁵⁵³ Stephanus 1550 NT.

⁵⁵⁴ This was the response that I received when I directed my questions regarding David Cloud’s “Biblical” support for church membership to his “pastor” (since Cloud refused to give consideration to my evaluation of his position). Notice that he says that he *believes* the Baptist traditions are Biblical – which could mean that he has tested each one according to Scripture and confirmed them, or (and much more likely) that he has taken by faith that the Baptist traditions are Biblical.

age [mature], even those who by reason of use [an established pattern] have their senses exercised [to exercise vigorously] to discern both good and evil” (Hebrews 5:14).⁵⁵⁵

There is a purpose to Paul’s pursuit – it is so that he might lay hold of that for which Christ has laid hold of him, i.e., that he might become what Christ desires. Let’s take a moment to consider what Christ desires of us. “Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love ...” (Ephesians 1:3-4). We are *in Christ* for the expressed purpose of being *holy and without blame*. We are to “put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Ephesians 4:24); God declared to Israel, “Be ye holy: for I *am* the LORD your God” (Leviticus 20:7). Evangelicals have zeroed in on the love of God as their primary objective, and they are zealously expressing a form of love through their ecumenism. God is love (1 John 4:8), and God’s love will be expressed through us, but God’s greatest desire for His children is that we live in holiness before Him (1 Thessalonians 4:7). God’s holiness demands separation from anything that is tainted with error or evil; His holiness, lived out through us, likewise calls us to have no part with error – ecumenism is a terrible thing in the sight of God’s holiness. We are called to express our love for God and our fellowman through holiness, not through tolerance and accommodation. We might not achieve “true holiness” while walking this earth with the corrupt “old man,” but we are called to run “the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith” (Hebrews 12:1-2). We are called upon to reckon ourselves to be “dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:11); we are warned, “take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing [to fall away, become faithless – it is in the active voice, which means that the *brethren* are doing the falling away] from the living God ... For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold [to hold fast, keep secure, keep firm possession of] the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end ...” (Hebrews 3:12,14).⁵⁵⁶ This gives us a glimpse into what Paul desired to see actively present in his life; here are the elements of how we need to be spending our time as Christians so that we might grow in holiness of life now. Even a cursory review of Evangelicalism over the past 60 years will reveal the dramatic slide into apostasy that has taken place, suggesting that their ecumenical “love” has only hastened the downward spiral. The Scriptures, which we have just considered, confirm that our focus must be on God’s desire for our holiness, and we must determine to know His Word so that we are able to adequately test everything that comes our way (1 John 4:1). Christ saved us so that we might be holy; we have received His Spirit to guide us into all truth (John 16:13) – His Word (John 17:17).

Consider Jesus’ words: “As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love” (John 15:9). Today’s Evangelical would say, “See! We are to immerse ourselves in love”; they would use this as justification for their ecumenical ways. Truly, Jesus said that we are to *continue* in His love – but how do we do that? What the Evangelical needs to do is to continue reading, for Jesus goes on to say, “If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love” (John 15:10). How do we *continue* in the love of God? – we will abide in His love by obedience to His commandments. Evangelicals view a desire to walk in obedience to the Word of God as being legalistic, or, at the very least, narrow-minded. However, once again, Jesus set the example for us; therefore, they are accusing Jesus of being legalistic. What we must never lose sight of is that, as we become partakers of the New Covenant in Christ, God writes His Law (the permanent Ten Commandments) upon

⁵⁵⁵ Strong’s Online.

⁵⁵⁶ Ibid.

our hearts and minds (Hebrews 8:10 as quoted from Jeremiah 31:33). Why would God do this if obedience to them was optional? Evangelicals have sought to stretch the grace of God to cover their worldliness (after all, they are much too spiritually with-it to be under any Law, for even God's Word says, "... ye are not under the law, but under grace" [Romans 6:14]). "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (Romans 6:1-2). It is important to recognize that the Christian life is a divine combination of God's Law and His grace. A careful reading of Romans 8:1-4 shows that when we are *in Christ*, we are not under the **condemnation** of the Law (this is the expression of God's grace), but at the same time, as we are led by the Spirit of God, we will live in obedience to His Law – the righteousness of the Law will be evident in us. The Apostle John understood and wrote of this truth, as well: "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar [see Revelation 21:8 for the destiny of liars], and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him" (1 John 2:3-5). Jesus, Paul and John all taught the significance of obedience to God's commandments in order to abide in His love; however, this fundamental truth seems to have disappeared from the Evangelical mind. Paul's present desire was that he might be holy even as he was called unto a life of holiness in Christ; it is very clear from his teachings that he understood this to mean obedience to the commands of God.

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



Paul begins by reiterating what he has just stated. In the previous verse we had: *not as though I had already attained* – the word *not* is the absolute form, and *attained* is the Greek word *lambano*, which means to take or to receive.⁵⁵⁷ Now he says: *I count not myself to have apprehended*. Once again, *not* is in the absolute form, which is a strengthened negative expressing absolute denial.⁵⁵⁸ The Greek word translated as *apprehended* is *katalambano*, which means to lay hold of or to seize.⁵⁵⁹ This is an emphasized reiteration of what Paul has just stated; since it is preceded by the word *brethren*, it would seem that he is seeking to ensure that he has their attention, and then he emphasizes his point. His point is this: he absolutely does not consider himself to have laid hold of holiness of life (that for which Christ has laid hold of us); in other words, he does not claim to live a perfect life. It is noteworthy that he uses the perfect tense for *apprehended* (*katalambano*), which speaks of a past completed action that does not need to be repeated.⁵⁶⁰ This tells us that, when we place our faith in Christ for salvation, we do not step into perfect holiness of life; God views us as being holy because we are in Christ, but that does not equate with living a perfect life here on earth (Romans 7 tells of the warfare being waged within us). We are charged to reckon ourselves "to be dead indeed unto sin," and we are not to yield our members as "instruments of unrighteousness unto sin" (Romans 6:11,13). If, upon faith in Christ, we stepped into holiness of living, such admonitions would then not be necessary. Theologically, this is often referred to as "standing" and "state" – our standing before God is one of holiness in Christ; our present state in this life is one of learning to account ourselves free from sin through

⁵⁵⁷ Vine's "obtain."

⁵⁵⁸ Strong's Online.

⁵⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid.

the death of Christ and alive unto God through His resurrection (all done by the power of the Spirit of God Who abides within us through faith in Christ).

This next part of the verse is somewhat difficult to sort out. Paul says *one* and then goes on to list what appears to be two things that he does. However, Jesus said, “No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back [contemplating what has been left behind], is fit for the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:62)⁵⁶¹; these are two actions which come together to bring Jesus’ condemnation. In the same way, Paul writes of two actions, which come together as one – not unto condemnation, but rather unto our benefit.

The first of these is *forgetting those things which are behind*. *Forgetting* is in the present tense, which would indicate that there must be a continual *forgetting* of what is behind. This would include living in the past – either reliving bygone victories as a means of compensating for present failures, or wallowing under the defeats and stumbles of the past, thereby paralyzing any present growth. The adage is that the older we get, the more we like to reminisce about the “good old days,” and there is nothing inherently wrong with that. As a matter of fact, there are numerous occasions within Scripture where we are called upon to *remember*. The fourth Commandment, written by God upon tables of stone, declares, “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy” (Exodus 20:8); this is a command that we are to remember. However, when the children of Israel remembered the fish, cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions and garlic, which they freely ate in Egypt, and showed disdain for the manna that the Lord was providing for them in the wilderness, the Lord judged them with a plague (Numbers 11:5,33). The Lord called on Israel to remember that He had brought them out of slavery, and so they need not fear what lay ahead (Deuteronomy 7:18); numerous times He called them to remember that they were slaves in Egypt and that they now needed to follow His commands (Deuteronomy 16:12; 24:18,22). The Psalmist declared, “I remember the days of old; I meditate on all thy works; I muse on the work of thy hands. I stretch forth my hands unto thee: my soul *thirsteth* after thee, as a thirsty land” (Psalm 143:5-6). The Lord has created us with the capacity to remember, and there are some things that we must remember for our own spiritual good – some things that we must never forget.

If we consider the context in which Paul makes this statement (*forgetting those things which are behind*), we must recognize that for him this meant leaving his Jewish heritage and traditions behind. Paul sought to focus his life on knowing Christ Jesus, and anything that did not support this was set aside and *forgotten*. Anything and everything that would hinder us from following the Lord Jesus Christ with a whole heart must be left behind. We read, “... thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might” (Deuteronomy 6:5); Jesus said, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind” (Matthew 22:37), and elsewhere He said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15). Jesus underscored the importance of making Him the highest priority of our lives – in our *agape* (love as an act of the will) and in our obedience to His Word. The writer of Hebrews declares, “... let us lay aside [put off] every weight [encumbrance], and the sin which doth so easily beset [literally, *cleverly placing itself around*⁵⁶²] us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking [to turn the eyes away from other things and fix them on one thing] unto Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith (12:1-2).⁵⁶³ We are to free ourselves from anything that might hinder our pursuit of the Lord Jesus Christ; “... put off [same Greek word as used in Hebrews 12:1, and something that we are to do – active mood] concerning the former conversation

⁵⁶¹ Vine’s “look.”

⁵⁶² Friberg Lexicon.

⁵⁶³ Strong’s Online.

the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed [something that is done for us – passive mood] in the spirit of your mind” (Ephesians 4:22-23). When we placed our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of our souls, of necessity our focus shifted from earthly pursuits to heavenly concerns – as we daily account ourselves dead to sin and alive unto God, our earthly ambitions are forgotten in our whole-hearted venture of abiding in Christ through the working of the Spirit of God. We all have those things that we must resolutely and deliberately leave behind.

However, *forgetting those things which are behind* is only half of the one compound action of which Paul speaks. He goes on to say that he is *reaching forth unto those things which are before*. Like the *forgetting*, the *reaching forth* is also a present tense verb (in the Greek) and means to stretch out to,⁵⁶⁴ or to strain forward to.⁵⁶⁵ This is not passively reaching for something; this speaks of expending energy as I strain to reach for something that might be at the outer limits of my grasp. Paul has written of his desire to be found in Christ (Philippians 3:9), and to know Him (v. 10) – and this is the reason that he relinquished anything, and everything, that might, from a worldly perspective, be considered to his advantage. He has let go of his Jewish credentials so that he might apply all of his energy to pursuing what lies ahead – namely, a deepening understanding of the Lord. He draws these two actions together (*forgetting* and *reaching*) into one, thereby emphasizing the necessity of the two working simultaneously. If we simply forget what is behind, then we might well be adrift in life; if we reach forward in anticipation, but have not let go of the past, we will then frustrate our spiritual progress.

Paul writes so forcefully about this matter because he has learned the necessity of *forgetting*, through personal experience. We know that he was extremely burdened for his fellow Jews, for we read, “For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh ...” (Romans 9:3). It was this great burden to reach his Jewish kinsmen that saw Paul dip into their traditions to seek to build a bridge of communication with them. The last time that Paul went to Jerusalem, we read: “And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. And the *day* following Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present. And when he had saluted them, he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry” (Acts 21:17-19). The previous time that Paul had been in Jerusalem, there was some disagreement regarding the Law of Moses (the numerous statutes and ordinances that had become the lifestyle of the Jews); “... there arose certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them [the Gentiles] and to command *them* to keep the law of Moses” (Acts 15:5). The prevailing opinion of the Jews of Jerusalem was that the Law of Moses was to be kept by everyone, but the concession that came out of that meeting was that the Gentiles would not be required to keep the Jewish traditions. When Paul arrived in Jerusalem many years later, we see that the traditions of the Jews still held great influence; after hearing Paul’s report of what the Lord had done among the Gentiles, we read:

And when they heard *it*, they glorified the Lord [now notice the change in mood], and said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law: And they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise *their* children, neither to walk after the customs. What is it therefore? the multitude must needs come together: for they will hear that thou art come. Do therefore this that we say to thee: We have four men which have a vow on them; Them take, and purify thyself with them, and be at charges with them, that they may shave

⁵⁶⁴ Strong’s Online.

⁵⁶⁵ Friberg Lexicon.

their heads [Numbers 6:1-8,13-18]: and all may know that those things, whereof they were informed concerning thee, are nothing; but *that* thou thyself also walkest orderly, and keepest the law (Acts 21:20-24).

Can you believe it? When the chief of the Christians in Jerusalem heard Paul's report, they glorified the Lord, and then immediately informed Paul that there were thousands of Jews who believed and kept the Law of Moses and, furthermore, they had been told that he taught the Jews that they did not have to keep the Law of Moses. These leaders then persuaded Paul to join four Jews who had taken a vow according to their traditions, and that he might, thereby, make himself appear to keep the traditions of Moses. The Lord saw to it that Paul never fulfilled this Jewish practice – “when the seven days [of the vow] were **almost ended**, the Jews ... laid hands on him ...” (Acts 21:27) – and so Paul began his journey to Rome as a prisoner.

I believe that it was through his experiences in Jerusalem that Paul wrote with such determination concerning the necessity of *forgetting those things which are behind*. He preached Christ crucified (1 Corinthians 1:23) and taught the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27) – neither of which included anything about keeping the Jewish traditions. The Jews of Jerusalem caused no end of grief through their unwillingness to accept the message of faith alone in Christ alone. As Paul wrote to the believers in Galatia, Ephesus, Colosse and Philippi during his time of imprisonment in Rome, each letter included a very clear declaration that the Jewish traditions had been fulfilled and ended in Christ. To the Galatians he boldly declared that adding the necessity of Jewish traditions to faith in Christ is a destruction of the Gospel as it was delivered to them (1:6-7), and even went so far as to say that if they added the requirement of keeping the Law of Moses to their faith in Christ, then they had returned to their former paganism (4:9) – that is strong language! Here Paul says that we must forget what is behind; whatever does not enhance our walk with the Lord must be forsaken – including the Jewish traditions, which were set in place, by God, for a season (Galatians 3:19 – “until the seed should come to whom the promise was made”). When the Jewish leadership of the *ekklesia* in Jerusalem conceded that the Gentiles should not be required to keep the Jewish traditions, it would seem that Paul accepted their compromise (Acts 15:22). However, having been imprisoned largely because the Jewish professing-Christians of Jerusalem were still zealous for their traditions, Paul came out very strongly opposed to holding onto the past.

Before my wife and I left Mt. Olive Evangelical Free Church, I was given the opportunity to challenge the leadership regarding their attitude toward what is commonly referred to as syncretism (the melding of two or more belief systems). It is amazing to see Evangelicals bend over backwards to accommodate, and their willingness to compromise for the sake of including



more within their fold. For their conference in 2000, the Missions Committee of Mt. Olive decided to bring Dean Shingoose in, a native Pentecostal pastor from Calgary who was working among his own people. They

were to demonstrate “native worship in dance, song and drums,”⁵⁶⁶ and show how they had incorporated the use of sweetgrass and the eagle's feather into their Christianity. I spoke with Mt. Olive's senior pastor about what seemed to be a significant departure from the truth of the Bible, and he acknowledged that he had some reservations about it as well, but indicated that he didn't know much about Indian culture. I took that as my cue to look into what all of these elements

⁵⁶⁶ Mt. Olive Evangelical Free Church bulletin, September 24, 2000.

meant within their own culture; the more I studied, the more I was convinced that such syncretism was a significant error of judgment. In the meantime, the Chairman of the Missions Committee heard that I was unhappy with their program, and presented me with a couple of articles, which he hoped would sway me into accepting what Dean Shingoose and company were doing (actually, the articles worked the other way and further convinced me that this was a serious error). I prepared a brief paper on my findings in light of Scripture, and presented a copy to the pastor, the Chairman of the Board, and the Chairman of the Missions Committee. Shortly thereafter I was called to meet with these men, and I came, Bible in hand, prepared to expand on what I had presented. The meeting was actually quite brief; for two reasons, the pastor was now prepared to go ahead with the program as it was: 1) Dean Shingoose had been a Christian for some 20 years, and 2) he accepted the judgment of the Chairman of the Missions Committee in this matter. What was entirely missing was any Biblical support for their decision to proceed. If I had understood then what I know now, I would have followed Paul's example and called what they were doing heresy, and accused them of perverting the Gospel of Christ. The Jewish Christians wanted to hold onto their traditions, which had been ordained by God for a time, yet Paul calls that a perversion of the Gospel (Galatians 1:7); what would he call dragging pagan traditions into Christianity? We must let go of those things that will only serve to hinder our progress with the Lord, even while we reach forward to that which He has prepared for us; two actions that must work together for our good. If we are reluctant to let go of those things that we once held dear (particularly traditions held by many other Christians, even though they have no Biblical basis), we will then, at the very least, become spiritually stagnant and become prime targets for the enemy of our souls; of greater concern is that our reaching forward will be hindered by what we are holding onto. We must both let go and strain forward.

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



We have just read how Paul desires to forget and stretch forth – the two working as one to bolster his walk with the Lord; now he provides clarification as to that for which he is reaching. The Greek word translated as *press* is a present tense verb and means to make haste and to press forward;⁵⁶⁷ there is an urgency attached to this word, which builds upon the *reaching forth* from the previous verse. This is the same Greek word translated as *follow after* in verse 12, a rather anemic translation for such an intensive word. We have a reiteration of Paul's purpose to pursue the Lord; there is an expenditure of energy, but that energy must be spent in Biblically-focused activities. Activity alone is not a sign of spirituality, much less a Biblical orientation. The old adage is that idle hands are the devil's workshop; what this misses is that the devil loves to keep people busy – so busy that they have no time to think about anything eternal. There are many today who are pressing toward financial prosperity, who are striving for positions of greater influence, who must have that bigger home, that flashier car, or the latest electronic gadget – there might well be an urgency to their all-consuming drive for more of what they deem to be important, but none of it fits with God's desire for us.

Paul reveals that he is pursuing the prize of the *high calling of God in Christ Jesus*. "... God; Who hath saved us, and called *us* with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began ..." (2 Timothy 1:8-9). God's *high calling* on our lives is to holiness; we've already seen that Christ laid hold of us so that we might live in holiness before Him (verse 12). Our goal (*mark*) is to live a

⁵⁶⁷ Friberg Lexicon.

holy life; "... put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Ephesians 4:24), "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10). Paul's example is that, having cast off all of those things that might well have been accounted to him for profit, his focus for living is to walk in righteousness and true holiness before God. Paul wrote of this to the Romans, "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of **obedience unto righteousness**? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have **obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you**. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness" (Romans 6:16-18). Righteousness will be achieved through obedience to what God has given to us in His Word, which, in turn, requires that we must know the Scriptures. "Study [give diligence] to shew thyself approved [acceptable] unto God ..." (2 Timothy 2:15).⁵⁶⁸ Failure in this area is a significant contributor to Evangelicals becoming entangled in deception; ignorance of the Word of God has permitted Satan more than a toehold in the lives of many – how can we stand fast (2 Thessalonians 2:15) if we do not know on what we are to stand?

God's Word is the Truth (John 17:17). Unless we cultivate a love for the Truth, we will be susceptible to being deceived. "... they received not the love [*agape*] of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie ..." (2 Thessalonians 2:10b-11a).⁵⁶⁹ It is an act of the will that we have a love for the truth, a love that God will give us, but which we must accept (*receive*). If we have a love for His truth, then we will desire to spend time studying that Truth so that we can also obey that Truth. It is commonly reported that those who work with counterfeit money do not spend their time studying fake bills – they focus on getting to know what the genuine article looks like. In the same way, we must have such a love for God's Word that we will study it to the extent that we are able to recognize error when we see it. The great delusion of the ecumenical movement is that it feigns the love of God, even while showing contempt for His Word; if we love the Truth, we will see the fallacy of the ecumenical delusion.



Paul uses words here that come from the area of sports, specifically a race. The concept is that he will intensely pursue the mark, the goal or the finish line, so that he will gain the prize. We have been called unto holiness, which is the mark that we must continue to pursue to the end of the race. However, our calling in Christ is more than a life of holiness now, it is also that we will one day be part of His kingdom and appear in His glory. Paul reminds the Thessalonians that his exhortation to them was for a purpose: "That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory" (1 Thessalonians 2:12). Our *walk*, or how we live our lives, is to be in holiness, for we are to "put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Ephesians 4:24). Holiness of life is to characterize how we live, as we *press* toward the ultimate goal of being with Christ; this is the hope that tempers our present day struggle to live as we should. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (1 John 3:2-3). John, too, understood the necessity of relating the future hope to the present reality; because of the promised hope that we have in Christ, we must live in purity now. The Greek words translated as *purifieth* and *pure* have their root in the Greek word for *holy*.⁵⁷⁰

⁵⁶⁸ Strong's Online.

⁵⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁰ Ibid.

Jesus described the way as *narrow*, or compressed (Matthew 7:14), and He told us clearly what this meant: “I am the way, the truth, and the life ...” (John 14:6). Paul has just told us that he has laid his Jewish heritage aside (v.8) so that he might know Christ (v.10); he is forgetting those things that are past (what he has deliberately set aside so that he might pursue Christ unhindered) in order to focus on Christ (the only Way) and what He has prepared for him. Ecumenical thinking has done much to blur the clarity of Christ’s narrow-way to life – compromise and tolerance of error mark the lives of those who are caught in this snare. Then, too, the organized church has often seemed to be that way to life by assuming a greater role in the life of the Christian than it should; faithful attendance and participation in the church programs will often be sufficient to qualify one as being a good Christian. This is an inheritance from the Roman Catholic Church, which openly declares that they are the only means to eternal salvation; although they will state that salvation is only through Christ, they have made their organization to be the only dispenser of the grace that is necessary for salvation (namely through keeping their sacraments).⁵⁷¹ By contrast, Paul calls for a holy life now (free from anything that would hamper our spiritual development), with the promise of glory to come. Even as Paul turned away from his Jewish heritage to embrace Christ, so we must be prepared to forsake church traditions for a life of obedience to the Word of God⁵⁷² – forgetting what is behind and reaching forward, pressing toward the goal of our holy calling in Christ.

¹⁵ Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.



Inasmuch as we are to count all things as loss in our pursuit of Christ and His holiness, Paul now provides a summary of what he has just thoroughly expounded. This is something in which Paul includes himself – he uses the word *us*. A literal translation of the first phrase goes like this: *as many as then be mature this we should think*.⁵⁷³ The thrust is that if we are mature in our faith, then we will think like Paul in what he has just laid out. The word *minded* (*think*) bears the subjunctive mood, which means that this may or may not take place, but the indication is that it should. As we have looked at Paul’s life up to the time of this letter (to his imprisonment in Rome), we realize that he has probably learned this open-handedness with God at great personal cost. Everywhere that he went, he sought to reach his own people, the Jews; yet it was his own people who ultimately made him a prisoner of Rome. From this perspective, Paul wrote of the necessity of holding Christ alone, of the need for us to release whatever we might think to be to our advantage, and to stretch forward to that to which He has called us – namely, holiness of life. If we cling to anything but Christ alone, it will either hinder us in our walk with the Lord, or it will draw us into apostasy.

In the last part of this verse, Paul says that if anyone thinks differently (the necessity of forgetting what is behind and reaching toward what is ahead), God will reveal this to him. There is a confidence in Paul that what he has just declared is what God desires for each of us. I believe that he learned this concept through his imprisonment, probably a very difficult lesson to learn,

⁵⁷¹ <http://www.catholiceducation.org/articles/apologetics/ap0043.html>

⁵⁷² I am convinced that if you sincerely desire to walk according to the Word of God, and express what that means within the context of the traditional church, you will be shown to the door or ostracized. Most churches are governed by a constitution that is shaped by tradition more than by the Scriptures; they might well use Biblical references to support their doctrine, but they are selective in their choices and traditional in their application.

⁵⁷³ Stephanus 1550 NT.

but one that he sees as essential for the Christian life. If this is not how we are living, but we sincerely desire God's best in our lives, then Paul is certain that God will open our understanding in this matter. In other words, we all have those things that we must relinquish so that our stretching forward to holiness of life in the Spirit of God and our pressing toward the goal that we have in Christ, will be unhindered.

¹⁶ Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.



The word *nevertheless*, as it is used here, draws the previous discussion to a conclusion. Paul has very meticulously laid out his case for wholeheartedly committing to holiness of life, to which we have been called by God, and he now confidently states that *we* (both Paul and the Philippians) have been convinced of the validity of this calling. In the previous verse, he says that those who are spiritually mature will have this understanding of the Christian life, and so he carries that thought forward here.

Walk comes from the Greek word *stoicheo* (*stoy-kheh'-o*), a very specific word which is only used five times in the NT. We have come to understand that the word *walk* often refers to how we are living our life; however, here it speaks of a much more controlled and orderly walk – more like a military march. What comes, through the use of this word, is conformity to a standard; this is not a stop-to-smell-the-roses, meandering stroll through the park, but rather a disciplined, carefully guarded march under the guidance of a higher plan. That higher plan is God's desire for our unencumbered holiness – letting go and forgetting what is behind and pressing forward for the holiness of life to which we have been saved (Ephesians 4:24). Paul says that since this understanding has been attained, we must also see to it that we walk accordingly – it is not enough to understand this truth; it must find continual expression in our daily living (*walk* is in the present tense), and we must continually think this way as well (*mind* is also present tense).⁵⁷⁴

Once again, we are faced with the reality that mental assent and heart commitment are two very different things. There are many Evangelicals who openly profess to be Christians, yet their lives do not reflect a commitment to the holiness of God and an attitude of forgetfulness to those things that might seem to be to their advantage. Jesus said, "... whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he [absolutely] cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:33).⁵⁷⁵ Evangelical Christianity carries no such price tag today, yet it is so clear from Jesus' teachings that we are to count the cost of following Him, lest we begin and fall away (Matthew 13:20-22). Apostasy is the sin from which there is no recovery (the unpardonable sin, if you will). "For if after they [those who have been saved] have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge [a precise and correct knowledge] of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known [to know thoroughly and accurately] the way of righteousness, than, after they have known *it*, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them" (2 Peter 2:20-21).⁵⁷⁶ To truly know the Lord and then to turn away from Him, is worse than never having known Him at all – how can this be? This is definitely not the position of modern Evangelicals! "For if we sin wilfully [willingly, of one's own accord – as opposed to stumbling or being deceived] after that we have received the knowledge [precise and correct knowledge] of the truth, there remaineth [absolutely]

⁵⁷⁴ Strong's Online.

⁵⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁶ Ibid.

no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot [to treat with rudeness and insult; to spurn] the Son of God, and hath counted [considered] the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified [made holy], an unholy thing, and hath done despite [insult] unto the Spirit of grace?" (Hebrews 10:26-29).⁵⁷⁷ What is very clear is that there is only one Sacrifice for sins, and if, after we have placed our faith in the sacrificed Lamb of God, we then turn away from Him, we have then lost our only hope for life, and His one-time sacrifice is no longer available to us. The sin of apostasy cannot be undone.

However, we must ensure that we define apostasy carefully and consistently; one definition is: "a total desertion of or departure from one's religion"⁵⁷⁸ John MacArthur, considered to be a conservative Evangelical, has defined it as "abandonment, a separation, a defection – the abdication of truth altogether," and he relates the term to the Greek word for divorce (*apoluo*).⁵⁷⁹ However, he no sooner makes this acceptable explanation of the reality of apostasy than he goes on to ask this question: "Can a genuine Christian fall away from the faith and become an apostate?"⁵⁸⁰ His response is that the Scriptures are quite clear that the answer to this question is "No." He contends that there are many people who are apostate, "who profess faith in Christ and identify themselves as disciples but who never genuinely embrace the truth"⁵⁸¹ – which really means that they were never born again. A review of the definitions of apostasy will reveal MacArthur's error – "a total desertion of or departure from one's religion," "abandonment, a

separation, a defection" (even his own definition runs contrary to his following comments). If I, as a Canadian citizen, profess with great sincerity that I am an American, that does not make it true; therefore, I would not expect anyone to consider me to be a run-away American because I live in Canada. I am not an American, I have never been an American, and so it would make no sense to call me an "apostate" American. Likewise, someone who is spiritually lost but vehemently professes to be a Christian, is, very simply, not what he professes – even if he has been deluded into thinking that he is a Christian and has convinced others as well. If such a person turns away from following Christianity (to whatever extent that he participated in Christian things since he never held faith in Christ), he has then not apostatized but simply revealed his true allegiance. Apostasy, by definition, demands a departure from the faith, which is why I believe that most of those who are called apostate today are nothing more than pagans – they might have professed Christianity but they have never held faith in Christ.

In an effort to support his flawed position, MacArthur refers to two passages of Scripture. The first is 1 John 2:19 – "They went out from us, but they were not [absolute] of [from] us; for if they had been of [from] us, they would *no doubt* [might – a small Greek word is included in the text, which introduces the element of uncertainty] have continued with us: but *they went out*, that they

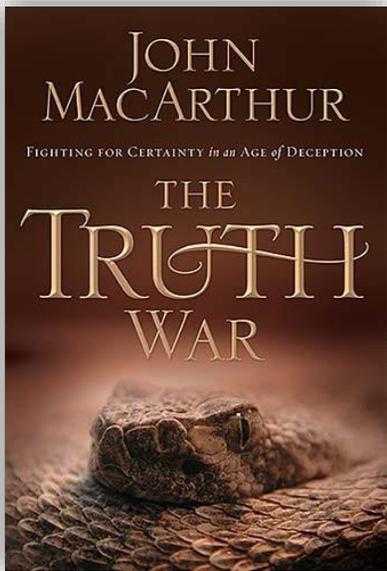
⁵⁷⁷ Strong's Online.

⁵⁷⁸ Dictionary.com, "apostasy."

⁵⁷⁹ John MacArthur, The Truth War, p. 43.

⁵⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁸¹ Ibid.



might be made manifest that they were not [absolute] all of [from] us.”⁵⁸² By looking at this verse carefully, we see that it does not support MacArthur’s position at all. From the context, we learn that *they* refers to those whom the Apostle John has just called *antichrists* (v. 18). Externally, they might have appeared to be part of our fellowship (they were religious), but in truth they were never a part of God’s family – in other words, they are not apostate, but they are pagan, for they have never been born again. MacArthur might like to call them apostate, but that does not even fit with his own definition of the term. The second passage that he uses is John 10:28-29 – “And I give [am giving (present tense)] unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish [*perish* is in the subjunctive mood and along with the Greek negatives *ou* and *me* makes this an emphatically strong negative, but we must note the context which clearly identifies those whom Jesus calls *My sheep* who know Him and follow Him], neither shall any *man* pluck [to snatch with force] them out of my hand. My Father, which gave *them* me, is greater than all; and no *man* is able to pluck *them* out of my Father’s hand”.⁵⁸³ As much as it lies within the grace of God, He has done everything to ensure that we (those who have placed their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and are living faithfully with Him) will abide in Him forever – what He has not removed is our will to choose. “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from [deserting, falling away from] the living God” (Hebrews 3:12); this is a word of warning addressed to *brethren*, those who just earlier were called *holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling* (v. 1). This sounds very much like a warning against apostasy; it is the *brethren* who are doing the departing. Apostasy is a very real danger, but you can only fall away from that of which you have been a part. Paul’s exhortation to the Philippians is that they should continually walk in an orderly manner, according to his instruction to forsake the old and reach out for the new. The focus of such a life will be a restraint against apostasy.

¹⁷ Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.



The word *followers* comes from a Greek word that means to imitate.⁵⁸⁴ The definition of a follower has undergone some changes over the past 400 years (since the translation of the KJV); Webster’s 1828 edition shows the thought of imitator as the second definition, whereas a modern dictionary has it as the fourth.⁵⁸⁵ Today we think of a follower as someone who is supportive of a person or cause, and so we might come away with the idea that Paul was seeking to amass a following. However, he wrote against this to the Corinthians, for they were bringing division by claiming to hold allegiance to Paul, or to Apollos or to Cephas or to Christ (1 Corinthians 1:12). The word received by the Corinthians was, “Therefore let no man glory in men” (1 Corinthians 3:21a). There is a natural tendency to hold those in high regard with whom we can identify; today we have the numerous gurus of India with the crowds of people who hang on their every word, Billy Graham has amassed a tremendous number of loyal supporters, and Rick Warren is busily working to increase his popularity, with the hope of accomplishing his world-wide goals. These men all have followings – people who are enamored with who they are, the message that they bring, and/or the work to which they aspire. This is very different from imitating someone, which is what Paul is advocating. You can follow someone (you might highly acclaim their

⁵⁸² Friberg Lexicon

⁵⁸³ Strong’s Online.

⁵⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁵ The Bishop’s Bible shows this as *followers*, so the KJV translators may have just followed this lead (*ESword*).

message and what they are doing) without it ever making a difference in your own life. Paul is saying, “Think how I am thinking” (the last phrase of the previous verse), and through this will come a new focus for living.

The context for Paul’s comment is the acceptance of the dual concept of leaving behind and reaching forward. His living example was to relinquish his Jewish heritage and forget it, and to reach forward to holiness of living by being found in Christ (3:9,13). He says that if we are spiritually mature, then we will have his mindset (*forgetting* and *reaching*), and be prepared to circumspectly live accordingly (v. 15-16). Through the painful trials of life, Paul had learned the necessity of letting go of everything that might hinder him in his walk with Christ (no matter how beneficial it might appear to be); his sole purpose in life was to be all that he could be in Christ – his calling was to holiness (2 Timothy 1:9), and that was his consuming desire. It is this to which he enjoins the Philippians (and us) to imitate him; the Greek word used means *fellow imitator* – in other words, he is calling them to join with others who were already following the principle on which he has just expounded.⁵⁸⁶ Paul has no desire for a following, but a tremendous longing that we learn to have the life-focus that he had – Christ!

Paul goes on to say that they are to notice carefully (*mark*) those who live (*walk*) according to the principles established (*so*), even as they have Paul and Timothy as a pattern (*ensample*). The Greek word for *walk*, as used here, is not the same as the one used in verse 16 – this word (*peripateo*) speaks of a general manner of living.⁵⁸⁷ *Ensample* comes from the Greek word *tupos*, and means the mark of a stroke or blow, a print; the word most often translated as *example* is *hupodeigma* (*hoop-od’-igie-mah*), which means a representation, figure, or copy.⁵⁸⁸ The former would be used to describe the mark left by the application of a seal in sealing wax; the impression left is exactly that of the seal. The latter word is a more general term and does not carry the same precision as the former. The word that Paul uses here (*tupos*) finds support in his use of the word *stoicheo*, translated as *walk*, in verse 16. What must not be overlooked is that he is strongly emphasizing the necessity of striving for holiness of life in the Lord, even while forgetting what we have left behind in order to enter this orderly walk with Christ. Jesus said, “... strait [narrow] is the gate, and narrow [compressed] is the way, which leadeth unto life ...” (Matthew 7:14).⁵⁸⁹ It should be evident that the restricted way to life in Christ demands an orderly walk (*stoicheo*); it is the broad way, which leads to destruction, that permits a more casual approach to life. However, the Evangelical of today does not exhibit a restrained walk with the Lord, and denounces anyone who endeavors to live in such a way as being legalistic. Yet if we carefully ponder the Biblical call to separation, then we will recognize that such a calling fits well with the narrow gate and the compressed way that we, as those who are in Christ, must carefully walk.

Evangelicals today not only like to emphasize God’s love, but will speak glowingly of His grace – and, in truth, it is only through God’s grace that we can be assured of our salvation in Christ. “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9). However, when you observe the careless living of the average Evangelical, you can only wonder, “Does God’s grace extend that far?” It would seem that the Spirit of God anticipated such a question, for Paul wrote: “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?” (Romans 6:1-2). God’s grace will cover any sin that we might

⁵⁸⁶ Friberg Lexicon.

⁵⁸⁷ Strong’s Online.

⁵⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁹ Ibid.

have committed prior to conversion (while we are still alive unto sin), but once we have placed our faith in the salvation provided through Christ, we are now dead to sin, and our focus must shift to living according to the leading of the Spirit of God (namely, obedience to God's commands, including the foundational Ten Commandments, which have now been written upon our hearts – Hebrews 8:10). For example, ecumenism, which has thoroughly permeated Evangelicalism, is absolutely contrary to God's Word, and so we are to be dead to this sin – we are to have no part in it. What we need to realize is that God's grace will not stretch to cover willful sin: "For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge [a precise and correct knowledge] of the truth, there remaineth [is left] no [this is an absolute] more sacrifice for sins ..." (Hebrews 10:26).⁵⁹⁰ In Christ, we are dead to sin; therefore, we can no longer live a life of continual sin (1 John 3:8). We will still commit sinful acts, but it will be through failure, and not a willful determination; "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). If we recognize the sin of ecumenism, yet remain unwilling to separate from it, then we are in jeopardy of falling from the grace of God – of becoming apostate! God's grace cannot be stretched to cover willful disobedience – it never has. "But the soul that doeth *ought* presumptuously [with a high hand, in rebellion against God], *whether he be* born in the land, or a stranger, the same reproacheth [blasphemes] the LORD; and that soul shall be cut off [killed] from among his people" (Numbers 15:30).⁵⁹¹ To know what the Lord desires, or has commanded, and to refuse to be obedient, is blasphemy against the Lord.



Paul's call is for the Philippians (and us) to think as he thinks – to set aside what might appear to be to our advantage, and strive to live in a manner that is in keeping with our holy calling in Christ. There is a precision demanded by such a life; it is a disciplined walk (as we saw in v. 16) and so we are to imitate the pattern of thinking that Paul has so carefully laid out. The Spirit of God has been given to us in order to guide us into all truth (John 16:13), which is a very narrowly defined path for living. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6); He is that restricted pathway to God. As the eternal Logos, Jesus stated unequivocally, "If ye love me, keep [attend carefully to] my commandments" (John 14:15), and "If ye keep [same Greek word] my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love" (John 15:10).⁵⁹² Once more, we come back to the necessity of obedience to God's Word; if we refuse to live in accordance with God's requirements for us, we are not permitting His Spirit to be our Guide, and we stand in peril of blaspheming the name of the Lord and falling from His grace. The Psalmist declared, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Psalm 119:105); but we also read, "For the commandment *is* a lamp; and the law *is* light; and reproofs of instruction *are* the way of life" (Proverbs 6:23). Jesus said, "He that is not with me is against me ..."; there is no buffer zone between obedience to the Lord and disobedience, no fence to straddle between the world and Christ. If we would walk in the light of the Word of God, then we must do what it says – we must let go of all that might appear to be good, and strive single-mindedly for the higher calling of holiness in Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:14), and, thereby, join the company of imitators of Paul.

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:

⁵⁹⁰ Strong's Online.

⁵⁹¹ Keil & Delitzsch Commentary, *ESword*; Strong's Online.

⁵⁹² Strong's Online.



Paul now draws a contrast to what he has so carefully expounded and set as the example for us to imitate. He has just called on the Philippians (and us) to carefully note those who are living after the pattern that he has just shown; the connotation is that they will not be common, or else they would not be noteworthy. He speaks now of *many* who will be living in a different manner (*walk*), something that he has mentioned to the Philippians before – he is referring to those who are the enemies of the Gospel.

You will recall that, when Paul and Silas first came to Philippi, there was a young girl who followed them proclaiming: “These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation” (Acts 16:17). Although the words that she spoke were true, we are told that she had the spirit of divination (the Greek word is *puthon* – a serpent or dragon in Greek mythology⁵⁹³); i.e., she had an evil spirit living within her, which was used to bring wealth to her masters. When Paul cast the demon out of her, those for whom she worked lost their “golden goose.” Likewise, it is noteworthy that there were also demons whom Jesus faced who recognized Him for Who He was and openly proclaimed that truth (Matthew 8:29; Mark 1:24). However, despite declaring the truth concerning Who Jesus is, they remained demons bent on doing the bidding of Satan; they remained the enemies of Christ.



However, Paul is not speaking here of demons or of the overtly demon-possessed; rather, he is referring to those who walk through life around us, and some of whom might well wave the banner of Christianity. The Greek word translated as *weeping* speaks of any loud expression of grief,⁵⁹⁴ as opposed to crying silently. It would only be fitting for Paul to lament loudly over those who were flying the banner of Christ, yet not in a manner glorifying to Him. Earlier, Paul referred to those who were preaching Christ out of an effort to make life more difficult for him (1:15-16); although they preached Christ, it is evident that this did not come from a heart that was in tune with the Gospel of God – the message was true, but the motives were wrong. Even though they proclaimed the Gospel message, Paul undoubtedly recognized the spirit of antichrist in them, which would eventually overtake any truth that they presented. It is important that we do not take everything at face value. John challenges us to “believe not [don’t be persuaded by] every spirit [not an angel or demon, but the essence of man], but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1). This would suggest that the *false prophets* will masquerade as godly people, but, in their hearts, they will either deny God or His Word (the result is the same); therefore, we must use Biblical discernment in order to recognize the error. It is such as these who will one day face Christ and say, “Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?” (Matthew 7:22), and the Lord will respond, “I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matthew 7:23). They might proclaim to be followers of Christ, but they have never known Him.

Ecumenism is a movement whose focus is unity, not merely tolerance, and finds its expression through different denominations working together as one. For example, the Three Hills Ministerial Association (which includes Evangelical, Charismatic, Anglican, United, and Catholic Churches) “encourages cooperation and coordination of church activities in the area”;⁵⁹⁵ its contacts are listed as John Schaufele (Victory Church) and Norm Koop (Evangelical Free Church). Such an association demands a casual approach to Biblical doctrine and a willingness to ignore the truths

⁵⁹³ Vine’s “divination.”

⁵⁹⁴ Vine’s “weeping.”

⁵⁹⁵ Kneehill Services Directory 2012, p. 18.

of Scripture for the sake of unity. Although the profession of many who are involved in such programs may sound Biblical, their actions will reveal to those who are discerning that the Word of God is not their highest priority. Ecumenism, by its very nature, is a violation of God's call for us to separate from evil (2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1) and from error (Romans 16:17-18). Who is ecumenical? Is it only the leadership? "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary [the Greek word is *para* and it means alongside of – their doctrine is not sharply contradictory to Scripture, it is only somewhat different] to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them" (Romans 16:17).⁵⁹⁶ Everyone who attends and/or supports a group represented by the ministerial association is ecumenical, otherwise they would separate from the error, as God requires; whether they are guilty through ignorance, apathy or enthusiasm, it matters little – we are to be discerning at all times, and so there is no excuse for anyone. If we desire to live Biblically, then we must **never** seek spiritual blessing from anyone who is guilty of ecumenical involvement, whether through active participation or tolerance.

¹⁹ Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.)



Paul now goes on to identify four things that will attach themselves to these who, although they might appear to be Christians, are, in reality, the enemies of Christ.

The first is that their *end* is *destruction* (*apoleia* [*ap-o'-li-a*]); the final state of this person will be utter ruin, to which Vine adds this thought: "The idea is not extinction but ruin, loss, not of being, but of well-being."⁵⁹⁷ Peter used this same Greek word to describe those for whom we must be on the alert: "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable [*apoleia*] heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift [quick] destruction [*apoleia*]" (2 Peter 2:1).⁵⁹⁸ We might wonder about this last phrase, *swift destruction*. As we look about us today, we see Billy Graham, Robert Schuller and Rick Warren (among countless others of like mind) who continue to wield great influence within the Evangelical community, yet each has propagated heresy (expounded *damnable heresies*) for many years – the question is: where is their *swift destruction*? If these men at one time held a proper understanding of the truth of God, their *swift destruction* is that they no longer have any hope: "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no [absolute form] more sacrifice for sins, But a certain [*only* – a Greek word used to heighten and emphasize⁵⁹⁹] fearful [terrible] looking for [expectation] of judgment [condemnation] and fiery indignation ..." (Hebrews 10:26-27).⁶⁰⁰ For those who have been saved, and then turn away from the Lord and His Word (become apostate), their future is immediately secured – they are marked for destruction! Their judgment is immediate, even if it will not be carried out for some time; they may well continue to prosper in this life, but their eternal destiny has been irrevocably sealed. All men, without the Lord, are marked for destruction; however, those who have not known the way of truth may still have the opportunity to repent, believe and find salvation in Christ – there is still hope for them. Of those who might give the

⁵⁹⁶ Strong's Online.

⁵⁹⁷ Vine's "destruction."

⁵⁹⁸ Strong's Online.

⁵⁹⁹ Friberg Lexicon.

⁶⁰⁰ Strong's Online.

appearance of being Christians but who are really the enemies of Christ, Paul says that their end is destruction.

We then have the identification of the god of these enemies of Christ: “whose God *is their belly*.” As these have turned away from the Lord, perhaps one of the most obvious things would be that the Lord is no longer their God: you cannot depart from the God of the Bible (whether through disavowing Him entirely, or simply by giving no heed to His Word) and still hold Him as your God. This is not to say that you might not still profess Him to be your God, which is very evident in the lives of men like Billy Graham, Robert Schuller, Rick Warren, et.al. – they all readily speak of having a relationship with God, yet their lives and teachings show their disdain for His Word. The Greek word translated as *belly* is used equally of the stomach and of the womb, but metaphorically (as used here) it speaks of the desires or appetites of an individual.⁶⁰¹ To those who corrupted God’s glory (Romans 1:23), twisted His truth (Romans 1:25), and did not consider it worthwhile to hold God in true knowledge⁶⁰² (Romans 1:28), we read that God “gave them up” to their own devices (Romans 1:24, 26, 28). Rejection by God is a serious matter, for He will relinquish you to that on which you have set your mind. Judah felt the sting of God’s rejection (Jeremiah 11:6-11), and it has been recorded for our learning. This is significant in light of what is happening within Evangelicalism today. Although most Evangelicals might not yet accept an idol as being a depiction of the god whom they serve, they have excelled at skewing the truth of God’s Word to their own advantage. The whole departure into ecumenism comes only through an abandonment of the truth of the Scriptures; as they skew the message of the Word of God, they distort the image of the Lord Jesus Christ, for He IS the Word of God (Revelation 19:13). Here we have the answer as to why those who study the Word of God for a living can still hold to aberrant teachings; a classic example is Billy Graham who has spent his life preaching from the Bible, yet believes that some will be in heaven even though they have never heard of Jesus Christ (contrary to John 14:6 and Acts 4:12). The fact of the matter is that, because he refuses to obey the commands of God, God has given him over to his own theological desires, and the truth is hidden from him; the passions of such men have become their god, and so spiritual blindness has become their lot: “seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive” (Matthew 13:14). To the Pharisees and the Evangelicals Jesus says, “If ye were blind, ye should have no sin [you would see your need and repent]: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth” (John 9:41); there is no salvation in self-righteousness.

The *glory* of these enemies of the cross is *in their shame*. In Romans one, Paul spoke of those who knew God but departed to do their own thing (1:21-22), and so God gave them up to follow their corrupt hearts and do those things which *ought not to be done* (the meaning of the word *convenient* in Romans 1:28).⁶⁰³ Of these we read, “Who knowing the judgment [or righteousness] of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in [to applaud] them that do them” (Romans 1:32)⁶⁰⁴; they know that God is righteous and just, and to depart from His commandments is death, yet they continue to do those things that are contrary to God’s commands, and rejoice in those who join them. The most prolific example of this has to be ecumenism. Evangelicals might well recognize that disobedience to God’s commands is death, yet, in their spiritual blindness, they continue to embrace the workers of iniquity, taking great pride and joy in their broad fellowship, and showing contempt for anyone

⁶⁰¹ Friberg Lexicon.

⁶⁰² Ibid.

⁶⁰³ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁴ Strong’s Online.

who would seek to separate from such error. What should be a matter of disgrace for them has become that which brings them cause for much rejoicing; they *glory in their shame*.

The fourth thing, which attaches itself to these enemies of the cross, is that they *mind earthly things*. In other words, they are preoccupied with the here and now; their focus is earthly, rather than heavenly. Jesus said, "... whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple." (Luke 14:26); what Jesus says that we must forsake, these enemies of the cross embrace. We are to be *looking* unto Jesus (Hebrews 12:2); the Greek word translated as *looking* means to give "attention to one thing to the exclusion of all else."⁶⁰⁵ Jesus is to be our focus; we are to strive toward the holy calling that we have in Him, relinquishing everything that might hinder us in this pursuit. Those who are described here, no matter how spiritual their speech might be, will not have this holy calling in view. Rick Warren is in pursuit of peace on earth, and he will join with anyone, whether he is Catholic, Muslim, or Buddhist, in order to accomplish this earthly task. Such men seek to hasten Christ's return by establishing His kingdom on earth; instead, they are hastening Christ's return by spreading heresy far and wide through their careless departure from God's truth. Instead of building His kingdom, they are sowing the seeds of apostasy and spiritual ruin.

The enemies of the cross of Christ face confirmed destruction, they are overcome with their self-directed passions, they rejoice in that which is disgraceful, and they are obsessed with this life. This stands in stark contrast to what Paul has just outlined for the Philippians: relinquish all the seeming benefits of life and single-mindedly seek to be found in Christ, striving to reach unto the holy calling that we have in Him.

²⁰ For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:



As we have studied Scripture, we have come to expect that the word *conversation* speaks of our manner of living. In most cases, we would be correct; however, the Greek word used here is unique in the NT and refers to the place of our citizenship, or our homeland.⁶⁰⁶ Paul is asking the Philippians (and us) to imitate him by letting go of what is past (all of our earthly benefits) and straining forward to what awaits us in Christ Jesus, because our home is in heaven (this is the goal that we have as we press forward in Christ – 3:14). Heaven is the dwelling place of God; the model prayer that Jesus gave begins, "Our Father which art in heaven ..." (Matthew 6:9). If we are in Christ, then we are seen as citizens of heaven, ready to abide in the presence of God. When the disciples returned from one of their mission trips for the Lord, they rejoiced that they had experienced power over evil spirits, but Jesus said, "... rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven" (Luke 10:20). As we come to abide in Christ, our names are entered into the book of citizenship in heaven. However, we must not become lax in knowing what Christ has done for us, for just as certainly as we read of our names being written in heaven, we also read of names being blotted out of the book. When Moses pled with God on behalf of sinful Israel, he begged for God to forgive the people and said that if He would not forgive them, then he desired to have his name removed from God's book. However, God's response was, "Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot [to wipe] out of my book" (Exodus 32:33).⁶⁰⁷ To the messenger of the *ekklesia* at Sardis, Jesus said, "He that overcometh [to conquer – present tense], the same

⁶⁰⁵ Friberg Lexicon.

⁶⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁷ Strong's Online.

shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out [to obliterate, erase] his name out of the book of life ..." (Revelation 3:5).⁶⁰⁸ We are to rejoice that our names are written in heaven, but we must also "Take heed ... lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God" (Hebrews 3:12).

To the twelve, Jesus said that He was going away to prepare a place for them in His Father's house, and that He would return to take them there (John 14:1-3). Peter wrote of this, "Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible [cannot be destroyed], and undefiled [without stain, unpolluted], and that fadeth not away [will not waste away], reserved [to keep, to attend to carefully - *tereo* (*tay-reh'-o*); perfect tense] in heaven for you, Who are kept [guarded] by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Peter 1:3-5).⁶⁰⁹ If we would see this marvelous inheritance that God has prepared for us, then we must "keep (*tereo* – attend to carefully; present tense) his [God's] commandments (1 John 2:3).⁶¹⁰ Notice that we are to continually (*tereo* – *keep*, present tense) give the same attention to our obedience of God's commandments as He has given (*tereo* – *reserved*, perfect tense) to our inheritance with Him. We are called to persevere (Hebrews 3:14); it is not sufficient to begin well – we must also complete that which we have begun with Christ.

The Lord was very explicit with Ezekiel concerning this: "But when the righteous turneth away [apostatizes] from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, *and* doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked *man* doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned [remembered]: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die" (Ezekiel 18:24).⁶¹¹ Evangelicals might well be unwilling to hear the "thus saith the Lord" of God's Word, but it is there nonetheless. Ezekiel bore a message from the Lord for Israel, yet here are the Lord's words to him: "... I do send thee unto them; and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD. And they, whether they will hear [obey], or whether they will forbear [to leave undone], (for they *are* a rebellious house,) yet shall know that there hath been a prophet among them" (Ezekiel 2:4b-5).⁶¹² Nothing has changed: Israel ignored God's message through the prophet, and Evangelicals ignore God's message to us, the Bible; the results in both cases are the same – God's displeasure. When God admonishes us to persevere in our obedience of His commandments, as given in His Word, we would do well to study the Scriptures so that we know what He desires of us. Our citizenship in heaven is not retained through praying a prayer once, but through donning the new man who is created in righteousness and true holiness (Ephesians 4:24), through the careful protection of our Shepherd from any outside attack (John 10:27-28), through the intercession of the Lord and the Spirit to God the Father on our behalf (Romans 8:26,34), and through a life lived in obedience to God (1 John 2:3-5). God has created us in Christ Jesus to live in a certain manner (Ephesians 2:10), which is in keeping with our heavenly citizenship.

When Jesus ascended to the Father, the angels declared, "... this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11b). Here, Paul says that we eagerly await (*look for*) the coming of the Lord Jesus from heaven.⁶¹³ The return of the Lord is seen as the culmination of our salvation. "For the Lord himself

⁶⁰⁸ Strong's Online.

⁶⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁶¹⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹¹ Ibid.

⁶¹² Ibid.

⁶¹³ Friberg Lexicon.

shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive [living] *and* remain [surviving] shall be caught up [to seize] together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).⁶¹⁴ Consider this passage for a moment. Unlike what is typically depicted within Evangelicalism, the coming of the Lord will not be a silent event where people simply vanish. There will be a *shout*, or a command, from heaven, the *voice* of the chief angel will be heard, and the *trump*, or trumpet, of God will be sounded – that is not silence!⁶¹⁵ To the Corinthians Paul wrote, “In a moment [something too small to be cut, hence the smallest measure of time], in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible [not subject to decay], and we shall be changed [transformed]” (1 Corinthians 15:52).⁶¹⁶ The Lord’s coming will not be quiet; it is our transformation that will take place in an indivisible amount of time, for everyone on earth will know what is taking place, and they will mourn (Matthew 24:30; Revelation 1:7). This is the bodily resurrection of those who are in Christ; we will be *raised incorruptible*, no longer subject to aging and death. This can only refer to our bodies, for our souls are not subject to the ravages of this life. To the repentant thief on the cross Jesus said, “To day shalt thou be with me in paradise” (Luke 23:43). Both Jesus and the thief died that day; Jesus’ body was laid in the tomb, and the thief would likewise have been buried. Along with the bodily resurrection of those who are *in Christ*, will come an eternity with Him – “so shall we ever be with the Lord.” Now we are looking for the coming of our Savior in the clouds of the air; He will be coming from the place where our citizenship is held.

²¹ Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.



Jesus will come and transform (*change*) our body of humiliation (*vile*); the word *vile* has a much more deplorable meaning today than 400 years ago.

When God created the animals of the earth on the sixth day, we read that He “made the beast of the earth” (Genesis 1:25); when He contemplated making man, He said, “Let us make man in our image ...” (Genesis 1:26). The two words *made* and *make* are different forms of the same word in Hebrew, and so there is a similarity between how the animals were created and how God created man. However, there is also a difference, and God provides us with a further explanation of how He created man. “And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul” (Genesis 2:7); in creating man, God formed him and breathed life into him. With all of the other living creatures, God simply spoke, and they were formed and had life; man was unique – the creation of both Adam and Eve came through the personal touch of the Creator. “So God created man in his *own* image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them” (Genesis 1:27). Mankind bears the image of God, even in our sinful state (James 3:9).

“And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly [through and through]; and *I pray God* your whole [sound in every part] spirit (*pneuma*) and soul (*psuche*) and body (*soma*) be preserved

⁶¹⁴ Strong’s Online.

⁶¹⁵ Ibid.

⁶¹⁶ Friberg Lexicon.

[singular] blameless unto [in] the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thessalonians 5:23).⁶¹⁷ What is obvious from this verse is that there are at least three parts to man – spirit, soul and body (*pneuma, psuche, soma*); however, that’s where such simplicity ends. The Greek words translated as *spirit* and *soul* include both the concept of breath and the inner working of the mind of man (for both of the Greek and Hebrew languages), thus making it difficult for us to differentiate between the two. The word *heart* is also used to refer to the inner workings of man, although typically leaning more to the seat of the will than to the emotions and passions. How these all function together is a mystery known only to God (Hebrews 4:12). However, we must not overlook the fact that our body is included in the listing of what will be completely sound, and what will be carefully attended to (*preserved*) when we are with the Lord Jesus. Jesus told His disciples, “And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matthew 10:28). This clarifies that the body and the soul are separate; the body can be killed, the soul cannot. It also shows that the body and soul can be destroyed (not killed) together in hell; this is not annihilation, but a ruin, which leaves the soul and body identifiable despite being destroyed.⁶¹⁸ What becomes evident is that our bodies are not just for this life, but, if we die, they will be resurrected – for the righteous, when Jesus returns; for the unrighteous, to stand before God to be judged according to their works (Revelation 20:12-15).

Paul refers to a transformation of our body of humiliation. When God created Adam and Eve, they were pronounced good (Genesis 1:31), but sin entered the world and death by sin (Romans 5:12). “For the creature [or creation] was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected *the same* in hope, Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only *they*, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, *to wit*, the redemption of our body” (Romans 8:20-23). The consequences of sin fell upon all of creation; although man immediately died spiritually, he, along with all of the rest of creation, began to feel the ravages of aging, sickness and death (the physical consequences of sin). Paul speaks here of the redemption, or deliverance, of our body from this influence – that day when “this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality” (1 Corinthians 15:53). That is the day when Jesus will transform (*change*) our humbled (*vile*) body into a glorious one, and we shall be like Him for we will see Him as He is (1 John 3:2).

This marvelous transformation is possible based on Jesus being powerful to bring all things under His control. When Jesus met with His disciples just prior to His ascension, He stated, “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth” (Matthew 28:18); God the Father gave Jesus Christ complete authority over everything in heaven and on earth. This is confirmation that the power of Satan has been broken by the Lord Jesus Christ, and His victory forms the basis for His command to teach everyone to do what God has commanded (Matthew 28:20). However, in the wisdom of God, Satan is permitted to tempt and to test those who profess to follow Christ so that they might be strengthened and come forth as gold (Job 23:10). “Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised [trained or exercise self-control] thereby” (Hebrews 12:11).⁶¹⁹ To those who will be trained by God’s discipline, His righteousness will be our reward; His discipline is involved with putting on the new man, who is created in “righteousness and true holiness” (Ephesians 4:24). Paul testified “... there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger [an

⁶¹⁷ Vine’s “wholly,” “entire,” “preserve”; Strong’s Online.

⁶¹⁸ Vine’s “destroy”; Robertson’s Word Pictures, Matthew 10:28.

⁶¹⁹ Friberg Lexicon.

angel] of Satan to buffet [afflict or cause difficulty] me, lest I should be exalted above measure” (2 Corinthians 12:7).⁶²⁰ If we step back and look at this from a broader perspective than our own situation in the midst of a trial, we can see that God is using Satan to strengthen and to mold us; however, we must be willing to be trained through this discipline. If we fight against God’s working in us, then we are in rebellion against what He desires to accomplish in us; Paul prayed three times to have the angel of Satan removed from his life, yet submitted to the discipline of the Lord, rather than insisting upon freedom from this trial. We must recognize that our chastening is controlled by God Who knows our frame (Psalm 103:14); His desire is for our sanctification, that we might live in holiness before Him today, and that we might be ready to meet the Lord Jesus Christ when He returns to transform us into His image.

⁶²⁰ Friberg Lexicon.

Chapter 4

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



Therefore, based upon what Paul has just set forth – namely, having a singular focus on being found in Christ and to know Him, setting those things aside that would hinder such a life, and reaching forth unto that which God has prepared for us in Christ – stand fast, or persevere, in the Lord. Here, again, we must remind ourselves that it is possible not to persevere in the Lord; it is possible to fall away from Him – these frequent reminders to stand fast are not without purpose. The verb used here, *stand fast*, is in the present tense (it is to be a continual action), active voice (we are to carry out this action) and imperative mood (it is a command that we are to obey).⁶²¹ The context for this charge leaves little doubt that we are to remain steadfast in Paul's instructions in the previous chapter; he called on the *brethren* to imitate him (3:17), and now he strengthens this by underscoring their need to be firm in their faith.

Here, as well, is the Greek word *agapetos*, translated as *dearly beloved*, which is formed from *agape*, love as an act of the will; we saw this earlier in 2:12, where it appears simply as *beloved*. Very evidently, the Philippian believers were special to Paul; it is clear that he has fond memories of his time with them (1:3). He longs to be with them again and considers them to be a personal source of joy and an honor to him. Considering Paul's focus on Christ and knowing Him, this can only mean that the Philippian Christians were growing in their understanding of the message that Paul had delivered to them.

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



Earlier, Paul desired that the Philippians would be *likeminded* (2:2); the same Greek words are used here (different mood) in his exhortation (*beseech*) to these two women to *think the same* in the Lord.⁶²² Indeed, this might well be an encouragement to be united, but this unity is qualified in that it is to be *in the Lord*. There is no tinge of ecumenical thinking here, and absolutely no support for compromise. As the Lord increasingly becomes the focus, so unity will be a reality; the true unity of believers can only be found in the Lord. We know nothing of these two women, but it seems that there was some disparity in their view of things.

³ And I intreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and *with* other my fellowlabourers, whose names *are* in the book of life.

⁶²¹ Strong's Online.

⁶²² Ibid.



Paul now turns his attention to a *true yokefellow*. There is no indication as to whom this might be; the context would signify that this person is simply an unnamed, genuine fellow-worker with Paul.⁶²³ He asks or begs this person to come to the aid of the women who struggled in the work of the Gospel with him. Although there is some conjecture that Paul is referring to the two women mentioned in the previous verse, there is no substantial evidence to limit his plea in this way. If we consider the beginning of the *ekklesia* in Phillipi, we will note that it began among women who met by the river to pray (Acts 16:13). From this we also learn that Lydia was an early convert and prevailed upon Paul and Silas to make her home their place of residence (Acts 16:14-15). In accordance with the custom of the day, it would only follow that they would have met in her home for teaching. However, Paul then goes on to show that these women also labored with Clement and all of those who worked with him; their commitment was to God and the Gospel message, and not to Paul.

Within the context of modern Evangelicalism, there might be cause for pause at this juncture to show that there were women in ministry with Paul. However, one thing that we can rest assured of is that these women would not have ministered in contradiction to Paul's own teachings.



Beth Moore

Therefore, these women would have labored with Paul in full compliance with: "... I suffer not [absolutely do not permit] a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority [to govern or have dominion] over the [a] man, but to be in silence [quietness]" (1 Timothy 2:12).⁶²⁴ The basis for this teaching goes back to the Garden of Eden where Eve was deceived by Satan – not to say that the man cannot be deceived, for there is ample evidence of that today. However, two things come to the fore here: 1) the differing roles for the man and the woman, not only in marriage but also within the *ekklesia* (Ephesians 5:23; 1 Timothy 3:1-2), and 2) although less significant, there is some indication that the woman might be more prone to being deceived (1 Timothy 2:14).

Consider the very popular woman teacher, Beth Moore, ranked by *Today's Christian Woman* as one of the top three most influential women teachers today.⁶²⁵ According to her website, the purpose of her Living Proof Ministries is to invest in people "through sound Biblical teaching and uplifting praise and worship."⁶²⁶ On the same site, she also says, "We actively

support the unity of all believers eclipsing all denominational, economic, or ethnic diversities."⁶²⁷ Here is someone who actively supports ecumenical unity and, at the same time, declares her teaching to be Biblically sound – James' question comes to mind: "Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet *water* and bitter?" (3:11). Even though she is immensely popular with women today, and the purpose of her ministry is geared to draw women into the Word of God, she does not limit her teaching ministry to women (yet you read nothing of her husband having a role in her work). Regrettably, it is not uncommon to hear phrases like "God told me" or "God spoke to me" from Evangelicals today. However, Moore has taken this a step further; she has declared, "... this

⁶²³ Friberg Lexicon.

⁶²⁴ Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon.

⁶²⁵ *The Quarterly Journal*, "When Godly People Teach Ungodly Theology," July-Sept. 2007, p. 1.

⁶²⁶ <http://www.lproof.org/AboutUs/OurMission/default.htm>

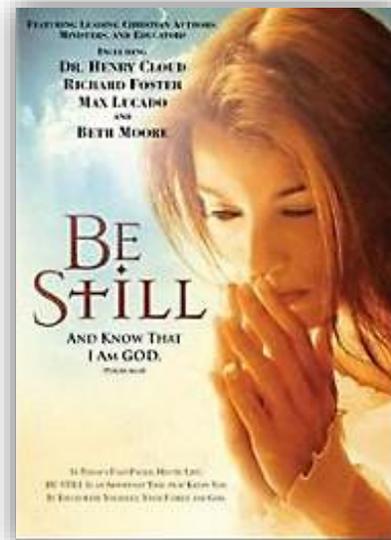
⁶²⁷ *Ibid.*

came as a direct revelation of the Spirit because this would never have come to me.”⁶²⁸ The Scriptures are our direct revelation from God, and we are given understanding of them as we permit the Spirit of God to open our eyes and as we walk in accordance with the Spirit; direct revelation has ceased (Hebrews 1:1-2). Moore has been likened to a female Billy Graham and is excessively popular within Evangelical circles,⁶²⁹ yet she has come out in support of the “truth” as it is proclaimed on the DVD *Be Still*, on which she participates with Richard Foster, Dallas Willard and Max Lucado. Foster and Willard are strong proponents of contemplative prayer and the mystical teachings of the Emergent Church, and Lucado holds to a spark of divinity abiding in all of us – not exactly a Biblical crowd. In Moore’s efforts to remain influential and popular, she has departed from anything that might be called Biblically sound (if she was ever there). What we must recognize when dealing with such as Moore, is that not everything that is said will be gross error, indeed, in good ecumenical fashion, many things that are taught might well be true; however, scattered throughout the truth will be error, which only serves to make their teaching more dangerous. “... mark [keep a watchful eye on] them which cause divisions and offences contrary to [alongside of or without regard for] the doctrine which ye have learned; and **avoid them**” (Romans 16:17).⁶³⁰



The last phrase, *whose names are in the book of life*, refers specifically to those who are *fellowlabourers* with Paul. This is an open statement saying that those who labor with Paul have their names in the book of life – those who are unhindered, by the baggage of this life, in their pursuit of holiness and the prize of glory to come. It would seem obvious that he would not include among this number those who are preaching Christ out of contention (Philippians 1:15-16), those who sought to increase Paul’s burden through their preaching. These did not work with Paul, and, therefore, it would be inappropriate to consider them as being companions in the labor of the Gospel.

The first reference that we have to God having a book of names is after Moses brought the children of Israel out of Egypt. Shortly after witnessing the miracles that God performed at the Red Sea, and after Moses had been in the mountain with God for some time, the Israelites constructed an idol of gold and returned to the pagan practices of Egypt. Moses rebuked the people, “Ye have sinned a great sin: and now I will go up unto the LORD; peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin” (Exodus 32:30). As Moses seeks God’s forgiveness for the people of Israel, he says, “Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin–; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written” (Exodus 32:32). Moses’ plea is this: Lord, forgive these people, but if You won’t, then remove my name from Your book. This is similar to Paul being willing to be cut off from Christ forever, if only his people, the Jews, would repent before God (Romans 9:3). However, we must notice the Lord’s response to Moses: “And the LORD said unto Moses, Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book”



⁶²⁸ *The Quarterly Journal*, “Believing Beth About Believing God,” January-March 2009, p. 4.

⁶²⁹ http://blog.christianitytoday.com/women/2011/03/confessions_of_a_beth_moore_co.html

⁶³⁰ Friberg Lexicon.

(Exodus 32:33). We might consider this and think that God's book must be empty, "For all have sinned ..." (Romans 3:23).

With man's fall into sin, there came the expression of God's grace; God made coats of skins to cover the nakedness of Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:21) – a picture of His mercy extended to cover their sin. We read of Adam and Eve's second born, "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous ..." (Hebrews 11:4). Faith in God's mercy, expressed through the required shed blood of a perfect sacrifice, provided spiritual life for the repentant sinner. It is the unrepentant sinner, the faithless one (which excludes those who are innocent, as we will see), whom God will wipe out of His book. Those who come to God believing that His mercy is sufficient to cover their sin, will find Him faithful to do just that; when their sins are covered, God will write their names in His book.

The concept at work here is somewhat similar to citizenship rights today. If you are born in Canada, you are a Canadian citizen and will have all of the rights and privileges of such, or if you move to Canada and take out citizenship, then you have committed yourself to upholding the laws of the country, and your name is added as a citizen. Two things can remove your name from a citizenship roll: 1) you renounce your citizenship, or 2) you die (at which time a death certificate is issued confirming your removal from the rights and privileges of citizenship). Death will rob us of our earthly citizenship, which then is no longer of any value to us anyway. However, to renounce your citizenship requires a deliberate act; it is a willful turning away from the responsibilities and privileges that you have as a citizen.

We are not told many details on how God keeps the Book of Life. We read Jesus' words, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God" (Mark 10:14); elsewhere we are told to become as little children, if we would see the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 18:3). From this, we would conclude that little children must have their names in the Book of Life, those who are still in innocence, i.e., before the age of accountability. With accountability comes responsibility for our inherited sin nature, at which time our name is removed from the Book of Life – "Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book ..." (Exodus 32:33). However, when we come to faith in Christ, our sins are covered by His blood sacrifice (the fulfillment of the coats of skin covering Adam and Eve), and, thereby, our name is entered into the Book of Life through faith. What also is very evident is that God does not record our names in this Book of Life in indelible ink. In Romans 11, Paul states that we (the Gentiles) have been grafted into the Holy Tree by faith; however, the warning is that we are not to become arrogant, for "if God spared not the natural branches, *take heed* lest he also spare not thee" (Romans 11:21). The natural branches (the children of Israel) were removed from the Holy Tree because of unbelief, and it is unbelief that can see us lose our position in Christ. Our names are entered into the Book of Life by faith; there are two ways for our names not to be found in the Book: 1) never coming to faith in Christ, and 2) a willful turning away from that faith.

Consider Israel's regulations regarding sin:

And if any soul sin through ignorance [in error or inadvertently], then he shall bring a she goat of the first year for a sin offering. And the priest shall make an atonement for the soul that sinneth ignorantly, when he sinneth by ignorance before the LORD, to make an atonement for him; and it shall be forgiven him. Ye shall have one law for him that sinneth

through ignorance, *both* for him that is born among the children of Israel, and for the stranger that sojourneth among them (Numbers 15:27-29).⁶³¹

Here we have God's provision for the children of Israel and for the Gentile who might be living with them; this describes someone who has already placed their faith in the Lord to cleanse them (their place in the Book of Life has been secured by faith). When they falter in their walk of faith, there is a prescribed way of dealing with their sin; their faith, so expressed, results in forgiveness, spiritual cleansing, and retention of their name in the Book of Life. However, these instructions are followed by a warning:

But the soul that doeth *ought* presumptuously [intentionally], *whether he be* born in the land, or a stranger, the same reproacheth [blasphemes] the LORD; and that soul shall be cut off [eliminated/killed] from among his people. Because he hath despised [viewed with contempt] the word of the LORD, and hath broken his commandment, that soul shall utterly be cut off; his iniquity *shall be* upon him (Numbers 15:30-31).⁶³²

By contrast, this is someone who sins deliberately, thereby showing contempt for the Lord's commandment and, consequently, blaspheming against the Lord. Within Israel's economy, that person was killed in order to purge the sin from their midst, and he died in his iniquity – his name was blotted out of the Book of Life.

Ezekiel wrote of this matter, as well:

But when the righteous turneth away [apostatize] from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, *and* doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked *man* doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned [remembered]: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die (Ezekiel 18:24).⁶³³

There is a finality to apostasy, properly defined. We must note that this is not referring to a failure along life's way – this is a deliberate turning away from righteousness, and results in spiritual death for which there is no remedy. The writer of Hebrews expressed the same thought:

For if we sin willfully [deliberately, intentionally] after that we have received the knowledge [precise and correct knowledge⁶³⁴; "what one comes to know and appropriate through faith in Christ"] of the truth, there remaineth no more [no longer continues to exist a] sacrifice for sins, But a certain [only – emphasized in Greek] fearful looking for [expectation] of judgment [condemnation] and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised [rejected] Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer [worse] punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot [despised] the Son of God, and hath counted [regarded] the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified [made holy], an unholy thing, and hath done despite [insult] unto the Spirit of grace? (Hebrews 10:26-29).⁶³⁵

⁶³¹ Strong's Online.

⁶³² Holladay Lexicon.

⁶³³ Strong's Online.

⁶³⁴ Ibid.

⁶³⁵ Friberg Lexicon.

What we must not miss from this passage is that it is speaking of someone who has been truly born-again (*he was sanctified* by the blood of Christ); this is not someone professing to have faith, when there is none – this is someone who has been made holy through faith in Christ. Apostasy occurs when a person, who has been saved by the blood of Christ, turns away from God! Prior to this we read, “For *it is* impossible for those who were once enlightened [cause to fully know; “imbue with saving knowledge”⁶³⁶] ... If they shall fall away [commit apostasy], to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put *him* to an open shame” (Hebrews 6:4-6).⁶³⁷

We are told that Christ died once for all time (Hebrews 9:28); He is the fulfillment and end of the Mosaic sacrificial system. This highlights the problem with the Catholic Eucharist (called the Sacrifice), for, within their traditions, Christ dies during every mass. The Mosaic system required continual sacrifices to be made because they could not ultimately make the person, offering the sacrifice, whole; “For the law having a shadow of good things to come ... can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect” (Hebrews 10:1). By contrast, “this man [Christ], after he had offered **one sacrifice for sins for ever**, sat down on the right hand of God ...” (Hebrews 10:12). Christ has paid the price **once** for man’s sin, and that single payment is sufficient for the sins of all of mankind, from Adam to the end of time. Therefore, when, by faith, we have accepted Christ’s cleansing for our souls and then turn away from Him, we have rejected the one and only sacrifice made for our sins.

Jesus said to the messenger of the *ekklesia* at Sardis, “He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels” (Revelation 3:5). There were a few at Sardis who remained pure before God (they have not defiled their garments – v.4) and the assurance is that those who retain a firm grasp of their faith (overcome the temptations that surround them), their names will remain in the Book of Life. Notice that it says that they “have not defiled their garments”; the verb is in the active voice, which means that they would be the ones not defiling or contaminating their lives, i.e., they have chosen not to defile themselves. The obvious reciprocal to this is those who are not victorious over temptation and choose to defile their garments; their names God will blot out – they will be obliterated, or erased, from the Book of Life.⁶³⁸ Their names were in the Book, but through deliberate failure (by turning away from their faith) and, therefore, not being victorious (but being apostate), they have been removed.

The next occasion of mention of the Book of Life comes in Revelation 13:8 – “And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” We have looked at this verse numerous times because it so explicitly shows that the salvation of mankind was not an afterthought with God; He was not caught off guard by the sin of Adam – His perfect plan for our redemption was already in place. This verse speaks of the Antichrist and the following that he will have among all of the people of the earth, but only those whose names are not in the Book of Life. To those who have not placed their faith in Christ for salvation, or have rejected their faith in Christ (apostates), the Antichrist will appear to be their savior – the only one who can bring peace and safety. Those whose names are in the Book of Life will be the target of his anger – he “will make war with the saints” (13:7). Notice that it is the Book of Life of *the Lamb*; it is only through the Lamb of God

⁶³⁶ Strong’s Online.

⁶³⁷ Friberg Lexicon.

⁶³⁸ Strong’s Online.

that our names can be written in this Book. What did Jesus say? “I am the way, the truth and **the life ...**” (John 14:6).

Once again, we are told of what those, whose names are not written in the Book of Life, will do in the future: “The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend [is about to ascend] out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition [destruction]: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they beheld the beast that was, and is not, and yet is” (Revelation 17:8).⁶³⁹ Those who are not saved will marvel at the Beast, in this case Satan – they will be mesmerized and enthralled with the Antichrist, and will worship the one who is giving him is power (Revelation 13:4). We have seen two passages now where we are told of those who will be supportive of someone who will seek to set himself up as God; can this be right? “And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: *Even him*, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness [deceit] of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved” (2 Thessalonians 2:8-10).⁶⁴⁰ We must have a love (*agape*) for the truth in order to be saved; the Antichrist will come with great power and overwhelming manifestations of that power, and great will be the deception of those who are not saved and secure in the Truth. Jesus said, “For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if *it were* possible, they shall deceive the very elect” (Matthew 24:24); we have already seen that this indicates that it is possible for those who are in Christ to be led away from the truth by these mighty signs and wonders. Jesus spoke these words as a warning so that we might be alert and prepared to withstand, through the power of His Spirit, the allurements of Satan. Isaiah speaks of the Lord’s help in a “day of salvation” (49:8) and Paul refers to this in his second letter to the Corinthians when he declares, “now *is* the day of salvation” (6:2). The “day of salvation” will end; a day came when God shut the door of the ark (Genesis 7:16) and all who sought entrance after that died in the deluge.

The Book of Life is mentioned once more, as it pertains to those who do not have their names written there – Revelation 20:12-15:

And I saw the dead [these are the dead who did not have part in the first resurrection – 20:6, those who either did not accept God’s provision of salvation or who apostatized], small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is *the book* of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

How many will find justification in this final judgment? “...by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified” (Galatians 2:16); the unrighteous dead will be judged according to their works, but no one will be saved. Their names will not be found in the Book of Life and none of their works, which have been carefully recorded for this final review, will change that; their end will be to share the lake of fire with the devil and his angels. “As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your

⁶³⁹ Gingrich Lexicon.

⁶⁴⁰ Strong’s Online.

evil ways; for why will ye die ...” (Ezekiel 33:11). God’s desire has always been that man would seek Him, but there is a prescribed way to come to God that will meet His requirement for justice. Abel found that way, while his brother, Cain, missed it; Jacob came to know the pathway to God even while Esau spurned it. The way has always been there, and it has always been available to everyone; faith in God’s provision (whether promised or accomplished) followed by a life of obedience to His commands is all that has ever been required (1 John 3:23-24).

The Book of Life is mentioned two more times, and, in both cases, deals with those who have their names written in its pages. The only people who will enter into the New Jerusalem are those whose names are in the Book (Revelation 21:27) – those who have been cleansed, made holy and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of God (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). The final mention is, again, a warning to those who have their names written in the Book of Life: “And if any man shall take away from [or remove (present tense)] the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away [or remove (future tense) – same Greek word] his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and *from* the things which are written in this book” (Revelation 22:19).⁶⁴¹ This is a significant warning against how the *words* of the book of Revelation are to be handled.

As we have looked at the Book of Life, there are several things that have become very evident – things that are beyond question:

1. God is the Author of this Book; it is He Who writes in it,
2. Not everyone’s name will be in the Book when it is completed,
3. If our name is in the Book at the final day, then we will enter eternal glory,
4. If our name is not in the Book at the final day, then we will enter eternal damnation, and
5. Our name can be removed from the Book.

Looking at the overall thrust of Scripture, it seems clear that our name is entered into the Book when we become *in Christ* – i.e., when we place our faith in the finished work of Christ for our salvation and cleansing. However, there are sufficient warnings in Scripture for us to realize that our names are entered by faith, and they will be removed if we become faithless (apostate). “Take heed [a command to be continually discerning (present tense)], brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief [faithlessness], in departing [to fall away] from [speaks of separation from] the living God” (Hebrews 3:12).⁶⁴² “Watch ye [a present tense command to be cautious], stand fast [a present tense command to persevere, to persist] in the faith ...” (1 Corinthians 16:13).⁶⁴³



Paul’s assurance that these, his fellow laborers, have their names written in the Book of Life follows on the heels of his charge to *stand fast in the Lord* (v.1). These commands are in Scripture for a reason. The disciples asked Jesus what the sign of His return would be, and He began by saying, “Take heed that no man deceive you [or that no one may lead you astray]” (Matthew 24:4).⁶⁴⁴ Cradled within Jesus’ warning is the very real possibility of being deceived. After giving this warning, He goes on to speak of coming false christs, of wars and great disasters, and of persecution and great deception; then He says, “But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved” (Matthew 24:13). *Endure* comes from the Greek word *hupomeno*, which

⁶⁴¹ Friberg Lexicon.

⁶⁴² Strong’s Online.

⁶⁴³ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁴ Ibid.

means to bear up courageously⁶⁴⁵, to be patient under, or to suffer.⁶⁴⁶ The word is in the active voice, which means that we must endure through all that He has just outlined; *saved*, on the other hand, is in the passive voice, which means that we will be saved by God if we endure in Him.

We cannot relax because we think that our names are written in the Book of Life – there are far too many warnings in Scripture that demand us to be ever vigilant lest our hearts depart from faith in God. Having our eyes on the prize of the high calling that we have from God (which calls for holy living now) will help us to focus on the Author of faith, Jesus Christ (Hebrews 12:2).

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always: *and* again I say, Rejoice.



Here is another charge for the Philippians to *rejoice*. The two Greek words used for *rejoice* are exactly the same, and the circumstance for our rejoicing is in the Lord. When the disciples returned from their missions trip, Jesus cautioned them to “rejoice, because your names are written in heaven” (Luke 10:20). Paul has just commented on those who are his fellow laborers having their names in the Book of Life; the desired response is to rejoice. We, too, can rejoice that our names are recorded in this Book, not because of anything that we have done, but because of what Christ endured to purchase our salvation – we must live faithfully in obedience to the Lord to ensure that our name is not *erased* from the Book of Life.

⁵ Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord *is* at hand.



It seems that Paul has dealt with the primary teaching portion of his letter, and, as he nears the end of his writing, he begins to present short exhortations, which often stand independently of one another.

Moderation, as used here, comes from a Greek word that means gentleness or forbearance (not insisting on what may be rightfully yours).⁶⁴⁷ The same Greek word is used for one of the traits of a bishop or elder, where it appears as *patient* (1 Timothy 3:3) and *gentle* (Titus 3:2). It is also used to describe the wisdom that comes from above (James 3:17). The call is for our *gentleness*, or *forbearance*, to be become known to everyone, which means that it must be evident through how we live.

Wycliff’s translation, the Bishop’s Bible and Young’s Literal Translation all join the latter sentence in this verse closer to the former through punctuation (using a colon or semicolon rather than a period). The phrase *at hand* (the Greek word *eggus*) means near or close by.⁶⁴⁸ For the child of God, the Lord is **very** near; through faith we are *sealed* (marked) by the Holy Spirit Who lives within us (Ephesians 1:13), and He is there to lead us into all truth (John 16:13). If we are walking faithfully with the Lord, then our gentleness and forbearance will be evident; the key is to remain in Christ. As Jesus prepared to leave His disciples for heaven, He said to them, “I am with you *even* unto the end of the world” (Matthew 28:20); Jesus is the ever-present One – He is the Lord Who is always *at hand*. However, He also made it very clear that it is only the one who

⁶⁴⁵ Vine’s “endure.”

⁶⁴⁶ Friberg Lexicon.

⁶⁴⁷ Friberg Lexicon; <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/forbearance>.

⁶⁴⁸ Friberg Lexicon.

remains faithful to Him to the end, who will be saved (Matthew 24:13); if we fail to remain faithful to Him, He will no longer be *at hand* to us.

Interestingly, this is one of the texts that is used to support the doctrine of the imminent return of the Lord Jesus Christ, yet, as we have seen, the phrase *at hand* has nothing to do with the timing of the Lord's return; the context does not deal with time, but with living properly. A somewhat similar use of the Greek word *eggus* is found in James: "Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming [presence; *parousia*] of the Lord draweth nigh [*eggus*]" (James 5:8). This, too, has become a pillar of support for the imminent return of Christ, but, alas, proponents of this teaching have not looked carefully at this verse. The phrase *for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh* might sound like the Lord's return is getting closer (which it is, of course), and this is how it is generally understood. However, the Greek *eggus* (*draweth nigh*) is in the perfect tense, describing an action that has been completed in the past,⁶⁴⁹ which would mean that this phrase says (if you want to make this application) that the Lord's return has already happened. Again, context is very important. James has just given a scathing rebuke of the rich who covet their treasures and kill the one who is righteous, who, in turn, does not set himself against (*resist*) the rich (James 5:1-6). Perhaps, in a subtle way, James is rehearsing, in his mind, the events that surrounded the Lord's crucifixion. For this reason (*therefore*), he commands the *brethren* to be longsuffering (*patient*), and to properly fix (*stablish*) their hearts since the Lord's presence (*coming*) has come (*draweth nigh*)! The Lord brings to us an upward view of life, for His kingdom (at this time) is not of this earth. The illustration that is used by James is that of a farmer who patiently waits for the harvest (*fruit*), waiting through the early and late rains; so we are to wait patiently for the Lord to make all things right. When Jesus opened the fifth seal, John saw the souls of those who had died under the rule of the Antichrist crying out to God for Him to avenge their blood on those who were on the earth (those who had killed them); God's response is that they must *rest*, for He is not finished with the events that are taking place on the earth (Revelation 6:10-11). Likewise, James challenges the *just* to be longsuffering in the face of persecution from the wealthy and influential, for the Lord's presence is with them, and He will set all things in order in His time.

It is interesting to realize that the imminence, or nearness, of Christ's return has become a significant teaching within most Evangelical theologies. Texts of Scripture, like the ones that we have just looked at, have been used to support this position, and arguments have been made in an effort to show that Jesus taught this, and that first century believers held to this teaching. Jesus' words that are used in this effort are: "Watch [present tense command] therefore, for ye know neither the day [*hemera*] nor the hour [*hora*] wherein the Son of man cometh" (Matthew 25:13).⁶⁵⁰ We are told to *watch* for the Lord's coming, but that does not necessarily mean that it is *imminent*. To the same extent that we cannot know the exact day and hour of the Lord's return, so we cannot predict the exact day or hour of our death – that moment when we will either stand or fall before the Lord of salvation. Jesus made it very clear that salvation belongs to the one who remains faithful to Him to the very end (Matthew 24:13) – the end has to be either the Lord's return, or our departure from this life, and we don't know which *end* will be ours. Therefore, when the Lord charges us to remain continually watchful, that is very sound advice for us, since it is only the faithful who will enter heaven.

However, during those early years, there were some, it seems, who believed that the Lord had come – not only was His coming imminent, but He'd already come. Paul assured the Thessalonians who had been upset by this teaching, that this was not the case, and he went on to outline some

⁶⁴⁹ Strong's Online.

⁶⁵⁰ https://www.wayoflife.org/reports/the_pre_tribulation_rapture.html; Strong's Online.

things that will take place before the Lord's return (2 Thessalonians 2:1-10). The loudest proponents for the imminent return of the Lord Jesus are those who advocate that the faithful of the Lord will not experience the reign of the Antichrist – they will be raptured before that day. This teaching (pre-tribulation rapture) is, in turn, founded upon the ill-conceived teaching of dispensationalism, which places artificial divisions within God's Word – particularly between Israel and "the Church."⁶⁵¹ Even though Jesus taught His disciples about some of the general events leading up to His return, until John was given the Revelation of events that will take place *hereafter* (Revelation 4:1), there was nothing more than a broad sketch of what was to come. However, that does not render the challenge to be watchful, steadfast, and faithful of no importance; the moment that we die, our eternal destiny has been determined (Hebrews 9:27); therefore, we must pay particular heed as to how we are living so that we will gain heaven. As long as we have breath and are able to choose, we have the ability to depart from the Lord and become apostate (Hebrews 3:12), from which there is no recovery (Hebrews 10:26-29). Our impending death brings all of the warnings of Scripture into sharp focus, but that does not translate into the Lord returning at any moment. A careful study of John's Revelation of Jesus Christ reveals that there are many things that will transpire before the Lord comes, but we still do not know the day or hour of His coming – nor should we seek to calculate them.



William Miller

came a splinter group that today is the Seventh-Day Adventists (SDA); the "Adventist" part of their name refers to their belief in the imminent return of the Lord. Through the visions of Ellen G. White, following the Great Disappointment, much of the SDA theology was formulated. Until Ellen White's visions, the group was primarily identified as believing that the Lord could return at any moment; with her visions being given legitimacy and taken as being authoritative, the group very quickly slid into heresy. With a corresponding slide within Evangelicalism after the mid-20th century, SDAs became accepted as being Protestant and possibly even Evangelical – it's not that SDA doctrine changed, but the standard held by Evangelicals certainly did.

When the disciples queried Jesus about the matter of His return, His very plain word was, "But of that day and hour knoweth no *man*, no, not the angels of heaven, but my



Ellen G. White

⁶⁵¹ https://www.wayoflife.org/database/study_bible_dispensationally.html

Father only” (Matthew 24:36). Nevertheless, date-setters have dotted the landscape ever since He departed from this earth. Probably the most notorious, recently, was Harold Camping. He predicted the judgment of the world to take place on May 21, 1988, and then September 6, 1994; this was followed by his most widely publicized prediction of May 21, 2011 (which was re-scheduled to October 21, 2011).⁶⁵² In March of 2012, Camping’s Family Radio posted a letter of apology for making the predictions, but they claim that even though they were wrong, God used them to spread His Word (a distinct lack of humility within the framework of an apology): “Yet this incorrect and sinful statement allowed God to get the attention of a great many people who otherwise would not have paid attention.”⁶⁵³ There seems to be no acknowledgement of having brought ridicule against the name of Christ, nor the possibility that many of their converts might well throw it all up when they see their evident failure to read God’s Word accurately. We are to “Watch [we are to be continually vigilant] therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh” (Matthew 25:13).⁶⁵⁴ Paul’s challenge to the Philippians is to live expectantly, for we do not know either the day of the Lord’s return, nor the date of our departure from this life.

⁶ Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.



This has become a much-quoted verse. The word *careful*, as we have correctly come to understand, means to be anxious or troubled.⁶⁵⁵ The command given here is that we are not to be anxious about anything. Jesus said, “Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought [do not be anxious – same Greek word] for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?” (Matthew 6:25). He goes on to describe the Father’s care for the birds and the flowers, and draws the parallel that we are of greater importance to God than these. However, what we must not miss, in this discourse, is Jesus’ conclusion: “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matthew 6:33). The thrust of this is, do not be anxious (because you are not in control), but do not be careless either. The promise made here is that if we will make God’s kingdom and His righteousness the top priority in our lives, then God will look after us. However, this is not an invitation to a life of leisure. Jesus said, “I am the way ...” (John 14:6); as He becomes our focus for life, it becomes clear that we must live in obedience to His commandments (John 14:15), beginning with the Ten Commandments written by God upon tables of stone (Old Covenant; Exodus 31:18) and now written upon the hearts of all who have placed their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (New Covenant; Jeremiah 31:33 and Luke 22:20). We, who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, have been called by God with a holy calling (2 Timothy 1:9), we have been charged with the responsibility to know His Word (2 Timothy 2:15), and to do the works that God has prepared for us (Ephesians 2:10). Over and above this, we are also told that if we do not provide for those within our own household, then we have denied the faith and are worse than a pagan (1 Timothy 5:8). The thought that we have here, as we look at the context of Scripture, is – be anxious for nothing; be obedient in everything.

We have *prayer* and *supplication* brought together here. *Prayer* is the more general of the two terms, and is something that is addressed to God;⁶⁵⁶ *supplication*, on the other hand, is more

⁶⁵² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harold_Camping

⁶⁵³ <http://www.familyradio.com/>

⁶⁵⁴ Strong’s Online.

⁶⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁶ Ibid.

specifically a plea or entreaty.⁶⁵⁷ In all things, we are to come before God with prayer (which could include praise, confession, as well as requests) and with supplication (or the expression of our needs or desires), and we are to do so with thanksgiving. The gratitude will flow as we understand somewhat of the tremendous sacrifice that God has made to deliver us from sin. Prayer and entreaty, mingled with thanksgiving, is the setting within which we are to present our requests to God. Before introducing the model prayer to His disciples, Jesus said this: “But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions [from a Greek word which means to stutter], as the heathen *do*: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him” (Matthew 6:7-8).⁶⁵⁸ This confirms what we have just said: God knows what we need; it is our responsibility to set His kingdom and righteousness as our priority (Matthew 6:33). If God knows what we need before we even come to Him, why pray? Since God is omniscient and does not need to be told about our needs or desires, prayer must then be for our benefit.

Let us look very briefly at the model prayer that Jesus gave to us in Matthew 6. *Our Father which art in heaven* – this tells us that our prayers are to be addressed to God, the Father Who is in heaven. *Hallowed by thy name* – holy, sanctified, and separated is He; Evangelicals have reduced God to being love, but His model prayer for us exalts His holiness! *Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven* – by this we acknowledge God’s right to rule, and submit ourselves to the accomplishment of His will on earth (obedience to His commands). *Give us this day our daily bread* – here is our petition for our daily needs. *And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors* – we now request spiritual cleansing from our sins (we owe God our obedience to His commands, our *debts* are our failures to do as we ought), and we request God’s forgiveness in proportion to our forgiveness of others. *And lead us not into temptation [or trial, testing], but deliver us from evil [the evil one]* – the final requests are that God might not bring us into testing (subjunctive) and that He will rescue us from the evil one.⁶⁵⁹ *For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever* – the final note of the prayer is again an acknowledgement of Who God is. The model prayer that Jesus laid out begins and ends with adulation of God; in between, we have simple requests for our needs of the day, for spiritual cleansing, and for our walk, that we might not be led into trials and that we will be rescued from the devil. This prayer shows our need to focus on the majesty and purity of God, and our utter dependence upon Him for everything related to our daily living. Prayer is a significant reminder of who we are before a holy God.



As we consider Paul’s admonition here, the reality is that we will learn to release our anxiety as we bring our petitions and requests to the Lord after the pattern of prayer that Jesus gave, for we will be reminded of the glory and power of our God. Like Peter when he walked on the water (Matthew 14:29-30) – it is when our eyes lose their focus on the Lord Jesus Christ that we become anxious (Hebrews 12:2 – He must be our focus).

⁷ And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.



This is actually joined more closely to the previous verse than our KJV would indicate. After the command to not be anxious about anything, comes the *peace of God*. This is the

⁶⁵⁷ Friberg Lexicon.

⁶⁵⁸ Strong’s Online.

⁶⁵⁹ Friberg Lexicon.

peace referred to in Galatians 5:22 – “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace ...” *Peace* is one aspect of nine characteristics of the singular fruit of the Spirit; there are not nine fruits of the Spirit – only one, and it presents itself in many ways.

This *peace* will be something that will surpass all understanding. The peace that the world knows is entirely dependent upon external circumstances; if life is favorable and everything is going well, then they will have a measure of peace. For the Christian, we are to have the peace of the Spirit of God regardless of our situation; our peace flows out of our relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ and is to be independent of what life holds for us. This is the only way that such a peace can be beyond comprehension; if our peace ebbs and flows after the pattern of the world, then we are no different, and the Spirit of God is not finding expression through us.

We are assured that God’s peace will guard (*keep*) our hearts and minds in (*through*) Christ Jesus. The Greek word translated as *keep* is a military term, which means to guard, and is a compound word bringing together *before* and *to see* (either physically with the eyes or to know or perceive with the mind),⁶⁶⁰ in other words, to be a watcher in advance.⁶⁶¹ We have the assurance that nothing will come upon us that will catch God unaware, and His peace is our portion (through His abiding Spirit) to steady us. His peace will guard our *hearts and minds* – the essence of who we are (the heart) and our understanding (the mind); God has done everything possible to protect us. “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish [the word *perish* is in the subjunctive mood and with the Greek negatives *ou* and *me* form the strongest negative in Greek, but we must recognize that Jesus is speaking of *My sheep* whom He knows and who are following Him], neither shall any *man* pluck them out of my hand [the indicative mood means that this is a fact]” (John 10:27-28).⁶⁶² God’s guard is in place and nothing will ever be able to rip us out of His hand. The last three words of Paul’s encouragement to the Philippians are fundamental: *through* (the word is *in*) *Christ Jesus*. It is as we are *in Christ* that we are freed from the condemnation of the Law of God (Romans 8:1); when we are *in Christ*, we are among those whom God has chosen from before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4). Those who are *in Christ* will walk in obedience to His Word: “And he that keepeth [is keeping (present tense)] his [God’s] commandments dwelleth [is dwelling] in him [God or Christ], and he [God] in him” (1 John 3:24a).⁶⁶³ We are amply assured of God’s protection when we are in Christ, but this is **not** a pray-a-little-prayer-and-you’re-in-for-the-ride situation – we must be prepared to walk according to the commands of Scripture, beginning with the Ten Commandments, which God has now written upon our hearts (Jeremiah 31:33).

Jesus said, “I am ... the truth ...” (John 14:6). Paul warned the Thessalonians of those who “received [accepted⁶⁶⁴] not the love of the truth, that they might be saved” (2 Thessalonians 2:10); we do not have to develop a love for the truth, it is given to us by the Lord – we must accept it from Him. Jesus said that He would send the Spirit **of truth**, Who would lead us into all truth (John 16:13). We are also warned, “Quench [stifle, suppress, restrain⁶⁶⁵] not the Spirit” (1 Thessalonians 5:19); those who refuse to accept the love of the truth are suppressing the Spirit of truth, as are those who refuse to be led into an understanding of the truth. If we have placed our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for deliverance from sin, then Jesus, Who is the Truth, has given us His Spirit of truth so that we might live in obedience to His commandments. Obedience to God’s

⁶⁶⁰ Strong’s Online.

⁶⁶¹ Strong’s Dictionary, *ESword*.

⁶⁶² Strong’s Online.

⁶⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶⁵ Friberg Lexicon.

Word must never be construed as legalism or narrow-mindedness, or even optional. Jesus said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15); despite Evangelicals placing an enormous emphasis upon the love of God (to the virtual exclusion of His holiness and justice), they refuse to give heed to His Word. It would seem that they are seeking to thrive on the love of God, which, in their minds, grants them license to live as they please. In their enthusiasm to celebrate the love that God has for all of mankind, they have lost sight of the fact that they are to love God. The lawyer asked Jesus what the greatest commandment was, and Jesus told him that it was to love God and then to love his neighbor (Matthew 22:36-40). How do we express our love for God? – it is through our obedience (John 14:15). Who will be granted access to heaven? – it will be those who do the will of God (Matthew 7:21). God is diligently guarding our hearts against external attacks (John 10:28); we must guard against an evil heart of unbelief (Hebrews 3:12). How will our unbelief be evident? – it will show itself through an unwillingness to keep the commands of God (namely, disobedience to His will). If we say that we believe His Word, then we must also do it; “But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving [to reckon falsely, to delude by false reasoning] your own selves” (James 1:22).⁶⁶⁶ If we hear the Word of God and say, “I believe,” but do not do what God has said, then we are guilty of deluding ourselves; such false reasoning will result in our exclusion from heaven (Matthew 7:21). “Therefore to him that knoweth [to understand how⁶⁶⁷] to do good, and doeth *it* not, to him it is sin” (James 4:17).

God has done all that He can to keep us in His peace. Paul writes this with confidence, knowing the hearts of the Philippians; however, in this day when we live in the midst of excessive compromise among those who call themselves Christians, we must be vigilant lest we fall into the crowd of hearers, and forfeit not only the peace of God, but our eternal inheritance with Him, as well.

⁸ Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things *are* honest, whatsoever things *are* just, whatsoever things *are* pure, whatsoever things *are* lovely, whatsoever things *are* of good report; if *there be* any virtue, and if *there be* any praise, think on these things.



We have just been assured that the *peace* of God will guard our minds; now Paul provides a list of things that we can use as a guide to occupy our minds. The Greek word for *finally* is the same one that is used in 3:1; it does not signify that the end of the letter is near so much as it identifies a change in the subject matter⁶⁶⁸ – Paul is moving on to something else, or *for the rest*.⁶⁶⁹ The Greek word translated as *think* finds its roots in logic, and is frequently rendered as *reckons* or *account*;⁶⁷⁰ what this does not include is the idea of opinion or conjecture. The thrust is that we should give careful attention to what is presented here, so that our minds are occupied with godly thinking.

There are a series of *whatsoever things*, which can be equally rendered as *everything that, all that, or whatever*.⁶⁷¹ The first thing that we are to take into account is all that is *true*. The Greek

⁶⁶⁶ Friberg Lexicon.

⁶⁶⁷ Gingrich Lexicon.

⁶⁶⁸ Vine’s “finally.”

⁶⁶⁹ Strong’s Online.

⁶⁷⁰ Friberg Lexicon.

⁶⁷¹ Ibid.

word is *alethes* (*al-ay-thace*) and literally means that which is not hidden;⁶⁷² i.e., there is no conflict between what is held in the mind and reality. We might wonder how anyone would think anything other than what is reality, but we live in a world today when the two do not necessarily meet. Consideration of the concept of truth today reveals that man no longer accepts the thought of absolute truth; truth is considered to be something that is determined by experience – it is subjective. What Paul refers to here has absolutely nothing to do with modern man’s ability to twist and skew the truth – the God with Whom we have to do does not change (Malachi 3:6), therefore, there is an absolute truth, He is not hidden, and He is the Lord Jesus Christ. “Jesus saith ..., I am the way, **the truth** [a different form of the



same Greek word], and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6). The Word of God is a revelation of Who Jesus is (Revelation 19:13), and we would do well to diligently study it so that we might be found to be pleasing to God (2 Timothy 2:15). However, we must be careful to know that, in the multitude of Bibles on the market today, not all of them are worthy of diligent study. Satan has been working to dilute and distort God’s Word, and he has made great inroads through textual criticism, which has resulted in a corrupt text of Scripture that is used in all modern translations. The higher critics made two significant false assumptions about the Bible that set them on the devil’s path: 1) they could treat the Bible like any other piece of ancient literature (thereby denying God’s inspiration, and active preservation, of His Word – Matthew 24:35), and 2) the older the manuscript, the more accurate it is (discounting the fact that the oldest Bible manuscripts show signs of corruption and only survived because they weren’t used). Through this came original language texts that incorporated the corrupted, oldest manuscripts to the deliberate exclusion of what is known as the Received Text (the accepted text for many centuries). More recently, this has been coupled with a translation method called dynamic equivalency (used prolifically by Wycliffe Bible Translators) where only thoughts and ideas are translated, and not words or phrases. Therefore, ALL modern translations are based upon a faulty text, and this is frequently exacerbated by using a subjective translation methodology. The NASB is a very good literal translation of the corrupt manuscript; the NIV, on the other hand, is the result of using the dynamic equivalency translation method of the corrupt text. We must ensure that we do not lose the truth through careless use of corrupted translations.

 The next is all that is *honest*. The Greek word so translated means to be venerable or noble,⁶⁷³ that which would inspire reverence or awe.⁶⁷⁴ If there is one word that has found prolific use today, it is the word *awesome*. At one time, *awe* meant “fear mingled with admiration or reverence,” and this would be the application here.⁶⁷⁵ A modern definition is: “a feeling of amazement and respect mixed with fear” – notice that fear has taken a backseat to amazement or admiration.⁶⁷⁶ It seems that it was in the early 1960s that the term *awesome* began to make its way into colloquial language and meant only *very good* – a dramatic shift from meaning “profoundly reverential,” as it did at the end of the 16th century.⁶⁷⁷ This Greek word (*honest*) is translated as *grave* when used of the deacons (1 Timothy 3:8) and elders (Titus 2:2), and carries the idea of

⁶⁷² Strong’s Online.

⁶⁷³ Friberg Lexicon.

⁶⁷⁴ Strong’s Online.

⁶⁷⁵ Webster’s 1828 American Dictionary of the English Language, “awe.”

⁶⁷⁶ EnCarta Dictionary, “awe.”

⁶⁷⁷ <http://www.etymonline.com>; “awesome.”

calling for respect through quality of character and behavior. As we set our minds on all that is *honest*, we must acknowledge the need to have a Spirit-renewed mind. “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed [passive, it must be done for us by the Spirit of God] by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Romans 12:2).

Then, whatever is *just*: the underlying Greek word speaks of being righteous, of doing those things that are in keeping with that which is right, of keeping the commands of God.⁶⁷⁸ We are to think on all that is of obedience to God. How important is obedience to what God has commanded? We cannot get our answer from Evangelicals today, for they have departed from God’s Word and live like the world; as with all matters pertaining to our spiritual welfare, we must look into the Scriptures. “And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments” (1 John 2:3); through obedience, we will know God. Our obedience will show that we love the Lord Jesus Christ; “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15). *Keep*, in both cases, comes from a Greek word that means to attend to carefully.⁶⁷⁹ There is no room for careless living, no place for a casual attitude toward spiritual matters; after all, we have received a holy calling from God, and we must strive to live in holiness before Him (2 Timothy 1:9). Paul’s charge is that we are to think on whatever is in keeping with God’s desire for us.

Everything that is *pure*: this comes from a Greek word meaning to be without defect, and is related to the Greek word for holy.⁶⁸⁰ This will eliminate most of what takes place in our lives; we live in an imperfect world and anything that might be considered to be pure would have to be of God. “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure” (1 John 3:2-3). Our hope in Christ will give us motivation to live in purity before Him.

All that is *lovely*: this is the only place where this Greek word is found in the NT, and it speaks of that which is acceptable or pleasing.⁶⁸¹ The root of the Greek word comes from *phileo*, which is translated as *love*, and speaks of a love that springs from a pleasant emotional experience. Standing alone, this could mean almost anything; however, coming as it does within the context of this verse, it can only mean that we should entertain thoughts that are in keeping with God’s Word. Anything worldly or sinful would not be acceptable in His sight, and certainly should not provide a pleasant response in the heart of His child. “Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer” (Psalm 19:14).

Whatever is *of good report*: the Greek word behind this phrase speaks of a report of prosperity,⁶⁸² and what is commendable or praiseworthy.⁶⁸³ By itself, this might be construed to be the financial report of a successful company, but, coming as it does within this particular context, it can only mean that which is faring well spiritually. Paul’s prayer for the Colossians was that they “might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God ...” (Colossians 1:10).

⁶⁷⁸ Strong’s Online; Vine’s “just.”

⁶⁷⁹ Strong’s Online.

⁶⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁸¹ Ibid.

⁶⁸² Ibid.

⁶⁸³ Friberg Lexicon.

There is now a slight shift in the words used, and probably a similar change in the focus. To this point, the spotlight has been on things outside of us, things about which we are encouraged to think. However, the light now seems to turn to the reader – *if any virtue*. *Virtue* comes from a Greek word that speaks of uprightness and goodness, and the thrust is less about things that might be virtuous and more about whether our character is upright. Peter wrote, “... add [or supply] to your faith virtue ...” (2 Peter 1:5); hence, he is encouraging us to provide our faith with moral goodness or uprightness of character.

The phrasing is the same for *praise*, or that which is commendable.⁶⁸⁴ Although we are not to seek the praise of men, we are to endeavor to be approved of God (2 Timothy 2:15) and walk in a way that will bring glory to His name (Matthew 5:16). “Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth” (Colossians 3:2). Therefore, if we desire to be found upright and commendable in God’s sight, we must set our mind on things that are *true, honest, just, pure, lovely* and *of good report*. Much of what bombards us today does not fit within these honorable categories; we must permit the Spirit of God to wean us from those things with which we should not fill our minds.

⁹ Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.



Earlier, Paul said, “Brethren, be followers together of me ...” (Philippians 3:17), and we noted that his call was for the Philippian Christians to imitate him in what he had just carefully laid out for them – namely, a consuming desire to be found in Christ and to give up those things that are past, and to reach expectantly to what is ahead in Christ. Very specifically, at the time of this letter, it meant the relinquishment of all practices that related to the Law of Moses – something that Paul very carefully explained throughout chapter three. This was a particular problem for those whom we call Judaizers – those who accepted salvation through faith in Christ, but refused to let go of the traditions of the Jews as declared through the Mosaic Law. Paul thoroughly dealt with this problem in his letter to the Galatians (for they were having a significant difficulty with the Judaizers), but he also made sure that the Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians understood that the Law of Moses had been done away with at the cross (Ephesians 2, Philippians 3 and Colossians 2).

This verse is very closely tied to the previous one; the Stephanus Greek NT, shows verse eight as ending with a semi-colon (as does Robert Young in his Literal Translation).⁶⁸⁵ A literal translation of the text for this first part is: *which also ye have learned and received and heard and seen in me these do*.⁶⁸⁶ Each of the words in this listing (*learned, received, heard* and *seen*) is presented as a statement of fact; each is declared to be the reality of how the Philippians had accepted the teachings of Paul. *Learned* comes from a Greek word that means to direct the mind toward something to the extent that there is an external result,⁶⁸⁷ to increase one’s knowledge.⁶⁸⁸ *Received*, means to take to one’s self from another, *heard* involves the understanding as well as the hearing, and *seen* speaks of perceiving what has been observed.⁶⁸⁹ What is clearly evident here

⁶⁸⁴ Strong’s Online.

⁶⁸⁵ Stephanus 1550 NT; Young’s Literal Translation.

⁶⁸⁶ Stephanus 1550 NT.

⁶⁸⁷ Friberg Lexicon.

⁶⁸⁸ Vine’s “learned.”

⁶⁸⁹ Strong’s Online.

is that the Philippians thoroughly accepted and understood the Gospel that Paul had brought to them; since they have such a solid knowledge of the truth of the Gospel, Paul now says, “Do it!”

By contrast, today there is a growing acceptance of the missiological concept called contextualization, which is especially gaining ground within Islamic works. What is meant by this is that a Muslim can convert to Christianity and still continue to participate in many of the traditions of their Islamic culture. “These believers usually attend the mosque, commonly pray traditional Muslim prayers, fast, and do all the things their Islamic neighbors do. Yet there are two key differences between Muslims and Muslim **followers of Isa**” (emphasis added).⁶⁹⁰ Justification for this mind-boggling departure from being truly born-again by the Spirit of God, through the saving work of Christ, takes several paths. A creative interpretation of the Koran becomes the first area of difference: “... some Islamic teaching is reinterpreted along biblical lines, while some Islamic doctrines are rejected completely.”⁶⁹¹ The propagators of contextualization feel free to change the meaning of a pagan book so as to align it more with the Bible; if they can’t stretch the teaching that far, then they will reject it. Now they have two books from two different religions (their form of Christianity is ONLY a religion), both containing many rejected passages (I say *both* because they are not following the Word of God, either). They go on to identify the second key difference as being: “biblical believers meet regularly for Bible study, prayer and fellowship. This provides a venue for Bible teaching and instruction, discipleship, and community building.”⁶⁹² First of all, these *followers of Isa* are NOT *biblical believers* (they remain firmly rooted in paganism), and, secondly, what kind of *Bible teaching and instruction* could be imparted when the whole premise is to continue to live as a Muslim? The overwhelming clincher is their attempt to use the Bible to justify contextualization; they abuse 1 Corinthians 7, particularly verses 20 and 24 as their foundation for this heresy: “Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called”; “Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God.”

This is a demonstration of the ability of man to rationalize almost anything and make the Bible say whatever they desire, in an effort to support what they want to do. First Corinthians seven is a passage where Paul works through some matters of marriage, in light of their error concerning the disregard for the body and neglect of the marriage relationship. He says that if a believing husband or wife has an unbelieving mate, and the unbeliever is happy to remain in the relationship, then they should remain together (vs. 12-13). He then goes on to illustrate this concept further by saying that if you are circumcised or uncircumcised when you come to the Lord, then don’t seek to change it – for neither one matters in the least (vs. 18-19); or, if you are a servant when you are born-again, it matters not, for you are the Lord’s freeman; likewise, if you are a freeman when you become a Christian, you are Christ’s servant (vs. 21-22). After providing these examples to demonstrate that whatever your station in life when you come to faith in Christ, don’t be bothered by it, for that is not central to your new life in Christ; Paul then returns to the matter of marriage. The heretics behind contextualization use this as justification to spread the heresy that if you are a Muslim or a Hindu when you come to the Lord, then you should remain as a Muslim or Hindu and thereby avoid persecution. Islam and Hinduism are not just cultures, but are systems of faith that bear their own distorted form of salvation; these heretics seem to think that they can retain a veneer of such a false religion and, underneath of it, build a Christian life. “Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he* is a new creature: **old things are passed away** [to pass away, come to an end, disappear⁶⁹³];

⁶⁹⁰ <http://www.xenos.org/ministries/crossroads/OnlineJournal/issue1/contextu.htm>

⁶⁹¹ Ibid.

⁶⁹² Ibid.

⁶⁹³ Gingrich Lexicon.

behold, all things are become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17). There is no room for hanging onto the *old*, while trying to build something *new* underneath.

Paul asked the Corinthians the rhetorical question, “What concord [agreement or harmony] hath Christ with Belial [a reference to Satan]?” (2 Corinthians 6:15).⁶⁹⁴ The obvious answer is, “NOTHING!” The conclusion that Paul reaches for the Corinthians is this: “Wherefore come out [a command] from among them, and be ye separate [a command to set boundaries of separation], saith the Lord, and touch not [a command, do not cling to] the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you ...” (2 Corinthians 6:17).⁶⁹⁵ This is a conditional promise where God says, “I will receive you,” **if** you separate yourself from unbelievers, unrighteousness, darkness, Belial, the infidel, and idols (vs. 14-16); all of these descriptive words can be applied to Islam. Here is a classic fulfillment of, “Can the blind lead the blind? shall they not both fall into the ditch?” (Luke 6:39). The proponents of contextualization obviously do not understand what it means to be a child of God, and they go out to instill a false hope in those whom they “convert” to a different form of paganism (Galatians 1:8).

When Joshua made his final charge to Israel, he declared, “Be ye therefore very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, that ye turn not aside therefrom *to* the right hand or *to* the left; That ye come not among these nations, these that remain among you; **neither make mention of the name of their gods**, nor cause to swear *by them*, neither serve them, **nor bow yourselves unto them**: But **cleave unto the LORD** your God, as ye have done unto this day” (Joshua 23:6-8). Joshua did not advocate contextualization, but rather separation! Those who practice this fallacy within Islam are referred to as being *followers of Isa*. Who is Isa? Are Isa and Jesus the same? You might recall that when Rick Warren prayed at Obama’s inauguration, he closed his prayer in the name of Isa (among others); it is evident that there is a willingness to accept Isa as being another name for Jesus, the Son of God, and the eternal Logos. However, there are some very significant differences. The Koran says, “O People of the Scripture, do not commit excess in your religion or say about Allah except the truth. The Messiah, **Jesus**, the son of Mary, **was but a messenger of Allah** and His word which He directed to Mary and a soul [created at a command] from Him. So believe in Allah and His messengers. And **do not say, “Three”**; desist - it is better for you. Indeed, **Allah is but one God**. Exalted is He above having a son. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth. And sufficient is Allah as Disposer of affairs” (Surah 4:171).⁶⁹⁶ Most significantly, Islam believes that Isa is only a man, and not the Son of God, and definitely not God. Despite the carelessness of men like Rick Warren, the Bible is very clear on these matters. “And the angel answered and said unto her [Mary], The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called [named] the Son of God” (Luke 1:35).⁶⁹⁷ The Spirit of God, through John, declared, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ... And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us ...” (John 1:1,14a).

Another significant difference is that the Koran says that Isa did not die on a cross. “And [for] their saying, ‘Indeed, we have killed the Messiah, Jesus, the son of Mary, the messenger of Allah.’ And **they did not kill him, nor did they crucify him**; but [another] was made to resemble him to them. And indeed, those who differ over it are in doubt about it. They have no knowledge of it

⁶⁹⁴ Friberg Lexicon.

⁶⁹⁵ Strong’s Online.

⁶⁹⁶ <http://quran.com/4>

⁶⁹⁷ Strong’s Online.

except the following of assumption. And they did not kill him, for certain” (Surah 4:157).⁶⁹⁸ The Bible tells us, “Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. ... Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God” (Matthew 27:50,54). To the Corinthians, Paul declared, “For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:2). The Muslims express the wish of Satan – oh, that Jesus had not died, for, through His death, Satan’s defeat has been confirmed in fulfillment of Genesis 3:15.

What we find, if we are not blinded by a zeal for oneness, is that Jesus and Isa are not the same at all. Therefore, when Rick Warren closed his inaugural prayer with these words, “I humbly ask this in the name of the one who changed my life—Yeshua, ‘Isa, Jesus [Spanish pronunciation], Jesus ...,”⁶⁹⁹ he was really praying in the name of a false god and equating it with the Jesus of the Bible. That is blasphemy! Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6); this places Isa and all other false gods outside of the narrow way to life. Warren and contextualizers have created a false gospel that is without hope, without salvation, and without God – their message is anathema (Galatians 1:8). Today, the Word of God has been skewed and twisted by man to make it appear to be what it is not; we must return to the Scriptures alone, and walk in obedience to the commands of God found there. Paul encourages the Philippians to do what they had learned from him, knowing that they had a firm grasp of the truth; by doing so, the promise is that the *God of peace* will be with them.

¹⁰ But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity.



We looked at this briefly when we were considering Paul’s comments on the sacrifice that Epaphroditus had made in ministering to him on behalf of the Philippians (2:30). Even though the Philippians were not personally ministering to Paul, as they would have done while he was with them, he rejoices in the Lord for their consideration of him through the hands of Epaphroditus. They may have had no opportunity to minister to Paul, but they found a way by sending a representative to act on their behalf.

¹¹ Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, *therewith* to be content.



This flows out of the previous verse where Paul expresses his gratitude for their identification with him in his imprisonment, and sending Epaphroditus to him. He is very appreciative of the Philippians standing with him during this time (*care* – v.10). However, he now goes on to qualify his appreciation.

The word *want* has undergone a significant metamorphosis over the past couple of hundred years. In Webster’s 1828 dictionary, the definitions go in this order: to be destitute, to be defective, to fall short, to be without, to need, and to wish for.⁷⁰⁰ A modern dictionary has this order of definition: desire something, wish something done, miss something, wish somebody present, seek

⁶⁹⁸ <http://quran.com/4>

⁶⁹⁹ <http://thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justintaylor/2009/01/20/rick-warrens-inauguration-prayer/>

⁷⁰⁰ Webster’s 1828 Dictionary, “want.”

somebody as crime suspect, and need something.⁷⁰¹ There has been a 180° flip-flop in the definition of this word. The Greek word behind *want* speaks of need. Paul states that he is absolutely not speaking according to need, for he has learned through experience to be content (satisfied, in a happy state of mind⁷⁰²) wherever he finds himself.

¹² I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.



The Greek word translated as *know* (in both cases) is *oida*, which suggests a fullness of knowledge as opposed to *ginosko*, which speaks of a growing knowledge.⁷⁰³ Paul says that he has learned (NOT “is learning”) how to live both in poverty (*abased*) and in abundance, and (going back to the previous verse) he has also learned how to be content in both situations. You might say that Paul has learned how to be even-keeled; he remains steady through the storms of life.

The words *every where* and *all things* are actually different forms of the same Greek word; the primary difference is that the first (translated as *every where*) is singular, and the second is plural.⁷⁰⁴ Literally, this is *in everything and in all things*,⁷⁰⁵ thereby expressing the same word in singular and plural forms, and demonstrating the all-inclusiveness of this phrase. In everything, Paul says, *I am instructed*, or I have learned the secret – the passive voice means that he has learned this from Someone else.⁷⁰⁶ This is followed by two couplets, which, in the KJV, are framed with *both ... and*; an equally acceptable frame would be *not only ... but also*, which would emphasize the contrast between the two parts of each couplet. The first is bodily; Paul has learned not only how to be satisfied, i.e., to eat and be filled, but he has also learned how to go hungry. Materially, he has learned how to live with an abundance, and also how to do without. In essence, Paul has learned how to remain steady in the ebb and flow of life.



St. Peter's Basilica

Within western society, we have learned how to abound to the point that we think that it is our right. People who profess to be Christians will invest millions of dollars into church facilities, staffing, and programs, yet they are content to remain spiritually illiterate and bankrupt. They view their church as being their spiritual action, and so they are able to salve their consciences by tossing some money into the offering each week, thereby “participating in wonderful Christian activities,” and fulfilling their responsibility. This is not far removed from the work of the Roman Catholic Church during the dark ages; through the sale of indulgences (remission of the punishment for sin), the Church of Rome was able to finance the construction of massive cathedrals – it was those who thought that they were doing their Christian duty

⁷⁰¹ Encarta Dictionary, “want.”

⁷⁰² Friberg Lexicon.

⁷⁰³ Vine’s “know.”

⁷⁰⁴ Stephanus 1550 NT.

⁷⁰⁵ Vine’s “every.”

⁷⁰⁶ Friberg Lexicon.

who provided the capital for the leadership to build their churches and supported their hierarchy of pope, cardinals, and bishops. The most lucrative business was the selling of indulgences for the dead, from which this rhyme grew: “As soon as money in the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory’s fire springs.”⁷⁰⁷ The spiritual dearth, which characterized those who attended Rome’s churches, is comparable to the spiritual condition of most who are filling today’s Protestant, Evangelical, and Baptist churches. Rome deliberately kept the Scriptures out of the hands of the average person (so, to that extent, the people were spiritually oppressed); today’s pew-warmer has voluntarily shelved their Bible in favor of the opinions of the experts – a case of being spiritually ignorant and apathetic. Churchgoers today would contentedly say, “I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing”; yet Jesus says, “[Thou] knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked ...” (Revelation 3:17). The Pharisees of Jesus’ day had a comparable problem; they were totally oblivious to their own need before God. Jesus said to them, “[Because you say] We see; therefore your sin remaineth” (John 9:41); they could not (or would not) see their spiritual need, and so they remained in their sins, despite meticulously keeping the externals of the Law of Moses (Luke 11:42).

Jesus said, “If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also” (John 15:19-20). Jesus, the Creator of all things (John 1:3), was hated by men (His own creation, and made in His image) while He was here on earth; His own people, the Jews, ultimately saw Him crucified because He did not bring them liberty from the Roman oppression. The promise of Jesus is that if we identify with Him (by placing our faith in Him for our salvation), then we will face persecution. Jesus goes on to tell His disciples why He warned them: “These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended [“to cause a person to begin to distrust and desert one whom he ought to trust and obey”]” (John 16:1).⁷⁰⁸ The word *offended* bears the subjunctive mood, which makes being offended a possibility, even for His disciples. You will recall the sower’s seed that fell upon the rocks: it sprang up immediately, but “when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by [immediately] he is offended [this is the same word that is used in John 16:1 (although not in the subjunctive mood), and means to fall away]” (Matthew 13:21).⁷⁰⁹ “For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. ... Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby” (Hebrews 12:6,11). Herein is the key to Paul’s even-keeled journey through life; he knew that whatever came into his life, it came through the gracious and loving hand of God. He understood the proverb, “My son, despise not [do not reject] the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of [abhor or dread] his correction ...” (Proverbs 3:11).⁷¹⁰

¹³ I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.



This is another one of those verses that has suffered much abuse through the years at the hands of those who fail to regard context. Too often, it is taken to mean that I can accomplish anything that I put my mind to because Jesus is going to help me, and, just as

⁷⁰⁷ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indulgence>

⁷⁰⁸ Strong’s Online.

⁷⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁷¹⁰ Ibid.

frequently, the accomplishments have nothing to do with exploits for the Lord. This text has been used as a catalyst to push us on to achieve great things, but that is not what it means. Context is so important; a verse taken in isolation can easily be misconstrued. The context, in this case, is Paul declaring that he has learned to live in plenty and to suffer need; in all (in times of plenty and need) he is strengthened through Christ. It is through Christ strengthening him that he receives the ability to be content in whatever state he is (v. 11); it is Christ's strength that is the focus of this statement, not the **"I can."** Jesus said, "Abide in me ... for without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:4-5).

Man, left to his own devices, is capable of many things. It only takes a brief glance about to realize that man's genius is phenomenal; technology is flourishing today, and it is evident that man is capable of many amazing achievements. As the Creator and Sustainer of all things (Colossians 1:16-17), Jesus (God) is the enabler even within the lives of those who refuse to recognize Him; without Him, they would not have life, much less display such intelligence. However, all of that aside, without faith in Christ and the empowerment of the Spirit of God, we are nothing spiritually – we are dead (Ephesians 2:1-2). It is through faith in Christ and the working of the abiding Spirit of God that we are able to fix our eyes on Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith, and not be tossed about by that which life throws our way (Ephesians 4:11-16; Hebrews 12:2). Christ's strength is the secret to Paul's contentment wherever and however the Lord places him.

¹⁴ Notwithstanding ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction.



We might be tempted to think that this verse is Paul's gratitude to the Philippians for coming to his aid; he might have learned how to be content in any situation, but he is very grateful that they came through with help when they did. The first part of the verse has an element of his gratitude despite his overall acceptance of his situation. There are always two sides to the help that is provided – the one giving and the one receiving; here, Paul's focus is primarily on the Philippians as the providers. He sees their aid as more than simply a commendable generosity; as we saw in Philippians 1:7, Paul declares them to be partakers with him of the grace of God, even in his imprisonment.

The word *communicate*, is much larger than what we might expect in our modern day of massive communication networks. The Greek word (*sugkoinoneo* [*soong-koy-no-neh'-o*]) means "to become a partaker together with others,"⁷¹¹ to share with.⁷¹² It is this word that is used in Philippians 1:7 where it is translated as *partakers*. The root of this word is *koinoneo*, which means to have communion or fellowship with, to share with or to partner with.⁷¹³ This goes well beyond what we might consider to be communication, which in our day would be largely the electronic transfer of information; there is much more identification with one another – in this case, the Philippians identifying with Paul, the prisoner. Paul's commendation of the Philippians' aid is founded upon their identification with him while he is a prisoner. They are willing to share with him in his hardships while in bonds. Paul uses the word *thlipsis* (here translated as *affliction*), which speaks of tribulation, oppression and distress.⁷¹⁴ The Philippians identify with Paul in his distress, and, for this, he commends them.

⁷¹¹ Strong's Online.

⁷¹² Friberg Lexicon.

⁷¹³ Strong's Online.

⁷¹⁴ Ibid.

Jesus promised, “In the world ye shall have tribulation [*thlipsis*]: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).⁷¹⁵ When Jesus spoke of the Seed, which fell upon the stony ground, He said that although they received the Word with gladness, they had no root and so, “when affliction [*thlipsis*] or persecution ariseth for the word’s sake,” they immediately fall away (Mark 4:17). Tribulation can easily lead to apostasy (if we are not prepared), and Jesus spoke of a coming time of “great tribulation” (Matthew 24:21) – the Greek word used is *thlipsis*. He then goes on to say, “Immediately after the tribulation [*thlipsis*] of those days ... he [Jesus] shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds ...” (Matthew 24:29,31). What is very evident is that **we will have tribulation**, but we have been promised protection from all outside attack. “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish [a strong Greek negative; this is for *My sheep* who are following the Lord – living faithfully in obedience to Him], neither shall any *man* [and no (absolute) one shall] pluck them out of my hand” (John 10:27-28).⁷¹⁶ God’s protection is assured, His promise that no one will be able to snatch us out of Jesus’ hand is a statement of fact; however, for our part, we must guard against a heart of unbelief, or faithlessness, which will result in us falling away from Him (Hebrews 3:12). As Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, “For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation [*thlibo* – the verb form of *thlipsis*⁷¹⁷]; even as it came to pass, and ye know” (1Thessalonians 3:4).⁷¹⁸ The promise of suffering was part of the message that Paul proclaimed; even on his first trip with Barnabas, this was included for the new believers – “... we must through much tribulation [*thlipsis*] enter into the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22).

Evangelicals have stripped the Gospel of everything that they have deemed to be offensive: the sinfulness of man, repentance, the need to count the cost of being a disciple of Jesus, Jesus as the narrow and only Way to life, and the need to persevere through tribulation in the faith. Consequently, when they speak of thousands coming to Christ, they are referring to those responding to their version of the Good News – a false gospel that has lost its saving message. When some Jews sought to retain some of the traditions from the Law of Moses as being necessary for salvation (Acts 15:1), and then set out to proclaim this in the region of Galatia, Paul was very clear in his judgment of this error: “... there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ” (Galatians 1:7). *Pervert* is translated from a Greek term that means to transform into something that is opposite.⁷¹⁹ The Gospel is a message of life; therefore, to turn it into something that is its opposite would be to make it a message that brings death. If some should commit themselves to such, then they have embraced a message that is devoid of life; they might be deluded into thinking that they have accepted the true Gospel, but when it does not agree with the Scriptures, then it is a lie, a myth, a fable (2 Timothy 4:4). The derision held by Evangelicals for the narrow way that leads to life is an indication of their failure to accept God’s Word.



Paul commends the Philippians for their aid – not for what he received from them, but because it confirmed that they understood the part that tribulation has in the life of every believer. The message that Paul brought to them, which would have included the promise of tribulation, had been heard, believed, and acted upon.

⁷¹⁵ Strong’s Online.

⁷¹⁶ Stephanus 1550 NT.

⁷¹⁷ Vine’s “affliction.”

⁷¹⁸ Strong’s Online.

⁷¹⁹ Friberg Lexicon.

15 Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only.



Paul now takes the Philippians back in their minds to the early days of his ministry to them – *the beginning of the gospel* – and reminds them of when he left their region. He had great difficulties in Macedonia. In Philippi, he and Silas were thrown into prison; after the



Lord had miraculously secured their release, they moved on to Thessalonica (Acts 17:1). Within three weeks, trouble erupted there as well and they went on to Berea (Acts 17:10). However, some of the Jews from Thessalonica followed and stirred up more trouble, so that Paul was sent on to Athens (Acts 17:14-15), which was when he departed from Macedonia.

Therefore, Paul would have been well away from the Philippians when they made themselves partakers with him in his work. Here, *communicated* is from the Greek word *koinonea*, which speaks of fellowship or

sharing⁷²⁰ – identifying with Paul. Of all of the assemblies that he had established, the Philippians were the only ones to become partakers with Paul in his work. The *giving* and *receiving* confirms the reality of their fellowship – the Philippians gave to Paul, and he to them.

16 For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity.



Paul was only in Thessalonica (still in the region of Macedonia) for a period of three weeks (Acts 17:2), yet during this short time, twice (*once and again*) the Philippians sent gifts to meet his needs.

17 Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account.



Paul commends them, but *absolutely not* because he *seeks for* the gift; rather, he *seeks for* their *gain to superabound*.⁷²¹

When Paul defended his Gospel message before the Jews of Jerusalem, he said that they commended him to go to the heathen (the Gentiles), but they also asked that he remember the poor (Galatians 2:10). Even before this exhortation from the elders of Jerusalem, Paul and Barnabas had taken relief to the Jews in Jerusalem who were stricken with famine (Acts 11:28-30). Paul spoke to the Romans of taking a gift to Jerusalem for the relief of the needy (Romans 15:25-27), and challenged the Corinthians to save up a gift for the poor of Jerusalem so that it would be ready

⁷²⁰ Strong's Online.

⁷²¹ Ibid.

when it was time to deliver it (1 Corinthians 16:1-3). Attending to the needs of the poor had always been a part of Paul's work.

To Timothy, Paul said that the local assembly should be prepared to look after those who were in need among them. However, he qualified this by saying that the family should look after their own who are in need and not permit that burden to fall onto the assembly (1 Timothy 5:16). "But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel [a faithless one]" (1 Timothy 5:8).⁷²² Paul had a strong sense of responsibility to look after one's own. Today, the government has created numerous safety nets for those who are in need, and, to a large extent, the individual has been squeezed out of the picture. Unfortunately, this has only served to instill a sense of dependency upon the government, and a reduced commitment to the responsibility that we all have to provide for those in need. To the Ephesians, Paul said that the one who has been a thief should work with his hands that which is good so that he has something to share with those in need (Ephesians 4:28). The establishment of government safety nets has made thieves out of some who are quite capable of working; rather than working to provide for their own, they rely on government programs.

Paul makes it clear that he does not crave the gift, but he is aware of the good that it does for the Philippians to identify with him and to do their part to meet his needs. As we've seen, Paul was very aware of giving to others, but here we see that he also knew how to be the recipient and permit others to experience the joy of giving.

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



We have here the second use of the English word *abound*. In the previous verse, Paul desired their *gain* to abound – the Greek word means to be present in abundance, grow, and increase;⁷²³ there is a sense of an abundance that is still growing. The Greek word that Paul uses here means to have an abundance, to be rich in something,⁷²⁴ which gives a greater sense of a stable reality. In the Greek, these are two very different words, even though the difference in meaning is marginal. Inasmuch as Paul has learned to be content in whatever state he finds himself (v. 11), he says that he is full – he has an abundance.

He goes on to say, *I am full*. *Full* is closely related to the word *abound* used here, and is in the perfect tense and passive mood – in other words, Paul is saying, *I have been filled up!*⁷²⁵ What he received from the Philippians through Epaphroditus has filled him up. We have here some italicized words, indicating that these have been supplied by the translators; the transliteration of the Greek is, *I have been filled up, receiving from Epaphroditus these from you.*⁷²⁶

The word *odour* comes from *osme* (*os-may'*), which means smell.⁷²⁷ *Sweet smell* is from one Greek word – *euodia* (*yoo-o-dee'-ah*) – which means fragrance or sweet smell.⁷²⁸ After Noah and his family left the ark, he built an altar to the Lord and sacrificed of the clean animals and birds, which had been with him on the ark: "And the LORD smelled a sweet savour; and the LORD said

⁷²² Strong's Online.

⁷²³ Gingrich Lexicon.

⁷²⁴ Ibid.

⁷²⁵ Strong's Online.

⁷²⁶ Stephanus 1550 NT.

⁷²⁷ Strong's Online.

⁷²⁸ Ibid.

in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart *is* evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done" (Genesis 8:21). This is the first of many times that the Lord refers to the sacrifices made as being a *sweet savour*, meaning a soothing aroma.⁷²⁹ It is not that the smell of burning flesh, hair and feathers made a pleasant fragrance, but that the Lord found the faithful and humble attitude of the heart of the one making the sacrifice, pleasing and acceptable in His sight. The sacrifice represented the obedient heart of faith in the promises of God to one day provide complete redemption through the shed blood of the Savior to come; it was the faith in Him, expressed through obedience, that God found pleasing. Paul uses this historical backdrop to characterize the Philippians gift to him, a gift *wellpleasing* (acceptable) to God.⁷³⁰

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



This is another verse that has suffered much through the years by being carelessly ripped out of its context. Too often, it has been used as a blanket promise that God will provide for us all that we need – we don't have to do anything. However, by placing it back into its context, we realize that it comes on the heels of Paul's expression of appreciation for the Philippians' demonstration of kindness in meeting his areas of need. Even as they have given abundantly to Paul, so he now affirms to them that God will supply for their needs. The promise that Jesus gave was that if we seek "first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness ... all these things [the necessities of life] shall be added" unto us (Matthew 6:33).

Supply is translated from the Greek word *pleroo* (*play-ro'-o*), which means to fill up.⁷³¹ As the Philippians have freely given to meet the necessities of Paul, so God will fill up their needs from His riches in Christ Jesus.

Out of an abuse of this verse, and others like it, has come the Word of Faith movement, and their message is commonly referred to as the prosperity gospel. This has become increasingly popular in our day, with many purveyors of this heresy. Joel Osteen, undoubtedly, wields the greatest influence of anyone in this arena. He is the "pastor" of the largest American church (average weekly attendance figures are 43,500⁷³²) and his television broadcasts reach into an estimated 100 million homes in the US, as well as 100 countries around the world; with the growth of new technology, a million downloads of his audio and video podcasts are made on a weekly basis.⁷³³ There is no denying Osteen's popularity and his impact on the lives of many worldwide. He reveals his Word of Faith foundation when he says, "Remember, your words have creative power. If you want to know what you're going to be like five years from now, just listen to what you're saying about your life today. You are prophesying your future. ... Don't use your words to describe your situation; use your words to change your situation!"⁷³⁴ In his book, *Your Best Life Now*, Osteen makes this telling observation: "... if you develop an image of victory, success, health, abundance, joy, peace, and happiness, nothing on earth will be able to hold those things from

⁷²⁹ Strong's Online.

⁷³⁰ Friberg Lexicon.

⁷³¹ Strong's Online.

⁷³² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lakewood_Church

⁷³³ <http://www.joelosteen.com/About/Pages/OurMinistry.aspx>

⁷³⁴ <http://www.joelosteen.com/HopeForToday/JoelAndVictoriasBlog/May2009/NoWeaponFormedShallProsper/Pages/NoWeaponFormedShallProsper.aspx>

you.”⁷³⁵ In essence, he is saying that we need to visualize our success (whatever we determine that to be) and then speak forth words describing this visualized success; develop the image of whatever you want, and then permit your spoken words to create this for you (*change your situation*) – this is Word of Faith 101!



Kenneth Hagin

positive, name-it-claim-it philosophy, says, “Deep inside each of us, there is a river of life. This river is a wonderful gift given to each of us by God. It flows with good health, a positive outlook on life, and a generous and forgiving attitude. Ideally, this river flows freely through us. ... I once had a stopped-up well in my life. I struggled to tap into the river that I knew was in me.”⁷³⁸ Joyce sees a river of life within everyone – all you need to do is release it! Max Lucado, in his book *Cure for the Common Life*, says this: “You have one. A divine spark. An uncommon call to an uncommon life.”⁷³⁹ When Hagin says, “Say it,” he is acknowledging what Meyer calls the river of life within and what Lucado calls the divine spark. In other words, within all of us is the key to finding happiness, success, and all that we need in life.

Kenneth Hagin, considered to be the father of the Word of Faith movement, outlined four steps to ensure success in his faith lesson called *How to Write Your Own Ticket With God*: say it, do it, receive it and tell it.⁷³⁶ Coupled within step one is the visualization of what you desire and then verbalize. Charles Capps, another preacher of this movement, says that the tongue “can kill you, or it can release the life of God within you”; he also said, “Faith is a seed . . . you plant it by speaking it.”⁷³⁷ Notice that Capps speaks of releasing the *life of God within you*. Evidently, from his perspective, we all have God within us; it’s simply a matter of releasing His life through a word of faith. Joyce Meyer, another who has succumbed to the



Joyce Meyer

Mormonism presents a very similar concept. According to their doctrine, we are all “sons and daughters of God the Eternal Father, we possess in embryo his nature and potential.”⁷⁴⁰ Joyce Meyer might call this a river of life and Max Lucado would call it a divine spark (after the tradition of the Quakers), but, in reality, they are all speaking of the same thing – a little bit of God is in every one of us. New Age proponent Marianne Williamson says this: “... our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. ... You are a

⁷³⁵ Joel Osteen, *Your Best Life Now*, pg. 5.

⁷³⁶ <http://hopefaithprayer.com/faith/kenneth-hagin-faith-lesson-no-23-how-to-write-your-own-ticket-with-god/>

⁷³⁷ <http://www.svchapel.org/resources/articles/22-contemporary-issues/620-joel-osteen-and-the-prosperity-gospel>

⁷³⁸ [http://www.joycemeyer.org/articles/ea.aspx?article=what to do when life becomes dry](http://www.joycemeyer.org/articles/ea.aspx?article=what%20to%20do%20when%20life%20becomes%20dry)

⁷³⁹ Max Lucado, *Cure for the Common Life*, p. 3.

⁷⁴⁰ Stephen Covey, *The Divine Center*, p. 166.

child of God. ... We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone."⁷⁴¹ Hagin, Capps, Meyer, Lucado, Mormonism and Williamson all carry the same message – within each person is a little bit of God, which can be coaxed into a wonderful life. Say it (whatever wonderful thing that you want) and release the god, the river of life, or the divine spark within; Satan doesn't care what you call it – if you believe it, he has you in his deceitful grip. What tremendous darkness that is being hailed as light – “If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great *is* that darkness!” (Matthew 6:23b).



God will meet our needs – not through our spoken word, but through His riches expressed through Jesus Christ. His assurance is that as we seek His righteousness, He will attend to the necessities of life (Matthew 6:33). There is no word of faith – it is a matter of a living faith in Christ coupled with obedience to God's holy calling.

²⁰ Now unto God and our Father *be* glory for ever and ever. Amen.



This would appear to be Paul ascribing glory or praise to God. The Greek translates as, *now the God and father of us the glory unto the ages of the ages.*⁷⁴² Glory is being ascribed to God as an eternal part of Who He is.

Paul has just commended the Philippians for extending themselves to meet his needs, and assured them that God, in turn, would supply all that they needed in accordance with His *riches in glory in Christ Jesus*. The resource for this *supply* is God's glory in Christ, which Paul now states is clearly an eternal part of God – i.e., God's resources are immeasurable. “Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again” (Luke 6:38).

Amen – so it is!

²¹ Salute every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren which are with me greet you.



Salute comes from a Greek word that means to embrace⁷⁴³ or to draw to one's self.⁷⁴⁴ This is much more than a military salute and our western custom of shaking hands. *Saint* comes from the word *holy* in Greek; it is actually an adjective describing those who are in Christ Jesus. The command is to greet all who are holy in Christ Jesus.

Greet comes from a different form of the same Greek word translated as *salute*. The *brethren* (possibly those who were teaching the Word of God, since all *saints* are referred to in the next verse⁷⁴⁵), who are with Paul, send their greetings.

²² All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar's household.

⁷⁴¹ Marianne Williamson, *A Return to Love*, p. 190-191.

⁷⁴² Stephanus 1550 NT.

⁷⁴³ Friberg Lexicon.

⁷⁴⁴ Strong's Online.

⁷⁴⁵ Barnes' Notes.



All of the holy ones send the Philippians greetings, but Paul especially (*chiefly*) notes those of Caesar's house.

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



The word *grace* would be best understood here as speaking of favor.⁷⁴⁶ It is the favor of our Lord, the One to Whom we belong, our Owner, Whom Paul desires to be their portion. “Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men” (1 Corinthians 7:23). “Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin [not doing the good that you know (James 4:17)] unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?” (Romans 6:16). Jesus said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15) – if we would know His favor, then we must walk in obedience to His Word without compromise.

So be it!

⁷⁴⁶ Strong's Online.