

Philippians

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Chapter 1

Part 1: Philippians 1:1-6

In this epistle we learn two important things:

1. We learn that Paul's commitment and faithfulness in living his life as a sacrificial offering to God was rooted in what he believed about Messiah Yeshua. Paul understood the significance of Messiah's identity and His work, and it totally transformed his life.
2. We learn more about the Son of God – Messiah Yeshua – who emptied Himself, taking on the form of a man and dying on the cross (so that we could be forgiven of our sins, conformed to His image and so that we can spend eternity in the Kingdom of God).

Verse 1: *“Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Messiah Yeshua, to all the saints in Messiah Yeshua who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:”*

Timothy: Timothy was very faithful in serving and ministering with Paul.

Bondservants: This is a word that can also be translated 'slaves'. Paul and Timothy saw themselves as slaves/servants of the Living God. Moses, too, considered himself, and was considered by others, to be a servant of God (Exodus 14:31, Hebrews 3:5). Do we consider ourselves slaves to the Living God? Are we indebted to Him for what He has done for us – sending His only Son to suffer and die on the cross for us so that we can be eternally redeemed by His blood?

In Messiah Yeshua: Frequently in Paul's writing we see this phrase: IN Messiah/IN Messiah Yeshua. This is a phrase that speaks of a covenantal relationship – a relationship between God and man. When we accept Messiah Yeshua as our Lord and Saviour (Romans 10:9-10) we are considered to be “in Messiah”. It is only “in Messiah” that we have access to the promises and covenantal blessings of God. It is only when we are “in Messiah” that we can have eternal life.

In Philippi: The congregation that Paul and Timothy are writing this epistle to are located in this city called Philippi. Philippi was a city in North- Eastern Greece. There was a close relationship between this congregation and the Apostle Paul. Paul loved the Philippian congregation, and he was very committed to them.

Bishops: Those in leadership who supervise and oversee the congregants (saints).

Bishops and deacons: Although Paul is writing this epistle to the whole congregation he emphasises the leadership within it. In this letter, Paul is going to give us much theological truth (doctrine). It is particularly important for the leaders to study and understand this truth so that they are able to share it with others in a way that impacts others and brings about a change in their lives.

Note: If we want to mature, we need to understand Biblical doctrine so that we can rightly apply it to our lives. Foundational to good doctrine is having a right understanding of the Son of God (Christology – or the study of Messiah).

This involves not only knowing the stories/historical events surrounding Messiah (ie what He did), but it also involves knowing who He is – how and why He did things, why He was able to perform miracles, why He said the things that He said, etc. When we understand the identity of Messiah in a deeper and a Biblically based way, it is going to impact our ability and our commitment to apply Biblical principles to our lives.

Verse 2: *“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Messiah Yeshua.”*

Grace ... and peace: The vast majority of time Paul speaks about grace first, for this simple reason: without the grace of God, we can't have the peace of God. Grace is not only the key element that makes the gift of salvation possible, but it is also through grace that our lives are transformed – grace teaches us to say “no” to ungodliness and “no” to the desires of this world (Titus 2:11-14). Grace brings about obedience (which is pleasing to God) in our lives. It is only when we are living in obedience to God that we are going to experience His peace (peace is what we experience as a result of living in the will of God). Obedience or doing good works do not lead to salvation, however once we are saved obedience (good deeds) are a fruit of salvation. Obedience is a natural outcome that shows others that we are truly saved.

The Lord Messiah Yeshua: The Lordship of Messiah is emphasized throughout this book. Paul wants people to understand that when we submit to Messiah's Lordship in our lives we are going to grow and mature. When we are submitted to the Lordship of Messiah, we are going to be anointed with power to do great things that bring honour and glory to Him. When Yeshua is the Lord of our lives we will live very differently. We will be a living testimony that bears witness to the reality of God, as people will see Him ministering in and through our lives – fulfilling His purposes through us.

Verse 3: *“I give thanks to my God with every remembrance of you,”*

Note: Paul was a man of prayer. He prayed for this congregation.

Verse 4: *“always in all prayer of mine on behalf of you with joy making requests,”*

Always in all prayer: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

With joy making requests: Paul is in prison and in shackles (Philippians 1:7), yet he has joy. The world would not understand someone having joy whilst they are in prison. However, as believers, who have an intimate and personal relationship with God (by means of His only begotten Son – Messiah Yeshua), we experience joy. Joy is not based on our circumstances, but it is based on the fact that we know Him, and because we are known by Him as His son or daughter. When we understand that we are His purchased possession, that He has taken ownership of us, we realize that whatever happens on this earth is temporary – a passing vapour (James 4:14). Our joy is based on the fact that we have a true and sure future expectation that we are going to dwell with God for ever and ever in His kingdom. For eternity we are going to experience His love and His presence. This is our hope, and this gives us great joy!

Verse 5: *“for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now,”*

From the first day until now: From the first day that Paul went to the people of Philippi, they embraced his word (the message of the gospel) and they understood that he was a man who was anointed by God. The Holy Spirit was organizing Paul and was leading him and directing him, filling him with words of revelation, and they embraced him and became partners with him in the gospel.

Verse 6: *“being confident of this same thing, that the One who has begun in you a good work will bring it to its completion until the day of Messiah Yeshua;”*

Being confident: The word used here is a word that speaks about trust, it is a word that shows an assurance about something.

The One: God Himself (whether God the Father, God the Son or through the ministry of the Holy Spirit)

The One who has begun in you a good work: This good work in us begins the moment we accept the gospel. This is a promise. Biblically ‘good’ is a word that alludes to God’s will. The work that God has begun in us, this work that He is going to bring to perfection, is rooted in His will and not in ours.

Completion: This word in Greek alludes to that which is perfect. When something is perfect there is no need for improvement. When God does this work in our lives, He does it perfectly. It is not a work that is lacking or a work that needs to be redone. This is the same word that Messiah cried out immediately before He died upon the cross (John 19:30 – “It is finished” – Messiah’s work was over; it was completely done, and it was perfect).

The day of Messiah Yeshua: The “Day of the Lord” (used very frequently in the Old Testament) is a day that refers to God’s judgment or wrath being poured out upon the world. In the New Testament “The Day of the Lord” is a term used very infrequently, the “Day of Messiah” being used more frequently. The “Day of Messiah” and the “Day of the Lord” are two completely different days with two completely different outcomes. The “Day of the Lord” is a day designed for those who have rejected a covenantal relationship with God, through Messiah Yeshua.

The “Day of Messiah” (our Blessed Hope, also called the rapture – Titus 2:13), on the other hand, is a day “designed” for believers. It is a day that precedes the “Day of the Lord (i.e. His wrath). Believers are not appointed to wrath and therefore are not going to experience this “Day of the Lord”, the wrath of God (1 Thessalonians 5:9).

At this “Day of Messiah” the heavens are going to open up with a shout, and a trumpet is going to blow (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18, 1 Corinthians 15:51-52). Those who are alive at that time and who are IN Messiah, and the bodies of those who died IN Messiah before this time, are going to rise to meet Yeshua in the clouds, in the air. This day is not to be confused with the second coming of Messiah – On this day, Messiah’s feet do not stand on the Mount of Olives (Zechariah 14:4). The second coming of Messiah (to earth) happens (days, weeks, months, years??) after the rapture has already taken place.

Chapter 1

Part 2: Philippians 1:7-11

Paul writes to the congregation at Philippi because he wants to make sure that they are thinking properly. Do we understand Biblical truth and are we living lives (behaving in a way) that are pleasing to God?

Verse 7: *“just as it is right for me to think in this way on behalf of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defence and certification of the gospel, you all are joint partakers with me of grace.”*

It is right for me to think in this way: Do we have a right way of thinking? Thinking properly is foundational to accomplishing the things that God wants us to do. If we do not think properly, we are not going to live properly.

On behalf of you: This is a phrase that means something that is “done for another person’s benefit or support, or because you are representing the interests of that person”. Although Paul was in chains and in prison, he was not thinking about himself. His prayers, thoughts and concerns were geared toward this congregation in Philippi.

In my chains: Paul, because of his defence of the gospel, was in prison when he wrote this letter to the Philippian congregation. He was not writing this in a cosy study or from a plush estate that he was able to purchase with all the wealth he had acquired as an apostle of the Living God.

The defence ... of the gospel: As we get closer to the end of this age, the gospel message is going to come under increasing attack (2 Timothy 4:3-5). People are not going to want to stomach Biblical truth (2 Thessalonians 2:10-12). The true gospel is not ‘narrow’ or ‘bigoted’. It is the ONLY message of salvation, and that is why Paul is defending it – even to the point of prison and (ultimately) death.

Certification of the gospel: People work so hard to not be offensive to other religions, but many care less about offending Biblical truth or speaking against Messiah. What Paul is saying here is that his suffering for the gospel is a testimony that certifies that the gospel is real. Today, those who suffer the most ridicule or hatred (on a world scale) are those who speak out the simple truths of the Bible. Biblical truth that wasn’t controversial 50 years ago is now seen as highly controversial and offensive in many places around the world.

Verse 8: *“For God is my witness, how greatly I desire you all with the compassion in Messiah Yeshua.”*

I desire you all with the compassion in Messiah Yeshua: Paul, having received the Holy Spirit by faith in the gospel message, became someone whose life reflected loving his neighbour as he loved himself.

Compassion: This is a word that speaks about a feeling in the pit of one’s stomach. It is a feeling that wells up within a person as a deep and abiding concern for someone else/others.

Verse 9: *“And this I pray, that your **love** may abound still more and more in **knowledge** and all **discernment**,”*

Your love: This love is the love of God that they had experienced. The love of God in our lives produces knowledge and discernment.

Abound still more and more: The love of God is not static. It doesn't just come into our lives and remain as it is – it grows and abounds more and more.

Knowledge: Literally: To know upon. Knowledge has a foundation that it is built upon. When we live out our lives rooted in the love of God, that we have received, it is going to produce (spiritual) knowledge in our lives.

Love...knowledge...discernment: When we are living compelled by the love of God, we are going to be recipients of supernatural knowledge and discernment (discernment is a form of wisdom). God is going to give us insight into making wise and knowledgeable decisions – decisions which are according to His will. Paul is praying that this Philippian congregation will recognise that this way of living produces supernatural wisdom and knowledge.

Verse 10: *“that you may document the things that are excellent, that you may be pure and without blemish till the day of Messiah,”*

Document: A document contains information, and it certifies or reveals something. This love, that produces knowledge and discernment, will demonstrate or prove (testify to) the excellent things in our lives.

The things that are excellent: Most scholars see the excellent things as the Fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). They see the excellent things as a transformed life – a life that manifests the character of God (in behaviour, deeds, words and feelings).

Pure and without blemish: As believers, as we begin to minister to other people (loving them in a sacrificial and not in a selfish way) we are going to be used by God as instruments of transformation/change in their lives. As we minister to other people their lives are transformed, but, at the same time, doing ministry transforms us – purifying us and removing the blemishes (defects) in our own lives.

Without blemish: This is a word that speaks about acceptability. God's grace, the righteousness of Messiah, is imputed to us when we believe in Him. God, seeing the imputed righteousness of His Son, which was given to us at the point of our salvation, considers us acceptable to enter into His Kingdom – without a single deed having been done. The righteous of Messiah is our entrance into, and assurance of, salvation (through faith alone - believing in the sufficiency of Messiah's work on the cross). Paul is not talking here about imputed righteousness. He is talking about an acquired righteousness which affects our behaviour – the process of sanctification. Becoming pure and without blemish is acceptable in God's sight.

The day of Messiah: This is referring to our blessed hope – the rapture. All believers – those who are alive at this time as well as those who have died in Messiah – are going to receive their new, resurrected bodies. This is a day of hope. It is a day when we are going to be completely transformed.

Verse 11: *“having been filled with the fruits of righteousness through Messiah Yeshua, to the glory and praise of God.”*

The fruits of righteousness: Declarative righteousness is the righteousness that is imputed to us through Messiah. Through submitting to the work of the indwelling Holy Spirit in our lives, post salvation, our behaviour begins to reflect this righteousness.

To the glory and praise of God: Although we submit, it is the Holy Spirit who does the work in our lives and therefore God is the One who gets all the praise and glory. This should be the objective of every believer's life – to live in such a way that we bring glory to God (Matthew 5:16). Our good works manifest to others the fact that God, the Holy Spirit of Messiah, lives within us. As we obey Him, His glory is manifested in our lives. There is a relationship between glory and praise. Throughout Scripture, whenever someone encounters the glory of God they fall down before Him, and they begin to praise Him.

Note: Being full of the fruits of righteousness, for the glory and for the praise of God, is true spiritual maturity.

Chapter 1

Part 3: Philippians 1:12-23

When people hear our name what comes to their minds? Ie: what is our testimony or our witness? This is an important question to ask ourselves.

Verse 12: *“But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have more so turned out for the furtherance of the gospel,”*

Want: This is a strong word in the Greek language.

The things which happened to me have more so turned out: There was a purpose for the things that Paul was going through – prison, chains, etc. Paul was in a Roman prison because of his commitment to the gospel. Being in prison, instead of causing the gospel to regress, caused the gospel to progress/move forward.

Verse 13: *“so that it has become evident that I am in my chains in Messiah, a message in all the judgment halls and in every remaining place.”*

My chains: From society's perspective, those who are in prison and in chains are considered to be criminals, shameful. Paul viewed his time in prison from a very different perspective. The predominant religion at Paul's time was idolatry. People worshipped at pagan shrines. No other pagan religious leaders were being thrown into prison at that time. No other religion was under attack. However, when Paul spoke the true message of salvation, the authorities did not like it and incarcerated him and caused him to suffer. Suffering for the gospel was proof in itself that the message of salvation is the genuine truth of God.

My chains in Messiah: The reason why Paul was in bondage and enslaved was because he was in Messiah.

A message in all the judgment halls and in every remaining place: Those around Paul knew that Paul was not a criminal. They knew that he was suffering greatly in order to manifest the gospel.

Verse 14: *“and many of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are all the more abundant in boldness, without fear, to speak the word.”*

Note: When we see changes in the Scripture we need to take note. Changes in grammar, changes in words etc, help us to rightly interpret Scripture.

In the Lord: In Philippians 1:13 Paul spoke of his chains as being IN Messiah. Here he changes the word 'Messiah' ('the Anointed One') to 'Lord' ('Master'). Paul understood that he was under the Lordship of Messiah. This changed the way he lived. Paul was willing to make sacrifices. He was bold and willing to suffer for his faith. When we as believers understand that we are called to live with Messiah as the Lord and Master of our lives, we are going to live sacrificially, like Paul did.

All the more abundant: Paul's imprisonment infused courage, boldness and daring into the attitudes and behaviours of the believers. They were no longer afraid to speak the words of truth to those around them (in their workplaces, in the marketplaces, in their neighbourhoods, etc).

Verse 15: *"On one hand some (proclaim) from envy and strife, but on the other hand some from a proper understanding, proclaim Messiah:"*

Note: In this verse Paul is NOT speaking about the motivation behind someone's preaching (whether they are preaching from envy/strife or from good). What Paul is saying is that no matter what the motivation is, the important thing is that Messiah is being named.

On one hand...but on the other hand: Paul is comparing two different (preaching) situations.

From envy: Some people speak about Messiah, and they do so with the wrong motivation. They may be speaking in this way because they are envious (possibly because they see the blessings of God moving in the lives of other people who share the gospel, and they want that blessing for themselves). This is not a right commitment to truth. These, however, want the outcome of faithfulness, so they preach the gospel out of envy or jealous for what these other individuals are receiving, for what God is doing in their lives.

Strife: Their desire is to exalt themselves over other servants of Messiah. We need to remember that those who proclaim Messiah are not in competition to one another – we are a team, fellow servants.

Proper: Good

Verse 16: *"On one hand some from selfish ambition proclaim Messiah, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains;"*

Selfish ambition: For some, this is their motivation for preaching the gospel. Some preach for what they can get out of it. They are not concerned about God's glory but are concerned about their own glory.

Add affliction to my chains: They are doing things in a way that cause Paul to suffer more.

Verse 17: *"but on the other hand some (proclaim) out of love, knowing that for the defence of the gospel I have been appointed."*

Note: There are two possible motivations that drive those who preach the gospel - those who are doing it from the right motivations and those who are doing it from the wrong motivation.

I have been appointed: Paul preached the gospel because God had set him apart to do so. This was Paul's motivation.

Verse 18: *"For this is what is of concern: only that in all ways, whether in pretence or in truth, Messiah is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice."*

This is what is of concern: At the end of the day, this is what really matters.

In pretence: Literally: 'To stand before'. They are doing it because they want attention.

Messiah is preached: Paul was not concerned about the preacher having a good or bad motivation for preaching the gospel. What Paul rejoiced in was the simple fact that Messiah was preached, and that people heard about Him. Paul wanted the name of Messiah to go out, even if it was being done by individuals with questionable character or motivations (God used a donkey to relay His message to Balaam – Numbers 22:28-31). Paul is not excusing or justifying poor motivation, but that is not the issue he is emphasizing or dealing with in this portion of Scripture.

Note: This is a very important Biblical truth: God's Word will never return void (Isaiah 55:11). When sincere people hear (through any means) about Yeshua they begin to pursue God. God is faithful to get them to truth, to reveal Himself to them.

Verse 19: *"For I know that this will turn out for my salvation because of your prayers and the supply of the Spirit of Messiah Yeshua,"*

My salvation: This is not speaking about a salvation that saves Paul and gives him an assurance that he will have eternal life. Paul was already saved. The word used here leaves the reader with the idea of deliverance. Paul was a man of faith, completely committed to God. From a human perspective, he was wasting away in prison and people were treating him like a criminal because of his commitment to Messiah. Despite all the opposition that Paul was facing, he had an assurance that, in the end, this would all work out into a glorious victory for him - maybe not while he was on earth, but for eternity.

Your prayers and the supply of the Spirit of Messiah Yeshua: At the foundation of deliverance or victory over difficult circumstances are prayers and the supply of the Holy Spirit. There is a connection between our prayers and the supply of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Our prayers release the Spirit of Yeshua into our lives and into the situations we find ourselves in. One of the primary aspects of the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives is that He brings about divine order into our lives.

Your prayers: Our prayers make a difference. Paul knew (and affirmed) that the Philippian congregation was a congregation of prayer. They were praying for Paul that God's will would be manifested through him, that God would move in Paul's situation.

Verse 20: *"according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Messiah will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death."*

Earnest expectation and hope: Paul, standing on the right foundation, had an earnest expectation and hope that he would not be ashamed about anything that he had done (or not done) in Messiah.

With all boldness: With every confidence.

Messiah will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death: This was the objective (goal) of Paul's life. This was his purpose – which he was willing to live or die for. We need purpose in our lives. Not our own purpose, but God's purpose for it. If we live aimlessly (without purpose) we are going to live spiritually frustrated lives. When we live for the purposes of God, He is going to move in our lives to direct our paths. Paul wanted God's greatness (the exaltation of Messiah) to be seen through what he did with his body – his behaviour, his speech, his thoughts, even through dying etc.

Verse 21: *“For to me, to live is Messiah, and to die is gain.”*

Note: Paul wanted Messiah to be magnified through him – through both his life and through his death. Dead or alive, Paul's desire was to be used by God to bring Him glory.

Gain: Profit. Paul considered death to be profitable or gain for him. Most people are upset, scared or broken when they are confronted with death. This was not Paul's response to, or perspective of, death. Paul looked forward to his death.

Verse 22: *“But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labour; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell.”*

What I shall choose I cannot tell: Paul was torn between two desires – living so that he could produce more fruit, or dying and being with Messiah.

Verse 23: *“For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Messiah, which is far better.”*

Having a desire to depart: Paul did not fear death, but that does not mean that he ran to it in a suicidal way. When we rightly understand the gospel, we will not fear death, but we will embrace it – knowing that we will spend eternity with Messiah. Nothing is better than this.

Chapter 1

Part 4: Philippians 1:24-30

For many people, hearing that they are going to die is terrible news. Many people become fearful, stricken by panic, and want to weep as they do not know what's going to happen to them when they pass away. Paul, however, knew the truth. He knew that because of the grace of God, because of Messiah's work on the cross, he was not going to be subject to eternal punishment/hell. Death for a believer is not something that we need to fear. It is a transformation, a journey, into unbelievably great joy and pleasure – a step into the very presence of God.

Verse 24: *“Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you.”*

Note: Paul was convicted by God that it was not yet his time to die. He felt, in God, that it was more necessary for him to remain alive at that time, for the sake of the congregations. Paul was committed to this congregation. He was committed to the ministry that God had entrusted to him. If we are not committed to serving God, to doing His will (His ministry), practising His truth, etc then we are wasting our lives – living lives that have little to no eternal significance for ourselves or in our impacting of others for the Kingdom.

Verse 25: *“And being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progression and joy of faith,”*

Being confident of this...I shall remain: Paul is convinced that it is not yet his time to die.

Progression: This is a word used for the advancement of or for the furthering of (the gospel, their spiritual maturity, etc). It is a word that speaks about a moving forward. The gospel is going to go forward, and it is going to touch more people. Paul is also speaking, in this context, about their spiritual maturity, which is also going to grow, progress, move forward.

For your progression and joy of faith: Paul is going to continue to live, continue in ministry, for this purpose: for their progression and for their joy. A very important Biblical principle is revealed here. Once we have accepted the gospel (the good news about the redemption we have IN Messiah) and have been saved, the gospel (through the work of the Holy Spirit) begins to move in our lives to sanctify us, to cause us to mature, grow, progress. As this becomes the reality of our lives, we become filled with joy. This joy is not dependant on our circumstances (what we have or do not have). True joy comes when there is a progression of the gospel (sanctification) in our lives – when we are living as good citizens of God's Kingdom while we are on this earth.

Joy of faith: Biblically there is a connection between faith and obedience. We are saved by faith alone. We are not saved by obedience. However, Biblical faith leads to obedience in our lives. As we progress in faith, as we walk in obedience, the fruit of that is going to be joy.

Verse 26: *“that your boasting abounds in Messiah Yeshua through me and my coming again unto you.”*

Boasting: When we boast about ourselves it is not a good thing. When we boast about God it means that we are rejoicing in Him, we are praising Him.

Your boasting abounds in Messiah Yeshua: The purpose of Paul's ministry was that people would be able to boast in Messiah. Paul is conveying to us that his life was about impacting others to exalt, to be thankful, to give praise or to rejoice in Messiah. That is why Paul was willing to remain in prison and in chains.

Through me and my coming again unto you: Paul was not a prima-donna. He did not have an inflated view of his own importance. The Philippians were not going to boast in the fact that Paul had come to them again. He is saying that they were going to boast in the Lord, our Deliverer, when He delivered Paul from prison. Paul was going to be an example to them of what God can do – how God can deliver His people. Paul is not putting emphasis on his coming again to them. He is emphasising what God is going to do – granting Paul freedom to continue his ministry, to continue investing in this congregation who are going to boast in Messiah.

Verse 27: *“Only worthy let your conversation be of the gospel of Messiah, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind contending together for the faith of the gospel,”*

Only: This word can also be interpreted ‘just’. Paul is talking about the primary (main) thing – ‘just this’. Paul wants what he is talking about here (worthy conduct) to be our primary focus.

Worthy: Something that is worthy is something that is of great significance.

Conversation: The first part of this Greek word is a word which can be translated ‘politically’. It is a word that alludes to government and citizenship. It is a word that speaks of living like a good citizen. Our behaviour (lifestyle) on earth needs to reflect our Heavenly citizenship. The purpose of the gospel is to save us and then, once we are saved, it teaches us how to behave in a Godly way (Titus 2:11-13).

Stand fast in one spirit, with one mind contending together: We are not alone. When the Holy Spirit brings our individual lives into Godly order, and when we begin to live our lives in a way that reflects our Heavenly citizenship, the Holy Spirit empowers us to live in unity (oneness) with those who also believe – being able to stand together, but also being able to contend together or war together (spiritual warfare) for the sake of the gospel, for the sake of the Kingdom.

Verse 28: *“and not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from God.”*

Adversaries: Opponents or enemies.

A proof of perdition: When we walk in confidence – knowing that we are not alone and that we are fighting battles together – we show or prove to our enemies (those who are in opposition to the gospel) that they are going to be defeated.

But to you of salvation: This unity is proof to us that we have a sure expectation of our deliverance or victory over our enemies.

That from God: God is the One who grants us this victory (Psalm 133).

Verse 29: *“For to you it has been granted on behalf of Messiah, not only to believe in Him, but also on behalf of Him to suffer,”*

Granted: The base word of this word is the word for ‘grace’.

On behalf of Him to suffer: We need to understand that part of a credible lifestyle (a lifestyle which is rooted in gospel truth, Biblical revelation) is that we are expected to suffer for Messiah – this should be considered ‘normal’. Paul was a living example of this.

Verse 30: *“having the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear is in me. “*

Having the same conflict which you saw in me: Paul is warning the Philippian congregation that in the same way he suffered they can expect to suffer. He is admonishing them to do what he did - to stand firm for the truth of God, having confidence that the attacks of the enemy will not demoralise, defeat or discourage them. This world is passing away. Our lives on earth are a vapour in comparison to eternity (James 4:14). Ultimately, as believers, we are going to experience deliverance or victory. This is our hope and joy.

Chapter 2

Part 1: Philippians 2:1-11

There are great benefits for faith - not only eternal benefits, but benefits which are available for us today. This is what Paul is going to emphasise in this chapter. Paul loved this congregation in Philippi. He was committed to seeing them do great things for the Kingdom of God. He wanted them to know that God is faithful – moving in supernatural and miraculous ways in order for them (us) to accomplish His will. Are we interested in and passionate about being the servants of God? Does doing His will excite us?

Verse 1: *“Therefore if there is any encouragement in Messiah, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any compassion and mercy,”*

If... if... if...if: Paul is not using this word to cast doubt into the text. It is a word that can also be understood as ‘since’ or ‘because’. There is encouragement when we are IN Messiah – no doubt should be cast on or read into this statement.

Encouragement...comfort...fellowship...compassion...mercy: This is what God offers His followers/disciples. Paul is in prison. However, even in prison he is able to testify that he is receiving all of these from being in a relationship with the Living God through Messiah Yeshua. If we lack any of these things, they are available to us in a gospel centred relationship with Messiah Yeshua.

Verse 2: *“fulfil my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.”*

Fulfil my joy: This is an instruction. Paul's joy was not in what he was experiencing. His joy and motivation (what moved him, excited him and pleased him) was influencing (not manipulating) others and seeing them living for Messiah Yeshua, doing things out of obedience to the Word of God.

Like-minded: '(One)mind', and 'like-minded' appear often in this epistle. Paul is exhorting us to think properly and to think in a similar way to fellow believers (who have received the mind of Messiah – 1 Corinthians 2:16).

Having the same love: It is only through the love of God that we are enabled to think properly. Having this love, and thinking properly, leads to us being in one accord with one another.

Verse 3: *“Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or vain glory, but in lowliness of mind let each consider others surpassing himself.”*

Selfish ambition: This is the second time that Paul mentions selfishness in this letter (see Philippians 1:16). Selfishness is the exact opposite of what we are commanded to do – to love our neighbour as we love ourselves (Leviticus 19:18). Selfish people do everything only for their own interests – what seems right to them, what makes them feel good etc. The focus is only on themselves. Selfishness leads to conflict and disunity. God does not want us to focus on ourselves. As we focus on Him and love Him with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength we are going to manifest this love by loving our neighbours like we love ourselves – investing in their lives. When we invest ourselves in others, concerned about their joy, we become recipients of joy. This may seem counterintuitive, but it is the truth of God.

Vain glory: Empty pride. All of us are living lifestyles that either reflect the glory of God or the empty glory that we shower on ourselves. When we are reflecting the glory of God, it is a weighty glory – it is a glory that has substance and leads to us changing. Vain glory (self-glory) is empty. It has no substance and therefore leads to no lasting change.

Note: Paul is reminding us to not be motivated to do things for selfish reasons or for vain glory.

Lowliness of mind: Humility of mind. We need to be people who think properly, humbly, of ourselves.

Consider: Esteem. Think about. When we have a humble opinion of ourselves, and a higher opinion of others, we are enabled to live in unity.

Verse 4: *“Let each of you consider not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.”*

Consider: To think about.

Note: Our objective is not to pursue our own objectives or goals. We are to help others to pursue God's objectives for them. In other words, we need to put others ahead of ourselves – becoming a tool or an instrument that brings about God's will in their lives.

Verse 5: *“Let this mindset be in you which was also in Messiah Yeshua,”*

Note 1: This verse is a New Testament commandment. Paul is commanding us to think in the same way that Yeshua thinks. As we think like Yeshua, we are going to become like Him.

Note 2: For the next couple of verses, we move into a section that focusses on the study of Messiah – what theologians have dubbed ‘Christology’.

Verse 6: *“whom, being in the form of God, did not consider it to be grasped to be equal with God,”*

Whom: Talking of Messiah Yeshua.

Being in the form of God: Messiah exists in the form/likeness of God. He has always and will always exist in this form (eternity past, present and eternity future). There was never a time when Messiah did not exist in the appearance or likeness of God.

Did not consider it to be grasped to be equal with God: Yeshua is God. He did not have to think of a way of how He could be equal to God. He is equal with God. In His eternal state, the eternal Son of God, He has never been less than God.

Verse 7: *“But emptied Himself, and took upon Himself the form of a servant, in the likeness of man becoming:”*

Emptied Himself: Yeshua, the eternal and beloved Son of our Heavenly Father, humbled Himself and took on a role as a servant. Biblically there is a connection between sonship and servanthood. A good son brings glory to his father. In Numbers 30, if a son made a vow (a business deal etc) his father was obligated to help him to uphold his word (This is not the case with daughters – daughters could be overruled by their fathers and freed from their vows). This principle of a father upholding the word of his son speaks of an equality between a father and a son (an equality between God the Father and His Son).

In the likeness of man becoming: God, the Son, underwent a transformation. Although He was physically transformed, His identity never changed. Even as a man He was NEVER less than God.

Verse 8: *“And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even death on the cross.”*

Became obedient: Obedience has to do with the purposes of God. A wise son always obeys his father. A wise son participates in his father’s will – putting his father’s purposes into action and completing them.

Death: The human body that Yeshua clothed Himself in is what died.

Death on the cross: Dying on a cross communicates shame. Yeshua was willing to suffer shame in order to obey His Father, in order that we could find forgiveness for our sins – eternal redemption.

Verse 9: *“Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and granted Him the name which is above every name,”*

Highly exalted Him and granted Him the name: Because of Yeshua's humility and obedience, God the Father gave to Him a name that is above every name.

Exalted: Lifted Him up. This is a word of affirmation. God the Father was pleased with His Son's behaviour.

Verse 10: *"that at the name of Yeshua every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth,"*

Every knee should bow: For many people they are going to bow the knee to Yeshua when it is too late for their redemption. This proclamation, at this late stage, will hold no eternal value for them. Those who are humble enough, and wise enough, will not wait for this day to confess Yeshua as Lord. If we want our bowing down and confession that Yeshua is Lord to have any eternal significance, we need to respond to Him before we die – i.e. today (Hebrews 3:15).

Verse 11: *"and that every tongue should confess that Messiah Yeshua is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."*

Confess: In the Greek, the word used here refers to a public confession – not a private one.

Chapter 2

Part 2: Philippians 2:12-18

Verse 12: *"Therefore, my beloved, just as always you have obeyed, not only in my coming, but now even more so in my absence, with fear and trembling work out your own salvation;"*

Fear and trembling: This shows respect. It speaks of the behaviour of someone who is totally aware of the identity of Messiah – not only of who He is but also knowing what He has done.

Work out your own salvation: This does NOT mean that we play a role in the salvation that causes us to receive eternal life. The salvation that we receive that gives us eternal life is a free gift from God (Ephesians 2:8-9). We cannot add to it and nor can we subtract from it. This salvation is accessed through faith and not through our works. Paul is not speaking here about the means of salvation but about the outcome of salvation in this world (the fruit of salvation).

Salvation has two very important components to it (Titus 2:11-14):

1. Usually when we speak of salvation we are speaking about justification - having our sins forgiven (when the righteousness of Messiah is imputed to us, and we enter into an eternal relationship with God through Messiah).
2. Salvation has a second component: Victory! Not only are our sins forgiven (the first aspect of salvation, which we cannot earn) but we are able, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to have victory over our bondage to sin (this is the part of salvation that we get to play a role in).

Note: In Colossians 2:16-17 Paul reminds us that the festivals are a paradigm (a picture, a shadow) of things to come. These festivals are instruments of revelation. They teach us about the workings of God. The Passover in Egypt is a picture to us of redemption (like the Passover lamb in Egypt, Yeshua also died on Passover). The blood of the lamb on the doorposts allowed the Israelites to live. The blood (like what Yeshua's blood does for us – Hebrews 12:24, 1 John 1:7-9) redeemed the people from their bondage to Egypt and allowed them to go into the wilderness to worship God, to have a relationship with God (Exodus 5:1). The Israelites were redeemed from Egypt (a paradigm of the first aspect of salvation spoken about above – this redemption came about solely through God). Other than eating of the lamb and spreading its blood on the doorframes, the Israelites had nothing to do with their initial salvation from Egypt/bondage. Part of their redemptive experience was that Moses led them to Mount Sinai – Exodus 3:12. The purpose of God redeeming His people from Egypt was so that He could meet them at this mountain and give them His Word, which they could then apply to their lives (Exodus 20). This is a picture/a paradigm of the second aspect of salvation spoken about above – the working out of their salvation (victory) with fear and trembling. Most of the people who left Egypt did not take this second aspect of salvation seriously, and they died in the wilderness. The difference for us today is that Messiah's blood (superior to the lamb's blood in Egypt) has purchased for us eternal redemption (Hebrews 9:12-15). Once we have accepted Yeshua as our Lord and Saviour we are assured of our eternal salvation, eternal life (John 3:16). Our souls will never see death. HOWEVER, what can die is our testimony or our effectiveness in this age. This is what Paul is warning us about here. We need to work out, with fear and trembling, our testimony/effectiveness/victory in this age. We do this by knowing the Word of God and by being obedient to it. Obedience to God's Word should be our priority. We do not need to figure out how to do this on our own – God has provided us with a Helper who teaches us and helps us to obey (John 14:26, John 16:7-15).

Verse 13: *“for it is God who works in you both to will and to work for His good pleasure.”*

Note: This verse is not talking about being saved from our sins. Paul is speaking to people who have already been saved from their sins. Paul is speaking here about the maturing of salvation – being able to live a victorious life. God has saved us so that we can manifest the power of the Kingdom of God while we are still on this earth.

God who works in you: God works in us through His Holy Spirit, whom we receive when we are saved (1 Corinthians 12:3, Romans 10:9)

To will and to work: Having been saved, we are going to become individuals that know the will of God. Salvation gives us the potential to know God's will. When we know God's will, He is able to work through us so that His will can be fulfilled.

Good: When something is pronounced 'good' it means that it is according to the will of God.

His good pleasure: Knowing the will of God and working according to His will not only brings God pleasure, but it also brings us pleasure. Agreeing with God and being united with Him in a common purpose lead to us seeing things from His perspective – we begin to think like Him.

Verse 14: *“Do all things without complaining and debating,”*

Note: The children of Israel grumbled and murmured against Moses in the wilderness. It was God's will that they were in the wilderness, so they were in fact grumbling and murmuring

against the will of God. These people were redeemed, but they refused to be transformed. They refused the Holy Spirit (Exodus 20:19). We, having received eternal redemption and the indwelling Holy Spirit, are in a better position than they were. However, we are warned in Hebrews 12:25-29 that we are not to refuse when God speaks to us. We need to submit to the leadership of the Holy Spirit in our lives, so that we are a people who are transformed – a people who do not argue, murmur or complain every time God gives us an instruction.

Verse 15: *“that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world,”*

You may become blameless: Every time we disobey God it is like receiving a blemish on our bodies. However, obedience to God has a cleansing aspect to it.

Harmless: When we pursue our own wills (doing what is right in our own eyes), we become dangerous and have the potential to harm other people spiritually. When we agree with God and submit to Him, we are not in danger of harming or wounding others.

Fault: Spot or blemish

A crooked and perverse generation: In the last decade we have seen a very rapid decline in the generation that we are living in. What used to be called evil is now considered good, what was good is now called by new names – bigotry, narrow-mindedness, etc (Isaiah 5:20). We are living in a crooked (distorted) and perverse generation.

You shine as lights in the world: We are called to stand out in this generation – to manifest light. The best interpreter of the Scripture is the Scripture itself. This is a hermeneutical principle: when we see a word in Scripture it is often beneficial to find the first place (and subsequent occurrences) in Scripture where it occurs. In Genesis 1:3 God, bringing order into creation, created a supernatural light that shone in the darkness. It was, however, that on the fourth day of creation God created the natural lights – the sun, moon and stars (Genesis 1:14-17). As believers we are going to be like these lights found in Genesis 1:14 – a sign (a source of revelation) to those who are wicked and who are living in darkness (see also Daniel 12:3).

Verse 16: *“holding fast the Word of life, so that I may boast in the day of Messiah that I have not run in vain or laboured in vain.”*

The day of Messiah: This is the third time in this epistle that Paul has written about the day of Messiah (Philippians 1:6,10). This Day is referring to our Blessed Hope or the rapture.

In vain: In emptiness. Paul did not want his life to count for nothing. All that he invested into people he wanted to count for him toward eternal gain or reward.

Verse 17: *“Yes, and if I am being poured out upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all.”*

Poured out: Paul is referring to a libation offering. A libation offering was liquid (sometimes water or wine) that was poured out upon a sacrifice. The reason for this was to heighten or

enhance this offering before God (Leviticus 23:13). Paul wanted, in some way, to play a role in their lives by being like that libation offering before God for them – enhancing their deeds, their sacrifice, before God. Paul affirms that this would bring him great joy.

I am glad and rejoice with you all: Paul rejoiced in the fact that he was part of what they were doing for God, part of what they were offering up to God.

Verse 18: *“For the same reason you also be glad and rejoice with me.”*

You also be glad and rejoice: Paul has spoken to them about his desire to be an influence in their spiritual lives (like a drink offering on their sacrifice). He is invested in their lives. When this congregation lives in a sacrificial way before God, they are going to be people who rejoice, people who are full of joy. Living in obedience to God leads to victory and to joy. The joy of the Lord gives us strength (Nehemiah 8:10). Joy is able to transform our worship into worship that is pleasing to God (Psalm 27:6).

Chapter 2

Part 3: Philippians 2:19-30

Even though Paul was in prison, his ministry did not stop. Experiencing spiritual victory is not dependent upon man and his circumstances, but spiritual victory is dependent upon God.

Verse 19: *“But I hope in the Lord Yeshua to send Timothy to you quickly, that I also may be encouraged when I know your state.”*

I hope in the Lord Yeshua: All hope is rooted in Messiah and in His Lordship in our lives. Messiah rules over everything and over every decision – even over whether Timothy would receive permission to go to this congregation or not.

Encouraged: Having a good mindset. Paul wants this congregation to realize that he is concerned about them. He is concerned about the fact that they don't have a spiritual leader.

When I know your state: Paul wanted Timothy to go to this Philippian congregation and then report back to him as to how they were really doing. Paul was not concerned about himself (being in chains and in prison) but he was concerned about them and wanted to hear news about them.

Verse 20: *“For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state.”*

Like-minded: Timothy ministered to others in the way that Paul ministered to them. Paul trusted Timothy to care for this congregation in the way that he would if he was able to be with them.

Care: This is a word of ministry.

Verse 21: *“For all seek their own, not the things which are of Messiah Yeshua.”*

All seek their own: Most people have the tendency to selfishly seek their own interests, rather than the interests of the ones that they are called to minister to.

Verse 22: *“But you know his proven character, that as a son with his father he ministered with me in the gospel.”*

Proven character: They had proof that Timothy behaved like a son – he carried out and honoured the work of Paul (his spiritual father).

Verse 23: *“Therefore I hope to send him at once, as soon as I see how it goes with me.”*

Note: Paul was in prison and needed someone to care for him (take him food etc). Paul’s intent was to send Timothy to them as soon as he had assessed his situation in prison.

Verse 24: *“But I am confident in the Lord that I myself shall quickly come to you.”*

Note: Paul knows that he is not going to die in this prison. He has an expectation that he’s going to be released and be able to go to them.

Verse 25: *“Yet I considered it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier, but your messenger and the one who ministered to my need;”*

Your messenger: Epaphroditus took and gave Biblical truth to this congregation.

Verse 26: *“Since he was longing for you all and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick.”*

He was longing for you all: Epaphroditus, like Paul, had a great love for this congregation. Individuals who love others, and who have the ability to take their minds off their own circumstances to focus on the needs of others, are individuals who are used by God in a mighty way. We need to have the mind of Messiah (Philippians 2:5). He did not think of Himself, but He humbled Himself and was obedient - even to the point of death. Like Yeshua, we need to be people who consider or think of others as better or as more important than ourselves.

Verse 27: *“For indeed he was sick almost unto death; but God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have grief upon grief.”*

Note: Not only was God merciful to Epaphroditus but God was also merciful to Paul. If Epaphroditus had died, it would have brought a lot of sorrow to Paul.

Verse 28: *“Therefore I sent him the more eagerly, that when you see him again you may rejoice, and I may be less sorrowful.”*

Note: Paul wanted to send Timothy to this congregation, but he was not going to do that until he understood what his own situation was. In the meantime, Paul was going to send Epaphroditus to them. They knew Epaphroditus and they loved Epaphroditus.

Verse 29: *“Therefore receive him in the Lord with all joy, and hold such men in honour;”*

Hold such men in honour: Paul is commending Epaphroditus as a man of honour. Epaphroditus was a committed representative of the Kingdom of God. In a unique way, Epaphroditus worked, together with Paul, on behalf of others. Paul exhorted this congregation to honour Epaphroditus for this.

Verse 30: *“because for the work of Messiah he came close to death, disregarding his life, in order that he might fulfil the deficiency that was lacking in your service to me.”*

Disregarding his life: Paul and Epaphroditus shared the same approach to life. Neither man held the things of this world in high regard and neither man worried about dying for the sake of the gospel. Their focus was on the work of Messiah being done.

He might fulfil the deficiency that was lacking: Epaphroditus was useful in all that he did. Epaphroditus was a blessing to this congregation, because what they were unable to do for Paul, he was able to do.

Note: Paul is revealing the faithfulness of God to provide for His people. God uses people who are willing to serve Him. Paul is telling this Philippian congregation that Epaphroditus was a fellow servant and soldier of the gospel. Epaphroditus was a provision from God for Paul. When the Philippian congregation were unable to minister to Paul or meet his needs, God sent Epaphroditus into Paul’s life. This is the same one who will be sent to the Philippian congregation to meet their needs.

Chapter 3

Part 1: Philippians 3:1-8

In this passage, Paul reveals to the Philippians what kind of a person he was before he met Messiah, and who he became after coming to faith in Messiah (the transformation that had happened in his life). Are our lives before Messiah the same as our lives after Messiah? Or are we being transformed, conformed to the image of Messiah Yeshua?

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

Finally: This is a word that speaks of that which remains (the remaining things). Sometimes it is used as a word before a summarizing, but often it is a word which is used to denote something of great importance. Paul wanted to tell the Philippians how important the work was that God was doing in his life.

Brethren: Brothers and sisters - fellow believers. For believers, transformation is not the exception to the norm. Each and every believer, through the working of the Holy Spirit in their lives, should be experiencing radical transformation – a change that is well pleasing to God.

Rejoice: This word is related to the concept of grace. We can only have true joy (no matter what our circumstances may be) if we are recipients of God’s grace.

For me to write the same things to you is not troublesome: Paul loved this congregation. It was a delight for him to write Biblical truths to them to help them to understand God's expectations for them as a congregation and for them as individuals. Paul knew that these Biblical truths, that he wrote about, impacted people’s lives and so he loved writing about them.

For you it is safe: When we apply Biblical truth to our lives it brings us stability and security. Biblical truth gives us confidence - knowing that God is with us and will never leave or forsake us but will provide us with everything we need in order to fulfil His purposes.

Verse 2: *“Watch out for the dogs, watch out for evil workers, watch out for the mutilation!”*

Note: Paul gives the believers a warning. As believers, we have a common enemy. Satan and his demons want to hinder and oppress us. Many in this world are hostile to the message of the cross.

Watch out: The word used here is a word that means to look at with discernment. Based upon prophetic truth, as well as other truth found in the Scripture, we should have discernment and be able to recognise that there are those who want to hinder what we are doing for God.

The dogs: In Paul’s culture, dogs were generally not pets. Most dogs were scavengers - looking only for what they wanted or needed, giving no thought to other creatures. It was all about themselves. Paul was warning the believers that some groups of individuals (‘Judaizers’) go around like these dogs – people who think only of themselves. These Judaizers were not interested in the message of salvation by grace, but their focus was on salvation through works. Works and behaviour are important, but not as a means of salvation but as a fruit of salvation. Messiah’s work on the cross purchased our salvation. Our works, after we have, by faith, accepted Messiah’s work, are a proof (a testimony) that we are saved. After salvation, good deeds should characterize our lives. When Messiah evaluates the churches (in Revelation 2 and 3) He evaluates them according to their works. Our eternal life is not based on our works, but our eternal rewards are (Revelation 22:12).

These individuals, that Paul called ‘the dogs’, were teaching an incorrect theology. They were teaching that people were saved through their works (circumcision etc).

The mutilation: Literally: The ‘cutting’ – referring to circumcision. Paul was not against the message of circumcision – i.e. the death of the flesh or of the carnal nature. What Paul was against was these ones associating circumcision with the law of Moses and saying that people could not be saved unless they were circumcised (Acts 15:1). It is interesting to note that circumcision, in fact, predated the law. We read in Genesis 17 that Abraham (hundreds of years before Moses was born and the law was given) and his household were circumcised. Abraham was not circumcised because of the law, but because of his faith – Genesis 15:6. Abraham first believed by faith, and then he was circumcised (the work followed his faith, and NOT the other way around). It is only after we have been saved (through faith) that the death of our carnal/sinful nature can be brought about (Deuteronomy 30:6).

Verse 3: *“For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Messiah Yeshua, and have no confidence in the flesh,”*

We are the circumcision: Far superior to circumcision of the flesh is circumcision of the heart (Deuteronomy 30:6, Romans 2:25-29). As believers, we receive a new heart (Ezekiel 36:26-27), and, although we might be uncircumcised, we are considered to be a part of the ‘circumcision’ - a new creation.

Worship God...rejoice in Messiah Yeshua...have no confidence in the flesh: Having a new heart, a circumcised heart, produces these things in our lives.

Worship God in the Spirit: When we believe, the Holy Spirit comes to live within us. Part of His work is to teach us how to worship God (Isaiah 43:21, John 4:21-24). Without the Holy Spirit (whom we receive only once we have been redeemed through the blood of Messiah) we cannot worship God.

Rejoice: Literally: boasting. Paul is talking about that which excites us, that which causes us to boast – to praise and lift up Messiah Yeshua. Our praise is not in ourselves. Anything good that we do cannot be attributed to us, because we are only able to do these things through Messiah, by means of His Holy Spirit – Romans 7:18-19, Philippians 2:13. Therefore the praise does not belong to us, but it ALL belongs to Him. Our boast is in Him and not in ourselves.

Have no confidence in the flesh: In our flesh we can do nothing good. We should never lift up or exalt ourselves. Matthew 5:16 tells us that when others see our good works, they are going to praise our Heavenly Father – He is the One who is doing any good work through our lives. It is not our ability or deeds that give us confidence before God.

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

Note: Paul now begins to talk about who he used to be and the change that has come about in his life.

I also have confidence in the flesh: Paul was a Pharisee. Before meeting Messiah, he was not serious about grace but about his works. As a Pharisee, Paul was used to a Rabbinical approach to the law. What he is saying here is that if he had to evaluate himself (from a completely fleshly or carnal standpoint) in regard to the studying and learning this methodology of the law he did exceedingly well. Before Messiah, he placed his confidence in his flesh – what he could do by himself.

I more: In fact, Paul, before Messiah, rated himself and his abilities (as far as the law was concerned) as better than most other men. Based upon the Rabbinical approach to the law (i.e. the tradition of the elders, their understanding of the law and how to apply it to their lives), Paul is saying here that he did better than anyone else.

Verse 5: *“circumcised the eighth day, of the lineage of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee;”*

Circumcised the eighth day: This was a Torah requirement (a requirement of Jewish law – Leviticus 12:3). Paul’s parents fulfilled this law on his behalf.

A Hebrew of the Hebrews: Paul’s family could trace their lineage all the way back to Abraham (even before the exile to Egypt). While this family was in Egypt they were known as the ‘Hebrews’. Paul was a Hebrew through and through. He was very serious about his understanding of the call of God upon him and upon his brethren (fellow Hebrews).

Concerning the law, a Pharisee: The Pharisees were fanatical about their approach to, understanding of, and dealings with the law. Paul was as well.

Verse 6: *“concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.”*

The righteousness which is in the law: This is speaking about righteousness as seen through the perspective of the law. Paul is not saying that he was without sin and faultless, but what he is saying is that he utilised the law – when he sinned, he would offer up a sacrifice for his sins. Paul took the Word of God seriously and he conscientiously applied the laws to his life. Paul did everything as he was taught. His righteousness was not the righteousness of God, but it was the righteousness according to the Pharisaic approach to the law.

Blameless: If Paul was judged by the laws of the Pharisees, they would have pronounced him ‘blameless’. This did not mean that Paul was blameless in God’s eyes. Being blameless according to the law did not give Paul an assurance of salvation. It did not give him victory or eternal hope.

Verse 7: *“But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Messiah.”*

Gain: Gain from a worldly perspective (based on Pharisaic law).

These I have counted loss for Messiah: All the good things (good in the eyes of man) that Paul had accumulated in his life, up until the time he encountered Messiah, he was willing

to give up. Paul had quite a reputation. In Pharisaic circles he was seen as superior. The Pharisees honoured Paul. He was known throughout the Jewish world as someone who was knowledgeable, someone who was obedient to the teachings of the law. He had risen up through the ranks of being the very best. He had honour, prestige and religious prowess. However, he counted all of these things as insignificant (as rubbish) after his encounter with Messiah.

Verse 8: *“Yet indeed I also count all things loss on account of the surpassing knowledge of Messiah Yeshua my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that Messiah may profit me.”*

Note: Notice how Paul has been radically transformed. All of the things that he had counted as gain before Messiah (honour, prestige, a place in society, etc), became as rubbish to him after encountering Messiah.

Surpassing: This is a word that means that not only is this better than something else, but it also means that it doesn't end – it continues on. It is superior to anything else, and it does not wear out.

My Lord: When Yeshua is Lord of our lives it means that He is the One ruling our lives. He is the One who is guiding us and leading us into fulfilling His will – we are no longer the 'captain of our ship' but we are under His command to do His bidding and not our own. We will only find true joy and satisfaction in this life when we are submitted to the Lordship of Messiah Yeshua.

Count them as rubbish: Rubbish has no value. No one goes out to buy rubbish. Rubbish is the waste that is left over after everything good has been taken from it and used up. Paul is telling us that many of the things we are pursuing in life are going to be consumed and only good to be thrown away. We need to be pursuing the things which have eternal value (Kingdom things – Luke 12:33-34).

Messiah may profit me: Through salvation, Messiah becomes profit for us. The excellency of knowing Messiah as Lord of our lives is worth more than all earthly gain.

Chapter 3

Part 2: Philipians 3:9-12

Do we have the right perspective on life? Are we seeing things from God's perspective? Are we able to discern what is truly of significance and what is of deceit or falsehood? Many believers emphasise things that God is not interested in. These things do not reflect God's character or His objective. We desperately need to be people of discernment.

Verse 9: *“and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Messiah, the righteousness which is from God by faith;”*

In Him: Paul uses this term very often in his writings. To be IN Messiah means to be doing His will, experiencing His Presence in our lives, etc. Being IN Messiah, and therefore being indwelt by the Holy Spirit, changed Paul's life and brought satisfaction to him.

My own righteousness: The righteousness that his own behaviour can bring about. This is a righteousness that is defined by religious dogma or doctrine (the law). This kind of righteousness is difficult to maintain and leaves no lasting satisfaction.

That which is through faith in Messiah: When we, through faith, believe in the Lord Messiah Yeshua, His righteousness is imparted to us. When God the Father looks at us (after salvation) He does not see our unrighteousness, but He views us through the lens of His Son's righteousness. The righteousness of Yeshua is pleasing to His Father. This righteousness, which is imparted to us through faith, is going to be manifested in our actions and thoughts. This righteousness, which is obtained through faith, causes a radical transformation to happen in our lives – we begin to live differently, not based upon the religious teachings of man but upon spiritual revelation that comes from God, through His Holy Spirit.

Verse 10: *“that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,”*

I may know Him: It is so important that after we know Messiah as our Saviour, we also get to know Him as our Lord and Master.

Know Him and the power: Knowing Messiah gives us access to His power.

Know ... the power of His resurrection: Although Yeshua as a man was always fully God (He never lost His identity as the Son of God), when He took on human flesh He was restricted to human flesh boundaries. When God the Father raised Him from the dead, Yeshua was raised to a new life. He was no longer restricted to being confined within four walls, but He was able to walk through the walls. He could appear and disappear at will in various locations. Colossians 1:18 identifies Yeshua as the firstborn from the dead. When we experience resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:51-57) we are going to receive resurrected bodies – like Yeshua did. In our new bodies we will be able to perfectly serve God. When we receive our new bodies, we will no longer be able to sin. Living with resurrection power in our lives causes us to live with a desire for a sinless life – even while we are alive on this earth today.

Fellowship: Intimacy with God.

Note: These things all follow on after each other (in a way, they can be seen as different stages of spiritual maturity).

When we know Messiah, we have the potential to live a Kingdom life (given power to not live a sinful life). Not living according to the ways of this world brings about suffering and persecution. Paul desires this suffering, because he knows that it is through suffering that he has a deeper fellowship or intimacy with God.

Being conformed to His death: When we are willing to suffer for our faith, it leads to us being willing to lay down everything for Messiah – including our very lives. Messiah perfectly did the will of His Father. He did not think about Himself, but He laid His life down to death on a cross (Luke 22:42). It is only when we live an obedient life that we are going to experience the victory that God wants us to have. Paul’s desire was that he would be fully given over to the purposes and the will of God.

Verse 11: *“if, somehow, that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.”*

Note: Every believer is going to be resurrected from the dead. When our bodies are resurrected, it means that death and sin no longer have any hold over us (1 Corinthians 15:53-57). It can be said that when we are in our resurrected bodies, we have attained spiritual perfection (a new body of righteousness). Paul did not want this to only be his reality after death. Paul wanted to live in such a way on earth (pre-death) that it would be as though he was already occupying his resurrected body (Romans 6:11-14). He wanted to live in complete obedience to God and to the purposes of God.

Verse 12: *“Not that I have already received it or have already been made perfect; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Messiah Yeshua has also laid hold of me.”*

Not that I have already received it or have already been made perfect: Paul was not perfect, but he had a desire to be perfect and to demonstrate this to others (Matthew 5:48). Paul was pursuing perfection.

That: The purpose of God. Messiah saved us (took hold of us) for a purpose.

I may lay hold of that for which Messiah Yeshua has also laid hold of me: Paul’s desire was to embrace the will of God for his life. Messiah Yeshua had saved him (taken hold of him) for a reason, and Paul wanted to make sure that he fulfilled or completed that reason/purpose. God has saved us for a purpose. Do we seek to fulfil the purpose for which He saved us?

Chapter 3

Part 3: Philippians 3:13-21

In Philippians, Paul is revealing to us the truth that we need to understand and apply to our lives. This truth impacts our beliefs and our behaviours and helps us to grow spiritually. As we grow and mature spiritually, we are going to be satisfied and filled with joy and contentment. Paul's life was drastically changed because he was humble and wise enough to not only allow Messiah to save him but also to transform him into the man that God wanted him to be.

Verse 13: *“Brethren, I myself do not consider that I have taken hold of these things to their fullest; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and stretching forward to those things which are ahead,”*

Brethren: Paul is writing to fellow believers – brothers and sisters.

I myself do not consider that I have taken hold of these things: Paul acknowledged that he was not perfect. Although he was not on the same level as Messiah, he had matured, and his life could be used by God as an example to others.

Forgetting those things which are behind: If we want to mature spiritually then this is a principle that we need to learn...to leave behind, and forget, our sinful pasts. One of satan's tactics is to try to keep us focussed on the past. He wants us to feel guilty and unworthy before a holy God. However, we need to realise that when we accepted Yeshua into our lives, God made us worthy – not through what we had done but because of what Yeshua has done for us. The failures of our past have been swept away by grace. Our sins have been perfectly dealt with and washed away by the blood of Messiah, through the sufficiency of the cross.

Stretching: This is a word for pursuing or grasping. It is a word of intensity and shows effort.

Stretching forward to those things which are ahead: We are going to live in one of two ways:

1. We are going to live focused on the past – never truly set free. If we focus on these past failures, they are going to dictate and determine our future if we allow them to.
2. OR, we are going to forget those things which are behind us so that we can focus on what the will of God for our lives truly is – the future things that God has for us.

Note: So many believers, minimising the power of God's forgiveness, are handicapped by their pasts.

Verse 14: *“I press toward the goal for the reward of the upward call of God in Messiah Yeshua.”*

The *goal:* The destination. Paul realises that to reach this destination (this place where God desires us to be) there are certain things he needs to take into consideration (e.g.: we don't just arrive at a destination. There are certain things that have to be taken into consideration before that destination can be reached – buying tickets, packing a bag, hiring a car etc. We have to go through a process before we arrive at our destination. This is what Paul is alluding to here).

As believers we have a spiritual destination – living a Kingdom life. To get there we need to go through a Biblical preparation and transformation (knowing Messiah, having resurrection power in our lives, fellowshiping with God, being willing to suffer for our faith, etc).

For the reward: The patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, etc) had faith. Their faith (which produces obedience) was grounded and spurred on by the promises of God. Their lives were

changed as they pursued the promises of God. It is only when we stand on the promises of God, and pursue the Biblically based reward that He has for us, that our lives will be impacted, and we will be able to live faithfully before Him.

The upward call of God: This is the reward that Paul was pursuing. Paul wanted to be lifted up by God (drawn closer to God) so that he could view and live life having God's perspective on things. Being called 'upward' is a blessing, as we are enabled to receive Heavenly counsel so that we can make informed decisions while we are alive on the earth – decisions which are in line with Biblical truth and therefore enable us to live victoriously over our enemy.

In Messiah Yeshua: The call of God in our lives is not realised apart from Messiah.

Verse 15: *"Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you."*

Mature: Literally: perfect. Paul is speaking about those who desire (think about) and pursue perfection as their goal (Matthew 5:48). All believers are sinners saved by grace. Some believers desire and actually pursue living transformed (perfect)/victorious lives. A victorious life is a mark of spiritual maturity.

If in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you: Paul is confident that if someone does not place a high value on living a transformed and perfect life before God, as they begin to open themselves up to Biblical truth God is going to reveal to them the value of living in this way. God is able to set the thinking of believers straight.

Verse 16: *"Nevertheless, the things that we are attaining, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind."*

Note: This is the expectation placed on believers.

Let us walk by the same rule: (Maturing) Believers are expected to behave in the same way.

Be of the same mind: (Maturing) Believers are expected to think in the same way.

Verse 17: *"Brethren, imitate me, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern."*

Imitate me: One of the goals of a believer should be a desire to live their lives in such a way that others are able to imitate or copy their way of life. Paul was a practical example to people in his day of what a life that imitated Messiah looked like. This is how we should be living today – showing others how to live like Messiah in this dark world (being salt and light). We should be a pattern or a template that others can use for their own lives.

Verse 18: *"For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Messiah:"*

Enemies of the cross: When we walk like Messiah did, we can expect opposition. People are enemies of the cross, because the cross speaks about dying to ourselves – living lives of denial to self (Matthew 16:24-25). Many people do not want to die to themselves and to their own desires. Therefore, they oppose this message.

Verse 19: *"whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things."*

Whose god is their belly: They are living for earthly satisfaction and pleasure (living lives with a consumer mentality). This kind of lifestyle leads to destruction and shame.

Set their mind on earthly things: They have a materialistic way of thinking.

Verse 20: *“For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Saviour, the Lord Messiah Yeshua,”*

Our citizenship is in heaven: This is where we truly belong. This is our true home.

From which we also eagerly wait for the Saviour: This (heaven) is where we are expecting Messiah to come from (Acts 1:11)

Lord: This is emphasised in the text. When we live obediently, following Yeshua as our Master and as the One who is in control of our lives, this is our expectation.

Verse 21: *“who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.”*

Transform: This is where the word ‘schematics’ comes from. A schematic (although not the reality itself) is a drawing or a plan (a visual representation) of how something operates or is put together.

Conformed: Fashioned. Our bodies are going to go through a transformation. They are no longer going to be corrupted with sin, but they are going to be glorious.

The working: This refers to Messiah’s work that He did on the cross, His work in our lives through His Holy Spirit, as well as the work that we do as we submit to Him and do the things that He has called us to do.

He is able even to subdue all things to Himself: If we trust and rely on the Lord, He is able to subject all the things in our lives to Himself. This means that we can live lives that are glorifying and pleasing to the Lord – even before our earthly bodies are transformed. When we believe, we become temples of the Holy Spirit - where God's glory is manifested through us. This is our call. It is when we obediently submit to His truth that this is going to be our reality.

Chapter 4

Part 1: Philippians 4:1-6

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

Therefore: Literally: ‘so that’. Paul is drawing a conclusion of a reality that can be, based on what he has just said (i.e. at the end of chapter 3). God is working in our lives, and He is able to subdue all things to Himself (everyone and everything is subjected to Him). A wonderful promise from God is that He is going to transform our lowly bodies into glorious bodies that reflect His truth, will and objectives. He can give us victory in our lives (victory not only over sin, but also victory to successfully accomplish God’s will in our lives).

Brethren: Paul speaks to these individuals as family – as brothers and sisters. What Paul is revealing here is that this is something that is not available for unbelievers. This can only be the reality of believers – brethren.

Beloved and longed-for: Paul loved this congregation. This congregation in Philippi had a history of ministering to Paul – praying for him and meeting his physical needs.

My joy: Being used by God in the lives of other people brings about great joy. It gave Paul great joy to think about and to see the people in this Philippian congregation. Paul had ministered to them, taught them, influenced them, been friends with them and had watched them faithfully live out, in obedience, the purposes of God.

My ... crown: Most scholars believe a crown refers to a reward. Paul is saying that as he ministered to and invested his life in the lives of other people not only did he find joy, but he also found it to be a source of reward in the Kingdom of God.

Stand fast in the Lord: Paul is speaking to mature believers – to a congregation that has demonstrated true faith (not just receiving the gospel but they had also grown in the gospel). It is no accident that the name used for God here is ‘Lord’ (Master). Those who desire to obey God recognise Him as Lord in their lives. We grow and mature as we obey our Lord.

Verse 2: *“I implore Euodia and I implore Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord.”*

Note: Paul is concerned about the ministry going on within this congregation.

Implore: Could also be translated ‘exhort’ or ‘encourage’.

Euodia...Syntyche: Two women who were part of the Philippian congregation.

Be of the same mind: These are probably women who were spiritually mature. Paul is exhorting them to utilise their spiritual maturity – to utilise what they have been taught.

In the Lord: More frequently than not, Paul, when writing about Yeshua, calls Him Lord.

Verse 3: *“And I urge you also, true companions, help these women who laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the Book of Life.”*

True companions: Genuine colleagues. Colleagues are those who are bound together in a common purpose – fellow servants.

Paul is not speaking here to the entire congregation but only to those who are jointly yoked to him within it (those who are completely committed, like Paul, to the purposes of God).

Help these women...: This was a dynamic congregation. God had done great things within it. However, God had more for them to do. There was a greater objective that needed to be met...more than they were experiencing at that point. Paul was encouraging his colleagues to help the women to grow and to think in a likeminded way. Women can do a great deal of ministry within a congregation – often things which are foundational within a congregation

or within a household (or marriage). Women need to be encouraged in their ministering to others.

Whose names are in the Book of Life: Paul is encouraging this congregation to get more serious about the things of God. He is encouraging them to encourage others. There is a call for greater ministry to be done, more work to be done. The motivation behind this: Our names are written in the Book of Life. In order for our names to be written in the Book of Life, Messiah had to go to the cross and shed His blood. God invested everything for us so that we could inherit eternal life. We need to invest everything for Him. Having our names written in the Lamb's Book of Life should give us a new perspective, an eternal perspective.

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

Always: In good or bad circumstances, we need to be people who rejoice.

Again, I will say: The implication is that Paul is saying 'rejoice' now, but he is going to continue to say it into the future.

Rejoice: In Greek this is a word which is related to grace. God's grace puts us on a pathway of restoration - so that we can be restored back to the purposes, intent, promises and blessings that God has for us. It is only by grace that we are enabled to live the life that God has called us to live. As we do what God has given us grace for, we become a joyful people (no matter what circumstances we find ourselves in – Philippians 4:11).

Verse 5: *"Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is near."*

Note: Having joy impacts how we approach life.

Gentleness: Can also be translated 'pleasantness'. As believers we should have a testimony of not being abrasive, but we need to be people who others gravitate toward – we need to be people who are 'nice' to be around. Being gentle or pleasant toward others is the basis for ministry. Being pleasant testifies that we are not overwhelmed by life's problems. People are drawn to gentle/pleasant people, so this gives them a greater opportunity to minister to others.

The Lord is near: We have a limited amount of time to serve God in this body and our time is running out (either physically, or the time of Messiah's return is getting closer). Even if we are currently young people, there are prophetic signs indicating to us that the time/era we are in is coming to an end. Messiah is coming soon! This should give us an added incentive/encouragement to live in a proper (contented, gentle, pleasant, etc) way.

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

Be anxious for nothing: Do not be worried about anything.

Prayer: Prayer is turning to God for revelation. The primary reason we should be praying is for God's will to be done in our lives (Matthew 6:10). In order to do God's will, we need God's provision (Matthew 6:11). When we pray, we need to ask God to provide what we need in order for His will to be done.

Supplication: This is a word that involves taking a spiritual inventory. We have to see what we are lacking and then need to ask God to provide.

Thanksgiving: Turning to God (pray and supplication) involves praising God and giving Him glory - honouring Him, sanctifying His name and listening to Him. Thanking God is a very important part of prayer.

Let your requests be made known: God knows what we need, but as we confess to Him what we think we need we begin to discern what we truly need and so can begin to pray more effectively. God has obligated Himself to be listening to us as we pray (1 Peter 3:12, Proverbs 15:29, Psalm 34:17). We can be assured that He hears our prayers as we pray for His will to be done in our lives.

Chapter 4

Part 2: Philippians 4:7-14

Verse 7: *“and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Messiah Yeshua.”*

Peace: This is a very important word in the Bible. In the Old Testament, peace (rest) has to do with the fulfilment of God's will (Joshua 21:44-45). In the New Testament, when peace is mentioned, it has to do with a feeling of contentment, assurance or joy that comes as an outcome of God's will being done (John 14:27). It is not simply the fulfilment of God's will, but it is the feeling associated with God's will being done. As we do God's will, the result or fruit in our lives will be His peace.

Surpasses all understanding: This peace (contentment, joy) that we are going to receive from God is not dependent upon things (good or bad circumstances in our lives) but it is dependent upon God's glory being manifested through us. When we were created, we were created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27). This means that we were created to behave in a way that manifests (illuminates) God's glory – reflecting His character or presence in every situation we find ourselves in. As we behave in this way (serving God and serving others – Matthew 25:40), the supernatural outcome is that God gives us contentment.

Hearts: Biblically a heart can be seen in the same light as our brain (Proverbs 23:7). It is seen as the seat of our deepest thoughts. When we serve God, our thinking and perspectives change.

Minds: Thoughts

Verse 8: *“Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.”*

Finally: Paul is going to speak about the remaining things as he begins to bring this epistle to its conclusion.

Brethren: Believers. All of this would not make sense to a non-believer. It is only when we are walking in the truth of God that this Scripture can speak to us and motivate us to be instruments or catalysts of change.

True...noble...just...pure...lovely...of good report...virtue...praiseworthy: Paul is writing about things which should be foundational in the lives of every believer. These attributes are key in transforming us and conforming us into the image of Messiah (being like Him).

True: The things that are true reflect the character of God.

Noble: Honourable. This is connected to the glory of God. They bring honour (glory) to Him.

Just: Righteous.

Lovely: That which is ugly repels people. That which is lovely attracts or draws.

Good report: A good word. A good reputation. What people hear spoken about this person is good (in line with the will of God).

Virtue: Pleasing

Note: How do we know what behaviour constitutes “true...noble....just...pure...lovely...of good report...virtue...praiseworthy”? Against what standard do we measure ourselves to see if we are reaching this goal and actually living in a true, honourable, righteous, etc way? Although we are no longer under the law, in the way that the law demands (sacrifice, etc), the law (commandments/expectations of God) still teaches us and defines for us how we can live in the way (with the help of the indwelling Holy Spirit) that this verse describes – 2 Corinthians 3:6. The law is not an instrument of righteousness (i.e. if we keep the law it does not make us righteous) but it does teach us what righteousness and unrighteousness is. For example: we don’t get to define what purity is. We need to see how God views purity in His Word and then adjust our own definitions of purity (human ‘wisdom’) so that they align with His view. We get to understand His view on these things through His Word, through His laws, etc.

Meditate on: The English word ‘logic’ comes from the Greek word used here. Logic is dependent upon a hypothesis – something making sense based on an assumption. We can make the right assumptions based on the Word of God. The Word of God and the commandments of God logically tell us what we should be thinking upon.

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

The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do: Paul is making a powerful statement here. He is saying that if we look at his life, we will see all these characteristics mentioned above defined through it. This is the goal that every believer should be moving toward – a life that reflects these characteristics, a life that others would be able to emulate. Our thoughts and deeds (behaviour) should be a reflection of the Word, character and revelation of God.

These do: It is not enough to just believe what is good and right and honourable. We need to put these things into practice – not once or twice, but on an ongoing basis.

With you: God “with us” is a very important phrase in the Bible. It is a phrase which is a reference to redemption (Emmanuel – God with us). Being “with God” is only possible through redemption. The purpose of redemption is to draw us into the presence of God. When we have been redeemed, when we are growing and maturing in God’s will, we are going to experience God’s peace and His Presence.

Verse 10: *“and I rejoice in the Lord greatly that already your care for me has flourished again; though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity.”*

Your care for me has flourished: Paul has referred to this congregation as his “joy and crown” (Philippians 4:1). Paul found joy in their obedience, in their doing of ministry. Caring

involves thinking on behalf of someone and then turning those thoughts into actions toward that person.

Flourished again: Their care for Paul has been recently renewed.

Lacked opportunity: For a period of time this congregation had been unable to care for and minister to Paul in prison. Now, however, they had an opportunity again to do so.

Verse 11: *“Not that in regard to lack I speak, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content:”*

Not that in regard to lack I speak: Paul is not speaking to them in this way because he has a need that he wants them to fulfil.

I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: Whether this congregation ministered to Paul or not, Paul was content in the situation he found himself in. What Paul was rejoicing in, however, was not the fact that they were caring for him specifically (although he would have appreciated and welcomed their care) but he was rejoicing in the fact that they were demonstrating their faith by behaving correctly – loving their neighbours as they loved themselves. They were thinking beyond themselves and their own needs and were thinking of, and acting to meet, the needs of others. Caring for others demonstrates spiritual maturity.

Verse 12: *“I have known lack, and I have known abundance. Everywhere and in all things, I have been taught both to be full of food and to be empty of food, whether I have abundance or whether I have lacking.”*

I have been taught: As we grow and mature in the Lord, we are going to learn how to be content.

Full of food ... empty of food: Food is something that we are dependent upon - daily. Being full or being hungry should not impact our contentment.

Whether I have abundance or whether I have lacking: Paul is emphasising that contentment is not dictated to by abundance or lack in our lives. No matter what circumstance we find ourselves in, we need to be content.

Verse 13: *“In all things I am strong, having been empowered through Messiah.”*

I am strong: This is speaking of God’s provision to us. Messiah empowers and strengthens us to carry out all the things required to do His will. God desires His will to be carried out, because His will manifests His glory. Biblically there is a relationship between the power of God and the glory of God. We are recipients of His power when we are committed to His glory being manifested. If we are not interested in God’s glory, but are motivated by worldly desires, God is not going to provide us with His power.

Verse 14: *“Nevertheless you have done well that you shared in my affliction.”*

You shared: Fellowshipped

My affliction: Paul is one of the heroes of the faith and yet he suffered and was cast into prison. When we desire to serve God, we need to understand that we are going to be

afflicted by the enemy. However, this affliction is not eternal. It only affects us in this age. We do not need to fear affliction. God grows us as we stand firm in affliction.

Chapter 4

Part 3: Philippians 4:15-23

Verse 15: *“Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I went forth from Macedonia, no other congregation shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only.”*

In the beginning of the gospel: Paul is reminding the Philippians of the time when they first heard and received the gospel message from him. The gospel message was already being proclaimed, so this phrase refers to the beginning of the gospel in their lives specifically. *No other congregation shared with me:* When Paul proclaimed the gospel message to the congregations in this region, only the Philippian congregation truly understood the spiritual principle behind giving and receiving (Acts 20:35). They were unique in this regard.

Verse 16: *“For even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities.”*

Note: Paul has already laid the foundation to help us to understand that he was content no matter what happened to him. He contentment was not reliant on whether others gave to him or not.

Verse 17: *“Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account.”*

I seek the fruit: More than the gifts, Paul was overjoyed to see the abundant fruit that this congregation was displaying. Paul’s delight was in the fact that they were putting into action what they had heard and believed. Paul’s objective was not to get something from this congregation (food/financial provision/support/visitation in prison, etc), but his objective was to see them producing abundant fruit, to see them behaving in a sacrificial way – investing their lives in the lives of others.

Verse 18: *“Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God.”*

The things sent from you: Paul was in prison. This congregation were ministering to both his physical and spiritual needs.

A sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God: Paul parallels Old Testament sacrifice with what he has received from the Philippian congregation. Paul is encouraged that people remember him, that they are praying for him, that they are ministering to him.

In one way we can interpret this like this: these people have believed Yeshua when He said it is more blessed to give than to receive. By faith they put Yeshua’s words into action, sacrificing (time, money, effort, etc) in order to minister to Paul and others. Sacrificing their wants and desires, for the sake of obedience to Messiah, is a spiritual act of worship

(Romans 12:1). Like a sacrifice, their deeds were seen as not only acceptable to God but also pleasing to Him. Their deeds were like a sweet-smelling aroma before Him.

Another way we can understand this is that their giving caused Paul to be thankful and to praise God.

Paul is praising God because God has (through stirring the hearts of others) provided for him. Paul's praise to God is also like the sweet-smelling aroma of a sacrifice before God. Praising God is pleasing to God. Both the deeds and the subsequent praise are both forms of worship – both are a sweet fragrance in His nostrils.

Verse 19: *“And my God shall fulfil all your need according to His riches in glory in Messiah Yeshua.”*

My God: Paul had personally seen God work in his life and in the lives of others. God is for us; He is not against us (Romans 8:31). He is ours and we are His (Song of Songs 6:3).

Glory: This concept of glory repeats throughout Scripture. The reason for this is that ministry manifests God's glory. When God's glory is manifested, it brings a change into circumstances, households, families, marriages, business relationships, etc. It is so important that believers behave in a way that God's glory can be seen. When we minister to others, God's Presence is manifested, and His glory is given in that situation.

Verse 20: *“Now to our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.”*

Father: When God is revealed as 'Father' it is a term that should remind us of provision. God is testifying, through Paul, that He is faithful to provide for His people. Paul was a living example of that in prison. He was suffering and could have been forgotten. God, however, provided for him even in the place of his deepest need – in a place where he was unable to fend for himself.

Forever and ever: Paul is speaking about the fact that God does not change. When we serve Him and embrace His truth, for eternity we are going to testify to and praise Him for His faithfulness to always provide for us.

Verse 21: *“Greet all the saints in Messiah Yeshua. The brethren who are with me greet you.”*

Greet: Acknowledge. Be aware of.

Verse 22: *“All the saints greet you, but especially those who are of Caesar's household.”*

Especially those who are of Caesar's household: There's a debate among the Biblical scholars as to who Paul is referring to here. Some people say he is referring to an individual named 'Caesar'. Most believers, however, believe that Paul is writing this letter from Rome. If this is the case then it is probable that Paul's ministry was having an impact even among those who served and lived in the emperors (Caesar's) household (Acts 23:11, Acts 25:10-12).

Verse 23: *“The grace of our Lord Messiah Yeshua be with you all. Amen.”*

Note: This is Paul's concluding statement.

Grace: Grace is a word that can be translated 'kindness or mercy'. Paul is speaking of a specific type of grace, a love that goes on and on – a love without end.

Our Lord Messiah Yeshua: This grace is ONLY found IN Messiah – our Master, Saviour and Anointed One.

Be with you all: God's grace is not selective. It is with ALL who have believed in, and serve, the Lord Messiah Yeshua.