

Pennsylvania Ladies' Retreat

“What are You Thinking?”

Safeguarding Your Soul with the Mind of Christ

March 2020

“Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus.” Philippians 2:5

“Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ.” 1 Corinthians 11:1

“Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life.” Proverbs 4:23

Introduction

People falling away from the faith:

1. **Joshua Harris**—Author of the book, *I Kissed Dating Goodbye*, and prominent pastor has now divorced his wife and denounced his faith as a Christian.

“I have undergone a massive shift regarding my faith in Jesus. The popular phrase for this is ‘deconstruction,’ the biblical phrase is ‘falling away.’ By all the measurements that I have for defining a Christian, I am not a Christian. I don’t view this moment negatively. I feel very much alive, and awake, and surprisingly hopeful.”

2. **Marty Sampson**—songwriter and worship leader for Hillsong United has recently denounced his faith.

“Time for some real talk. I’m genuinely losing my faith, and it doesn’t bother me. Like, what bothers me now is nothing. I am so happy now, so at peace with the world. It’s crazy.”

Notice the similarities in their statements. They claim that walking away from their faith is a positive, freeing, and happy occasion (which will be used by the enemy to persuade others to follow in their path).

3. **Family and Friends**—When speaking with others, the question arises: Where did we go wrong regarding the raising of our children, who now as adults are sometimes pursuing everything but the life of discipleship? Others express doubt in the power and presence of God and the power of His Word. David Barna has recently done a survey and found that less than one percent of the U.S. adult population holds a Christian worldview.

4. **Colossians Chapter One**

- Paul begins the epistle by telling the Colossians how he continually thanks God for their faith, hope, and love—things that are constantly increasing in their lives and bearing fruit for the glory of Christ. This gives us insight into the strength and stability of the faith of the Colossian believers.
- After stating these absolutes in verses 1–8, Paul goes on to express another prayer he prays for the Colossian believers in verses 9–12, exhorting them:

- “*be filled with the knowledge of [God’s] will, in all spiritual wisdom and understanding*”—**filled with wisdom**
 - “*walk in a manner worthy of the Lord*”—**faithful walk**
 - “*bearing fruit in every good work*”—**fruitful work**
 - “*strengthened with power, according to His glorious might*”—**attaining of steadfastness** (“steadfastness” =constancy, cheerful endurance)
- Why does Paul first recognize the strength of their faith and then pray for the strength of their faith? Because he recognizes that we all are one step away from sin and one decision away from destruction. He is praying for the Colossians to live in such a way that their soul would be safeguarded from falling away.

Transition into Philippians

In this day of threats and dangers at every level, we take precautions to safeguard our lives; we insure our health, our cars, and our homes. We lock the doors at night and sleep with a weapon at our bedside. We have passcodes on all our devices and LifeLock to protect our identity. With all this focus on the physical/material world around us, it is sometimes easy to leave our soul wide open and vulnerable to lies, deception, apathy, indifference, sin, and evil.

We know that the only perfectly steadfast and sinless soul that ever lived was the Lord Jesus Christ. From His very birth, He set His mind on the mission God sent Him to this Earth to accomplish. He set His face like flint to the task; He lived and died to reconcile man to God.

To safeguard our soul would be to arm ourselves with the “*mind of Christ,*” to think as He thought, and to walk as He walked. It is most often accepted that the theme of Philippians is “*joy.*” Fair enough—the word “joy” or “rejoicing” is used 19 times in the book. But within that emphasis on rejoicing, there are other threads of thought that should not be overlooked. It is a book full of warnings; it is a book full of the faithful working of God within the soul of His children. Philippians is a book that lays out for us the mind of Christ, and that is the thread that we will focus on.

“Have this attitude [mind] in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus.” Philippians 2:5

In each chapter of Philippians, Paul puts forth a mindset that he has learned in his desire to imitate the thinking and Person of Jesus Christ. In each chapter, he then asks us, as believers, to follow in that mindset as a safeguard for our soul.

I. Chapter One: The Single Mind—Purpose

A mind singly focused on the Gospel is a safeguard to our soul.

A. Explanation

1. Jesus had a single mind—a mind focused on the mission of reaching the lost.

“For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.” Luke 19:10

2. Paul expresses a single-minded attitude toward the Gospel message:

“For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.” Philippians 1:21
“I do all things for the sake of the gospel.” 1 Corinthians 9:23

3. Christ has a single-minded focus on lost souls. Paul imitated that single-minded focus, and in Chapter 1 encourages us to follow with a like mind.

B. Philippians 1:1–11

1. Paul remembers the Philippians with joy in his heart. So he begins the epistle by expressing his love and appreciation for these believers. This was based on their participation with Paul in the outreach of the Gospel (vv. 5, 7).
2. Paul desires that the Philippians continue and even increase in this path of love for the lost; that they might be found blameless at the coming of Christ (vv. 6, 10).
3. He reminds them that the power to do this is found in Christ, and in Christ alone. (vv. 6, 11).

C. Philippians 1:12–21

1. Paul is writing to the Philippians from a Roman jail cell. Paul recognizes his imprisonment (a seemingly bad thing) was being used by God to further the effect and outreach of the Gospel message.
2. Paul was a pioneer missionary with a deep passion to constantly be on the move with the Gospel. And then, put in prison for the sake of the Gospel, He was held—chained and unable to go beyond the walls of the jail cell with his message. The jail cell could restrict Paul’s movement, but it could not restrict the working of God in his heart; neither could it restrict his witness!
3. Being a witness is not a matter of freedom, it is a matter of obedience.
4. “Things happened **to** Paul in order that things would happen **in** Paul. Things happened **in** Paul so that things could happen **through** Paul.”
 - a. **What happened to him?** Persecution. Prison. Chains. Restraint.
 - b. **What happened in him?** The prison cell gave him time to contemplate his life in the context of a loving and almighty God. He came to this deep soul conclusion:

“For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.”

He dogmatically states that Christ is his reason and resource for living!
 - c. **What happened through him?** The greater progress of the Gospel.
5. We each have our own prison. Something in life that has **happened to us** that we think restrains, chains, and hinders our effectiveness for Christ, it is through that very thing that God wants to work **in** us, so that He can then work **through** us. Our prison may restrict our movement, dampen our joy, or change our path, but it cannot restrict the working of God within us, nor our witness. Oftentimes, our

greatest ministry comes from our deepest pain, our problems become our pulpit, our wheelchair becomes our witness, our trial becomes our testimony.

6. “Joy” or “rejoice” is used four times in chapter one. Paul rejoices in the fact that through adversity the Gospel advanced. His single-minded focus on the progress of the Gospel brought him joy.

D. Philippians 1: 22–26

1. In these verses, Paul expresses absolutely no fear or dread of death; for death is only a passing from this earthly home to our heavenly home. He expresses only anticipation! However, in contemplating the glories of Heaven above, he recognizes the purpose of his life on Earth below. That purpose is for the progress of the Gospel (v. 12) and the progress of the faith of the Philippians. Therefore, he concludes that it is much better for him to remain on the Earth and fulfill that purpose—to live for Christ rather than to gain death.
2. With the conclusion of that thought, Paul turns to the Philippians to instruct and exhort them to live with a like-minded, single-minded focus on the Gospel.

E. Philippians 1:27–2:2, Application

1. The previous verses have been autobiographical. Paul opens his heart and exposes the depth of it to the Philippian believers. In verse 27, he changes from talking about himself in relation to the furtherance of the Gospel and puts the ownership on the Philippians—and on us.
2. Paul outlines what our behavior should be in relation to the Gospel:
 - a. **“Walk worthy of the gospel”** (v. 27). To balance the scales, both our conduct and our words should point people to Jesus.
 - **Matthew 10:37–38.** In this passage, God is asking a lot of us. Is He asking too much of us?
 - When Jesus died on the cross, He did not just pay the penalty for our sin, He willingly **became** our sin. He became the murderer, the pornographer, the child molester, the rapist, even the Hitler.
 - Is our gratefulness displayed in our single-minded devotion to the messages of His sacrifice?
 - b. **“Standing firm”** in your faith (v. 27)—*Stete!* As a soldier of Christ, a warrior maiden, you have six square feet of ground to use in advancing the Gospel. Those six square feet are not stationary, they are mobile. Wherever you go, those six square feet of ground go with you!
 - c. **“Strive together”** (v. 27). Support and encourage others in the furtherance of the Gospel. Reaching the lost takes a team effort; be a coworker through your prayers, support, and encouragement (Matt. 26:36–46; Heb. 13:3).
 - d. **Do not fear opposition** (vv. 28–30)

- In **Matthew 10:16**, Jesus said, “*Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves.*”
 - Across the globe today, approximately 80% of Christians who are actively living out their faith are under some form of threat and persecution. Every six minutes, somewhere in the world, a Christian dies for his faith.
 - As in the day of Paul, this opposition is a proof of spiritual loss for those who oppose or persecute the Gospel, but also a proof of spiritual gain for the believer (v. 28).
 - Those who persecute Christians have one main goal in mind: keep others from hearing the good news of the Gospel. When you and I refuse to share the Gospel because of fear, embarrassment, apathy, or indifference, we are siding not with the persecuted, but with the persecutors! Whose side are you on?
 - Paul suffered for the sake of the Gospel, and so will we. Paul rejoiced in that suffering, and so should we.
 - It may take suffering, tests, and trials, for others around you to see the truth, power, and glory of the Gospel message. Use these opportunities wisely. The Gospel is nourished under opposition!
- e. **Be intent on one purpose** (Phil. 2:1–2): the furtherance of the Gospel. Men and women crave a life of purpose and few find it in our day and age. As believers, our purpose is to live with a Christ-like mind—a single mind—focused on the task of reaching the lost for Christ.

II. Chapter Two: The Servant Mind—Passion

A humble, servant-mindset is a safeguard to our soul.

We are exhorted in this chapter to imitate the attitude of Jesus

A. Philippians 2:5–30

1. Jesus lived a servant-minded life:

“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” Mark 10:45

2. Paul imitated the servant-mind of Christ in thought and deed. He opened the book of Philippians with the words, “*Paul and Timothy, bond servants of Christ Jesus*” (“bond servant” is the Greek word *doulos*, “one who is subservient to and totally at the disposal of his master.”).
3. In Philippians 2, we are exhorted to have a humble servant-mind.

“Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 2:5)

B. Philippians 2:6–8

1. The humility and servant-mindset of Jesus Christ is described for us:

- a. He did not grasp on to what He had or who He was. He willingly traded His throne for a stable, His glory for shame, His crown for a cross.
 - b. He emptied Himself to become a man and a bondservant; the Creator of all served His creation. He healed the sick, fed the hungry, welcomed the children, and washed the feet of the disciples.
 - c. He was willing to be underestimated.
 - d. He was obedient to the point of death, even death on the cross—the most humiliating and painful of all deaths.
 - e. His humility led him first to come in the form of man, then He humbled Himself even lower to become a servant; then He humbled Himself yet lower to be associated in His death with the sins of the world!
2. **Colossians 1:15–20.** Compare the humility of Christ with His preeminence! His humble service led to eternal exaltation.

C. Philippians 2:9–11. The exaltation of Jesus Christ is described for us.

It is not even possible to imagine in our minds what it will be like to see every human being who ever lived, from Adam to the last person born into this world, all bow at His Name and confess Him as Lord! What a glorious sight!

D. Philippians 2:12–13

“So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.”

1. **“So then”**—considering what Christ has done for us
2. **“my beloved”**—notice that Paul is writing to brothers and sisters in Christ, those who have already received eternal salvation through faith. This is important to note considering the rest of the verse.
3. **“work out your salvation with fear and trembling”**—to give evidence of, or demonstrate that you are a child of God with reverence and respect for God

Note: “*fear*” is from the Greek word *fobos*, translated in 1 Peter 3:2 as “*respectful behavior*,” and “*trembling*,” from the Greek word *tromos*, is used to describe the anxiety of one who distrusts his ability to meet requirements, but does his utmost to fulfill that duty.

4. This verse does not refer to a loss of salvation. Once we are born into the family of God by grace, through faith, we cannot be unborn. We are eternally secure—saved forever regardless of how we live our life!

5. However, if we do not redeem the time through obedient service, there are things we can and will lose, such as: joy, fellowship, inner peace, fruitfulness, testimony, and reward.
6. **“For it is God who is at work in you”**—There are many aspects of God’s presence in our life. He is *“a very present help in [time of] trouble”* (Psalm 46:1). He guides and leads us; He is our rear-guard watching over us. The most amazing aspect of God’s presence is His indwelling of every believer. God is in us! (Col. 1:27; Rom. 8; 1 Cor. 1:21, 22; John 14:16, 17)
7. When baby Jesus was born in a stable, that stable was transformed from a common shed for feeding and housing animals to the birthplace of a King. That common stable now had eternal significance. God’s presence turns the common into the incredible. His presence in our soul transforms us from an insignificant nobody to a glorious somebody!
8. He is working to energize you for His purpose. God will not call us to do that which He does not equip us or energize us to do. What He is, He imparts to us. True humility and a servant-mind is not something we conjure up or strive to attain; it is the natural fruit of abiding in Him.

This same word, *energeo*. is used in:

- a. Ephesians 3:20, when Paul says, *“Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the **power** that works in us”* (emphasis added).
- b. 1 Thessalonians 2:13, *“The Word of God performs its **work** in you who believe”* (emphasis added). The Word of God is an energizing power for equipping the saints for service.
9. He indwells us **“to will and to work for His good pleasure.”** The Holy Spirit works in conjunction with the Word of God in our soul to conform us into a servant-minded believer. He gives the burden, He gives the love, He gives the power, He gives the opportunity—all aspects of true godly service flow from His presence within us and His purpose for us. We demonstrate His presence by obedience, which in turn brings Him pleasure.
10. Our adequacy is from God! (see 2 Cor. 3:5; Col. 1:29)

E. Philippians 2:14–16

“Do all things without grumbling or disputing; that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I will have reason to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain.”

1. **“Do ALL THINGS without grumbling or disputing”** (emphasis added). These words, *“grumbling”* and *“disputing,”* are not necessarily an outward argument or

complaint, but an internal annoyance, a muttering, a secret displeasure with the circumstances at hand. Remember, it won't be long before our attitude is revealed in our words and our actions.

2. A servant-mindset will stand out as a testimony in a self-centered, "me-centered," perverse generation. Paul is encouraging us to serve with a smile in our heart.
3. Remember that the smallest act of service, done with the love of Christ, is pleasing in God's sight. Jesus Christ took a towel and washed the feet of His disciples—such a small servant-act in the eyes of man, but a glorious, humble act in the eyes of God.
4. The light of service that shines here on this Earth will shine as glory in eternity! Just as the humility, obedience, and service of Jesus Christ resulted in His eternal exaltation, our humility, obedience, and service will result in eternal glory to God (see James 4:10).
5. **"blameless and innocent"**—without sin, spot or blemish, like the sacrificial lambs in Old Testament times.
6. In **verse 16**, there is a reciprocal ministry, reward, and joy between the Apostle Paul and the Philippians.
7. **Conclusion:** Just as the humility and obedience of Jesus Christ on the cross demonstrated to the world that He was the Son of God, our humility and obedience in serving others should demonstrate who we are—children of God and lights in the world!

F. Philippians 2:17–18

1. Paul was willing to have his life **"poured out as a drink offering"** on behalf of his brothers and sisters in Philippi; to do so would be joy!
2. He was referencing back to the **"drink offering"** commanded in Numbers 15:1–10 and 28:1–8 (an animal sacrificed by fire, a grain offering, and a wine offering as **"a soothing aroma to the Lord."**)
3. In this picture, wine is both a symbol of life and a symbol of pleasure.
4. Just as Jesus Christ served even to the point of death on a cross, Paul expresses the realization that his life-blood may soon be poured out as an offering to God; yet, he rejoices. His suffering, service, and sacrifice is naught to him compared to the joy of serving the Philippian believers.
5. **2 Timothy 4:6–8.** At the end of Paul's life, he declared that his life had been poured out and his eternal reward was certain. Just as with Jesus, Paul's humble service resulted in eternal exaltation, for the glory of God!
6. **The Poured-Out Life**
"For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it" (Matt. 16:25).

- a. If you think about it, our lives **are** being poured out: in housework, making meals, child-raising, husband-pleasing, grocery shopping, and a multitude of other activities. Day runs into day, year runs into year and before we know it, we are going through menopause, on Medicare, and the next stop is the grave!
- b. The question is not **if** your life will be poured out, the question is **what** will it be poured out for?
- c. If we pour out our lives for nothing more than a career, a bigger house, a Mediterranean cruise, a closet full of shoes and clothes, we may or may not find pleasure in those things. But we can be assured that our life was poured out in vanity and waste—with no eternal value.
- d. If we pour out our lives in service to God, in service to the Gospel, and in service to those around us, there is the joy of serving in time and reward for eternity. Humble service leads to eternal exaltation (James 4:10).
- e. Spend your life in serving yourself, and you will have lost it forever. But lose your life in serving the Lord, and you will have made an investment that will last forever. Jim Elliott, missionary and martyr, rightly said, *“No man is a fool to give up what he cannot keep, to gain that which he cannot lose.”*

G. Philippians 2:19–30

1. Paul expresses a heart of gratitude toward Timothy and Epaphroditus—both fellow servants with Paul for the sake of the Gospel and the blessing of the Philippians. In reading these verses, notice the emotion and fondness that Paul expresses.
2. Paul says they are *“kindred spirits.”* They are like-minded with Paul in their desire to serve the Lord. He comments on their devotion, and their proven worth. Time and trial have tested their faith, and they have come through with flying colors.
3. Of Epaphroditus, Paul says he is a brother, fellow worker, fellow soldier, a messenger and minister—a man who is willing to gamble away his own life for the work of Christ.
4. There is a unique and fond fellowship between like-minded believers who share a passion for ministry. Are you experiencing this fellowship?

Matthew 10:42

Jesus said, *“And whoever in the name of a disciple gives to one of these little ones even a cup of cold water to drink, truly I say to you, he shall not lose his reward.”*

If there is eternal reward that cannot be lost for the giving of one cup of water to a child, how much greater is the assurance of eternal reward for the **pouring out of one’s life** in service to God?

III. Chapter Three: The Spiritual Mind—Priority

A spiritually focused mindset will help safeguard our soul.

As a youth, Jesus declared He must be about His Father's business (Luke 2:49). In His later ministry, Jesus declared His spiritual focus, "*I am from above ... I am not of this world ... I always do the things that are pleasing to Him*" (John 8:23, 29b).

Throughout chapter three, we will see the spiritual focus of Paul's soul as he contrasts the flesh with the spirit, the earthly with the spiritual. Whereas chapter two ended with Paul expressing a very gentle and emotional fondness, chapter three expresses the intense "drivenness" of Paul's life. He was a man with spiritual passion!

A. Philippians 3:1–2

Paul exhorts the believers to rejoice in the Lord. Yet, in the same breath, warns them of the spiritual dangers surrounding them and how to safeguard their souls. In chapter one, Paul warns the Philippians that there are those who oppose the Gospel (1:28) and in chapter two, he reminds them that they are living out their faith "*in the midst of a perverse and crooked generation*" (2:15). In chapter three, as Paul exhorts them to have a spiritual mindset, he warns the Philippians of the danger of association with those not seeking true spirituality:

- "*beware of the dogs*"—those always ready for a fight (3:2).
- "*beware of evil workers*" (3: 2).
- "*beware of ... false circumcisions*" (religious Jews who had no reality to their worship).
- beware of enemies of the cross.
- beware of those who set their mind on earthly things.

B. Philippians 3:3

1. Paul recognizes that there is an imitation to spirituality and a **true** spirituality that:
 - a. worships in the Spirit of God,
 - b. finds glory in Jesus Christ and gives glory to Jesus Christ, and
 - c. puts no confidence in the flesh. Under the magnifying glass of false spirituality, he could put confidence in the flesh. But under the magnifying glass of true spirituality he has nothing to boast in except the Lord.
2. True circumcision is explained for us in Colossians 2:8–14

C. Philippians 3:4–6

Paul outlines for us the religious advantages he was born into and his own zeal for Judaism. Yet, in his pursuit of true spirituality, he refuses to put any confidence or boasting in these religious advantages.

D. Philippians 3:7–14

Paul goes on to explain to us the spiritual pursuit of his life.

1. In these verses, Paul expresses his strong desire to “*know Jesus Christ.*” To live with a spiritual mind that “counted all things loss, compared to the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus.”
 - a. Know Jesus through His Word and application of His Word. The Word of God is the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2:16).
 - b. Know Jesus through the power of His resurrection.
 - c. Know Jesus through the fellowship of His sufferings: to carry the burden of people’s needs both physical and spiritual, to suffer persecution for the sake of the Gospel, to give up ownership of your own life to serve God.
 - d. Be conformed to His death. This is a willingness to surrender your life on a day-to-day basis, as well as a permanent basis.

Jesus told his disciples, “*If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross **daily** and follow Me*” (Luke 9:23, emphasis added).

As Jesus faced the cross, He prayed to the Father, “*Yet not my will, but Yours be done.*” (Luke 22:42)

2. Paul wanted to know these four things to achieve the “out resurrection” (*exanastasis*—this is the only place in Scripture that uses this word) of verse 10, “a resurrection from out of the dead.” This is Paul’s desire to be delivered from the power of the old sin nature—to live in the power of the spiritual life, resulting in eternal glory and reward.
3. In Paul’s spiritual pursuit, he adopts four outlooks:
 - a. **Upward Look: Verse 14**, “*I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*”
 - Paul hears the upward call of God. And sets his mind on spiritual things to attain that goal. He was running a spiritual race of faith and had a spiritual goal in mind: “*to lay hold of that for which also [he] was laid hold of by Christ Jesus*” (Phil. 3:12)—to fulfill the purpose and mission God had for him.
 - Every runner has a goal in mind. To be a state champion, a national champion, to make the US Olympic team—these are career goals. But to attain a career goal, an athlete must set daily goals of discipline and training. Such runners do it for a perishable crown.
 - Just so in the spiritual realm. Every day is an opportunity to lay up for ourselves treasures in Heaven, to run with drivenness toward an imperishable crown that reflects the faithful run of our life, and brings

glory to Christ our Lord. We must **keep our eyes on the prize!** (1 Cor. 9:25)

A spiritual mindset has an ever-present goal in mind—eternal reward.

b. **Inward Look: Verse 12–13**, “*not that I already attained it ... I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet.*”

- Here, we see a great honesty and humility in the soul of Paul. With all his missionary journeys, all the miracles he performed, the sermons he preached, and the people he reached, he does not give himself the luxury to sit back, put his feet up on the couch and say, “I have it! I have attained!” He keeps on growing spiritually even as he sits in a Roman prison.

A spiritual mindset is constantly evaluating self in light of the scriptural standard, in light of the perfect Person of Jesus Christ.

c. **Backward Look: Verse 13**, “*forgetting what lies behind ...*”

- To attain the upward goal, Paul had to look back. Not to look back to live in the past, but look back to be delivered from the past. He forgets his earthly assets (mentioned in verses 4–6), forgets his failures (by embracing the forgiveness of Jesus Christ and being freed from guilt), and forgets his spiritual victories (to be free of boasting in self), realizing each day has challenges and opportunities of its own.
- Some of us live with pain and sorrow from circumstances in the past. Forgiveness of others is necessary; forgiveness of self is necessary. Yesterday cannot be redeemed, tomorrow cannot be redeemed—only today can be redeemed for God’s glory. To adopt Paul’s perspective of the past is to focus on the present.

A spiritual mindset is focused on redeeming the moment at hand!

d. **Forward Look: Verses 12–14**

- Twice Paul uses the words “*I press on.*” The Greek word here, *dioko*, means “to pursue, to run after so as to catch.” The intensity of the word is found in the fact that it is also used in a different form in Scripture for “persecution.” Formerly, Paul ran after Christians to persecute them. Now he is running after a spiritual goal.
- In verse 13, he says, “[I reach] *forward to what lies ahead.*” The Greek word here means, “to stretch out towards something so as to attain it.” Like a runner racing for the finish line, Paul’s desire is to run well to the finish.
- Both expressions have a goal in mind.

A spiritual mindset stays focused on the finish line!

E. Philippians 3:15–19

In keeping with the pattern of Philippians, Paul uses himself as an example of a spiritual mindset and then exhorts us to follow his pattern. He wants the Philippians—and us—to adopt the same “drivenness” that was the signature of his life.

1. We are earthly people by birth, we are heavenly people by new birth. We are one person living in two realms. Earth operates in a totally different realm than Heaven.
2. In this world, we have examples of those who are driven by their own appetite, walk in the earthly realm, whose end is destruction. In Paul, we have an example of someone who walked here on Earth while focusing on the heavenly realm.
3. Safeguard your soul by walking after his example!

F. Philippians 3:20–21

1. In these last two verses of chapter three, Paul gives us further cause to live with spiritual drivenness: our citizenship is in Heaven! Paul expresses great anticipation that he is “one day closer” to entering his country of spiritual birth—his heavenly home. The focus of that anticipation is not the streets of gold, the heavenly mansions, or the chorus of the angels, but the Savior—the Lord Jesus Christ. Finally, in that heavenly home, the conformity with Christ that Paul has striven for here on Earth will become a reality.
2. Chapter three shows the vivid contrast between living an earthly life and a spiritual life, between false spirituality and true spirituality. The emphasis of false spirituality is on behavior. To the religious Jews of Paul’s time, if you acted spiritual, you were spiritual. But behavior does not dictate our identity; our identity dictates our behavior. True spirituality is the natural fruit of who we are, our identity as believers “in Christ.”
3. Let’s consider who we are **“In Christ”**:
 - New creation (2 Cor. 5:17)
 - *“Sons of God”* (Gal. 3:26; Eph. 1:5)
 - Joint heirs with Christ (Rom. 8:17)
 - More than conquerors (Rom. 8:37)
 - *“His workmanship”* (Eph. 2:10)
 - Salt and light (Matt. 5:13, 14)
 - *“Ambassadors for Christ”* (2 Cor. 5:20)
 - The Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:27; Rom. 12:5)
 - *“God’s household”* and *“fellow citizens”* of Heaven (Eph. 2:19)
 - Chosen, Holy, and Royal (1 Pet. 2:9–11)
 - The Bride of Christ (Rev. 19:7; 21:9; 22:17)
4. As the Bride of Christ, we should have that same eager anticipation of eternity that Paul expressed at the end of Philippians 3, for there is an eternal wedding day

awaiting us, that day when we will be forever joined in marriage to the man of our dreams—the Lord Jesus Christ!

5. To be a well-prepared bride, let's adopt Paul's four outlooks in preparation for that eternal wedding day:
 - a. **Upward Look:** A bride anticipates, with much joy, the sealing of the wedding vows and the blessings that follow: honeymoon, home, family, life together with the man she loves. Many brides who have walked down the aisle with great joy and anticipation have ended up with shattered dreams. As the Bride of Christ, all our joy and anticipation of eternity is valid, for the Lord Jesus Christ will never disappoint or desert. Eternity is ours to enjoy in perfect union with the King of kings and Lord of lords!
 - b. **Inward Look:** What does the Lord Jesus Christ find attractive?
 - “... *for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outer appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart,*” 1 Samuel 16:7.
 - “*Your adornment must not be merely external ... but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God,*” 1 Peter 3:1–5.
 - In preparation for our eternal wedding day, we should beautify our soul through submission to God, His Word, His plan, and His purpose for our life. A gentle and quiet spirit is beautiful to Jesus.
 - c. **Backward Look:** Just as a bride forgets her previous relationships to be faithful to her groom, we forsake who we were in the past to walk as new creatures in Christ. Our old identity is forgotten; our old behavior is forgotten; our new identity defines our behavior. Most marriage vows include the words, “forsaking all others, be faithful only to him so long as you both shall live.”
 - d. **Forward Look:** Our walk on this Earth is a walk down the wedding aisle, with each step getting closer to our groom. Walk worthy—walk as a bride keeping to the path that leads to the groom.

Even so, come Lord Jesus!

IV. **Chapter Four: The Strong Mind—Power**

The Lord strengthens our mind to safeguard our soul.

Though the Word of God is not specifically mentioned in chapter four, the powerful effects of it on our soul are highlighted by Paul in this chapter. It contains the famous verse so often quoted on coffee cups and Christian T-shirts:

*“I can do all things through Christ who **strengthens** me.”* (Phil. 4:13, emphasis added)

Paul faced many tests and trials in life. In chapter four, he addresses the fact that we all face many tests and trials in life: Problems in relationships, problems in circumstances and seemingly lack of provision. If those problems are not faced with the truth and power of God's Word, we fret, regret, worry, and fear. When we face those problems with the power of God's Word, there is unity, peace, and contentment. The choice is ours.

The power to face these problems is found "*in the Lord.*" Life is unpredictable, the Lord is reliable! Leaving the faith is more common among emotional-based worship groups. Emotion is not a power source; the Word of God is.

A. Philippians 4:1–5

1. Three times, Paul uses the phrase "*in the Lord.*" Our God's name is mentioned **40 times** in the book of Philippians! In His glorious name we are to "*stand firm,*" "*rejoice always,*" and "*live in harmony*" with one another.
2. If Paul were to write these verses without the words "*in the Lord,*" he would be exhorting us to do something in our own strength, and failure would be certain. But by including the phrase, "*in the Lord,*" he recognizes that as Christians born into the family of God, we have a power available to us that the world does not have. Therefore, there is a behavior and strength expected of us that cannot be expected of those who are not "*in the Lord.*" We have the strength to live above our circumstances and, therefore, the ability to stand firm, live in harmony, and rejoice ALWAYS! This phrase, "*in the Lord,*" pertains to the exhortations and principles found throughout chapter four.

B. Philippians 4:6–9

Strength in the Lord comes through prayer, pondering, and practice.

1. Prayer: Verses 6–7

Anxious thoughts should be turned to prayer.

- a. Prayer—the word invokes a sense of reverence and worship.
- b. Supplication—this word indicates a deep desire and need.
- c. Thanksgiving—in everything!

2. Pondering: Verse 8

The word " *dwell* " is the New Testament version of meditation, meaning "to think hard on, to consider, to ponder." These are not fleeting thoughts, but deep meditations.

- a. Proverbs 23:7, "*For as he thinks within himself [his heart], so he is.*"
- b. 2 Corinthians 10:5, "*... we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.*"
- c. Psalm 1:2, "*But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night*" (emphasis added).

d. Isaiah 26:3, “*The steadfast [to lean upon, to rest upon] of mind You will keep in perfect peace, because he trusts in You.*”

e. **Lamentations 3:1–24**

3. **Practice: Verse 9**

Throughout the book of Philippians, Paul has revealed his mindset to us as something we should imitate and follow. Now, he also puts forth his life as an example for us to follow. He desires that we learn what he has learned by doing what he has done.

4. **Peace: Verse 9**

Twice in these verses, Paul promises peace through prayer, pondering, and practice.

- a. The peace of God will guard your heart (vv. 7, 9). The Greek word means “to mount a guard, post spies at the gate.”
- b. In John 14:27, Jesus said to His disciples, “*Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.*” He knew that, after His departure, the disciples would face many trials, doubts, fears and even persecution. Jesus Himself, would soon be departing, but His peace would be left behind with His children.
- c. Peace is found not in the world, but in a Person—the Person of Jesus Christ. He is the Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, **Prince of Peace**. The God of peace has promised to never leave us and never forsake us. (Isa. 9:6; Heb. 13:5b).
- d. Because this passage is tied in with the exhortation to unity in Philippians 4:1–5, it would be good to look at **Hebrews 12:14–15**.

Since we are recipients of the peace of God, delivered to us by the grace of God, we should reflect that grace in willing pursuit of peace with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

C. Philippians 4:10–13

Strength “*in the Lord*” leads to contentment.

In this passage, Paul once again reveals to us his thinking so that we might have a godly path to follow.

1. The context of Paul’s contentment was in God’s provision, given through the heart and hands of the Philippian church.
2. In verse 11, Paul does not bring up the issue of their grace gift out of want but out of a desire to express to them his contentment. That contentment is “*learned*” through the circumstances of life: prison, beatings, scourgings, shipwrecks, hunger, thirst, dangers, fears, and burdens (see 2 Cor. 11:24–29).

3. During extreme pain and persecution, Paul found that the joy he had in the Lord was not lost. Indeed, he sang in prison (Acts 16)!
4. Through these things, he found the source and the secret of contentment—the strength of Jesus Christ.

“I can do [can be content with] all things through Him who strengthens me.” (Phil. 4:13)

5. Contentment

- a. The Greek word means “self-sufficient.” The Stoic philosophers viewed contentment as a dispassionate acceptance of circumstances due to a total reliance on self. Paul knew that his sufficiency was not in self, but in the all-sufficient God of the Bible.
- b. To the Greeks, contentment meant “I need nothing.” To Paul, it meant “I have everything” (“in the Lord”).
- c. **1 Timothy 6:6–9:** In Paul’s theology, “*godliness*” speaks of spiritual growth and conformity to Christ. With our maturity in Christ, we find something of great gain—contentment! As we grow, we find our riches not in this world, but in the next; not in things, but in people; not in self, but in Christ.
- d. **Psalm 131:** This is the shortest, but one of the sweetest of all Psalms. David pictures his soul in a state of contentment with God, likening it to a weened child laying at peace on his mother’s breast.

D. **Philippians 4:14–19, Reciprocal Ministry**

In this passage, we have another verse that is so often used out of context:

“And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 4:19)

This promise is made by Paul to the Philippians in light of their participation in the Gospel ministry. Paul ministered to them through encouragement, instruction, and example. The Philippians ministered back to him by financial support. Throughout this book, the reciprocal ministry of Paul and the Philippians is on display for us.

1. **Acts 16:** Through a vision, the Lord called Paul to Macedonia. In obedience, he followed that call and found himself, by God’s design, in the city of Philippi.
 - a. On the Sabbath, he went to the riverside and found women worshipping God. Lydia was there, and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul. She and her household were baptized.
 - b. In an act of reciprocal ministry, Lydia invited Paul into her house and ministered to him through hospitality.

- c. While still in Philippi, Paul and Silas were arrested, beaten, and jailed. Paul led the jailer to Christ and came to his house to speak God's Word. The jailer and his family believed and were baptized.
- d. In an act of reciprocal ministry, the jailer washed the wounds of Paul and Silas, and set before them food—rejoicing along the way!

2. **The Philippian Believers**

- a. At the time of writing the book of Philippians, Paul is in prison in Rome. Yet, under the inspiration of God, he remains concerned for their spiritual state and pens the words of this book.
- b. In turn, the Philippians, through their participation in Paul's suffering, and through their participation in the spreading the Gospel, minister encouragement back to him. In a place as joyless as a prison, Paul finds joy in the faith and obedience of the Philippians. This is reciprocal ministry (3 John 4).
- c. In chapter two, Paul speaks of Epaphroditus being willing to risk his neck and gamble away his life for the sake of encouraging the Philippians. In return, Paul encourages them to hold Epaphroditus, and others like him, in high regard. Paul is exhorting them to show reciprocal ministry of grace to Epaphroditus.
- d. Finally, in chapter four, Paul recalls the sacrificial giving of the Philippians—how even after Paul had left Philippi, they continued to send support for the needs of his ministry. In reciprocal response to the truths that Paul had taught, the love he had shown, the concern that he had for the condition of their souls, the Philippians chose to be a channel of blessing to Paul. Paul praises their reciprocal ministry calling it full and abundant, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice—well-pleasing to God.
- e. Because of their reciprocal ministry, Paul is confident that the Lord *“will supply all [of their] needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”*
- f. Throughout the book of Philippians, Paul highlights the value of joint participation with our brothers and sisters in Christ. He shows us his appreciation for others through the language that he uses: “fellowship,” “share,” “love,” “affection,” “same mind,” “kindred spirit,” “beloved,” and “brethren.”
- g. If the Body of Christ was so precious to the Apostle Paul, should it not be just as precious to us? What reciprocal ministry is God calling you to?

E. Philippians 4:21–23

The rich and glorious book of Philippians opens and closes with bookends of God's grace!

Philippians 1:2, “Grace to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Philippians 4:23, “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.”

We are chosen recipients of God’s amazing grace!

- God’s grace gives us a **purpose** to live for: a **single-minded** focus on the Gospel.
- God’s grace gives us a **passion** for life: to live with a humble **servant-mind**.
- God’s grace gives our life a **priority**: to live with a **spiritual mind** focused on the eternal.
- God’s grace gives us the **power** we need “*in the Lord*”: to live with a **strong mind** above the circumstances of life.

He Giveth More Grace

“He giveth more grace when the burdens grow greater,
He sends us more strength when the labors increase;
To added afflictions He addeth His mercy;
To multiplied trials, His multiplied peace.

“When we have exhausted our store of endurance,
When our strength has failed and our day is half done,
When we reach the end of our hoarded resources,
Our Father’s full giving is only begun.

“His love has no limit; His grace has no measure.
His power has no boundary known unto men;
For out of His infinite riches in Jesus,
He giveth, and giveth, and giveth again.”

~ Annie J. Flint