

PHILIPPIANS: JOY IN SERVING

A PROPER ATTITUDE IN GETTING ALONG IN SERVICE

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Paul's letter to the Philippians has often been designated the letter of joy. Robert Gromacki comments, "This book has a traditional reputation of being the epistle of joy."¹ Ralph Martin agrees, "This impression upon the modern reader is re-echoed by all commentators, and forms the most noticeable characteristic which distinguishes Philippians in the Pauline literature."² A tally of the word "joy" gives about 16 occurrences, compared with 42 such occurrences in the rest of Paul's letters. Joy does appear to have special significance in the Philippian letter.

Yet a reading of the letter reveals marked incongruity with the common understanding of joy. In chapter one Paul had to address the matter of believers who evangelized but did so with the wrong attitude. He charged the Philippians to stand and work together. He gave four examples in chapter two of a proper attitude toward service. He included a warning to do all things without grumbling and arguing. In chapter three he elaborated on the difference between the wrong attitude toward service and a proper attitude, even warning about those who have made their own stomach their god. In chapter four he encouraged two women to get along, and encouraged the church to talk to God rather than live in anxiety. He closed the letter sharing lessons he had learned regarding contentment. The Philippian church was not without problems, yet despite those problems proper joy had both a place and purpose.³

The nature of the conflict in the Philippian church might be classified as 'hurt feelings.' Paul used the word soul or its cognates 30 times in his writings.⁴ One sixth or five of those occurrences are in Philippians. By comparisons, he used spirit (of the human spirit) twice in Philippians. The hurt feelings appear to be related to the issue of service in the assembly. Paul spoke of work or service twelve times, referencing two forms of priestly work, the work of a slave, and the work of a servant. He tied fruit to work, and viewed believers as working together like an athletic team. In chapter one, Paul expressed his attitude regarding the service of fellow believers, even when they acted with less than pure motives. Chapter two consists of four examples of a proper attitude in serving. Clearly, serving together and the proper attitude when serving together are the focus of Paul's letter to the Philippians.

1 R.G. Gromacki, *The Books of Philippians & Colossians*, (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2003) p. 8.

2 Ralph P. Martin, *The Epistle of Paul to the Philippians*, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978) pp. 42-43.

³ Assuming that the council of Acts 15 was about AD 50, Paul's first visit to Philippi was either in the same year or the year following (AD 51). His imprisonment and eventual trip to Rome took place about seven to eight years later (c. AD 57-58). Luke tells us that Paul spent two years in his own rented place, under house arrest.³ It is during this time that Paul wrote the Philippians. He probably wrote toward the end of his imprisonment (c. AD 61), as he indicates a likely release (1:19). Therefore, Paul wrote Philippians approximately 9-10 years after first meeting them and starting that church.

⁴ This includes Hebrews as a Pauline letter.

This study will briefly examine joy in service or work. I'll consider the various terms indicating service. Some of these will be indicated by specific terms and others by interpretation. I then will move through the letter following Paul's case for proper service. This will involve the matter of the soul and the related feelings. I will demonstrate that a misaligned soul can interfere with serving in the Church, and it is therefore wise to align one's soul with God's purpose. I'll note the importance Paul places on joy in these contexts and the proper location for joy. It is hoped that Paul's letter will encourage us to have a proper attitude toward our fellow believers, especially those alongside of whom we serve.

Serving: Key Terminology in Philippians

Before I look at some of the situations, it will be helpful to consider some of the terms in their various forms. Though word counts may seem tedious, they demonstrate points of emphasis in the Biblical writings. Following are tallies of some key terms. I'll make some observations following this.

Frame of mind φρονέω - 11x - no noun form occurs in Philippians

- 1x humble frame of mind 2:3 - ταπεινοφροσύνη
- 10x the verb - 1:7; 2:2 (2x), 5; 3:15 (2x), 19; 4:2, 10 (2x)

Joy χαρά - 16x

- Paul's joy - 1:4, 18 (2x), 25; 2:2, 17 (2x); 4:1, 10
- Charge for the Philippians to rejoice - 2:18 (2x), 28, 29; 3:1; 4:4 (2x)
- For comparison Paul uses the verb χαίρω 29x in all his writings, the verb συγχαίρω 4x, and the noun χαρά 25x. 27% of all uses these words occur in Philippians.

Soul ψυχή - 2x- 1:27; 2:30

- joint-soul σύμψυχος 1x- 2:2
- good-soul εὐψυχέω 1x- 2:19
- equal-soul ἰσόψυχος 1x - 2:20
- 5x total in Philippians while 25x in the rest of Paul's material. That's 20% of all uses by Paul occur in Philippians.

Spirit

- as human spirit πνεῦμα - 1:27; 2:1; 4:23
- as the Holy Spirit- 1:19; 3:3 out of 111x in Paul's letters; as man's spirit 11x and here 2x

Slave/Serve/Work

- fruit καρπὸς tied to working 3x 1:11, 22; 4:17
- ergon- work- including cognates - 12x.
 - leitourgia λειτουργία - priestly work toward the people- 3x 2:17, 30, 25 (6x total in Paul)
 - energeō, energia - direct work - 3x 2:13 ἐνεργέω ; 3:21 ἐνεργεῖα
 - sunergos συνεργός - worker together- 2x 2:25; 4:3
 - ergon ἔργον - work - 1:6 God's; 1:22 Paul's; 2:30 work regarding Christ;
 - katergeō κατεργάζομαι - work out, produce 2:12 of the Philippians;
 - ergatās ἐργάτης - worker- 3:2 evil workers;

- doulos δοῦλος - slave - 1:1; 2:7; douleō δουλεω - 2:22 118x in NT, 2x, 1x vb
- diakonos διάκονος - servant, “minister” - 1:1
- thusia θυσία - sacrifice (requires the action of one offering)- 2x 2:17; 4:18.
- korīaō κοπιᾶω - to labor - 2:16
- latreuo λατρεύω - priestly work towards God - 1x 3:3

One

one - 4x

Stand and Compete - στήκω and συναθλέω

both stand and compete occur together 2x 1:27; 4:1, 3

The verb στήκω occurs ten times in the New Testament.

The verb ἀθλέω occurs five times in the New Testament two being this prefixed form.

Lord

- Lord [κύριος] occurs 15 times in Philippians.

- Nine occurrences of Lord are “in *the* Lord” ἐν κυρίῳ.

Lord occurs more often in other letters, sometimes due to the size of the letter, but “in *the* Lord” occurs more frequently in Philippians than any other letter of Paul.⁵

Comments on key terms

Joy

As noted in the introduction, Philippians has been designated the epistle of **joy**. Certainly in terms of occurrences of the word joy and its cognates, Philippians garners over twenty-five percent of all occurrences in Paul’s writings. Yet of Paul’s uses of joy in this letter, almost half are imperatives as repeated charges to rejoice, signaling perhaps a problem with rejoicing in their circumstance. The noun occurs in 2:29 with the imperative verb “receive” so it is part of a charge. The verb in 2:28 is subjunctive indicating potential joy. These charges may indicate a struggle with working together.

Soul

Paul’s use of **soul** in Philippians demonstrates part of their problem. Twenty percent of all occurrences in Paul’s letters being found in Philippians is notable. Though the word spirit occurs far more frequently throughout Paul’s letters due to his emphasis on the Holy Spirit’s work, his use of spirit as reference to the human spirit is significantly less, only being used about 11 times. That makes Paul’s two references to the believer’s human spirit in Philippians

	<u>Total Hits</u>	<u>Hits per 1000 words</u>
⁵ Romans	8	1.12
1Corinthians	9	1.32
2Corinthians	2	0.45
Galatians	1	0.45
Ephesians	7	2.89
<u>Philippians</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>5.52</u>
Colossians	4	2.53
1Thessalonians	3	2.02
2Thessalonians	2	2.43
1Timothy-Titus	0	0.00
Philemon	2	5.97
Hebrews	0	0.00

close to twenty percent of all occurrences. The Philippian believers have an issue with their soul. They seem to objectively know (an ability of the spirit; 1 Cor. 2:11) truth, but struggle with how they feel about others (a quality of the soul).

Work terms

The issue of the soul and need for joy lead to the matter of work. Paul uses *ergon* and its cognates 135 times in all his letters. So twelve times does not seem remarkable. However, some of its related forms stand out, especially *leitourgia*⁶ which indicates the priestly work directed towards people contrasted to *latreia* which is the priestly work directed towards God. Paul uses *leitourgia* of the Philippians' gift sent to Paul (2:17, 30) [from here on verse references without a book will be in Philippians]. Of the five occurrences of this word in the New Testament, two refer to priestly service under the Law (Mosaic) covenant (Heb. 8:6; 9:21). The only other use in the New Testament also describes a material gift for the needs of the saints as a priestly work (2 Cor. 9:12). Paul applies the noun *leitourgos* - priestly servant - to Epaphroditus (2:25). Whereas the uses of this word in Hebrews are first to angels and then to the Law covenant (Heb. 1:7; 8:2). Paul applies it to earthly rulers and to himself as one doing priest-work [*hierourgeō*- **ἱερουργέω**] of the good news regarding God (Rom. 13:6; 15:16). This means that most of the occurrences of this word are not about believers. Only six occurrences of these four forms refer to New Testament believers, and half are in Philippians.

Frame of Mind

The Greek *phren* [**φρην**] and its cognates are also common in this short letter. Occurring in about 21 different forms or cognates⁷ throughout the New Testament, it occurs a total of 124 times. Of those, 11 are in Philippians, which is frequent considering the size of the letter (It only occurs more frequently in Titus).

Lord

Paul emphasizes Christ's Lordship in Philippians over individuals and the whole assembly. While Lord does refer to His deity in several passages (cf. Rom. 10:9, 10), Philippians lays emphasis on His being the Master or Boss of His body the Church. No individual at the moment of salvation grasps any real sense of Christ's right to be master of his or her life. Lordship is a matter of maturity, a result of coming to appreciate what He did to secure our salvation and the place He maintains for us even now. Every conflict between believers recorded in the New Testament involves a practical refusal of Christ's Lordship.⁸ Comparing the number of occurrences in Paul's letters matches the conflicts. The strife ridden competitive Corinthians received sixty-five references to Christ as Lord, reminding them that none of them are truly in charge. Similarly the comparatively short letter to the Ephesians divided between believers of Jewish and Gentile backgrounds received twenty-six reminders of who is truly in charge of the body. Colossians split between the philosophy-bent, well-disciplined believers and the regular "nobody" believers are reminded sixteen times. The combined forty-six references to Lord in 1 & 2 Thessalonians likely has more to do with His ultimate Lordship over matters such as

⁶ The adjective *leitourgos* - one ministering, is used of spirits (Heb. 1:14). The verb *leitourgeō* refers to a material gift for the saints (Rom. 15:27) and to service under the Law covenant (Heb. 10:11). The noun

⁷ The root **φρην** is broadly used. Some examples: **καταφρονέω** meaning to "think down upon," **αφρονες** "to function without proper thinking or attitude," or **ταπεινοφροσύνης** "to have a humble or low attitude."

⁸ Conflicts arise when individual so focus upon his or her goals, concerns accomplishments or fears that he or she loses sight of the Lord being in charge.

suffering at the hands of the world, rather than the inner-workings of the assembly. Timothy, who is timidly apprehensive about using his gift, is reminded about his Lord sixteen times in 2 Timothy. Like these various churches, the Philippian saints needed to remember who is the only Lord of the body and so of their local group.

Of forty-eight⁹ references to “in *the* Lord” in Paul’s letters nine occur in Philippians, that’s nearly twenty percent of all occurrences and twice as often as in any other letter of Paul. Believers have a confident trust¹⁰ “in *the* Lord” (1:14; 2:24) and He is the One in whom Paul hopes (2:19). Most of Paul’s uses encourage the Philippian believers to live “in *the* Lord,” receiving believers (2:29); rejoicing (3:1; 4:4); standing (4:1); framing their minds (4:2).

We believers are saved by grace apart from works (Eph. 2:8-9). Yet God intends us to work, specifically to serve among believers with whom we have association (Eph. 2:10). Such service is general and specific. It is specific as we exercise our God-given spiritual/grace gift. It is also general, because by virtue of our salvation, believers are capable of serving in a variety of areas as God provides opportunity. The believer should never think himself incapable of or above certain opportunities because, “That is not my gift.” We may defer an act of service to another better equipped for the such service, but if God brings an opportunity to one’s attention, is it not likely that God intends that individual to take the opportunity? God has given three gifts which directly involve teaching: shepherd-teachers, teachers, helps. Yet, all believers should be capable of operating as teachers to some degree if they have been saved for a while. God has given a gift of giving and yet Paul does not appear to limit his encouragement in 2 Corinthians 8-9 to only those with that gift. God has gifted some believers to encourage [exhort], while Paul’s words in 2 Corinthians 1 appear directed to all saints, not only those with the gift of encouragement. Whether specific to our gift or general by way of our salvation, believers are equipped to serve and God has planned good works which involve service with joy.

Moving Through the Text: Paul’s Case for Proper Service Confidence in God

Paul expressed confidence in God’s work with them. He knew that God would continue the work begun in them, until the day that Christ returns for His own (Php. 1:6). By “work” did Paul mean “God’s work alone,” as perhaps regeneration, or did he mean a work which is being worked out in the believer? Spirit-baptism and regeneration (these are the two initial works, by which God initiates salvation), are each a one time occurrence. The Spirit baptizes the believer into Christ one time only. Likewise, once the Spirit joins the Father, Son, and Himself to the believer in regeneration, He does not repeat it—they are joined, it is unnecessary to repeat it.¹¹ Paul stated that God began¹² this work implying something which continues. He also stated that God will bring it to its intended end or purpose.¹³ While baptism and regeneration are one time events they are the bases of God’s continued work.

⁹ Revelation 14:13 has one additional ἐν κυρίῳ but is probably instrumental “by *the* Lord.”

¹⁰ πείθω in the perfect tense, therefore, confidently persuaded or trust.

¹¹ Regeneration results in the birth (immediately, not over a course of time). 1 John 5:1 indicates this is a one time event by the perfect verb “is born.”

¹² ἐναρξάμενος-Aor. Mid. Part.

¹³ ἐπιτελέσει Fut. Act. Ind. < ἐπιτελέω. 2 Corinthians 8:11 illustrates this verb, as the Corinthians intended to give and were not to complete the intention by actually giving.

By “work,” Paul means God’s ongoing work in the believer. That work includes service to God in local assemblies. This verse serves not only as a personal encouragement for the individual believer – “God will finish in you, that which He began,” but it also encourages believers to consider God’s faithful work in others– “God will finish in them, that which He began.” As the matters in this letter unfold, it is not hard to see why they needed this assurance. When feelings are hurt, clear thinking can be thrown to the curb. Paul knew it was necessary to remind them that God would complete His intended work in them all, not just in those who served with a proper attitude, or served in the same way they served.

Paul’s confidence is in God (Php. 1:6). He cited examples past and present as proof of God’s work (1:7). The Philippians had shared¹⁴ in Paul’s work, and did not stop even when he was imprisoned. All this formed Paul’s frame of mind or his attitude¹⁵ toward the Philippians and God’s work in them. This idea of a frame of mind or an attitude toward other saints will become a key issue in addressing their problem.

While Paul expressed His confidence in God, he also encouraged the Philippians to go on in their service (Php. 1:9-11). They had demonstrated love, but Paul desired their love to overflow (1:9) and to do so in full experiential knowledge and all discernment. The full experiential knowledge would mean that their love was becoming a more regular part of their activity, something with which they were increasingly familiar by way of their actions. Their discernment is explained in verse ten “that you prove the things differing, that you might be sincere and without offense to a day of Christ.” Love is love, but some acts of love are more appropriate to the need. They needed discernment to see the differences¹⁶ in how they could love. Further, by seeing differing, even better ways of loving their fellow believers, they could be sincere with no hidden motives, and could operate without any cause of stumbling their fellow believers. Though Paul is confident in God, he is aware of actual and potential problems; perhaps some motives had not always been pure (Paul will address this shortly), while others may have tripped up fellow believers while they were serving with those believers.

Rejoice that others are working

1 Corinthians 3:10-15 compares our service in the Church to workers on a construction site. How we serve is evaluated by God. In the context, our attitude¹⁷ and motivation appear to be key components in how God evaluates our works. We might conclude that unless one serves with a proper attitude, he might just as well sit on his hands.

¹⁴ συγκαινωνούς an Accusative plural noun < συγκαινωνός.

¹⁵ φρονεῖν Pres. Act. Inf. < φρονέω, a verb meaning to form a frame work within one’s mind, and therefore to have an attitude regarding.

¹⁶ The phrase τὸ δοκιμάζειν ὑμᾶς τὰ διαφέροντα is translated in most English Bibles “approve the things that are excellent” both here and in Romans 2:18. The other three occurrences of the verb διαφέρω (differ/excellent) are translated with some idea of “differ.” Romans 2:18 refers to Israel and the Law. The Law made distinctions which Israel had to observe. “Excellent” was dictated by God for Israel. In Philippians 1:10, that which differs is the quality or exercise of love. “Excellent” is an interpretation which may give Paul’s sense.

¹⁷ Some of the Corinthians were seeking self-glory, focusing on being somebodies rather than our being in Christ where God has made Him wisdom for us, sanctification, righteousness and redemption, so boast in the Lord.

Philippians 1:12-18 counters this response. Paul's imprisonment had not chained the gospel but allowed it to be made known in places it may not have otherwise reached. So even the praetorian guard who were in charge of Paul's house-arrest were reached (1:13). This does not mean that all these guards became believers, but many had heard the gospel. Further, Paul's boldness even while chained to a Roman soldier caused other believers¹⁸ to fearlessly speak the word (1:14). However, these emboldened believers did not all share the same pure and selfless motives. Some envied¹⁹ Paul, not his chains but perhaps the attention he seemed to receive or the God-given position he had (v. 15). Others were argumentative.²⁰ Still others had good will, or upheld a good reputation²¹ for Paul. These represent three different motives through which different believers were proclaiming Christ. The latter group did so because of their love for Paul (v. 16) while the former group did so from selfish ambition, pursuing their own aims and supposing that by doing so they could raise adverse pressure to Paul's chains (v. 17).

Our inclination would be to encourage those proclaiming Christ from good motives, while telling the second group to 'shut up.' We might even distance ourselves from this latter group. However, notice Paul's response, "What then? Only that in every manner, whether in pretense or truth, Christ is proclaimed and in this **I rejoice**. But also **I will rejoice**." Paul had joy that Christ was proclaimed, even if some did so with improper motives and attitudes. Paul did not rejoice in their bad attitudes, but in the work. The gospel remains God's power to salvation, even if it is announced with improper motives. This encourages the Philippians to rejoice that others are doing a God-given work even if their motives are questionable or wrong. When you are serving God, you rejoice in everyone else who is doing the same. You do not restrict your joy to those shining examples of proper motivation and service—if any such exist.

Doing what's best for others

Most of us will struggle with our interests conflicting with the needs of others. We know that the best thing to do is address the needs of others ahead of our own. This fits a biblical definition of love. Paul expressed his personal goal of serving others even it meant giving up a great opportunity. He wished Christ to be exalted in his body whether through life or death (1:20). If Paul lived, Christ could be manifested through his mortal flesh (1:21; cf. 2 Cor. 4:11). This would involve fruit in the form of work²² (1:22). Therefore, Paul would have to continue working if he remained alive. If Paul died, it would be gain for him. Paul had been stoned outside of Lystra and left for dead (Acts 14:19). He related his experience²³ of being caught into²⁴ Paradise at the edge of²⁵ the third heaven and hearing things which one can't put into

¹⁸ These believers live in or near Rome. They could see Paul in chains and their actions would affect him.

¹⁹ φθόνον Acc. Sing. < φθόνος envy.

²⁰ ἔρις Acc. Sing. < ἔρις strife, argumentativeness.

²¹ εὐδοκίαν Acc. Sing. < εὐδοκίας good will, good opinion, good reputation.

²² "Work" [ἔργου] is a Genitive of Description.

²³ Following Bishop Ussher's chronology as recorded in the Scofield Reference Bible this agrees. Most modern chronologies would require this event to have happened during Paul's time in Tarsus. He describes himself in the third person.

²⁴ εἰς

²⁵ ἕως

words²⁶ which are outside man's authority²⁷ or ability to speak (2 Cor. 12:2-4). Therefore, when Paul expressed being with²⁸ Christ as "much better" he was not guessing or repeating what he might have been taught (1:23). Paul was speaking from experience. He described his desire to depart as a craving²⁹ or lust (1:23). Paul was willing to stay and work rather than going to be with the Lord which he desired most of all, Most would agree it is a good and righteous option.

How Paul understood staying or going to be his decision, I do not understand. David and Job both expressed confidence that God has written down all our days before one exists (Job 14:5; Ps. 139:16). Yet in some way, Paul felt himself pressed tightly between these two choices.³⁰ He knew that staying was more necessary for the Philippian saints (1:24), and he was persuaded to remain for their sake (1:25). Just as he exemplified joy toward any who were serving, regardless of attitude, he now exemplified selflessness in choosing what was best for the Philippians, not what what he most wished to do.

Serving Together by Spirit and Soul, Standing and Teamwork

Politics involve a location where an individual resides with rights as a citizen. One may reside in a location without the rights of a resident. So, the Grace believers live in this world but are non-residents and foreigners in this world (cf. Eph. 2:19). We are not citizens of this world but of heavens (Php. 3:20).

Paul charged the Philippian believers to live out their citizenship³¹ in a manner worthy of the gospel of the Christ (Php. 1:27). The Imperative verb *politeuesthe* involves acting as a citizen. Our English Bibles translate this verb "conduct" [NASB, NET, NIV, NKJV], "conversation" [AV] or "manner of life" [ASV, ESV], each of which give some sense of this word but miss the aspect of citizenship. It is important that while believers are abroad (living on earth), residing in a location that is not home, they live in a manner worthy of their true home. In keeping with that citizenship they should also live worthy of the good news about the Christ. "The Christ" views Jesus Christ as head joined with His body the Church (cp. 1 Cor. 12:12). "The Christ" adds breadth to the idea of the believer's position in Christ. New Testament Believers are citizens of heavens because they are all seated together in Christ in the heavens (Eph. 2:5-6). Seated all-together, Jesus Christ and all New Testament believers constitute "the Christ." The good news of the Christ is not the gospel proclaimed to the unsaved, but the good news for believers about who they are together with Jesus Christ. To conduct one's self worthy of the good news of the Christ means that one practices the unity that good news presents. In that God-reckoned position no schism exists. Operating in disunity with fellow believers is inconsistent with that position, while operating together is worthy of that position.

²⁶ ἄρρητα a negative form of ῥῆμα an utterance.

²⁷ ἔξῳν < ἔξῳστυν to exist outside, be outside. In this context it likely indicates that which was so far removed from Paul's sphere of experience, that no words from Paul or any other man on earth could express.

²⁸ σὺν - close association with.

²⁹ ἐπιθυμία a craving, lust or desire of such intensity that it had its basis in "heat" [θῦμος],

³⁰ Perhaps Paul knew he could blow his defense before Caesar and die.

³¹ Present Middle Imperative of πολιτεύομαι - "to be a citizen, live as a citizen" Abbott-Smith, *A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament*, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1937. p. 371.

The point of the charge to live as a citizen is that the believers stand in one spirit. Two parts of the believer's makeup are tied to Paul's instructions: spirit and soul. The human spirit and soul are immaterial parts of man's tripartite makeup (cf. 1 Thess. 5:23). The spirit is that immaterial part of man which allows him to think and relate to things which are outside of his realm of experience. Man relates to God with his spirit, for he cannot touch, taste, smell or see God with any physical sense. The soul is that immaterial part of man with which he relates to the tangible or sensory experiences. The two parts work together as parts of the human mind, and by which man makes decisions in his heart. The believer's human spirit was regenerated at the moment of initial faith (Jh. 3:6). The soul awaits salvation when Christ appears (1 Pet.3:9). Both the spirit and soul play key roles in the believer's service.

Standing by means of one spirit involves a united attitude, or perhaps a united front (1:27). Though often translated "in one spirit" it seems better in this context to understand the preposition to have an instrumental sense. This means they can stand together by being united by their one spirit. "One spirit" means they agree on what they objectively know. It appears that the Philippians were not struggling with what they knew objectively. They could stand united by one spirit, or by having all their spirit's united with one thought or sphere of thinking. Paul will address one reason they need to stand united in 1:28-30.

The Spirit uses the idea of teamwork as a metaphor for the relationship of believers to one another (Php. 1:27). Teamwork is an apt description, as often various team members have different responsibilities yet a shared goal. In 1:27 Paul encouraged the Philippians to compete together as a team. He used the verb *sūnathleō*³² which lexicographers often define as "striving together." By striving they show that the word involved athletic striving³³ or stress in competition. Paul employed the root of this word in 2 Timothy 2:5, where he pictured an athlete competing according to the rules and being awarded the victor's wreath. The *sūn* preposition indicates close association. So rather than competitors in an individual footrace (an image Paul used on at least three occasions) Paul pictured this as a team effort. The individual footrace imagery would not have served to unify the assembly in their work, but would have pressed each to push himself, perhaps even in competition with fellow believers. The Philippians, like all believers, are to view themselves as members of a team, competing together for the God-given goal.

The need for teamwork involves one soul. Most English Bibles translate ψυχή "mind" which is misleading and misses Paul's point. "The Greek literally reads 'one soul' (*mia psuche*)."³⁴ When teamwork is at stake, the soul is as important as the spirit. The team members may know clearly what is to be done and how it is to be accomplished. However, they may not "feel" like doing what they know they should. Think of the five players on a basketball team driving down the court. They've run their plays countless times and know what each is to do. But if two players have hurt and or hard feelings towards each other, one may refuse to pass the ball

³² συναθλοῦντες Pres. Act. Part. < ἄθλέω. J.H. Thayer defines it, "to strive at the same time with another." *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, (Public Domain) Formatted and hypertexted by OakTree Software, Inc. Version 1.5. Barkley Newman defines it, "fight together with, work together with." *A Concise Greek-English Dictionary of the New Testament*, (1971 by United Bible Societies, Edition © 1993 Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, Stuttgart.) Hypertext links for this electronic version prepared by OakTree Software, Inc., Version 1.8

³³ A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1931) p. 441.

³⁴ Gromacki, op cit, p. 47. See also J.B. Lightfoot, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Philippians*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1987) p. 106. Note that the NIV translates this "one man" which is way off.

to the player who is open and the goal is not met. Likewise, in a local church, when two believers who work together have hurt or hard feelings, they also may not cooperate as God intends. In their spirits, they know how it is supposed to work, but their hurt soul interferes with clear decision making, and so they disrupt God's planned teamwork.

In his letter to the Hebrews, Paul explained how to bring the soul in line. One is to set his hope in heaven where Christ has entered (Heb. 6:19-20). Doing so, draws one to his position in Christ. In the context of Hebrews, Paul defines that hope as the ability to boldly approach God (Heb. 6:19; 7:25; 4:16). That hope anchors the believer's soul, keeping it from being driven about by the changing circumstances in this world. This results in the believer not shrinking or withdrawing from fellow believers but specially possessing his soul (Heb. 10:39). The noun "possess" is translated "preserving" in the NASB, ESV, and NET, and "saving" in the AV, ASV, Darby. In four other occurrences of this word in the New Testament, the idea of preserving or saving is not in view. Rather it indicates the special possession or ownership of something, such as our future inheritance (Eph. 1:14; 1 Thess. 5:9; 2 Thess. 2:14), or God specially owning us as His people (1 Pet. 2:9). In the Hebrews passage, Paul's intent is not that we or God saves our souls, but that we take ownership of the soul. This means that rather than the soul pushing us around and manipulating us at its whim or hurt feelings, we own it like a dog, we call it to heel. When the believer possesses his soul in this manner, he is able to even do whatever he does from the soul as though he were working for the Lord instead of serving men (Col. 3:23).

In addition to the envy, strife and selfish ambition mentioned earlier, being "alarmed"³⁵ (1:28) may present another reason for the division between saints and the need for operating by one spirit and one soul. Everyone does not respond to adversity or persecution the same. Some stand firm and resolute while others buckle, acquiesce even bolt and run. Sometimes this results in a division between saints. Those who gave in to pressure may feel embarrassed and ashamed, and wish to avoid those who stood firm. Similarly, those who maintained their testimony for Christ may be ashamed or disgusted with those who caved to pressure.³⁶ This makes for a lack of fellowship and impedes working together.

Paul lays out a means to address the lack of oneness in spirit and soul in the first verses of Philippians two. As believers we can move towards oneness in spirit by focusing on encouragement in Christ (2:1). Who we are in Christ is unaffected by persecution or division. It depends solely on who Christ is now and the faithful, continued reckoning of the Father. It cannot be experienced in the soul, but only related to with one's spirit.³⁷ If you remember who you are in Christ, and I remember who I am in Christ, whatever else has passed between us, we have a ground for getting along.

Next, we can find a soothing comfort from love (2:1). The word I've translated "soothing comfort" in its verb form describes the activity of those who came to comfort Mary and Martha at the death of their brother Lazarus (Jh. 11:19, 31). Paul encourages believers to soothe

³⁵ πτόρω as a present passive participle - to fear as a result of intimidation, to be startled.

³⁶ In a personal conversation over twenty years ago with a believer who immigrated from Russia in the early 1990's, he related how Russian Baptists who had formerly held to the doctrine of eternal security abandoned it. They did this because some from their assemblies compromised with the Soviet government to avoid being treated as harshly as others. Those who stood firm and suffered the pressures of the government judged that indeed the others were believers at one time, but lost their salvation because they compromised.

³⁷ When a believer frames his or her mind with the truth of being in Christ, it can positively affect the soul.

the small-souled, a likely reference to those easily moved to emotions (1 Thess. 5:14). Rather than chide those who struggle with their souls and are more easily made to fear, we should soothe them. I would suggest that Paul's order is important; you first address the spirit with in-Christ truths and then soothe the soul. In-Christ truths will play a role in soothing the soul, and love is to be the source of this activity.

We then focus on any fellowship of spirit (2:1). Fellowship is a sharing in common and so we can exercise our spirits together to focus on the same vital truths. Paul says this twice in two slightly different ways in 2:2; "with the same thing you might frame your mind" and "with the one thing framing your mind."³⁸ Paul then turns back to the soul, "if any compassion and tender compassion." The first is the gut-feeling type of compassion and the second is the kind compassion of pity. Neither word indicates anything negative. A believer who has given in to fear needs others to show compassion not harshness. Responding in this way to other believers knits our souls. Paul says this with a simple plural noun *σύμψυχοι* [*sympsuchoi*] "ones joined in soul" or "ones of joint-soul." Rather than allowing our soul to respond to their soulish problems in disgust, we show them compassion and become joined or knit in soul with them. This fourfold prescription will draw believers together in spirit and soul, so we can stand by one spirit and work as a team by one soul.

Paul adds a warning to this prescription for unity, "Don't do anything by the standard of selfish ambition or empty glory but be humble and consider others as exceeding yourself" (2:3). Paul has already mentioned the selfish ambition but adds "empty glory"³⁹ where the prefix *kenos* emphasizes emptiness of content. This is a reputation that has no real substance or content. One may make a big deal about him or herself over nothing ultimately important. Both these words may refer to another reason for a division as some were achieving God's purpose from selfish ambition and were basing their reputation on all **they had accomplished**. Certainly we give credit to God, but we can't overlook our hard work! Paul will pick this up again in chapter three. These two attitudes can alienate other believers who have not performed as well or are less interested in all it took you to get this thing done.⁴⁰ So, operating in humility, seeing others as better than ourselves goes a long way in promoting unity not only in general but in serving together.

If the Philippians would stand by means of one spirit and work as a team by one soul, it would address the issue of selfishness. Remember those preaching Christ from wrong motives? While Paul didn't tell them to stop preaching, but shows a better way to love, a better way to serve.

Four Examples of Service

Paul's teaching on serving with the proper attitude is not theory but can be demonstrated in four real individuals: Christ, Paul, Timothy, Epaphroditus. Each individual shows a different

³⁸ I've translated "with" in both instances though Paul uses no preposition and the noun is accusative. The verb *phroneō* takes its object in the Accusative but "with" gives the sense in English. The first occurrence of *phroneō* is subjunctive expressing potential and the second a participle.

³⁹ *κενοδοξίαν* < *κενοδοξία* from *κενός* empty + *δοκέω* to be of the reputation or opinion.

⁴⁰ Take my paper for example. It takes time to search the Scriptures, collate and cull information to determine what is most helpful to understand the topic, and for me, writing is a labor. But others who read the paper, don't care about most of that, they just want to learn what God says. It's like a woodworker who enjoys watching another woodworker build furniture, while those who use the furniture often don't care about the process

aspect of service and the proper attitude. Christ demonstrated that even one Who is God and Master can willingly be a slave to do another's will (2:5-11). He just mentioned the importance of humility in 2:3 and offers Christ as the epitome of humility in 2:7-8. Christ's humility brings Paul to charge the Philippians to "work out your own salvation" (2:12). Too often, we focus on what everyone else is doing or not doing, rather than working out our own salvation. We are not tasked with working out others' salvation, but our own salvation. Twice in 2:2 Paul encouraged the Philippians to frame their minds with one thing and the same thing. That one thing is in Christ as indicated by 2:1, but 2:5 adds an element to the frame of mind. Believers are to frame the mind with the same frame of mind which was in Christ, that of humility.

Next Paul himself demonstrated that one can be on the needy end so that others can do priestly service from faith (2:17). He did so with joy and without grumbling or disputing, valuable attitudes for serving (2:14). This suggests that some of the feelings revolved around needs. Timothy demonstrated that one could serve with a soul equal to others, meaning he could feel the same, and genuinely care about others more than his own self (2:19-21). Finally, Epaphroditus, one of their own, demonstrates one can serve to the point of putting his life in jeopardy even casting aside his life (2:25-30). Life is the soul⁴¹ life or what one cares about. Epaphroditus was sent with a gift from the Philippians for Paul (cf. 4:18). He became sick in doing a priestly service to Paul's need, making up what was lacking in the Philippians' gift (2:25, 30). Arriving in Rome, Epaphroditus realized the gift was not sufficient for Paul's need and apparently went to work not for himself, but to provide for Paul, and in time became sick but continued to work. How's that for putting others ahead of yourself. These four give us a picture of a proper attitude for serving: humility and obedience, joy rather than grumbling, genuinely caring for those being served rather than one's own needs, putting others' needs ahead of one's own needs.

Service and Past Accomplishments

Philippians does not chiefly address the problem of legalists, though chapter three warns of their influence. Paul identifies them as dogs, evil workers, and mutilated circumcision (3:2). He contrasts them to believers who are the true circumcision who serve God, boast in Christ, and do not place their confidence in flesh (3:3). Believers are circumcised, not by a physical act of cutting, but by being cut off from the sin nature by baptism into Christ (Col. 2:11-12). Their service is priestly service done to/for God. Believers can and are encouraged to boast in Christ, because all believers can, for all New Testament believers are in Christ and share the same standing (cp 1 Cor. 1:31). Contrast this common boast in Christ to confidence in flesh, or confidence in what one can do or has done. These four qualities should further characterize the believer's service. It is done because one is cut off from and free of his or her sin nature. It is done as a priestly service to God. It is done in Christ so that any boast is in Christ and not in one's accomplishments.

Proper service does not rest on what one has done, but always looks forward to what God has planned for today or tomorrow. Paul gives his resumé in 3:4-6 as proof that he could have rested with confidence in his flesh if such confidence were worth anything. Rather than rest on all he had done, Paul counts those things loss because of Christ (3:7). He even leads his

⁴¹ Paul uses *psuché* [ψυχή] as opposed to *zoé* or *bios*.

mind⁴² to see all things as loss because knowing Christ Jesus our Lord is far superior (3:8). He rather vividly portrays all things as human waste [my translation] for the purpose of gaining Christ (3:8). The translators of the New English Bible include this explanatory note on “human waste,” “The word here translated ‘dung’ was often used in Greek as a vulgar term for fecal matter. As such it would most likely have had a certain shock value for the readers. This may well be Paul’s meaning here, especially since the context is about what the *flesh* produces.”⁴³ With this statement, Paul is points out just how worthless are those works accomplished by one’s own selfish efforts.

Paul wished to be found in Christ Jesus our Lord having a righteousness from faith (3:9). Paul does not mean his righteous standing. He knows that is certain and unchanging. Rather, he refers to practical righteousness which is only possible as the believer operates in Christ. This contrasts to his own righteousness which would come from [ek] law. Law is anarthrous and so is not a reference to the Mosaic law alone but any kind of law. Law promises a reward or benefit for obedience and curse or punishment for disobedience. Law motivated individuals by a system for measuring one’s worthy actions or the lack thereof. Paul wanted to be found only doing works which resulted from faith in God’s promises as he operated in Christ. This should encourage the Philippians to likewise strive for works done in Christ by faith alone.

Paul clarifies what he means by knowing Christ and being found in Him with three additional statements (3:10). He wanted to know the power of His resurrection. The believer is a living one to God in Christ, sharing in Christ’s resurrection by God’s imputation (Rom. 6:11; Eph. 2:5). When the believer makes that truth part of his or her frame of mind, he or she gets to experience the same power by which the Father raised Christ (Eph. 1:19-20). That power in the inner man, not the body, allows one to grasp the full dimensions of the Christ (Eph. 3:16-19). The power of the resurrection is necessary to see that one needs the whole body, so that one willingly serves the whole body, not select members with whom one best identifies or likes.

Second, knowing Christ involves the fellowship of Christ’s sufferings (3:10). Paul refers to Christ’s present sufferings not His past sufferings on the cross. When Christ first confronted Paul, He took personally Paul’s persecution of believers saying, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” (Acts 9:4). Paul states that if one member suffers all the members suffer (1 Cor. 12:26). We have a High Priest (Jesus Christ) who is able to suffer⁴⁴ together with our weaknesses (Heb. 4:15). Paul wanted to suffer with other saints as Christ does. Recall the problem of believers being startled by persecution in chapter one. Some might respond with disdain. While Paul wants to encourage them to be strong, he also shows compassion to them.

Finally, he desires to do this while being conformed to His death (3:10). Christ’s death accomplished freedom from the sin nature among many other benefits (cp Rom. 6:9-11). Paul

⁴² The verb count or consider translates *hēgeomai* [ἡγέομαι] derived from *agō* [ἄγω] “to lead.” In the middle voice it has the sense of to lead one’s self. It occurs in contexts in which one must lead his or her mind because the mind does not naturally go in that direction. For example, the mind does not natural consider it joy to be tempted (Jas. 1:2).

⁴³ *New English Translation*, Biblical Studies Foundation, 1996-2005. textual note 10 under Philippians 3:8. I’ve read some of the debate regarding how vulgar this term is. Many Christians struggle with the idea that Paul would use such a vulgar term, but that is the point. Other translations have “rubbish” ESV, NASB, NKJV; “garbage” NIV11, “refuse” ASV; “dung” AV, NET.

⁴⁴ The aorist infinitive *sumpathēsai* [συμπαθῆσαι] with the present participle see a present activity, not past.

named envy, strife and selfish ambition as the attitudes which drove some believers' service (Php. 1:15, 17). Each is a work of the flesh. Being conformed to Christ's death means he can serve free of the sin nature while living out Christ's life. Each of these involves a relationship to Christ which affects how one relates to others and so affects one's service.

The mature believer still needs to grow and that growth includes growing in service (3:12). Therefore, without using "work" or "serving" vocabulary, Paul addresses it. Christ laid hold of Paul to be a servant (1 Cor. 4:1). Paul uses the nouns *diakonos* and *diaknoia* of his service (1 Cor. 3:5; Eph. 3:7; Rom. 15:31; 2 Cor. 4:1). Our English Bibles distinguish this word from others by the translation "minister" or "ministry." We have come to associate this English word with some noble service, though the Greek saw it as common service, frequently rendered by a free man. When Paul wrote Philippians, he may have been serving for twenty years, yet he did not consider himself to have reached the point at which his service was done. So, he let the successes of the past escape his attention and pressed forward to still more service (3:12-13). He answered the upward call to his position in Christ (3:14). Sometimes believers think that they have served and it is time to sit back, rest, and let others take over the work. There is wisdom in turning over the work to others while one is still involved, but if one lives, he or she should assume God has work for him or her to do.

Every believer can set his or her mind on our united position in Christ. This is God's upward call of God in Christ Jesus, the position to which the Spirit leads us (Gal. 5:18; Rom. 8:2, 13). Those who were mature, and by mature, Paul means they have begun to use the truth they have been taught. They may not know everything one could wish to know, but to what they have reach, they should walk in that. If they know two truths about themselves in Christ, they are to walk carefully by those two truths.

Despite Paul's example and encouragement, some were apparently influenced by the legalists and Paul wept over these (3:18-19). Paul did not expect the unsaved to act any better, but he wept over believers who lived selfishly, running roughshod over other believers. These were enemies of the cross, not by preaching against it or denying it, but by living a life out of character with the promised forgiveness of and freedom from sin. Their end is ruination (3:20). "Destruction" in our English Bibles makes us think of the unsaved and Hell, but Paul applies a related term to a brother in 1 Corinthians 8:11.⁴⁵ He applies the same noun to believers who pursue wealth (1 Tim. 6:9) and the effect of drawing back from the church (Heb. 10:39). Believers think a good end may result from putting themselves first: you've got to look out for number ONE. Paul has demonstrated the importance of serving selflessly but for these, their belly is their god, meaning they are serving themselves. Their glory or reputation is in their shame. Selfless love in Christ should be their reputation, but their reputation rests in their resumé or the very types of things Paul said that he counted as loss. Rather than framing their mind on the one thing in Christ, that great unity shared by all New Testament believers in Christ, they set their frame of mind on things on this earth.

Setting their frame of mind on things on this earth is inconsistent with one's citizenship in heavens (Php. 3:20). Living with the anticipation that our Lord will come for us soon and will change this humble body is or should be our expectation. One who lives in a place that is not his home may be able to enjoy some of the benefits of life in this other place, but is mindful he

⁴⁵ In Philippians ἀπόλεια is a cognate noun of the verb ἀπόλλυμι in 1 Corinthians 8.

or she is a non-resident without local rights and so lives accordingly and in anticipation of going home.

Helping Those Who Struggle with Serving Together

In chapter four, Paul addresses a specific division in the Philippian church between two women who have worked together but are now at odds (4:2-3). In general terms, Paul addressed the need to work together as a team in chapter one, and it is possible that the general conflict rose from this specific issue. Paul never states in this present text why these women are at odds. He does not single out one as bearing more blame than the other, but repeats the verb “I encourage” with each woman. Paul encourages a third individual to bring these two together (4:3). These women worked together as team members (the same verb *sūnathleō* used in 1:27). They have worked together with others in the good news⁴⁶ but are not serving at the time Paul writes, indicated by the aorist verb. The one called to bring them together is unnamed, though some have suggested his name is Sysygyus, though it seems simpler to understand this as Paul’s description of him as a yoke-fellow, or one equally sharing the yoke of service. This one who Paul trusts because of his continued service knows how to encourage these two women to begin setting their frame of mind on the same thing.

They need to frame their minds with the same thing in *the* Lord. He twice indicated in 2:1-3 that the believers needed to frame their minds with one thing and the same thing. Paul repeats this charge here but states “in *the* Lord”⁴⁷ rather than “in Christ” reminding them that He is in charge. He just told the whole church to stand in *the* Lord (4:1). This may indicate that part of their conflict involved who is in charge or makes the final decision regarding what they will do. Framing their minds with their united position in *the* Lord will serve to adjust their attitude with the fruit from the Spirit so they can return to serving together. If two or more believers are at odds and it is not over a significant doctrinal deviation or active disobedience, it is certain that one, both or all are not framing their minds with their united position in Christ.

Paul charges the women to rejoice in *the* Lord always and repeats the charge (4:4). Joy is appreciation not happiness or giddiness. For these women, joy would be the appreciation for what God is doing. Not only do they need a common frame of mind, but they need joy in the one who is in charge of the body of Christ. The charge to rejoice reminds us that they lacked joy. The present imperative could mean continue rejoicing, but may also indicate the need to begin rejoicing.⁴⁸ The fact that these two women are not serving together and are not framing their mind with the same truth evidences a lack of Spirit-produced joy.

Verse five may indicate part of the problem between these two women and definitely part of the problem between many believers who serve together, letting go of one’s goals. The ASV renders the noun *epieikes* [ἐπιεικὲς] “your forbearance,” the AV “your moderation,” ESV “your reasonableness,” the NASB “your gentle *spirit*,” the NET, NIV and NKJV “your

⁴⁶ This passage suggests a great role of women in service than is often accepted among us as conservatives. Paul does not state how they served together, but it likely wasn’t making sandwiches for the boys.

⁴⁷ Paul uses the noun “Lord” 15 times in Philippians. Twelve times the noun is anarthrous, and of those, four occur with Jesus or Jesus Christ. Three times the noun is definite. So though the anarthrous use of Lord can indicate another person who is Lord such as the Spirit (cf 2 Cor. 3:17-18), these occurrences appear to refer to the Lord Jesus Christ.

⁴⁸ How one interprets and applies the imperative depends on one’s point of view: are you doing it, are you not.

gentleness.” All of these give some sense of the word, but none give the full idea. It is built on the root *eikē* [ἐἰκῆ] meaning “vain” or Thayer suggests *eikos* [ἔϊκος] to which he assigns the meaning “reasonable.” Both roots have the same idea of empty of content. With the prefixed preposition *epi* the idea is that which rests on empty content, but not in the sense that the original content was worthless but in this case because one has let go of one’s goal or content. Lenski, I believe rightly, translates it “yieldingness.” Lenski concludes the definition with a clarification, “Only our perverted reason would think that ‘yieldingness’ might include a yielding of truth to error, of right to wrong, of virtue to vice and crime.”⁴⁹ One has yielded to another and so rather than sitting by bitterly allowing another to take the lead, this individual yield’s his or her idea or goal to allow another’s goal to move ahead. This is born out in 1 Timothy 3:3 and Titus 3:2 in which it pairs with “not a fighter”⁵⁰ How often have competing ideas caused hard feelings, fights and rifts in churches? One’s idea is pushed to the side by others or by a dominant individual and rather than yielding or letting go of one’s goal, one holds on to it, hurt that his or her idea was not pursued. This fits the problem with the soul, the need of examples for being a slave to others no matter what it costs you, and letting go of your past accomplishments. Perhaps one of these women suggested a plan for a common area of service and it was countered by the other’s idea. One of the ideas was accepted and the other put aside. A hurt soul resulted. Her frame of mind became fixed upon her idea being rejected. She may be dwelling on all the good things she’s done for the church over the years. All these continue to increase the rift which then affects the whole church.

Paul reminds these people that the Lord is near (4:5). Paul refers to our Lord’s soon return to gather His Church. Our Lord’s coming for His Church puts many aspects of life on earth into perspective. It reminds us that any situation is short in light of His soon coming (3:20-21; 1 Cor. 7:29; 15:51-58). Why pursue your right, your idea to the point of offending brothers, if you know the Lord is coming soon?

A lack of unity in attitude/frame of mind can cause worry or anxiety (Php. 4:6). What is to be done? How do we deal with this division? Paul’s charge to not worry about anything is focused on this conflict. Anxiety over this conflict cannot help. Rather Paul encourages the Philippians to communicate with God by worship,⁵¹ by supplication after thanksgiving.⁵² The one who communicates with God about this problem experiences God’s peace covering over his mind and guarding his heart and conclusions⁵³ of his mind in Christ Jesus (4:7). The mind made of

⁴⁹ RCH Lenski translates this “yieldingness” and summarizes Trench (I think Lenski’s conclusion is clearer), “[T]he derivation is from ἔϊκω, ἔϊκος, Latin *cedo*, hence the meaning is ‘yielding,’ not insisting on one’s legal rights, as these are often inserted into moral wrongs, making the *summum jus* [supreme law] the *summa injuria* [highest injury].” Clarifications mine, *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistles to the Galatians, to the Ephesians and to the Philippians*, (Columbus, OH: Lutheran Book Concern, 1937) p. 885.

⁵⁰ The noun is ἄμαχος *amachos*, where the alpha privative negates “fighter” *machos*.

⁵¹ This passage among others demonstrates that *proseuchomai* cannot be a general term for “prayer.” Both *proseuchomai* and *deēsis* are articular and so distinct. *Deēsis* is not a subcategory of “prayer.” 1 Timothy 2:1 is the key text to demonstrate that *proseuchomai* is not the general term, as Paul lists it second in a list, not first.

⁵² Worship involves remembering who God is and telling that back to Him. Supplication indicates one does not know all the details. The preposition μετὰ with the accusative case is “after” not “with.” See, Mounce, op cit.

⁵³ I translate “the conclusions” τὰ νοήματα, a noun in which the μα suffix, before the τα neuter ending, indicates a result of a process, here of the experiential mind or νοῦς. Νοῦς is translated “comprehension” in the NASB and “understanding” in AV, ESV, NIV, NKJV in the first half of this verse.

the soul and the spirit processes events. The heart makes decisions and these are the conclusions at which one arrives. One needs God's peace and a guarded heart, because worry tends to result in poor decisions and conclusions.⁵⁴ Though Paul does not bring Satan into this present discussion, Scripture connects the same issues of conclusions and worry being footholds for Satan in 2 Corinthians 2 and 1 Peter 5.

All too often, we talk to God about a problem as Paul has just told us to do, but upon saying "AMEN," we immediately go back to focusing on and worrying about the problem. Paul encouraged the Philippians to logically think on things which would keep them in a proper frame of mind. Whatever is TRUE as opposed to what one might SUPPOSE about another.⁵⁵ Whatever is SERIOUS or DIGNIFIED⁵⁶ as opposed to jumping into the fray. Whatever is RIGHTEOUS⁵⁷ as opposed to focusing on how one may have WRONGED another. Whatever is PURE as opposed to that which is TAINTED perhaps by selfish motives.⁵⁸ Whatever is FRIENDLY⁵⁹ as opposed to ANIMOSITY. Whatever is KINDLY SPOKEN⁶⁰ or COMMENDABLE as opposed to A RECORD OF WRONGS, FAILURES or ACCUSATIONS. If there are MANIFESTATIONS OF GOD'S POWER⁶¹ as opposed to DEFICIENCIES. If there is any PRAISE as opposed to CRITICISM. Note how this list focuses individuals on, for lack of a better expression, the good they see in those with whom they are at odds. This list reminds them of what God is doing in others, though the tendency is to focus on their failures or conflict with us.

⁵⁴ Peter seems to indicate that the young men (pastor-teachers but not yet overseer/elders) were worrying about what was not being done by the elders (pastors!) and Satan could take advantage of this so that the young men might not submit to the timid elders and so try to fix problems in their local churches by their own efforts (1 Pet. 5:1-8). Paul was concerned that if the Corinthians did not begin showing grace to a brother who had been put under discipline, Satan would take advantage of them, for they were not ignorant of the conclusions (same word) from Satan (2 Cor. 2:11).

⁵⁵ I acknowledge that I have not given the following list as proper sentences, but I think the impact is greater as is.

⁵⁶ **σεμνά** involves a dignity of an official who rises above the fray, not drawn into, perhaps a name-calling fight.

⁵⁷ Paul found it right to have his frame of mind set on God finishing His work in the Philippians, despite some of the issues he will have to address (1:6-7). Their being filled with the fruit consisting of righteousness involves their love increasing, especially with great discernment as to the better ways to love (1:9-11).

⁵⁸ Paul uses the adverbial form **ἀγνώως** in 1:17 of those who announced Christ with ulterior motives. Nearly all occurrences of **ἀγνός** and its cognates (excluding the **ἅγιος** "holy" word family) refer to purifying one's motives for conduct so they are not mixed (cp. 1 Jh. 3:3; 1 Pet. 1:22; . A few times in John and Acts of ritual purification according to the Law and one time of Timothy's conduct in purity toward the younger women.

⁵⁹ Suggested translation by Dale Spurbeck, from 1987 class notes on Philippians at Dispensational Theological Seminary. See also, *Mounce Concise Greek-English Dictionary of the New Testament*, eds. William D. Mounce with Rick D. Bennett, Jr., 2011. Accordance edition hypertexted and formatted by OakTree Software, Inc. Abbott-Smith, op cit, has "pleasing, agreeable" p. 388.

⁶⁰ Again, suggested by Dale Spurbeck from class notes. See also 2 Cor. 6:8 where it is contrasted to a "bad report."

⁶¹ Often translated "virtue" or "excellency" which to me provide no clear idea. See G. Adolf Deissmann, *Bible Studies*, (Peabody, MS: Hendrickson Publishers, 1988). pp. 96-97. This is born out in 2 Peter 1:3 where the believer has been called to God's own glory and manifestations of power (i.e. His). Further 2 Peter 1:5 urges believers to add "the manifestation of power" in their faith, and this would agree with the purpose of faith not being a work but producing a work in a believer.

This list can also be traced through the issues of this letter. It is true that God continues working to His end what He began. Dignity keeps one from being drawn into the conflict of wrong motives and continue to serve from love. Righteous is what the spirit can appreciate while the soul tends to focus on what it thinks are wrongs. Pure is exemplified by Christ's attitude (frame of mind) in being a slave; He had no ulterior motives. Agreeable (friendly/lovely) is contrasted to serving while grumbling and complaining. Commendable is exemplified by Epaphroditus' service and is better than an earthly resumé. Virtue involves laying hold of that for which God has laid hold of the believer. Praise is anything in which we can recognize God's work, "You are our joy and crown" (4:1). I've tried not to strain the interpretation with this list, but I think it is important to see that Paul has given many of these throughout this letter.

In addition to this list, Paul encouraged them to practice what they had learned, received, heard and know by Paul's instruction (4:9). In that context or logically thinking on those proper things and practicing what Paul had left with them, the God of THE PEACE will continue be⁶² with you all. They need God's peace in their personal interactions in the assembly.

Paul's Need and the Philippians' Need

Paul turns his attention to the recent material gift he received from the Philippians (4:10-19). Paul had learned to be content or sufficient with what he had (v. 11). He was OK when humble and OK when overflowing. The NASB's "I have learned the secret" translates the verb **μυέω** the base of "mystery." Paul viewed contentment as a hidden truth now revealed or learned.⁶³ Though 4:13 is often applied to any situation, (I applied it to running miles when I was in high school), the strength in this context is for being content in any circumstance. Being content in any circumstance means one's need is always addressed. Having expressed his thanks for their recent gift, Paul encourages them that God will "supply your every need according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus" (v. 19). Again, many apply this to every circumstance, most commonly to individual's material needs: I need money, I need a car... When Paul wrote the Corinthians, he stated that the Macedonians were deeply impoverished (2 Cor. 8:2). Luke tells us that Philippi was the first city of the district of Macedonia (Acts 16:12), therefore the Philippians were impoverished. However, Paul does not mean the Philippians' material need, but their spiritual need. As we have seen, they need to get along. They need to serve together, standing as one in spirit and working as a team as one in soul. They need to have a proper attitude toward service. They need to let go of their past accomplishments. They need to remember they are in the Lord, the one who is truly in charge of the body of Christ. They need to have the same frame of mind in the Lord. Their need can only be addressed in Christ Jesus.

Like Paul, they can learn the secret of contentment. God has revealed that it is found in Christ Jesus. The Philippian believers are in Christ Jesus, but they need to begin relating to who they are in Christ. They need to set their minds on the same reality of who they are in Christ. Two believers at odds and unable to serve together need to see themselves and each other in Christ our Lord. Each can be content if the other receives attention and he/she does not. He or she can rejoice with that believer. One can be content when humble. Service in Christ draws no attention one's self. Contentment in Christ keeps one from parading his or her

⁶² Progressive future of **ἐπιμύω**, e.g. see 1:18. H.E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (Toronto, ON: The MacMillan Company, 1955) p. 192.

⁶³ I appreciate Lenski's comment on this verb, "This entire modern tendency at every turn to find Stoic and pagan cult terms in Paul's writings is the bane of exegesis and finds its way even into the dictionaries." op cit, p. 899.

accomplishments before others so as to draw attention to another's lack of notable accomplishments. One would not wish to stir another's soul with conflict or make him or her feel inferior. One would wish to focus others on the shared reality we have in Christ, and the shared potential due to a shared regeneration.

Conclusion

The troubled souls of believers can be mended and soothed by the proper use of one's regenerated spirit. Paul ends the letter with the reminder that the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ is with the spirit of every believer (Php. 4:23). That regenerated spirit can focus on the truth of who we all are together in Christ. We cannot experience that with our soul: no scent, no bright lights, no choirs, no cool breeze and goosebumps, no sweet or savory flavors. Knowing who we are in Christ can affect our soul by anchoring it in the unchanging truth of God's reckoning us to be in Christ.

In two thousand years, the needs have not changed. Believers are still in Christ, still share a common standing in Christ. Good brothers and sisters still struggle with selfishness, with grumbling, complaining, with focusing on all the hard work we've done, with the lack of contentment with what and where God has put us, with the hard feelings that often rise in this environment. Like the Philippians two thousands years ago, we still need to relate to who we are in Christ and maintain a proper attitude in Christ toward our fellow believers. As we do, we too can find God meeting this very real need by His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.