

28 August 1983

Philippians 3:17-19

1. Paul takes a dangerous step in these verses: He sets himself up as an example. This takes either extreme arrogance or transparent humbleness. The world uses the arrogant path; TV commercials use superstars to foster the lie that if you use the product you can be just like them. How often do we hear the humble call for us to imitate them? Why can Paul do it here? Compare verse 17 with I Corinthians 11:1. What is the example that Paul is setting for us to follow?
2. Compare verse 18 with verse 19 and with Romans 6:6 and I Corinthians 2:14; 15:47. Who are the enemies of the cross of Christ?
3. Paul is not talking about outsiders in verses 18 and 19; he is talking about church members. This makes his statement even more searing. Among those who come to church, there are those whose fate is destruction because they turn their freedom into perverted liberty. Their primary interest is selfish: self-serving, self-seeking, and self-justifying. Their minds are still set on earthly things. Compare Romans 6:1-6; 15:1-3. How should we apply these thoughts in the church? In our daily relationships; both within and outside of the church?

Philippians 3:20-4:3

4. Verse 20 says we are citizens of Heaven and only "resident aliens" here on Earth. It says we are eagerly waiting for the return of our Savior. The Greek word translated "wait for" is apekdechomai. This word is also used in Romans 8:19,23,25; I Corinthians 1:7; Galatians 5:5; Hebrews 9:28; and I Peter 3:20. What do those verses tell us about the meaning of this word? How should we be waiting?
5. Compare verse 21 with I Corinthians 15:50-58 and I Thessalonians 4:13-18. When will our Lord transform our body to be like his glorious body?
6. Compare verse 21 with Psalm 110:1; Mark 12:36; I Corinthians 15:25-28; and Revelation 20:14. When will our Lord subdue all things unto Himself?
7. Some have used I Timothy 1:11,12 to accuse Paul of being "down on women." But note the role that women played in the church at Philippi. Lydia was the first convert there, and the church began in her house (cf. Acts 16:12-15). Euodia and Syntyche were obviously leaders in the church or their disagreement with each other would not have been so important to Paul. Compare verse 2 with Philippians 1:27; 2:2; and Ephesians 4:30-32. What is Paul asking them to do?
8. Compare verse 2 with Matthew 18:15-17. How should we go about resolving resentments and hostilities with our brothers and sisters in Christ?

Philippians 4:4-7

9. Compare verse 4 with I Corinthians 12:1,8-10,28; Galatians 5:22,23; and Ephesians 4:8,11. Is joy a gift or a fruit of the Spirit? Why is this difference important? Why is "fruit" singular in Galatians 5:22?
10. Compare verse 4 with Romans 8:28; II Corinthians 6:10; and I Thessalonians 5:16,18. Under what circumstances should we stop rejoicing? Why?
11. Forbearance in verse 5 (RSV) is epieikēs in the Greek. It is hard to translate. It is moderation (KJV), patience (Wycliffe), magnanimity (NEB), gentleness (New KJV), and others in other translations. Are christians well known for being gentle today? What traits show gentleness or the lack thereof in our lives?
12. Verse 6 tells us not to be anxious. But anxiety seems to be a normal part of life; worry, confusion of mind, pressures of daily life, uncertainty about the future. Depression is the most common emotional problem in America today, and one of the most difficult to deal with. Compare verse 6 with Matthew 6:25-34; Hebrews 13:5,6; I Peter 3:14; 5:7; and I John 4:18. What should we do when we find ourselves worrying? When is worrying justified?

13. Paul was not being glib when he said we should pray in every circumstance. Remember: He himself was in prison facing possible execution when he wrote these words. He was not offering an easy solution; no magic formula, no bedtime or morning rote repetition that we often label as prayer. Compare verse 6 with Hebrews 11:6 and I John 5:13-15. What principles of prayer do we need to adhere to?

14. The opposite of anxiety is peace. Not numbness nor unconcern, not the absence of inner and outward struggle, but God's peace, the peace that is from Him, giving us hope and confidence, strengthening us to carry on with joy when the burdens are heavy and the pathway rough. Compare verse 7 with John 14:27; Romans 5:1; 8:31-39; II Corinthians 4:8-11,16-18; and II Timothy 1:12. What are the sources and foundations of the peace promised here?