A Practical Study of PHILIPPIANS

THE GOAL OF CHRISTIAN LIVING
"Important Keys to Successful, Fulfilled Living"

GOAL NUMBER ONE – THE LOVE OF CHRIST – PHILIPPIANS 1:1-11

The focus in the book has always been Philippians 3:14 where Paul says:

Philippians 3:14

> I am pressing onward toward the goal for the prize of the call from above of God in Christ Jesus.

Paul was an intensely goal-oriented individual. Because of that, it explains the productivity of his life. The joy and the fulfillment that he experienced is because he did not waste time. He was effective in the use of it.

Now it's within that framework of Philippians 3:14 that we will endeavor to discover what that goal is that he's pressing toward. Then how the rest of the book contributes to that one goal.

If you want to take a verse and put it on somebody's card for retirement, this one is it.

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Most of the research we've done on retirement shows that if people don't have a plan and they don't have a goal, they're dead in two years. God did not intend for us to stop at any time along the way and just mess around.

Now sure we can mix leisure and work and God designed it that way. There's a balance in it.

A person who faces retirement should face the challenge of a new opportunity, a new challenge. It ought to be something he planned and prepared for and he's got definite goals and objectives.

Many Christian books on the subject of retirement look at it scripturally but they don't look at it verse-by-verse. The whole thesis is there by the secular writers.

The guy who dies doesn't have anything to live for. He's lost it when he lost work—he lost his identity, he lost his self-image.

He's in the way at home because his wife's not been used to having him around. Sometimes he either takes his life or ends up dying. Many people become casualties simply because they're buying the line of the day. When you get older, you retire, you're no good, so you're on the shelf and you might as well coast on in and just enjoy what you can while you still have a little time left.

Philippians 3:14 is the key verse and yet so little time is spent on it.

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What this study has done has caused us to take a good hard look at this whole selfish approach to the gospel today that is overwhelming the television crowd and everybody else. "Come to Jesus and you'll be healthy, wealthy and prosperous. They'll come to Jesus and Jesus is going to really lay it on you. You're going to have a lot of good things happen to you when you come to Jesus." That is a totally wrong orientation for the gospel.

When you come to Jesus Christ in brokenness, you spend the rest of your life saying thank you. You spend the rest of your life discovering what His goal and purpose is for your life and then you fulfill it.

Your joy is going to be measured by your fulfillment of that goal and objective. That's a lie from the pit.

What is the goal that Paul is driving toward? It's recorded in:

<u>1 John 3:1-3</u>

> See how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us that we should be called children of God, and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us because it did not know him. Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be; we know that if he should appear, we shall be like him, because we shall see him just as he is. And everyone who has this hope fixed in him, purifies himself just as he is pure.

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Very little time in Christian instruction is spent on:

What is the Lord doing in our life?

What are our objectives?

What is our job description?

What are we supposed to do now that we've become a Christian?

How should we look?

How should we act?

How should we conduct ourselves?

It's these practical things that we face on a daily basis that so often are not addressed effectively in the Christian community.

Now where is Paul? Paul's in prison. This is his first imprisonment. He's going to be released for a brief time after this but he doesn't know that. Especially when we see in this study he's ready to throw it in if necessary. He has a great view of physical death.

He does come back here a second time and it ends in martyrdom for him. But he's near the end of the road. We see

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him as a person who's up there in years, just a little time left and he's living on a short line at this point—as to how long he's going to last.

These things are very dear. This is the most intimate letter he wrote. He writes it for the church at Philippi.

Remember the story of Paul trying to find direction as he and Silas on that second journey were heading across Asia Minor? They kept running out of territory and they tried to slip north into Bithynia and the Spirit of God stopped them there. They ran out of real estate and got down to Troas. Finally Paul has a dream in the night and it's a man from Macedonia who says "Come over and help us."

They take the little boat trip about 95 miles north, land in Neapolis, then take an 8 mile walk up to Philippi. Instead of meeting the man from Macedonia, they meet a woman—Lydia.

Lydia is the first convert in the whole church. We also have the conversion of a little girl who has a demon cast out of her. Then Paul is thrown into prison. Remember Paul and Silas were singing at midnight and while they were there, the jailer and his family became Christians. Those were the first three converts in that Philippian church.

Paul loved them. He was always proud of his churches in Macedonia.

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When he writes the Corinthians and says "I want to tell you, the people in Macedonia are so poor they shouldn't have given, but they begged for the opportunity. They gave themselves first to the Lord and then they gave everything they had. They just, they've overwhelmed us by their generosity."

These are incredible people that he's writing to.

So he has several reasons. He's heard that Euodia and Syntyche—the chairman of the women's association and soprano in the choir—have gotten into a fight. He has to straighten that out.

Then he's learned something that's a concern to him. The Judaizers have plagued his steps to Philippi, introducing heresy among them. So he has to talk about that.

He then wants to tell him he loves them. He wants to say thanks for sending Epaphroditus over. He really appreciated his help. He risked his life physically to minister to them.

Then in chapter 1 he says "Hey look, don't y'all get really upset and worried about me being in prison. This is a great opportunity for the gospel."

Some guys like Paul, you drop them anywhere and they're going to be preaching the gospel and people are going to get saved and things are going to happen. So he tells them that. It's really beautiful.

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The chapter ends just by saying thanks for their gift. And telling them that he's content wherever he is. If he doesn't have anything, if he's full or whatever, he's happy.

The people who have studied the book take many different themes from it.

The word "joy" jumps out a lot and so we call it the EPISTLE OF JOY. There are some fun statements we'll see. Some writers follow that line.

Ironside focuses on Christ. If you take the word "Christ" in the four chapters, it almost turns your paper pink if you're marking it—all the times Christ occurs or a pronoun.

Ironside outlines the book:

1. Christ is my LIFE—chapter 1.

2. He's my EXAMPLE—chapter 2.

3. He's my OBJECT—chapter 3.

4. He's my STRENGTH and SUPPLY—chapter 4.

We're going to focus on goals. We're going to focus on the one goal and then the secondary goals to reach the primary goal. That makes this book come alive.

This is what the retirement person needs to do. He/she:

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1. needs to focus on what's God going to do in the last part of his/her life.

2. is going to finish what they started.

3. is going to make them like His Son.

All of these things are going to be manifested as individual goals that can be ours.

The goals we're going to talk about:

1. the LOVE of Christ,

2. the GLORY of Christ,

3. the SUFFERING of Christ,

4. the MIND of Christ,

5. the DAY of Christ,

6. the THINGS of Christ,

7. the WORK of Christ,

8. the KNOWLEDGE of Christ,

9. the COMING of Christ,

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10. the JOY of Christ, and

11. the STRENGTH of Christ.

Now when we talk about a PRIMARY GOAL—what is it?

When we become a Christian, what do we expect is God's primary objective in our life?

He wants to make us as much like His Son as He possibly can through every experience in our lives.

All of the curriculum that we face, no matter what it is, is part and parcel of taking out of our heads and putting into our lives the likeness of Jesus Christ.

It doesn't make any difference what it is that we face—how difficult or how hard—God is going to forge that around and He's going to mould us into the image of Christ.

That's totally contrary to the preaching of all this fluff and cotton candy that we're hearing about health, wealth and prosperity. That's totally contrary.

We don't have very many Christians today who are ready for the inevitable and that is running uphill into the wind. It's going to get tough.

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We're saying "Boy God! You're sure ticked at me and I've been so good to You!" It's like we deserve better treatment than that!

If we received the treatment we deserved, we'd all be in hell. We know that. We certainly don't want to talk about that.

What are we saying? If that's the goal, be ready for anything! God will stop at nothing! Don't get scared. It's going to be worth it.

It's just incredible. As God forges the image of Christ, the blessings seem to flow unhindered and incredible things begin to happen.

Because we're missing that, people aren't seeing Jesus in us! Because they aren't seeing Jesus in us, they don't want what we have. They're coming at a totally wrong basis to the gospel.

Here are a few statements about goals:

<u>Hebrews 12:1, 2</u>

> Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfector of faith, …

<u>1 Corinthians 9:24-27</u>

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> Don't you know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. And everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They, then, do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. I run in such a way not without aim. And I box in such a way, not beating the air. I buffet my body and I make it my slave, lest possibly after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified.

Now that's tough preaching. But Paul's telling us how the cow eats the cabbage.

When you get to 2 Timothy 4, when he's wrapping it up, he says:

2 Timothy 4:7

> I've fought a good fight, I've finished the course, I've kept the faith.

1 Timothy 4:7, 8

> On the other hand, discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness. For bodily discipline is only little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, …

1 Timothy 4:15, 16

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> Take pains with these things. Be absorbed in them so that your progress may be evident to all. Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching. Persevere in these things, for as you do this, you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you.

<u>2 Timothy 2:15</u>

> Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth.

June Hunt wrote a book called *Above All Else* and she tells the story about the artist who carved the heads of the presidents in Mount Rushmore. And it's so interesting, his statement:

Carved into the famous black hills of South Dakota are the gigantic faces of our past U.S. presidents. When asked how he could have sculpted the figures on such a huge scale, the craftsman replied, "It was simple. I just chipped away the pieces I didn't need. The faces were there all the time." (source unknown)

He's there in you and He's just chipping away the pieces through what you're going through that you don't understand and you can't explain. God's at work. His ultimate goal is to make you like His Son.

Napoleon Hill would be a heretic from a religious point of view, but he wrote a book called *Think and Grow Rich*. He

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should have read the apostle Paul and come to know Jesus before he wrote this. He says how you're going to do it. Here's what the world spends their money on:

1. A definite purpose backed by burning desire for its fulfillment.

2. A definite plan expressed in continuous action.

3. A mind closed tightly against all negative and discouraging influences, including negative suggestions from your relatives, your friends and your acquaintances.

4. A friendly alliance with one or more persons who will encourage one to follow through with both his plan and purpose.

(source unknown)

Isn't that incredible?

We take those four things and we bring them over into the book of Philippians and we have the mentality to go for it. God is going to use us, bless us, and use us in the lives of others. People are going to start saying we sure are beginning to look a lot like Jesus. That's exactly what we want them to do.

That's our goal. What are the secondary goals?

1. The LOVE of Christ

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In the text before us, we're going to see what the love of Christ will do in us and how we demonstrate it.

Someone was trying to describe love and Alan Loy McGinnis in his book *The Friendship Factor* said:

(The Friendship Factor by Alan Loy McGinnis)

By our sentimental ignorance we encourage marriage as a kind of tranquilizing drug. A lady of 47, who has been married 27 years and has six children, knows what love really is, and once she described it like this for me: "Love is what you've been through with somebody."
(source unknown)

That says it. It's not this gushy little stuff with John Denver: "Love is why I came here in the first place, and love is now the reason I must go."

That's not it. The kind of love we're talking about is the love where we'll lay down our life for another. It's a kind of love that He wants to produce in you.

One of the first things that God expects of us is love. Jesus, in the Upper Room, really marked it.

John 13:34, 35

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> A new commandment I give unto you: that you love one another… By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another.

Paul says:

<u>2 Corinthians 5:14</u>

> It's the love of Christ that motivates us and strains us to carry the gospel to the lost and dying world.

It's love that can change the unattractive and make it attractive. It's love that makes things beautiful.

It's this love that we're about to talk about in these verses—both His love for us and the love which we demonstrate to those around us.

So ask yourself, as you're beginning to look like Jesus, how much is the love of Christ reflected in your life in these verses?

<u>v. 1</u> Paul and Timothy, bondslaves of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, together with overseers and deacons;

"Paul and Timothy, bondslaves of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, together with the overseers and the deacons;"

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We love to see Paul and Timothy together because that's old age and a young man together. Timothy probably never knew who his daddy was. Or if he did, he wasn't a believer. He was raised by his grandmother and his mother. So Paul became a father image to him.

After becoming a Christian, Paul invested his life in Timothy.

He calls them "bondslaves of Christ Jesus."

This is a person with no rights. It's a person who has learned that the secret to life is to serve and to give.

<u>Mark 10:45</u>

> I came not to be ministered unto but to minister and to give my life a ransom for many.

In John 13, Jesus described it beautifully.

Here are these twelve guys that He spent three years with, sitting around arguing over who's going to be Secretary of State in the kingdom. Proud hearts and dirty feet, and who walks in? Jesus.

He says "Well guys, I feel like a failure as a teacher, because you haven't learned the first lesson in love. Why didn't one of you pick up the bucket and towel and wash feet?"

The president of the kingdom doesn't wash feet! He delegates

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that responsibility!

It would be great if the government leaders would get ahold of this. God blesses servants not power mongers and He has great joy in seeing us sacrificially serve as bondslaves.

Jesus takes the towel and washes their feet. Then He tells them to do it for each other.

Joe Aldrich wrote a book called *Secrets of Inner Beauty*. In it he says:

(Secrets of Inner Beauty by Joe Aldrich)

Humpty Dumpty was pushed. And the king's best men couldn't put him back together again. Sin has broken all of us and we can't put ourselves back together, but God can. He does beautiful work and He desires that we yield ourselves whole-heartedly to Him as candidates for beauty. We are already sons. He wants us also to serve. Servants are beautiful. Check your wardrobe. The ones who will hear well-done, good and faithful servant, will be wearing towels that are worn, faded and patched because of heavy use.
(source unknown)

How much do we really care about serving others?

You'd be amazed. This is the one thing we should emphasize with young people. It is giving yourself sacrificially to others that you really learn what it is to begin to live. It's in serving

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that we manifest our love. We're "bondslaves of Christ," basically is what Paul says.

"…to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi…"

We can't be a saint unless we're in Christ Jesus. To be in Christ, we have to come to know Him. He is our atmosphere and our environment even though we're living here on this foreign land for a period of time.

"…together with overseers and deacons;"—he speaks to the leadership in the local congregation.

<u>v. 2</u> grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

"grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

Those are never reversed.

We have to know God's GRACE before we can know God's PEACE.

We must experience, first of all, His unmerited favor.

<u>Ephesians 2:8, 9</u>

> By grace you have been saved through faith—and that not of yourselves, it is a gift of God…

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Then peace comes—Colossians 1:20—as a result of receiving His grace in the Lord Jesus Christ.

<u>v. 3</u> I am thanking my God upon every remembrance of you,

"I am thanking my God upon every remembrance of you,"

Notice the little word "my."

"I am thanking <u>my</u> God…"

It's interesting in the biography of Saul, old King Saul, he never says "my" or "our." He always says "your God."

Maybe you've not become a Christian and you're saying "Well that's alright for you. That's your God." We hope that'll be changed into "our God" together or "my God—I've come to know Jesus in a personal way."

"I am thanking my God upon every remembrance of you,"

<u>v. 4</u> always in every prayer of mine, making request in behalf of all of you with joy,

"always in every prayer of mine, making request in behalf of all of you with joy,"

How much do you pray for others? How concerned are you in

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your prayer life?

If we had it flashed on a screen, how much time we've spent in prayer this week, what kind of a record would we get? Are our priorities right? Are we comfortable on the computer print-out for the Judgment Seat of Christ, for the amount of time we've spent in prayer?

Paul constantly was in prayer.

1 Thessalonians 5:18

> In everything he's giving thanks and this is the will of God.

1 Thessalonians 5:17

> Pray without ceasing.

He's always desirous to talk to the Lord.

Paul meant it and he said:

"I'll pray for you and I'm praying for you and I'm thanking God for you. I'm doing it with joy because you all have a handle on things there in the way you are approaching this whole business of the Christian life."

v. 5 in view of your close relationship with the gospel from the first day until now.

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"in view of your close relationship with the gospel from the first day until now."

"You have demonstrated it by what's going on in your life that makes me excited about this."

<u>v. 6</u> Being sure of this very thing, that He who began in you a good work will bring it to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

"Being sure of this very thing, that He who began in you a good work will bring it to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."

There it is. At the minute you receive the Lord Jesus, He does what? He begins "a good work."

That "good work" will not be culminated until the Rapture or until you're physical demise.

That's what we're saying to the person who is retired.

The work that God does in your life doesn't stop because you're retired. You're not there yet. He's continuing this "good work" that He begin

He is more interested in working IN US than FOR US.

Now put a handle on that! What are so many of our prayers?

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"Oh God! Help me through this surgery."

"Oh God! Help my children to be good."

Oh God! You give me this one and I'll pay You back!"

It's like He's up there and we want His help and we want Him on our team working for us. God is saying "When are you going to get it? I want to work <u>in</u> you, not <u>for</u> you!"

In the process of working in us, we find He's working for us because He's found someone He can trust and who has a heart for Him.

David was a man after God's own heart. (see 1 Samuel 13:14)

No matter where you dropped him, he always came back and made things right.

Paul sensed that in Philippians.

"Being sure of this very thing, that He who began in you a good work will bring it to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."

When is that day?

That day Christ Jesus is at the Rapture of the Church—that's when we're taken out of here. By the looks of things, it isn't

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going to be too long. We certainly shouldn't be sitting around waiting for it to happen but we're getting close.

Let's move to our KEY VERSE and wrap this up.

<u>v. 7</u> Even as it is right for me to be feeling this way about all of you, because you are holding me in your heart, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, all of you being sharers with me in this grace.

"Even as it is right for me to be feeling this way about all of you,"

God is doing a good work in you. Why?

"…because you are holding me in your heart,"

You're thinking about me. How are they doing that?

"…both in my imprisonment"

You've thought about me here. You sent Epaphroditus over here and you've done all those nice things for me.

"…and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, all of you sharers with me in this grace."

Try this statement on for size:

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Fair-weather friends fly when we fail.

So true.

The people who say they're your friends will be there when it's rough. They'll stay there with you through it. But the fair-weather friends fly if it's about accepting responsibility for you.

Paul is saying: "You Philippians are not fair-weather friends. You've hung in there with me. You've sent gifts. You've encouraged me while I'm in prison. You're demonstrating the fact that you know the Lord Jesus."

Here's a Sermon outline to be used in the future:

1. Paul looks at the PAST in verse 5. He's joyful over their continued progress.

2. He looks to the FUTURE with confidence in verse 6, because of God's work in them

3. He looks at the PRESENT in verse 7. He's joyful because they're sharing his burdens.

We have the past, the future and the present in verses 5, 6 and 7.

Here's our key verse—verse 8.

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<u>v. 8</u> For God is my witness, how I am longing after all of you with the affections of Christ Jesus.

"For God is my witness, how I am longing after all of you with the affections of Christ Jesus."

He says "Before I tell you Philippians this, I want you to know I'm calling God to the witness stand. Because God knows how I feel."

What's Paul telling us? He's telling us that Christ is manifesting His love through the apostle Paul.

Have you bumped into that lately? Where somebody comes with such an encouraging, affirming word of love that you know it had to be prompted by the Spirit?

Paul has that deep love for these Philippians.

<u>1 John 4:12</u>

> For though we have never yet seen God, when we love each other, God lives in us and His love within us grows ever and ever stronger.

What's the secondary goal? The secondary goal is to show forth the love of Christ—to your spouse, to your kids, to your family members, to your friends, to everyone.

<u>1 John 4:8</u>

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> If a person isn't loving and kind, it shows that he doesn't know God, for God is love.

What was the concern of the Lord Jesus when he wrote to the church at Ephesus in Revelation 2.

"Y'all have really got it together in Ephesus except for one thing. You have left your first love."

Don't you love to be around new Christians? They love everybody.

What are we saying? Our capacity to love will deepen with the relationship with our Lord. God sometimes has to hurt a person deeply before He will love through them. God sometimes has to hurt a person deeply before He can use him greatly. The two go together.

You're not going to be used until you learn to be a lover. When you learn what it is to love others sacrificially, God is ready to entrust the Gospel with you and send you forth to be fruitful and effective for Him.

Paul says, "I long for you with the affections of Jesus Christ."

"I'm freed from love for myself and everyone else and I want to be consumed with the love of Christ!"

Amy Carmichael left behind a great heritage in her writing.

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She wrote:

> Mender of broken reeds, O patient lover,
> 'Tis love my brother needs, make me a lover,
> That this poor reed may be,
> Mended and tuned for thee.
> O Lord of even me,
> Make a true lover, kindler of smoking flax,
> O fervent lover, give what thy servant lacks,
> Make me a lover, that this poor flax may be,
> Quickened to flame for thee.
> O Lord, of even me, make a true lover.

(source unknown)

Where's the needle on your love tank? Why is it as empty if it is? Out of fellowship? Fighting God's purpose and plan? Bitter and resentful over the hand you've been dealt?

God is speaking to you right now. He brought you to this study to think about it.

Maybe you're the epitome of selfishness. Maybe all you can think about is your own comfort and what you're going to get out of something. And you haven't learned the first lesson: Sacrificially giving motivated by the love of Christ.

More love for Him produces more love for each other.

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<u>v. 9</u> And this I am praying, that your love yet more and more might overflow (grow) in knowledge and every experience,

"And this I am praying, that your love yet more and more might overflow (or grow) in knowledge and in every experience,"

Out of a deepened relationship comes a greater capacity for love. It's a love that flows within the river banks of knowledge and experience. They go together and we'll be demonstrating this love to those who are around us.

<u>Romans 12:9</u>

> Don't just pretend that you love others, really love them. Hate what is wrong, and stand on the side of the good.

<u>v. 10</u> so that you may be putting to the test the things that really matter, in order that you might be sincere and blameless for the day of Christ;

"so that you may be putting to the test the things that really matter, in order that you might be sincere and blameless for the day of Christ;"

Why is this verse here?

As our love deepens for the Lord, we know what offends Him and what doesn't offend Him. We don't have to go running to

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the minister and say, “Is this alright for me to do? Or is this wrong for me to do?” We’re already sensitive.

The Holy Spirit’s putting His finger on that and we love the Lord and we don’t want to do that. We can just cut it out of your life.

We put to test the things that differ and we begin to change our life. It’s all part of the growing process.

Dr. Robert Coleman, he’s the one who wrote *Master Plan for Evangelism, Discipleship* and several other books, had a consuming desire for discipleship. He’s a great author to read.

God makes you feel queasy in the gut. He starts kind of speaking to you from passages of scripture. He starts talking to you and you get queasy. So you start changing. You just do!

It’s the deepening of a love relationship that produces those changes in our lives. We try to foster from up here with a legalistic standard of “Christians don’t do this and Christians don’t do that!” we prefer to have somebody tell us what we aren’t supposed to do rather than to deepen a relationship and discover what offends the Lord.

As we discover what offends Him, we drop it out of our lives because we love Him more than any lousy habit or something that we would have to defend in the presence of somebody else. God does that! He does it differently with everybody! it’s none of our business what He does in your life and it’s none of

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your business what He does in someone else's life as a believer.

Before Him we're going to stand or fall and that's between the individual and the Lord. God help us to see it right. It's been proven again and again. We all have the freedom to develop into Christlikeness and the way He wants us to be! Not the way somebody else is!

God has made each of us very unique and special.

We put to the test the things that differ because of His love.

<u>v. 11</u> having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which fruit is through Jesus Christ, for the glory and praise of God.

"having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which fruit is through Jesus Christ, for the glory and the praise of God."

What is love? Love is the FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT.

And our lives, as the Spirit manifests Himself, fills us with the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, self-control—these are the things that He produces within us that He might bear fruit through us in touching other lives. (Gal. 5:22, 23)

What did we get out of the text? Here are the lessons we learned:

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Lesson #1: A man must experience God's grace before he can know anything of God's peace.

Lesson #2: Prayer is a vital part of a growing Christian's relationship with God.

Lesson #3: An indication of salvation is sacrificial love.

"Behold how they love one another."

Lesson #4: The work He has begun in us He will complete.

Lesson #5: How much do you love Jesus Christ?

Lesson #6: Love for Christ grows through knowledge and experience.

Lesson #7: Are you filled with the fruit of righteousness?

Lesson #8: Is the love of Christ flowing through you right now?

Remember that futile fishing trip? Peter and six of the other exes decided to take off and fish and fished all night and caught nothing. In the gray dawning of the morning there was a figure on the shore.

"Have you caught any fish?"

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"No, we haven't!"

"Throw the net on the other side."

And they did—a hundred and fifty-three fish.

Peter put on his t-shirt, jumped in, swam to the shore because John said, "That's the Lord"

He already had breakfast prepared and they ate.

They were probably reminiscing over a lot of things during the three years they'd shared together.

Remember what Jesus said?

"Peter, do you love me more than these?"

He used *agapé*—love produced by the Spirit of God—the love of Christ.

This is the first time in his life that Peter is not arrogant or defensive. It's the first time he admits his inadequacy.

In this next statement we have the explanation of Pentecost.

"Lord, you know that I love You. It's just *phileō*—it's human love."

Jesus hit him again: "Peter, do you *agapé* me more than

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these?"

Peter hangs on: "Lord, You know I'm Your friend."

And a third time: "Peter, do you even *phileō* me?"

Wow!

"Peter, are you even my friend?"

That heart was prepared for the demonstration of the love of Christ that would lead a man to be crucified upside down in martyrdom as he was faithful to finish his course.

Father, so many times in our Christian lives we want to demonstrate our adequacy. We want to demonstrate that we've got it all together and we know all the answers. You pierce through all of our theological facade and all of our Bible verses that we memorized and ready to hit anybody with as a spiritual Band-Aid when we run into someone with a need—"do you love me?" Lord, may this entire day be a day of reflection upon how much we really do love You. Father, convicted by the Spirit, that there would be fertile soils of inadequacy, raising eyes and hearts to heaven and saying "Oh God, produce within me this love—this fruit of righteousness—that I long to have as a part of my life." Father, there are many people who are facing retirement and old age whose bodies have started to ache and they feel like they have an excuse to be selfish and cantankerous, bitter and resentful, and who aren't very loving. May this message really

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speak to them, that they're a normal child growing into old age and it's the epitome of *agapé* love. Then we know flowing out of that we'll become real servants because greater love has no man than this, than a man who would lay down his life for his friends. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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A Practical Study of PHILIPPIANS

THE GOAL OF CHRISTIAN LIVING
"Important Keys to Successful, Fulfilled Living"

GOAL NUMBER ONE – THE LOVE OF CHRIST – PHILIPPIANS 1:1-11

KEY VERSE 1:8

v. 1 Paul and Timothy, bondslaves of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, together with overseers and deacons;
v. 2 grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
v. 3 I am thanking my God upon every remembrance of you,
v. 4 always in every prayer of mine, making request in behalf of all of you with joy,
v. 5 in view of your close relationship with the gospel from the first day until now.
v. 6 Being sure of this very thing, that He who began in you a good work will bring it to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.
v. 7 Even as it is right for me to be feeling this way about all of you, because you are holding me in your heart, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, all of you being sharers with me in this grace.
v. 8 For God is my witness, how I am longing after all of you with the affections of Christ Jesus.
v. 9 And this I am praying, that your love yet more and more might overflow (grow) in knowledge and every experience,
v. 10 so that you may be putting to the test the things that really matter, in order that you might be sincere and blameless for the day of Christ;
v.11 having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which fruit is through Jesus Christ, for the glory and praise of God.

NOTES

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QUESTIONS:

1. Read Philippians 1:1-11 and in your own words pull out the main thought of this passage.

2. To whom was this letter written, according to verse 1?

3. How did Paul get to know the Philippians? Acts 16:12-31

4. Who were the first three people to become Christians there?

5. Have you ever opened your heart to Jesus Christ?
If so, when?

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6. Paul was confident of what, according to verse 6?

7. What did Paul pray for in verse 9?

8. What kind of fruit does he talk about in verse 11? Describe some of this fruit recorded in Galatians 5:22, 23.

9. Which verse in the study has meant the most to you?

10. What lesson have you learned from this study?

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LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: A man must experience God's grace before he can know anything of God's peace.

LESSON #2: Prayer is a vital part of a growing Christian's relationship with God.

LESSON #3: An indication of salvation is generosity.

LESSON #4: The work He has begun in us, He will complete.

LESSON #5: How much do you love Jesus Christ?

LESSON #6: Love for Christ grows through knowledge and experience.

LESSON #7: Are you filled with the fruit of righteousness?

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