

Philippians

Results of Imitating Christ's Attitude									
Joy			Humility		Protection		Peace		
Chapter 1			Chapter 2		Chapter 3		Chapter 4		
Joy (5x)			Joy (7x)		Joy (1x)		Joy (4x)		
Attitude (1x)			Attitude (7x)		Attitude (8x)		Attitude (4x)		
Suffering			Submission		Salvation		Sanctification		
Salutation 1:1-2	Thanks & Prayer 1:3-11	In Prison Ministry 1:12-30	Exhorted 2:1-4	Exemplified 2:5-30	From Legalism 3:1-16	From Indulgence 3:17-21	With People 4:1-3	With God 4:4-9	Always 4:10-20 – Greetings 4:21-23
Rome									
Early Spring AD 62 (first Roman imprisonment)									

Key Word: Attitude

Key Verse: “Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:5).

Summary Statement: The results of *imitating Christ's resurrection attitude* are joy, humility, peace, and protection from *false teachers and disunity* in the church.

Application: How do you need to show a more Christ-like attitude during difficulty?

Note: Words for “joy” total 17 times in the letter but words for “attitude” total 20 times.

Philippians

Introduction

I. **Title:** The Greek for Philippians (*Ἐπιστολὴ πρὸς Φιλιππησίους* *To the Philippians*) follows the standard practice of naming the Pauline Epistles after their recipients.

II. Authorship

- A. External Evidence: Scholars of nearly all persuasions believe Paul wrote Philippians. The only exception is perhaps F. Baur of the radical 19th century German critics.
- B. Internal Evidence: Philippians claims to be written by Paul (1:1). This is confirmed in the references to his companion Timothy (1:1; cf. Acts 16) and the description the author gives of himself (3:4-6).

III. Circumstances

- A. Date: Paul notes his chains (1:14) in Rome (palace guard 1:13), which places the letter in his first Roman imprisonment (AD 60-62). Philippians probably was the last of the four prison epistles since Ephesians lacks mention of any expected release, and Colossians and Philemon were written at about the same time as Ephesians or shortly afterwards (AD 60-61). Therefore, the best date for Philippians is early spring AD 62. Paul wrote just before his release in answer to the church's prayers (1:19).
- B. Origin/Recipients: The palace guard (1:13) and Caesar's household (4:22) show that Paul wrote during his Roman imprisonment (not his captivity in Ephesus or Caesarea). Therefore, he wrote from Rome and sent the letter to the colony of Philippi (1:1b) by Epaphroditus (2:25-30).
- C. Occasion: Paul's "Macedonian Call" on his second missionary journey led him to plant the church at Philippi (Aug-Oct AD 50). Lydia, others, and the Philippian jailer responded to the gospel, but then government officials asked Paul and Silas to leave (Acts 16). Paul returned to the city six years later, but probably only for a few days (between June-Nov AD 56; Acts 20:1, 6). He wrote this thank you letter to the church six years later (AD 62) after the church had sent Epaphroditus with a gift (4:18). Epaphroditus almost died of an illness, but when he recovered Paul sent him back to the Philippians with the letter (2:25-30). Paul's immediate motive for writing was to express his affection and thanks for the church's generosity (other purposes are listed in the "Argument" section below). Yet another key purpose was to encourage perseverance (1:27-28; 2:12; 3:13-15; 4:1) against Judaizers who sought to require obedience to the Mosaic law (1:27-28; 3:2-4, 17-19; cf. Acts 15:1-6; Gal. 1:6-9; 2:1-16; 3:1-5; 5:7-10; 6:12-13). The way the Philippians could persevere was to imitate Christ's attitude, so Paul emphasized the results of this type of resurrection spirit.

IV. Characteristics

- A. Philippians is not a systematic treatise of formal doctrine, but it contains the most significant christological passage in the Pauline epistles (2:5-11), cited as an example of humility. This passage is often called the *kenosis* passage since it refers to Christ's emptying (Gr. *κενόω* "to empty") his rights (not deity) as God. These seven verses provide profound insights into his preexistence, incarnation, humiliation, and exaltation (*TTTB*, 408).
- B. The authorship has rarely been debated for Philippians, but the unity has been strongly challenged. Some suggest several interpolations by Paul at different times. Particularly at issue are: (1) a sudden change in tone from affection to warning and from the posture of fellow worker to an assertion of authority (3:1a contrasts 3:1b) and (2) the so-called poetic hymn in the midst of prose (2:6-11). The first issue is not significant since Paul certainly could change disposition as he writes and secondly, the insertion of a well-known or even Pauline "hymn" does not affect the inspiration of the letter.

C. Central Theme: Philippians is one of the most studied biblical books, resulting in differing ideas on the theme. Here are some examples of the central idea (from least likely to most likely):

1. Living the Christian life (Robert P. Lightner, "Philippians," *BKC*, 2:647) is offered as a theme but is too general since all NT books exhort Christian living.
2. Pastoral: Paul's warmth here is unmatched by any other epistle. "He pours out his heart [to these] whom he prizes highly and loves profoundly" (Hendriksen, *NTC*, 39; cf. Lightfoot, 66; Martin, *NCBC*, vii). After all, this was the first church ever in Europe. But this theme does not account for the exhortations and doctrinal content.
3. Joy: The most popular theme for Philippians is that believers can rejoice despite their circumstances due to Christ (Benware, 222; Wiersbe, *Be Joyful*; Briscoe, *Bound for Joy*; William D. Lawrence, "Overcoming Under the Circumstances," DTS Video Series, 1984, 4). Joy during trials is certainly an emphasis since the words "joy" or "rejoice" or "glad" appear 17 times in this four-chapter book (1:4, 18 [2x], 25, 26; 2:2, 17 [2x], 18 [2x], 28, 29; 3:1; 4:1, 4a, 4b, 10). Yet this theme downplays its doctrinal elements too much.
4. The Person of Christ (Alec Motyer, *The Message of Philippians*, BST, 22-23) is prominent as his name is noted 70 times or more. The following lists every occurrence of "Christ," "Jesus," "Lord," or pronouns referring to Him in the book:

Characteristics	Chapter 1	Chapter 2	Chapter 3	Chapter 4
Deity (God)		2:6		
Pre-eminent (Lord)	1:2, 20	2:9-11	3:20-21	
Returning in Power	1:6, 10	2:10, 16	3:20-21	4:5
Sacrificial (Cross)	1:29	2:8	3:18	
Savior			3:20	
Glorified Body (Resurrected)			3:10, 21	
Incarnation (man)		2:6-8		
Humble		2:6-8		
Obedient		2:8		
Selfless Interests (Servant)		2:6, 21		
Has a Ministry Plan		2:21, 30		
Provider of Needs				4:19
Helper via the Spirit	1:19			
Answers Prayer	1:19			
Gives Faith to Believe	1:29			
Gives Privilege of Service	1:1, 14-18, 22			
Gives Ability to Glorify Him			3:3	
Gives Affection for Others	1:8	2:29		
Gives Righteousness (Saints)	1:1, 10-11		3:9	4:21
Gives Encouragement		2:19		
Gives Knowledge of Himself			3:8, 10	
Gives Glory to God	1:11			
Gives Grace	1:2			4:23
Gives Comfort to Us		2:1		
Gives Comfort for Others		2:1		
Gives Purpose for Ministry		2:16		
Gives Life	1:21			
Gives Ability to Do Everything				4:13
Gives Joy (Contentment)	1:18, 26	2:29	3:1	4:4, 10-13
Gives Confidence (Ability to Stand)	1:13-14	2:19, 24		4:1, 19
Gives Peace	1:2			4:2, 7
Gives Suffering	1:13, 29		3:10	
Gives Rewards	1:21, 23		3:7-8, 14	
Gives Humility		2:5		
Gives Unity	1:15-17	2:1-2		4:21-22
Gives New Bodies (Resurrection)			3:11, 21	
Gives Christlikeness (Exalts Himself in Us)	1:20, 27	2:5	3:10-14	

5. **Multipurpose** (*TTTB*, 408): Paul had many purposes in composing this epistle to the Philippians. He expresses affection for them (1:7), thanks them for their gift (1:5, 7; 4:10-19), updates them on his missionary work in prison (1:12f.), encourages them in their growth (1:27f.), corrects a problem of disunity in the church (2:1-4, 14; 4:2), encourages them of Epaphroditus' recovery (2:25f.), warns of false teaching (1:28)—especially legalism (3:2-4) and libertinism/antinomianism (3:17-19)—and exhorts them to express joy in their trials as he had in his own sufferings (3:1; 4:4).
6. **Imitating the Attitude of Christ**: While Philippians emphasizes the person of Christ, the *application* of this truth is the focus of the book. Having Christ's attitude (or mind) appears to be the most all-encompassing purpose, with 2:5-11 forming the heart of the book (Moisés Silva, *WEC*, 19-20; cf. see "Argument" below). This theme goes deeper than joy (or any other positive characteristic in the book) since it explains *how* one can experience these qualities during difficulty (cf. p. 186k).

Argument

As good as the above purposes are, none sums up the book as a whole except the last one—to have the mind or attitude of Christ. Clearly Christ is the main subject as his name appears 70 times, but some key verbs convey the idea of imitating his thinking, attitude, or mind appear twenty or more times (*φρονέω* "think, form opinion, set one's mind on, be minded, or disposed" [BAGD] 1:7; 2:2a, 2b, 5; 3:15a, 15b, 16 [Byz.], 19; 4:2, 10a, 10b; *ἡγέομαι* "think, consider, regard, lead, guide" [BAGD] 2:3, 6, 25; 3:7, 8a, 8b; *σκοπέω* "notice, consider" 2:4; 3:17; *λογίζομαι* "reckon, consider" 3:13; 4:8). This is supported with many "knowledge" terms (esp. 1:9-11; 3:8-10) "which include, but are not restricted to, purely intellectual concerns" (Silva, 20).

Therefore, the concept of imitating Christ's attitude in difficulty appears more times (over 20) than the theme of rejoicing (17 times) and should be given at least as much weight (3:10). Each chapter bears out this emphasis since having Christ's attitude produces: joy in adversity (Phil 1), humility leading to unity (Phil 2), protection from legalistic or libertine teaching (Phil 3), and peace with God and man in all circumstances (Phil 4). Paul wrote the Philippians to let them know that "as a man thinks, so is he" (Prov 23:7) and the best thinkers do so with Christ's attitude. Paul states the key verse in this respect in Philippians 2:5, "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus" (NIV), which begins the heart of the book (2:5-11). A related concept is that of mimicking Paul (3:17; 4:9).

Synthesis

Results of imitating Christ's attitude

1	Joy
1:1-2	Salutation
1:3-11	Thanksgiving/prayer
1:12-30	Joy in prison ministry
2	Humility
2:1-4	Exhorted
2:5-30	Exemplified in...
2:5-11	Christ
2:12-18	Paul
2:19-24	Timothy
2:25-30	Epaphroditus
3	Protection
3:1-16	From Legalists
3:1-3	Warning against legalists
3:4-6	Paul's former confidence in the flesh
3:7-16	Paul's present pursuit of Christlikeness
3:17-21	From Libertines
3:17-19	Warning against libertines
3:20-21	Christ's power

4	Peace
4:1-3	Peace between two women
4:4-9	Peace with God
4:10-20	Peace in all circumstances
4:21-23	Affectionate greetings

Outline

Summary Statement for the Book

The results of *imitating Christ's resurrection attitude* are joy, humility, peace, and protection from *false teachers and disunity* in the church.

- I. **Imitating Christ's attitude brings joy like Paul had in prison by seeing the gospel advance, so the Philippians should have while fighting their enemies (Phil 1).**
 - A. Paul introduces himself and Timothy warmly to begin on an affectionate note (1:1-2).
 1. Authors: Paul calls himself and Timothy servants to set a tone of affection (1:1a).
 2. Recipients: The Philippian congregation and leaders received its holiness in Christ (1:1b).
 3. Salutation: The Father and Son are identified as the Source of favor and harmony (1:2).
 - B. Paul gives thanks and prays for them to have Christ's attitude of righteousness (1:3-11).
 1. Paul thanks them for partnering in their giving with the promise of God's blessing (1:3-8).
 2. Paul prays for their love to grow in both knowledge and virtue until the rapture (1:9-11).
 - C. Paul rejoices that his captivity spread the gospel so they will show joy in their trials (1:12-30).
 1. Paul rejoices that guards trust Jesus so the church will rejoice in its suffering (1:12-18a).
 - a) Prison helped Paul preach the gospel even farther rather than hindering it (1:12-14).
 - b) Paul even rejoiced that some selfishly preached the gospel (1:15-18a).
 2. Paul rejoices whether executed or freed since both have their advantages (1:18b-26)!

Persecutors

"Aha! You like to share about Jesus? I'll *imprison* you!"

"Well, then, I'll *torture* you!"

"Oh yeah? Then I'll *kill* you!"

Paul

"Good! This will give me more time to pray, write letters to the churches, and share Christ with soldiers guarding me."

"Thank you, for in this way I can participate in the sufferings of my Master, Jesus."

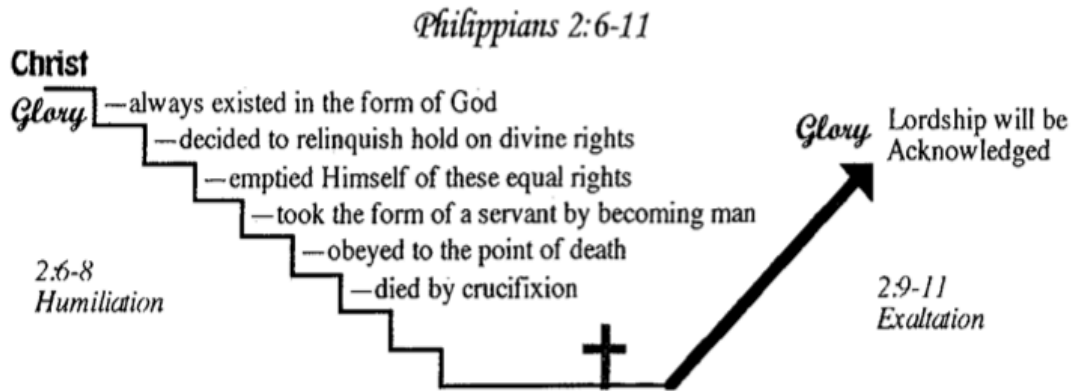
"This is the best option yet, for then you will usher me into his presence!"

3. They must contend against their persecutors by obeying Jesus in unity and joy (1:27-30).

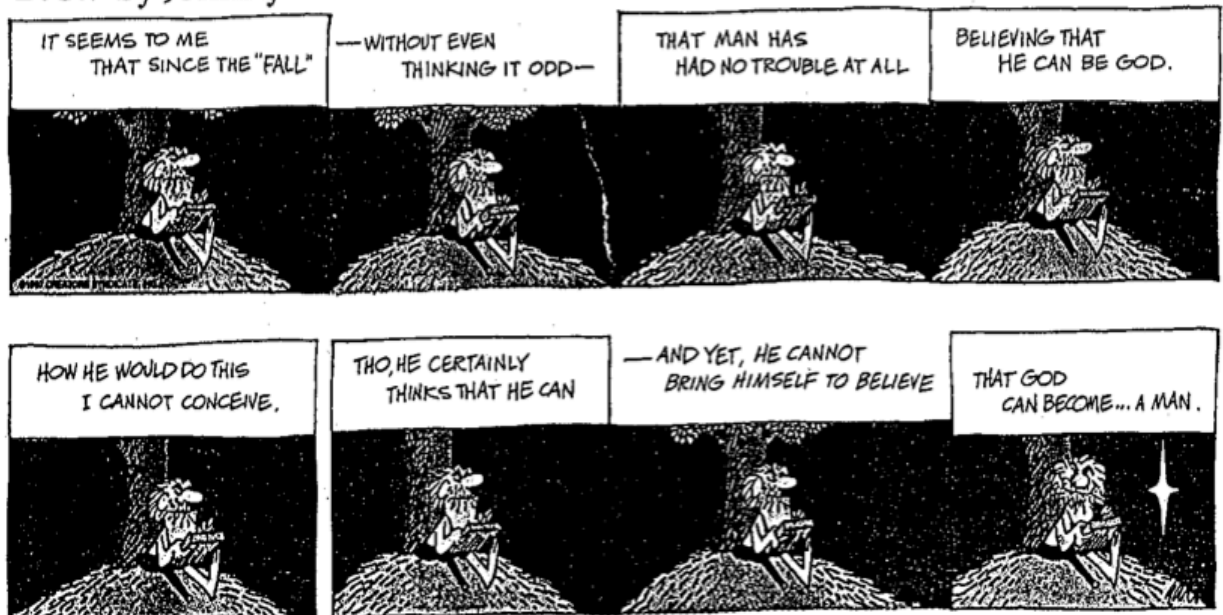
II. **Imitating Christ's attitude brings humility modeled in Christ, Paul, Timothy, and Epaphroditus to exhort the church to unity (Phil 2).**

- A. Each believer should work towards unity through a humble concern for one another to prevent church divisions (2:1-4; see p. 186d).
- B. Four humble individuals exemplify selfless concern to lead to the unity of the body (2:5-30).

1. Christ modeled humility as our best example since he refused his rights as God (2:5-11).
2. Paul modeled humility in selfless service so they should stop their complaining (2:12-18;



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see pp. 186e-f).

3. Timothy modeled humility so Paul planned to send him to the church (2:19-24).
4. Epaphroditus modeled humility in his concern for the church (2:25-30).

III. Imitating Christ's attitude brings protection from the extremes of law and liberty to give them balance instead of self-righteousness or excess (Phil 3).

A. Christlikeness guards us from legalism by denying our flesh (3:1-16).

1. Paul warns the church against legalists (3:1-3).
2. Paul used to have confidence in his works and pedigree (3:4-6; cf. p. 186h).
3. Paul renounces his self-righteousness by seeking Christlikeness above all (3:7-16).
 - a) All his gains are garbage compared to knowing Christ (3:7-11; see p. 186h).
 - b) The church should seek Christlikeness like Paul (3:12-16).

*Have *you* renounced personal accomplishments to pursue Christlikeness (see p. 186i)?

B. Christlikeness protects us from libertines who indulge their flesh (3:17-21).

1. Libertines live for today by indulging their flesh, so avoid them (3:17-19; see p. 186j).
2. Believers live for tomorrow by anticipating their glorified bodies (3:20-21).

IV. Imitating Christ's attitude brings peace with God and man at all times through Christ's strength for unity and contentment (Phil 4).

A. Paul pleads for peace between two arguing women (4:1-3).

B. Paul promises peace with God by following some simple principles (4:4-9).

1. Rejoice (4:4).
2. Be gentle with others (4:5).
3. Pray in all circumstances (4:6-7).
4. Think about praiseworthy things (4:8-9).

C. Paul rejoices with peace in all circumstances (4:10-20).

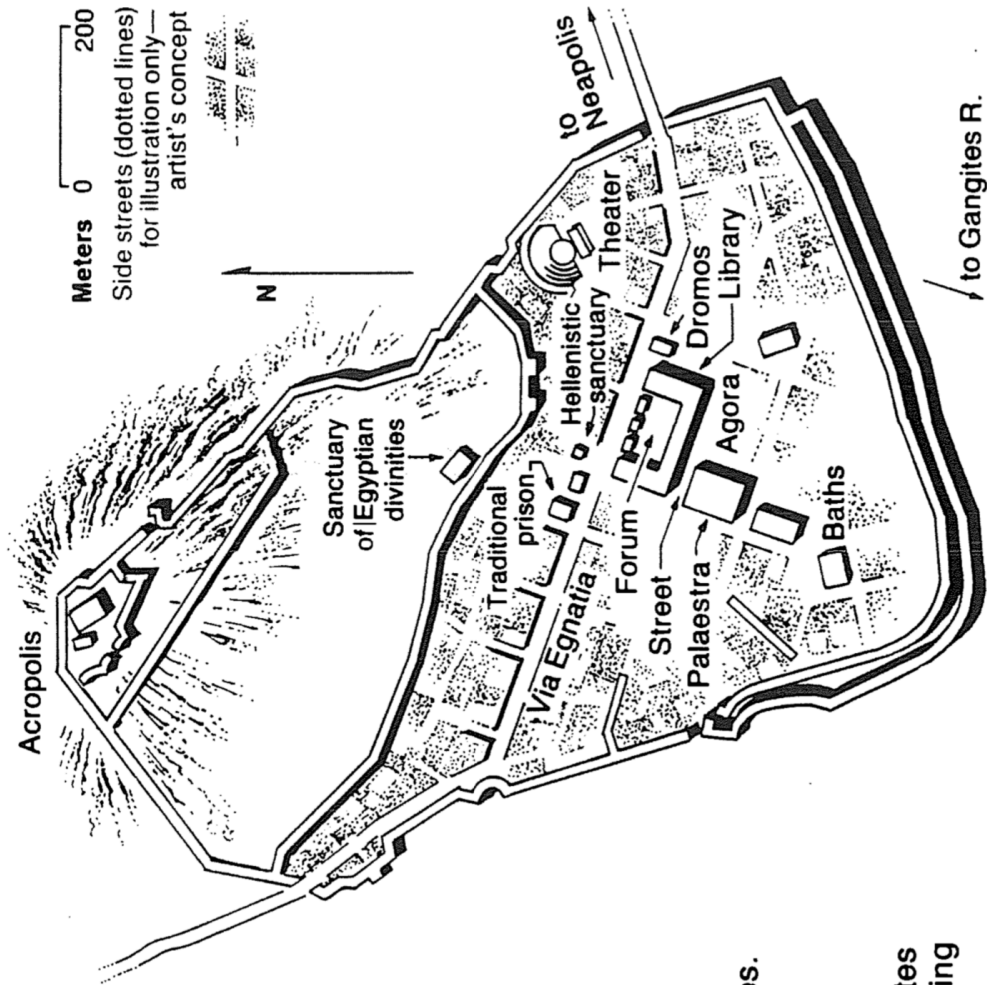
D. Paul closes his letter with affectionate greetings to show his deep care for them (4:21-23).

Philippi in the Time of Paul

The Roman colony of Philippi (*Colonia Augusta Julia Philippensis*) was an important city in Macedonia, located on the main highway leading from the eastern provinces to Rome. This road, the Via Egnatia, bisected the city's forum and was the chief cause of its prosperity and political importance. Ten miles distant on the coast was Neapolis, the place where Paul landed after sailing from Troas, in response to the Macedonian vision.

As a prominent city of the gold-producing region of Macedonia, Philippi had a proud history. Named originally after Philip II, the father of Alexander the Great, the city was later honored with the name of Julius Caesar and Augustus. Many Italian settlers from the legions swelled the ranks of citizens and made Philippi vigorous and polyglot. It grew from a small settlement to a city of dignity and privilege. Among its highest honors was the *ius Italicum*, by which it enjoyed rights legally equivalent to those of Italian cities.

Ruins of the theater, the acropolis, the forum, the baths, and the western commemorative arch mentioned as the "gate" of the city in Ac 16:13 have been found. A little farther beyond the arch at the Gangites River is the place where Paul addressed some God-fearing women and where Lydia was converted.



Philippi in the Time of Paul

Bible Visual Resource Book, 247

Happiness versus Joy

Happiness

External

Dependent on circumstances

Emotional response

Having what
you want

Euphoria

Effect

Result

Inconsistent

Temporary

Joy

Internal

Independent of circumstances

Act of the will

Wanting what
you have

Contentment

Cause

Foundation

Consistent

Eternal

Two Ways to Relate to Others

Philippians 2:1-4

Selfish	Selfless
Produces grumbling (2:14)	Produces joy (2:2a)
Leads to division (4:2)	Leads to unity (2:2b)
Proud (2:3a)	Humble (2:3b)
Considers self better than others (2:3a)	Considers others better than self (2:3b)
Looks out for self (2:4a)	Looks out for others (2:4b)
Imitates Satan	Imitates Christ (2:5)

Results of a Bad Attitude

Philippians 2:14-16

**If we complain
and argue**



**We won't be
blameless and
innocent**

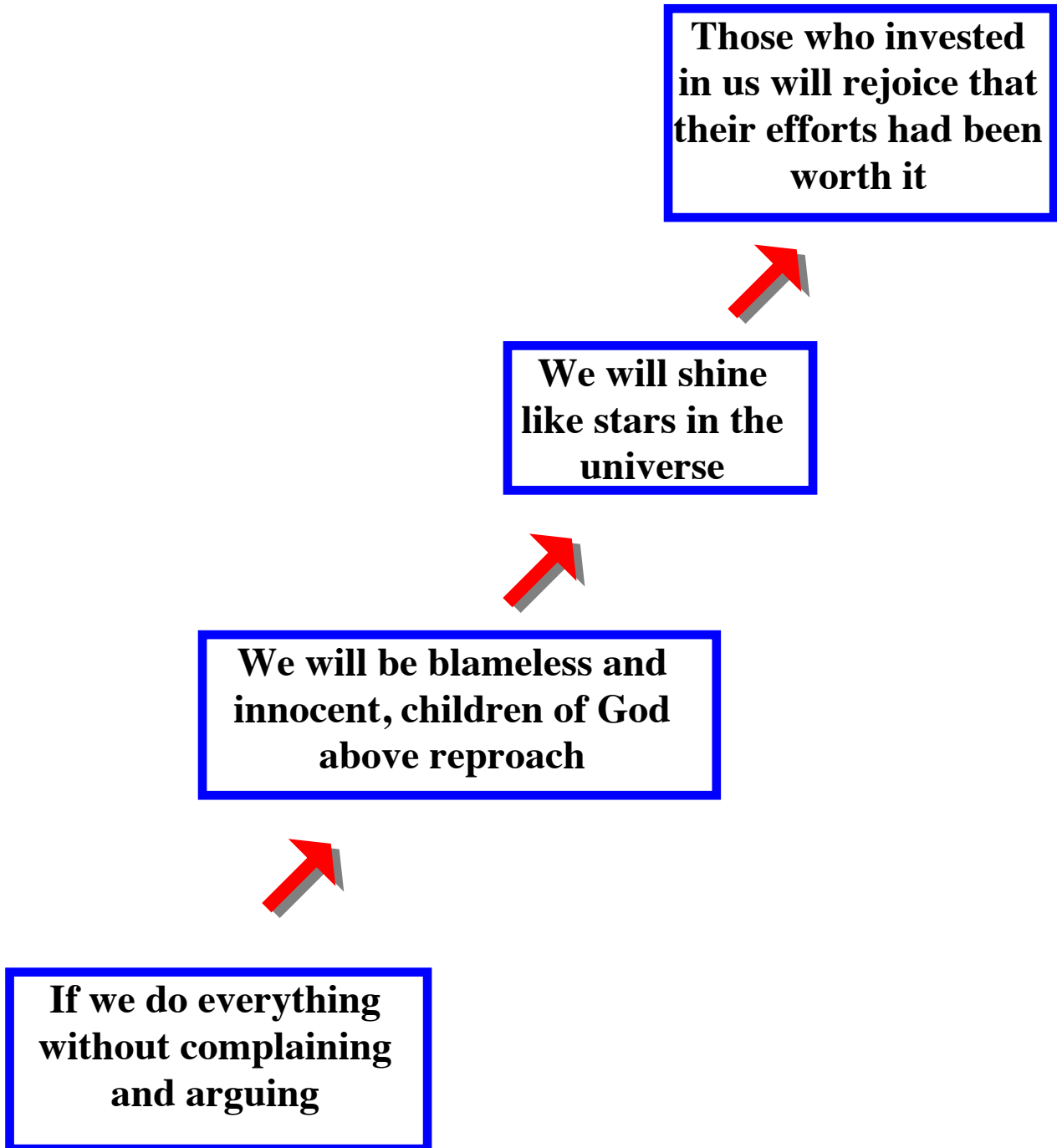


**We won't stand
out with a
positive impact**



**Those who
invested in us will
wish they had
invested in others**

Results of a Good Attitude
Philippians 2:14-16



Balance in the Christian Life

Legalism	<i>A Godly Balance</i>	Libertinism
Phil. 3:1-3	Phil. 3:4-16	Phil. 3:17-20
Legal = Law Only	Standards and Liberty	Liberty = No Law
Excessive Rules	Only Biblical Rules	License for Everything
Actions are Everything	Actions are Something	Actions are Unimportant
Highly Structured	Some Structure	No Structure
Pharisee-like	Christlike	Glutton-like
“god” is their Traditions	God is Christ	“god” is their Stomach
Starves the Flesh	Controls the Flesh	Indulges the Flesh
Claim of Perfectionism	In Process (3:12-13)	Practice of Fatalism
Think they’ve Arrived	Know they Haven’t	Don’t Care if they Do
Confidence in Flesh (3:3)	Confidence in Christ (3:7)	Confidence in Shame (3:19c)
Righteousness from the Law (3:9a)	Righteousness by Faith (3:9b)	Righteousness Not Pursued (3:19d)
No Movies	Wholesome Movies	All Movies
No TV	Wholesome TV	All TV
No Music	Wholesome Music	All Music
No Wine for Merit	No Wine/Moderation	Drunkenness
Unclean Foods	Moderation	Gluttony
“Christian Sabbath”	Rest	Frivolity
Celibacy Required	Celibacy for Ministry	Sexual Immorality
Salvation can be Lost	Eternal Security	Salvation can’t be Gained

Paul's Pedigree (Phil. 3:4-6)

Circumcised the eighth day

This sign of participation in the Abrahamic Covenant separated Paul from pagans and was performed on him the exact day the OT prescribed (Gen. 17:11-12)

Of the people of Israel

Paul was a pure-blooded member of this race chosen by God himself (not even a proselyte, who was often viewed as "second class")

Of the tribe of Benjamin

This tribe was one of the smallest, yet it boasted Israel's first king (Saul)—so Paul was not from a disreputable tribe like Dan, Reuben, etc.

A Hebrew of Hebrews

Paul did not adopt Greek ways even though he grew up in a Greek city (Tarsus)

In regard to the law, a Pharisee

This sect adhered more strictly to the Mosaic law than any sect in mainstream society

As for zeal, persecuting the church

Even most Pharisees did not actively seek to do away with Messianic believers

As for legalistic righteousness, faultless

Paul followed all 613 Pharisaical laws without exception

Excrement for Christ

Philippians 3:7-8

Paul considered his life's best accomplishments mere "dung" (KJV) compared to knowing Christ. Which of the following items are potential sources of pride in your own life?

Personal

- _____ Occupational position/title
- _____ Income level
- _____ Power
- _____ Education/Degree(s)
- _____ Other

Social

- _____ Social position
- _____ Friends
- _____ Spouse
- _____ House
- _____ Car
- _____ Neighborhood
- _____ Country club
- _____ Golf/sports
- _____ Children
- _____ Other

Spiritual

- _____ Church position/title
- _____ Tithes, offerings, gifts
- _____ Church membership
- _____ Ministry experience or giftedness
- _____ Bible knowledge
- _____ Humility
- _____ Other

Physical

- _____ Personal Appearance
- _____ Strength
- _____ Health
- _____ Abilities
- _____ Other

Is your attitude toward these things like Paul's? Are they "rubbish" to you?

Modern License

Philippians 3:18-19

<i>Text</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>	<i>Mormons</i>	<i>Holy Laughter</i>
<i>Live as enemies of the cross of Christ</i>	They oppose salvation by faith	Salvation by works	Do not preach the cross
<i>Their destiny is destruction</i>	They are unsaved	Claim that all are saved but are not even saved themselves	Claim to be Christians but if so, why don't they preach Christ?
<i>Their god is their stomach</i>	Their real goal is pleasure	Goal is to be a god to have sex with as many celestial wives as possible	Goal is to feel good
<i>Their glory is in their shame</i>	They're proud about things that they should be ashamed of	Temple polygamy is the highest goal	The spiritual heights is to laugh uncontrollably and cluck like a chicken
<i>Their mind is on earthly things</i>	They have "here-and-now" priorities	"Become a god for ego and sex"	"Don't use your mind and you will feel great!"

Imitating Christ

Mimicking Christ is one of the most practical suggestions of how to live the Christian life. If each of us could simply ask, “What would Jesus do?” in a given situation, and then actually do it, then our behaviour would radically change for the better.

This challenge is presented in Charles M. Sheldon’s book, *In His Steps*, written in 1896—over 100 years ago but still in print (Copyright: Chosen Books, 1984; Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1989; Grand Rapids: Spire [Baker], 1994; Uhrichsville, OH: Barbour, 2002. 251 pp.). Due to a copyright error, sixteen publishers began publishing it in the US alone and soon it was printed in 45 countries so that a conservative estimate is 22 million copies in circulation—the world’s record next to the Scriptures! This fiction depicts what happens when a small group of Christians commit themselves to live as Jesus would for an entire year.

Imitating Jesus is not only the theme of the book of Philipians (2:5). Throughout the New Testament we are exhorted to imitate Christ...

In His Character

“For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the **likeness of his Son**” (Rom. 8:29)

In His Joyful Suffering

“You became imitators of us and the Lord; in spite of severe suffering, you welcomed the message with the **joy** of the Holy Spirit” (1 Thess. 1:6)

In His Maturity

“until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the **stature of Christ**” (Eph. 4:13)

In His Patience

“But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his **unlimited patience** as an example for those who would believe and receive eternal life” (1 Tim. 1:16)

In His Perfection

“We proclaim Him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone **perfect** in Christ” (Col. 1:28; Matt. 6:33)

In His Submission to Unjust Suffering

“To this you were called, because Christ **suffered** for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in His steps” (1 Pet. 2:21)

In Everything

“He must become **greater**. I must become less important” (John 3:30)

“...I am in the pains of childbirth until **Christ is formed** in you” (Gal. 4:19)

“Whoever claims to live in him must **walk as Jesus did**” (1 John 2:6)