

The subject, as it was this morning, is that of suffering. As we looked at the believer we noticed that God's objective for the believer is to conform him into the image of His Son, Jesus Christ, and whatever it might take to accomplish that objective, our heavenly Father, who deals with us individually, may use and will use on occasions, suffering to accomplish that objective. As we think of His objective, our attitudes toward that suffering should fall into...Well, let's turn to Philippians 3, we'll look at a few verses here to begin with. I'm thinking of verses 10 through 14 which would be an attitude reflected by the Apostle Paul which each believer should duplicate in his thinking, for we notice that God has a purpose and a plan, an objective, and a ministry for each of us, and He seeks to conform us to Christ as He fulfills that ministry in and through us. Paul says in verse 10 of Phillipians 3, "That I might know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his suffering, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead; not as though I'd already attained, or am already perfect, but I follow after if that I might apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." Thus, he sought to grasp hold of that for which he was grasped hold of by the Lord Jesus. Verse 13, "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended, but this one thing I do: forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Thus the believer's desire should be that of pressing forward in obtaining, not heaven, which is a gift, but the prize that's afforded those who run the race. Now turn back to Phillipians 1.....(trouble with the speaker system "The trying of your faith is more precious than gold that perishes," thus, trials are used to make the believer. With this, and this attitude the believer should have towards trials and difficulties, we might shift towards that dimension of suffering which involves the believer's physical welfare and the Lord alone. By that I mean when finds himself in the same position as Job found himself in, the natural tendency is to question God, and ask God what he or she has done to deserve what has come their way. The implication in that question is, "God, are you dealing fairly

with me. In fact, do I actually deserve this? In fact, I don't deserve this." A believer might think that God is angry for something, and then seek to find out what particular sin that they think God might be irritated over, hoping to find it so that they might be alleviated from the suffering if they could just find what they are being punished for. I might say in conjunction with that, that the Bible does teach that God disciplines His children, and this discipline may come in the form of physical suffering. Usually, however, it's mental. We have that found in Psalms where David goes through mental anguish in regards to his sin with Bathsheba. He goes through the fact that people are avoiding him; he feels as though he's a castout from his friends; he feels as though God's making a pin cushion out of him in bringing pressure to bear; he finds great difficult to sleep at nights. All these things are mental; thus, one of the things that can accompany discipline more in the believer is mental instability. As it was with Job, we have physical suffering involved as well, and so, as we look at physical suffering in contrast to the suffering that comes our way for serving the Lord Jesus Christ which is to be expected, let's open our Bibles now to the Book of Job. We should be familiar with Job and his sufferings. In the Old Testament, which was carried over by the Pharisees, material wealth was a yardstick in evaluating God's blessing upon the individuals. If they had much wealth, God was blessing them. If they were poor, they interpreted that as God turning His hand against them. In that these two were put together in the New Testament, they gloried in their wealth before people because it gave the impression that God was blessing them. Now this was not always true. In the case of Job, however, it was true. This is not true, however with the believer in the Age of Grace. We have been commissioned to suffer, and the more faithful we are to the Lord Jesus Christ, the less, in most cases, we have materially. That's not always true, but oft times, it is true, and so this is not true in the New Testament at all. In fact, just the reverse is true as we look at the early churches; especially, the church of Smyrna, which means suffering, in Revelation 2, for they were tossed to the lions in the arena, and accepting Christ was like signing a suicide note, in that you wouldn't live long

once you accepted Christ as your personal Savior. The devil brought an accusation against Job, who was a faithful servant. As we think of physical suffering, I bring this point before you to set forth the fact that suffering is necessary to teach the believer obedience. Suffering is that which the Lord entrusts to the believer; thus, it's a privilege to suffer for the Lord Jesus. Job is used by illustration by James in the New Testament, of patience in suffering. Had not Job gone through this, we tonight, could not read or study this portion of the Word of God, and be encouraged in the area of suffering. Think of the unnumbered saints over the years that have derived encouragement by reading the Book of Job during a time of suffering. That fits in II Corinthians 1 as we think of the comforts of God given to those who suffer, that they, in turn, may comfort others with which they themselves are comforted of God. So that's one other aspect that comes with suffering, and so, tonight, I hope we are going to receive a measure of encouragement as we look at this portion of the Word of God. The devil, who is the accuser of the brethren, called Satan, which means accuser, accuses the brethren night and day. When the angels were meeting together, the devil made an appearance. Picking it up in verse 7, "The Lord said unto Satan, 'Whence comest thou?' Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, 'From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.'" The devil, when successfully enticing Eve to sin, picked up the scepter which apparently he, at one time, had control over, and is referred to by the Lord Jesus as the prince of this world. Paul refers to him as "the god of this world". Peter calls him the believer's adversary, and as a 'roaring lion', he walks up and down through the earth seeking whom he may devour; thus, he is likened to a devouring lion. We wouldn't be here tonight as believers if it weren't for the grace of God, I might add. The devil, however, has a very intricate bookkeeping system, and through his demons, keeps track of believers, and by virtue of the fact that we are now made testimonies to the angels as well as demons, the devil will scrutinize us, and on every occasion seek to bring before the Lord any inconsistencies that he sees, or observes, because he knows the Word of God better than we do.

In verse 8, the Lord said, "Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth?" The Lord was pleased with Job's testimony, for it says in verse 1-- "There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job. This man was a perfect (or mature) and upright man. He feared God." "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. "He eschewed evil." This means that he separated from evil, he side-stepped evil, he jumped over evil, he jumped beside evil, he refused to stick his foot in a mudpuddle. So, Job was a beautiful puddle-jumper, as he sought to jump over those temptations, tests, and trials, or anything that the Devil would bring in his way that would cause him to sin against his God. This, of course, should be our attitude. In verse 9, Satan answered the Lord, and says, "Does Job fear God for nought (for nothing)"; thus, he slanders Job before God., and he says in effect, "For financial remuneration, Job serves you. You take away his money, and he'll spit in your face." Now, sometimes it's the reverse I've noticed today in watching believers--When they're broke, they'll serve the Lord. You give them a few thousand bucks, and you never see them. I'm convinced that if the average person would inherit a million dollars, they'd get so flaky that you wouldn't believe it. They'd check out of church until they die, or atleast until the million dollars was spent. When they didn't have any money to do all they ever wanted to do, and to buy all those things that they always wanted secretly, and the things that their heart panted after, but which no one knew about because they didn't have the money to buy it anyway, then they decide to serve the Lord, because they're wasn't anything else to do. Oft times that happens. In this case, however, the man was well-to-do, and along with that wealth, he desired to honor the Lord Jesus Christ. This is a rarity. No doubt why the Lord said, "Have you noticed one man on the face of the earth, because he's one in a million. You can hardly find one, but there was one! Now to make a long story short, the stock market crashed. Job was wiped out financially. And the Devil used his children to move in and take all of his agricultural wealth. You have that in verse 15. The Sabians were cattle theives, so they fell upon them and took them away, and left his servants. This is in conjunction with the oxes and the asses of verse 14; so consequently they were gone. Now, they left one to report. Verse 16--"While he was yet speaking,

another stock market report came in, and it was said that 'the fire of god is fallen' (not the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, but the god of this world--the Devil. He can perform miracles as well.) "And fire fell from heaven, and burned up all the sheep, and the servants, and consumed them, (except one, however. One had to bring in the report) "and only I have escaped." And then, the Chaldeans (verse 17) made out three bands and fell upon the camels, and killed all the servants, and they left one to bring in the stock market report. While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, "Thy sons and they daughters were eating and drinking wine in thy eldest brothers house, and behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness (Satanic) and smote the four corners of the house, and fell upon them. They are dead." One was allowed to escape. He brought in the report. Job arose, rent his mantle, shaved his head, fell down upon the ground and worshipped, saying, "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, naked shall I return thither. The Lord gave (that's grace); the Lord hath taken away (that's grace)." For the Lord always deals with us in grace. "Blessed be the name of the Lord. Now in all this Job sinned not nor charged God foolishly." It's the normal action of the believer, when problems come our way to charge God foolishly, and to say in effect, "God, you've allowed things to get totally out of hand," or "Why am I like this," or " Why am I in this situation?", failing to see that all things are working together for good, and that God is giving us the privilege of submitting to His grace and allowing Him, as the sculptor to conform us into the image of His Son, which is His objective for each of us. We can read more: Job fared out well in this first test. The Devil said that a man would give anything he had for physical health, so in verse 3 of chapter 2, the Lord said, "What do you think of my servant Job. There is none like him on the earth. He is a perfect and upright man. He passed the test. He fears God and eschews evil. " You see, that's all you have to do. If you fear the Lord, it means you stand in awe and in total and complete submission to His rightful place over you as your Lord. It means that you are willing to respond to the Word of God and to orient your life in accordance to His truth. It means that you seek to please Him, and avoid anything that would displease Him, as you see His will revealed in the Word. That is your inner heart's desire, or at least should be.

Is that your desire tonight above all else? Honestly, is that your desire? If, for example, a few hours from now, the angels would have a meeting, and the Devil would be there, and your name was brought up, could the Lord say of you, "Have you considered this, my servant, how he fears me, how he ordainates his thinking to the Word of God, and his great objective is to eschew evil, or avoid doing anything that displeases me. That is his great desire in life"? Could the Lord say that of you? Verse 4--"Satan answered the Lord, and said, "Skin for skin; yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life." Now the reason that I am revealing this, is by virtue of the fact, that we, as believers, lose track of God's objective, and we evaluate success, as I mentioned this morning, just like the unsaved. We think success is having a bank roll; we think success is having a new home, a new car, all the frills, and all that goes with it. We fail, as believers, to see that God labels success by being what God wants us to be right where we're at, reflecting the Fruit of the Spirit before other. That's all he wants. That's success at that moment. And moment-by-moment dependence or filling of the Spirit for the believer makes him moment-by-moment successful. Living the Christian life is living moment by moment. You put all those moments together, you got successful days. You put all the days together, you got a successful week. You put all the weeks together, you got a successful month, and on and on we go. That's the point. So the key here was the test. The Devil said, "I believe Job is looking for a buck in the future, he wants to retire at 39 with a million bucks and live like the unsaved. He's using you for a patsy God, like most believers do. God said, "Now I do know what he's thinking. He would rather be faithful to the Lord, and lose everything to be true to me, and drop everything to be true to me, and that's more important to him than making a million bucks." That's the difference between the unbeliever's thinking and the believer's thinking.. That means the unbeliever practice 'the end justifies the means', but the believer says, "My first responsibility is to Him transcipiently. That means to live in moment-by-moment obedience to the Word of God, and in the meantime, martyred tonight for doing it. God must take care of the consequences, I have no choice but to be faithful to Him no matter the loss. That's the way the Christian life is lived. The is the spirit Job is reflecting.

What happens to me a week from now, or a year from now, is inconsequential and irrelevant. He takes care of the future. God wants me to be faithful to Him RIGHT NOW! And that's the key to next week. Well, as the result of that, and Satan's answer, verse 4, "Skin for skin; yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life," brings me to a story: Of Doc Kellogg, (back in Battlecreek, Michigan, where I was born and raised), of a very wealthy man who had millions, said to Dr. Kellogg, who is the brother of W.K. Kellogg, who founded the cereal factory (whom his kids say made a bet that one would be wealthier than the other, and I guess Cornflake won.) But this wealthy man said, "If you will operate on my stomach, and perform a successful operation so I'll live, I'll build you the biggest hospital in the world." He did it. He had the biggest hospital in the world for performing one operation--the first one like it that was ever performed in the world. He took the stomach right out, patched him up, and made him perk. Where's the hospital now? The government owns it now; no one can afford to pay the heating bill. Verse 6, "The Lord said unto Satan, 'Behold, he is in thine hands, save his life.'" Now notice--the Devil can only do what God permits him to do. Job was in the perfect will and plan of God. All things were working together for good. God knew exactly what He was doing; Job didn't know what God was doing. Job didn't have to know what God was doing, all he had to do was to believe the promises of God. So, Satan took off, verse 7--"...from the presence of the Lord, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown." (Skin cancer) It resulted in Job sitting on an ash heap with a peice of crockery scraping himself. Well, what was the purpose of all this? His wife made a suggestion that he should just curse God and drop dead. That's verse 9. You can see why the Devil left her around. He didn't bother with her. Now, turn to Job 23. See if this does not fit in to the objectives of God in the New Testament. Verse 9, he says, "On the left hand, where he doeth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand that I cannot see him."

In other words, Job was in a position where he could not understand what was going on. Verse 10--"But he knoweth the way that I take; When he hath tested me, I shall come forth as gold." This is exactly what the Lord seeks to do and fulfill with each of us. Turn to Job 42. In verses 1 and 2, then Job answered the Lord and said, "I know thou canst do everything, and that no thought can be withholden from thee. Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not. Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak: I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me. I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes." In all of this (this is exactly what suffering does, as we're going to see with Paul) it is designed to make us truly dependent upon the Lord. Thus, the greater the pressure placed upon Job, the more dependent Job should have become upon the Lord, because all of the props were removed--the natural props that he would have naturally leaned upon. Through this suffering, he saw the Lord in a way that he never saw the Lord as we noticed in Chapter 1, by having daily devotions and offering sacrifices for his children daily. He got a glimpse of the Lord in a way, through suffering, that he would have never seen the Lord had he not suffered; thus, it was a privilege to him to be able to see God's grace in a way that he had never seen it before. The whole objective in suffering is for God to show us that He's able, He's adequate, He's powerful, He's dynamic, He's glorious, He's everything! When His creatures on earth glorify Him, and acknowledge Him for what He is, He's delighted. In other words, He wants us to find our all-in-all in Him irregardless of any other factor. As we think of Abraham and Isaac, God said, "I want you to offer you only begotten son on an altar for me, and I want you to kill him, to see if you love the itsy-bitsy more than me," Abraham did it. Do you mean to tell me that God is so jealous of our love and devotion that he'd remove one of our children to get our attention?!? He may. I don't know.

But, I'm saying this, he wanted Abraham's attention, and he wanted Abraham to devote to the Lord the devotion he might have given to his child. Now, I might add one more note--When he saw the Lord, he saw himself, and through it all, he said, "I will repent in dust and ashes." He got a good look at himself through it all. Suffering should cause us to take inventory. With that, let us turn in our Bibles to the New Testament, in the Book of John Chapter 9. As we think of suffering and its objectives for the believer, we have a man here who is sick, and we have the natural reaction of the people who lived there in that city. "And Jesus passed by and saw a man which was blind from birth. His disciples asked him, saying, "Who did sin... (You see, the naturally equated sickness with sin. That was their natural reaction. Now, that wasn't true in this case, but that's how they normally looked at sicknesses. In fact, you have the Pentecostal group today doing exactly the same thing. They think that all physical sickness is a result of sin, and consequently, if you would confess you sin (I don't know if they know enough to confess sin) but if you would believe, then you wouldn't have to be sick or ill, which is absolutely ludicrous! The death rate among the apostles was one apiece, and that's true with divine healers and everybody else. Now, let's go on..."Who did sin, this man's parents that he was born blind." Jesus answered, "Neither did this man sin, nor his parents. (That had nothing to do with it. Well, then why was he sick?) That the works of God should be made manifest in him. I must work the works of him that sent me while it is yet day. The night cometh when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world. When he had thus spoken, he spit upon the ground, made clay with the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, and said unto him, "Go wash in the pool of Solom", and he went,"and as the result of that, he could see. All kinds of confusion came out of this. His folks were questioned, he was questioned, he was accused of being somebody else and not the same man, but all of it was designed to prove the fact that Jesus Christ was their rightful Messiah, and

that He should receive the rightful glory that Israel should have given Him, and that man was fitted into the plan of God in eternity past, was allowed to be born blind as an illustration of Israel's condition, to be used as an illustration before all those to see so that Jesus Christ could be glorified, and this miracle could be used as credentials (as a credit card, if you please) to prove that He was the rightful Messiah. Would you have been willing to remain blind for 40 years to give Jesus Christ the momentary opportunity to glorify Himself through you as the rightful Messiah, or would you say, "That's too big a price for me. You mean to tell me I have to be blind for 40 years just for Jesus Christ to do a job on me just to get a little glory?" That would be the normal reaction. That's exactly why this man was sick--so that God could glorify Himself through it all. Let's open our Bibles to II Corinthians 5. We'll mention the Apostle Paul in conjunction with suffering. In Chapter 11, we have many things mentioned in conjunction with suffering for the sake of preaching the Gospel of Christ. He says, for example in verse 23 of Chapter 11, "Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; I labor more than they do. And along with that laboring ministry, I received stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. Of the Jews, fives times received I forty stripes save one. Three times was I beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I suffered shipwreck. A night and a day I spent in the deep (the Meditteranean). In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of mine own countrymen (that's the worst), perils by the heathen, perils in the city, wilderness, sea, false brethren, weariness, painfulness, watchings, hunger, thirst, fastings, cold, nakedness." (You think we got it cold here at -30^o. Be thankful you got a coat. And then it says, verse 29, "Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not? If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities." Now notice how he looked at it, he just merely approached like God told us to approach it--He told us to rejoice in our infirmities. "Count it all joy when

you fall into divers temptations,"and to leap for joy when people cast out as evil among them. Leap for joy, for great is your reward in heaven." He was looking at it like God looks at it. But, now let's move on--He was caught up into the third heavens and saw things which it was unlawful to speak about. Verse 5--"of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities." Now notice he uses the contrast--"caught up into the third heavens" and rather than glorying in a glorious experience, he's glorying in the moment--not the past, nor the future, but the moment-- the moment God gave them the opportunity to live and suffer for Him. Verse 6,"For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth: but now I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, or that he heareth of me. And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations which was given to me. (I don't know where that was at; whether that was in the third heavens or back at...or right here where he was, or wherever he may have been;nevertheless, the Lord, to keep Him humble, He gave him a "thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure." Now we have here what the thorn is-- apparently, it is a messenger of Satan. Apparently, it duplicated the difficulty that Job had. This demon was given the right-of-way or the go-ahead to give Paul a hard time. This was designed to keep Paul humble because of all that Paul knew God recognized the fact that pride is that which haunts every believer, and in giving a believer too much information, the first thing that he does is get a fat head, and oft times believers want to learn the whole Bible in a few hundred seconds so they know more than anybody else knows, because they are competitive by nature, and they are just waiting to compete. They compete on the job, they compete at home, and they compete at church, and wherever they're at, they always compete. They drive me nuts! Now let's look at Paul's attitude in regards to this. Verse 8--"For this thing I besought the Lord three times, that it might depart from me." Now notice the Lord's answer. "And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." That means the weaker we become, the more the grace of God

can reflect itself through us, for the key to success is getting out of the way; thus, when we're weak, that's actually when we become strong, because we become more dependent upon Him, and that's the key to success. He goes on to say, "Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." If God seeks to glorify Himself through me in this weakness, then I wouldn't want it any other way because the whole objective in life is not that of the unbeliever-- to want a more comfy-comfy position--my objective in life is to reflect the power of God and the grace of God, and if this suffering is reflecting it, then that's what I want, because that's why I'm here. Verse 10--"Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong." He says, "I feel glad because you put me in such a position where I was compelled to be a fool, and to glorify myself this way." As we think of suffering in the believer's skin or flesh (physical sufferings), one of the things that it was designed to demonstrate was the power of God. Another thing it was designed to do was for the glory to fall on the grace of God. Suffering was designed to do that. It's also designed to enable us to reflect the fruit of the Spirit. While we're in Corinthians, let's turn back to Chapter 4 of II Corinthians. Here again, he's mentioning the opposition to the ministry which involved his flesh. But, you see, it oft times is easier to take suffering when it's inflicted by an opponent, than it is when it just comes. But whatever the case may be, it's designed to accomplish the same objective. Paul is speaking about his ministry in Chapter 4, verse 1--"Seeing that we have this ministry." In verse 3, the ministry was giving out the Gospel. "If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, because the god of this world blinds their minds, lest they believe and get saved." Verse 5--"We are not preaching ourselves, but Christ, and your servants for Jesus sake." Verse 7--"God has given us this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us." Verse 8--"We are troubled on every side, yet not in distress; we are perplexed, but not in despair." In other words, they

were crowded, but not crushed. Verse 9--"Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed. Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. So then death worketh in us, but life in you." Now notice how he looked at this. You have the same thing in Romans 12--"We are counted as sheep for the slaughter." If in our daily life we recognize the fact that it may be called upon us to give our life, and we are willing mentally to sacrifice our life, we've already reckoned ourself dead. Is that not what Jesus meant when He said, "Take up the cross daily, and follow me." If the cross is the emblem of death, it means that you will die daily to your ambitions and say, "I'll lay my life on the block for Jesus Christ." That's what it means. He goes on in verse 16 by saying, "For which cause we faint not, but though our outward man perishes, yet our inward man is renewed day by day." That's what counts; not the outside. "For light affliction (by comparison to eternity) which is but for a moment worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight in glory. While we look not at the things which are seen (That's the way the flesh or the unsaved man looks at it), but we're looking at the things which are not seen; For the things which are seen or temporal (or temporary) but the things which are not seen are eternal." We should be living in the light of eternity. Let's turn to II Corinthians, Chapter 1. We'll begin with verse 3-- "Blessed be the God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the father of mercies the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation... (is He indeed the God of all comfort? Will He comfort us in all our tribulation? If He will, then that enables us "to comfort them which are any trouble by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation abounds by Jesus Christ." What's the consolation to suffering? What even up the scale? What makes it worth it? Is it not Jesus Christ? Is it not what we have in Him? Is it not what we'll have during the endless ages of eternity? Is it not worth it all if the Bible is true and what we have in Jesus Christ is real? Now, you wouldn't expect an unbeliever to live like this; he's

going to save his own skin. That's more important to him than anything else. Technically, when Paul speaks in Philippians 1--"For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." For to die and be in Christ is far better than living down here in fact, I'm in a strait between two; having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better than living down here." He believed that. That means a believer doesn't have to fear death by virtue of the fact of where he's going. To die is gain! That's to his advantage; that's to his benefit' that's to his profit. Living down here is a disadvantage. That's exactly how the Bible teaches it. "Absent from the body is present with the Lord." "No more sorrow, no more sickness, no more headache, no more despair." If the Bible is real, and means what it says, then we can rejoice in death. If you don't believe it, you can readily see, you're flattened tonight. You must think I'm an idiot although I didn't write it. In verse 10 it says, "Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver, and whom we trust he will yet deliver us." The Lord is the deliverer. That's one of the reasons we suffer--so the Lord can use us to be a source of encouragement to others "with the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God." Thinking of that, let's turn to Phillipians 4 as we think of Paul's attitude. You see, the key is what God has provided for us in Christ. If we're filled with the Spirit, we're in a position where nothing can touch us. In fact, that's true even when we're not filled with the Spirit, but at least we're in a position where we can enjoy what's going on. But, by way of illustration, if you would be placed in a rocket and sent to the moon, you would be given intricate equipment. This equipment would be designed to enable you to carry along with you the very environment that you are accustomed to here on the Earth though you may be on the moon. We'll reverse it--Let's say you're a deep-sea diver. What's the purpose of the suit? Is it not to enable you to carry the environment that you are accustomed to down in under the sea so that you can withstand that which would dissolve you and enslave you, and thus, do you in? Thus, the sea is your enemy. By virtue of our position in Jesus Christ, though our citizenship has been transferred, through the indwelling Spirit we have been given in Jesus Christ the ability to carry with

us the power of the Spirit, and to be able to overcome any temptation or difficulty that comes our way and go through it with flying colors by virtue of what God has provided for us. So as we look at Philippians 4, we have Paul giving us these words--He is rejoicing (verse 10) over the fact that they had an opportunity to provide a gift for him while he was in jail. He rejoiced greatly that their care for him was revived again. Apparently, there was a lapse of time between the time they had helped him before and this time. But, notice what he said in verse 11--"Not that I speak in respect of want. (There's your key. What do you want tonight? You see, if you don't want anything, but the perfect will of God, you can enjoy life. It's only when we want something that we become worrisome, irritated, and we get dyspepsia, and all the rest of it. The headaches move in and we're uptight, nervous. That's why he says this actually, in regards to verses 6 and 7 "The peace of God which passes all understanding that shall guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." You see, that's your uniform--the peace of God which passes all understanding--so you're in that provision--the uniform, the tube, the belt, whatever. You don't want anything, because you've got everything in the belt. God provided all that you need.) He says in verse 11, "Not that I speak in respect of want, for I've learned that whatever state I'm in, therewith to be contented." "Godliness with contentment," Paul says, "Is great gain." You've brought nothing in, you're taking nothing out; therefore, having something something to eat, something to wear, therewith be content." Paul was even content without that! He went even one step further. Verse 12--"I know both how to be abased; I know how to abound. In everywhere, in all things, I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry. Both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." There's your belt. There's your equipment. There's your provision. "You can do all things through Christ that strengthens you. That means that if I walk into a hospital, I should say to any individual, I don't care what the situation is, they may say, "No one understands me. My husband doesn't understand me. My wife doesn't understand me. The doctor doesn't understand me. My kids don't understand me. My relation doesn't...Nobody understands me!" I can say, "Jesus understands Y

and He tells you that all things are working together for good", and this situation is to conform you into the image of His Son. He tells you to "rejoice evermore, Pray without ceasing, and in everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." No matter who they are, I can make that statement. Paul tells you, as he did it himself, that you can be contented, because you can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth you. Christ promised you that no temptation will take you, but what you're able to withstand, and He'll give you the wherewithal to withstand it, and the way of escape. That's a promise from God--I Corinthians 10:13. Now stand on it! I don't go into a hospital room and tell someone what I just told you in that fashion. I use a little different approach. I'm saying it this way for emphasis. I try to be tactful and wise in bringing out this principle--that God has a purpose for them where they're at. In the final analysis, does it really make any difference where you live. Think of a person who's been in the hospital for a year. He's been fighting bed sores for six months. Where are you going? Well, I can go home. So what are you going to do when you get there? Well, I can watch television. Oh, is that right? What else do you do? Well, I cut wood. Oh, what do you do? I put it in the stove. Is that right? Then what do you do? I go to bed. That's the same thing you did in the hospital. Well, what are you going to do? What's all this about? What's the Key? Why are you living? What's your privilege over.. You know what the privileges are. The privileges are a mental response to the Word of God, and fellowship with the Lord. The whole key to success is, What are you thinking about Jesus Christ right where you're at! That person in the hospital who's thinking about Jesus Christ can have a ball while you're flying an airplane and don't know where you're going, or a snowmachine, or a yacht, or maybe you're going to Hawaii, or the Caribbean for a nice warm vacation. That person in the hospital in northern Minnesota can have a ball with Jesus Christ because the Bible says they can do all things through Jesus Christ, and they're right in the center of God's will and you're on a Caribbean cruise out of the will of God. Boy are you miserable! That miserable mutt believer in a swimming pool, in a boat on a

Caribbean cruise. What a miserable character! Out of the will of God! I'm not saying that everybody who goes on a Caribbean cruise is out of the will of God. I'm using it as an illustration. So for you folks who are leaving next week, you may feel free to go. Notice verse 19--"My God shall supply all your needs according to his riches in glory." Not all you want, but all you need. He knows what we need; He's no fool. But, you know, our problem is that we have too much, not because we don't have enough. When I went in the Army, I didn't receive things I didn't need to have. I had to leave things behind that they wouldn't let me bring along. Why? Because they said I'd be a better soldier if I'd leave 90% of this junk I was used to living with home. You mean I could work for the government better without all that? You mean I have to leave my posturpedic home, and my hi-fi home, and my car home, and all those things I thought I needed. And you know, I got along fine, and I didn't have any of it. What I was doing for them, I didn't need it. They said, "You don't need that where you're going, boy." I can just see these guys with their hot rods, driving up to a foxhole, trying to hide their new Charger, or whatever they might have. Well, I hope you're enjoying yourself tonight, and I hope it is a result of what we've talked about, which is to see that God has you well taken care of. Now just in closing, I think of another verse. Let's turn back to II Corinthians again, Chapter 3, because I want to drill this point home, and to drive it home in your thinking. We noticed in Romans 8:29, that God's objective is to conform us into the image of His Son. This should be our desire in response to that. As we appropriate the Word of God and its provisions, and we produce a supernatural life in a hostile atmosphere; namely, the world --the Spirit of God, and the Word of God will accomplish its purpose. Verse 8--"But we all with an open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, (Do you know how you look at Jesus Christ? You look in the Bible and God reflects Himself in the Word of God. I hope that we've accomplished that in a measure tonight. And as we see the glory of the Lord reflected to us from the Word of God, that same Book, the Bible, used by the Spirit of God, changes us; thus, "we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory (That's growing in

grace) even as by the Spirit of the Lord." That's by the power of His might. Thus, by occupation with him, the Holy Spirit makes adjustments in our life in changing us into His Son. That's His objective with you tonight. I hope you catch His objective, and I hope as a believer you might agree with God, that the greatest privilege that God has given you is to allow Him in any way He sees fit as your loving heavenly Father, to form you into that image, and that your only objective and desire as one of His children is to be what God wants you to be as you are contented. You have no desires or ambitions of your own; you just want to be what He will make you. You see, you can't even make yourself something; He even has to do that for you. It just hinges on your willingness. Are you willing? Let's turn back to I Corinthians, Chapter 11.....(communion)