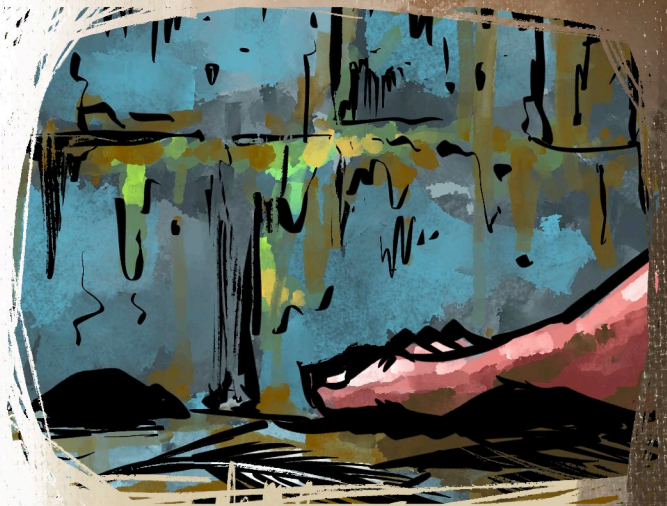


Through the Bible

# PHILIPPIANS

Zac Poonen



Illustrations by Vinay Kuruvilla



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**CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP CHURCH**

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# PHILIPPIANS



THE **THEME** OF PHILIPPIANS IS FOUND IN 2:5, "HAVE THIS **ATTITUDE** IN YOURSELF WHICH WAS IN **CHRIST JESUS**."



PHILIPPIANS WAS WRITTEN WHEN PAUL WAS IN **PRISON** (1:13). IT IS **CHALLENGING** TO SEE THAT PAUL WROTE SO MUCH ABOUT **JOY** WHILE HE WAS IN A **PRISON**.



PAUL'S WORDS HERE TEACH US THAT IT IS **POSSIBLE** FOR A **CHRISTIAN** TO HAVE **JOY** UNDER ALL **CIRCUMSTANCES**. THAT IS THE **MIND** AND **ATTITUDE** OF **CHRIST**. JESUS SPOKE MOST ABOUT **JOY** ON THE **NIGHT** BEFORE HE WAS **CRUCIFIED** (IN JOHN 15 AND 16).



MANY YEARS EARLIER **PAUL** HAD BEEN LED BY THE **LORD** THROUGH A **VISION** TO GO TO **PHILIPPI** (ACTS 16:9--12). HE HAD FOLLOWED THAT **VISION** AND GONE THERE AND **LED** PEOPLE TO THE **LORD** -- AND BEEN **IMPRISONED** IN **PHILIPPI** TOO. THE **JAILER** WHO WAS **CONVERTED** THERE WAS **PROBABLY** AN **ELDER** IN THE **CHURCH** IN **PHILIPPI** NOW, AND HE WOULD HAVE TOLD THE PEOPLE THEN, "I **SAW** THIS MAN **REJOICING** IN **PRISON**." NOW AS HE WRITES THIS LETTER, **JOY** DID NOT COME FROM HIS **CIRCUMSTANCES**, BUT FROM THE **GRACE** OF **GOD** THAT HE **SAW** IN THE **BELIEVERS** AT **PHILIPPI**.



PAUL WAS A GREAT **PRAYER** WARRIOR (1:4). A **TRUE** SERVANT OF **GOD** NOT ONLY **PREACHES**, BUT ALSO **PRAYS** FOR HIS **PEOPLE**.



PAUL CARRIED **BELIEVERS**, FOR WHOM **GOD** HAD GIVEN HIM **RESPONSIBILITY**, IN HIS **HEART** (1:7), JUST LIKE **AARON** HAD THE NAMES OF THE 12 TRIBES OF ISRAEL ON THE **BREASTPLATE** OVER HIS **HEART**.

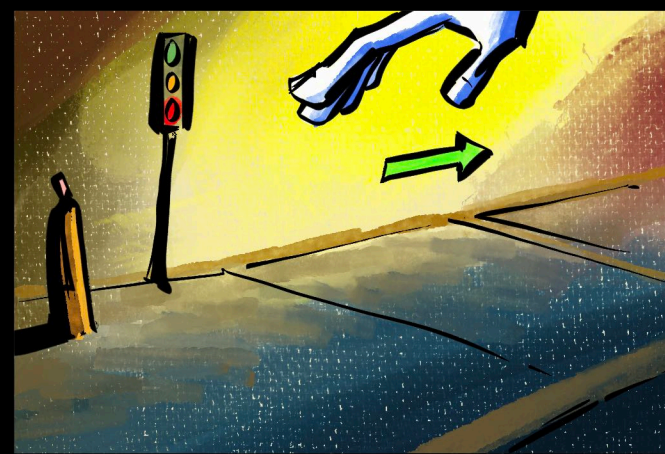




HE PRAYED THAT THEIR **LOVE** WOULD **INCREASE** IN **DISCERNMENT** (1:9, 10). **LOVE** WITHOUT **DISCERNMENT** CAN BE **DANGEROUS**. WHEN OUR **LOVE** INCREASES ALONG WITH **SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT**, THEN WE WILL BE ABLE TO **APPROVE** THE THINGS THAT ARE **EXCELLENT** ABOVE THE THINGS THAT ARE **GOOD**.



THEN HE MENTIONS HIS **IMPRISONMENT** AND SAYS, "**DON'T** BE **DISCOURAGED** ABOUT MY **IMPRISONMENT** BECAUSE MY **IMPRISONMENT** HAS TURNED OUT FOR THE **PROGRESS** OF THE **GOSPEL**" (1:12). **GOD** DETERMINED THAT THIS MAN'S **SPIRITUAL WEALTH** SHOULD **NOT** GO DOWN WITH HIM INTO THE **GRAVE**, BUT BE **PRESERVED** AND **TRANSMITTED** FOR THE **BLESSING** OF **COMING GENERATIONS**. BUT HOW **COULD** **GOD** MAKE **PAUL** **SLOW DOWN** ENOUGH TO MAKE HIM **SIT DOWN** AND **WRITE** ALL THAT? HE ALLOWED **PAUL** TO BE **IMPRISONED** SO **COULD NOT TRAVEL**. THAT IS HOW HE WROTE SCRIPTURE



SO WE CAN BE **THANKFUL** WHENEVER **GOD** **STOPS** US IN OUR **TRACKS**. HE HAS A **PURPOSE** IN IT, FOR "**THE STOPS** OF **GOOD MEN** ARE **DIRECTED** BY THE **LORD**, JUST AS **MUCH** AS THEIR **STEPS**" (PSALM 37:23).



IN THOSE DAYS, **PRISONERS** WERE CHAINED TO A **PRISON GUARD** TO **PREVENT** THEM FROM **ESCAPING**. DURING THE **8 HOURS** THAT A **ROMAN SOLDIER** WAS CHAINED TO HIM, **PAUL** **PREACHED** THE **GOSPEL** TO HIM. THE **GUARD** **COULD NOT GO AWAY!**



THE **GUARD** MAY HAVE **REPENTED** AND RECEIVED **CHRIST** AS HIS **SAVIOUR**. WHEN HIS **8-HOUR SHIFT** WAS **OVER**, ANOTHER **GUARD** **REPLACED** HIM FOR THE NEXT **8 HOURS**. THUS A **NUMBER** OF THE **GUARDS** WERE **CONVERTED** AND VERY SOON THERE WAS A **LITTLE CHURCH MEETING** IN **CAESAR'S PALACE!!** (1:13, 4:22)

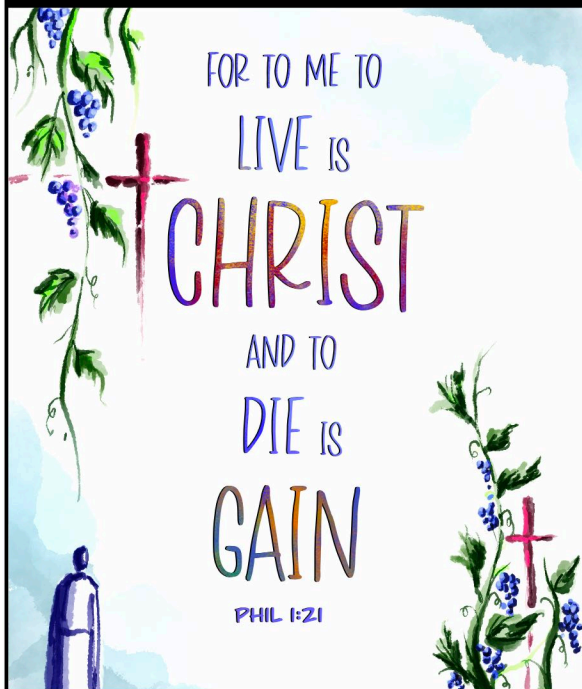


BECAUSE OF **PAUL'S IMPRISONMENT**, MANY **BELIEVERS** BECAME MORE **COURAGEOUS** TO **PREACH** (1:14). **TIMID BELIEVERS** GOT RID OF THEIR **FEAR** OF **PREACHING** THE **GOSPEL** AND BECAME **BOLD**.





BUT THERE WERE **SOME** PEOPLE THERE WHO WERE **JEALOUS** OF PAUL AND WHO HAD A SPIRIT OF **COMPETITION** AND **STRIFE**. BUT HE **REJOICED** THAT **CHRIST** WAS BEING **PREACHED** AND LEFT IT TO **GOD** TO **JUDGE** THEM FOR THEIR **WRONG MOTIVES** (1:15). AN **UNCONVERTED** PERSON MAY **DISTRIBUTE GOSPEL TRACTS** OR A **PREACHER** MAY **PREACH CHRIST** IN ORDER TO **MAKE MONEY**. PEOPLE CAN BE **SAVED** THROUGH THESE **MINISTRIES**. BUT THE **UNCONVERTED MAN** WHO **DISTRIBUTED THE TRACTS/ PREACHED** WITH **WRONG MOTIVES** GOES TO **HELL**.



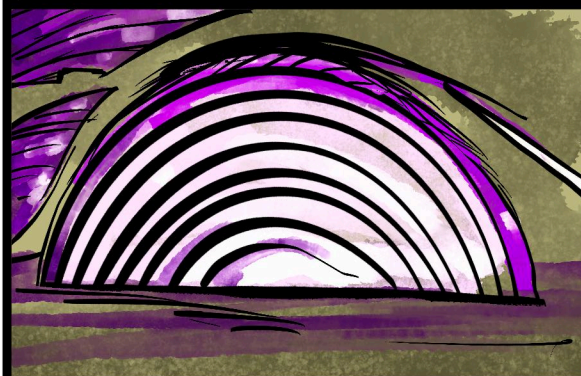
IN 1:27 WE SEE PAUL'S BURDEN -- **UNITY** -- AS WE CAN SEE IN THE DIFFERENT EXPRESSIONS HE USES HERE -- **ONE MIND, ONE SPIRIT, AND STRIVING TOGETHER**.



IF HE **DIED**, HE WOULD BE WITH THE **LORD IMMEDIATELY**. IF HE **CONTINUED TO LIVE**, HE WOULD HAVE SOME MORE YEARS OF **FRUITFUL LABOUR** IN **CHRIST'S VINEYARD**. BOTH OPTIONS **APPEALED TO PAUL EQUALLY**.



IN 1:28, HE **URGES THEM NOT TO BE ALARMED** BECAUSE OF THEIR **ENEMIES**, FOR THEIR **"BEING AT REST"** WHEN **PERSECUTED** WOULD BE AN **EVIDENCE** OF THEIR OWN **SALVATION** AND A **SIGN OF DESTRUCTION** TO THEIR **ENEMIES!**



THE WAY TO **UNITY** IS - **NEVER DO ANYTHING FROM SELFISHNESS OR PRIDE** (2:3). THE **TWO SINS** THAT WILL REMAIN WITH US IN **SOME DEGREE** UNTIL WE **DIE** ARE **SELFISHNESS** AND **PRIDE**. THEY ARE LIKE TWO **HUGE ONIONS**. WHEN WE **PEEL OFF ONE LAYER**, WE FIND **ANOTHER LAYER UNDERNEATH**.

WHEN **PILATE** TOLD **JESUS**, "DON'T YOU KNOW THAT I HAVE **POWER** TO **CRUCIFY** YOU?" **JESUS** REPLIED, "YOU CAN HAVE **NO POWER** AGAINST ME, UNLESS **MY FATHER GIVES IT TO YOU**". **GOD** HAS GIVEN US **TWO PRIVILEGES** (1:29) -- "TO **BELIEVE** IN **CHRIST**" AND "TO **SUFFER** FOR **HIS SAKE**".

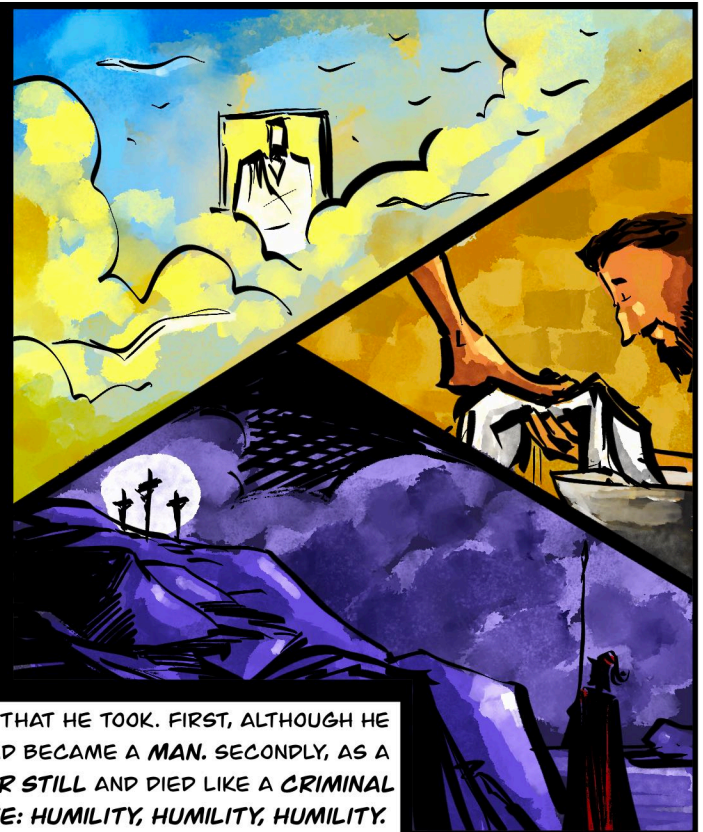
THERE IS A LOT OF **SELFISHNESS** IN THE **ATTITUDE** OF THE **RACE OF ADAM** TO THEIR OWN **CONVENIENCES**. WE LIKE TO **CHOOSE** THE **BEST BED**, THE **BEST FOOD** AND THE **BIGGEST SLICE OF CAKE** - THOUGH **ADULTS** MAY **NOT EXPRESS** IT SO **CRUDELY**



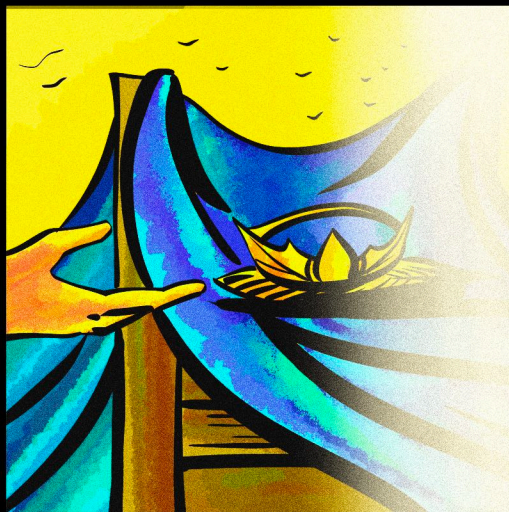




WHAT IS THE **ATTITUDE** OF **JESUS**? WHILE IN HEAVEN, HE THOUGHT OF THE **PATHETIC CONDITION** OF PEOPLE ON EARTH WHO DID **NOT** HAVE ALL THAT HE HAD; AND **HIS** ATTITUDE WAS, "I WANT **THEM** ALSO TO HAVE WHAT **I** HAVE HERE IN HEAVEN."



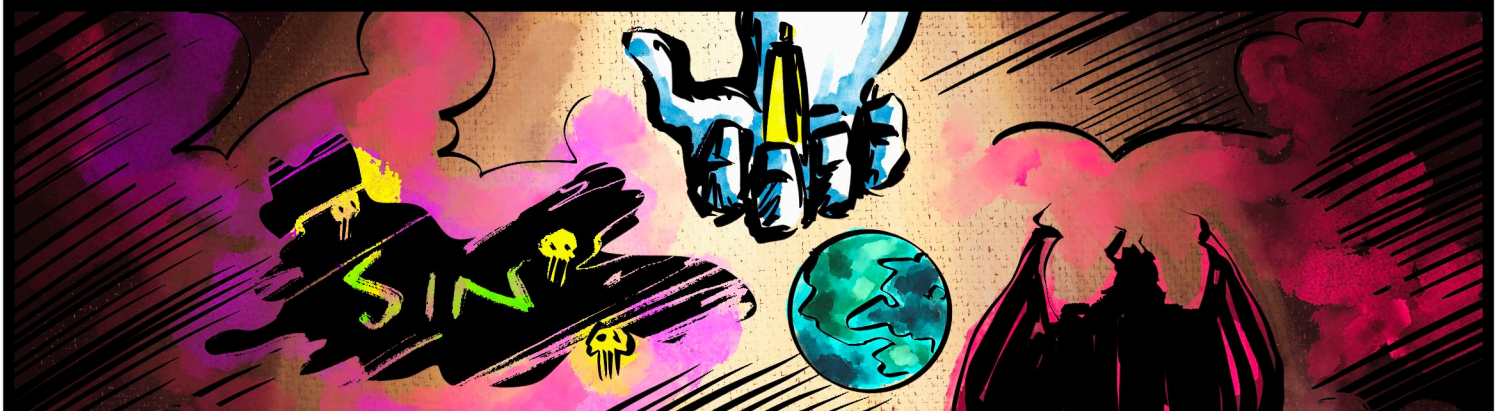
WHEN CHRIST CAME TO EARTH, WE SEE **THREE** STEPS OF **HUMILITY** THAT HE TOOK. FIRST, ALTHOUGH HE WAS **EQUAL** WITH THE FATHER, HE **GAVE UP** THOSE **PRIVILEGES** AND BECAME A **MAN**. SECONDLY, AS A **MAN**, HE BECAME A **SERVANT** OF ALL MEN. THIRDLY, HE WENT **LOWER STILL** AND DIED LIKE A **CRIMINAL** (2:6--8). THESE ARE THE **THREE SECRETS** OF THE **CHRISTIAN LIFE**: **HUMILITY, HUMILITY, HUMILITY**.



HE KNEW THAT HE COULD **HELP** PEOPLE ONLY IF HE **SERVED** THEM, AND **NOT** IF HE WAS LIKE A **KING** OVER THEM. THAT'S WHY HE **REFUSED** TO BE A **KING**, WHEN THE PEOPLE **TRIED** TO MAKE HIM ONE.



THERE IS A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN **SERVING** AND **BEING A SERVANT**. A **MINISTER** MIGHT **SWEEP** THE ROAD FOR **5 SECONDS** AND WAITS FOR THE **NEWSPAPERS** TO TAKE HIS **PHOTOGRAPH**. IS HE A **SERVANT**? **NO**. HE IS ONLY **ACTING** LIKE A **SERVANT** FOR **5 SECONDS** TO GET A **REPUTATION**.



**JESUS HUMBL**ED HIMSELF TO BE A **SERVANT** -- AND **GOD EXALTED** HIM. THE **MORE** YOU **HUMBLE** YOURSELF, THE **MORE** **GOD** WILL **EXALT** YOU -- **SPIRITUALLY**. HE **WON'T** EXALT YOU OVER **PEOPLE** BUT OVER **SIN**, THE **WORLD**, AND THE **DEVIL**.



WE ARE TOLD THAT IN 2:12,13 - GOD FIRST WORKS WITHIN US AND WE HAVE TO THEN WORK IT OUT IN OUR DAILY SITUATIONS. WE CANNOT PRODUCE THE HUMILITY AND THE UNSELFISH LOVE OF CHRIST ON OUR OWN.



IN 2:14, WE ARE TOLD TO DO EVERYTHING WITHOUT GRUMBLING OR COMPLAINING. THIS LOOKS LIKE AN IMPOSSIBLE STANDARD BUT IT CAN BE DONE WITH GOD'S POWER.

PAUL SAID THAT **AMONG** ALL HIS COWORKERS WHO WERE WITH HIM THEN, HE COULD ONLY CHOOSE **TIMOTHY** TO SEND TO PHILIPPI, BECAUSE ALL THE OTHERS SOUGHT THEIR **OWN** - SOME HONOUR, SOME MONEY AND SOME COMFORT FOR THEMSELVES.



IN 3:1, PAUL SAYS, "TO WRITE THE **SAME THINGS AGAIN** IS NO TROUBLE TO ME, AND IT IS A **SAFEGUARD** FOR YOU." PAUL WAS **NOT ASHAMED** OF **REPETITION** IN HIS WRITINGS. HE SOUGHT THE **GOOD** OF PEOPLE AND **NOT** HIS **OWN HONOUR**.



GOD IS LOOKING FOR THOSE WHO **SEEK** THE THINGS OF **CHRIST** FIRST AND **FOREMOST**. TO SUCH HE GIVES **REVELATION** AND THROUGH SUCH HE DOES AN **ETERNAL WORK**. **TIMOTHY** AND **EPAPHRODITUS** WERE LIKE THAT. **EPAPHRODITUS** WAS **SICK** TO THE POINT OF **DEATH** WHILE **SERVING** GOD, BUT YET HIS **LIFE** **RADIATED** THE **GLORY** OF **CHRIST**.



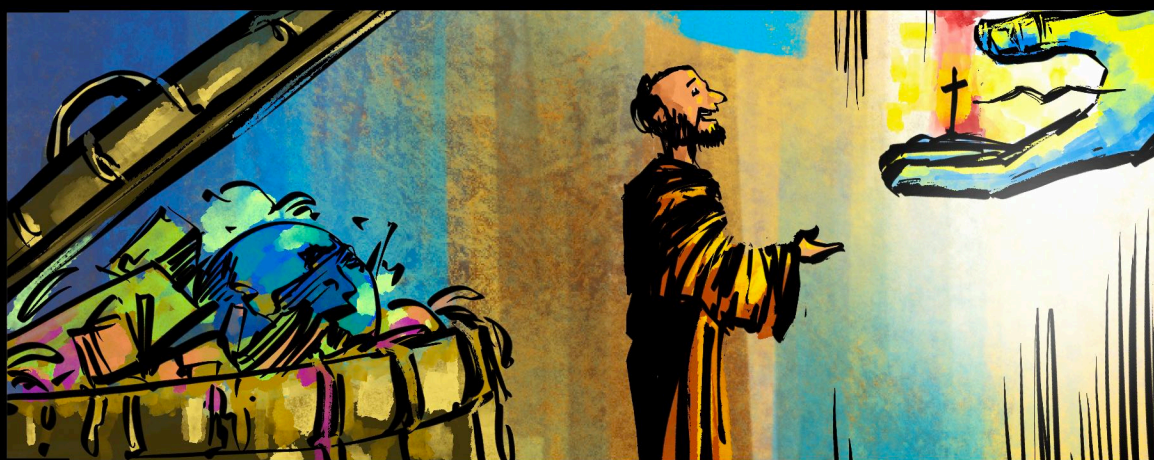
IN 3:2, PAUL SAYS, "... WE ARE THE **TRUE CIRCUMCISION**." CIRCUMCISION -- THE CUTTING OFF OF THE **FLESH** -- SYMBOLISED "**NO CONFIDENCE** IN THE **FLESH** AND **GLORYING ONLY** IN **CHRIST**" (3:3).



PAUL GOES ON TO SAY THAT HE HAD **MANY THINGS** TO **BOAST** OF, IN TERMS OF THE **FLESH**. HE **FAITHFULLY** KEPT THE **FIRST 9 COMMANDMENTS**. (**NO-ONE** IN THE **OLD COVENANT** COULD **KEEP** THE **10TH COMMANDMENT** -- **ROMANS 7:7--9**)



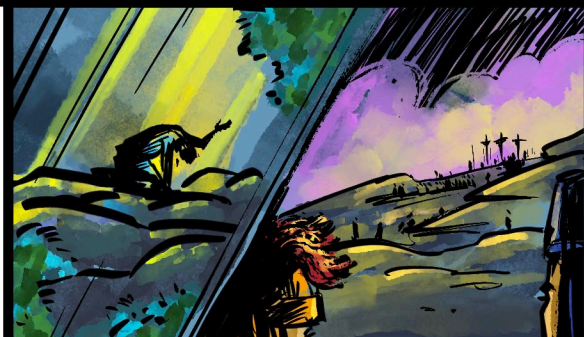
BUT WHEN HE FOUND CHRIST HE DISCOVERED THAT ALL HIS "HUMAN GOODNESS" WAS ACTUALLY GARBAGE -- RUBBISH. HE SAID THAT EVERYTHING ON EARTH - MONEY, FAME, HONOUR - INCLUDING HUMAN RIGHTEOUSNESS, WAS ACTUALLY GARBAGE AND RUBBISH COMPARED TO CHRIST.



THE STREETS OF HEAVEN ARE PAVED WITH GOLD. GOLD IS UNDER OUR FEET IN HEAVEN. THAT IS WHERE MONEY SHOULD BE FOR EVERY TRUE SERVANT OF THE LORD ON EARTH TOO. ON EARTH, THEY PUT GOLD ON THEIR HEADS. IF YOU CAN PUT GOLD UNDER YOUR FEET NOW, THEN YOU ARE READY FOR HEAVEN.



THEN WE SEE HIS EARNEST DESIRE WAS TO KNOW CHRIST MORE, TO KNOW MORE OF THE POWER OF HIS RESURRECTION AND MORE OF THE FELLOWSHIP OF HIS SUFFERINGS (3:10).



HE GOES ON TO SAY THAT HE HAD NOT YET REACHED THE PERFECTION OF CHRIST (3:12). BECOMING TOTALLY LIKE CHRIST IS THE TOP OF THE MOUNTAIN, WHICH WILL HAPPEN ONLY WHEN CHRIST RETURNS. EVERY DAY WE MUST CLIMB A LITTLE HIGHER TOWARDS THAT PEAK, KEEPING OUR CONSCIENCE CLEAR WITH GOD AND MEN. THUS WE PRESS ON TO PERFECTION.



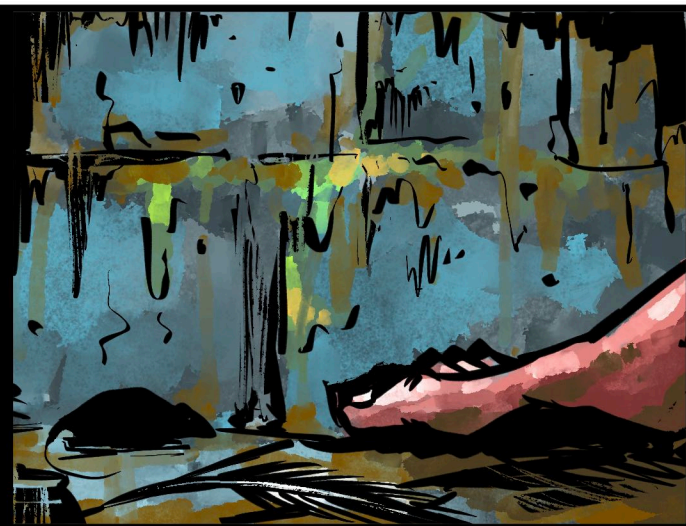
BUT MOST CHRISTIANS DO NOT WALK LIKE THIS. INSTEAD, THEY ARE ENEMIES OF THE CROSS OF CHRIST (VERSE 18). THEIR GOD IS THEIR STOMACH (VERSE 19).







IN 4:4, THE HOLY SPIRIT URGES US, "REJOICE IN THE LORD ALWAYS" -- NOT SOMETIMES OR EVEN MOST OF THE TIME, BUT ALL THE TIME. BY THE GRACE OF GOD IT IS POSSIBLE.



IF WE HAVE NOT SEEN EVERYTHING IN THE WORLD AS GARBAGE, OUTSIDE OF CHRIST -- THEN IT IS INDEED IMPOSSIBLE TO REJOICE ALWAYS! PAUL WAS A PRISONER IN A ROTTEN DUNGEON OF A PRISON IN ROME WHEN HE WROTE THOSE WORDS.



THEN PAUL SAYS ONE MORE CHALLENGING THING: "BE ANXIOUS ABOUT NOTHING" (4:6). ANXIETY COMES SO EASILY TO ALL OF US.

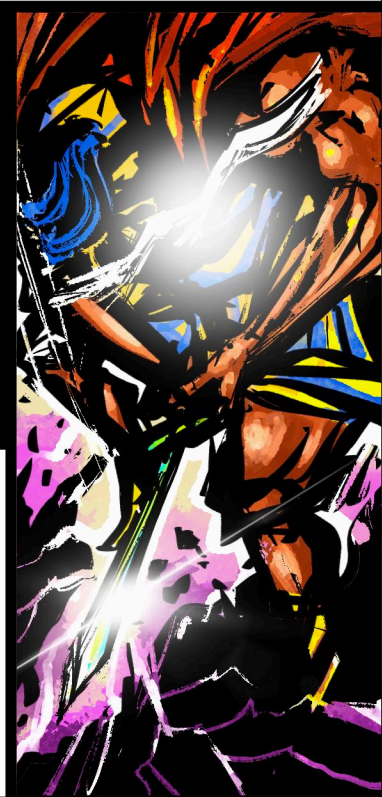


WE SHOULD PRESS ON, SO THAT OUR FAITH AND CONFIDENCE IN GOD GROWS, SO THAT WHENEVER WE ARE ANXIOUS ABOUT ANYTHING, WE TAKE IT TO THE LORD IN PRAYER WITH THANKSGIVING.



WE ARE EXHORTED FURTHER TO ALWAYS SET YOUR MINDS ON THE THINGS THAT ARE EXCELLENT (4:8).

PAUL THEN TELLS US THAT IN HIS OWN LIFE HE HAS LEARN'T THE SECRET OF BEING CONTENT WITH MUCH OR LITTLE, WHATEVER GOD, IN HIS WISDOM, CHOSE TO GIVE HIM (4:11, 12).



PAUL THEN MAKES THIS TRIUMPHANT DECLARATION: "I CAN DO ALL THINGS THROUGH CHRIST WHO STRENGTHENS ME" (4:13).



TO THIS GENEROUS CHURCH, PAUL SAYS, "MY GOD WILL SUPPLY ALL YOUR NEEDS ACCORDING TO HIS RICHES IN GLORY THROUGH CHRIST JESUS" (4:19). GOD WILL SUPPLY US WITH EVERYTHING THAT WE NEED TO OVERCOME SATAN AND TO LIVE A GODLY LIFE