Satan must have rejoiced the day Paul was arrested, thinking the apostle’s ministry would be stalled and possibly stopped. Little did the enemy realize the positive impact Paul's imprisonment would have on the spread of the gospel. Paul would become an even more dangerous threat to the kingdom of darkness as he spent unending hours in prayer storming the enemy’s camp with prayer. Paul’s imprisonment emboldened the timid to speak up, forced the naysayers to shut up and caused the blood-bought church of the redeemed to stand up!

Satan’s most powerful tool in his arsenal may very well be dissension among the body of Christ. The church is the living testimony of the power of Christ to change lives. In our lost state, we walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air. We indulged the lusts of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest (See Ephesians 2:1-3). God did not abandon us in our sinful condition. God was rich in mercy and sent His only begotten Son to redeem us from our lost state, remove us from the enemy’s camp, and restore our fellowship with the Father. Colossians 1:13 says, Christ rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son.

When we meet God on His terms of faith and repentance, we are gloriously saved by grace. No longer pawns of Satan’s devious deception, we are eternally secure, sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise. Since Satan cannot recapture our souls once we have been translated into the kingdom of light, he settles for stealing our testimony. Appealing to the lust of our flesh, he subtly locates an unguarded weakness and exploits it for his advantage. To battle the onslaught of the enemy, Paul set forth the example of Jesus Christ.

I. A Crucified Life-Philippians 2:1-4

While the Philippian church was progressively making forward progress as a body, Paul was well aware of some internal squabbles among the membership. Satan had slipped in and sown seeds of discord. Dissension, allowed to proceed unchecked in the body of Christ, can quickly become disastrous. Our united representation of Christ to the lost world causes those outside a personal relationship with Christ to consider the claims of the gospel. When the enemy is allowed to produce disharmony in an individual believer, it will give way to dissension among the body. If the spread of dissension is not arrested, it caves to division among the body of Christ – the earthly representation of Christ. The end result is that the lost world sneers at the testimony of the church.

Make my joy complete by being of the same mind, the apostle pleaded (Phil. 2:1). Paul had learned the secret of joy unspeakable and full of glory (1 Peter 1:8). The discord in the Philippian church was hitting a sour note in Paul’s sympathy of joy. Paul’s spirit was
disturbed within him. The believers were cheapening the value of their redemption, bringing disgrace upon the church, and damaging the testimony of Christ. Paul was not intent on patching up a spat or reconciling a rift in the fellowship. Instead he called the congregation to unity in the Lord. Being unselfish in attitude and action cuts to the heart of our human nature. It means we are willing to forego our own comfort, our own personal preferences, our own schedule, and our own desires to benefit another. In order to do so, the self-life must be crucified and the Christ-life demonstrated. Be likeminded, Paul commanded. Be Christ-centered rather than self-centered. Make up your mind!

II. A Renewed Mind-Philippians 2:5-8
In the context of selfless living, Paul illustrates his point in the person of Christ Jesus. Christ embodies unselfishness and a meek spirit. Jesus spoke of Himself saying, “I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light” (Matt. 11:29-30). It was His attitude of unselfishness that launched Him from the glories of heaven to a humble birth in Bethlehem and propelled Him to the cross of Calvary. Paul wrote, For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich (2 Cor. 8:9).

Totally yielded to the Father’s purpose and plan, Christ laid aside the splendor of heaven, the worship and adoration of the angelic host, the unveiled presence of God, and humbly clothed His deity with the humanity of His fallen creation, yet without sin. He willingly came to earth, exchanging glories of heaven for the agonies of earth. Christ emptied Himself of His deity and took the form of a bondservant in the likeness of men. He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on the cross (See Phil. 2:5-8). Jesus Christ accepted the most painful and humiliating death by crucifixion in order to redeem lost humanity. Christ freely laid down His life. In John 10:17-18 Jesus says, For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it up again. No one has taken (My life) away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down and I have authority to take is up again. Paul wrote, For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above very name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow (Phil. 2:9-10). Deity clothed in humanity. Humble. Obedient. Holy. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus (Phil. 2:5) by renewing your mind with the in-depth study of the Word of God. Make up your mind!

III. A Mature Faith-Philippians 2:9-13
Paul urged the congregation to pursue a mature faith, not in his presence only, but also in his absence. An immature believer requires constant supervision and cannot serve up the meat of the Word without relying on the guidance of another. Rather than learning how to study independently and apply the truth of the Word, the immature Christian leaves the hard work to the maturing believer with no intention of learning the disciplines of the Christian life. Paul wrote, Work out your salvation. Co-operate with His purpose and plan. Sanctification is a slow process, which requires work – reading, memorizing, meditating, praying, studying to show yourself approved. Make up your mind the things of the Lord. And that, beloved is exactly what produces Joy in the Journey!