



# Growing in our Readiness, Service and Maturity

Philippians 3:7-4:1  
Bob Stone

## Listening Guide

**INTRODUCTION:** We're in a real spiritual war; therefore, we need to GROW in our spiritual maturity, readiness and conditioning. **Why do we need to be reminded of this so often?** For two reasons:

A. **First**, we need to be reminded we're in a real spiritual war, a spiritual contest because we **forget, underestimate** Satan and even **UNDERESTIMATE** our Lord!

If we're spiritually aware today, we should see evidence of spiritual conflict everywhere. Satan is active in our culture in an undercover and overt way. The good news is our Lord is in opposition, and winning millions to Himself.

- **How should we respond to this conflict/opposition?**
- **Should we fear our opponent?** (See 1 Cor. 9:24-27; 1 John 4:4; Rom. 8:37-39.)

B. **Second**, we need to be reminded of our spiritual war so we'll develop a strategy to keep us from Satan's evil tactics, and to be victorious in our battle/service.

- **What will keep us from attaining the prize (as in a race/contest)?**
- **What will keep us from winning the spiritual conflict (as in a war/conflict)?**

Paul seems to anticipate that question, so he gives the Philippian **"team/troops"** a **fantastic pep talk. Consider him a coach, or a general!**

- Paul's challenge can be summarized with 7 paraphrased statements.
- It's a **"Seven Point Strategy"** from a very familiar passage—Phil. 3:7-4:1.

I. **Let's not be satisfied with our present level of spiritual maturity/readiness/service or conditioning**—Phil. 3:12,14-15a. 12] *Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on...*14] *I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.* 15] *All of us who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you.* 16] *Only let us live up to what we have already attained.*

**What does that say to us?**

II. **Let's be prepared to learn directly from the Lord**—v. 15b. How will we do that?

- Personal suffering—2 Cor. 12:7-10
- Godly examples—1 Cor. 11:1; 2 Thess. 3:7-8
- Inner witness of the Spirit—John 10:27; 14:26; 1 John 4:1
- Scripture—2 Tim. 3:15b-17 (if not in Scripture, we're assuring defeat/no service)!

- III. **Let's not lose any of the spiritual growth we've gained; let's live up to what we know and have experienced**—v. 16. How can we lose gains?
- **Legalism**—rules/perspective/beliefs that replace Scripture/elaborate on Scripture
  - **Inactivity**—we'll lose what we don't use (apathy)
  - **Temptation**—relationships, materialism, bitterness
  - **Other ways might be**—arrogance, not listening, not appreciating God's blessing and provision, etc.
- IV. **Let's listen to and follow good leaders, coaches, soldiers and model players.** v. 17: *"Join with others in following my example...and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you."* (*"...keep your eyes on those who live as we do."*)
- A. What does that mean, specifically?**
- Run with the whole team/join with the troops. v. 17a—*"Join with others..."*
  - Follow Paul's example. v. 17b—*"...following my example..."* (Also Phil. 3:7; 1:2,8.)
  - Follow other examples. v. 17c—*"...those who live according to the pattern we gave you."* (See 2:19-30: Timothy - v. 19; Epaphroditus - v. 25; and others.)
- B. What are we to follow and notice in these people?**  
**The Summary:**
- Spirituality is following the pattern that Paul/Jesus set—v. 17.
  - Spirituality is a matter of seeking to know God above all else—Phil. 3:7-11.
  - Spirituality isn't a matter of perfection; it's dependency (on the Spirit, others, Scripture) and being a team player—vv. 12-13.
  - Spirituality is correcting our weaknesses, while developing a game plan to overcome the enemy's strategy.
- V. **Let's watch out for the opponents of our COACH/TEAM who lead us away from Christ.** vv. 18-19—*"...many live as enemies of the cross of Christ."*
- We aren't the only team in the race/game/war.
  - Also, running is often 80% mental and 20% physical. It makes a big difference what we think about! (The enemy thinks—v. 19; we think—v. 20; Matt. 6:20.)
- VI. **Let's focus on The One who will guide us through the race and bring us to ultimate victory (heaven)**—vv. 20-21.
- Where will our final citizenship be?
  - Does our Savior (Coach/Commander) have the power to see us through to the final transformation? vv. 20-21
- VII. **Let's compete together and win together.** 4:1—*"Therefore, my brothers, YOU whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, that is how YOU (plural) should stand firm in the Lord, dear FRIENDS!"*
- Do we want to make our Coach (our Lord) pleased? He's pleased/joyful when we fight/run/stand firm together—4:1.
  - How do we stand firm?

## **Application Questions**

*Let's Press on and Win—Phil. 3:7-4:1*

### **Application Activities**

- A. Develop your own conditioning plan: schedule, exercises, equipment (e.g., time of the day, spiritual health habits, reading the Bible, memorizing, journaling, SOAP, etc.).
- B. Develop offensive and defensive strategies against our enemy/opponent, e.g., Scriptures and prayers to use in time of attack or to advance.

Memorize: 1 Cor. 9:24-27; 1 John 4:4; Rom. 8:37-39.

### **Application Questions for small group or personal application**

- A. Which of the 7 statements did you need to hear? Why?
- B. How do you usually hear from the Lord? What safeguards do you follow to make sure what you're hearing is the Lord and not the enemy (or bad pizza)?
- C. Who has been an example to you of someone who is a real and authentic Christ follower? (Someone who has strengths and weaknesses, yet consistently follows/grows in the Lord.)
- D. How might Paul's words in this passage help someone who is stressed and/or tempted in their life right now?
- E. How do you intend to keep Jesus at the center of your life, be your example, and your chief pursuit? How will simplicity in our lives; silence at regular intervals; solitude for moments of deep prayer; reflection on the Word; and a new surrender to the Holy Spirit help us?
- F. How do you respond to this statement: Spirituality isn't a matter of perfection, it's a matter of dependency (dependency on the Spirit of God, others, Scripture)?
- G. What steps do you need to take in a difficult situation before you? (marriage, work, church, relationships, other)
- H. Where do you need to run better so that others may win?

On Purpose

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