

New Year Message – Osaka International Church – Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2016.

Reading – Philippians Chapter 3. Title: “The Spiritual Mind”

Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. For me to write the same things to you *is* not tedious, but for you *it is* safe. <sup>2</sup> Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation! <sup>3</sup> For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh, <sup>4</sup> though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: <sup>5</sup> circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, *of* the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee;

<sup>6</sup> concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. <sup>7</sup> But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. <sup>8</sup> Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ <sup>9</sup> and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which *is* from the law, but that which *is* through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith;

<sup>10</sup> that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, <sup>11</sup> if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. <sup>12</sup> Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. <sup>13</sup> Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing *I do*, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead,

<sup>14</sup> I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. <sup>15</sup> Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you.

<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, to *the degree* that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind. <sup>17</sup> Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. <sup>18</sup> For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, *that they are* the enemies of the cross of Christ:

<sup>19</sup> whose end *is* destruction, whose god *is their* belly, and *whose glory is* in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things. <sup>20</sup> For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>21</sup> who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.

### Introduction

This is the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of 2016. Millions of Japanese people have visited temples and shrines in the last few days in order to pray for a good New Year.

Some have prayed for good health, others have prayed for a marriage partner, some have prayed for success for their business. Most of these people are very sincere, some are quite religious. They are hoping that their religion will help them in 2016.

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As we will discover from the Bible in a moment, religion will not help us in our eternal destiny, whatever that religion might be.

It is not Religion in 2016 that will help us through a New Year, but a relationship with our creator God. God has made this personal relationship possible through Jesus.

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Although it is not wrong to pray for positive things to come into our life in 2016, we must be careful not to be distracted by them or by what the world has to offer us.

If we get too involved in the things of this world then we will lose the JOY and PEACE that JESUS CHRIST can give us. The Joy and Peace that Jesus Christ can give us in 2016 is far greater than anything that this world has to offer.

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In a moment we will look at Philippians Chapter 3. However before this I would like to introduce to you one of the key themes of the book. One of the key themes in Philippians is JOY. It is mentioned 19 times in these four chapters.

If we want to experience JOY during 2016 then we would do well to read over this letter a number of times until it sinks deep into our soul.

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Happiness is dependent upon our outward circumstances, but Joy is dependent on the condition our heart as it relates to our creator God. If we are in a good relationship with our creator God, then we will experience Joy during 2016, even if our outward circumstances are not good. We may have very little money or experience bad health, but a good relationship with God will bring Joy to hearts in spite of our circumstances.

Therefore I wish you a Joyful New Year.

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As we read through Philippians we will also notice how many times Paul talks about remembering and thinking.

If we had to summarize the book of Philippians we might well say this;

“The Christ-like mind that brings Christian joy.”

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In each chapter Paul describes the kind of mind Christians need to have if they are to enjoy the Peace and the Joy of Jesus Christ.

Our thoughts have a great influence on our lives and wrong thinking leads to wrong living.

If we are to enjoy the peace and joy of Jesus Christ during this New Year then we need to have the correct mind set. In the chapter that we will focus upon today the challenge is to have a “Spiritual Mind”.

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Basically a spiritual mind is a mind that thinks God’s thoughts and a mind that is directed towards God’s goals.

If we are going to have a year that is blessed by God then we will need to focus upon the mind of God as revealed in the Bible and move towards the goals that God has set before us.

In Chapter 3 of Philippians Paul is revealing to the Church what is in his mind.

Paul is focusing upon his PAST, his PRESENT and his FUTURE. We would benefit this year if we could learnt something from what Paul is teaching to the Church in Philippi.

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1. Salvation v. 1-11. ( A Christians Past)

In v. 1-11 Paul warns his readers to beware of “Religion”. He tells his readers that he was once the perfect religious person. He kept the Jewish Law and obey all the outward observance of the Jewish Religion.

Paul was very sincere in the past about his religion, but he was sincerely wrong to think that his religion would provide a way to Heaven when he died.

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In v. 7- 9 Paul explains that since he discovered Jesus Christ, he realized how wrong and worthless his religion was.

Paul realized that his "Religion" was about having his own righteousness, by obeying the Jewish Law. However he later discovered that the only righteousness that would get him to heaven was the righteousness that came through faith in Jesus Christ.

Paul said that his relationship with Jesus Christ meant so much to him that even the religion that he had in the past he counted as dung and rubbish compared to what he now had.

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As we all look forward to what is going to happen in 2016, may our minds always be focused upon the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ towards us.

None of us deserve this wonderful Salvation that our creator God has provided for us through Jesus Christ. It is a gift from God, none of us deserve it, and none of us can earn it. On top of all this, none can take away God's gift to us in Jesus Christ.

In Ephesians 1: v. 13-14 we are told that the Holy Spirit that we receive when we believe in Jesus Christ as our own personal savior is the guarantee of our inheritance to come.

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So if you want a Joyful New Year in 2016 then you need to have a personal relationship with your creator owner, the God of the Bible.

God created us for a personal relationship. However He is a 100% Holy God who can't stand sin and must punish sin. In His love and mercy He provided a way to save us without compromising His Holiness.

God did this by sending His only Son Jesus Christ to take the punishment for our sin.

When we believe in Jesus and what He did, we are set free from the punishment of our sin.

As we go through 2016 make sure that your mind is focused upon God's love and grace through Jesus Christ.

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## 2. Sanctification v. 12-16 – The Present Life.

We now move on to v. 12-16 where Paul is concerned with his present situation.

In the last section Paul was like a spiritual accountant talking about his gains and losses. He is now like a "Runner" pressing towards the finishing line in order to get his reward.

The illustration of a runner in a race is a favorite of Paul's. He uses it many times in the New Testament. (1 Corinthians 9: v. 25-27, 1 Thess. 2: v. 19-20)

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The Olympic Runners in ancient Greece had to be citizens of the nation that they represented. They also had to be free men and not slaves. At that time in history 40% of the population of men were slaves.

The Non- Christian is a slave to sin, however a Christian is a citizen of heaven. (3:v. 20)

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Every Christian is given a special place on the race track that is taking them to the finishing line which is heaven. However it is not a race in physical terms but a race in spiritual terms. It is about GROWTH and PROGRESS in the Christian life.

As we look forward to 2016 we need to have a mind -set that is open to growth and progress in our Christian life.

Even as a Pastor I have to be growing and progressing in my spiritual life.

Growth as a Christian can often be painful but it is always beneficial.

We never grow as a Christian in the Happy Times, but we will grow in the difficult times if we let God's Holy Spirit work through us to strengthen our faith.

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3. Glorification – The Future Life. – v. 17-21.

Paul now tells us in v. 17-21 to set our minds upon "Heavenly things".

Paul tells us that he was weeping over professing Christians whose lives were bearing the fruit of worldly mindedness. They were focusing upon the things of the world. Paul calls these people the enemies of the cross – v. 18.

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Paul says 3 things about these people.

1. They only think of what the world has to offer.
2. They live for the flesh, god is their stomach.
3. Their end is destruction.

When we become a Christian, regardless of our nationality, we become a citizen of heaven.

Our bodies will be transformed later, but we have our entry visa to heaven.

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During 2016 let us not be so wrapped up in the present that we forget about the future.

Every Christian has a glorious future. The Bible has more to say to us about what will not be in heaven that what will be in heaven.

Let us turn to Revelation 21: v. 3-4. (Read these verses in the N.K. J.)

<sup>3</sup> And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them *and be* their God. <sup>4</sup> And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."

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It is wonderful to know that there will be no more death or suffering in heaven and that God will make all things new.

In 2016 we will live in a world with much pain and suffering, but in the future God will provide a secure place for all of those who love Him through Jesus Christ.

Make sure that you are looking forward to heaven in 2016 by trusting in Jesus this year and not RELIGION.

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