"The Lord turns man to dust and sayest, Return, ye children of men. For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night."
of "dogs" who are factious and teach erring doctrines that they may gain a following for themselves (see Philippians 3:2). All must be aware that the "enemies of the cross" of Christ were real (Philippians 3:18).

Paul equips the saints at Philippi with instructions that would help them through these most difficult days. First, the Philippian's attitude toward this life must be correct. When I view my immediate life as nothing, in comparison to eternity, then I too will say, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21). Whether one liked to hear it or not, death was a reality for the saints of God in these days (see Philippians 2:30). Paul sets the example of a proper outlook to life and persecution saying, "Yea, and if I am offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all" (Philippians 2:17).

Secondly, Paul encourages the Philippians to look to the examples of himself and Christ to make it through these discouraging times. Jesus gave up the glories of heaven to come to this lowly earth and suffer on behalf of others (Philippians 2:1-11). Surely the Philippians can have the mind of Christ and put aside their own interest to help each other in these desperate times. Paul also sets an example for the Philippians to handle their persecution (see Philippians 3:17; 4:9). Paul had, "learned in whatsoever state I am therein to be content" (Philippians 4:11-13). Let the persecutors bring their worst! Paul's faith would not budge and neither should ours.

Thirdly, Paul reminds the Philippians of a future day when their bodies will be fashioned anew and they gain their citizenship in heaven (see Philippians 3:19-21). Until that day they must continue to press through the trials and tribulation that come with Christian sanctification. Paul, again, uses himself as an example. Paul writes, "Brethren, I count not myself yet to have laid hold: but one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before, I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:13-14). What other option do we have? The mature of mind will keep pressing and never ever give up (Philippians 3:15).

While walking through this life the Christian must continue forward. We must "let our manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ" (Philippians 1:27) and "work out our own salvation with fear and trembling" (Philippians 2:12). Rather than dwelling on so much discouragement let us think on things that are true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, of a good report, virtue, and praise" (Philippians 4:8). The tables of fortune would soon turn for the Philippians in heaven. Though the enemies of the cross of Christ may have the immediate upper hand God will have the final words in judgment.

I. Identity of Mercy

A. The word "merciful" (Greek eleemon) means “compassionate (the deep feeling of sharing the suffering of another, together with the inclination to give aid or support or to show mercy)” (LS 249).

B. The American Heritage Dictionary defines merciful as, "a disposition to be kind and forgiving... forbearance" (AHD 787).

C. Mercy is part of the weightier matters of the law (Matthew 23:23).

D. To be merciful is to have wisdom from above (James 3:17).

E. The OT reveals God to be merciful (Psalms 116:5; Proverbs 12:10; Exodus 34:6). The NT reveals Jesus (Matthew 9:36; 14:14; Luke 23:34; Hebrews 2:17) and the heavenly Father to be merciful (Luke 6:36; 2 Corinthians 1:3).

F. God is merciful to man through to blood of his son Jesus (Ephesians 2:4; 1 Peter 1:3; 2:10).

II. Are you and I Merciful?

A. Are we compassionate to those in need (see Luke 10:37; James 1:27; 1 John 3:17-18).

B. Are we willing to forgive others of their sins against us (see Matthew 6:14-15; Luke 17:3-4).

C. Are we patient and forbearing with people (Philippians 4:5).

III. God's Mercy will eventually run Out

A. The word mercy sometimes infers that a wrong has been committed yet the penalty is withheld. God is not ever merciful with people.

B. James said, "For judgment is without mercy to him that hath showed no mercy: mercy glories against judgment" (James 2:13).

C. God's mercy ran out on the people of Israel and Judah (see Jeremiah 6:30; 7:13-14, 16). God would act without mercy upon Judah through Babylon (see Jeremiah 5:15-16; 6:23).

D. No mercy for the rich man who cried out to Abraham (Luke 16:19-25).

E. No mercy for the merciless servant at Matthew 18:21-35.

F. There will be no mercy for the faithless on the day of judgment (see Matthew 13:40-43; Romans 2:3-10; 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10; Revelation 20:15).

Conclusion:

Merciful people are happy because they know that they shall receive mercy from God. To be merciful to others I must know that I need mercy due to my needs and sins. To be merciful to others is the ability of putting one's own self in the shoes of others. To be merciful to people who sin against us is to understand one's own need of mercy from God. Merciful people are good people!