



I press on  
toward the goal to  
win the prize for  
which God has  
called me  
heavenward  
in Christ  
Jesus.

Philippians 3:14

Following the upward call through Philippians ...

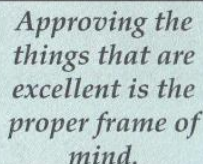
## Approving the Excellent

A mind is a terrible thing to waste. What if that mind is pulled into the realm of darkness and destruction? What if that mind is enticed into the negative and nonproductive? The appeal that God makes to man across the darkened chasm created by man's sin is to his mind; the continued pleadings of the scripture to the saints are reasoned presentations to their minds. Satan likewise works on the minds of men and of believers. "And even if our gospel is veiled," wrote Paul to the Corinthian brethren, "it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the

minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God" (2 Corinthians 4:3,4). The battle is for the mind, because it is through the mind that the heart of man is changed.

- **Things that are excellent** — The apostle Paul, then, was desiring that the brethren in Philippi "abound still more and more in real knowledge and discernment, so that you may approve the things that are excellent" (Philippians 1:9,10). The theme of *excellence* runs through this epistle, calling these precious saints to higher elevations. But to know what really is excellent is challenging; the man of flesh has no appreciation for the spiritual excellencies which are open to the minds of those who have been enlightened by the word of God and by His Spirit. It takes what the apostle calls "real knowledge and discernment" to know what those excellent things are, and also to be able to give the appropriate approval. Most of mankind, for example, has no real understanding or appreciation of the sacrifice of Christ or of His elevation to the ultimate High Priesthood. While many denominational people claim to understand and appreciate, they really do not. If they truly did approve of these excellent things, they would become true Christians instead of the pale counterfeits that they are.
- **Sincere and blameless** — When the apostle Paul gets on a roll, he really strings together awesome series of majestic and sweeping concepts. He starts this section by laying a foundation of love as the base for his points, then moves on to knowledge and discernment, and talks about approving the things that are excellent. All this, he says, is "in order [that the saints] be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ" (Philippians 1:10). The opposite of sincere is *fake*. There are many who have their own agendas, who are attempting to use Christ and His church for their own personal purposes. While they often give the appearance of being sincere, over time their fruit will show to the discerning. A sincere saint has uncontaminated motives, and earnestly desires to know and understand God. "The goal of our instruction," stated the apostle in another place, "is love from a pure heart and good conscience and a sincere faith" (1 Timothy 1:5). The insincere will surely perish. The goal, in terms of character, is for the followers of Christ to be *blameless*. Every motive, every action is to be for Jesus' purposes.
- **Jesus' coming** — Jesus is coming back, but no one knows that day. His own words were "be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming" (Matthew 24:42). He followed that point with some parables to let the saints know that they may have to endure for long periods of time from their perspective, as in the case of five foolish bridesmaids who did not have enough oil in their lamps for the long haul. If the saint begins to falter, if he loses his focus, he will fall into the trap of the slave who Jesus describes in these words: "But if that evil slave says in his heart, 'My master is not coming for a long time ...'" (Matthew 24:48). The sincere and blameless hold on until Jesus comes.

Christians are thus being exhorted to approve the things that are excellent; that frame of mind will result in the saint's being sincere and blameless until the day of Jesus' return!!



Approving the  
things that are  
excellent is the  
proper frame of  
mind.

JAY WILSON