

PHILIPPIANS

INTRODUCTION

The city of Philippi:

- (a) The pre-Christian history of this place dates back to Phillip II of Macedon (382-336 B. C.) father of Alexander the great.

The location of the place figured prominently in its early history. Phillip II, the first undisputed master of ancient Macedonia, decided to expand his kingdom and needed the financial muscle to do it. The gold mines of Mount Pangaeus would provide it.

Therefore, he took over a very ancient village on the mountain's slopes, Krenides (meaning springs), named it Philippi, made a city of it and established himself as undisputed owner of the vast wealth of the gold mines of Pangaeus which yielded over one thousand talents of gold a year, really an incredibly large sum of money.

Philip soon had the power to take the world of his day, a project he was not permitted to finish, due to his murder in 336 B. C.; but he left the twin instruments of the military and the gold by which his son Alexander the Great would accomplish his conquest of the entire world.

In 42 B. C., the decisive battle between the imperialists Octavius and Anthony and the supporters of the republic, Cassius and Brutus, took place near Philippi, resulting in the establishing of the empire and elevation of Octavius as Caesar Augustus by the Roman senate some 15 years later. It was this battle which focused the attention of Augustus upon Philippi, leading to his making it a Roman colony, settling some of his retired soldiers upon the surrounding land, and lavishing Roman money upon the rebuilding and enlargement of it.

A Roman colony in those times was a fortunate city, subsidized by the imperial treasury, honored with all kinds of privileges, exemption from taxes, freedom from the regulations of the provincial governors and political autonomy with regard to an extensive list of their personal affairs.

The local rulers took titles like the great lords in Rome; the people wore Roman costumes; theaters and stadiums, built after Roman models, featured the same kind of entertainment seen in the capital.

- (b) In the times when Paul, Luke, Timothy, and Silas entered Philippi with the gospel (50 A.D.), a hundred years of imperial patronage had

endowed Philippi with an importance consistent with its strategic location as a mighty bastion of Roman power in Macedonia.

Philippi dominated the trade routes, and was a sectional headquarters of the famed Roman road, the Egnatian Way, the great 500-mile long highway from the Adriatic Sea through Thrace to the Bosphorus, located some ten miles inland from the town of Neapolis (new town).

- (c) The glorious history of the Philippian church was not to be continued indefinitely. Today, the place is not inhabited and is marked by the ruins of an amphitheater and a great temple with inscriptions.

The character of the Philippians:

Due to their history, there were traces of the humble virtues which marked Rome's early history. The men were manly; the women womanly; and like the centurions so often mentioned in the New Testament, many of them with military background exhibited the stern qualities of rugged dependability, honesty, liberality and faithfulness.

Following are the characteristic qualities of the Philippians at the times of Paul's writings:

- (a) It is the least Jewish of any of the places featured in Paul's writings. It will be recalled that when Paul first preached there, no synagogue was available, indicating that there were fewer than ten Jews in Philippi. In place of it (the synagogue) there was a place of prayer by the river.
- (b) Women were very prominent in the congregation, Lydia's home being the base of operations for Paul's evangelism of the city.
- (c) The hardness and dependability of Macedonian men who were part of the Philippian church were commented upon by Hausrath, who said, "They represented the noblest and soundest part of the ancient world. They were men of sterner mold than could be found in Asia Minor." ISBE., p.2372 and Ibid., p. 2373).
- (d) Diversity marked the Philippian population. There were elements of the old pagan populations, residual elements of the Roman military, tradesmen (such as Lydia) and members of the Imperial Civil Service.
- (e) The population, as well as the converts, were derived from deeply religious stock, the religious zeal of the Philippians being attested even by the excavations in that area.

- (f) An extraordinary liberality characterized them; “Even Paul was astonished at their giving, declaring that they gave out of much affliction, that they abounded in giving, and that they were rich only in their liberality.” (2 Corinthians 8:2) “ (ISBE, p. 2373)

Founding of the church at Philippi:

A full account of this is found in Acts 16th chapter. E. M. Blaiklock, *op. cit.*, p. 42 reminded us: “It cannot be stated with certainty that Philippi saw the first preaching of Christianity in Europe.” There is the possibility that Christ was preached in Rome before Paul’s arrival at Philippi. Philippi is definitely the first in Europe of which we have so full and vivid an account.

William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary, Philippians*, p. 14 wrote: “The Codex Bezae suggests that the authorities had seen a connection between the earthquake and the missionaries, and that in their fear they had arrived at the conclusion that Paul and Silas were what they claimed to be.”

Authorship and canonicity of Philippians:

John A. Knight, *Beacon Bible Commentary, Vol. I, Philippians*, p. 281 wrote: “The Pauline authorship of Philippians has not been seriously questioned by reputable scholars.”

Answers to criticisms:

- (a) The mention of “elders and deacons” in 1:1 is alleged as proof of a later first century date of the epistle, but such allegations are founded in scholarly ignorance of the truth that Paul ordained elders in every church he planted on the first missionary journey (Acts 14:23), and that long before that the elders were governing the congregation in Jerusalem (Acts 11:30). The critical notion that the development of church organization was a later first-century development is rejected.
- (b) The epistle shows traces of Gnosticism (2:5-8); but as William Hendriksen, *op. cit.*, p. 31 said: “Such a weird interpretation contradicts the context.”
- (c) The epistle is a post-Pauline attempt to reconcile Jewish-Christian and Gentile-Christian parties, typified respectively by Euodia and Syntyche (4:2); but the context plainly reveals that both of these names apply to women who belonged to the congregation in Philippi and that neither

one of them had ever headed a party opposed to Paul, being on the contrary “laborers together“ with him!

Date and occasion of writing:

B. C. Caffin, op. cit., p. i. made the date to be “thirty years after the ascension and ten years later after the founding of the Philippian congregation,” that is, in the year 60 A. D. The view accepted in this series was ably expressed by H. A. A. Kennedy, op. cit., 406 who wrote: “In all likelihood, Philippians as written towards the close of the year 61.”

Philippians is one of the four prison epistles: Philippians, Colossians, Philemon and Ephesians.

Theological value of Philippians:

Despite the truth of this epistle being in the form of a somewhat rambling and informal personal letter, it has some of the profoundest teaching of Holy Scripture.

They were practical, everyday doctrines appealed to here as the basis of Paul’s exhortations.

Special features of Philippians:

The emphasis upon joy, the frequent use of “in Christ” or its equivalent, and the oft-repeated compound name of Lord Jesus Christ must be mentioned as special features.

Why study Philippians?

There are many reasons for studying all of God’s word; but William Hendriksen, op. cit., p. 3 has an admonition on this question which richly deserves to be remembered and repeated:

- (1) It reveals the secret of true happiness; and how this secret may be obtained.
- (2) It reveals the man who had learned this secret. Philippians is one of the most personal of all Paul’s letters.
- (3) It reveals the Christ who taught Paul this secret. Thus, there was in this letter revealed the true secret of one who could say: “I’VE FOUND IT!”

CHAPTER 1

This marvelous epistle begins, with a salutation followed by thanksgiving and supplications. Philippians is a personal letter to beloved friends; and it runs along in the same somewhat rambling fashion of any personal letter. Nevertheless, some of Paul's profoundest teaching is presented in this priceless little letter.

Verse 1

"Paul . . ." is the sole author of the epistle, the name of Timothy who was with him at the time being added as a courtesy.

"Timothy . . ." was deeply interested in the Philippians, having been with Paul when their congregation was established. (Acts 16:11-40)

"Bond-servants of Christ Jesus . . ." The word rendered "servants" here is actually "slaves;" but the sinister connotations of that word make the other rendering preferable. Paul's true authority as an apostle was fully known and recognized in Philippi. Paul did not here distinguish between himself as an apostle and Timothy as a brother, but actually writes: "Paul and Timothy servants of Christ Jesus."

"To all the saints . . . in Philippi . . ." William Barclay, *The Letters to the Philippians, Colossians and Thessalonians*, p.10 said: "Saint is a misleading quotation." Robert H. Monroe, *op. cit.*, p.756 in the New Testament usage of the word; "it does not designate any high level of ethical achievement, but persons who in Christ have been set apart unto the new life." Thus it indicates the goals, rather than attainments of Christians.

It is clear enough that Paul used "saints" as a designation for all Christians, and that it denoted living members of the body of Christ.

"All . . ." This word as found here attests the "beautiful spirit of unity," at Philippi.

"Including the overseers and deacons . . ." Overseers or elders were organized on the very first missionary tour Paul made. (Acts 14:23)

James Macknight, *Apostolic Epistles with Commentary*, p. 402 wrote that most of Paul's letters were addressed to the Christians, not to their officers, in order to prevent: "The elders and deacons from imagining that the apostolic writings were their property, and that it belonged to them to communicate what part of the writings to the people, that they saws fit."

"Bishops . . ." this term is synonymous with elders and shepherds. J. B. Lightfoot, Paul's Epistle to the Philippians p. 95, 98, wrote: "It is an act now recognized by theologians of all shades of opinion that in the New Testament the same officer in the church is indifferently called bishop (overseer) or presbyter (elder) . . . the one a term of dignity, the other of age."

There are six (perhaps seven) New Testament synonyms for the title that belonged to this New Testament office.

Bishop (translated overseer).

Presbyter (translated elder).

Pastor (translated shepherd).

Steward (Titus 1:7).

There was a plurality of bishops in Philippi, demonstrating the fact that no such thing as the "metropolitan bishop" of later ages was evident here when Paul wrote these lines.

As for the reason why Paul elected to mention these congregational officers in this letter, it was probably connected with the gift of money which he had received from that church, a gift which, in all probability, was suggested, administered and dispatched by the elders and deacons making it very appropriate that they would have been greeted in this salutation.

"Deacons . . ." These officers are not mentioned elsewhere in the New Testament, except in "first" Timothy 3:8, 12ff. Note: The word from which this is rendered is also translated "servant" or "minister" in the New Testament.

Verse 2

Frequent comments on this characteristic Pauline greeting have been made in this series of commentaries. Scholars are inclined to make a big thing out of the order of "grace" and "peace" as they appear in most of Paul's greetings. James Montgomery Boice, Philippians, p. 32 said: "The final point is this: grace comes before peace . . . In God's order of things God's hand is always there before any spiritual blessing."

Verses 3-5

Significant in this apostolic prayer is the absence from it of any list of things Paul needed to receive from God and the predominance of those things for

which Paul felt the need of giving thanks to God! Paul's prayers were more like a list of things he had already received and for which thanksgiving was offered.

"With joy . . ." Joy is the key word of Philippians. William Barclay, op. cit., p. 13 has given a beautiful outline of the joy Paul communicated in this loving letter:

CHRISTIAN JOY INCLUDES:

The joy of prayer. (1:4)

The joy that Jesus Christ is preached. (1:18)

The joy of faith. (1:25)

The joy of seeing Christians in fellowship together. (2:2)

The joy of suffering for Christ. (2:17)

The joy of news of a loved one. (2:28)

The joy of Christian hospitality. (2:29)

The joy of the man who has been baptized into Christ. (3:1; 4:1)

The joy of the man who has won one soul for the Lord. (4:1)

The joy inherent in every gift. (4:10) (Note: This being not in regard merely to its value but to the fact of another's caring.)

Christian joy is an emotion unspeakably higher than that which may be occasioned by mirth, pleasure, fun, hilarity, gladness, laughter, delight, and the whole family of related emotions unworthy to be compared to Christian joy. In verses 3-5, Paul's words seem to be more than usually earnest and impassioned.

"For your fellowship (participation) . . ." James Montgomery Boice, op. cit., p. 36 has a priceless note on it thus: "Fellowship means more than a sharing of something, like the fellowship of bank robbers dividing the loot. It means a sharing in something, participating in something greater than the people involved and more lasting than the activity of any given moment . . . it means being caught up in a communion created by God!"

"You all . . ." is the plural of you, there being no other definite plural of this word in the English language.

"From the first day until now . . ." This refers to the first day of Paul's preaching in Philippi. (Act 16:13) Amazingly, this church had contributed financially to Paul's support throughout their acquaintance with the apostle. All

men should take this lesson to heart. The true extent of one's love of the Lord is measured by "the amount of sacrifice he is prepared to make to help in the progress of the gospel." (R. P. Martin, *The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, Philippians*, p, 61.)

William Hendriksen, *op. cit.*, p. 52 wrote: "The characteristics of that "fellowship" enjoyed by those "in Christ" revealed fellowship as a fellowship of grace, of faith, in prayer and thanksgiving, of believers with each other, in love one for another, helping each other, of contributing to each other's needs, of helping promote the gospel, of separation from the world, and of that eternal of believers struggling side by side against a common foe."

Verse 6

Paul does not here refer to himself as the founder of the church at Philippi, though in a sense he was the founder. Paul, however, preferred to give the glory to God, recognizing the Father as the One who had actually converted them and brought them to a saving knowledge of the Savior.

James Montgomery *op. cit.*, p. 40 flatly declared that this is one "of the three greatest verses in the Bible," teaching the doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints. It should be noted here that Paul's confidence was not in the Philippians, but in God. It was the conduct of those Philippians up to that point which inspired Paul with confidence concerning their ultimate destiny.

It is true that God did foreordain and predestinate such souls to eternal life; but there was absolutely nothing in God's so doing to compel the Philippians to be such souls! That is not what Paul declared here; but rather his declaration is that evidence proved the Philippians to be such souls, as attested by their conduct throughout his acquaintance with them, a confidence being contingent upon the fact of the Philippians continuing to be such souls.

"Until the day of Christ Jesus . . ." This can hardly be anything except the final day of the Second Advent of Christ called in the New Testament "the judgment."

That is "the day" toward which all the world moves.

Verse 7

"I have you in my heart . . ." Paul's deep affection for the Philippians is easy to understand. Nothing had caused them to waver in their constant help of his

preaching mission. Not even Paul's imprisonment had caused them to cut off their support.

"Partakers of grace with me . . ." Robert H. Mounce, *op. cit.*, p. 758 said: "They were partakers with Paul in grace, not partakers of Paul's grace."

Verse 8

This verse is a remarkable witness of the Christian's unity with the Lord, and, in fact, his identity with the Lord.

B. C. Caffin, *Pulpit Commentary*, Vol. 20, *Philippians* p. 3, stated the implications of the verse thus: "Not I, but Christ lives in me. Paul is so united with Christ that he feels with the heart of Christ and loves with the love of Christ."

J. B. Lightfoot, *op. cit.*, p. 85 wrote: "Did I speak of having you in my heart? I should rather have said that in the heart of Jesus Christ I long for you. This is a powerful metaphor describing perfect union. The believer has no yearnings apart from his Lord; his pulse beats with the pulse of Christ; his heart throbs with the heart of Christ."

Paul's profession of love for the Philippians was genuine; and, as William Hendriksen, *op. cit.*, p.57 wrote: "It tends in no small degree to secure faith in the doctrine when the people are persuaded that they are loved by the teacher."

Verse 9

Arthur W. Pink, *Gleanings From Paul*, p. 200, made an amazing deduction from this verse to the effect that in contrast to the amazing love of the Philippians, they had an inadequate understanding of the mind of Christ, and that Paul longed for a better balance in their characters wrote: "Therefore he prayed (not as most of us need to pray—that our love may be in proportion to our light) but that their intelligence may be commensurate with their affections." He compared the Philippians to certain simple but sincere Christians of all ages whose affections exceeded their knowledge.

"That your love may abound . . ." "Love here is "agape" not eros or philo." Paul heartily approved of the abounding love of the Philippians.

Verse 10

"Approve the things that are excellent . . ." This is very similar to "distinguish things that differ" as Paul wrote in *Romans 2:18*. Paul wanted the

Philippians to grow in knowledge in order to avoid offense in living the Christian life.

“Sincere . . .” It has often been pointed out that this word is derived from two Latin words, *sin* (without) and *cere* (wax). Italian marble vendors and certain merchants of porcelain fell into the habit of hiding flaws in their merchandise by filling cracks and blemishes with a certain kind of wax; but the more reputable dealers advertised their wares as *sin cere* (without wax); and from this derived the meaning of the English word “sincere.” The true meaning of it is “without deception” or “without hypocrisy.”

“Until the day of Christ . . .” This is another reference to the judgment and final advent of Jesus our Lord.

Verse 11

Arthur W. Pink, *op. cit.*, p. 216 wrote: “This verse, along with verse 10, sets before us a powerful incentive to live hourly with the judgment seat of Christ before us, that we may not be ashamed at His coming.”

“The fruit of righteousness . . .” John A. Knight, *op. cit.*, p. 297 wrote: “This righteousness is that by Jesus Christ in contrast to that which is by the law.” (3:9)”

In order, therefore, to have fruit of that righteousness, the believer must be “in Christ,” identified with Him. (3:9)

This expression also carries with it the idea of the end of the world being a harvest (Matthew 13:39) and a reaping. (Galatians 6:4-9)

Arthur W. Pink, *op. cit.*, p. 221 wrote: “Here Paul prays upon behalf of the Philippians that: “At that day they might appear filled with all the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ. What an incentive to holiness to keep that before us.”

Verse 12

“My circumstances have turned out for the greater progress . . .” And what were those circumstances? Only a man of profoundest humility could have made this casual reference to such a list of sufferings and hardships as that which marked Paul’s life. Rather than dwelling upon them here, Paul rejoices that the net result of all he has endured has been the spread of the gospel of Christ.

Verse 13

“The whole Praetorian guard . . .” “Praetorian” as used here is reference to a body of men, and not to a place.

Paul, although blessed with some liberty, was nevertheless chained to a Roman soldier at all times, his captor being changed several times a day, and thus providing Paul with a captive audience which included, in time, practically the whole Praetorian guard, a body of troops assigned to the person of the emperor.

“Throughout the whole Praetorian guard . . .” This usually is understood as meaning the rest of the Praetorian troops; but it might have a wider application to many others who were in Rome at that time.

“In the cause of Christ . . .” This refers to the fact that the reasons for Paul’s imprisonment became generally known as unconnected with any kind of crime or misdemeanor and derived solely from his faithfulness in preaching the gospel of Christ. Such a truth would have endeared him to many in the praetorian.

Verse 14

John Wesley, *One Volume New Testament Commentary*, in loco, explained the renewed vigor and courage of “most of the brethren” as being due to the fact that: “They saw in Paul, as they had never seen before, the presence, power and sufficient grace of Christ.”

With such a notable character as Paul being permitted for at least a couple of years to continue day by day preaching of the gospel while in the custody and control of the emperor’s bodyguard very effectively spread the word abroad that it was safe to preach the word.

Under Nero, Paul would suffer martyrdom, and countless Christians would seal their faith with their blood. That Paul surely had premonitions of such a drastic change appears in this very letter (verse 20); but, for the moment, the grand apostle would glorify God, rejoicing in the opportunities to preach the word of salvation to all who would hear it.

Verse 15

The New Testament does not reveal any of the details concerning those who preached Christ of “envy and strife;” and speculation leads us nowhere. Paul’s success and influence through winning many converts in the Praetorian guards and even the palace, is impossible to determine.

Envy and strife caused trouble in those days and so do they still cause trouble now. James Montgomery Boice, *op. cit.*, p. 69 wrote: “Never in the history of the world have the opportunities been greater for the proclamation of the gospel; yet never has the believing church been more irrelevant and divided . . . the bitter fruits of strife and envy divide today’s believers.”

Verses 16-17

The factious party in view here had the purpose of making Paul’s imprisonment more distasteful and burdensome, no doubt hoping to influence his judges against him, their conduct in this being as contemptible as any that could be imagined.

“Appointed for the defense of the gospel . . .” Lightfoot identified the factious preachers of this passage as belonging to the Judaizing party, giving reasons for the difference in Paul’s rejoicing in their preaching and his scathing denunciation of the Judaizers in Galatians; but the reasons for such a change of Paul’s viewpoint are not sufficient. Therefore, it seems far more preferable to look for the source of the envy and strife against Paul in some other quarter.

B. C. Caffin, *op. cit.*, p. 5 and many others have followed Lightfoot’s lead in this, supposing that: “Their motives were not pure; they wished to make Paul feel the helplessness of imprisonment, and to increase his affliction by opposing his doctrines, and by forming a party insisting on the observance of the ceremonial law.”

Verse 18

One must agree with D. A. Hayes, *op. cit.*, p. 434 who said: “This is one of the noblest utterances of one of the greatest of men.” There is a toleration in Paul’s words here which would bless the whole world if more widely imitated.

Verse 19

John A. Knight, *op. cit.*, p. 303 preferred the translation: “turn out to my deliverance;” thus not taking away the truth that Paul was most certainly a saved person already at that the time these words were written.

Note: It is true that Christians are already “saved in Christ;” but it is also true that they “shall be saved” at the last day.

Verse 20

The great truth evident in this verse was concisely stated by James Montgomery Boice, *op. cit.*, p. 80, when he wrote: “Christ must be magnified in

the bodies of those who believe Him, or He will not be magnified at all.” God is not magnified in political movements, earthly cathedrals, temples or church houses, but in the bodies of Christians. “You are the temple of the Holy Spirit!” God did not dwell even in the temple of Solomon. (Acts 7:47-48)

As Boice, *Ibid.*, p. 81 stressed: “Throughout history this truth has been perverted over and over. Men have often made the mistake of identifying the hand of God with the development of reformation churches, the cause of democracy, the movement for prohibition, pacifism, or even civil rights. But God is not magnified in these . . . God’s hand is seen only in the lives of men who honor God.”

Paul’s determination that whether he lives or dies he would honor Christ provoked the Great Soliloquy in the next few verses.

PAUL’S GREAT SOLILOQUY

Verses 21-24

“To live is Christ . . .” Salvation through Christ is, briefly stated, a sinner’s denial of himself, renunciation of himself, and a complete submission to the will of Christ, being “baptized into” Christ, thus being saved, not as himself, but as Christ. That fact surfaces in Paul’s brief clause here.

“To die is gain . . .” Anyone who can truthfully say, “For me to live is Christ” can also say, “to die is gain.” No Christian should dread death. Whatever Paul could have meant by such words as these, the confidence is justified that the after-death of Christians will be “far better” than any earthly life, however blessed.

“If I am to live on. . .” James Macknight, *Apostolic Epistles with Commentary*, Vol, III, p. 413 wrote: “This is the highest superlative which it is possible to form in any language . . . from which we may infer that Paul knew of no middle state of insensibility between death and the resurrection.” We must confess, as did J. R. Dummelow, *Commentary on the Holy Bible*, p. 972 who wrote that: “Our best notions of the other world are dim and confused.”

“Having the desire to depart and be with Christ . . .” This is a mere euphemism for death, but as R. P. Martin, *op. cit.*, p. 78 noted: “It is a military term for striking camp, and a nautical expression for releasing a vessel from its moorings.” “The body is looked upon as a mere tabernacle. Each day is a march nearer home, and death is the last striking of the tent on arrival.” (Alfred Barry Ellicott’s *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, Vol. III, p. 71)

Verse 25

“Continue with you all . . .” seems to be a poetic way of saying he would remain alive; because as, James Macknight, *op. cit.*, p. 414 said: “He did not mean to tell the Philippians that he would leave off traveling among the churches he had planted and make his residence with them alone.”

“In the faith . . .” This is most certainly not a reference to subjective faith in the heart of Christians but has the meaning of “the Christian religion.”

Verse 26

“Your proud confidence . . .” R. P. Martin, *op. cit.*, p. 81 describes: “What the Philippians would feel if Paul were restored again to the church.”

Although it is evident that Paul here expressed confidence of seeing the Philippians again, it should be remembered that his isolation did not reveal exactly what would take place upon every future occasion contemplated by the apostle. It is best to view this as a confident expectation on Paul’s part of seeing the Philippians again, and not as a dogmatic prophecy that he would indeed do so.

Verse 27

“Manner worthy of the gospel of Christ . . .” William Barclay, *op. cit.*, p. 29 wrote: “No matter what happens, either to Paul or the Philippians, they must live worthily of their faith and profession.”

“Are standing firm . . .” One thing Paul expected of every Christian was that he should stand firm in the faith. It was a foregone certainty that Satan would use every device to induce Christians to waver or defect. The world was a hostile environment for Christianity. The Christian life could be lived successfully only by those who were determined to fight with all of their strength in order to maintain integrity. It is clear here that Paul expected the Philippians to do just that.

“Striving together for the faith of the gospel . . .” J. R. Dummelow, *op. cit.*, p. 972 declared that this does: “Not mean Christian doctrine . . . but faith as a power in the soul.” However, such an interpretation is surely wrong, being only another instance of modern commentators trying to make every reference of faith in the New Testament a subjective trust/faith inwardly experienced by Christians.

H. C. Hewlett, *A New Testament Commentary*, Philippians, p. 473 wrote: "According to Lightfoot and others, "the faith" is here objective, that which is believed, the content of the gospel message, as in Jude 3, "to contend for the faith:" if so, it may be the earliest New Testament instance of this use of the word."

Verse 28

"A sign of destruction . . ." The thought here is that the fearlessness of the Christians would be an omen of perdition to the persecutors, and at the same time an evidence of their own salvation.

"And that too, from God . . ." Only God could give them the fearlessness which Paul here enjoined; and some apply these words to their fearlessness.

"Salvation" is their salvation which is here affirmed as coming "from God."

Verses 29-30

Here one glimpses the impact of terrible persecutions upon the soul of the beloved apostle. Alfred Barry, *op. cit.*, p. 72 wrote: "This allusion, of course, is to the lawless scourging and imprisonment of Acts 16:22-24." That outrage deeply impressed itself upon Paul's heart.

The same implacable and evil hatred of the darkness against the light was the motivation of persecutions against both Paul and the Philippians. Paul's own sufferings were the same as theirs with regard to cause and motivation of both.

"Has been granted for Christ's sake . . ." Paul's evident purpose here was to bring home to the Philippians the high dignity and privilege of suffering for the cause of the Lord. By these words, he shared with them the fellowship of suffering in the name of Christ.

CHAPTER 2

This exceedingly important chapter containing some of the profoundest teaching in the word of God begins with an earnest plea for unity, in which Paul stated a fourfold basis of his appeal with an intensity indicating that, "There was serious personal strife for place among the Philippian Christians." (John A. Knight, *Beacon Bible Commentary*, p. 315). (Verses 1-4)

The example of unity exhibited by the Savior was cited as motivation for their unity. (Verses 5-11), this offhand, matter-of-fact appeal standing as one of the

most astounding testimonials to the pre-existence and deity of Jesus Christ that could be imagined.

Paul continued his appeal for the Philippians to exercise diligence in Christian service and for them to become shining lights in an evil world. (Verses 12-18)

Plans concerning Timothy and Epaphroditus were discussed in the final verses of the chapter. (Verses 19-30)

Verse 1

Collectively, the fourfold premise of this verse adds up go this: “Look, if there is anything at all to your Christianity . . .!”

“If . . .” James William Russell, *Compact Commentary on the New Testament*, 1964 wrote: “This is rhetorical and in no way expresses doubt.” Paul was here appealing to those very things which he considered most certain in the area of Christian experience. This was a common Hebrew method of making a statement in the affirmative, as when Jesus said, “If I go, I shall come again” (John 14:3), making the certainty of his going the pledge also of His Second Coming.

J. B. Lightfoot, *Saint Paul’s Epistle to the Philippians*, p. 107, paraphrased this quadruple list of “if’s” thus: “If your experiences in Christ appeal to you with any force, if love exerts any persuasive power upon you, if your fellowship in the Spirit is living reality, if you have any affectionate yearnings of heart, any tender feelings of compassion, listen and obey!”

Paul based this appeal for unity upon all of the sacred elements of true Christianity and upon their highest and best impulses as men.

“Fellowship of the Spirit . . .” R. P. Martin, *The Tyndale New testament Commentaries, Philippians*, p. 91 wrote: “The meaning must be ‘fellowship with participation in the Spirit’ rather than ‘fellowship wrought by the Spirit.’” Thus the admonition is that the Philippians should be “in the Spirit,” not that the Spirit should be “in them!”

William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary, Philippians* p. 99 pointed out that Paul’s stirring appeal here has a fourfold incentive and a threefold directive, the latter being (i) oneness (verse 2), (ii) lowliness of mind or disposition (verse 3), and (iii) helpfulness (verse 4).

Verse 2

By commanding them to be in the Spirit, Paul touched upon the theological foundation of Christian unity. There is only “one Spirit.” (Ephesians 4:4)

Verse 3

“Selfishness or empty conceit . . .” These twin vices have been spoilers of the church of God in all ages. Petty strivings for place or preferment, jockeying for advantage, pushing or shoving for prestige or attention—how many congregations of believers in Christ have been blighted or destroyed by the sins Paul mentioned here.

William Hendriksen, *op. cit.*, p. 100, asked a pertinent question on this verse; “But how can a man who knows that he is industrious regard the rather lazy fellow-member as being better than Himself.?”

Paul’s rule here does not mean that every Christian must think that every member besides himself is better in every particular than he is! However, a proper evaluation in one particular or another is better than ourselves.

In opportunity, in privilege, in the endowment of youth, strength, intelligence, or other of life’s benefits, every Christian in some specific sense is better than any other.

Verse 4

John Wesley, *One Volume New Testament Commentary*, *in loco*, wrote: “He also sanctions some reasonable amount of attention to one’s own interests!”

It is concern for and interests in other people and their interests which pay the greatest dividends to the Christian.

Would a person who habitually practiced the injunction of Paul in this verse be popular with his peers? William Hendriksen, *op. cit.*, p. 101 gave the answer thus: “True Christianity is still the best answer to the question, ‘How can I win friends and influence people?’”

If all Christians would concentrate upon thinking of those particulars in which others are better than themselves and of speaking of such things, a climate of heavenly love and appreciation would soon replace that faction and vainglory which Paul sought to eradicate by his injunction.

Verse 5

John Wesley, *op. cit.*, in loco said: “From this verse to verse 11, Paul presents the great renunciation of Christ as the supreme example of that unselfishness to which he has exhorted the Philippians in verse 4.

“Have this attitude in yourselves. . .” This is one of eight scriptural expressions describing the redeemed in Christ. Note: For a full list and discussion of these see Galatians 5:23.

“Which is also in Christ Jesus . . .” Having the mind of Christ in one is equivalent to the indwelling of the Father and the Son in Christian hearts. The Christian’s being “in Christ,” “in God,” “in the Holy Spirit,” or having “the word of Christ dwell in” him are also equivalent in every way.

THE SO-CALLED HYMN

Verse 6

The passage is composed of balanced phrases having a kind of rhythm and that they could have been sung; but what does that prove?

“Existed in the form of God . . .” John A. Knight, *op. cit.*, p. 318 said: “The Greeks had two words for “form,” one of them referring to mere external appearance, as when a mirage takes the appearance of water . . . the other suggests that the appearance is the true revelation of the object itself, the form participating in the reality. It is the second word (morph) which Paul here employs.”

This is of course a dogmatic statement of the deity of Jesus Christ. H. C. Hewlett, *A New Testament Commentary, Philippians* p.474 said: “It includes the whole nature and essence of deity, and is inseparable from them.”

“Did not regard equality with God . . .” These words refer to “being in the form of God,” and are a statement (in different words) of the status of our Lord in His pre-existent state before the incarnation.

“A thing to be grasped . . .” R. P. Martin, *op. cit.*, p. 97 wrote: “Modern exegesis has, to a large extent, attempted to pervert this clause, making it mean that Jesus (in His pre-existent state): “Could have grasped at equality with God by self-assertion, but declined to do so.”

Such a misinterpretation, however, makes “equality with God” something that Christ did not have in his pre-incarnate state (fully contradicting “existing in the form of God”), but something which presented itself to Him as a temptation.

The true meaning of this place is that, although Christ had existed from the beginning as God (John 1:1), He did not count the prerogatives of deity “something to be grasped” or “tenaciously retained.”

As R. P. Martin, *op. cit.*, p. 97 expressed this viewpoint (while denying it), “He had no need to grasp at equality with God because He already possessed it.”

The truth of this passage shines like the sun and it is nearly incredible that anyone could miss it. Note the following:

- (1) The mistaken position of some scholars is concisely stated by both F. F. Bruce, *Answers to Questions*, p. 109 and R. P. Martin, *op. cit.*, p. 97 Bruce wrote: “The basic idea of the word (*harpagmos* in verse 6) is that of seizing what one does not possess . . .” Martin said, “Equality with God is not a position which the pre-existent Christ had and gave up.”
- (2) After all of the tiresome arguments of scholars pontificating about the meaning of an obscure Greek word, the truth still stands as expressed by William Barclay, *The Letters to the Philippians, Colossians and Thessalonians*, p. 36, who affirmed that: “It can mean that Jesus did not need to snatch at equality with God because He had it as a right.” This is of course is exactly what it does mean.

Verse 7

“But emptied Himself . . .” Of what did Christ empty Himself? F. F. Bruce (as quoted by John A. Knight, *op. cit.*, p. 319 wrote: “The diversity of opinions prevailing among interpreters in regard to the meaning of this passage is enough to fill the student with despair, and to inflict him with intellectual paralysis.”

Robert H. Mounce, *Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, p. 765 wrote: “One thing is clear enough. The use of *morph* in connection with servant shows that the manhood of Jesus was no less real and actual than His godhead.” “He that has seen Me has seen the Father. (John 14:9)

Christ emptied Himself of His glory (John 17:5), exactly the same renunciation Paul was enjoining upon the Philippians.

“In the likeness of men . . .” “B. C. Caffin, *op. cit.*, p. 60 wrote: “This word, of course, does not imply that our Lord was not truly man, but, that he is more than a man.”

Verse 8

Here in this verse also, the essential truth of the whole passage bearing upon the eternal power and godhead of Christ shines in the use of the word “obedient.” R. P. Martin (quoting Lohmeyer), *op. cit.*, p. 102 wrote: “Only a divine being can accept death as obedience; for ordinary men it is a necessity.” The death of Christ was not something inflicted upon the Son of God, but the voluntary laying down of His life for the salvation of men (John 10:17f); therefore, it was, on the part of Christ, obedience to the Father’s will.

Verse 9

“Exalted Him . . .” The exaltation here is contrasted not with the pre-existent eternal godhead of Christ, but with the humiliation of His incarnation, the one new element in it being in this, that “He is exalted in the very nature in which He died.” (James Macknight, *op. cit.*, p. 427)

“The name which is above every name . . .” J. R. Dummelow, *Commentary on the Holy Bible*, p. 973 wrote: “This name is the completed title, The Lord Jesus Christ.” The name in view here “is Lord, Kurios, the Old Testament name for God.”

The word “Lord” denotes rulership based upon competent and authoritative power.

Verse 10

“In the name of Jesus . . .” It is wrong to read this “at the name of Jesus.” “In the name of,” means, “by the authority of.” And one thing in view here is that prayers shall be universally offered in the sacred name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

William Barclay, *op. cit.*, p. 39 has a precious passage on the term “Lord.” He wrote: “This great title by which Jesus came to be known in the early church was Kurios. (1) It began by meaning master or owner. (2) It became the official title of the Roman emperors; (3) it became the title of the heathen gods; and (4) it was the title used to translate the sacred four-letter unpronounceable name of God in the Old Testament. So when Jesus was called Kurios (Lord), it meant He was the Master and Owner of Life, the King of kings, the true Lord in a way which heathen gods could never be; He was nothing less than Divine.

As to the meaning of things in heaven . . . earth . . . under the earth, etc., such actions as knees bending and tongues confessing are universally associated with human beings. William Hendriksen, *op. cit.*, p. 115 wrote: “Therefore, unless it

can be proved that these words are highly poetical, the view which refers these designations to persons (and not to things) deserves the preference.”

James Macknight, *op. cit.*, p. 429 said; “It is possible that this is a reference to “angels, men and devils.” It is possible that he may be correct. However construed, the words speak of the absolute and total supremacy of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Verse 11

The teaching here details what men ought to do, “should” do, and not what they will do; for it is a fact that many live and die without confessing the Savior. However, there are overtones of eternity in the passage, and with reference to the ultimate future, all men, high or low, good or bad, saved or unsaved “shall” surely confess Christ to the glory of God the Father. (Revelation 6:15-17)

Here is the great truth that comforted and sustained the weary prisoner chained to a Roman guard; this was the reason why martyrs died with the blessed name of Jesus on their lips; and here is the basic conviction of the redeemed of all ages, namely, that Jesus Christ our Lord is supreme, our only Lord, seated at the right hand of God.

Everything mentioned in this Philippian letter was commonly accepted Christian doctrine. It was only about 30 years since Christ was crucified when Paul wrote this letter.

James Montgomery Boice, *op. cit.*, p. 126 wrote a matchless paragraph on this as follows: “What do these verses contain? The answer is that they contain most of the distinctive articles of the Christian creed. They teach the divinity of Christ, His preexistence, His equality with God the Father, His incarnation, and true humanity, His voluntary death on the cross, the certainty of His ultimate triumph over evil and the permanence of His ultimate reign. Christianity is Christ—this Christ; and these things were believed about Him from the beginning.”

Verse 12

To be sure this verse gives the lie to the heresy of being saved by faith alone; and the somewhat humorous efforts of those holders of the heresy to diminish the impact of this place is discernible in the following comments:

Salvation (in this verse) has emphasis on that aspect of salvation which is called sanctification. (William Hendriksen, *op. cit.*, p. 126)

Salvation, not in personal terms . . . This can hardly be taken in a personal sense! (R. P. Martin, op. cit., p. 111)

Here is no denial of justification by faith, for it is Christians not unbelievers, who are being addressed. Salvation is something they already possess. (John A. Knight, op. cit., p. 323)

The very word salvation signifies that we cannot save ourselves. This does not mean that we can and must effect our salvation. (B. C. Caffin, op. cit., p. 61)

Far more acceptable are such comments as:

Work out your own salvation. Though salvation is through Christ it must be worked out by obedience. (Hebrews 5:8) With fear and trembling. That is, earnest anxiety. (James William Russell, op. cit., p. 489)

Work out your own salvation. Christ's work of atonement is finished . . . Your own; it is each man's own work; no human friend, no preacher, not even an apostle can work it out for him. With fear and trembling. Have an eager, trembling anxiety to obey God in all things. (B. C. Caffin, op. cit., p. 61)

If there is any outstanding commandment of God through Christ and the apostles which sinners neglect, refuse or reject through disobeying it, may they be persuaded by Paul's word in another place to the effect that those "who obey not the gospel" will be utterly destroyed. (2 Thessalonians 1:8). And just what is the gospel? In a general sense it is all that Christ through the apostles commanded; but specifically the reference is to believing, repenting, confessing Christ and being baptized into Him. How unspeakably foolish are those who fancy since they "believe" there is no need of them to obey a command like baptism!

Verse 13

God indeed works in and through the obedient, but this is far from being a denial that men must obey God. Through the ages the problem has been this: if one must (in addition to believing in Christ) to be baptized in order to be saved, that, in the view of some, would make man his own Savior; but such a view is not justified. For example, when the man born blind washed in the pool of Siloam (John 9:1-12) that did not make him his own healer; although none can deny that he could not have been healed without doing what Christ commanded. The same principle applies to the scripture: "He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved." (Mark 16:16)

Scholars are entirely too sensitive about “work” and sinners, or Christians either, “saving themselves.” No apostle, or other New Testament evangelist, had any of the foolish notions on this subject which clutter the minds of so many today. In the first sermon ever preached, the apostle Peter said, “Be saved from this perverse generation.” (Acts 2:40)

Verses 14-15

“Without grumbling . . . “ Here, as practically always in scripture, guilt is attached to the vice of “grumbling.” “Disputing . . .” would seem to be just one form of grumbling.

“Prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent children of God . . .” William Hendriksen, *op. cit.*, p. 124 said: “Some commentators fail to see how children of God can in any sense become children of God.” William Hendriksen went on to say: “A child of God should strive to become a child of God without blemish.”

Verse 16

“Holding fast the word of life . . .” This is explanatory of the clause in the preceding verse to the effect that Philippians “are seen as lights in the world.” The light which they are able to shed abroad is not of themselves, but of the word of God which they have received.

“Run in vain . . . toil in vain . . .” Paul did not mean by this that his ultimate redemption depended in any manner upon the fidelity of the Philippians, but that if they should not live properly his “running” and “labors” would prove to be in vain as far as the Philippians were concerned.

Verses 17-18

There is in view here a sacrifice, whether like that in Exodus 29:40, or like one of the animal sacrifices offered to pagan gods, is not specified; because a “drink offering” was a prominent feature of both. James William Russell, *op. cit.*, p. 290, thought that Paul had the Jewish sacrifice in mind, saying: “Paul’s meaning is figurative, referring in humility to his service as the drink-offering which was added to the burnt offering.”

William Hendriksen, *op. cit.*, p. 127 wrote: “However, whether the reference is to the Jewish libation poured out beside the altar, or the pagan libation poured out over the sacrifice, makes no difference.”

The great lesson for all in the passage was presented by William Barclay, *op. cit.*, p. 46 when he wrote: “Paul was perfectly willing to make his life a sacrifice

to God; and, if that happened, to him it would be all joy, and he calls on them (verse 18) not to mourn at the prospect but rather to rejoice. To him every call for sacrifice to toil was a call to his love for Christ; and therefore he met it, not with regret or complaint but with joy.”

Verse 19

Like any person in similar circumstances, Paul, from time to time, would have wavered between the extremes of despair and confidence. Timothy had been with Paul extensively during his travels and was at the time indicated here performing some valuable service for the apostle. It would have been a genuine sacrifice for Paul to part with him for a journey to Philippi.

Verses 20-21

Paul refers to those around him as “brethren” (4:21), but they were far short of the zeal and dedication of a man like Timothy. B. C. Caffin, *op. cit.*, p. 63 said: “Paul’s spiritual isolation increases our wonder and admiration for the strain of holy joy that runs thru Philippians.

Robert H. Mounce, *op. cit.*, p. 767 wrote: “Paul’s no one here is not a sweeping condemnation of fellow laborers, but it means that of those available there was no one like Timothy.”

Despite this, as J. R. Dummelow, *op. cit.* p. 974 said: “Doubtless some of Paul’s brethren had declined the mission from reasons that Paul considered selfish.”

Verses 22-24

The whole world of New Testament churches in those days knew the proof of Timothy. Timothy had been with Paul in Philippi when that church was founded (Acts 16:1ff); he was in Thessalonica and Berea (Acts 17:1-14), and in Corinth and Ephesus (Acts 18:25; 19:21-22), and even at the time Paul wrote this letter he was standing by Paul in Rome. (Philippians 1:1)

Paul could not, at the moment, send Timothy. James Macknight, *op. cit.*, p. 436 believed that: “This was because Aristarchus, Titus, and Luke were all absent from Rome at this time,” leaving only Timothy to look after Paul.

“I trust . . . that I myself also shall be coming shortly . . . “ B. C. Caffin, *op. cit.*, p. 68 said: “This hope, in all probability was fulfilled.” (Titus 3:12)

David Lipscomb, *A Commentary on New Testament Epistles*, Vol. IV, p. 194 has a great paragraph on Paul’s probable thoughts at this juncture: “We do not

know what he meant by shortly. The uncertainty as to what whim might strike Nero was nothing to count upon. He no longer counts on going to Spain as he once had planned (Romans 15:28); his heart now turns to his old field of labor (Philemon 22) . . . those grievous wolves of whom he warned the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:29-30) had taken advantage of his absence and were causing much trouble and confusion among the churches of Asia.”

Verse 25

Paul must have regarded Epaphroditus very highly. Note the five titles given to him, in verse 25, “brother, fellow-worker, fellow-soldier, messenger, and minister.”

“I thought it necessary to send to you . . .” Epaphroditus was the one who bore this letter to the Philippian church and his name appears only here in the New Testament.

“Messenger . . .” The Greek word from which this comes is actually “apostle;” but, as Epaphroditus was certainly not an apostle in the ordinary sense, it is supposed that Paul used the title here as complimentary.

EPAPHRODITUS

Certainly Epaphroditus was a spiritual leader at Philippi, probably one of the elders. He had been commissioned by the church there to bring a gift of money to Paul and to remain with him for an unspecified time to look after Paul’s needs and to assist in any way possible. He became dangerously ill, possibly from attending Paul during an illness, or from over-exertion. God graciously restored him to health.

Verse 26

“Was distressed . . .” James Macknight, *op. cit.*, p. 437 said: “Erasmus said the Greek word so translated means, to be almost killed with grief.” It should be remembered that homesickness was certainly a factor in the grief of Epaphroditus.

Verse 27

All healing is of God; but there are some recoveries which give every evidence of having been granted by the Father in answer to prayer, and so, it seems, was the case of Epaphroditus.

William Hendriksen, *op. cit.*, p. 141 raises an important question: “Why did not Paul perform a miracle on behalf Epaphroditus, instead of permitting the

illness to continue?” The answer lies in the purpose of miracles, which were never given for the personal needs of God’s apostles and preachers, but only for the purpose of “confirming the word.” (Mark 16:20)

Verse 28

The altruism of the great apostle shines in this, as Hendriksen, *Ibid.*, p. 143 noted:

“Easing the mind of the Philippians and imparting gladness of heart to them meant more to Paul than any personal service he might have been able to derive by the continued service he might have been able to derive by the continued attendance of Epaphroditus.”

Verse 29

J. R. Dummelow, *op. cit.*, p. 974 thought that: “The apostle heaps commendations upon Epaphroditus seemingly that he might have a cool reception (verses 29-30), since he is going home prematurely and without having rendered all the service expected.”

It is very difficult, however, to agree with that, because the severe “nigh-unto-death” illness of Epaphroditus would certainly have made it difficult for any right-minded person to have faulted his desire to return home before the mission was totally completed.

Verse 30

“Risking his life . . .” The word here actually means “gambling his life” for Paul’s sake. The use of the particular Greek word (*parabolos*) has led some scholars to identify Epaphroditus’ work as like that of an association of men in Alexandria known as the Parabolani. Robert H. Mounce, *op. cit.*, p. 769 wrote: “Among the hazardous duties of this ‘suicide squad’ was the nursing of the sick during epidemics.”

When certain types of epidemics frightened the pagan populations, terrible things happened. William Barclay, *op. cit.*, p. 50 tells this: “In A. D. 22, a plague broke out in Carthage; the heathen threw out the bodies of their dead and fled in terror. Cyprian, the Christian bishop, gathered his congregation together and set them to burying the dead and nursing the sick.”

Whether anything like this was involved in the illness contracted by Epaphroditus is unknown; but we may be sure of one thing, William Barclay, *Ibid.*, p. 48 wrote: “He was a brave man; for anyone who proposed to offer

himself as an attendant of a man awaiting trial on a capital charge was laying himself open to considerable risk of facing the same charge.”

CHAPTER 3

J. R. Dummelow, Commentary of the Holy Bible, p. 975 said Paul sounded again: “The prevalent note of the epistle, ‘rejoice in the Lord,’ added a few supplementary counsels and acknowledged the contribution sent through Epaphroditus.” However, beginning in verse 4, there is a typical Pauline diversion.

Verse 1

“Finally, my brethren . . .” Many preachers have said, “Now, finally . . .” and then continued half an hour; and there is no reason to suppose that Paul might not have done the same thing here, especially in a personal letter.

“Rejoice in the Lord . . .” The type of rejoicing Paul is speaking of is possible only for those who have been baptized into Christ. James Montgomery Boice, Philippians, p. 190 wrote: “Joy is founded to a very great degree on sound doctrine. Joy is a supernatural delight in God and God’s goodness; and it is a very different thing from happiness . . . supernatural joy is to steep ourselves in the teachings of the Bible.”

It is amazing how often in the scriptures joy is associated with knowledge and study of God’s word. A familiar example being, “The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart.” (Psalm 19:8) Both here and in 2:18 “rejoice” has the status of an apostolic order or commandment. A Christian who will not “rejoice in the Lord: is a contradiction!

“To write the same things . . .” B. C. Caffin, Pulpit Commentary, Vol. 20, Philippians, p. 111 wrote: The words refer to the constant admonition of this epistle, ‘Rejoice in the Lord.’”

William Barclay, The Letters to the Philippians, Etc., p. 52, said: “Like any good teacher, Paul was never afraid of repetition.”

“A safeguard for you . . .” The danger, however, that Paul guarded against through his oft-repeated admonitions was that of drifting away from the truth.

Verse 2

Here is more repetition, the threefold “beware” being one of the most dramatic warnings in Scripture. “Beware” is a far better word in his place than “look out for.”

“Dogs . . . evil workers . . . false circumcision . . .” Many believe that these are not three classes of enemies but three designations of one class, the class being rather effectively identified by the word “false circumcision”.

The secular, nationalistic Jews were also enemies; but when Paul referred to them, his references to circumcision were more respectful. R. P. Martin, *op. cit.*, p. 136 said: “But what did infuriate him was the insistence that the rite be enforced on the Gentile Christians in order to make them ‘full Christians.’”

“Dogs . . .” James William Russell, *Compact Commentary on the New Testament*, p. 491 wrote: “This applies to those of unholy tastes and desires, of whom Jesus warned the multitude in the Sermon on the Mount: ‘Do not give what is holy to dogs.’” (Matthew 7:6)

The status of dogs in that ancient culture was a far different thing from what it is in our own. The dog in America today is loved and appreciated creature; but the dog was held to be most contemptible in ancient times. The Jews referred to Gentiles as “dogs;” the prophet Isaiah compared the false shepherds of Israel to dumb dogs, lazy dogs and greedy dogs (Isaiah 56:9-11; the Psalmist designated the enemies of the Messiah, stating that “the dogs have encompassed” him. (Isaiah 22:16)

“Evil workers . . .” The opinion of J. R. Dummelow, *op. cit.*, p. 975 cannot be ruled out that there are three classes of gospel enemies in this passage, the expression here meaning the establishment of national Israel. (1 Thessalonians 2:14-16) He wrote: “Unbelieving Jews are here intended, radically opposed to the gospel of Christ . . . Jewish hostility was violent beyond measure in Macedonia (Acts 17).”

If this view should be accepted, then the three classes of enemies would be:
dogs . . . those of unholy desires and appetites.

evil workers . . . the unbelieving Jews who tried to exterminate the gospel.

the circumcision . . . the unbelieving Jews who sought to pervert it.

Verse 3

Both the Judaizers and the unbelieving Jews supported their opposition to Christianity by appealing to their circumcision as proof of their standing within the covenant of Abraham.

James Macknight, *Apostolic Epistles with Commentary*, Vol III, p. 440 wrote: "They called themselves "the circumcision" as proof of their right descent from Abraham and the only objects of God's favor." Here Paul challenged them.

"We are the true circumcision . . ." Christians, not those fleshly descendants of Abraham, are the true Israel of God. James Macknight, *Ibid.*, p. 445 wrote: "The Judaizers, being destitute of the qualities signified by circumcision, have no title to the name and should be shunned. But we are the true circumcision, who worship God in Spirit and in truth, and boast in Christ Jesus as our Savior, and have no reliance upon our descent from Abraham."

Verse 4

Paul defended himself against any who might have said, "Paul is decrying privileges to which he himself cannot lay claim. He minimizes them because he never had them and cannot get them. The grapes are sour!" (William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary, Philippians*, p. 155)

William Barclay, *op. cit.*, p. 57 wrote: "Paul set out his credentials, not in order to boast, but to show that he had had every privilege that a Jew could enjoy, and had risen to every attainment to which a Jew could rise."

Verses 5-6

It was who and what Paul was which disarmed and frustrated the Jewish opposition. Paul was the equal or superior of every Jew on earth, and his wholehearted acceptance of Christ as the true Messiah of Israel annihilated in one fantastic act of acceptance every argument of the Jewish hierarchy who denied it.

"Circumcised the eighth day . . ." The ancient Jew placed an inordinate amount of emphasis on this, even affirming that no circumcised person could be lost!

"Of the nation of Israel . . ." Alfred Barry, *Ellicott's Commentary on the Whole Bible*, Vol VIII, p. 80 noted: "These words are emphatic . . . a true scion of the covenanted stock, the royal race of the Prince of God."

“Of the tribe of Benjamin . . .” This tribe gave Israel their first king (Saul), their wisest man, Mordecai, and they remained faithful despite the departure of the ten tribes; but their greatest contribution to both Israel and the whole world was the apostle Paul.

“A Pharisee . . .” Paul was one of the noble Pharisees, the same being one who sincerely and honestly tried to measure up to all of the strict and scrupulous teachings of this demanding group.

The Sadducees were materialists, politically minded unbelievers, who denied many teachings of the scriptures. The Pharisees were far better than they, but the Sadducees held most of the high offices.

“As to the righteousness which is in the Law . . .” Whereas many of the Pharisees held religious convictions like Paul, they did nothing about it. Paul fanatically pursued his faith by persecuting the church.

“As to righteousness which is the Law . . .” Paul was here speaking of the Law of Moses’ not of “law-works” or of “law-righteousness” as these words are frequently read in an effort to make Paul’s reference here inclusive of the law of Christ; but Paul was speaking in this passage of the Mosaic regulations.

“Blameless . . .” By his, Paul did not lay claim to perfection, but on the other hand affirmed by this that his record was without charge of violation.

Verses 7-8

No earthly honor, or preferment, no mortal achievement, no wealth, social standing or earthly glory would the great apostle exchange for the knowledge of Christ.

“I have counted as loss . . .” It cannot be known what all this might have included. Was his wife, or family, included in the things he lost? No one can say, but the haunting possibility exists. Whatever he lost for the sake of gaining Christ, Paul considered his status as a child of God far above and beyond any privilege he might have lost.

Verse 9

Robert H. Mounce, *op. cit.*, p. 771 declared that: “Here is Paul’s most concise statement of justification by faith.” And here is, therefore, all the more reason why men should take heed of the meaning of it. Most of the so-called modern translations pervert the meaning of this passage by rendering “faith in Christ,” instead of “faith of Christ.”

“And may be found in Him . . .” The great Pauline expression “in Christ,” or as here “in Him,” which is found more than one hundred fifty times in his letters, identifies the place of redemption as being “in the Lord.” The New Testament reveals no way of being “in the Lord” except through being baptized “into Him.”

Paul is addressing these words to people who have been baptized into Christ with the admonition that they strive to be “found in Him,” either when death overtakes them or the Lord shall come.

The apostle John expressed it in Revelation 14:13 when he wrote: “And I heard a voice from heaven saying, write,” “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!” “Yes,” says the Spirit, “that they may rest from their Labors, for their deeds follow with them.”

“Righteousness . . . of the Law . . .” That is, of the Law of Moses. The contrast here is not between obeying the ordinances of the gospel of Christ and being saved by “faith alone;” but the contrast is between trusting in the ceremonies of the Law of Moses for salvation as contrasted with believing and obeying the gospel of Christ.

“The righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith . . .” James Montgomery Boice, *op. cit.*, p. 200 said: “There are two kinds of righteousness,” that which comes of men, and that which is achieved by God. The righteousness which saves was not achieved by men, but by Christ, therefore, it is called here the “righteousness of Christ,” or the “righteousness of God through the faith and perfect obedience of Christ.

Paul revealed how truly men become sharers in Christ’s righteousness. They renounce self, deny themselves, believe in Christ and obey the gospel by being baptized into Christ, thus becoming Christ, in the sense of being “in Him” and identified with Christ.

The righteousness that saves is not theirs but Christ’s; and even in the case of Christ’s righteousness, it was not achieved by faith only but by faith and our Savior’s perfect obedience. Thus every man who will be saved shall not be saved as Joe Doakes, but as Jesus Christ.

“The righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith . . .” This clause, with its reference to sinner’s faith, is the irrefutable denial that it is sinner’s faith mentioned in the preceding clause.

“By faith . . .” Even here, the meaning is not the mere subjective faith of sinners; for, as James Montgomery Boice said: “The most common distortion of faith in our day is the attempt to make it subjective.” The usual theological jargon of the current era makes faith to be absolutely subjective; but nothing could be farther from the truth. In the New Testament Greek, the word for faith almost never has the sense of subjective believing, The true meaning is nearer to our word “fidelity: or “faithfulness,” meanings which :Paul plainly included in the expression, ”the obedience of faith,” with which he both began and concluded the Book of Romans.

“Faith of Christ . . .” It would be just as correct to translate “knowledge of Christ” (verse 8) and “cross of Christ” in (verse 18) as the knowledge or cross “in Christ” as it is to make ‘of Christ” read “in Christ.” In all these cases, the Greek word for Christ stands without the article; and, at a glance at the Greek Testament shows, the preferable rendition is “of Christ.” (Alfred Marshall, the Nestle Greek Text with an English Translation, p. 785)

Verses 10-11

Alfred Barry, *op. cit.*, p. 82 pointed out: “The order of these verses is notable and instructive.” The three mountain peaks of interest are (1) the resurrection of Christ, (2) the fellowship of Christians with Him in sufferings and (3) the glorious resurrection unto eternal life at the last day.

The threefold emphasis discernible in these verses provides a thumbnail abbreviation of the apostolic gospel, an abbreviation which by extension can be made to include nearly everything in the entire New Testament. Note:

1. The Resurrection of Christ.

This of course, includes all of the gospel record which preceded and led up to the resurrection, all of which, especially the sufferings and death of our Lord, were in a sense validated, confirmed and endowed with eternal significance by the resurrection.

Peter tied the entire Pentecostal sermon to the resurrection of Christ (Acts 2:24), making forgiveness of sins and the reception of the earnest of the Holy Spirit derivative from the fact of our Lord’s resurrection, ascension and sending the Comforter; and, while true enough that Peter promised forgiveness and the gift of the Spirit as blessings to be received subsequently to in consequence of the recipients’ believing, repenting and being baptized into Christ, the sacred record makes it clear enough that the sinner’s part in such marvelous blessings

is limited to his fulfillment of the preconditions prior to receiving them, and that Christ, not the sinner, is the fountain source from which all blessings flows.

It would be impossible to trace in a single chapter the amazing manner of Paul's making all to depend on Christ's resurrection. Everything depends on it; without it, we are still in our sins (1 Corinthians 15:17); it is the pledge of our justification and forgiveness. (Acts 13:30, 38-39)

2. Suffering with Christ.

This is the "partaking of Christ's sufferings," "the conformity to His death, the "taking up the cross," and being crucified with Christ," as stressed through the New Testament. (1 Peter 4:13; Romans 8:17; 2 Corinthians 1:5; Colossians 1:23 and 2 Timothy 2:11). It was expected that every Christian should suffer as a result of his faith; indeed it was a proverb or "faithful saying" that "If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him" (2 Timothy 2:12)

3. Attainment to the Resurrection from the Dead.

This means the final and glorious resurrection of the redeemed at the last day, an event so nobly referred to by Paul a few moments later in verses 20-21.

"For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall be also be in the likeness of His resurrection." (Romans 6:5)

Also in 1 Corinthians 15:12-23, Paul made the resurrection of Christ, appealed to as a fact which not even the enemies of the faith could deny, to be a pledge of the Christian's own resurrection at the last day.

Verse 12

"Not that I have already obtained it . . ." Paul never viewed the Christian prize of eternal salvation as being something that one might "get" in any final and irrevocable act. The Pauline view, in evidence here, was that the Christian life was a race to be won, a life to be lived, a course to be completed, and that no one ever had it made till the probation was completed. There was no lack of confidence in Paul, as evidenced by these words; but this was merely his way of saying that he was still running the Christian race.

"Or have already become perfect . . ." Paul is speaking of that personal and individual perfection which God will give to every Christian on the last day. In this instance reference is to the perfection of Christ which rightfully belongs to every Christian.

In Matthew 5:48, Jesus laid down the law that underlies eternal salvation, the law of absolute perfection, “even as God is perfect.” No one ever attained such perfection in his own right, except the Lord; but every Christian enjoys that status as a result of his being baptized “into Christ,” identified with Christ, and in a sense, being Christ!

Verse 13

“I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it . . .” “laid hold” was a favorite expression with Paul. He viewed the priceless gift of eternal life as a prize to be seized eagerly and without delay, something to be taken with determination never to let go of it.

“Forgetting what lies behind . . .” Paul was not one to live in the past. The past he properly appreciated; but his thought continued to dwell upon the future. The great prize still lay forward at the finish line.

Just how did Paul forget the past? James Montgomery Boice, *op. cit.*, p. 227, wrote: “Well, he certainly did not forget his knowledge of the Bible, nor God’s grace or God’s great mercies . . . his writings prove this.” Boice thought Paul’s forgetting was “ceasing to let the things which are in their past overshadow the present. He let the past, both good and bad, be past, constantly looking forward to the work God had for him to do.” All Christians need the grace to do the same thing.

Verse 14

William Hendriksen, *op. cit.*, p. 170 expressed it: “Paul’s intense yearning and striving for spiritual perfection is expressed now under the symbolism of the familiar footrace.” In this verse, it is the eagerness and determination of the contestant to win which dominate the thought.

Verse 15

The perfection in Christ was a very real and genuine thing to Paul and thus it should be to every Christian.

“God will reveal that also to you . . .” David Lipscomb, *A Commentary on the New Testament Epistles, Vol IV*, p. 210 applied this to all: “Having a sincere desire to know and to do God’s will, and without any wish or preference except to do the will of God.”

Robert H. Mounce, *op. cit.*, p. 772 arrived at a similar conclusion, thus: “The condition for future enlightenment is to walk according to present light.”

Indeed, if one does not walk in the light he already has, it may be considered certain that God will not provide more light than he is willing to use.

Verse 16

Paul here instructed the Philippians to keep on walking in the light they had received and by which they had come thus far.

Sometimes when churches grow and attain some measure of what the world would call prosperity, they wish to brighten up their image in the community, sometimes even softening the old doctrines preached by those who built the church; but the homely wisdom of staying with that which is already proved was here enunciated by apostle.

Verse 17

“Follow my example . . .” “Observe (Mark) them that so walk . . .” Marking them that cause divisions (Romans 16:17) has ever been the delight of some of the church’s professional “markers” in all generations; but here an opposite kind of marking is stressed. If churches and those who love the church were more diligent to honor and promote those who “walk even as” Paul walked, it may be that so much of the other type of marking would not be necessary.

Verse 18

For many walk . . .” These are the evil walkers and Christians are admonished also to mark these (Romans 16:17), that is, to identify them in order to thwart their evil devices against the church. James A. Macknight, *op. cit.*, p. 457 paraphrased this writing: “For many teachers walk very differently, who I have often said to you, and now even weeping I repeat it, are enemies of the cross of Christ, both by teaching that men are pardoned only through the Levitical sacrifices, and refusing to suffer with Christ for the truth.”

Robert Mounce, *op. cit.*, p. 773 wrote: “Those described here were Judaizers; this would have elicited a different reaction than weeping.”

J. B. Lightfoot, *op. cit.*, p. 155 took the persons denounced in this passage to be “the antinomian reactionists, (faith alone, not obedience to the moral law is necessary for salvation), as those in Roman 16:18.”

Those were the persons, professing to be wise, and yet by no means innocent in their wisdom. In any case, a more complete description of those “enemies:” is in the next verse.

Verse 19

This description includes all of every name and doctrine whose interests and concerns are focused upon the earth and earthly considerations alone. The apostolic description fits a great many people who would be chagrined and embarrassed to admit it; but it is evident to all except themselves that their one and only interest is centered in the present life on earth.

Verse 20

“Citizenship . . . in heaven” James William Russell, op. cit., p. 492 pointed out that this illustration: “Was drawn from the fact that the Philippians' citizenship was in Rome.”

“We eagerly wait for a Savior” The Second Coming is the thought here. Paul represents himself and the Philippians as living in a state of expectancy, awaiting the coming of the Son of God from heaven, who would raise the dead, appoint the hypocrites their portion in hell, and redeem the righteous unto eternal glory.

While true enough that no apostle ever taught that Christ was to come within the age wherein they lived, nevertheless they certainly taught that it was possible to be “at any time,” that men should live expectantly in regard of it, and that they should be ready at all times for the coming of the Lord. Note: This was sound doctrine then; and still is.

James Montgomery Boice, op. cit., p. 247 was correct in diagnosing the cause of much of the malaise which has fallen upon modern Christianity wrote: “In our day, belief in the Second Coming of Jesus Christ has faded into a remote and sometimes irrelevant doctrine in many large segments of the Christian church; and it is entirely possible that our present lack of courage and lack of joy flow from this attitude.”

Verse 21

“The body of our humble state” J. R. Dummelow, op. cit., p. 977 wrote some interesting remarks on this that appear to be true when he wrote: “The apostle keenly felt the humiliation of man's mortal state. The idea of the body of glory was given him by the form of the heavenly splendor in which he had seen the Lord Jesus on the Damascus road.”

D. A. Hayes, Paul and His Epistles, p. 439 wrote: “It is not our vile body that is to be changed . . . the body is not vile, and the Bible nowhere says it is.”

Nevertheless, the mortal body is sooner or later in every life a source of humiliation, and ultimately death.

“Transform the body . . .” This transformation must occur in either one of two way: (1) as a result of death itself, following which the body crumbles into dust, or (2) as a result of the change mentioned in 1 Corinthians 15:52.

But, whether following death, or the change of the living at the Second coming, all men shall be endowed with the new life at the resurrection and a “body” as it pleases God.”

CHAPTER 4

The salient features of this chapter outline are taken from Alfred Barry, Ellicott’s Commentary on the Whole Bible, Vol. VIII, p. 85. This chapter is a fitting conclusion for the whole epistle.

I. There are three final exhortations (a) to unity (verses 1-3, (b) to joy (verses 4-7), and (c) to conformity with all that is good after the apostle’s model (verses 8-9).

II. Finally, comes thanks for the Philippian offerings: (a) the admission that he could not claim their gift as a necessity (verses 10-13), (b) a rehearsal of their former liberality (verses 14-17, and (c) a blessing upon their present sacrifice offered through him to God (verses 18-20).

Verse 1

Paul heaped loving title upon loving title to express his affection for the Philippians, here being no less than five expressions of endearment. Significantly, they are Paul’s joy at the time present, but in prospect of the Second Advent they will be at that time his crown.

The Greeks had two words for crown, one signifying the diadem of the emperor, and the other referring to the garland that decorated the winner in an athletic contest, the latter being “*stephanos*, the wreath of victory in the games.” (H. C. Hewlett, A New Testament Commentary, Philippians, p. 479)

William Barclay, The Letters to the Philippians, Etc., p. 70 pointed out a second meaning of “*stephanos*,” just as applicable here as the other: “It was the crown with which guests were crowned when they sat at a banquet, at some time of great joy. It is as if Paul said that the Philippians were the crown of all his toil . . . that at the final banquet of God they were his festal crown.”

“So stand firm . . .” James Montgomery Boice, *Philippians*, p. 260 said: “If we were writing the passage and were using Paul’s image, we would likely speak of invasion, marching, or conquest!” Paul does not do that, but speaks correctly of standing.”

It has been pointed out that Christ conquers new territory; his followers stand firm in holding what Christ gains. This is not the only possible analogy of Christian evangelism, but it is surely one.

The great challenge for the Christian is not that of overcoming someone else with the knowledge of the truth, but with himself standing faithfully for the Lord till life’s end.

Verses 2-3

This passage is one of the most precious in the New Testament, because of its mention of the Book of Life.

“I urge Euodia . . . Syntyche . . .” The repetition of “I urge” was probably for the purpose of avoiding any semblance of partiality. No one can say just who these ladies were; but their trouble is easy enough to understand. They had a falling out or disagreement over some point of doctrine or practice, and the animosity between them had become a problem in the whole church. In this passage Paul boldly confronted the difficulty and demanded reconciliation.

B. C. Caffin, *Pulpit Commentary*, Vol. 20, *Philippians*, p. 156 considered the repeated “I urge” as a probable indication that both ladies were at fault.”

“True comrade . . .” Who was this? H. C. Hewlett, *op. cit.*, p. 479 allowed: “That it could have been Luke;” John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament*: “Made a conjecture that it was Silas;” Clement of Alexandria taught: “That this referred to Paul’s wife!” J. R. Dummelow, *Commentary on the Holy Bible*, p. 977 said: It was probably a proper name on which Paul made a pun as in the case of Onesimus (profitable).” It is hardly necessary to add that we do not know who it was. If this writer were asked to guess at it, the answer would be Epaphroditus.”

“In the Lord . . .” This expression absolutely dominates Paul’s writings, In verse 1, Paul commanded the Philippians to “stand fast” in the Lord; and here those two women at odds with each other were told to be of the same mind ”in the Lord.”

As John A. Knight, Beacon Bible Commentary, Vol IX, Philippians, p.346 said: “It is implied here that outside Christ there can be no unity; one cannot love man without loving God.” Most disputes are insoluble, except from the disciplines that come of being “in the Lord.”

“These women . . . labored with me in the gospel . . .” Not merely these two women, but Lydia also had been an extensive helper of Paul’s gospel labors at Philippi.

Paul could not forget their helpfulness, their love of the truth and their sacrifices on his behalf; but now all that was wrecked by an unfortunate disagreement. No wonder Paul attempted to heal it.

“With Clement also . . .” The language as it stands, is a reference to Clement having been, along with Paul, helped by the two sisters in disagreement.

“And the rest of my fellow-workers . . .” Paul’s mention, a moment before, of the two sisters in disagreement having helped his own labors, and with Clement also immediately brought into view a large number of others who had been Paul’s fellow-laborers, no less than Clement!

Paul declared that God has the whole record in the Book of Life. Significantly there is a register of the redeemed kept by God Himself without error. As R. P. Martin, The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, Philippians, p. 167 said, “Christian service may pass unnoticed on earth; but the important thing is that God takes note, and will praise at the last.” (1 Corinthians 4:5)

One’s having his name inscribed in the Book of Life does not of itself alone, assure eternal life. As B. C. Caffin, op. ci., p. 156 said, “This does not necessarily involve the doctrine of an unconditional, irreversible predestination, or the phrase to blot out of my book (Revelation 3:5) could not be used.”

Verse 4

“In the Lord . . .” The type of rejoicing commanded here is possible only for the redeemed in Christ.

Verse 5

“Moderation” may be a better word here than “forbearance” because it covers a lot more ground. The Christian is to be moderate in all things, acting with restraint, and without bigotry, avoiding all excesses and extremes of every kind.

“The Lord is near . . .” As Francis Foulkes, *New Bible Dictionary, Revised*, p. 1138 said: “This may refer to the nearness of the Lord to the believer, or to the nearness of His coming.”

Verse 6

“Be anxious for nothing . . .” In Matthew 6:25-34, our Lord gave extensive admonition on the subject of anxiety and reference is here made to the comment on those passages. In order to avoid anxiety here, Paul followed exactly the instruction given by the Lord during His ministry.

We must agree with William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary, Philippians*, p. 194 that Paul’s instruction here does not forbid: “Kindly concern . . . genuine interest in the welfare of others.”

THANKSGIVING IN EVERYTHING

“In everything . . .” It appears that Paul saw prayer as the fitting human response to every conceivable situation that might arise in life; and the position of this phrase at the beginning of a long clause would make it applicable throughout the clause, with the meaning that “thanksgiving” should characterize every prayer, no matter what unusual or extreme life-situation might have triggered the prayer.

But how can anyone be thankful “in everything?” George Henry Stephenson, in a sermon stressed the following:

In youth one may thank God for the brightness and prospect of life beckoning to the future.

In age one may thank God that life has extended so long.

In health one may thank God for the greatest of physical blessings.

In illness one may thank God for wise physicians, kind nurses and the tender concern of loved ones.

In wealth one may thank God for having been made the steward of such large accounts.

In poverty one may thank God for him, who though he was rich became poor that he might make many rich, and for his special promise, “Blessed are the poor.”

In the event of great loss one may thank God for blessings he is yet permitted to retain.

In death itself the Christian can thank God for Jesus Christ our Lord, for the hope of eternal life.

At all times and places, in all circumstances and situations, the Christian will thank God for Jesus Christ our Lord, for the Father who gave Him, for the life He lived, the death He died, His resurrection from the dead, and for His everlasting gospel which we have received.

“Let your requests be made known to God . . .” But, does not God already know everything? In a sense, of course, He does; but the command of God, as uttered here through an apostle, explains the manner chosen by the Father, through which He will know “the requests” of His children.

Note, too that this apostolic order says nothing of making known one’s needs or desires. God already knows about them; but our “requests” . . . they do not even become requests until they are made known to God in the prayers of His people.

WHAT SHOULD BE REQUESTED OF GOD?

The forgiveness of sins. Christians are commanded to pray for the forgiveness of their sins. (Acts 8:22)

The forgiveness of the sins of others. Both our Lord (Luke 23:34) and the martyr Stephen (Acts 7:60) prayed for the forgiveness of the sins of others.

The wisdom of God. “But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.” (James 1:5)

Relief from bitter experiences. Jesus Himself prayed that “the cup” might pass from Him. (Matthew 26:39)

Our daily bread. This line from the Lord’s prayer probably has the larger meaning of “food for today.” In any event, prayer for all of life’s basic necessities, such as food, clothing, and shelter, is authorized by this model prayer.

Laborers in the vineyard. “Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest.” (Matthew 9:38)

Laborers already working. Paul admonished the Ephesians to: “And pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel.” (Ephesians 6:19)

For mercy. “Therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in the time of need.” (Hebrews 4:16)

For the sick. “The prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick.” James 5:14-15)

Deliverance from temptation. “Do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” (Matthew 6:13)

For them that despitefully use us. This includes prayer for enemies. (Matthew 5:44)

In everything. The text before us stresses the need of prayer for all of life’s conditions and circumstances. Any list, therefore, of things we should pray for must be partial and incomplete. “Everything” certainly covers a lot of territory. Only one other specific will be noted.

For rulers and authorities. Paul singled this out as an object of prayer, in all probability, because it is easily over-looked, especially in a corrupt age like that of the New Testament era. Paul said: “First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, in order that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior.” (1Timothy 2:1-3)

WAYS IN WHICH GOD ANSWERS PRAYER

How does God answer prayer? First of all, God answers prayer literally, as when Joshua prayed for the sun to stand still, Elijah prayed for drouth or rain, and when Jonah prayed to God from the belly of the great fish. The New Testament confirmation of God’s literal answer to prayer is found in James 5:16-18.

The following are some additional ways in which God answers prayer.

God answers prayer by a refusal to grant the petition. In 2 Corinthians 12:7-10 Paul detailed the fact of his earnest prayers that God would take away his thorn in the flesh, a thing God declined to do.

God answers prayer by sending something different from what was requested.

Jesus prayed for the “cup” to pass from Him; instead of allowing this, God sent an angel to strengthen the Lord. Men may pray for lighter loads, but God may send them greater strength.

God answers prayer gradually.

God answers prayer after delay. It seems strange that God would delay to answer Christian prayers, but it may not be denied. The angel sent to stay the hand of Abraham about to offer Isaac delayed until the latest possible moment. The wine had run completely out at Cana before the Lord answered His mother's implied request.

In the New Testament, Jairus came to the Lord; and during Jesus' delay, his daughter died. Here also may be the explanation of why the Lord often delays the answer to prayer; it is that He may give something far more wonderful, or far better, than what was requested. In the case of Jairus' daughter, a resurrection was far better and far more wonderful than a healing would have been.

God also answers prayer through natural laws and processes. When fields yield richly; when people enjoy good health; when nature pours out abundant blessings; all of these things are God's answer to His children's prayers for daily bread, nor should the giver be overlooked merely because the normal processes of nature through which his blessings were conveyed are recognized and partially understood.

By way of summarizing the ways in which God answers prayer, some of the ways are:

He may answer it literally.

He may refuse to grant the petition.

He may send something different from what was requested.

He may answer it gradually.

He may answer it after long delay.

He may answer through natural laws and processes.

Verse 7

"The peace of God . . ." J. R. Hendriksen, *Ibid.*, p. 196, described this as :
"The smile of God reflected in the soul of the believer, the heart's calm after Calvary's storm, the conviction that God who spared not His own Son will surely also, along with Him, freely give us all things. (Romans 8:32)"

"Surpasses all comprehension . . ." Those who see it manifested in the lives of Christians cannot understand such peace exhibited despite the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune encountered by them; even those who possess it

cannot fully understand it; but those who have experienced it would not exchange it for anything that the world has to offer.

“Shall guard your hearts . . .” The scholars tell us that this is translated from a military term signifying a sentinel guarding a city. As Philippi was a Roman colony populated with many retirees from the military establishment of Rome, this must rank as another marvelous analogy drawn by Paul from things which he observed in his travels.

“In Christ Jesus . . .” Paul’s favorite expression again appears here. To understand all that is meant by these words is to grasp in its fullness the whole theology of the apostle Paul, and indeed all the New Testament writers. One may only be amazed that so many commentators pay no attention at all to these most important words. Out of Christ there is nothing; in Him is the life eternal; and men (let all men hear it) are “baptized into Christ,” as Paul himself declared. (Romans 6:3) What about faith? No unbeliever can be baptized, and no believer is in Christ till he is baptized into Him.

Verse 8

“Finally . . .” Paul had already written this in 3:1; but as B. C. Caffin, *op. cit.*, p. 157 put it: “Again and again he prepares to close his epistle, but he cannot at once bid farewell to his beloved Philippians.”

Thought control is clearly the practice Paul enjoined here. If men would live correctly in God’s sight, let them think of those qualities which possess positive values. Thinking of such things will lead to speaking of them, as exemplified in the lives of associates, thus contributing to the joy and unity of Christian fellowship.

Verse 9

This is the equivalent of Paul’s frequent admonition to follow (or imitate) him as he followed (or imitated) Christ.

“The God of peace . . .” In verse 7, Paul had just written “the peace of God;” and, as Alfred Barry, *op. cit.*, p.87 said: “The inversion is striking.” The peace of God passes all understanding, but the God of peace is more, peace being that which is given, and God being the giver.

Verse 10

Paul reserved his expression of thanks to the Philippian congregation for their financial aid, quite properly, to the very last of his letter.

Verse 11

“Not that I speak from want . . .” Francis Foulkes, *op. cit.*, p. 1138 wrote: “Paul uses the word content (a moment later) in the sense of his being independent of circumstances; but his all sufficient resources are by the grace of Christ who lives in him.”

Verse 12

Strange as it may appear to us, Paul was, in this verse, disclaiming any need of the Philippians' gift, rejoicing in the reception of it for the benefit of them, not to himself! This is simply astounding. Robert H. Mounce, *Wycliffe Bible Commentary, New Testament*, p. 775 put it: “While not dependent on the gift, or even seeking it, Paul rejoiced in that such sacrifices were well-pleasing to God and beneficial to the giver.”

Verse 13

Paul truly felt that it was impossible for life to confront him with anything that he and the Lord could not handle!

As J. B. Knight, *op. cit.*, p. 350 correctly noted: “Christ is the source of Paul’s power; it is Christ who is continually infusing power into him.” The key words of this verse, as so often in Paul’s writings, are “IN HIM.”

Verse 14

“My affliction . . .” Notice that Paul does not say “want,” leaving room for what he had already implied, namely that he did not actually need their gift.

William Hendriksen, *op. cit.*, p. 207, saw this verse as Paul’s statement that their gift had “relieved his need;” but it seems more accurate to see it as encouraging in his affliction (imprisonment).

Verses 15-16

From the beginning of Paul’s experience at Philippi, the people there were noted for their liberality and hospitality. It was from the house of Lydia that Paul preached the gospel there. Even before Paul was out of Macedonia, they began sending him money. “Truly the stamp of Luke’s and Lydia’s commendable generosity was upon this congregation.” (Hendriksen, *Ibid.* p. 207)

Verse 17

Again Paul stressed the truth that he did not covet their money, and yet he was glad for what they had done. Their eternal reward was enhanced and extended as a result of their generous treatment of the apostle.

Verse 18

The apostle “credits the givers with the proper spirit. That is, the attitude of faith, love and gratitude.” (Hendriksen, Ibid. p. 209) Notice how giving is described in the terms of the worship of God, being a “sacrifice,” “an odor of a sweet smell,” a figurative reference to the incense burned in the tabernacle, symbolical of the prayers of God’s people.

Verse 19

Hendriksen, Ibid., p. 210 made a distinction between God’s general providence over all of His creation, including even plants and animals, and: “The very special providence of which believers are the objects,” applying the latter to the Philippians as promised in this verse. Paul’s teaching in 2 Corinthians 9:6-10, coupled with the emphatic blessing upon the Philippians, surely supports such a view.

However, as Hendriksen, Ibid. p. 210 further commented on this: “This does not mean that the Philippians would now be justified in becoming lazy.” “God’s word does not advocate fanaticism nor does it say that one should throw his pocketbook into the nearest river and then announce that he is going to live on faith” (Tenney). To be sure, God was taking care of Paul, but one of the ways in which he was doing so was exemplified by the gift from Philippi.”

Verse 20

This short, beautiful doxology, so characteristic of Paul’s letters, is concluded with the solemn “Amen.”

Verses 21-23

Many have supposed that Paul might have written these final verses with his own hand, as he sometimes did, thus making such an inscription a kind of signature.

“Greet every saint . . .” Robert H. Mounce, op. cit., p. 777 wrote: “Only here in the New Testament does *hagios* (saint) occur in the singular (fifty-seven times in the plural), and even here it is prefaced by every, a strong reminder that Christianity is a corporate affair.”

“The saints . . . in Caesar’s household . . .” William Barclay, *op. cit.*, p. 87 said: “This is what we would call the Imperial Civil Service.” Caesar’s household was all over the empire, wherever his servants or officers were carrying out the emperor’s orders. William Barclay, *Ibid.*, wrote: “It should be remembered that Paul was in Rome when this was written, justifying the conclusion that “Christianity had infiltrated the highest positions in the empire.”

If slaves of a nobleman in the provinces were willed to the emperor, then upon the death of the nobleman, the slaves would be transferred to Rome, but still retain their family identity, as the “household of Aristobulus” for example.

“The Lord Jesus Christ . . .” The prevalence of this expression in Philippians is significant. Almost every other line in this epistle has it in one form or another, making it rank along with “in Christ” as a distinctive mark of the Pauline theology. All men should praise God for the remarkable beauty and effectiveness of this priceless personal letter reserved through so many dangers and centuries to bless the saints of all ages.