

NOTES ON THE EPISTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS

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PAUL'S LETTER TO THE PHILIPPIANS - WHEN AND WHERE WRITTEN (W. BUNTING)

There can be little doubt that this letter was written from the prison-house in Rome. He refers to the Praetorian guard (Phil.1:13¹) and to Caesar's household (Phil.4:22²). It was written in the hope of an early decision by the Emperor as to his appeal, and his earnest hope and expectation was, that whatever the decision might be, for life or death, Christ should be magnified (Phil.1:20³).

The saints in Philippi had shared with the apostle in the spread of the gospel, and their generosity towards him was manifest from the outset (Phil.4:15⁴,16⁵). They had sent a gift to Paul in the prison in Rome by the hand of Epaphroditus whom the apostle refers to as "my brother, and fellow-worker and fellow-soldier". Unfortunately, Epaphroditus became seriously ill in Rome, and his life was despaired of. However, "God had mercy on him, and not on him only, but on me also, that I might not have sorrow upon sorrow" (Phil.2:27⁶).

1. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.1.13>

2. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.4.22>

3. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.1.20>

4. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.4.15>

5. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil%204.16>

6. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.2.27>

In these circumstances, Paul wrote this delightful letter, and apparently sent it to the saints, overseers and deacons at Philippi by the hand of Epaphroditus. In his final salutation he does not single out individuals, but says, "Salute every saint in Christ Jesus". One's mind runs to such generous people as Lydia, the seller of purple, the unnamed jailor, Euodia, Syntyche and Clement.

(See further details in General Note below)

GENERAL NOTE

When Paul arrived in Europe for the extension of the Lord's work, having been directed to Macedonia by the vision he saw at Troas, he made for "Philippi, which is a city of Macedonia, the first of the district" (Acts 16:12¹). The work began in an unostentatious way. The account by Luke shows the small beginning of a work which was to have a not unimportant place in sacred annals of the work of the Lord. It is said, "On the Sabbath day we went forth without the gate by a river side, where we supposed there was a place of prayer; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which were come together" (Acts 16:13²). Whether it was a synagogue or some other praying place is not told us, but here hearts were won by the story of divine love, amongst such was that of Lydia, the purple-seller.

Such trophies of grace were yet to be augmented by Satan overreaching himself and sending after the preachers for many days the young woman possessed of an evil spirit, but those trophies were not won without grievous bodily suffering on the part of Paul and Silas. The story is well known to us all. Through stripes, imprisonment, stocks and earthquake, at last Paul and Silas sat round the hospitable board of the jailor, who with his whole household had become subjects of God's saving grace and had shown proof thereof in being baptized. Such was the beginning of what became the church in Philippi. Both Lydia and the jailor cared for the preachers in their homes, an example which has happily been followed by many, but besides, the church in

1. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%2016.12>

2. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%2016.13>

Philippi in acknowledgement of the debt they owed to the Lord and His servants sent once and again to the need of Paul and his fellow-workers (Phil.4:15³,16⁴). This same exercise in regard to the apostle's need in early times was revived when Paul was a prisoner in Rome.

Of this he wrote, "But I rejoice in the Lord greatly, that now at length ye have revived your thought for me; wherein ye did indeed take thought, but ye lacked opportunity" (Phil.4:10⁵). How gracious are Paul's words as he speaks of the reviving of their thought, he makes no accusation that they had been lax or indifferent! He quickly adds, "Ye did indeed take thought, but ye lacked opportunity." It was just like how a fond parent would speak of a somewhat forgetful child. They prepared their bounty and entrusted it to the care of Epaphroditus, whom Paul describes as "my brother and fellow-worker and fellow-soldier and your messenger and minister to my need" (Phil.2:25⁶). The long and hazardous journey of those days resulted, either on the journey or at Rome, in sickness which brought him nigh unto death (Phil.2:27⁷), and later, in verse 30, Paul adds, "Because for the work of Christ he came nigh unto death, hazarding his life to supply that which was lacking in your service toward me." Thus we learn that the supplying of the apostle's need was the work of Christ.

3. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.4.15>

4. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil%204.16>

5. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.4.10>

6. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.2.25>

7. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.2.27>

The reception of the gift of the Philippians was the occasion of the writing of this letter. It is a letter of grateful acknowledgement with which no letter of like sort could ever be compared. It is of course an inspired epistle and that accounts for a great part of the difference between it and all other letters, but besides this, there is a human side and here Paul the writer leaves indelibly the impress of his personality. This is true of all Scripture. All is inspired of God, and on all we see the character of the man who wrote.

Whilst Romans is Paul's grand treatise on the gospel, Philippians is his treatise on the spread of the gospel. "Let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ: that, whether I come and see you or be absent, I may hear of your state, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one soul striving for (with, RVM) the faith of the gospel" (Phil.1:27⁸). Earlier, in verse 7, he says, "Both in my bonds and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye are all partakers with me of grace." In this work, alas, there were those who preached Christ of envy and strife, but there were others who did it of good will. But in whatever way the gospel was preached he said, "Whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and therein I rejoice, yea and will rejoice" (verse 18).

In Phil.²⁹ Paul shows the unity of mind which should exist in any church in connexion with its responsibility toward men in the preaching of the message of life and peace. "Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be of the same mind having the same love, being of one accord (joined in soul), of one mind" (verse 2). This is seen in action in the early days in Jerusalem: "And the multitude of them that be-

8. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.1.27>

9. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.2>

lieved were of one heart and soul; ... And with great power gave the apostles their witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all” (Acts 4:32¹⁰,33¹¹). If there is that lowliness of mind, the mind which was in Christ Jesus, there will be little difficulty in maintaining unity; but if faction and vain glorying enter, then unity and peace will flee. These things cannot dwell together. So that saints might have the correct spirit of lowliness of mind before them, he draws that beautiful and entrancing picture of the Lord, of what He was, of His self-emptying, of what He became, and of how He went down, down, down to death, that of the cross. Can pride exist here? Can men preach Christ in pride and self-conceit? They may, but surely it is preaching Christ with their backs to the Crucified and sporting themselves before men. Surely we should preach Christ looking upon Him, and if the preacher keeps looking at this great sight others may be disposed to look also; otherwise they may just look on a preacher with his back to Calvary.

There is one thing that towers above all others in importance in connexion with the preaching of the gospel, and that is, to know Christ who is the Subject of the gospel. Paul says that the gospel is concerning Him, who is of the seed of David, and is declared to be the Son of God with power. God and man – one Christ. It is of the insatiable desire to know Him that Paul speaks in chapter 3: Paul had many natural advantages of birth, religious training, zeal and ability, things connected with the flesh; and on mere worldly attainments he would, no doubt, have risen high in his own nation, and being besides a Roman citizen by birth, he

10. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%204.32>

11. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%204.33>

might have attained to considerable prominence in the empire. But God had other work for him with an infinitely greater recompense at the end. Carnal advantages Paul cast aside as offal, for these were of no value to him as a herald of the crucified Saviour.

There was one thing only which would make him a sufficient minister of the New Covenant, and that was to know Christ Jesus his Lord. No sacrifice was too great and no suffering too painful for him to attain to this goal. He said, “Yea, verily, and I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I suffered the loss of all things ... that I may gain Christ” (Phil.3:8¹²). Those who would preach Christ must make their choice. Are they willing to lose worldly advantages and preferments to gain Christ, so that Christ may so enrich their minds and their thoughts, that as the message of life flows from their lips a crucified and living Saviour may be painted by words glowing with the glory and grace of this Saviour of men. Is it not the case that the words of Balaam are true of some gospel preachers and gospel addresses; “I see Him, but not now: I behold Him, but not nigh”? Many words are spoken, but Christ is lacking. Let us get back again to “the simplicity and the purity that is toward Christ” (2 Cor.11:3¹³).

Let us learn Christ (Eph.4:20¹⁴); let us gain Christ, and then we shall speak from a present and personal knowledge, and let us then note the difference that it will make in ourselves and others. Here in this epistle is the strife of women, alas, of Euodia and

12. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.3.8>

13. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Cor.11.3>

14. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph.4.20>

Syntyche (Phil.4:2¹⁵,3¹⁶). But we have also in contrast the devotedness and self-sacrifice of Paul and Timothy and Epaphroditus and others.

15. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.4.2>

16. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil%204.3>

COMMENTARY ON PHILIPPIANS 1

Phil.1:1¹

Paul does not here describe himself as an apostle of Christ Jesus, as in 2 Cor.1:1², where he links Timothy with himself in addressing the Corinthians. In both epistles to the Corinthians he has to defend his claim to being an apostle (1 Cor.9:1³,2⁴; 2 Cor.11:1-33⁵). Here in Philippians he describes himself and Tim.as bondservants or slaves, bought slaves (1 Cor.6: 20⁶). “To all the saints,” saints are “holy ones,” such as are “sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints” (1 Cor.1:2⁷), that is, saints by effectual calling, they having responded to the call in the gospel. “God chose you from the beginning unto salvation in sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: whereunto He called you through our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thess.2:13⁸,14⁹).

Though all believers in Christ are saints, not all, alas, are saintly in their behaviour. Bishops: a bishop (Gk. episkopos) means an

1. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.1.1>

2. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Cor.1.1>

3. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Cor.9.1>

4. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Cor%209.2>

5. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Cor.11.1-33>

6. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Cor.6.%2020>

7. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Cor.1.2>

8. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Thess.2.13>

9. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Thess%202.14>

overseer or guardian, “a superintendent in the apostolic age and equal to Gk. presbuteros (an elder) in the New Testament.” It conveys the thought of one who watches over others. Deacons: a deacon (Gk. diakonos) is a servant or waiting man. The bishop or overseer is one who is responsible to rule over and care for God’s saints and His work; the deacon or minister is one whose business is to be engaged in the Lord’s work in the ministry of His word and to attend faithfully thereon, and thereby to gain “a good standing, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus” (1 Tim.3:13¹⁰). Overseers and deacons are saints, but not all saints are deacons, and not all deacons are overseers. See 1 Tim.3:1-13¹¹; Tit.1:5-9¹².

Phil.1:2¹³

Paul’s salutation to the Romans and the Corinthians is similar to this here. Peace was the salutation of the Hebrew of the Old Testament and grace is the salutation of the New.

Phil.1:3¹⁴,4¹⁵

To Paul the memory of God’s work in the saints in Philippi was ever sweet. Deep appreciation of God’s grace to them filled his heart with thanksgiving as he made his supplication on their behalf – “making my supplication with joy,” he said. It may not be

10. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Tim.3.13>

11. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Tim.3.1-13>

12. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Titus.1.5-9>

13. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.1.2>

14. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.1.3>

15. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil%201.4>

that we can say this about all for whom we pray, that we make our supplication with joy.

Phil.1:5¹⁶

Paul writes of “all my remembrance of you,” as he thinks of the course they had followed, which no other church had, for only they ministered to his needs in Thessalonica; when he departed from Macedonia, they ministered to him (Phil.4:15¹⁷,16¹⁸). He could not forget these tokens of their love and fellowship. How unlike they were to the gifted and selfish Corinthians! (2 Cor.11:7-10¹⁹; 1 Cor.1:4-7²⁰). Sad it is when gift and greed meet in the same person; the latter destroys the lustre of the former.

Phil.1:6²¹

The good work in the Philippians started with Lydia and the jailor from the time that God’s grace reached their hearts. Both took Paul into their houses and cared for him. Lydia said: “If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there.” And the jailor washed Paul’s stripes and brought him up to his house and set meat before him. It is poor Christianity that says to the needy, “Go in peace, be ye warmed and filled; and yet ye give them not the things needful to the body; what doth it profit?” (Jas.2:16²²). The actions of

16. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.1.5>

17. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.4.15>

18. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil%204.16>

19. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Cor.11.7-10>

20. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Cor.1.4-7>

21. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.1.6>

the Philippians from the first were far otherwise than this. Many years had passed from those early days and they were still maintaining the same good works toward the apostle, and Paul was confident that this would continue. Paul wrote in such wise as believing that the Lord's coming would take place while he and the saints were yet alive, but we know that they have been at rest for long centuries and the Lord has not come yet, but we hope for His coming while we are alive. "The sky, not the grave, is our goal."

Phil.1:7²³

Paul had the saints in his heart as a fond parent, and it was right for him to wish that God's good work in them would be perfected until the Lord's coming. Paul joins bonds with the defence and confirmation of the gospel in his account of his many sufferings for Christ's and the gospel's sake; in 2 Cor.11:16-33²⁴, he speaks of "in prisons more abundantly." Such was the cost to the gospel preachers in the days of the apostles, and of this the Lord forewarned them. In the present we live in a time of freedom from violent persecution, bought for us by the blood of martyrs of former days, but days of violent persecution will come again. That splendid declaration of the apostle Paul makes us all feel very small: "The Holy Spirit testifieth unto me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But I hold not my life of any account, as dear unto myself, so that I may accomplish my course, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:23²⁵,24²⁶). The

22. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James.2.16>

23. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.1.7>

24. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Cor.11.16-33>

Philippians were partakers of grace which ever has supported the suffering witnesses of Christ.

Phil.1:8²⁷

The tender mercies or bowels of Christ Jesus tell of the most intense tenderness, such as a mother's love for her babe; it reveals a yearning and longing that cannot be measured. Only God could see down into the inner, secret parts of Paul's being, and bear witness to the reality of what he says.

Phil.1:9²⁸,10²⁹

The word here for love (Gk. agape), we are told, "expresses a more reasoning attachment (than Gk. philein, to love), of choice and selection ... from a seeing in the object upon whom it is bestowed that which is worthy of regard" (Trench). Here love is to abound "in knowledge and all discernment," not simply to love (philein) instinctively, with a love arising from feelings or natural affection. The consequence of love (agape) working in knowledge and discernment is that the saint may prove the things that differ (see Rom.2:18³⁰), so that points of difference in divine things may be proved and approved. In the study of the word of God there is too much lumping of things together on the part of the ignorant, with the result that there is failure to see the excel-

25. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%2020.23>

26. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%2020.24>

27. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.1.8>

28. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.1.9>

29. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil%201.10>

30. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.2.18>

lence there is in the things wherein God has made a difference. Hence so many wander about in ways displeasing to the Lord and do so, ignorant of the will of God.

Phil.1:10³¹,11³²

Here we have the result of love abounding in knowledge and discernment, that we may be sincere, which means, in the Greek, to be examined in the sun's light and found to be genuine, unmixed and pure; and void of offence, not stumbling or turning aside from the path of obedience and virtue unto the day of Christ; that is, the day of His coming for the saints of this dispensation, when they will appear before the judgement-seat of Christ to receive the things done through the body, whether they be good or bad (2 Cor.5:9³³,10³⁴). The day of Christ should be distinguished from the day of the Lord, which commences with the Lord's return to earth in judgement, for the punishment of the wicked and the deliverance of His suffering people. It is more than a thousand years in extent. Note the words of 2 Pet.3:10³⁵: "The day of the Lord will come as a thief, in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise," and so forth. This is at the time of the judgement of the Great White Throne. See Rev.20:11³⁶,12³⁷: How pleasant it is to contemplate enlightened saints being filled with the fruits (Greek, fruit, RVM) of right-

31. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.1.10>

32. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil%201.11>

33. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Cor.5.9>

34. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Cor%205.10>

35. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Pet.3.10>

36. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rev.20.11>

37. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rev%2020.12>

eousness! Such fruit is to the glory of God and to His praise through Jesus Christ, being the fruit of His Spirit (Gal.5:22³⁸,23³⁹), and the fruit of the light (Eph.5:9⁴⁰). The righteousness we have in Christ through faith is not the righteous acts of the saints (Rev.19:8⁴¹).

Phil.1:12⁴²,13⁴³

The Greek word for “progress” (Gk. prokope, pro = before, kop-to = to strike or cut) is thought to be borrowed from the practice of armies which cut away obstacles which impeded their progress. In the apostle’s case what seemed to be barriers to the spread of the gospel were turned by God as means of spreading it, for each soldier of the Imperial guard to whom Paul was bound from day to day learned that he was a prisoner in the Lord (Eph.4:1⁴⁴) and from him also of the glorious message of the gospel. He was one who was chosen to bear the name of Christ “before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel” (Acts 9:15⁴⁵), to publish the statute, “Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee,” a statute which is the very core of the gospel. How many hardened warriors of Rome heard the divine message of love and mercy from Paul and believed it, the day of

38. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.5.22>

39. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal%205.23>

40. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph.5.9>

41. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rev.19.8>

42. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.1.12>

43. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil%201.13>

44. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph.4.1>

45. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%209.15>

Christ will reveal. That there were some we cannot doubt, for Paul speaks of the progress of the gospel.

Phil.1:14⁴⁶

“Brethren” defines those who are born of God. “In the Lord” shows their position as united together in assembly life, as being subject to Christ as Lord. A fearless leader engenders the same courageous spirit in those that follow. Paul was fearless and tireless. He had had visions of the Lord that dwarfed all men and earthly things which opposed him in his course in the fulfilment of the ministry which he had received of the Lord: even his own life was of small account to him in this great work. No wonder men looking on this man with a poor afflicted body and with many weaknesses, yet fired with a zeal that burned with increasing vehemence, caught somewhat of the same boldness and determination to speak the word of God! This is the powerful weapon put into men’s hands, that the Holy Spirit uses in the carrying on of the work of God, against which the powers of darkness cannot stand.

Phil.1:15⁴⁷,16⁴⁸,17⁴⁹

Motive and effect we do well to keep apart; they are often confused. This portion clearly shows that the gospel may be preached in an envious (jealous of the good fortune of another), factious (faction is the demon of strife) spirit, and some preach-

46. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.1.14>

47. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.1.15>

48. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil%201.16>

49. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil%201.17>

ers may even be actuated by a spirit of covetousness and greed. Yet, despite this, souls may be saved, for God is sovereign and may bless His word though the preacher may not be acting in fellowship with Him. Jonah's message, both in the ship and in Nineveh, was most signally blessed to the turning of the mariners to Jehovah and the Ninevites to repentance, yet he was both a disobedient prophet and one who was angry with the LORD Himself when He showed mercy to the men of Nineveh, and said that he did well to be angry even unto death.

Paul had great difficulty with the Judaizers of his time, in Antioch and Jerusalem, in the Churches of Galatia, and no doubt in Rome also. Such were active in preaching Christ in a party spirit, their object being to stir up affliction for Paul the prisoner, the defender of the fundamental principles of the gospel, which he set out so clearly that there was no room left for legal works or the flesh to glory. On the other hand, there were those in the church of God in Rome who preached out of good will; all honour to them!

Phil.1:18⁵⁰

Paul's view is that of the Lord as to those who use His name and professedly do His work. John said, "Master, we saw one casting out devils (demons) in Thy name; and we forbade him, because he followeth not with us. But Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not: for he that is not against you is for you" (Lk.9:49⁵¹,50⁵²). The name of Jesus is all-powerful, though those who may speak

50. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.1.18>

51. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke.9.49>

52. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Lk%209.50>

it may know little of its power, and those that preach Christ may not be walking with Him, yet the gospel will do its work in the hearts of those who believe. The Lord issues no interdict against using His blessed name. This must not be confused with that other statement of the Lord: “He that is not with Me is against Me; and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth.” The Lord only gathers disciples together according to the principles of His word (Acts 2:41⁵³,42⁵⁴). Alas, there are many who set aside these divine principles and gather according to the doctrines of men, either ancient or modern, and such are scatterers of the Lord’s sheep.

Phil.1:19⁵⁵,20⁵⁶

“My salvation” cannot mean Paul’s assured deliverance from prison, though some have thought so, but rather that salvation indicated in the words, “that in nothing shall I be put to shame, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death.” Paul wished no such calamity to befall him as befell Jn the Baptist, who from his prison sent his disciples to the Lord with the words, “Art Thou He that cometh, or look we for another?” (Matt.11:3⁵⁷). Whether he was in “Doubting Castle,” or whether some other motive caused him to act as he did, it may be impossible to say, but who can doubt that he needed to be saved from such a state that caused him to act as he did? The gloom of discouragement

53. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%202.41>

54. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%202.42>

55. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.1.19>

56. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil%201.20>

57. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt.11.3>

or doubt is as a creeping paralysis from which we all need to be saved. What buoyancy is in the apostle's spirit, when he contemplates Christ being magnified in him, whether by life or death! The preaching and praying of saints on the manward side, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ on the Godward, would effect this glorious result in the apostle's life and testimony right to the end.

Phil.1:21⁵⁸

We have here an intriguing statement, yet it is but the summing up of the previous verses. It is what he puts in other words in different places, as for instance, "God, who separated me, even from my mother's womb, and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him" (Gal.1:15⁵⁹,16⁶⁰). It was not to reveal His Son to Paul, but to reveal His Son in him. "I live; and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal.2:20⁶¹). "Always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our body" (2 Cor.4:10⁶²). The objective in Paul's life was to live Christ; the old Saul of Tarsus was dead, and Christ was living over again on earth in the man Paul the apostle. What a conception! What an expectation and hope. Christ magnified in the body of a man! Of the greatest of worldly men whose portion is in this life, it can be written, "To die is loss", but with Paul and all such-like men, "To die is gain." The reason is, their portion is not in this life, but in the life

58. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.1.21>

59. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.1.15>

60. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal%201.16>

61. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.2.20>

62. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Cor.4.10>

to come. Their treasure is in heaven, where thieves do not break through and steal. What gain it will be! There is our citizenship, our country and our home, our friends, our wealth, and, above all else, the Lamb, our Saviour and our Lord.

Phil.1:22⁶³,23⁶⁴

Paul has just placed before his readers two propositions – to live, and to die. What is meant here by “this is the fruit of my work,” or “this is to me the fruit of work”? “This” points us back to what he has been saying with reference to the purpose of his life, that for him to live was Christ, and that Christ should be magnified in his body. Between living such a life in the flesh, and departing to be with Christ put him in a strait. Which should he choose? Who can answer such a question? No one, unless he is assured, as Paul was, not a great while later than this, when he wrote, “For I am already being offered, and the time of my departure is come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith” (2 Tim.4:6⁶⁵,7⁶⁶), that his time has come to depart and to be with Christ. We all want to live until we have borne such fruit in our lives to God as it is His will we should, and then to be called home is the best for us. Those who live Christ live fruitful and victorious lives.

Phil.1:24⁶⁷,25⁶⁸

63. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.1.22>

64. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil%201.23>

65. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Tim.4.6>

66. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Tim%204.7>

67. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.1.24>

68. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil%201.25>

The need of the saints ever pressed itself upon Paul, and his will was to abide with them, and he seemed confident that this was the Lord's will for him at that time also. It is, I think, better to render "your progress and joy of faith," of the AV/KJV, than "in the faith," of the RV. Though the definite article is before faith here, it is the subjective faith of the Philippians, rather than objective faith, i.e. the faith. The definite article is frequently in the Greek before faith where it is subjective faith. See Rom.10:17⁶⁹; 2 Cor.1:24⁷⁰; 2 Cor.4:13⁷¹, etc.

Phil.1:26⁷²

We have here the unique expression concerning the boasting of the Philippians- "Christ Jesus in me" (Paul). In Christ Jesus denotes Him in whom their boasting ever was, and the presence of the apostle with them again a further cause for glorying.

Phil.1:27⁷³

"Manner of life" literally means "to behave as citizens"; and remembering that our citizenship is in heaven (Phil.3:20⁷⁴), we see how fitting a worthy manner of life is for such citizens, so that by life as well as by lip the gospel may be commended. How necessary also is divine unity to the progress of the gospel! The Lord prayed that those whom He was leaving as His witnesses on earth

69. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.10.17>

70. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Cor.1.24>

71. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Cor.4.13>

72. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.1.26>

73. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.1.27>

74. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.3.20>

might be one (Jn 17:21⁷⁵,22⁷⁶). Paul here entreats the Philippians “to stand fast in one spirit, with one soul.” Division blights divine testimony. How successful the enemy has been in causing this! The striving (striving together) is not for, but with (RVM) the faith of the gospel. The gospel is the weapon which the combatants use in the combat against the powers of darkness. Striving (Gk. sunathleo) comes from the Greek word for athlete, so the church in Philippi was a group of heaven’s athletes engaged in a mighty contest of rescuing souls from the power of darkness.

Phil.1:28⁷⁷

Christians are not to be scared or terrified by their opponents. The athlete who is afraid of his opponent enters the stadium in the spirit of a beaten man. He that fears God need fear the face of no man. “Who art thou, that thou art afraid of man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass?” (Isa.51:12⁷⁸). The opposition of the adversaries is, Paul says, a demonstration or omen of their destruction and of our salvation in due time from them. God will in due time deal with opposers and save the faithful witnesses.

Phil.1:29⁷⁹,30⁸⁰

75. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%2017.21>

76. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jn%2017.22>

77. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.1.28>

78. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa.51.12>

79. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.1.29>

80. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil%201.30>

“To believe in Him” here, presents faith in the same sense as in 1 Jn 5:4⁸¹, 5⁸²; “This is the victory that hath overcome the world, even our faith, and who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?” It is not here the initial act of faith which brings salvation to the believing sinner, but the faith which is continuous, the victorious faith of the believer in an antagonistic world, which is granted to him on the behalf of Christ, both to believe on Him and to suffer in His behalf. Those who are of this faith will be sufferers, be their sufferings great or small. The same conflict which was in the Lord, and also in Paul, will be in them. Conflict is ever known by the athlete, the violent struggle which they had seen in Paul in past days, and which still continued in him in the then present time as a prisoner of Rome.

81. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20John%205.4>

82. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Jn%205.5>

COMMENTARY ON PHILIPPIANS 2

Phil.2:1¹

Here the apostle raises powerful arguments, based on Christian experience, in reference to what he is about to put before them as to the need of being of one mind and having the same love. There could be no doubt that the Philippians had known comfort in Christ, for He is a Comforter, as is also the Holy Spirit. Had they not known the consolation (or encouragement) of love? for God's love had been shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Spirit, as in the case of the Rom.(Rom.5:5²), that blessed restfulness that only love can minister to a restless and storm-tossed soul. They could not have missed having known that fellowship with the Father and the Son, that the indwelling Holy Spirit makes possible for those to know in whom He dwells (1 Jn 1:1-7³; 2 Cor.13:14⁴); this fellowship is to be experienced through walking in the light. And of tender mercies and compassions, who should know more of these than those who know the yearning love of the Father, Son and Spirit for the children of God? The Philippians had known all these. "If" here is not the "if" of doubt, but the "if" which forms the premise of an argument.

Phil.2:2⁵

1. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.2.1>

2. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.5.5>

3. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20John%201.1-7>

4. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Cor.13.14>

5. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.2.2>

What can be more disastrous to an army facing an enemy than dis-unity? Dis-unity amongst saints is a tragedy, and we are in this day of sectarianism surrounded by it. The apostle has just been viewing the saints as striving together with the faith of the gospel, but if through dis-unity their team-work is destroyed, how helpless they will become! Instead of striving together against the common enemy they would be striving against one another. Paul's joy over them was in their being of the same mind and having the same love. It is said of the multitude of the disciples in Jerusalem in the early days, that they were of one heart and soul (Acts 4:32⁶). What progress was made in those early days as the result of this unity! "Of one mind" means "joined in soul."

Phil.2:3⁷,4⁸

Some words have both a good and a bad meaning according to the context in which they are found, but faction is ever a bad word. It was used in the past of such as canvassed for public office, intriguing, and doing anything for gain or ambition, courting applause. It has been called the demon of strife. Vainglory is simply empty pride. In contrast to striving for applause or empty glory, saints should be characterised by lowliness of mind, humility, modesty, each esteeming the other better, a more excellent man, than himself. How foolish is the practice of peering into and preening oneself before, the mirror of self-admiration! The women who served at the door of the Tent of Meeting of old gave their copper mirrors to provide the Laver for the cleansing

6. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%204.32>

7. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.2.3>

8. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil%202.4>

of the priests in the service of God. A worthy example! Saints are not to be looking, viewing intently, their own things, matters, interests, qualities, or advantages, or whatever would engender pride of heart, but rather the things or excellencies of others. We have to be exceedingly careful in the consideration of our own things that we do not fall a prey to self-gratification as to what we are or have.

Phil.2:5⁹,6¹⁰

Here we have the humility of Christ Jesus set as a pattern of mind for those who would follow Him. Men by nature are proud, some more than others, but by the contemplation of Christ His lowly mind is to become ours. The mind of Christ is, that He who is, and was, and ever will be, in the form (Gk. *morphe*) of God took the form of a servant. He was originally (RVM) in the form of God, and “none can be in the form of God who is not God.” “*Morphe* (form) ... signifies the form as it is the utterance of the inner life,” and “mode of existence.” Being truly and fully God, He did not grasp, as a prize in rapine or robbery, at being on equality with God, for He was equal in all the attributes and prerogatives of Deity, of glory, honour, majesty, and so forth, which are peculiar to, and exclusively those of, Deity.

Phil.2:7¹¹,8¹²

9. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.2.5>

10. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil%202.6>

11. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.2.7>

12. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil%202.8>

He being God, it was impossible for Him to grasp anything as a prize and so enrich Himself, but He could empty Himself, He could become poor; “Though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor” (2 Cor.8:9¹³). He could not empty Himself of the form of God, but He “emptied, stripped Himself of the insignia of majesty,” as is implied in Jn 17:5¹⁴: “And now, O Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine own Self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was.” This casts light on the self-emptying of the Lord. He could not divest Himself of that glory which is inherent in Divine Being, the glory of the only begotten Son (Jn 1:14¹⁵), which the apostles beheld, veiled as it was by the veil of His flesh, and so tempered to their sight; but of that glory which is associated with Deity on the throne of heaven He emptied Himself in His self-humiliation and taking the form (Gk. morphē) of a servant (bondservant). The two actions coincide, the self-emptying, and the taking of the form of a bondservant.

As with the form of God, so with the form of a bondservant, all the characteristic attributes of bondservice are implied, such as subjection and obedience and all that goes with bondservice. In this taking the form of a bondservant is implied the Lord’s humanity. He who is Lord of all became Jehovah’s Servant to minister to others and to die for them. See Matt.20:28¹⁶, and note the context. “The likeness of men” strengthens the former statement, “the form of a servant,” for man was made to be God’s bondservant, which the apostle gladly acknowledges in chapter 1:1 when

13. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Cor.8.9>

14. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%2017.5>

15. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%201.14>

16. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt.20.28>

he writes of himself and Tim. being bond-servants of Christ Jesus. Sinners are bondservants broken loose from their Divine Master and Maker, and this rebellion will become more manifest yet, as Ps.2:3¹⁷ clearly shows. Christ came in the likeness (Gk. homoimati) of men, truly man, but with a difference, for He was not man utterly; He was God, the Word, who had become flesh (Jn 1:14¹⁸), and He was only in the likeness (homoimati) of sinful flesh (Rom.8:3¹⁹). He was found in fashion (Gk. schemati) as a man.

This is how men found Him; in His outward appearance there was no apparent difference between Him and other men. The Jewish people condemned Him, because He being Man made Himself God (Jn 10:33²⁰). Pilate and the Lord's accusers took Him for a man merely (Isa.53:2²¹,3²²). The words form (morphe), likeness (homoima), fashion (schema), are worthy of careful study. There is a grading of thought from morphe, the form as expressive of the inner life, to schema, the outward, superficial appearance. He who humbled Himself from the throne of God to the stable in Bethlehem to be Man on earth, humbled Himself still further, becoming obedient, as Jehovah's Servant, to death, the death of the cross, the death of a slave or a common criminal. Mystery of mysteries!

Phil.2:9²³,10²⁴,11²⁵

17. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps.2.3>

18. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%201.14>

19. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.8.3>

20. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%2010.33>

21. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa.53.2>

22. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa%2053.3>

The former verses describe the Lord's descent from the throne to the cross, these show the ascent from the cross to the throne. Christ emptied and humbled Himself, but God highly exalted Him, giving Him a name that is above every name. There are differences of opinion as to what this name is, as to whether it is the name "Jesus" or a new name as yet unknown to us. It should, I think, be noted that this name which has been given to Him is given in connexion with His exaltation, whereas the name Jesus was given when He humbled Himself and became the Babe of Bethlehem. It seems to me that this is the name referred to in Rev.3:12²⁶, "Mine own new name," which He promised to write upon the overcomer of the church in Philadelphia.

It seems to be connected with the thought of overcoming, for it was after the Lord had overcome all that was opposed to Him and had triumphed through the cross, that this name was given to Him, befitting the Lord as Victor in resurrection; thus the name of the Great Overcomer will be written on all overcomers. But on the other hand men in heaven, on earth, and under the earth, will be compelled to bow in the name of Jesus, the name that so many have despised, and the name of the rejected One, and to acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, and that to the glory of God the Father, the Father of His co-equal Son.

Phil.2:12²⁷,13²⁸

23. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.2.9>

24. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil%202.10>

25. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil%202.11>

26. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rev.3.12>

27. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.2.12>

28. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil%202.13>

The Philippians were dear to Paul. He called them “my beloved.” They had been obedient to God both when the apostle was present with them and when he was absent. In the light of all he has just written as to the humiliation and exaltation of the Lord, he calls on them to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling. This is not salvation from sin’s penalty (which was a past experience with them) but from sin’s power. We all need deliverance from “the power of cancelled sin.” We need to know deliverance from the power of sins which have been forgiven that they may not still enslave us after we are saved. The drunkard, after he has been forgiven, needs to be saved from the sin of drunkenness, the gambler from gambling, the railer from railing, and so on. The old roots of sin stick fast in the flesh and are a trouble to us like bad teeth. Deliverance does not arise from ourselves. We are commended to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, but whence comes the power? The answer is, It is God that worketh in us first to will, to make us willing to be saved from all evils, and then to work for His good pleasure. He cannot save the saint against his will from any evil practice, even as He cannot save a sinner from hell against his will. But the power to save in each case is available if there be the will to be saved, so that the sinner may be saved eternally and the saint have a saved life and not a lost one.

Phil.2:14²⁹,15³⁰,16³¹

How much harm has been done by saints murmuring and disputing! Think of Jehovah’s pattern Servant: “He shall not cry,

29. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.2.14>

30. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil%202.15>

31. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil%202.16>

nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench” (Isa.42:2³²,3³³). He was holy, guileless (harmless), undefiled (Heb.7:26³⁴). We should count it an honour to be engaged in the lowliest part of the Lord’s service, and carry it out with a sweet uncomplaining attitude of mind. It is to be coveted to be blameless and unblemished children of God living in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. The world has not changed its character, nor can it, since Paul’s time; and the present generation is perhaps more perverse than the past. The children of God are to be lights or luminaries (as the lights of heaven that shine in the darkness) in the world. The world would be without light save for them. “Ye are the light of the world,” said the Lord to His disciples (Matt.5:14³⁵). The work of those who have been illuminated is to hold forth the word of life. If the Philippians so continued, then Paul would have whereof to glory in the day of Christ; but if they failed in their testimony, in so far as that is concerned, Paul would have run and laboured in vain.

Phil.2:17³⁶,18³⁷

Offered here is “poured out” as a drink offering (2 Tim.4:6³⁸), which means to give his life. This pouring out should not be confused with the Lord’s emptying of Himself (verse 7). The empty-

32. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa.42.2>

33. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa%2042.3>

34. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Heb.7.26>

35. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt.5.14>

36. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.2.17>

37. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil%202.18>

38. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Tim.4.6>

ing coincided with His incarnation, not with His death on the cross. But Paul's pouring out of himself was in his life being spent in the service of others, and he reached that point in 2 Tim.4:6³⁹. If Paul poured out his life upon the sacrifice of the faith of the saints and on their priestly service in their witness for Christ, then he rejoiced and congratulated them, and in the same manner they were to rejoice and congratulate him.

Phil.2:19⁴⁰,20⁴¹,21⁴²

Paul's hoping and acting in the Lord shows how truly his actions and thoughts were governed by the Lord's will. "If the Lord will" should be a governing factor in the lives of all believers (Jas.4:15⁴³). Through the visit of Timothy to Philippi Paul expected to learn of their spiritual state and might be comforted by his report. He said that He had no man like Timothy who would genuinely care for them. Even in Paul's day there was not a surfeit of spiritual men of worth. We need not wonder that this is so in our time. Many then, as now, sought their own things and not the things of Jesus Christ.

Phil.2:22⁴⁴,23⁴⁵,24⁴⁶

39. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Tim.4.6>

40. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.2.19>

41. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil%202.20>

42. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil%202.21>

43. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James.4.15>

44. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.2.22>

45. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil%202.23>

46. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil%202.24>

The proof of Timothy was in his being a tried and consequently approved man. He was Paul's child in faith (1 Tim.1:2⁴⁷), and as a child to a father, he served as a bondservant with his spiritual father in the gospel. This tried and trusted man was soon to be sent to Philippi, as soon as Paul saw how it would go with himself. He seemed confident in the Lord that he would be liberated and would himself visit them. It is generally held that he was set at liberty, and visited Ephesus (1 Tim.1:3⁴⁸; 2 Tim.1:15-18⁴⁹), Macedonia, and Miletus (2 Tim.4:20⁵⁰). He hoped to visit not only Philippi (Phil.1:25⁵¹), but also Colossae (Philn.22). Then finally he hoped to winter at Nicopolis (Tit.3:12⁵²), where, it has been suggested, but without scriptural evidence, that he was arrested, and sent to Rome for his second term of imprisonment in Rome, which was his last. There Nero, that bestial man, killed one of the noblest characters that ever lived.

Phil.2:25⁵³,26⁵⁴,27⁵⁵

What a number of glorious titles this man has, far greater than the titles of nobility or royalty – my brother, fellow-worker, fellow-soldier, your apostle and minister to my need! Crowns, coronets, orders, medals and ribbons mark the world's great

47. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Tim.1.2>

48. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Tim.1.3>

49. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Tim.1.15-18>

50. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Tim.4.20>

51. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.1.25>

52. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Titus.3.12>

53. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.2.25>

54. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil%202.26>

55. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil%202.27>

ones, but these honours are nothing compared with the honours of Epaphroditus. The diadems of the Caesars are lost in the rubble of Rome, but these men who lived within its walls, and, in Paul's and Timothy's cases, its prisons, shall wear the crowns and unfading laurel of heaven. Paul counted it necessary to send Epaphroditus to Philippi, whence he had come bearing the gift of the Philippian saints to Paul. In this work of mercy he had almost lost his life, whether on the way or at Rome we know not, but he had been at death's door. But God had mercy both on him, and on Paul that he might not have sorrow upon sorrow. Epaphroditus was glad to return, for Paul says that "he longed after you all, and was sore troubled, because ye heard that he was sick." This is one of those affectionate touches that show the anxiety of love.

Phil.2:28⁵⁶,29⁵⁷,30⁵⁸

Paul sent Epaphroditus the more diligently because of his longing for the Philippian saints, for they had heard that he was sick. This shows how news travelled throughout the Roman world from assembly to assembly. Paul said that they were to receive him in the Lord with joy, and honour him for what he had done. Epaphroditus left Paul, carrying, it is believed, this wondrous epistle back with him, a much greater gift than Paul had received, necessary as were the material comforts which the Philippians had sent to him.

56. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.2.28>

57. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil%202.29>

58. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil%202.30>

COMMENTARY ON PHILIPPIANS 3

Phil.3:1¹ Finally, in conclusion, rejoice, be joyful, in the Lord. Rejoice is also used in salutation- Farewell. The great spirit of the apostle rises above his sorrow alluded to in the former chapter, and he strikes a joyful note, for well he knew the meaning of what he wrote to the Corinthians at an earlier time, “Our light affliction, which is for the moment, worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory” (2 Cor.4:17²). It was not irksome for him to write, and it was safe for the Philippians to get such an epistle with such truths.

Phil.3:2³,3⁴

Paul calls the Judaizers dogs. They were the evil workers from whom Paul suffered so much. They were also the concision or the cutters. Circumcision was with them a mere rite which bore no relation to their inward state; it was as the gashings and the mutilations of the heathen. The saints were the circumcision, for they had been “circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands, in the putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ” (Col.2:11⁵). Paul wrote of this in other words to the Romans; “Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you” (Rom.8:9⁶). Hence Paul

1. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.3.1>

2. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Cor.4.17>

3. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.3.2>

4. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil%203.3>

5. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.2.11>

wrote as above, “We ... worship (Gk. latreuo, religiously serve) by the Spirit of God, and glory in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.” Here the believer in Christ parts company with the mere religionist, whether Jew, Roman Catholic, Episcopalian, Presbyterian, or any other, all who depend on mere ceremonials, and promote the doctrine of perfecting the flesh. The fundamental doctrine of the faith is, “Ye must be born again,” “born of the Spirit.” “The flesh profiteth nothing.”

Phil.3:4⁷,5⁸,6⁹

Here is a veritable galaxy of qualifications which would dazzle any who were seeking perfection in the flesh. Dare any one rest in confidence as to eternal peace upon any one or all of these things which were so much admired in Jewish society? Circumcision in Paul’s case had been attended to scrupulously; his pedigree was correct, he being of Israel and Benjamin; his parents were both Hebrews, who adhered to the Hebrew language and customs, and in strict upbringing and profession he was a Pharisee, “a son of Pharisees” (Acts 23:6¹⁰). His zeal could never be called in question, for he persecuted the church of God in Jerusalem and laid it waste (Acts 8:3¹¹), and as touching the law’s righteousness men (not God) found him blameless. Truly he was a pattern of a man in the flesh, which availed much in time, but nothing in eternity.

6. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.8.9>

7. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.3.4>

8. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil%203.5>

9. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil%203.6>

10. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%2023.6>

11. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%208.3>

Phil.3:7¹²,8¹³

Paul was not only born again; he was soundly converted. He stepped out boldly upon the doctrine of Christ – “It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing.” When the Lord spoke those words, “many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him” (Jn 6:63¹⁴,66¹⁵). Many still cling to the flesh and seek the worldly gains the flesh brings, but Paul sought a truer gain. He suffered the loss, the confiscation, of all things, and in his old age he still viewed those things as loss, as he did in the early days of his first love, when he regarded them as dung, or offal to be cast to the dogs. Christ was Paul’s gain or enrichment, and in order to advance in that knowledge which eclipses all other forms of knowledge, the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord, he regarded all else as worthless. No one who reads Paul’s writings can fail to see the richness of his mind in the knowledge of Christ, and many, many have been enriched by him.

Phil.3:9¹⁶

What were his earliest thoughts about the righteousness of God were still his thoughts after long years of persecution and privation, that his righteousness should not be a legal righteousness of his own, but that which is through faith in Christ, even that righteousness of God which rests upon faith and not upon

12. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.3.7>

13. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil%203.8>

14. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%206.63>

15. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jn%206.66>

16. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.3.9>

works of law. God's righteousness in Christ was his soul's resting place and his hope for glory.

Phil.3:10¹⁷,11¹⁸

The true knowledge of Christ is not theoretical or merely historical, it is experimental and practical; it affects the whole life and conduct of the person who has it and seeks it. With some the knowledge of Jesus Christ is no better than the knowledge of Julius Caesar so far as yielding any real fruit in their lives is concerned. Christ is an historical Person truly, but He is much more; and besides, He is alive and Caesar is dead and gone to dust. The words that the Lord spoke are spirit and are life (Jn 6:63¹⁹), such are not the words of men.

Besides, He, the eternal Son of the Father, has sent forth the Holy Spirit into the hearts of His own to comfort and quicken them and to revive their hopes. With Paul the knowledge of Christ was intensely practical. In these verses there is a cycle – resurrection, sufferings, death, resurrection. It is a spiral; it means that the person ascends each cycle. This ascending is by sharing His sufferings, by being conformed unto His death, and by attaining unto the out - resurrection out from among dead ones. This is to be the present experience of those that follow the Lord. They are to take up their cross daily (Lk.9:23²⁰), and die daily (1 Cor.15:31²¹), if they would know that power which raised

17. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.3.10>

18. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil%203.11>

19. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%206.63>

20. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke.9.23>

21. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Cor.15.31>

Him from the dead, and will raise them from among the dead among whom they live. This power is the exceeding greatness of His (God's) power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead (Eph.1:19²²,20²³). It is one thing to know about Christ's resurrection, but it is quite another for that to be working in us who believe. This power makes real living for Christ possible.

Phil.3:12²⁴

What he strove after in the practical knowledge of Christ in his day by day experience, he had not yet obtained. He was not yet made perfect (though he was in another sense perfect in Christ), but he pressed on towards it, for in the knowledge of Christ he would learn the purpose that Christ had in apprehending him. He knew much already, He knew that he was a called apostle of Christ Jesus, and he knew what the Lord had wrought in and through him towards the Gentiles, as well as his own people, but he had not apprehended all that it was the Lord's purpose to accomplish through him. The painting of Paul's life was not yet complete. "I press on", he said; that is, he pursued for the purpose of catching or obtaining what was still in front of him.

Phil.3:13²⁵,14²⁶

22. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph.1.19>

23. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph%201.20>

24. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.3.12>

25. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.3.13>

26. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil%203.14>

Not apprehending all God's purpose in him, he sought to forget and to neglect the things that were behind him; these things cannot be lived over again and improved. He stretched forward, as a runner in a race to the course that lies in front, toward the goal, the mark at the end of the racecourse on which the eye is fixed, to the prize (as the crown, wreath or chaplet which was bestowed on the victor in the public games). The race is towards the place whence the call came. The calling is heavenly (Heb.3:1²⁷); it is an upward calling, hence the course is ever ascending.

Phil.3:15²⁸,16²⁹

“Perfect” here should not be confused with “made perfect” (verse 12); the latter may lie in the future while we are on earth, but the former word signifies mature full-grown persons, and such persons of full growth are to press on towards that perfect state (1 Cor.13:10³⁰) which lies ahead. But if there be differences of mind arising from the standard of spiritual growth, even that will God reveal. Such differences will inevitably arise, for some make marked progress, while others are slow, and some make little or no advance in spiritual things. There is a danger, in seeking to preserve unity, of making the standard of the backward believer that for all the rest. The standard by which we shall all be measured in due time, and by which we are to walk now, is that whereunto we have attained. Walk (Gk. *stoichein*) means to walk in order.

27. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Heb.3.1>

28. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.3.15>

29. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil%203.16>

30. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Cor.13.10>

Phil.3:17³¹

The Philippians were together to imitate Paul and so bear his resemblance. All such as followed this course of Paul-like, and consequently Christ-like, behaviour were to be marked as persons worthy of being ensamples or patterns of conduct for others to follow. These good-living people were to be marked, considered and followed, but those of Rom.16:17³² were to be marked and avoided, because they caused divisions contrary to the doctrine.

Phil.3:18³³,19³⁴

The persons here indicated were believers who followed a life of self-pleasing and indulgence. They were not enemies of God in the sense of Rom.5:10³⁵, but they were enemies of the cross. They knew little or nothing of the truth of Paul's words, "I have been crucified with Christ; yet I live; and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal.2:20³⁶). Their end was perdition, the complete loss of their life for God (Matt.16:25³⁷; Heb.10:39³⁸). Their God was a belly-god; they were devoted to uncurbed appetites. Their glory was nought but shame, and the whole bent of their minds was down and not up, earthly and not heavenly. Over the con-

31. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.3.17>

32. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.16.17>

33. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.3.18>

34. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil%203.19>

35. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.5.10>

36. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.2.20>

37. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt.16.25>

38. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Heb.10.39>

duct of these Paul wept bitter tears of sorrow, because of his love for his Lord and for them.

Phil.3:20³⁹,21⁴⁰

It is a distortion for a believer to have his mind set on earthly things, seeing that his citizenship is in heaven. There is his commonwealth and his politics. He has not bought this citizenship, as the Roman captain bought Roman citizenship (Acts 22: 28⁴¹), for he has been born from above. Hence Paul says that we are to “behave as citizens worthily” (Phil.1:27⁴², RVM). We wait for the Lord, the Saviour from heaven, who is coming to deal with the bodies of the saints, called properly in the RV “the body of our humiliation,” and not “our vile body,” as in the AV/KJV. These bodies will be fashioned anew, their outward appearance will be changed, and they will be conformed to the body of His glory. Thus the bodies of the saints will express the inner life, the eternal life which they already have in Christ; Christ is already their life (Col.3:4⁴³).

This conformation like unto the Lord’s resurrection body will remain unchanged and unalterable. The power which will effect this change is said to be “according to the working whereby He is able to subject all things unto Himself.” The same power which will put down instantly and irrevocably the antichrist and his minions, and bring into being a state of ordered government on

39. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.3.20>

40. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil%203.21>

41. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%2022.%2028>

42. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.1.27>

43. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.3.4>

earth and throughout the universe, is the same as that which will cast out sin and mortality from the bodies of saints for ever. Never again will there be an emotion or thought in these bodies which is out of alignment with His holy will. Blessed thought!

COMMENTARY ON PHILIPPIANS 4

Phil.4:1¹

“Wherefore,” as those who are citizens of heaven, who are beloved and longed for (this last description is not found elsewhere), his joy and crown (see 1 Thess.2:19²), he exhorts them to “so stand fast in the Lord.” “In the Lord” indicates subjection to the Lord’s will.

Phil.4:2³,3⁴

Some have thought that Euodia and Syntyche were men. Though there is no word for women in the Greek, yet the fact that “these” (Gk. autais) is feminine, should determine the matter that they were women. They may have been two of the women that gathered with Lydia at the place of prayer (Acts 16:13⁵,14⁶). In any case they had been of those who laboured with the apostle in the gospel in past days. Now a difference had come in between them, and this state of dis-unity was having a harmful effect on the church in Philippi. Help is to be given to the women by one who is called a true yokefellow, who probably is Epaphroditus who will shortly be bearing this epistle to Philip-

1. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.4.1>

2. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Thess.2.19>

3. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.4.2>

4. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil%204.3>

5. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%2016.13>

6. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%2016.14>

pi. Clement cannot be identified, but the thing that really matters is, that he and the rest of those that laboured in the gospel have their names in the book of life. This is the same book as is referred to in Rev.3:5⁷.

Phil.4:4⁸,5⁹

Here Paul repeats his words of chapter 3:1, “Rejoice in the Lord,” and adds “alway.” The believer has nothing to rejoice in himself, or in the world, but however turbulent be the lives of saints on earth, they can by faith look up to and rejoice in the Lord. Forbearance is gentleness, mildness of disposition. This gentle, Christ-like spirit is to be made known to all. Can the believer afford to maintain this mildness of temper always? Yes, for the Lord is at hand to be his Helper. This is not the coming of the Lord that is at hand, as in Jas.5:8¹⁰: The Lord is the Helper of His saints (Heb.13:5¹¹,6¹²). The power of the Lord is made perfect in weakness (2 Cor.12:9¹³). Paul entreated the Cor. “by the meekness and gentleness of Christ” (2 Cor.10:1¹⁴).

Phil.4:6¹⁵,7¹⁶

7. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rev.3.5>

8. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.4.4>

9. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil%204.5>

10. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James.5.8>

11. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Heb.13.5>

12. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Heb%2013.6>

13. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Cor.12.9>

14. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Cor.10.1>

15. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.4.6>

16. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil%204.7>

To be anxious is to be cumbered with care. Note how the elders are to cast all their anxiety upon God, for He cares for them, while they seek to care for others (1 Pet.5:7¹⁷). Saints are to bring their cares to God, in supplication, and prayer with thanksgiving, “nothing doubting” (Jas.1:6¹⁸). The peace of God like a garrison will enter to guard their hearts and thoughts in Christ Jesus. This experience passes all understanding. “Oh what peace we often forfeit, Oh what needless pain we bear, All because we do not carry Everything to God in prayer!” Peace is concord, harmony, unity, the opposite of anxiety, which conveys the thought of a divided mind.

Phil.4:8¹⁹,9²⁰

The mind is the most difficult part of ourselves to be happily and usefully engaged. But here are things for useful and profitable employment. Things true, conformable to truth; honourable, grave and dignified; just, nothing superfluous or deficient, in just proportion; pure, chaste, modest, blameless; lovely, amiable, grateful; good report, commendable, laudable; virtue, goodness, good quality of any sort, excellence; praise, honour paid, commendation. Think on these things, and let us remember that our thoughts find expression in our acts and ways; they build our characters. Excellent thoughts reveal themselves in a beautiful character. Paul had demonstrated these things in his conduct amongst the Philippians in past days; he says, “The things which ye both learned and received and heard and saw in me,

17. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Pet.5.7>

18. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James.1.6>

19. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.4.8>

20. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil%204.9>

these things do: and” says he, “The God of peace (of concord and harmony) shall be with you.”

Phil.4:10²¹,11²²,12²³,13²⁴

The apostle rejoices greatly in the Lord at the revival of the thought of the Philippians for him, and he gives them credit for the lack of opportunity to express it. He does not speak of their gift as though want caused him to write as he did, for in his arduous and abundant labours he had learned (as a disciple) the secret (Gk. *mueo* – from *muo*, to shut the mouth – to initiate, to instruct in secret rites and mysteries; used only here in the N.T.) of contentment in all his varied circumstances whatever they were, whether he was brought

low in times of privation or abounded in times of plenty. It is not an easy secret to learn, both to be filled and to be hungry, to abound and to be in want. Contentment is a mind contented with its lot, “independence of external circumstances.” Paul added that he could do all things in Him that strengthened him, an echo of what he wrote in 2 Cor.12:9²⁵:

Phil.4:14²⁶,15²⁷,16²⁸

21. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.4.10>

22. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil%204.11>

23. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil%204.12>

24. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil%204.13>

25. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Cor.12.9>

26. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.4.14>

27. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil%204.15>

28. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil%204.16>

The well-doing of the Philippians, that they had fellowship with the apostle in his affliction, has been to their credit all the centuries since they sent Epaphroditus with their gift, and will remain so for ever. The carrying of the treasure of ravaged lands to Rome by Rome's victorious legions was as nothing compared with this; such deeds of rapine will be to their shame as long as their history remains. Not only was it now that the Philippians were mindful of the apostle, but while he was at Thessalonica they sent to him once or twice to meet his need, and when he left Macedonia they continued to minister to his necessities. How gratefully he recalls their care for him!

Phil.4:17²⁹

The great-souled man rose above the thought of his own comfort to the thought of what it would mean for them in the day of reward. It was their reward he sought, not their gift. How different this is from commercialized religions, which like the horse leach cry, "Give, give," and never say, "Enough!"

Phil.4:18³⁰,19³¹,20³²

The needs of the apostle, never hard to supply and often met by his own hands, were met by the gift sent to him. He was filled by it. He speaks of the gift in similar terms to the offering of Christ Himself, of whom he says, "Christ ... gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for an odour of a sweet

29. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.4.17>

30. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.4.18>

31. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil%204.19>

32. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil%204.20>

smell” (Eph.5:2³³). His offering was as the sweet savour of rest of the burnt offering (Gen.8:21³⁴; Lev.1:9³⁵). So also was the gift of the Philippians, for the death of the Lord was the foundation of their giving. Paul links God’s unspeakable Gift with the giving of which he writes in 2 Cor.9³⁶: “My God,” the personal God of the apostle, would, in consequence of their giving to His bond-servant, supply every need of theirs, for God is no man’s debtor. The fulfilling of their need was to be in no stinted way, it was to be according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. What wealth and fulness are here indicated! He closes with a doxology to God the Father, whose is the glory for ever and ever.

Phil.4:21³⁷,22³⁸

What a Christian gentleman Paul was! “Every saint,” the poor with the rich, were worthy of salutation. There was no passing of saints with him as unworthy of notice. The brethren that were with Paul saluted the Philippians. Then all the saints in Rome saluted them, and, especially, they of Caesar’s household, those in the imperial household, slaves and others who had accepted Christ. How glorious were the triumphs of the gospel then! and how penetrating its ray had been to reach even into Caesar’s palace! Wonderful will be the story of divine grace, when it is all written as to where this one and that one have been born (Ps.87:4-6³⁹).

33. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph.5.2>

34. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gen.8.21>

35. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Lev.1.9>

36. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Cor.9>

37. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.4.21>

38. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil%204.22>

Phil.4:23⁴⁰

Grace is the closing salutation of Paul in all his epistles, as he wrote in 2 Thess.3:17⁴¹,18⁴²: Grace had not been found vain in him (1 Cor.15:10⁴³).

39. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps.87.4-6>

40. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.4.23>

41. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Thess.3.17>

42. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Thess%203.18>

43. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Cor.15.10>

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