

Dickson
Teacher's Bible

PHILIPPIANS



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WRITER

The apostle Paul wrote this letter to the disciples in Philippi who were converted by himself, Luke, Silas and Timothy (See "Writer" in intro. to Rm.) It was a personal letter of thanksgiving that was written by Paul because of their care for him.

DATE

With the letters to the Colossians, Ephesians and Philemon, this letter was also written from Paul's first Roman imprisonment of A.D. 61-63 (See At 28:30). There are some students who believe that the letter could have been written during Paul's stay in the city of Ephesus. If this is true, then the letter would have been written around A.D. 55. However, in the book of Acts, Luke does not refer to Paul's being in prison in Ephesus. Some have suggested that the letter was written from Caesarea while Paul was under custody for two years before traveling to Rome (At 24 – 26). If the letter were written at this time, then it would have been written somewhere between A.D. 56 and 61. When considering the content of the letter, most students believe that A.D. 61-63 is the most probable date of writing. It was written as a letter written to the Philippian disciples thanking them for the gift of things that was sent to Paul through Epaphroditus (4:18).

THEME

There is little question about the theme of this letter. It is expressed in one verse. "*Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!*" (4:4). This is the epistle of joy. Paul wrote to encourage the disciples in the city of Philippi who had captured the spirit of true Christianity from the very beginning. He had many good memories about their fellowship in the Lord (4:15,16), and thus, when he wrote this letter these fond memories permeated the message of the letter. It brought joy to Paul's heart when he saw Christianity in action in the lives of the members of the Philippian disciples. It encouraged him to know that his labors were not in vain when he saw the spiritual growth of the Philippians.

PURPOSE

This letter was stimulated by the arrival of Epaphroditus in Rome with a contribution of things that had been sent by the Philippians for Paul. Paul wrote to thank them for their sacrificial sharing with him in his affliction (4:10-18). In writing this letter of thanksgiving, he took the opportunity to encourage them to live after the nature of the mind of Christ (2:5). Their lives must be conducted in harmony with

the nature of the gospel they received (1:27; 2:16). He exhorted that they seek to be blameless in a perverse generation of mankind (2:15). He warns them concerning the legalistic judaizing teachers who were working among the disciples by teaching another gospel (See comments Gl 1:6-9 and intro. to Gl).

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In 356 B.C., Philip II of Macedonia, the father of Alexander the Great, changed the name of the city called Crenadies to Philippi, meaning, "pertaining to Philip." In 32 B.C., Caesar Augustus made the city a Roman colony which meant that all the citizens of the city gained Roman citizenship. Since most of the residents were Roman citizens at the time Paul visited, the city was primarily a Gentile city of retired Roman soldiers who were free from taxation. They also had the right to vote and have their own senate and magistrates. Since this all came to them as a free gift from Rome, we can understand why the magistrates were so fearful when they unjustly "*laid many stripes*" on Paul, a Roman citizen, when they were first in Philippi (At 16:23,37-39). The magistrates could have lost all their privileges as a Roman colony since they had unjustly beaten Paul.

On his second mission journey, Paul, Silas, Luke and Timothy answered the call of Paul's vision to go into Macedonia (At 16:9,10). Their first converts in the city were Lydia and her household (At 16:14,15). Paul and Silas were beaten and imprisoned for their preaching, and subsequently, the jailor of the prison and his household, also obeyed the gospel (At 16:26-34). When Paul, Silas and Timothy left the city for Thessalonica, Luke remained behind in order to train this small group of disciples (See comments At 16:9,10; 17:1).

The Philippian disciples are an example of how one's appreciation for God's grace manifests itself in the obedient response of men and women (See 2 Co 4:15). At the beginning of the church in Philippi, the number of disciples was small. It included Lydia, the jailor and their two households. And yet, only after being disciples for a few weeks they sent support for evangelistic efforts that the gospel be freely preached in Thessalonica (4:16). They were a young group of disciples, but began supporting evangelists immediately after their obedience to the gospel (See comments At 16:12; Ph 4:15,16). The Philippian disciples were not blessed with great material wealth, and yet, they contributed to the famine relief for the saints in Judea (2 Co 8:1-4). This was a small group of highly motivated and dedicated Christians who had captured the spirit of Christianity at the very beginning, and thus, the Holy Spirit has epitomized their Christian behavior for all history through the writing of this letter of Paul. The letter was written, therefore, to manifest what appreciation for the grace of God does in the lives of sincere disciples (See comments 1 Co 15:10; 2 Co 4:15).

CHAPTER 1

Greetings

(1:1,2)

GREETINGS

1:1,2 Since Timothy was with Paul in Rome at the time of writing, the letter came from both Paul and Timothy (See “Writer” in intro. to 1 Tm). Such would have only been natural since Timothy aided in both the establishment and nurturing of the Philippian church. Luke was not with Paul in Rome at the time of writing, or the letter would have also included his name. Timothy may have worked as Paul’s stenographer in writing this letter.

Bondservants: Evangelists who have dedicated their lives to the preaching of the gospel are the slaves of Jesus. They have submitted to the necessity of preaching the gospel in order to serve their Master (Gl 2:20). “*Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord we persuade men ...*” (2 Co 5:11). “*For woe is me if I do not preach the gospel*” (1 Co 9:16). When one recognizes the fullness of the grace of God that was extended to him through the cross of Christ, he is moved to proclaim to others the free gift of God’s grace. Evangelists are motivated through thanksgiving to inspire thanksgiving in the lives of others (See comments 2 Co 4:15). **Saints:** Of all the inhabitants of the city of Philippi, only those who had obeyed the gospel were sanctified by the blood of Jesus. When one obeys the gospel through immersion in water for the remission of sins, he is washed or cleansed of all sin (At 22:16). The sanc-

tified are the people of God among the residents of any city or region on earth (See 1 Co 1:2). **Overseers:** In less than the time between their conversion around the middle 50s, and the writing of this epistle around 61 or 62, these disciples had designated overseers and menservants (deacons). The word “overseers” comes from the Greek word *episkopos* which means “to see over.” The overseers are not overseers in the sense that they are designated with authority over the flock of God in order to bind where God has not bound. Their work was to see over the spiritual needs of the disciples (See comments 1 Tm 3:1ff; Ti 1:5ff). In the New Testament, these men are also referred to as elders, pastors and shepherds. There was always a plurality of these men designated to see over the disciples in any city (At 14:23; 1 Pt 5:1-4). **Menservants:** The Greek word here (*diakonos*) means “servants.” It is a Greek word that was never translated in the King James Version, but transliterated. From the transliteration came the word “deacon.” The gender of the word here is masculine, therefore, they were menservants. Menservants are those among the disciples who have been designated by the members to carry out specific tasks among the disciples (1 Tm 3:8-13). The church in Philippi came into existence on the second mission journey of Paul (At 16). This would have taken place somewhere in the mid 50s. The writing of this letter took place somewhere between A.D. 61-63. Therefore,

from the time of the first converts and the time of writing the letter, the members had designated elders and mensevants in the city. **Grace ... peace:** This is Paul's normal greeting in all his epistles. Its unique use by Paul identifies him as the writer of this letter, as well as other letters of the New Testament.

Rejoicing In Prayer And Ministry (1:3-30)

Outline: (1) Evangelistic zeal of the church (1:3-11), (2) Fruit from Paul's bondage (1:12-18), (3) Choosing between life and death (1:19-26), (4) Worthy conduct (1:27-30)

EVANGELISTIC ZEAL OF THE CHURCH

1:3-5 Remembrance of you: This is one of the unique groups of disciples of the New Testament. These were Christians who stimulated fond memories in the mind of Paul when he recalled the good things that they had done since their beginning, which beginning was marked with the conversions of Lydia, the jailor and their households. **In every prayer:** The maturity of these disciples had affected the thinking of Paul to the extent that in every prayer to God he made mention of them. He even prayed for them while he was in prison. In the prayers of all evangelists there should be the mention of disciples who are doing the work of God (Ep 1:16; 1 Th 1:2). In this particular case, Paul was making requests to God for the Philippian disciples. In some way, what the Philippians did in bringing relief to Paul in prison may have been the manner by which God answered

his prayer for them (See comments 4:10-17). **With joy:** Those disciples that maintain their response to the gospel by working to the glory of God will always bring joy to the hearts of those who have established them. *"I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in the truth"* (3 Jn 4; see 1 Th 2:19,20; 2 Jn 4). Paul here begins the book by giving the key word that expresses the primary theme of this letter (See vss 18,25; 2:2,17,28,29; 3:1; 4:1). This is the epistle of joy. From the time of their beginning in Acts 16 as disciples in Philippi, the Philippians assumed the responsibility of functioning as the body of Christ. They financially supported evangelists (4:15,16). They were benevolent (2 Co 8:1-4). They did all one would expect of a group of disciples in response to the grace of God. They had captured the spirit of Christianity, and thus, affected the lives of thousands of people, including ours as we study this letter and appreciate their example of service. **Fellowship in the gospel:** When one obeys the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus by immersion, he is added by God to the worldwide assembly of believers (At 2:47; Rm 6:3-6). It is upon the basis of our common obedience to the gospel, therefore, that God blesses us as a part of His family (1 Jn 1:3; Jd 3). We thus have a common purpose and work that has been designated by Jesus. All Christians, therefore, are partners in preaching the gospel to the world. In the work of world evangelism, there are those who are sent and those who send (Rm 10:14,15). This letter is to a fellowship

of believers who assumed their responsibility in God's system of world evangelism from the very beginning of their existence as Christians. From their very beginning they sent support once and again unto Paul for the preaching of the gospel (4:15,16). **From the first day:** At the time of writing, it had been at least five years since the conversion of Lydia, the jailor and their households. When they had the opportunity, and knew where Paul was, the Philippian disciples financially helped Paul in preaching the gospel and sending benevolent contributions to him (4:10).

1:6 Being confident: Paul had great confidence in the Philippians. They had proven themselves to be faithful workers for the preaching of the gospel (2:12,13; 4:15; 2 Co 8:1-4). Since they had been such faithful workers in the past, he commends them for what he knows they will do in the future. It was God who was working in and through them to carry out the goal of preaching the gospel to the world. They were a vital part of the organic function of the global body (Rm 10:14,15). Any disciple who does not support the preaching of the gospel outside his local region has not assumed his responsibility to preach the gospel to the world (See Mk 16:15,16). Those who obey the gospel that was made possible through the sacrifices of others who sent an evangelist to them are obligated to return the favor. They must make sure that the gospel is sent forth from them in order that others have an opportunity to hear the gospel. If this system of reaching the world

breaks down with any group of disciples, then others will not have an opportunity to hear the gospel. **The day of Jesus Christ:** This would be the last day, the day in which Jesus will come to finalize all things with this world (2:16; Jn 6:44; 1 Co 1:8; 2 Th 1:7-9; compare 2 Pt 2:9; 3:12).

1:7 Defense and confirmation of the gospel: The word "defense" is from the Greek word *apologia*. It is a word that refers to a verbal defense of that which one believes. Confirmation here refers to God's miraculous work in order to confirm the spoken word of Paul (Mk 16:17-20; Hb 2:3,4). Therefore, Paul verbally defended the good news of Jesus by referring to Old Testament prophecy that Jesus had fulfilled as the Prophet and Messiah of God (Dt 18; At 17:1-3). God confirmed Paul's preaching through miraculous works. He confirmed him to be His messenger who was sent forth with the good news. It is upon the foundation of the verbal defense of the gospel that was backed by the miraculous confirmation, that the gospel was believed throughout the world. Today, we have the record of both the message and confirmation (See comments Jn 20:30,31). Through the inspiration of the New Testament, we have an inspired record of Jesus' fulfillment of prophecy that He was the Prophet and Messiah of Israel. Through the record of the confirming miracles of God, our faith is based on the testimony of those who personally experienced God's confirmation of the message. **Partakers of grace with me:** God has extended His grace to all men. Both

Paul and the Philippians had responded to the free gift of God's grace by their obedience to the gospel. Therefore, both partook of the blessings of the gospel, and thus, were motivated to work together in order to preach the grace of God to the world (See comments 1 Co 15:10).

1:8 Long for you: Prison was certainly a lonely place. The good memories that Paul had with the Philippian disciples in years past were sweet thoughts upon which he could dwell during times of great trial. He had become as Jesus in reference to affection for the church. Jesus loved the church and gave Himself for her (Ep 5:25,26). With the same love and affection Paul had given himself for all the members of the body of Christ.

1:9 Your love may abound: Love is a growing process. It is a process that begins in Christ because God first loved us through Christ. "*We love because He first loved us*" (1 Jn 4:19; see 1 Jn 4:10). God's love toward us is the spark to begin a life process of developing the same unconditional love of others in our hearts that God manifested toward us through Jesus (Jn 3:16; Rm 5:8). ***In knowledge and all discernment:*** As one grows in love, he grows to discern better the love of God. "*He who does not love does not know God, for God is love*" (1 Jn 4:8). Such is true of all graces of Christianity. One grows to understand the patience of God by being patient. One grows to understand the mercy of God by exercising mercy toward others. The more one develops the nature of godliness, the more he discerns the God to whom he has given allegiance. Therefore, Christians must

"*grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*" (2 Pt 3:18). Through knowledge of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we are able to make better decisions. We are able to understand better the purpose of life, and thus, able to make better judgments in life. The greater our knowledge grows of God, the better we will make the right decisions in our lives.

1:10 By understanding the purpose for which all things exist, we can be content to accept the work of God in and through all things (See Rm 8:28). Christians must understand all things through the purposes of God. In order to understand all things from the viewpoint of God, we must be students of God's word. ***Sincere and without offense:*** When one understands God's purposes for all things, then he will make decisions in harmony with the work of God. Instead of working against God, he will work sincerely and without offense in agreement with God's eternal purposes (See Rm 2:18; 12:2). Those who have their minds on the things of this world cannot discern the things of God (See comments 1 Co 3:1-3). Men with transformed minds understand the purpose of God in all things, and thus, they conduct their lives in harmony with such purposes.

1:11 Filled with the fruit of righteousness: Fruit metaphorically refers to that which is produced from seed that has germinated and grown. The righteousness of God produces such in the lives of those who have submitted themselves to the word of God (2:12,13). Fruit also refers to harvest. Fruit is produced

for the purpose of harvest. Therefore, the righteousness of God produces fruit within the hearts and lives of those who have responded to the grace of God (1 Co 15:10; 2 Co 4:15). When Jesus comes again, the fruit will be delivered to Jesus. It will be delivered to Jesus in the sense that both the spiritual fruit of one's character, and the results of one's life in the lives of others, will stand as a testimony to the sonship of the saints (See comments 2 Co 5:10). Paul is here picturing the final harvest day wherein the fruits of all Christians will be reaped (Ep 2:10; compare Mt 13:36-40; Gl 6:4-10; Cl 1:6).

FRUIT FROM PAUL'S BONDAGE

1:12 In order to answer the concerns of the Philippians, Paul wants them to know that his imprisonment has become an opportunity for preaching the gospel (Compare 2 Co 11:23-30). He does not say that his misfortunes have been the work of God in his life. We would assume that they were not. What has happened is that Satan's work in the lives of evil men in Jerusalem has accomplished God's purpose of sending Paul to Rome (vs 17, see comments At 23:11). We would understand from this statement, and the theme of the documents of Acts and Luke, that Paul was in prison in Rome for the defense of Christianity before the highest court of the world (See comments in intro. to At).

1:13,14 *The whole Praetorian:* This would be the Praetorian guard of Rome. Paul's imprisonment led to the conversion of Roman palace guards. Even some of Caesar's household were converted

(4:22). *To all the rest:* All of the palace guard knew that Paul was in prison for preaching Jesus. All the brethren also knew that he was there for the sake of the cross. *Confident by my chains:* When leaders lead with boldness, the flock follows. In this case Paul preached with boldness even though he was in prison (See comments Rm 1:16). As a result of his not being ashamed of the gospel, many of the local disciples were encouraged to also speak with boldness. The environment of Rome was certainly an intimidating environment in which the disciples had to live. However, the influence of only one bold man in the midst of such an environment encouraged the rest to be bold for Jesus.

1:15 *Envy and strife:* Some were preaching Jesus with a jealous heart toward Paul. They preached to generate disagreement. Their motives may have been what Paul stated in 2:3 as a warning to the Philippians that they do nothing out of selfish ambition and conceit. There may have been some who harbored such ungodliness, and thus, they preached out of selfish motives. What may have been happening in Rome is what often happens when the disciples are intimidated by the political environment in which they lived. Rome presented a very intimidating environment in which to be a Christian. There were Christians there who were trying to live at peace with the worldly environment of Roman society. At the same time, they sought to maintain a form of Christianity that was often diluted by their compromises with the social pressures of

the politics. Paul would not be intimidated to conform his behavior to a worldly society, and thus, compromise his Christian values and behavior with the heathen environment of the Roman society. Rome was certainly a political environment. However, Paul would not bow to such in any effort to compromise Christ. Those Christians in Rome who wanted to maintain a good public image for the church spoke against Paul who was in prison on charges of preaching the kingship of Jesus. Their selfish ambition motivated them to be willing to sacrifice Paul for the benefit of giving themselves a good public image in a politically sensitive society. They lost their own distinctiveness as Christians in their efforts to remain politically correct by the unbelieving community. **Good will:** In contrast to those who preached out of envy and strife, there were those who were sincere in their preaching of the gospel. These were those who were bold in order not to be ashamed of the gospel (Rm 1:16).

1:16 I am appointed for the defense of the gospel: We must not underestimate the significance of this statement. The calling and ministry of Paul was not simply to select an apostle to the Gentiles. Paul's calling to be a "chosen vessel" was for a greater historical purpose than preaching the gospel throughout the Gentile world. His calling was an appointment for the *apologia* of the death and resurrection of the Son of God. The Greek word *apologia* here refers to a verbal defense of that which one believes. Paul was in Rome, therefore, for a rea-

son that was certainly beyond the thinking of those brethren who were seeking to make themselves politically correct. He was there through the work of God in His life that he stand before kings in the highest court of the world in order to defend the truth of Christianity before the world (See intro. to Lk and At). He was not there to deal with the trivialities of church politics. His destiny was greater than the political games men were playing with his imprisonment. God wanted him there in order to defend Christianity before the highest court of the world. Therefore, in knowing his destiny, Paul did not allow himself to digress in thinking or behavior to the preaching of envious men who were driven by selfish ambition, conceit and political prominence. When great spiritual men are in town, even in chains, the jealousy and selfish ambition of carnal minds is flushed out of the closet by their own speech and actions with which they betray their hearts.

1:17 Add distress to my chains: There were some among the members in Rome who were socially minded in reference to maintaining a good social representation of the church in the community. These politically minded Christians preached in a manner not to allow the apostle who was in chains to bring the church into disrepute in the community. The position of these compromising religious socialites certainly did not benefit Paul's case before the Roman court. Their selfish ambition and conceit led them to preach with little consideration for the jail house preacher in a Roman dungeon. One must not underestimate

the insensitivity of those preachers who are driven by either social or political ambitions.

1:18 *Christ is preached:* Great men of destiny will not allow themselves to be diverted from their work by the senseless church politics of envious minds. Paul rejoiced in the fact that Christ was preached. Though men preached in order to add affliction to the chains of Paul, he did not lash out to defend himself against such preaching that came out of selfish motives. The stature of his character is manifested in the fact that he rejoiced that the name of Jesus was being proclaimed. He rejoiced without seeking to defend his own name.

CHOOSING BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH

1:19 *Turn out for my deliverance:* Paul was confident that what was happening to him at the time would result in his deliverance from prison. He was confident because of the prayers of the Philippians (Pl 22). His confidence was in the God who is able to deliver answers to our prayers. ***Supply of the Spirit:*** Jesus had promised that one of the works of the Spirit with the apostles was that He would guide them in their defense when they stood before courts (See Mt 10:19,20). In this case, Paul knew the promise, and thus, he would rely on the Spirit in his defense before the court.

1:20 *Magnified in my body:* Paul speaks of his body in a manner that defined the body as not being the real Paul. It was a little dust in which his soul was trapped. The real Paul would exist be-

yond the death of the body. If he were executed in Rome, then his body would have been used by God to accomplish the preaching of the cross to the Gentiles. God would thus have used Paul's martyred body to magnify Jesus. ***Whether by life or by death:*** Christians have presented their bodies as living sacrifices to God (Rm 12:1; Gl 2:20). In life, therefore, their bodies magnify the name of Jesus. In death, the Christian's body is sacrificed for the gospel. Therefore, even in death the name of Jesus is magnified by one's body (See Rv 2:10).

1:21 *To live is Christ:* For Paul to continue living, it would be of benefit for the church because Jesus was living through Paul (See 2:5; 3:1; Gl 2:20). When one is doing the work of Jesus, then Jesus is using his sacrificial example for His purposes. ***To die is gain:*** Paul's martyrdom would benefit the cause of Christ in that his faithfulness, even in death, would be a testimony of commitment to many others (See Rv 2:10; 6:9). To die would be a personal gain for Paul, for he would then be with the Lord. For him to live would be to live for the work of Christ, but to die would be for his own benefit.

1:22,23 *Fruit:* Paul thought in terms of saving and edifying souls for Christ (See 1 Co 9:19-22; 1 Pt 3:1). If he remained alive, then he could win more souls. His life would also be a benefit to the global church. ***I am torn between the two:*** It was not that Paul did not know which state of existence was the best. Being with Jesus was far better than living with the struggles of this world (See

comments 2 Co 5:1-8). Being with Jesus in eternal glory is certainly far better than the sufferings and trials of this life (Rm 8:18). Therefore, Paul's choice of either life or death was difficult. If he lived, Christ would continue His work through his service. However, in death Paul would personally stop his work for Jesus on earth, but he would enjoy rest from His labors. From the statements he makes here, it is possible that he had some choice in determining the outcome of his case. **Be with Christ:** From this statement we would conclude that when one dies, his spirit returns to God (Ec 12:7). Therefore, he is with Christ in spirit (Lk 23:43; 2 Co 5:8). One does not go into a state of unconsciousness. He does not go into oblivion. He is in a disembodied state of being with Jesus (See comments Lk 16:19-31; 2 Co 5:1-8; 1 Th 4:13-18).

1:24-26 Beneficial for you: To remain alive would be more beneficial for the Philippians and all the members of the body. Therefore, Paul was confident that he would live in order to minister to the members (Pl 22). The news of this revelation from Paul to the Philippians certainly brought great joy to their hearts. **Coming to you again:** We would assume that after Paul's release from this first imprisonment that he made a journey to Philippi (See concluding remarks of At).

WORTHY CONDUCT

1:27 Worthy of the gospel: The lifestyle of all Christians must manifest the dignity and integrity of the gospel by which they were called (Ep 4:1; 1 Th

2:12; Cl 1:10). The Philippians must maintain Christian behavior, not only when Paul was in their presence, but also when absent. **Striving together:** Those who would call themselves after Christ must focus on maintaining unity with all others who have done the same (See comments 1 Co 1:10; see Jn 17:20,21; Rm 15:6; 2 Co 13:11; Ep 4:4-6). Unity is something each disciple must strive to maintain. Striving for unity means that disciples must learn to protect one another's freedom in Christ (Gl 5:1). They must learn not to bring one another into the bondage of personal opinions and methods of work. **The faith of the gospel:** This would be the truth of the death of Jesus for our sins and His resurrection for our hope that must be proclaimed throughout the world (Compare Gl 1:23; 1 Tm 4:1; 5:8; Jd 3). Christians must not only remain steadfast and united, they must strive together in order to preach the gospel (Mt 28:19,20; Mk 16:15,16; 2 Tm 2:2).

1:28 The life and work of the Christian must not be determined by the enemies of the gospel. *"And do not fear those who kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul"* (Mt 10:28; see Rv 2:10). Christians must be confident of their salvation. They must be confident that God is working all things together for their good (Rm 8:28). Paul gives as an evidence of our salvation the existence of those who are enemies of the gospel. When enemies exist, it is evidence that Christians are doing right. Therefore, the existence of those who are enemies against Christians should give the Phil-

ippians and all Christians confidence that they are going in the right direction, a direction that is opposed to the work of Satan. **Proof of destruction:** The fact that the enemies are against those who have given themselves to God is evidence of their lost condition. At the same time, it is evidence of the Christian's salvation.

1:29 Christians have been granted the right to suffer with and for Jesus. Therefore, "*count it all joy when you fall into various trials*" (Js 1:2; see Mt 5:11,12; At 5:41; Rm 5:3). Christians have been granted, both Jesus in whom they have faith (Ep 2:8), and the suffer-

ings that come with faith in Jesus (See comments At 14:22; 2 Tm 3:12).

1:30 The Philippians had witnessed the beating of Paul when he first preached in Philippi (At 16:22-24; see 1 Th 2:2; 2 Tm 3:10). They knew that he was now suffering and struggling against the forces of evil in Rome on behalf of the name of Jesus. They were also having the same persecution for the name of Jesus because of their struggle against those who had set themselves against God (See Cl 1:29; 2:1; 1 Th 2:2; 1 Tm 6:12; 2 Tm 4:7; Hb 10:32; 12:1).

CHAPTER 2

Rejoicing In Christ's Example

(2:1-18)

Outline: (1) Following after humility (2:1-4), (2) The mind of Christ (2:5-11), (3) The light of Christian behavior (2:12-18)

FOLLOWING AFTER HUMILITY

2:1,2 Paul now reasons for unity on the basis of the nature of Christ and Christianity. He reasons that if there is any encouragement, comfort, fellowship, affections and mercy, that are of the nature of Christ Jesus, then all Christians are to be like-minded (1:27; see 1 Co 1:10; 12:13). Those who would be Christians, therefore, must be united because of the very nature of the universal organic body of Christ. Paul's conclusion is that if one does not maintain the principles of behavior and attitude that he states here, then he is not of the nature of the Christ he claims to follow.

2:3 Rivalry or empty conceit: When

there are those who are seeking either their own glory or hidden agendas, then there will be dysfunction in the body (1 Co 4:6,18,19; 5:2; 8:1; Gl 5:26; Js 3:14). Selfish ambition and conceit lead one to seek his own ends. He is not considerate of the desires of others. Therefore, because he is seeking his own ends, he puts himself in conflict with the whole body. The primary problem that causes division among members is personality conflicts that are hidden behind supposed doctrinal differences. Personality conflicts exist because of pride that is generated from selfish ambition and vainglory. But it is the nature of the body to function with the goal of carrying out the mission of the Head. **Humility of mind:** The true disciples of Jesus will always seek to exalt their fellow disciples above themselves (See comments Mk 10:35-45; Rm 12:10; 1 Pt 5:5). In doing this, members submit to one another (Ep 5:21). Those

who have confidence in themselves will have no problem in building up others. They will have no problem edifying others because their minds are focused on others and not themselves. Because selfish people are always lacking in consideration of others, they do little to edify others. Those who lack self-esteem or confidence in themselves will often tear others down in order to make themselves look better. But such is not the nature of the organic function of the body of Christ. The sign of a member of the body is one who is functioning as Jesus in order to make himself the servant of others (Ep 5:21). This function is based on loving one's neighbor as himself (Mt 22:37-40; Gl 5:14). It is based on loving others as Jesus loved us (Jn 13:34,35). Members of the body who function in unison with all members understand that their preservation in Christ depends on the function of the body. If the body dies, they die. They are thus cautious to follow the instructions on how to function as a part of the organic body.

2:4 Look out ... for the interests of others: Members of the body bear one another's burdens (Gl 6:2). They seek to do good to all men, especially to the members of the body (Gl 6:10; see 1 Co 13:5; Rm 15:1,2). The body of Christ is a community of people who have one another's interest at heart in order to preserve themselves in a world of struggles. They are servants of one another in order that they encourage one another through life. Church is a community of servants who seek to endure life by the members help of one another to stand fast

in the faith in a world of trials.

THE MIND OF CHRIST

2:5 This verse begins one of the greatest sections of revelation that reveals the mission of God to man. In eternity, the Son was in existence in the form of God. However, through incarnation He came into this world in the form of man. Once the plan of redemption was accomplished, He was exalted to reign over all things (Ep 1:20-22). **Let this mind be in you:** Paul proposes that if Jesus as God humbled Himself in the fashion he is about to tell us, then certainly every disciple has no right to exalt himself above his fellow disciple in Christ. In verses 1-4 he has explained the spirit of Christian humility. In verses 6-11 he tells us how Jesus gave us an example of humility.

2:6 The form of God: Before the incarnation and the manifestation of God through Jesus, Jesus was originally in the totality of God in being, essence and existence (Jn 1:1; see Gn 1:1,16,17; 2 Co 4:4; Cl 1:15-17; 1 Jn 1:1; Rv 1:17,18). Though God has manifested Himself in history in three ways, He remains one God. We must not confuse the manifestation of God through the incarnation of Jesus to propose that there are three Gods. Such a conclusion only betrays our inability to understand the essence and being of God, which essence and being we try to understand. But in our feeble efforts to comprehend, we often make the mistake of defining God after our own being. In our frustration to comprehend God, we too often create a god in our minds that we can understand. We thus

create a god with eyes, ears and a bodily form as a man. We deny the incarnation through our efforts to imagine a god we can understand according to the flesh. We produce an idol god we can understand in order to relate with our created god. But what we fail to understand is that the one true and living God must be beyond the comprehension of man. He must be greater than the definition of our experiences and words. Though we would seek to understand fully the God of the Bible, we must not confine Him to the definitions of our vocabulary. **Form:** The Greek word *morphe* is used here to explain the being and essence of Jesus before the incarnation. He was in the "form" of God. The "form" of God is spirit (Jn 4:24). However, we must keep in mind that there are no humanly defined words that would explain this form. All dictionaries of this world are void of any concept that would completely define God. Therefore, it is useless to manipulate our words and phrases in conjunction with our finite deductions in order to come up with a complete understanding of the infinite God. If we think that we have defined the "form" of God, then we know that one thing is true. We have defined the wrong god. **Equal with God:** Jesus was equal with God in essence, being, eternity and work. Since He was God, then He could not have existed in any other state of being than what God is. However, in order to accomplish the redemption of mankind, He did not consider His being as God something that could not be forsaken for the benefit of His creation. Jesus did not consider His

existence as God something to be grasped in view of the state of condemnation in which all humanity dwelt. Since God created all things for the purpose of populating heaven, then it was only reasonable that He formulate a plan for the redemption of fallible man. Before the first word was spoken by God to create, the plan was in place. Jesus was thus crucified before the foundation of the world (Rv 13:8).

2:7 He made Himself of no reputation: Jesus was willing to lay aside or empty Himself, of His being and essence as God in order to incarnate in the flesh of man. We must conclude that He gave up something. Though we do not understand all the implications of what He gave up, we must assume that He did not have on earth the totality of that which He had before the incarnation. In some way, He made a supreme sacrifice in incarnation in order to accomplish the plan of redemption for the salvation of man. **Form of a bondservant:** In contrast to lordship, He took on slavehood (Is 42:1; Ez 34:23; Ze 3:8; Mt 20:28; Mk 10:45; Lk 22:27). In contrast to existence in spirit, He took on the physical. In order to become the slave of humanity, He had to take on the form of humanity (Hb 2:14). In order to make the divine sacrifice for the sins of humanity, He had to incarnate into the form of those for whom He would die. We would thus be cautious about conceiving God to be in the form of a man. The more one conceives God to be in the form of a man, the less he understands the incarnation of God into the likeness of man. The incarnation was

more than a mere transformation for Jesus. The magnitude of His transition from God to man was awesome and incomprehensible. Simply because we do not understand the incomprehensible God, we should not be moved to minimize the magnitude of the incarnation. The more we understand the greatness of God, the more we understand that the incarnation was an incomprehensible leap from deity to flesh. **Likeness of men:** In every way, therefore, the Son of God became flesh as those He had created after the dust of the earth (Jn 1:14; Rm 1:3; Gl 4:4; Hb 2:17). The concept of God becoming man is far beyond the full comprehension of our finite minds. To comprehend that the Creator of all things (Cl 1:16) would become as that which He created, is a concept that is foreign to any man-made religions of history. This principle of divine sacrificial love sets Christianity in contrast to the false gods and religions that are created after the ignorance of men concerning who this true and living God is. If one can only capture a small glimpse of what Paul here explains, then he has more than enough information to understand that Christianity originated from nothing that is of human invention or imagination.

2:8 Found in appearance as a man:

John wrote that there were in his day deceivers who did not believe that Jesus Christ, “*is coming in the flesh*” (2 Jn 7). Many years after the event, John actually used the present tense when he wrote of the incarnation in 2 John 7. Many Bible students have thus affirmed that Jesus was still in the flesh at the time of

John’s writing of 2 John. He was in the flesh of a resurrected body, for we will have a glorious body as His when we are resurrected (1 Jn 3:2). If this is the case, then the incarnation was permanent, and thus, eternal. When Jesus gave up being in the form of God, it was forever. His sacrifice was more than six hours on a cross outside Jerusalem. It was for eternity. **Obedient unto ... the death of the cross:** In His lowered state of incarnation, the Son of God was not only in the form of man, but also in a different relationship with the Godhead than what He had before the incarnation. In the form of man, He maintained an obedient relationship to God, the Father (Hb 5:8,9). He voluntarily died on the cross because it was the will of God (Jn 10:17,18). It was the eternal plan of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit to bring created beings into eternal dwelling.

2:9 Highly exalted Him: After Jesus’ death on the cross, He was raised up to reign at the right hand of the Father (See Mt 28:18; At 2:33; Ep 1:20-22; Hb 2:8,9; 1 Pt 3:22; Rv 11:15-17; 17:14). Jesus is now in this state of exaltation above every authority in the heavenly places and on earth. This is not a description of something that is yet to occur in the future. It is a description of what Jesus was at the very time Paul wrote, and at the time we are now reading this epistle.

2:10 Every knee should bow: This statement is in the subjunctive mood. Every knee should bow under the present kingdom reign of Jesus. But every knee does not bow. Nevertheless, though all

men do not submit to the kingdom reign of Jesus does not mean that He is not reigning. All things have been put in subjection to King Jesus, though we do not see at this time all people living in subjection to Him (Hb 2:8; see Dn 7:13,14). Though there are presently insurrectionists in the kingdom of Jesus, the time will come when all such rebellious insurrectionists will be cast into destruction from the presence of God (Mt 25:41; 2 Th 1:7-9).

2:11 *Should confess:* Everyone on earth should confess and submit to the lordship of Jesus (Jn 13:13; Rm 10:9; 14:9). But they do not. We live in a time when all men should confess Jesus as Lord and submit to His will. This is the time of opportunity for confession and submission. However, there is a time coming when it will be too late to confess (Compare Rv 6:15-17). When Jesus comes again, it will not be a time for confession. It will be a time for judgment and the end of this present world.

THE LIGHT OF CHRISTIAN BEHAVIOR

2:12,13 *As you have always obeyed:* Obedience to the will of God in response to God's grace is essential for the saving of our souls (See 1 Co 15:10; Gl 5:6; Hb 5:8,9; compare 2 Co 5:10). It is not that one obeys in order to be saved. He obeys because he is saved by God's grace through his obedience of the gospel. The Philippian disciples began their obedience to the will of the Lord when Paul was in their presence. They were obedient to the gospel in order to be saved by

the blood of Jesus (See comments Rm 6:3-6). However, after their initial obedience to the gospel, they continued their obedience when he was not there. They were more obedient because of the grace of God that was preached by Paul. They responded to the grace of God by immersion into Christ for the remission of sins (At 2:38; 22:16). In appreciation of their salvation by the grace of God, they continued to work (See comments 2 Co 4:15). Their work for the Lord, therefore, did not depend on the presence of the evangelist. Disciples who assume their responsibility to carry out the work of the Lord, without continually being reminded by others, have understood the nature of being motivated by the grace of God (1 Co 15:10; 2 Co 4:15). ***It is God who works in you:*** God works in us as we have responded to His work for us. He worked for us through the cross. Our sense of gratitude to the work of God in reference to our salvation, therefore, should move us into action (See Rm 12:3; 1 Co 12:6; 15:10; 2 Co 3:5; 4:15; Hb 13:20,21). In this way God is living in us (Gl 2:20; 1 Tm 4:16). When we are motivated into action by the redemptive work of God, then we work according to His purposes (2 Co 3:5). And when we work according to the purposes of God, it is God who works in us. Christians do not work in order to be saved. They work out their salvation because they are saved.

2:14 *Without grumbling and disputing:* It is the nature of the Christian to be a willing worker. God willingly worked for the Christian and the Chris-

tian willingly works for others. Those who work simply to do what they feel is their duty to do, will digress to murmuring and complaining concerning their responsibilities (1 Pt 4:9; compare Nm 11:1; 16:41; 1 Co 10:10). They will be grudging givers (2 Co 9:7). The commandments of God will be a burden (1 Jn 5:3). The word "disputing" here refers to arguing or questioning (Rm 1:21; 14:1; 1 Co 3:20; 1 Tm 2:8). Those who are working only to fulfill their duty usually work as little as possible to satisfy their own conscience. When asked to do more, they feel that their sense of duty has been attacked, and thus, resort to all sorts of defensive arguments and accusations. But those who work for God in appreciation for all that God has done for them, never feel as though they have accomplished enough. They know that they owe more than what they can repay.

2:15 Shine as lights in the world:

In contrast to the rest of the world that works while complaining and disputing, Christians work with a spirit of appreciation and joy. The Christian should never allow the demeanor of a morally twisted and perverse environment in which he lives to affect either his attitude or behavior. He must never allow his light to grow dim from the influences of darkness, nor allow the preserving salt of his behavior to be destroyed by worldliness (Mt 5:15,16; Ep 5:8). When one becomes an active member of the organic body of Christ, his light shines forth to those who are in darkness. The demeanor

of his life and attitude become evangelistic to those who are seeking a way through this life.

2:16 Holding fast the word of life:

It is the responsibility of each disciple to remain faithful. The salvation of Paul in the end did not depend on the Philippians' faithfulness (See comments 1 Co 3:12-15). However, Paul does exhort them to be faithful to the word of God and to let their light shine forth from their lives in order that he may rejoice over their faithfulness (2 Co 1:14; 1 Th 2:19). If they were not faithful, then his efforts to establish them as the church of God in Philippi would have been in vain (Gl 2:2). But as with the disciples in Ephesus, Paul had commended them to the word of God that was able to build them up (See comments At 20:32). We would assume, therefore, that when disciples lose their knowledge of the word of God, they will lose their way (See Hs 4:6).

2:17,18 Sacrifice and service: A cup of wine (drink offering) was offered with some Old Testament sacrifices (Nm 15:1-10). Paul here rejoices that his sacrifices and toil have been poured out as a drink offering in conjunction with the sacrifice and service that has resulted from the Philippians' obedient faith (See comments Rm 12:1). Since the Philippians had also poured out their cup of sacrifices, then they could rejoice with Paul in his sacrifice and service for the Lord. They were disciples of Jesus because of his sacrifice to preach the gospel of God's grace to the world.

Rejoicing In God's Servants

(2:19-30)

VISIT OF FELLOW WORKERS

2:19 Timothy: Timothy had arrived in Rome and was at this time with Paul (See "Writer" in intro. to 1 Tm). Paul sent Epaphroditus to Philippi with this letter. After they had received the letter, he wanted to send Timothy to the Philippians in order that they know of his continued condition in prison. After Timothy's arrival, and stay with the Philippian brethren, he was to return to Rome in order to report concerning the state of the Philippian church.

2:20 In the life of every evangelist there are usually one or two people with whom the evangelist establishes an emotional and spiritual bond that surpasses his relationship with others in general. It is a lifetime bond that can endure the most trying circumstances this world can offer. It is a relationship that neither time nor distance can weaken. Paul had this type of relationship with Timothy, and we suppose Timothy had the same with Paul (1 Co 16:10; 2 Tm 3:10).

2:21-24 Timothy was one who had given himself totally to the work of God. He had an unfeigned faith that moved him to unselfishly be the slave of the church (2 Tm 1:5). Such is the nature of good evangelists. **You know of his proven worth:** Timothy had proven himself among the disciples that he was a sacrificial worker. He did not work for money. Preaching was not a job or career to him. His labors for the Lord resulted from knowing the God of grace who had ex-

tended Himself to the cross for his sins. All the disciples with whom Timothy had contact throughout his ministry knew of his good reputation (See comments At 16:1-3). **Served with me:** Timothy was a servant of the Lord by being a special servant to Paul (1 Co 4:17). He was initially Paul's assistant to take the gospel to the Gentiles. **I hope to send him:** Paul planned to send Timothy on ahead to Philippi. Paul trusted in the Lord that he would be released from this first imprisonment in order to follow Timothy to Philippi (See Pl 15; see comments At 28:31).

2:25 Epaphroditus was Paul's brother in the Lord. He was a representative sent from the Philippian disciples to be a fellow worker and soldier who ministered to Paul's needs. **Your apostle:** The Greek word here is *apostolos*. Epaphroditus was a church-sent apostle. He was sent out from the Philippian church in order to minister to the physical needs of Paul (See 2 Co 8:23). Christ-sent apostles had the specific duty of witnessing to the resurrection of Jesus (See comments Lk 24:48; At 1:8). Church-sent apostles did not have the gift or responsibility of Christ-sent apostles. They were apostles sent out by other disciples to accomplish the work of the church to preach the gospel to the world. Christ-sent apostles were personally sent out by Jesus to initiate the preaching of the gospel to the world as the special witnesses of Jesus. Since Epaphroditus was their sent out evangelist (missionary), we would assume that the Philippians were a missionary sending fellowship. From

the time of conversion in the middle 50s, to the time this letter was written around A.D. 61,62, the Philippians had maintained their responsibility to send out evangelists (See 4:15,16). In reference to church-sent apostles, we must keep in mind that they were not local workers. They were sent out. If one would be a church-sent apostle (missionary), then he must go forth from those who send him.

2:26,27 Epaphroditus almost died because of some sickness he had while in Rome. If Epaphroditus was sick unto death, some might wonder why Paul did not work a miracle in order to heal him. The fact that Paul did not miraculously heal him helps us understand the purpose, if not the duration of confirming miracles in the 1st century. They were not for the selfish gratification and benefit of Christians. Miracles were a sign to the unbelievers (Mk 16:17-20; Hb 2:3,4). We could assume that in this case, God did not allow Epaphroditus to die, though a miracle was not worked by Paul to heal him. Paul said that God did not allow him to die for his benefit. Therefore, his recovery was the result of God's initiative. Paul did not heal him because the purpose of miracles was not for the members of the body. Trophimus was also sick in the presence of Paul (2 Tm 4:20), as well as Timothy who suffered from stomach problems (1 Tm 5:23). These cases help us understand the purpose for which the gift of miracles was given. The gift was not given for personal gratification or the benefit of the saints. Miracles were given for the purpose of confirming the message of God's evangelists in

the 1st century. We must also take into consideration that Epaphroditus' visit to Rome took place around A.D. 61 or 62. The fulfillment of Paul's prophecy concerning miraculous gifts in 1 Corinthians 13:8-10 was coming to pass. The gifts were passing as the consummation of national Israel was about to happen with the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. All truth by A.D. 70 had been delivered to the church in fulfillment of Jesus' promise to the apostles (See comments Jn 14:26; 16:13). It was a time for a transfer of emphasize from confirming miracles to the inspired word of God.

2:28-30 Once Epaphroditus had recovered, Paul hastily sent him to Philippi in order to report concerning his own situation, as well as the physical condition of Epaphroditus. The Philippians had great anxiety concerning the situation of Paul, but also concerning their apostle they had sent to Paul. ***Hold such men in high honor:*** It is the responsibility of the church to give honor to those evangelists who have risked their lives for the propagation of the gospel (Rm 13:7). Christians who ignore evangelists who have made great sacrifices to take the gospel to all the world are Christians who have forgotten their mission, and consequently, have forgotten who they are. They have forgotten their Lord Jesus because they manifest no respect for the servants of Jesus who have gone forth in the name of Jesus (See comments 3 Jn 5-8). They are no longer disciples of Christ with the mission of their Master. They are simply religious people without purpose or a relationship with Jesus and His

mission. **For the work of Christ:** Men must arise among us who are willing to make all necessary sacrifices for the preaching of the gospel (At 15:25,26). Men as Epaphroditus did not determine how many things of the world to which he could cling, and at the same time, be a slave of Jesus as an evangelist (See comments Lk 14:25-35). **To supply:** The Philippian disciples had sent a contribution of things to Paul by the hand of Epaphroditus (See 4:10-18). They had recognized their responsibility to support Paul, and thus, had sent the contribution

of things in order to express their love and concern for Paul. Christians who have not forgotten who they are, and what they are to be doing as God's sons, will continually support the preaching of the gospel throughout the world. Because of their close relationship with Jesus, they seek the work of Jesus to preach the cross to the world for whom Jesus died. Any faithful individual Christian who claims to be a disciple of Jesus will seek in his life to complete the mission of his Master (See Mt 28:19,20; Mk 16:15,16).

CHAPTER 3

Rejoicing In God's Call

(3:1-21)

Outline: (1) Gaining the excellence of Christ (3:1-11), (2) Pressing on (3:12-16), (3) Heavenly citizenship (3:17-21)

GAINING THE EXCELLENCE OF CHRIST

3:1 Rejoice in the Lord: In the midst of any environment, or at any time in one's life, rejoicing should be the nature of the Christian's spirit (4:4; 2 Co 13:11; 1 Th 5:16). Emphasis here is on the general nature of the Christian character. Because of their positive attitudes, Christians have a rejoicing spirit. **To write the same things:** Christians need to be continually reminded of the fact that they are in the Lord, and thus, should rejoice in this fact (2 Pt 1:12-15). They should continue to study concerning the work of the Lord in order to have occasion for rejoicing.

3:2 Beware: Paul uses descriptive

metaphors here that define legalistic judaizing teachers who were going about among the disciples in order to recruit members to their teaching (Gl 4:17). The metaphors leave no question as to how serious Paul considered such teaching to be a threat to Christian liberty (See comments Gl 1:6-9; 5:1). He is stern in his warning about those who seek to bring again into bondage to their legal system of religion those who have been set free in Christ (See comments Gl 5:1,2). **The false circumcision:** This seemingly derogatory term is here used by Paul to refer to the Jews' practice of circumcision. There were those Jews who were seeking to bring the Gentile disciples under the bondage of law (See At 15:10). In doing this they were binding on the Gentiles circumcision and ceremonies of the Sinai law (At 15:1,2; see comments in intro. to Gl). They were thus binding where God had not bound, and by doing such, were causing confusion among the

disciples (Rm 16:17,18).

3:3 We are the true circumcision: Paul refers to those who are the true sons of Abraham by faith. They are sons of Abraham by faith, not by physical lineage and circumcision (See Rm 2:28,29; 9:6; Cl 2:11; see Gl 3:26-29; 6:15). **Worship God in the Spirit:** Those who are sons of Abraham by faith worship God in spirit and truth (See comments Jn 4:24). In contrast to legalistic Judaism that emphasized ceremonial worship of God after the performance of man, Christians worship from the inner spirit, not the outward performances of religious concerts. If reference in this passage is to the Holy Spirit, then reference would be to the Spirit-directed worship of the 1st century church which Paul described in 1 Corinthians 12 & 14. However, in the context here he seems to place emphasis on worship that is in contrast to the outward ceremonial performances that were promoted by the judaizing teachers. **Have no confidence in the flesh:** Reference here could refer to one of two things, or both. The judaizing teachers trusted in their physical heritage from Abraham as an advantage in their relationship with God. But Paul says that one can have no confidence in any fleshly lineage from Abraham (See Gl 3:26-29). Secondly, the judaizing teachers emphasized performance of law and meritorious deeds as conditions for salvation. The Judaizing teachers believed that they needed to add circumcision and meritorious deeds to the grace of God. But Paul says to have no confidence in the ability of the flesh to perform religious rituals

in order to claim justification. Those who are sons of Abraham by faith do not trust in meritorious performance of the flesh in order to be saved. By faith they trust in God's grace (Rm 5:1,2).

3:4-6 There were those who were boasting about their Jewish heritage and Sinai law. But Paul argues that if anyone could be saved because they were Israelites and descendants of Abraham, he could argue his personal case better. He was once a militant and religiously fanatical Jew who lived according to the legal requirements of Judaism (See comments Gl 1:13,14). He was devout, even to the point of persecuting those Jews who had converted to Christianity (At 8:3; 22:4,5; 26:9-11). When it came to considering one righteous according to the law, he was blameless in the sense that he did all in good conscience before God (1 Tm 1:12,13). No one could find fault with Paul concerning his performance of what the Jews considered obedience to the law. And yet, concerning all that he had done in reference to law, he knew that he could not justify himself before God (See comments Gl 2:15,16; 3:11,12). Therefore, when he discovered the grace of God through the cross, he worked harder than when he lived under law (1 Co 15:10; 2 Co 4:15).

3:7 Loss for Christ: In the Jewish hierarchy, Paul had gained great fame and position. Nevertheless, while under the legal system of Judaism that the Jews had constructed after their traditions, Paul knew that something was wrong. He knew that his performance was always lacking. Neither he nor anyone else could

perform law and good deeds in a manner by which they could save themselves (See comments Rm 3:20; Gl 2:16). Therefore, when grace and truth were revealed through Jesus (Jn 1:17), Paul and the other Jews by faith realized that grace was the only answer to their problem of sin. Paul was willing to sacrifice all power, positions and possessions for the grace of God that was revealed through Jesus (Lk 9:23; Ti 2:11).

3:8 Count all things loss: There is nothing of this world that can be considered greater than the salvation that comes through Jesus. In comparison to the eternal salvation one receives in Christ, all power, possessions and pomp of this world are considered worthless. **Count them refuse:** In order to emphasize the uselessness of the things of this world in comparison to eternal life, Paul uses an extreme illustration. The Greek word for refuse here is “dung.” Paul’s point is clear. Those who would consider their worldly or religious performances as advantageous in reference to putting God in debt to award one with salvation should reconsider what Paul here says concerning his past accomplishments. In his previous religious life, he tried to make a trade with God by offering his accomplishments of law and good works. However, he finally realized that what he would receive costs more than what he could earn. The glory that God will reveal to us is far beyond any possible acquisition by the works of man (See comments Rm 8:18).

3:9 Not having my own righteousness: Neither Paul nor anyone else can

keep law in a manner to be self-justified before God. Most men know this. However, in a world of misguided religiosity, men often create their own conditions for justification. They form a system of righteousness by which to justify themselves before God. And such the Jews sought to do in an attempt to justify themselves before God at the time Jesus was in the world. *“For they [the Jews] being ignorant of God’s righteousness and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God”* (Rm 10:3). When religious men establish the conditions for their own righteousness, either after religious traditions or performances, they will often reject the righteousness of God (See comments Mk 7:1-9). The problem with establishing our own righteousness by which we would be judged is that we remove God from His judgment seat. We do so by establishing our own standard of judgment. Our standards usually revolve around our traditions or personal meritorious deeds. Both standards are humanly devised, and thus they are standards by which we judge ourselves either righteous or condemned before God. **Faith of Christ:** The article is not present, and thus the Greek text here literally reads “faith of Christ.” Faith on the part of two parties is necessary for our salvation. First, the faith and faithfulness of Jesus was necessary for Him to go to the cross on our behalf (See Rm 3:22,26; Gl 2:16,20; 3:22; Ep 3:12). Second, faith on man’s part in response to the revelation of grace on the cross is necessary in order to move us to depend on

the cross (Ti 2:11). The righteousness that comes from God comes through faith in Christ (Rm 5:1,2). Justification could never come through meritorious performances of law or good deeds (Rm 3:20; Gl 2:16; 3:11,12). In reference to man's part, therefore, we must respond to the grace of God that was revealed on the cross through the faithful work of Jesus (See Hb 5:8).

3:10,11 It was the goal of Paul to know Christ. Such should be the goal of all Christians. There is more to knowing Jesus than intellectual knowledge of who He is and what He did. Our intellectual knowledge of Him must move us into a relationship where our lives are consumed with His will (See comments Gl 2:20). Knowing Jesus is to know the power of God that was unleashed in order to raise Him from the dead (Rm 1:4; Ep 1:20). Knowing Jesus is to fellowship in His sufferings as one lives the Christian life (At 14:22; see comments Mt 5:3-12). ***Being like Him in His death:*** By obedience to the gospel, the repentant believer conforms to the death of Jesus in order to be raised from the waters of baptism to walk in newness of life (See comments Rm 6:3-6). One must conform to the death of Jesus on the cross (Rm 6:5). When we crucify ourselves with Christ, we die with him. We are dead until we are raised with Him from the tomb of water. There will be no resurrection to life unless one has been crucified with Jesus on the cross of repentance, and raised with Him in a resurrection from the grave of water. Paul's argument in this verse is that we cannot

know Jesus until we have gone to the cross with Him. We cannot be like Him unless we die with Him and are resurrected to walk with Him in newness of life. Only in this way will one attain to the resurrection from the dead when Jesus comes again. No greater statement could have been made concerning the necessity of one going to the cross of death (repentance) with Jesus and being resurrected with Him from water (baptism) in order to be resurrected to life when He comes again.

PRESSING ON

3:12 Though Paul was a Christ-sent apostle with a strong religious background in Judaism, he still had much room for both growth in the knowledge of Jesus, as well as, spiritual growth within his heart. There will be a time when we all come to a greater knowledge of Jesus in the heavenly realm. While we are in this world, however, our knowledge and relationship with Jesus will always be limited. Our understanding of Jesus will excel only when we have been taken from the confines of this world into the next to be in the presence of Jesus. ***I press on:*** The motivation for pressing on lies in one's realization that he does not yet fully know what he desires to know of Christ. When one realizes that great spiritual growth will occur in the presence of Jesus, then he desires to be with Jesus. Paul, as well as all Christians, press on to acquire that for which we have been called. Therefore, this world is not our home. We are waiting for our transition into the eternal dwell-

ing for which we were created.

3:13 *Laid hold:* The emphasis of the Greek word here means “to lay hold of.” In this life, the Christian cannot lay hold of that for which he strives. As long as we are in this temple we are separated from that realm which is just beyond the physical world (See comments 2 Co 5:1-8). The greater one grows in the knowledge of Christ, the greater his desire to depart and be with Jesus (1:23). Because of his confidence in life after death, Paul would rather be present with the Lord (See 2 Co 5:8). ***Forgetting those things that are behind:*** We do not allow the things of this world to detract us from our goal of eternal dwelling. Christians must never turn back to the things of this world (Lk 9:62).

3:14 *I press toward the mark:* God has set before the Christian the mark of a final rest for which all men were created. The goal is the new heavens and earth wherein dwells righteousness (2 Tm 4:7; Hb 3:1; 6:1; 2 Pt 3:13). The power of this hope in the life of the Christian keeps his life focused on Jesus. When one's hope for heaven is strong, then he will submit his life to the narrow way of Christian living (See comments Cl 3:1-4).

3:15 *As many as are perfect:* Reference here is to those who are mature in Christ. These are those who are focused on Jesus and the final goal for which we are being prepared (Mt 5:48; 1 Co 2:6). The mature Christian will have his mind focused on those things that will endure the passing of this material world (Cl 3:1,2). His maturity is identified by the

fact that he does not consider this world his home. His treasures are laid up in heaven and not on this earth (Mt 6:19-34). Those who are striving to grow spiritually, but have not yet set their minds completely on those things above, must remain confident that they will continue to grow in spiritual maturity as they discard their focus on things of this world. They must remain in fellowship with strong Christians in order to be influenced by those whose minds are set on things above (See Gl 6:1,2).

3:16 Paul wants the Philippians to live up to the spiritual nature of the gospel after which they were called (1:27). They have spiritually come to the point to which they were at the time of Paul's writing of this epistle. They must continue to grow (2 Pt 3:18). ***By the same rule:*** If Christians will continue to allow the word of God to direct their lives, then they will press on to greater spiritual heights. They will be able to do such because it is through the word of God that the Holy Spirit communicates the nature and character of God after whom we are to pattern our lives (Compare At 20:32). Obedience to the same rule assumes the same mind. When Christians submit to the gospel, they have given themselves over to the one head and King of all things. They are thus brought into fellowship with one another and are focused in the same direction (See comments 1 Co 1:10).

HEAVENLY CITIZENSHIP

3:17 *Followers together of me:* “*Be imitators of me, even as I also am of*

Christ" (1 Co 11:1; see 1 Co 4:16; Ep 5:1; Ph 4:9; 1 Th 1:6; 2:14). The Holy Spirit places Paul as an example to be followed. **The example:** What they were to follow was the Christian behavior of how Paul put into action the principles of Christ in his own life (See Ti 2:7,8; 1 Pt 5:3). The teaching here is that novice disciples should continually be in the presence of those who are strong in the faith. It is not that those who are strong in the faith have any control over the novice disciples. Paul's point is that the novice disciples should observe the behavior of the stronger disciples insofar as they follow Christ.

3:18 Enemies of the cross: Reference here is to those who were preaching the other gospel about which Paul spoke to the Galatians (See comments Gl 1:6-9). They were teaching the gospel, plus works. Judaizing teachers were teaching a legalistic religious system of meritorious law-keeping and good deeds. In their systematic theology, God's grace through the cross had to be supplemented with the legal works of law (See intro. to Gl; see Rm 16:17,18; Gl 1:17; 2:21). By teaching such a doctrine, they were actually enemies of the grace of God that was revealed on the cross.

3:19 Whose end is destruction: This destruction refers to the eternal consequences to which their teaching would lead. "*You have been severed from Christ, you who seek to be justified by law. You have fallen from grace*" (See comments Gl 5:4). Since eternal existence is only in the presence of the eternal God, to be estranged from Christ

would result in one's final destruction (2 Co 11:15; 2 Th 1:7-9). Paul is not complimentary of these religionists who have set themselves against all that God was doing through the cross. They were those who lived after the performance of the flesh in order to glorify themselves after the flesh. That in which they glorified themselves was actually shameful in the sight of God. It was shameful in the sense that the meritorious works of the flesh minimize the greatness of grace. If one assumes that his performance of law and meritorious works are the foundation upon which he is to be judged, then grace is set aside and the cross is marginalized.

3:20 Our citizenship is in heaven: In contrast to the worldly nature of those he has just described, Paul states that Christians have their minds set where they have their citizenship (Ep 2:6,19; Ph 1:27; Cl 3:1-3; Hb 12:22; 13:14). Because their citizenship is in heaven, their life is a journey through this world. They look forward to the return of Jesus in order to come to the end of their journey and to be at home with Jesus (At 1:11; 1 Co 1:7; 1 Th 1:10; Rv 22:20). Since their citizenship (membership) is in heaven, it can never be transferred from one group of disciples to another. Christians placed their membership in heaven when they were added to the church by God, and thus, they never change their membership. Neither is their citizenship in heaven determined by those with whom they assemble on earth. Nowhere in all Scripture is the concept of placing one's membership with a particular group of disciples, and by doing such, excluding

oneself from other disciples who assemble at other locations.

3:21 *Transform our lowly body:*

The spiritually minded seek to be clothed with a spiritual body (See comments 2 Co 5:1-8). We do not know the nature of this spiritual body that is yet to be revealed. However, we do know that we will be like Jesus in His present bodily form (1 Jn 3:2). We could make a verbal journey through endless speculation concerning the spiritual and immortal body with which our spirit will be clothed in

eternity. However, our imaginations can never take us beyond the confinement of our dictionary. Therefore, we thus content ourselves to trust in God whose business it is to clothe us with our habitation from heaven (See comments 1 Co 15:50-58; Cl 3:4). We do know that the same God who worked through the resurrection of Jesus, and subsequent subjection of all things to Jesus, is able also to transform our lowly bodies to conform to Jesus' present glorious body.

CHAPTER 4

Rejoicing In The Philippians' Love

(4:1-23)

Outline: (1) Joy and peace (4:1-9), (2) Partnership in world evangelism (4:10-23)

JOY AND PEACE

4:1 In view of the preceding facts about which Paul has encouraged the Philippians, they must stand fast in the Lord (1:27; Ep 6:10ff). **My joy and crown:** The *stephanos* (crown) was the crown that returning victors wore after a victorious war. The faithfulness of the Philippians brought joy to Paul's heart, but they were also a symbol of victory that he had over the forces of evil in the city of Philippi (See 2 Co 1:14; 1 Th 2:19).

4:2,3 In giving instructions concerning these two sisters, who evidently had a personality conflict, Paul did not take sides over that about which they were at odds with one another. He lays the responsibility for reconciliation on the shoulders of both Euodia and Syntyche.

They must sort out this problem and move on (See comments Mt 5:23ff; 18:15-18). **Loyal companion:** Paul does not identify the one who is to function as the third party in helping to sort out the above disagreement. He does want this fellow laborer to help these two women to come to an agreement because they worked close at his side in the preaching of the gospel. **Names are in the book of life:** The personality or work disagreement that these two sisters had did not lead to their names being blotted out of the book of life (See Rv 3:5; 20:12; 21:27; compare Is 4:3; Ez 13:9). We must not be too quick to judge and condemn our fellow brethren with whom we may disagree. We must remember the warning the Holy Spirit gave through the hand of James: "*For judgment will be without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. And mercy rejoices over judgment*" (Jas 2:13).

4:4,5 Rejoice: Paul's emphasis here is to define the nature of the Christian

life. One rejoices over specific incidents. However, the demeanor of the Christian life-style is one of rejoicing (Rm 12:12; 1 Th 5:16; Js 1:2; 1 Pt 4:13). If a disciple has a cantankerous demeanor, he must repent. **Let your forbearance be known:** One result of the rejoicing life is gentleness or forbearance toward others (Js 2:13). Every Christian should have a reputation for being a patient and longsuffering person toward the faults and weaknesses of others (Cl 3:12-15). If one is not forbearing, then his joy will be stolen away by his own impatience with others. In areas of opinion, Christians should bear with one another's differences (See comments Rm 14). **The Lord is at hand:** Paul may be bringing the omnipresence of the Lord to their minds in order that they be sober minded about the things he has just mentioned. There is a certain soberness in understanding the presence of the Lord. However, this letter was written at a time when the Jewish rebellion and tension with Rome was intensifying. In six to eight years from the time of the writing of this letter, God brought down judgment on national Israel through the consummation of national Israel in A.D. 70. In this sense, therefore, the judgment of the Lord on national Israel was near (See comments Mt 24; Js 5:7,8).

4:6 Christians should put their trust in God, for it is He who is working all things together according to His purposes (Ps 55:22; Pv 16:3; Mt 6:25-34; Rm 8:28; 1 Pt 5:7). Christians must not worry, for to worry is to doubt God's ability to take care of all things and to work all things

together for the good of the Christian. In order not to worry about the environment and events that are happening, Paul states that Christians should communicate with God in prayer. Supplication is offering petitions to God for help. Prayer and petitions are to be made in a spirit of thanking God for all that He has done in our lives. Thanksgiving should be the motivation that encourages one to pray (2 Co 4:15). The ungrateful feel that they have nothing to ask of God for they have assumed that their own performance has brought about all physical and spiritual blessings they have in their lives. The ungrateful man is not driven to make prayers and petitions to God for he has assumed that he has control over his own destiny. He is trusting in his works, and thus finds little need to trust in the help of God.

4:7 The peace of God: The result of one's prayerful communication with God that is based on faith (Js 1:6), is an inner tranquility that cannot be expressed in words (vs 9; Cl 3:15; see Is 26:3; Jn 14:27). It is the peace of God that protects one's heart and produces consistency in one's thoughts. When our prayers are offered to God upon the basis of faith, and knowing that God will work in answer to our prayers, then we will gain an inner peace of heart and mind. Disciples must have faith in the fact that God answers prayer.

4:8 Think on these things: Paul lists the things upon which Christians must meditate. He exhorts the Philippians to bring their minds into control. They must focus on that which is true (Ep 4:25).

They must focus on that which is noble (2 Co 8:21). They must concentrate on that which is right (1 Th 5:22; Js 3:17). They must keep their minds on the pure, lovely and admirable things of life (1 Co 13:4-7). If one will only meditate on these things, then his thoughts will be optimistic about life. There is no room in the Christian mentality for pessimistic thinking. When one understands that all things are under the control of the God who can do all things, then he sees the best things of life. His focus is on that which is good and after the nature of God who is working all things together for good (Rm 8:28). This is the life about which Jesus said, *"I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly"* (Jn 10:10).

4:9 Paul manifested in his life a positive view of all things. He thus exhorts the Philippians to follow the demeanor of his life (1 Co 11:1). The brief time he had with the brethren in Philippi was enough for them to recognize the godly nature of his behavior and spirit. They were thus to follow his response to the work of God in his life (1 Th 5:22).

PARTNERSHIP IN WORLD EVANGELISM

Paul concludes this letter by explaining the true mission-mindedness of the Philippian disciples who had captured the spirit of Christ. In this historical section of the letter, he begins with the arrival of Epaphroditus in Rome who had brought to him the contribution of the Philippian disciples. By referring to the time of his first visit to Philippi, Paul reviews the

contributing fellowship of these disciples as a result of their thankfulness to God for their salvation (See 2 Co 4:15).

4:10 Concern for me: Christians who conform to the nature of Jesus care for those who have gone forth for the sake of the name of Jesus (See comments 3 Jn 5-8). **Again:** These Christians once again sent support to Paul as they had done before (2 Co 11:9). When Paul, Silas and Timothy left Philippi on Paul's second mission journey, and after being in Philippi for only a few days, they had sent support once and again to the mission team in Thessalonica (vss 15,16). However, after the third journey, they had lost contact with Paul in his travels. Word finally came to Philippi that Paul was in prison in Rome. The Philippians immediately made a collection of things which they sent to Paul by the hand of Epaphroditus (vs 18; 2:25). They had lacked the opportunity to give until this time because they did not know where he was.

4:11 In whatever state ... to be content: Paul is not making these statements in order to plead for their continued help. He did not ask for the support they had just sent. The contribution that they gave came as a spontaneous desire on their part to express their love for Paul and their evangelistic spirit of freely giving the gospel to others as it had been freely given to them (1:5; Mt 28:19,20; Mk 16:15). The reason Paul did not ask or need to ask was that he had learned to be financially content with those things he had. **Learned:** It is a process of learning to be content with the things one has.

Contentment is not an attitude of mind with which one is born. It is not something one learns from ungodly materialistic neighbors. It is not something we can learn in institutions that focus on teaching us how to make money. It is an attitude of mind that one develops by focusing on that which is above this material world (See comments Cl 3:1-4).

4:12 *Be in need:* Paul had learned how to be poor without complaining about his circumstances. He knew how to go without food and shelter (1 Co 4:11). Most men are continually greedy for more money, regardless of their financial state of being. Regardless of whether one is poor or rich, most men continually seek to acquire more things of this world. Those Christians who are poor must learn not to complain and murmur about their situation and blame others for their predicament. Contentment of mind must be learned by those who are poor. ***Know how to abound:*** At times in his ministry, Paul had plenty. In those times he learned how to possess money without money possessing him. Therefore, the rich must also learn to be content with their own financial well-being. They must learn not to allow money to become the idol of their lives.

4:13 Paul explains in this verse how one learns to be content in poverty and in wealth. It is only in Christ that one understands the purpose of all things. When in poverty, it is Christ who gives strength to overcome discouragement and despair. When in riches, it is Christ who gives strength to overcome the control of money. In any circumstance of life,

therefore, the Christian has the power to endure because of Christ who works in him (See 1:12,13; Jn 15:5; Gl 2:20).

4:14 *You have done well:* The well-doing of the Philippians was in their work of sending support for the purpose of preaching the gospel. This Spirit-inspired commendation has been written for all history in order that God's people know what He considers to be a well-doing disciple. The Philippians were doing well by sending support to evangelists in order that the gospel be preached (Rm 10:14,15; see comments 3 Jn 1-8). ***Shared:*** The word here is from the Greek word *koinonia* which refers to joint partnership. This church was thus having fellowship with Paul in his sufferings, which thing they had done before in their contribution to the famine-stricken victims of Judea (See comments 2 Co 8:1-4). In other words, they were willing to go without things in order to contribute things to Paul (1:7).

4:15 *The beginning of the gospel:* Paul now takes their minds back several years to the time he first visited Philippi on his second missionary journey (See comments At 16). On that first visit, Paul, Silas, Timothy and Luke baptized Lydia and her household and the jailor and his household. When Paul, Silas and Timothy went on to Thessalonica, Luke was left with the small group of disciples that consisted of two households (At 17:1). According to 2 Corinthians 8:1-3, they were evidently poor. At the time Paul left Philippi, the church had two wage earners, Lydia, an expatriate business-woman who traded in purple, and the

jailor, who had a government job. When Paul left for Thessalonica, these households had been disciples for only a few days (At 16:12). Nevertheless, this small, poor and young group of disciples financially sent support once and again to Paul, Silas and Timothy for the continuation of their mission trip to other areas. These young disciples had thus captured the spirit of Christianity, that is, freely they received; freely they gave. It was only natural that they support the preaching of the gospel to other areas because it had been freely preached to them. They had freely received the gift of God's grace, and thus, they were motivated to freely deliver the grace of God to others. From their very beginning, they were Christians who understood the nature of Christianity.

4:16 *You sent once and again:* The Philippians did not give a onetime contribution to relieve themselves of a feeling of guilt. They continued sending someone over to Thessalonica and into Achaia with a contribution in order that the preaching of the gospel continue. Though they could not give much, they cheerfully gave what they could on a continuing basis. Paul worked to support himself by tentmaking wherever he went. However, other Christians as the Philippians sent contributions to make up what he lacked (See comments 2 Co 11:9).

4:17 *Not ... desire the gift:* Paul wanted to remind them that he was not preaching for money. Preaching was not a job. It was his compulsion. Those who are men of God will preach regardless of support. Hirelings preach in order to get

paid. God's men preach without consideration of how they are supported, either by the church or by making tents. Those who make their tents and preach are truly dedicated men of God who have a commitment that must be praised and admired. ***The fruit that abounds to your account:*** The fruit of Paul's labors in Thessalonica, and other places where people were converted, went to the spiritual account of those who supported him. Therefore, the Philippians were gaining fruit in other areas by sending financial support for the preaching of the gospel. The fruit went to their account, not the account of the supported evangelists. When evangelists support themselves, they get the fruit. However, when others support them, the supporters get the fruit. When the Christian works as a laborer at a job in the world, the contributions he makes to support evangelism brings fruit to his account. His job in the world, therefore, is a work for the Lord. There are those who are supported and sent in God's system of world evangelism. There are those who send (Rm 10:14,15). Therefore, it is a partnership between the sent and the senders that accomplishes the work of world evangelism.

4:18 *I have all and abound:* The Philippians had contributed a great deal to Paul on this occasion. He thus lets them know that he is now abounding as a result of their contribution. ***The things:*** He had received the things that came through Epaphroditus. Their contribution was more than money. The word here refers to material things that could have included blankets, food, shoes or

possibly clothing. Contribution is not confined to the giving of money. Disciples have liberty to contribute anything to the work of the Lord (See comments At 4:32-37). God does not restrict that which is to be contributed. From a cheerful heart, one must contribute whatever he can and how much he can. ***A fragrant aroma:*** From the Sinai law animal sacrifices, Paul metaphorically explains that the contribution that the Philippians sent was an aroma to God which is considered by God to be a sacrificial commitment to Him. The sacrifice was well pleasing to God. When brethren contribute to the preaching of the gospel, it is well pleasing to God. Such sacrifices send a message to God that brethren love Him and have captured the spirit of His Son who came as a missionary from heaven to them with the gospel of His grace (2:5-8).

4:19 *Supply all your need:* Emphasis here is not on material needs, but on riches in glory. God did not make the Philippians physically wealthy because of their contribution. Contribution must not be given out of selfish motives. Contribution is not a capital investment. The Christian does not selfishly give in order that he receive in return more things of

this world. The reward of the Christian is not in things of this world, but in the glory that will be revealed to us (Rm 8:18). The Christian is motivated to give because of what God has given through His grace that will be realized in the world to come. In this sense, therefore, the Christian has already received more than he can ever expect to earn through his contributions.

FINAL GREETINGS

4:20-23 To God all glory must go. All glory must go to Him because it was in the plan of God to redeem us from sin and death through the sacrificial offering of His Son on the cross. ***Those of Caesar's household:*** There were different brethren with Paul at different times during his Roman imprisonment. These brethren are mentioned in Ephesians, Colossians and Philemon. However, only here does he mention the result of his evangelistic work among the royal family of Nero. The godly influence, reputation and boldness of Paul reached even into Caesar's household through the preaching of the gospel. We must never underestimate the power of the gospel to change the lives of men (Rm 1:16).