

# **THE BOOK OF PHILIPPIANS**

**BY:**

**BOB STEWART\***

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**With thanks to our study group**

**(As always, revisions are necessary when new  
information is obtained)**

# INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF PHILIPPIANS

## Foreword

Paul wrote to his dear friends in Philippi while under house arrest in Rome. He was awaiting trial for being falsely accused of treasonable acts against Rome by Jews in Jerusalem where he had been imprisoned (in Caesarea) for about a year and a half. After several appearances before magistrates in Israel, he appealed to Caesar. The account of Luke describes all of this in Acts 21-28. The Lord had told Paul that he would be His witness in Rome. (Acts 23:11)

Having finally appealed his case to Caesar, Paul was transported by ship to Rome, placed under house arrest in small and dingy quarters he had to pay for himself. However, he was allowed to have visitors, write letters, receive gifts and so on. And so he did. One such letter was to the little congregation in Philippi for whom he had a great affection. This was in about 61-62 C.E.

The period in which all of this took place is filled with dramatic events in history and colorful personalities captured for us in literature, film and theatre. Some of these characters upon which the history of the times was built include Julius Caesar, Brutus, Cassius, Cleopatra, Octavian (Augustus), Mark Anthony, and the current emperor, Nero.

## I. The times and the setting.

The Mediterranean nations at the middle of the first century were firmly under the power of Rome. The Empire itself was a mere 50 years old when Paul began his missionary efforts. Four emperors had ruled; Augustus,<sup>1</sup> Tiberius, Caligula and it was under the reign of Claudius when Paul began his work. Later, when Paul wrote to the church at Philippi around 61-62 C. E., Nero was the emperor. Paul was in Rome under house arrest at this time pending his trial. Nero had become emperor in 54 at the age of 16 through the treachery of his mother, Agrippina. who poisoned all possible heirs to the throne including the emperor Claudius, his wife and his son - the heir apparent - Britannicus. Paul had just completed his second missionary journey when Nero came into power.

Under the tutelage of Burrus and Seneca, who had Nero's favor, Nero ruled well for the first five years. He affirmed the cancellation of the ban on Jews living in Rome and

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<sup>1</sup> Augustus, (formerly Octavian) defeated Brutus and Cassius at Philippi, and, after becoming emperor, he rebuilt Philippi, made it a military outpost and declared it a colony. This meant it became a leading city with the highest privileges including no poll or land tax. Colonists there could own their own land, run their own businesses with little accountability to Rome as long as they kept the law. Most of the citizens were Romans with a smaller population of Macedonian Greeks and Jews.

invited them back if they wished. Among those returning to Rome were Paul's dear friends and fellow workers, Priscilla and Aquila, and the church in their home was re-established again. Nero also forbade contests in the circus involving bloodshed, reduced taxes, pardoned many who had been prosecuted for minor crimes, promoted the arts and so on.

But in 59 C.E. Nero took more control and began to purge those who opposed him or his counselors including his own mother who had lost her control over Nero and had gone mad. He had her executed. From there, Nero's reign began to deteriorate. He dismissed his counselors and little by little he himself began to go mad.

Also in 59, Paul had likely completed his third missionary journey (c. 55-58). Paul had visited Philippi three times by then, once on his second journey and twice on his third.

## II. The journey that led Paul to Philippi. (Acts, chapter 16)

The setting for Paul's writing to the church at Philippi began in the second missionary journey. The story of the people of Philippi, like all the stories we read, is the story of people. We will talk about a lot of people to give the narrative life.

Having left Antioch in Syria (home base) with Silas, Paul visited the churches in Syria and Cilicia he had evangelized on his first missionary journey. At Lystra he was joined by Timothy. It was during this first journey that Paul was stoned to death in Lystra. Following his revival, he continued on in spite of serious injury. We pick the story of the second missionary journey up in Acts chapter 16:6-10,

6: "They passed through the Phrygian and Galatian region, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia; 7: and after they came to Mysia, they were trying to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them; 8: and passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas. 9: A vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing and appealing to him, and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us. 10: When he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them."

Quite a bit of time passes in this brief account. Enough so that the meeting between Paul, Silas and Timothy with Luke (and perhaps Theophilus) would take place and then Luke deciding to become part of the continuing journey.

From my commentary on the Book of Acts, we continue:

9: A “vision”. (See comment on 10:3) This man must have appeared in close proximity to Paul as it would be impossible to see across the Aegean to Macedonia from Troas. “A man of Macedonia” - obvious from the plea for “help”. This man was probably a Greek Gentile in indigenous garb. “Come over to Macedonia and help us”. No longer a prohibition, Paul now gets an affirmative. “It was the cry of Europe for Christ”<sup>2</sup> Macedonia is the land of Alexander the Great and of his father, King Phillip of Macedon. The chief city was Philippi.

10: A revealing passage affirming the passage of time in Troas. First, the textual pronouns describing Paul and his companions changes from “they” to “we” clearly indicating that Luke had now joined the mission at Troas.

The Spirit of God specifically directed Paul, Silas and Timothy to Troas and I suspect that Luke was one important reason. Luke, a physician, (Colossians 4:14) became a constant companion and help to Paul, not only as the writer of the history of the early church and the journeys Paul in what we now call the Book of Acts, but as a doctor. Paul; had suffered some major physical damage during his first missionary journey and needed assistance. His eyesight was apparently damaged and his general physical well-being was not 100%. Then, as time ensured, he suffered even more. In Philippi alone he was beaten severely with rods as we shall see. He recounts much of his sufferings in II Corinthians 11:24-28,

24: Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. 25: Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. 26: I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; 27: I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.

28: Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches."

He had several constant companions through the years until his death. They gave him the support and care he needed. Luke was one of his invaluable friends.

The “we” passages throughout Acts are indicative of Luke’s presence at the time of the event. When they are absent, Luke’s narrative is written from other eyewitness or reliable accounts. Now, we know that the team consisted of; Paul, Silas, Timothy and Luke. Luke

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<sup>2</sup> Jamieson, Fausset and Brown, Bible Commentary. [“Help us” – Greek “βοηθέω” (“bow-ey-theh-o”), “aid”: or “assistance”.]

mentions that the Lord also included him in the call to Macedonia.

“...immediately we sought to go into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.” It is clear Paul gathered his group confidants around him and told them of the vision. So there was discussion about it and it was concluded by all to go to Macedonia. Note Luke’s statement, “God had called us ...”. There is no question that Luke had become a part of Paul’s mission during the sojourn in Troas. This, no doubt, took some time, although Luke does not mention it directly.

One can easily imagine that, as the relationship of Paul and Luke deepened in Troas that Luke shared this with Theophilus and together, with Paul, came to a commitment regarding Luke’s accompaniment with Paul. No doubt Luke shared the goal to document everything about Jesus as well as the spread of the His gospel. How Luke, Theophilus and Paul saw the momentous importance of this work for future generations of believers is mind-boggling. It may have been partly due to the growing influence of Gnosticism and Judaism that further prompted this mission because we know that Theophilus had received many conflicting, even fanciful stories about Jesus.

Luke became the author and narrator of both the Book of Acts and the Gospel attributed to him. He addresses his work to Theophilus and likely sent it to him when completed. It well may have been Theophilus who published the work and without him we might not have this work today.

16:11-12

16:11: “So putting out to sea from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace, and on the day following to Neapolis; 12: and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia, a Roman colony; and we were staying in this city for some days.”

11: Samothrace is an island midway between Troas and the Philippian seaport at Neapolis. The journey could take anywhere from two to five days depending on the weather, especially the wind and the constant current running strongly from northwest to southeast in that part of the Aegean. This particular trip was a two-day journey by ship, and over a hundred miles, so they stayed the night on Samothrace. “We ran a straight course...” indicates they had favorable wind. Otherwise it could take several extra days to buck the current and the wind. Further, they did not cross directly to Neapolis but hugged the interior coastline as much as possible to avoid unpredictable weather conditions. This was a typical sailing procedure. In Acts 20:6, it took them five days to make the return trip, obviously bucking the same wind that helped them on this journey.

12: From Neapolis, they would walk over some rolling hills and transverse a few fields and shallow valleys on a paved Roman road to Philippi, some ten miles distant. Philippi sits only 275 feet above sea level. The road, paved with stones, is still in use today. The city was named after the father of Alexander the Great - Phillip II of Macedon. It was a Roman colony and the leading city of the first district of Macedonia. Philippi became the home of many retired Roman legionnaires. There were few Jews there and no synagogue. The Jews that did inhabit the city were "Hellenized", considered themselves Romans, and may have even worn Roman garb.

16:13-15

13: And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to a riverside, where we were supposing that there would be a place of prayer; and we sat down and began speaking to the women who had assembled. 14: A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul. 15: And when she and her household had been baptized, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and stay." And she prevailed upon us.

13: After arriving in Philippi, the missionary band had no place to stay. So they may have simply found a place in the city to room. The condition in these places was known to be deplorable.<sup>3</sup> They awaited the Sabbath day and then traveled about a mile west from the Agoura to the River Krenides<sup>4</sup>, to a place where they found women of the small Jewish population meeting for prayer. At the edge of the city was a Roman arch or gate that still stands today through which the men probably passed on the way to the "place of prayer". When they came among them, the missionaries, after introductions and so forth, sat down and spoke the gospel to them. This would have been a real blessing for the women to have such learned men and world travelers spend several hours with them.

14: Lydia was from Thyatira in Asia Minor (In the province of "Lydia") and a "God-fearer" ("worshipper of God"). This means she was a Gentile believer in the God of the Jews and appreciated their history and the scriptures, but did not become a proselyte. She was in the business of selling purple fabrics. There was quite a demand for this fine fabric, often used for the garments of royal personages, and on the togas of Roman citizens. In Thyatira there was a probably a Jewish segment of the population there that was in the dyeing industry. She had come to believe in God much the way Cornelius had or any other "God-Fearer" and this may have occurred in Thyatira while she was working in the industry there.

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<sup>3</sup> "Word Pictures in The New Testament", Volume II, A.T. Robertson, Harper and Brothers, 1931.

<sup>4</sup> Or, "Gangites."

Now at Philippi, she was a merchant and likely had a spot in the Agoura from which she sold her goods. It is likely that by now she was an older woman, possibly a widow as no husband is mentioned. The Lord opened her heart to believe what the missionaries were teaching and she was saved. Among the other women there may have been Euodia and Syntyche (Philippians 4:2). Men became involved shortly thereafter as well. Note Philippians 4:2, "Indeed, true companion, I ask you also to help these women who have shared my struggle in the cause of the gospel, together with Clement also and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life." Lydia is sometimes called "The first convert in Europe", but this is in error as there were already many established Christian congregations throughout the western empire. However, it is likely that Lydia was an older woman now, and a respected figure among many of the believing women in Philippi.

15: Lydia and "her household" were baptized. There is no indication whom this included but chapter 4 might give us a hint. Among them were likely servants and workers.

But this baptism took place in the very cold waters of the Krenides (or "Gangites") river near the place of prayer. After the baptisms, Lydia invited the missionary troop to stay at her house. This evidences some wealth, as she was able to give shelter to several guests. There was reluctance on the part of Paul and his companions to do so, because she had to "urge" or "compel" them to stay and used the words, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord,"... (simply indicating she was a believer, obedient to the word, and had followed the Lord in baptism). To refuse her invitation was tantamount to saying she was not faithful. She was a fine salesperson indeed! So they all accepted, including Luke, ("she prevailed upon us") evidencing he had no residence in Philippi. The financial resources of the little party were limited, and Lydia's generous offer saved them quite a bit as they not only had spent several months getting to Philippi but remained in Philippi for a lengthy stay. It could be that Paul found work as a tentmaker to supplement the revenue and others, like Luke, had skills to help as well. (See: Acts 18:3; 20:34; I Corinthians 4:12, 9:6; I Thessalonians 2:9; II Thessalonians 3:7-9)

16:16-24

16: It happened that as we were going to the place of prayer, a slave-girl having a spirit of divination met us, who was bringing her masters much profit by fortune-telling. 17: Following after Paul and us, she kept crying out, saying, "These men are bond-servants of the Most High God, who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation." 18: She continued doing this for many days. But Paul was greatly annoyed, and turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!" And it came out at that very moment. 19: But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the market place before the authorities, 20: and when they had

brought them to the chief magistrates, they said, "These men are throwing our city into confusion, being Jews, 21: and are proclaiming customs which it is not lawful for us to accept or to observe, being Romans." 22: The crowd rose up together against them, and the chief magistrates tore their robes off them and proceeded to order them to be beaten with rods. 23: When they had struck them with many blows, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to guard them securely; 24: and he, having received such a command, threw them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.

16: "It happened that" – again pointing to an extended stay in the city. "a slave-girl" - indicating a young woman or "damsel" who was held in slavery by "owners" (probably more than two). This subjected her to any number of abuses including sexual abuses. "having" – literally, "possessed by", "a spirit of divination", in contrast to the "Holy Spirit", a spirit called "Πυθων" or "Python" in the text. Luke uses this term (only here in the Bible) to describe this "spirit". "Python" was the name given to the serpent that guarded the Oracle at Delphi, and, in mythology, was slain by Apollo (the next most powerful god next to his father Zeus and the averter of evil, presiding over religious law and the spokesman for the will and word of Zeus). The prophetess at Delphi was called "Pythia". These possessed women spoke for the "spirit" of Apollo through an interpreter. (These "spirits" are always seen as demonic in the scriptures) From this image, the word Python also came to define a ventriloquist. She foretold the fortunes or calamities of those inquirers seeking guidance for the future. There was a considerable charge for this service.

Thus she, "was bringing her masters much profit by fortune-telling." Delphi itself had fallen to ruins centuries before, but the practice of this cult continued. This "service" was quite popular in Philippi, and was a business, which several men ran. The slave girl herself did not attain wealth or prestige as did the oracles and temple prostitutes in Greece.

17-18: This girl began to follow Paul and his company around (no doubt at the bequest of her "owners" as an advertising ploy) and shout and shriek out her announcement. The use of the term "Most High God" is also found in the mouths of demons in Mark 5:7 and Luke 8:28. "The way of salvation" is literally "a way of salvation", as no definite article is used. Further, the term "Most High God" implies a pantheon of other gods, of which Zeus is the chief. The demon, however, knew the truth, that it was "Yahweh" whom Paul was representing.

Paul allowed this to continue for quite some time without interference. No doubt much thought, prayer and discussion transpired as to what to do about this. The days passed. It was a complex situation. The main concern was the welfare of the young woman. This depended on how this was handled. After a while, Luke notes that Paul became "διαπονέω" (dia-po-neo) translated "greatly annoyed" in the NASB, "grieved" in the



KJV, and “troubled” in the NIV - showing the difficulty of an accurate translation. The root words give the sense that the activity of the young woman caused an emotional “working” “or “disturbance” in Paul resulting in his feeling a sorrow for the young woman while at the same time desiring to have the shouting stop. Her actions were not causing any specific difficulty in the ministry there, but her testimony was troubling because of its demonic source. It also proclaimed “a” way of salvation as if what Paul was preaching was one option among many, and God the “Most high” (of many.)

Very possibly Paul and the others had been thinking about how best to deal with this situation without causing the girl to come to harm at the hands of those who “owned” her. Considering various consequences of actions that could be taken, and weighing the damage already occurring in the woman’s life, not only by the demon, but possibly at the hands of her captors, Paul opted to place any repercussions that might occur upon himself and his friends rather than see her in torment any longer.

So he “turned” (that is he stopped and either turned around or walked back to where she was, i.e. “reversed his direction”) and addressed the spirit, commanding it to depart in the name of (authority of) Jesus Christ. The spirit departed instantly (“that very moment” is literally “that very hour”, but the context indicates “immediately”, or “without delay”).

19: Their “profit” (business) was gone. This was not an unexpected consequence. Paul and Silas were brought (forcibly and physically taken) to the “Bema” in the Agoura. This place of public judicial activity on the north side of the forum still exists today in the Agoura of Philippi, albeit in a state of ruin. The “we” and “us” passages end here and Luke does not accompany Paul and the rest when they leave Philippi (17:1)

20-22: The year is c. 52-53 A.D. at this time. The reason this is mentioned is because of the content of these verses. The accusation includes a reference to Paul and Silas being Jews. "These men are throwing our city into confusion, being Jews, and are proclaiming customs which it is not lawful for us to accept or to observe, being Romans." This is a direct reflection of the edict of Claudius in 49-50 that expelled Jews from Rome if they refused to comply with the Emperor’s edict that attempted to unify Rome after the disastrous rule of Caligula. His edict required, among many things, that all Roman citizens dress uniformly in Roman style clothing, which many Jews (and many Jewish-Christians) refused to do.

According to Suetonius, Jews were already unpopular in Rome due to tumult over the “Chrestus” cult.<sup>5 6</sup> So the predominantly Gentile – Roman officials (military – “strategos” often translated as “Praetor”) and the crowd were immediately prejudiced against Paul and

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<sup>5</sup> This situation and edict are recorded in Suetonius’ “Lives of the Caesars”, 25; and in Dio Cassius LX, 6.

<sup>6</sup> See also Acts 18:2 where this same edict is mentioned.

Silas from the start. This explains why Luke and Timothy were not arrested. They were Gentiles.<sup>7</sup>

The charge is hypocritical as the actual event, robbing these men of profit, is not mentioned. The “proclaimed customs” they are complaining about must be that Paul and Silas are, in their perception, introducing a new religion. Judaism was a legitimate religion approved by Rome but Christianity was not. The introduction of “new gods” was prohibited without Roman approval.

The already growing animosity toward Jews along with this accusation and did not even allow for a defense. The crowd was inflamed against Paul and Silas to the extent that a ruling was handed down immediately just to gain order. The outer garments of Paul and Silas were torn off, leaving them clothed with only their “loincloths” or “underwear”. This was humiliating. They both were beaten severely with rods. The “rod” was a peeled branch or stick from a tree. There were, apparently, several men beating Paul and Silas, each likely receiving dozens of very painful wounds. There was no “legal” limit to the number of these blows in Roman law, but Jewish custom was forty - less one so as not to violate the law accidentally.<sup>8</sup>

It is not clear if the Roman magistrates cared about infuriating the Jewish citizens in the city. Their punishment of Paul (and possibly Silas) was completely illegal since Paul was a Roman citizen. But no opportunity was afforded for a defense to be presented, and Paul did not even shout out that he was a Roman citizen. This may have been to continue protection of the young lady as the attention of everyone in the city was directed toward Paul and Silas. Only later when the “dust had settled” did Paul bring up his citizenship.

23-24: After a brutal beating, Paul and Silas were cast into a nearby “jail” or general confinement area adjacent to the Agoura. Their wounds were left unattended and their outer garments were replaced on them. The jailer, (“keeper of the bonds” as the Greek is understood) could have been a ranked Roman soldier, perhaps one of the many retired legionnaires that lived in Philippi or simply a hireling, perhaps even a Jew himself as later his whole household followed him in faith and baptism. The custom among Jewish families was that as the patriarch went, so did the family. He was told to “guard them securely”. Being the sole “jailer” and having no assistants, he took them into an inner chamber of the jail, (or “dungeon”) and fastened their feet in “stocks”. This way he could avoid the unpleasant responsibility of staying awake all night. The “stocks” [Greek – “ξύλον” (zool-awn)] were wooden planks split (lengthwise) with five holes large enough

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<sup>7</sup> This decree was reversed by Claudius prior to his death in 54, due to his friendship with and the influence of Herod Agrippa II. Also see Josephus, “Antiquities of the Jews”, Book XX, chapter 1. Romans 16:3 show Priscilla and Aquila once again in Rome.

<sup>8</sup> Paul states in II Corinthians 11:24 that he was beaten five times by the Jews (with a whip) as well as three times with rods.

to contain neck, wrists and ankles when closed and locked. The ankle holes were furthest out, then the hand holes within the feet holes and then the neck hole. The jailer had the choice as to what limbs to place in the stocks. In the case of Paul and Silas, he mercifully only placed their feet in the stocks and chained their wrists to the wall. Nevertheless the feet, spread apart, caused great discomfort and perhaps even considerable pain. There were two doors to close, one for the inner dungeon and an outer door. They were not alone in this jail (verse 25).

16:25-34

25: But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them; 26: and suddenly there came a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison house were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were unfastened. 27: When the jailer awoke and saw the prison doors opened, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. 28: But Paul cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here!" 29: And he called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas, 30: and after he brought them out, he said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" 31: They said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." 32: And they spoke the word of the Lord to him together with all who were in his house. 33: And he took them that very hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized, he and all his household. 34: And he brought them into his house and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, having believed in God with his whole household.

25: In this day, prayers were often chanted in a melodious fashion, as in the synagogue. The language is not mentioned, but their fellow prisoners were able to understand the words, and were listening intently, so it is possible they were singing in Greek. This would be unusual for the two Jews, but perhaps it was deliberate for the sake of the others, or perhaps the Holy Spirit was once again at work in the ministry of tongues and interpretations. It is likely that Paul and Silas were singing some passages from the Psalms as well as including their own prayers. The word for "hymns of praise" is "ὕμνῳ" ("hoom-neh-o") from which we get our word "hymn" and "hum". Psalms 113-118 were the great "Hallel" and a traditional song of the Jews along with Psalm 100 and others. The "Hallel" may well have been the song sung by Jesus and His disciples at "the last supper".

26: The idea here is that the earthquake was so forceful as to loose the doors and allow the chains of the prisoners to fall from the walls. We are not told whether or not the stocks were also loosened. It was possible however, once the hands were free, to pry or break the stocks loose

27: The earthquake awakened the jailer, who dressed rapidly, secured his weapon and lit a lamp. He then rushed to find out if the jail was still secure. He may have lived adjacent to or very near the jail. It appears that others, probably household servants, came with him. Since it was midnight, it was difficult to see, even with an oil lamp. Upon approaching the jail and seeing both the outer door and then the inner door also open, he concluded that the prisoners had escaped. He became terrified for his life, knowing he faced severe flogging and execution. So he drew his sword, prepared to kill himself. His act of suicide would relieve his family of both shame and distress. Did the act of suicide also preserve his family's income where a trial and execution would not?

28: The jailer's desperate plan was overheard by Paul and the rest, suggesting that there were others with the jailer to whom he was speaking regarding the consequences of the event and his decision. Luke notes that not only Paul and Silas remained in the jail, but the other prisoners also. Once they all were free of constrictions, escape was imminent, but while the jailer was getting prepared to rush to the jail, God, through the imploring of Paul and Silas had done a work in the hearts and minds of the others imprisoned with them. The prisoners were all well aware the fate awaiting the jailer and his family. They were all still in the dungeon.

29: "He called for lights". To whom? Again, it was likely household servants who brought lights or "torches of fire". When the torches came, he "rushed in" and could see clearly that all the prisoners were still there. He came to Paul and Silas and fell at their feet, and the Greek describes him as "ἐντρομος" ("en-tro-mos"), literally physically shaking and quaking with fear. This resulted from the crushing blow, realizing how close he had come to death and from the incredible miracle he then witnessed. He was deeply moved in any case, as he did not seek to re-confine them. Kneeling or laying prostrate at the feet of Paul and Silas, and perhaps weeping, he was comforted.

As they all then sat or stood together in the prison (Paul and Silas would never allow an attitude of worship toward themselves) the jailer was probably told by the two about why they had all stayed in the prison. They assured him they would not attempt an escape at all.

30: After Paul and Silas spent some time with the jailer, he brought them out and simply asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" The jailer either would not have asked this specific a question unless he either had been briefed in the jail after the quake, or had heard of the message Paul and the rest had been proclaiming these past several weeks. We saw (in verse 17) that the community was aware of their message. The address "sirs" is a title of high respect and regard, indicating that he was at their mercy as well as at their service. Again, Paul and Silas would have not accepted subservience or taken advantage of this man, even though he owed them his life. What of the other prisoners at this point?

Either they went with the group and participated in the events of the rest of the night (of which there is no direct mention of them) or they stayed in the jail and slept the night away, either voluntarily or re-confined. They are not mentioned again in the narrative.

31: This simple and much quoted statement says it all. It is much the same statement Peter made to Cornelius (10:43). “saved” is “σώζω” (“sowd-zo”). It includes the idea of, “being rescued and made whole”. “Household” would include family and servants.

32-33: From the beginning of scripture, they no doubt briefly shared all God had done in Christ in their lives as well as what God had done for all peoples including him. It was not a lengthy sermon but covered the essentials. Paul and Silas were weak from hunger, thirst, and from the severe beating they had endured. Yet sharing their message took precedent over their own needs. Their wounds had not even been tended to. Finally, the jailer took them out of his dwelling (to the river in all probability) and washed their wounds. While there, the jailer and his entire household were baptized, indicating that somewhere during the presentation of the gospel to all of them, they had come to faith and confessed Jesus as their Savior and Lord. It was still night, so the event was still lit by torches.

34: The Greek indicates he “brought them up” to his house further suggesting they had been “down” at the river at the “place of prayer”. A table was set and food served. The jailer and everyone there were moved to rejoicing because his new faith effected a miraculous change in him and in his household. This rejoicing is typical of those who first believe in Christ and recognize the miracle that happens within them. (Note: Luke 10:20; 15:5; 15:10; Acts 8:87; 8:39; and 11:23 for example) After this time of rejoicing and strengthening, all the prisoners returned to the jail. Morning was drawing near.

16:35-40

35: Now when day came, the chief magistrates sent their policemen, saying, "Release those men." 36: And the jailer reported these words to Paul, saying, "The chief magistrates have sent to release you. Therefore come out now and go in peace." 37: But Paul said to them, "They have beaten us in public without trial, men who are Romans, and have thrown us into prison; and now are they sending us away secretly? No indeed! But let them come themselves and bring us out." 38: The policemen reported these words to the chief magistrates. They were afraid when they heard that they were Romans, 39: and they came and appealed to them, and when they had brought them out, they kept begging them to leave the city. 40: They went out of the prison and entered the house of Lydia, and when they saw the brethren, they encouraged them and departed.

35-36: “policemen” – literally “keepers of the rods” - actually those who were employed to beat others with rods. Why this decree by the military officials? Later church tradition, as written in the Codex Bezae, says that the magistrates “assembled together in the market place and, recollecting The earthquake that had happened, were afraid.” But this is a fifth to sixth century document and this statement is not found in earlier manuscripts. The actual reason can only be conjectured.

37: “Them”. The “keepers of the rods” accompanied the jailer to the prison and heard the words of Paul and Silas. What was Paul’s motive in announcing his Roman citizenship and requiring this action of the magistrates? Could it have been so they would be allowed freedom to continue unhindered in the city?

38: One thing is clear, the heat is now cast back upon the accusers and the magistrates. They had broken the law and had been influenced by a hostile crowd.<sup>9</sup>

39: There was quite a discussion and a “deal” was struck. Paul and Silas would leave the city if...what? A good guess would be that the new believers (or “new religion”) would be respected and the slave girl allowed freedom from her previous owners without repercussion.

40: There is quite an assembly. Philippi now had a church that met at Lydia’s and had considerable numbers. Adding the women from Lydia’s acquaintance, their contacts, the jailer’s family and household, along with any others that may have come to believe, it is possible that up to twenty or more souls had come into the kingdom. They were “encouraged” by Paul and Silas. This word is “παρακαλέω”, (“para-ka-leh-oh”) the word commonly used to describe what the church did when it came together. It is a rich word, and also used of the “Paraclete” or Holy Spirit. The word means “to call near” or “alongside”. It carries the understanding of “support”, “encouragement”, “exhortation” (pep-talk), to “give courage” and so on. The idea is to assure others they are never alone, but the very presence of God and his saints is there with them in whatever they do. It also suggests maintaining “perseverance” and “steadfastness” in their walk.

“They departed”. Paul, Silas but not Luke and possibly not Timothy at this time. The “we” and “us” pronouns disappear for a time. Luke remained behind for a while, probably to stabilize the work at Philippi until leaders could emerge. He apparently remained there until the third missionary journey when Paul and his company met him at Philippi as revealed in Acts 20:2-6. Timothy seems to have also remained behind for a time as he is not mentioned until the work at Berea.

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<sup>9</sup> The *Lex Valeria* b.c. 509 and the *Lex Poecia* b.c. 248 made it a crime to inflict blows on a Roman citizen. Cicero says, “To fetter a Roman citizen was a crime, to scourge him a scandal, to slay him--parricide.” Claudius had “deprived the city of Rhodes of its freedom for having crucified some citizen of Rome”

The impact on Philippi was miraculous. The City was unlike other cities in which Paul had caused a stir. Philippi, once a hostile Roman stronghold where Jews had little privilege, was now a Christian center where Jew and Gentile believer alike worked side by side in the furtherance of the gospel and in the ministry to the church and the community.

Among all the churches Paul dealt with it had an essential peace about it without so much of the infighting and conflict many of the other churches had. The Roman City of Philippi had come to accept the Christians as an integral, if not vital part of their community. This is no doubt due to the impact Christ had on the city and its many citizens affected by it. So Paul's letter, written from a Roman prison some three or four years after his last visit there, was written not to correct some conflict, confusion or catastrophe he normally had to deal with in the churches, but to simply say hello to the many friends he missed, and share his thoughts with them. Note first chapter 1, verses 7-8;

7: For it is only right for me to feel this way about you all, because I have you in my heart, since both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers of grace with me. 8: For God is my witness, how I long for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus."

Then we have more names of some in the congregation there in chapter 4:1-3, and Paul's affection for them in 4:15-16;

1: "Therefore, my beloved brethren whom I long to see, my joy and crown, in this way stand firm in the Lord, my beloved. 2: I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord. 3: Indeed, true companion, I ask you also to help these women who have shared my struggle in the cause of the gospel, together with Clement also and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life."

15: "You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone; 16: for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs."

It was Paul's custom, according to the request of James, that Paul, in his travels, "remember the poor" in Jerusalem. So Paul regularly asked his new brothers and sisters in Christ to contribute to this need. Many did and Paul mentions it frequently in his letters. Timothy likely remained behind to help not only strengthen the fledgling church there, but gather whatever support he could for the poor at Jerusalem.

Paul continues his journeys and then, from Corinth, sails to Syria. About six months later around 52 A.D., he begins his third journey and visits Philippi twice<sup>10</sup>, once going west and once again on the return trip where he spends Passover with the saints there. Arriving in Caesarea and then on to Jerusalem in 57 to 58 A.D., Paul had spent some six years on this journey, much of it at Ephesus.

Arrested in Jerusalem and interrogated, imprisoned and kept in custody under house arrest in Caesarea over a period of a year and a half, Paul appeals to Caesar and is transported to Rome. Sometime during this period of custody in Rome, Paul wrote many letters. One of these was to Philippi around 61-62 A.D., some 3-4 years after he came to Jerusalem.

## II. The Occasion causing Paul to write the letter.

There were several reasons that could have prompted Paul to write this letter. Unlike most other epistles and gospels, there was not a specific doctrinal problem or challenge that had to be addressed to maintain the stability of the truth of our faith. This is refreshing. But the church was not without the need for counsel and encouragement in the area of interpersonal relationships and self-aggrandizement.

1. Paul makes it clear why he is writing. While under house arrest in Rome, he has time to think about many things. Crossing his mind is the kindness that the people in the little congregation at Philippi have shown to him, even sending him gifts and news while he was traveling and now in prison as he awaits trial. His letter is simply a thank you note along with an update as to what he has experienced during his journeys of late, and counsel in some areas having come to his attention.
2. He assures them he is doing well in spite of an unpleasant and difficult circumstance and, regardless of the outcome of his trial, he has hope and optimism. He also has the company of Timothy and Epaphroditus (who brought him gifts from Philippi). He also has the company of many whom he has brought to Christ while in Rome, some from Nero's own household.
3. Having the opportunity to write, he includes important themes about the necessity to: "conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ,..." (1:27). This especially includes adopting an attitude of selflessness (As seen in Jesus) rather than self-centeredness as is so common. Also are mentioned that they need to not grumble, complain, and argue, but come to harmony and oneness of mind about their faith. But rather they are to rejoice, be grateful and let their testimony be known to all people. There seems to be some disharmony and self-promoting that needed to be addressed.

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<sup>10</sup> Acts 20.



4. To help in this effort, they must avoid the influence of Jewish "teachers" of whom he says, "Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision." (3:2) Most of chapter 3 is given to this point but it is brought up in chapter 1:28.

### III. Place and date of writing

Despite a debate about this subject, there evidence is sufficient to place Paul under house arrest in Rome and that this epistle was written somewhere between 60-62 C.E. about ten years after his first visit to Philippi. Acts 28:11-31 gives us a picture of these events.

### IV. Outline.

- I. Opening salutation, greetings, thanksgiving and prayer: 1:1-11
- II. News of Paul's present situation: 1:1-20
- III. Paul's own attitude while in prison: 1:21-27
- IV. Paul's instruction and encouragement to the believers at Philippi: 1:28-2:18
- V. A note about Timothy and Epaphroditus: 2:19-2:30
- VI. A warning about the Jews who would dissuade them from faith and Paul's personal example of how he deals with this: 3:1-4:1
- VII. Exhortations to harmony and joy in their relationships and faith: 4:2-20.
- VIII. Final greetings and benediction: 4:21-23

## **V. SUMMARIZING THE HISTORY OF PAUL'S MINISTRIES LEADING TO THE WRITING OF THIS LETTER.**

After his startling conversion, Saul of Tarsus spent several years often away from civilization contemplating what all of this meant and was in communion with the Lord Himself. In total, this time of reflection and learning approached 15 years. He found himself attached to the little congregation in Antioch of Syria where Barnabas, Silas, Titus, and others he came to know gathered together.

In due time, around 48 A.D. Saul, now Paul, experienced the call of the Lord. Luke records it this way in Acts 13:2-3, "While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away." John mark also went with them but had to depart after a time.

This was the first missionary journey and it covered the relatively small territory of Cyprus, Pisidia and Galatia (Southeastern Turkey) and it was on this journey Paul suffered being stoned to death in Lystra, and then raised up to continue. During this journey he met Timothy and his mother in Lystra.

Following this journey, he was asked to come to Jerusalem and engage in a discussion with the apostles there including James, Peter, Thomas, John and all the rest as well as many Jewish elders who opposed Paul's ministry to the Gentiles and attacked him for claiming to be an apostle called by the Lord. With him were Barnabas, Titus and others, Titus being a gentile. But after much debate over many days, and with Peter's assistance, Paul was recognized as an apostle and sent on his way to continue God's work as he had been called. He was only asked to remember the desperate poor in Jerusalem, which he did.

The Second missionary journey began in around 50-51 A.D. We know the story there of how he came to Philippi and the challenges he faced. After leaving Philippi, Paul, Silas, Timothy, and Luke traveled through Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, (where Paul went by himself) then to Corinth where he met Priscilla and Aquila and where Timothy, and Silas rejoined him. He spent a year and a half there<sup>11</sup> working his trade as a "tent maker" as were Priscilla and Aquila. The term "tentmaker" falls short of all they did. They were craft-persons of fabric, leather and everything that went together with tents and accessories, perhaps even including equestrian or camel gear.

After some time, Paul, Priscilla and Aquila boarded a Roman Sailing ship and traveled to

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<sup>11</sup> Acts 18:11.

Ephesus where Paul took leave of the couple and sailed to Caesarea in Israel. Greeting the apostles and the church there in Jerusalem, he then went back to Antioch in Syria. This trip had taken 2 1/2 to 3 years. So he arrived Back in Antioch somewhere between 53 and 54 A.D.

After a stay of "some days"<sup>12</sup> in Antioch, Paul embarked on his third journey (c. 55 A.D.) covering much of the same ground he had on his second journey except he went directly to Ephesus from Antioch in Pisidia rather than Troas. But, after he left Ephesus he headed back to Macedonia and on to Greece. Then returning back through Macedonia he came to Philippi again where he rejoined Luke, Sopater of Berea, Aristarchus and Secundus of the Thessalonians, Gaius of Derbe, Timothy, Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia. In Philippi, the congregation had grown over the past five years.

Then from Philippi he and his companions continued on to Troas, then headed back to Jerusalem passing by Ephesus where he stopped, met with the elders of the church for a time of encouragement and prayer and then sailed to Caesarea. It was there that a prophet told him by prophetic utterance that he would be arrested and imprisoned there. His friends there urged him not to go, but Paul knew he had to go and that he would suffer these things as they were the will of the Lord.

This third journey took about three years. Arrested and held in prison at Caesarea for two years at least, Paul finally arrives at Rome in c. 60 A.D. and is placed under house arrest in a small, dingy rented quarters, chained to a wall.

It took about a year for the news of these events in Paul's life to reach Philippi and for them to respond. When they did, they sent gifts to Paul in Rome by the hand of Epaphroditus, one of the newer believers in Philippi. He stayed and assisted Paul for some time. It had now been ten years since Paul had first visited Philippi and the congregation had grown. But Epaphroditus became very ill while in Rome and nearly perished, but after a long recovery, he was sent back to Philippi with this letter in around 61-62.

We now have more new names we have not heard before including Epaphroditus, Euodia, Syntyche, Clement, and Lydia's presence may be implied (4:3) as well as a host of other workers for the Lord there as we will see.

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<sup>12</sup> Acts 18:23.

# PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE CHURCH AT PHILIPPI

## CHAPTER ONE

1:1-11, Salutation and greetings.

1: Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons: 2: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 3: I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, 4: always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all, 5: in view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now. 6: For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus. 7: For it is only right for me to feel this way about you all, because I have you in my heart, since both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers of grace with me. 8: For God is my witness, how I long for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. 9: And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, 10: so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ; 11: having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

1:1:

1: "Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons..."

From this we see that Timothy is with Paul at Rome. As one of the original evangelists to Philippi, the church would be glad to hear that Timothy was still with Paul. The church, from those early days, nearly a decade ago, had grown and now had structure. It is likely that Paul appointed the overseers and deacons with the recommendation of the body of believers there at Philippi on his third missionary journey. <sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> The overseers were: ἐπίσκοπος "epi-scope" epicenter, scope episkopos; *a superintendent, an overseer*: - guardian (1), overseer (2), overseers (2). The primary role of this person was to keep the doctrine and conduct of the church pure, in accordance with the truth of the gospel. He had to watch out for the attempt to infuse the church with one or more of the popular false teachings, mainly Judaism or Gnosticism. Therefore, this person had to have deep knowledge of the Word, both of the Old Testament, the Gospel message as well as the understanding of the New Covenant of grace in Christ's blood as taught by Paul and the apostles. (The named after this office certainly has abandoned the proper function of it.) Deacons were basically servers of the needy and poor. Their responsibility was to be sure that no member of the body was suffering needlessly and, secondarily, the community at large. The resources of the believers were at the disposal of those who had little or nothing due to circumstances beyond their own control.

2: "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

This is a common salutation of Paul's. He has experienced the ministry of God's grace and Peace in the roughest of times. We have discussed how Paul himself had suffered in Philippi as well as in other towns where he had spread the message of Life in Christ.

3-5:

3: "I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, 4: always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all, 5: in view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now."

3-5: Paul had great affection for this church (note: 4:1). Not only did they respond to the gospel, but also their first impulse thereafter was to ask, "What now, can we do for others?" This is made evident by their ministry to those in desperate need in Jerusalem they had never even met.

You may be well aware of the great persecution that gripped the new Jewish believers in Jerusalem and the surrounding countryside. Jews, once able to buy and sell, or own prosperous businesses, property or homes, were disenfranchised. They lost everything. Their former Jewish brethren wouldn't sell them food for their families. And they couldn't sell the goods they brought to the marketplace. They had no customers if they owned a shop. If they rented they were thrown out. If they were buying property, there was no mercy when they couldn't pay. Soon there was no income, no food and no place to live. The believing men were dragged off to jail and beaten or executed, many of the women of the church also. Others were left widowed with no one to care for them. Their own community shunned them, children were left orphaned with no place to go. Many scattered to the far parts of the empire, often taking nothing with them. The need for clothing, food and shelter was critical for those who could not leave.

James, the great apostle, stayed in Jerusalem and solicited help for the hurting community. He ultimately gave his life in the effort. We can understand why he wrote in his epistle, "This is pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father, to visit orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself unstained by the world." When he asked Paul to remember the poor in his travels, Paul was eager to do so and his visits had the added burden of taking up a collection from believers all over the empire.

The church at Philippi and other Macedonian congregations "participation" in the gospel became the model for other churches. They fulfilled James' point of, "showing their faith by their works". (Note: Romans 15:25-26; II Cor. 8:1-5, 9:1-5.)

Further, their personal support for Paul is mentioned in II Cor. 11:9, Phil 4:15-16.

1:6:

6: "*For I am* confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.

A continuation from verse 5 (3-5). Note that the italicized words are an addition by the translators, but not in the original text. What is Paul referring to? Well, there is the specific and the general view of this.

A. Specifically, the context tells us that they are willing and eager to participate in the work of the gospel. And subsequent verses speak of their love and commitment to help Paul and others. This is a good contrast to the general self-centeredness most people have and which he addresses later on. This "participation" included not only teamwork in the proclamation of the gospel, but also included Lydia providing a place for them to meet other than at the riverside, their collecting funds for the disenfranchised and poverty stricken Jews in Jerusalem as well as sending Paul support to help him when he was impoverished.

B. Generally, Paul is confident that God's work in their lives, demonstrated by their good deeds, will continue to develop and become a more complete and finished product, even until the day of the Lord's return. The word "perfect" is: ἐπιτελέω, (epi-tel-eh-ōh) from a preposition roughly meaning in this case "beyond" combined with a noun meaning "completion." It is in the future tense.

1:7-8:

7: "For it is only right for me to feel this way about you all, because I have you in my heart, since both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers of grace with me." 8: For God is my witness, how I long for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus.

7-8: This confirms his theme. This group of believers is very special to him because, as he says in 4:15-18,

15: You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone; 16: for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs. 17: Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account. 18: But I have received everything in full and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God."

1:9-11:

9: "And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, 10: so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ; 11: having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which *comes* through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God."

9-11: A long sentence typical of Paul. What he is trying to say here, is that he prays that the love they demonstrate will be expressed with an increasing grasp of that which is true as they sort out the "junk" they hear and are surrounded with and come to discern that which is true and of God. Then they can "approve" - that is - test and examine everything, holding onto the best so that all they do will be genuine and without fault until Christ returns.

Well, that is what we strive for in this study. Verse 11 is pointing out that their relationship with Christ bears good fruit because it is based in His righteousness. The word "righteousness" can also be translated "justification." So due to their being justified by faith in Christ, (or due to His righteousness imputed to them) they will bear the fruit corresponding with that reality and it will bring glory and praise to God.

1:12-14:

12: "Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel, 13: so that my imprisonment in the cause of Christ has become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else, 14: and that most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear."

12-13: Paul had exercised his right as a Roman citizen to appeal to Caesar regarding his arrest and lengthy detainment in Jerusalem. He had desired to visit the brethren in Rome anyway, and this afforded him a chance to do so. This eventual destination was predicted by the Lord in Acts 23:11 where the Lord told Paul he would be a witness of Him in Rome. Paul was not the founder of the church at Rome, yet it was a thriving body, actually several church homes involved. It was likely founded by some of those Jews who came to Jerusalem during that famous feast of Pentecost described in Acts chapter 2, and having heard and believed the gospel, returned to Rome to share it among the Jews there.

Two of those people, Priscilla and her husband Aquila, (tent makers by trade) met Paul in Corinth on his second missionary Journey over ten years prior to this writing. Priscilla had a fine grasp of the gospel. She even taught other apostolic leaders like Apollos and

Timothy. She and her husband had been banned from Rome by Claudius in 48 A.D. for refusing to become Romanized. The emperor Claudius was simply trying to reunite the people of Rome, a city left in chaos by his predecessor Caligula.

But the loss for Priscilla and Aquila was Paul's gain. They became those who were among Paul's closest friends. After Claudius was assassinated by his 5<sup>th</sup> wife Agrippina, her son Nero became emperor. Before he died he lifted the ban on the Jews. Nero confirmed the lifting the ban on Jews (and Christians) and Priscilla and Aquila moved back to Rome. The church had to be reorganized. It was difficult and Priscilla and Aquila appealed to Paul for some apostolic foundations to help the church get past its theological and interpersonal conflicts. On his third missionary journey, about 56 A.D., from Corinth, Paul wrote one of his most powerful epistles to this church.

Now, five years later, he was bought in bonds to Rome. The journey was free of charge of course, and quite exciting. You can read about it in Acts 27 and 28. He was subsequently placed in the custody of the palace (or Praetorian) guard and then assigned his own quarters. He was now under "house arrest" wherein Paul is able to minister the word to his caregivers and guards, (the very thing he was in jail for doing in the first place), receive visitors, carry on correspondence with the churches and pastors when called upon, and arrange travel for his associates where they were needed. Luke tells us in Acts 28:30-31 that Paul stayed in his own rented quarters preaching and teaching with all openness, but that he was shackled with a chain. This imprisonment lasted two years.

I am sure most who heard about his imprisonment for simply preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ thought that the furtherance of the gospel would be hampered. This was the sorrowful word that came to him from Philippi. But, unexpectedly, he offers the contrary reality. News of this celebrated prisoner and his teaching must have spread throughout the Praetorium, the barracks and out into the surrounding community. Thus, what appeared at first to be a staggering blow for the Christian mission turned out to be the means of its revitalization, even to the highest offices in national governments. What was it that Paul had written to the Romans in the eighth chapter, 28<sup>th</sup> verse of that epistle? Never give up. Keep on persevering in the faith of Christ regardless of the circumstances. Don't let yourself become discouraged and you too will see God work it out for good.

14: This is why the brethren have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear.

1:15-17:

15: "Some, to be sure, are preaching Christ even from envy and strife, but some also from good will; 16: the latter do it out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel; 17: the former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition rather



than from pure motives, thinking to cause me distress in my imprisonment."

15-17: We do not know who these people were that preached Christ out of envy, strife and selfish ambition thinking to cause Paul distress in his imprisonment, or why they would want to do so. But we are all aware of Christians who seem to be on a mission to tear down others for their own warped reasons. In this case, Paul is being undermined and criticized by others who want to be recognized as important teachers of the gospel, but he isn't that concerned. His personal feelings are secondary to the need for the truth to be proclaimed to the lost. So in another way, his imprisonment is working to the furtherance of the gospel even through those who are taking selfish advantage of his situation.

1:18-20:

18: "What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in this I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice, 19: for I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, 20: according to my earnest expectation and hope, that I will not be put to shame in anything, but that with all boldness, Christ will even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death."

18: I guess we could convert the old saying and put it this way. "He who rejoices last, rejoices best." Paul is rejoicing because, regardless of the motives of some people and their attempt to discredit Paul and lift themselves up, Christ still uses this for His own glory and the gospel is proclaimed. So no matter who, what, or why, the gospel is preached and it brings Paul to a state of amazed content wherein he rejoices. Rejoicing is a major theme of this letter Paul writes from prison.

19-20: These two verses are one complex sentence. Paul has confidence that, whether he lives or dies where he is, his "deliverance" is assured and that Christ will be exalted through his physical being whether he lives for a time or he dies. It is the Spirit of God that provides him what he needs during these times. But there is no question that he is uncertain about the outcome. This is conformed as we get to the end of the chapter in a moment.

He says, "For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ... The word "deliverance" is paralleled with the phrase in verse 20, "I shall not be put to shame in anything". The "anything" is simply consequences regardless of whether he lives or dies. The word "deliverance" is the same word as "salvation" and can also mean "rescue", "preservation", "well-being", and so forth.

He didn't choose the word "release" here, so we are left to try to put ourselves in his shoes in terms of his circumstances and the language he uses to describe it. There is no question he hoped for release. But he also considered seriously the possibility he might not get out alive.

So, on the one hand Acts 28:21 tells us that Paul's accusers in Jerusalem did not go to the trouble of filing a formal accusation against Paul in Rome. This would give him a confidence regarding future release.

On the other, while speaking to Jewish leaders in Rome, he spoke of the gospel and Christ and though some were persuaded, others were not and Paul made statements that caused them to be "stirred up" to say the least. But did they complain to Roman authorities? Unlikely as they were debating what he has to say and none of it was a violation of Roman law.

So this passage gives one pause in regard to the question of whether he got out of this imprisonment to continue his travels or not or if he was anticipating a courageous stand before the tribunal in which Christ would be exalted, or that he anticipated death before he was released, or all of the above.

Looking back historically, there is considerable evidence that he was released and did an additional fourth missionary journey, possibly even to Spain before returning to Rome where he was taken into custody again. Others conclude that he was detained in Rome until Nero finally went around the bend and executed Paul and a larger contingent of believers. I personally lean toward the first option.

However, we do know that after weighing all of his possible future circumstances, he looked forward to release and another visit to Philippi if the Lord permitted. (Note: 1:25-26, 2:19-24.) The reason we do not have a record of a fourth journey is that Luke had concluded his work on the life of Christ for his gospel to Theophilus and his recording of the beginnings of the church and the spread of Christianity. Once Paul was to be confined in Rome for a lengthy time, Luke returned home to complete his work. Acts 29:30-31 confirms this scenario.

Some go through tough times for quite a while. "Attacks without and fears within", as Paul wrote to Corinth.<sup>14</sup> As you slog through these times, be sure to do the best you can do and never give up because you will look back one day and be glad you trusted Christ and did not fall into some ungodly, faithless type of behavior. You will look back and see that He was in it all the time and that He worked it out for good in the long run. Yes, the run seems really long, but you can do all things through Him who strengthens you. (4:13)

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<sup>14</sup> II Corinthians 7:5

1:21-26,

21: "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. 22: But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. 23: But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better; 24: yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake." 25: Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith, 26: so that your proud confidence in me may abound in Christ Jesus through my coming to you again."

His uncertainty about his future continues here. He has mixed emotions arguing the points of his situation and future with himself in writing to these friends. This is unusual for Paul.

21: "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain" is one of the most quoted of Paul's writings. And because so many Christians desire to emulate this attitude, let's clarify its meaning before proceeding on to his quandary. The phrase, "dying is gain" is easily understood. It parallels "departing and being with Christ" in verse 25. But to Paul, "to live is Christ" does not mean that Christ is the source of his physical existence, or even of his spiritual life, nor does he mean that Christ is his life, or that Christ lives in him, as he states in Galatians. To Paul life means Christ, that is, there is no other reason to live except for Christ. Christ, and Christ alone, gives meaning and purpose to Paul's life. This is not always an easy attitude to have for we who have families, jobs, responsibilities, and youth! Paul's life and mission for Jesus consumes all of his attention, energy and purpose. But Paul does not necessarily intend that this statement be adopted by his readers in total. He has other counsel about this later on. But this is why he says in Galatians 2:20, "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me." He is sold out to Christ and whether he lives or dies, he is Christ's.<sup>15</sup>

22: This is why you get the sense that Paul is caught in somewhat of a quandary. Is he to live and continue on or not? We have already seen that when he delivered the collection for the poor and disenfranchised saints in Jerusalem at the end of his third missionary journey, that Paul felt that the ministry Christ had called him to was essentially complete. Now, after spending eighteen months incarcerated in Palestine and another two years here in Rome, he is unclear as to what the future holds for him. Yet he is perfectly clear about the gospel and the importance of its continued preaching. He just isn't sure where he fits in right now. So he sits in his quarters, doing all he can to minister to everyone he can within the circumstances he finds himself.

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<sup>15</sup> See: Galatians 2:20 for example.

23: Still, you get the feeling of some weariness in Paul, and his desire to move on to be with the Lord, but at the same time he senses the need to be released and go minister to them once again so their confidence in Christ will be bolstered – verses 24-26.

24: Even though to be with Christ is his desire, what is necessary is his ministry to them for their good.

Have you ever come to a crossroads and weren't sure which direction to take? You didn't sense God's direction or leading and so you did what you thought to be best and progressed down the road hoping your decision, made in good faith and conscience would turn out alright? Of course you have. We all have.

25-26: So after all this "thinking out loud" Paul concludes that the Lord will see him released so he can come to them and, as he says, "... continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith, so that your proud confidence in me may abound in Christ Jesus through my coming to you again." Because their "progress" is more important, Paul now concludes with assurance that he will be released and see them again.

(In the opinion of many, including myself, he was released and did indeed continue on for several years in mission work.)

Now, Paul shifts his attention (rather abruptly) from himself to them. Verses 27 and 28 are one long sentence, typical of Paul.

1:27-28,

27: "Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; 28: in no way alarmed by your opponents--which is a sign of destruction for them, but of salvation for you, and that too, from God. 29: For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, 30: experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear to be in me."

27: The word "conduct" relates directly to their behavior as citizens in Philippi and this behavior among the people is to be appropriate, and becoming of Christ. The next sentence in verse 27 appears, at first, to be somewhat disconnected from this, but the remaining context (27-30) can place it within Paul's overall point. He wishes them all to conduct themselves within the framework of their faith and do so in unity. He repeats this

same theme in chapters 2, 3 and 4. "Walking in a manner worthy of the Gospel of Christ" is defined from here throughout the remainder of the letter.

28: Don't be alarmed when "opponents" (adversaries) crash into you. This is to be expected, especially in the community of Jews. There is no question here that Paul is referring principally to staunch Jewish opponents. Chapter 3:1-3 underscores that this is the case. The united and firm stand for the faith of the gospel among the believers in Philippi is vital in staving off these opponents and presenting a powerful witness to the truth.

Those who oppose the truth reveal that they are lost and headed for destruction. Their opposition is in itself the sign of this as well as a sign of the salvation for those who stand firm in their faith. In every circumstance in the Christian life, adversity creates clarity. One will know where he really is and whether his faith is really strong when adversity strikes.

29-30: Thus, a believer can expect a period of suffering in some manner for his or her faith. Paul tells them that what they saw happen to him and Silas - and now with Paul under arrest - could well be their experience as well. But as they stand firm and united in their faith, Christ will be honored.

It is quite possible that the false teachers are attempting to delude the new church at Philippi that the persecution and suffering they endure is due to their believing a false doctrine. Or that God is somehow opposing them. Or that they are not in fellowship with God and their suffering is proof of that. Of course, we never hear this sort of stuff in the modern church, do we?

No, their suffering and persecution comes because they do believe the truth, not because they don't.

In chapter two, Paul continues in this context to offer encouragement not condemnation.

# PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE CHURCH AT PHILIPPI

## CHAPTER TWO

2:1-4,

1: "Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion,<sup>16</sup> 2: make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. 3: Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; 4: do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others."

1: "Therefore" - a word that means, "Based on what I have said then...." Paul now turns to how their relationship with Christ ought to radiate out to others just as His did. The words Paul uses are powerful and worthy of close study. This would continue the theme of "walking in a manner worthy of the Gospel of Christ."

"Encouragement" is: "παράκλησις" - (para-klee-sis) a word associated with the ministry of the Holy Spirit as we see in John 14:26; 15:26; 16:17 and Acts 9:31 etc. It is also translated; "comforter"; "helper"; "advocate"; "encourager"; "admonisher"; "exhorter" etc. It literally means; "One called alongside" (with the inference to give assistance or help).

"Consolation" is: "παραμύθιον" - (para-mew-thion) meaning to, "come alongside and speak to someone" with the intention of encouraging, comforting or consoling. This is coupled with "love" in that any coming alongside to speak is to be done in love. The word "love" is "agape" here indicating a relational love to someone valued and cared for.

"Fellowship" is: "κοινωνία" - (koi-no-nia) meaning; "participation with others." It includes the idea of sharing and mutual concern for each other. Here it is linked with the Holy Spirit and indicates that their fellowship comes not from themselves, but from the Holy Spirit.

"Affection" is: "σπλάγχνον" - (splagh-none), a word normally used of one's inner organs such as the heart, intestinal tract, liver and so on meaning that one ought to feel deep down concern for another rather than it be a shallow and passing matter. This word is used of

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<sup>16</sup> Reversing the two terms "affection and compassion" would actually be a better translation.

Jesus in Matthew 9:36 for example, where it reads, "Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd."

"Compassion" is: "οἰκτιρμός" - (oik-tir-mohs), "to have pity" especially on someone who is without resource or hope. This is not the only word translated "compassion."

The entire context is on moving from self-concern to "other concern" as we shall continue to see. Though not specifically directed at the marriage union, there is good reason to apply all of Paul's counsel in that relationship.

2: In verse two, Paul repeats the same theme four times. He implores them to be; "of the same mind", "maintaining the same love", "united in spirit", "intent on one purpose."

He wishes them to "make his joy complete," that is, he harkens back to 1:3-4 where he says, "I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all." He rejoices in who they have become, but there is some work to do as well so his joy is complete.

His goal is to have them be one, not disintegrated and in conflict as so many of his letters reveal about other churches he writes to. We will see later that there is some rising dissention among some of the believers in Philippi and this has to be nipped in the bud if their witness is to be effective.

The same "mind" points to their understanding and purpose as to what is really important. The same "love" points to their view of other people, that they see them in the same way Jesus did. "United in spirit" is actually not related to the Holy Spirit as the word Paul uses is: "σύνψυχος" - (soom-psyu-kohs) meaning: "with (or together with) souls" (or lives). In other words, their core being - why they exist - needs to be the same as all the others.

"Intent on one purpose" does have to do specifically with one's mind not the goal itself. The word here is "προσέω" - (fro-neh-oh), a simple and common Greek word for the intent of one's thinking. This is different from the intellect (nous) and carries the idea of motive or intention for what they do. This theme is seen in verses 3 and following.

3-4: Paul uses the common practice of Jewish teachers and writers called "parallelism." It is simply saying the same thing two different ways. Verse three says, "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves," and, verse four says, "do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others."

The repetition is, as usual, for emphasis. Thus far, Paul has emphasized this theme in several ways without being critical. "Selfishness" in verse 3 is more "selfish ambition," or trying to raise one's position by contentiously diminishing another person. But the point is clear.

Note on 5-11: Upcoming, there is a great deal to be gleaned from the following passage. Paul is demonstrating his point and theme by using Christ as an example. At the same time he generates a solid theological groundwork for his readers to appreciate. It blossoms into a worship and praise of God's great love for His Son and for us culminating in great glory due His name.

2:5-11,

5: "Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, 6: who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7: but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. 8: Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. 9: For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, 10: so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11: and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

5: "Attitude" is "fro-neh-oh" again, the same word as in verse two, "...*intent on one purpose.*" Again, close to "motive or intention of the heart or mind." It is to be the same as Jesus' who thought not of Himself, but of us who are lost and needy.

6-7: This "attitude" prompted Jesus to set aside His majesty and humble Himself for our sakes. Though controversial, the phrase that, "although He existed in the form (morpheh) of God" sets the contrast to His taking on the "form of man." Since God is not a physical entity but a spirit,<sup>17</sup> the word "form" would mean that Jesus existed as a spirit being, identical to God in essence and nature. The point is that ideally Paul wants his readers to adopt the same attitude, - to set aside our "majesty" and humble ourselves to the service of others often deemed "less" than we are.

Setting aside our self-absorption, prejudices, negative and critical opinions of others we feel repulsed by, ingrained and built-in attitudes, thoughts, and perspectives of other people we encounter so we can, like Christ, see beyond these impediments to the need,

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<sup>17</sup> John 4:24; II Cor, 3:17



hurt, and cause of another's character and mannerisms, may be the hardest challenge we will ever face. But that is what we are called to do. This will take much time to develop as we grow in Christ, even our entire lifetime, perhaps. It is a goal we may not even reach in this life, but one extending beyond it.

8: Self-explanatory.

9-11: Here Paul moves from the example Jesus set to His exaltation. He quotes a portion of Isaiah 45:23 that says, "I have sworn by Myself, The word has gone forth from My mouth in righteousness And will not turn back, That to Me every knee will bow, every tongue will swear allegiance."

His praise of God and the Lord Jesus shows how convinced and assured Paul is about what he says. There is no doubt in Paul's mind that this is indeed the truth. His personal testimony buttresses this.

2:12-13,

12: "So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; 13: for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure."

12-13: These verses have caused some consternation among believers because some legalistic teachers quote it to support the idea that our salvation is by works and not by grace through faith alone. They are wrong. The point Paul is making is introduced by the words "so then", (ὥστε - "ho-stay") which conveys, "based on all that I have just written", and then refers to how one works out the gift of salvation they already possess, not that which they are trying to achieve. We know this because he has already referred to his reader's faith. As this follows directly upon Paul's illustration of sacrificial care for others seen in Christ, it wouldn't be off the mark to suggest that the Practice of their salvation would include this as an essential element.

Further, his telling them to, "work out your salvation with fear and trembling" is stated because, "God is at work in you both to will and to work for *His* good pleasure." It is the fact that God is at work within us that ought to humble us and give us the sense of awe and commitment to His will. The word "for" is "γάρ" (gar), and as a conjunction is used as "in explaining" or "the reason for" or even causative. He prompts us by His Spirit and Word. Resisting His Spirit and Word would cause a spiritual conflict in our souls. In II

Corinthians 5:19, we are told that, "...God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation." God at work in us will have something to do with the needs of other people.

The translation "for *His* good pleasure" is discussable. Note the word "*His*" is italicized in the NASB. This word is supplied to reference the supposed subject of the sentence. The translators assumed it is God. And, the direct article "the" could reflect the antecedent "God." But that is not necessarily so. Literally, it translates, "God is at work in you both to will and to work for *the* good pleasure." Whose? The term "good pleasure" is "εὐδοκία." "Eu-doh-kia" and can mean, "desire", "pleasure", "benevolence" and the like. So, though most translators put in "His" good pleasure, it could also be to the benefit of the Philippians as well. The use of the Genitive case is unclear as to its subject. It might be better translated "for your sakes". So we would have, "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for your sakes". This also makes good sense in the context of the passage. Gerald Hawthorne translates it, "Well then, God's dear friends and mine, just as you always obeyed, so continue to obey. Obediently work at achieving spiritual health, not only in light of my coming to you again, but now even more in my absence from you. For the One who effectively works creating both the desire and the drive to promote good will is God."<sup>18</sup>

The "fear and trembling" is due to the awesome fact that God, by His Spirit and Word is working within us to prompt us to practice our salvation in a way worthy of Christ (1:27). In II Corinthians 5:19 Paul wrote, "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself."

To resist God's prompting to live for the sake of others would cause spiritual discomfort and perhaps even God's discipline in our lives. "The "fear and trembling" may simply be the awareness of the consequences of displeasing God.

Nevertheless, the passage and its context does not support the idea that our salvation is something that depends upon our works.

2:14-18,

14: "Do all things without grumbling or disputing; 15: so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, 16: holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I will have

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<sup>18</sup> Gerald F. Hawthorne, Word Biblical Commentary, Word Books, 1983, volume 43, Philippians, pg. 96.

reason to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain. 17: But even if I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice and share my joy with you all.

18: You too, I urge you, rejoice in the same way and share your joy with me."

Once again, verses 14-17 are one long sentence.

14: Divisiveness is occurring in the body it appears. "Grumbling" - "γογγυσμός" (gohg-gue-mohs) is speaking under one's breath, murmuring about another. It shows that there might well be some interpersonal ill will in the congregation. "Disputing" - "διαλογισμός" (dia-loh-ghis-mohs) means that there is some dissension and disagreements as well. Very likely this is the result of debates over the false teaching already so prevalent in the early church. Disagreements and disputes are occurring for some reason and theology is often at the root. Paul refers to these false teachers in 1:27-29 and sets a foundation for basic faith in 2:5-11.

15: So, they are to set aside these divisive actions and attitudes or their "light" will dim. We, after all, are not saved by the perfection of our doctrine. Pointing the finger at others to criticize or instill blame will not promote the harmony Paul implores them to attain. Better to conduct themselves in harmony and above reproach in the midst of a "crooked and perverse generation" so that the finger of blame does not come back at them. The idea that they are a "light" supports the understanding we have expressed in the comments for verses 12-13.

"Crooked" is "σκολιός" - (sko-lee-ohs), from which we get the medical term "scoliosis", a sideways curvature of the spine. "Perverse" is "διαστρέφω" - (dia-streph-oh), and means to reverse the (natural) order or use something for which it was not designed, that it misuse its actual function.

16: "...holding fast to the word of life" corresponds to them appearing as lights in the world. This admonition may reflect some who are attempting to distort their understanding and faith.

"The day of Christ" - refers to His appearing again. Paul's desire is to please the Lord and to have not worked so hard and suffered so much in vain. So he is asking them to conduct themselves appropriately, be solid and united in their faith, grow and mature, so his efforts will not have been futile when he stands before his Savior.

17-18: "Drink offering" recalls the offering of wine poured out upon the sacrificial altar normally with a grain or other sacrifice deemed redemptive for a guilt offering. The quantity of wine depended upon the exact sacrifice, but normally a quart to a quart and a half. Paul uses this as a metaphor for his life being poured out for them and compares them to the altar of God at the tabernacle and temple. This altar is the service sacrifice of their faith, not his. And his sacrifice is not in vain. He is pouring out his life upon the altar of the Lord for their benefit and it is a joy for him to do so, which he wishes to share with them.

Hebrews 12:2 speaking of Jesus says that He is, "...the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." Paul's sentiment is similar. He also asks that any joy they experience be shared with him as well.

2:19-24,

19: "But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, so that I also may be encouraged when I learn of your condition. 20: For I have no one else of kindred spirit who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare. 21: For they all seek after their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus. 22: But you know of his proven worth, that he served with me in the furtherance of the gospel like a child serving his father. 23: Therefore I hope to send him immediately, as soon as I see how things go with me; 24: and I trust in the Lord that I myself also will be coming shortly."

19: Following upon his statement about being "poured out" he hopes to send Timothy to them soon to see how they are doing and report back. Epaphroditus has left taking this letter with him. Only Timothy remains with Paul. In verse 19 and 20, the words "condition" and "welfare" are supplied and are interpretations of the same phrase, "τα περι υμων" literally meaning, "things about you." Paul wanted to hear all the news about what was happening among them.

20: On the one hand, Paul has a number of friends and supporters there in Rome, no doubt many from the church in the home of Priscilla and Aquila. But none of them have been in Philippi as Timothy had been, nor was there any, "...man likeminded as he, or so well disposed to the Philippians as he was, that had their good and cause at heart, and was willing to take so long a journey to do them service; for he had a particular affection for them, having been among them with the apostle..."<sup>19</sup> Epaphroditus would have been one of those Paul would feel confident about, but he is gone with the letter to the people at Philippi.

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<sup>19</sup> John Gill's Exposition on the Entire Bible, E-sword online, Commentaries, Gill, the Book of Philippians.

21: Many commentators sell these folks short a bit, in my opinion. Perhaps Paul also in some way. For me, it is simply that many who are associated with Paul are hard-working folks with jobs, families, obligations and cannot leave to go on a lengthy mission to Philippi. Paul made the same complaint about John Mark who had left the first mission at Pamphylia. Why John did this is speculation, but Paul saw him as a quitter when that actually may not have been the case. Mark may not have anticipated the extent of the journey and felt he had other obligations to attend to. In Acts 13:13 tells us that John left the team at Antioch of Pisidia and returned to Jerusalem. That is where his home was and he may have felt that his mother, by herself, needed looking after. There is no way to know other than to speculate.

22-24: Paul reminds the church at Philippi though it has been a few years, that Timothy is a proven servant, dedicated to the work of the gospel. At this time, Timothy is no longer a youth, but a grown man with years of service under his belt.

Paul intends to send Timothy as soon as he has some idea of the disposition of his own situation. He is hopeful of his own release and he and Timothy can come together. In the meantime he has sent Epaphroditus ahead with the this letter and the following note about him.

2:25-30,

25: But I thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger and minister to my need; 26: because he was longing for you all and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick. 27: For indeed he was sick to the point of death, but God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, so that I would not have sorrow upon sorrow. 28: Therefore I have sent him all the more eagerly so that when you see him again you may rejoice and I may be less concerned about you. 29: Receive him then in the Lord with all joy, and hold men like him in high regard; 30: because he came close to death for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was deficient in your service to me."

23-30: The timeline is: Epaphroditus has arrived in Philippi with this letter from Paul. In it Paul greets them, tells them of his uncertain situation and then writes to them about some interpersonal matters among them Epaphroditus shared with Paul. Then he commends Epaphroditus to them and tells them he hopes to send Timothy to them soon, along with the hope that he can join him in a visit to Philippi.

In commending Epaphroditus, Paul notes that he became "ill", nearly suffering death, and

that might be a reason for the delay in Paul's getting back to the church as is suggested in verse 26. How they heard he was "sick" is unknown. The word "sick" is more accurately translated "weak" or "feeble." Epaphroditus may have been an older man, and the trip a hardship for him. Verse 30 implies that he indeed risked his life in making the trip. The word "deficient" is not a criticism of the church in Philippi. It could be better translated "lacking in your ministry to me." It indicates that Paul had expected to hear from them sooner, as he states in 4:10, "But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your care for me has flourished again; though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity." Still, 4:18 notes, "But I have received everything in full and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God."

# PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE CHURCH AT PHILIPPI

## CHAPTER THREE

3:1-3,

1: Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things again is no trouble to me, and it is a safeguard for you. 2: Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision; 3: for we are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh..."

1: "Finally" is a poor translation. "Leaving that" would be much better as Paul seems to reflect on his comment about Epaphroditus in 2:29, "...receive him then in the Lord with all joy, and hold men like him in high regard..." He will return to the theme of joy in a short while. There is a lot on his mind.

"To write the same things" prefaces what is to come, not what he already has said. The things he is about to write have been conveyed before, perhaps on his previous visits. But they bear repeating as these issues he is about to comment on are a serious concern to the believer's understanding of the true gospel. Distortions and false teachings are rampant both then and now, and Paul wants them to be reminded to stand firm in the truth. His teachings are a safeguard for them, (literally "to keep them from stumbling") and he does not mind repeating them once again.

2: So Paul launches into a topic he is inspired to expand on having left it in 1:28 where he said, "...in no way (*be*) alarmed by your opponents--which is a sign of destruction for them, but of salvation for you, and that too, from God." He casts the lowest insult upon those who have come in to the congregation to distract them from the truth, namely, that their salvation is by God's grace through their faith in God's provision in Christ, not by works of the law, circumcision, or any other so-called works of obedience that is assumed to gain them, favor with God.

As it is today, it was and is almost impossible to detach oneself from the Old Covenant and the Law because of the threats of death and destruction promised by God to those who do so. Understandable in one sense except that God also made it clear, as early as Abraham, that righteousness is by faith, not by works. So he calls these teachers of fear, "dogs", "evil workers" and the "false circumcision."

The term "dogs" was used by the Jews as an insult to Gentiles. Jesus used the word in Matthew 15:21-28 (and repeated in Mark 7:24-30) as a test. He did not at all use it in a derogatory manner. The word "dogs" is a term of contempt indicating that the Gentiles are little more than animals, scavengers and filthy. For Paul to turn this metaphor upon the Jewish false teachers is to cast them in the same light. "Evil workers" is not to intend the thought of evil as we grasp it, but rather "useless" and "loathsome", creating excrement where there was once purity. "False circumcision" confirms these are Jews as do the next sentences. Though having undergone the physical act of circumcision, that no longer has any validity either as far as faith or the New Covenant in Christ is concerned as verse 3 explains.

3: The word "true" is supplied, but conveys Paul's intent. Paul is not referring to a circumcision of the flesh at all, but uses this surgery as a metaphor of a spiritual reality that surpasses the physical. In Romans 2:9-29 Paul wrote,

"For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God."

And in Galatians 5:6, he says,

"For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love."

To those who place their confidence in their works (the flesh) they are lost in darkness with no hope of salvation. If someone thinks they have the qualifications to enter the kingdom of God, then they would have to compare themselves with the apostle's "qualifications" he deemed filth.

3:4-6,

4: "...although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more: 5: circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; 6: as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless."

4: Paul had all the credentials to establish himself as righteous before God according to



the religion and tradition of the Jews based on his works. Even being "blameless" under the law is quite an achievement. This does not mean he was sinless, but offered the required sacrifices as directed. Not many could stand up to Paul's early pedigree.

3:7-14,

7: But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. 8: More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, 9: and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, 10: that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; 11: in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. 12: Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. 13: Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, 14: I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."

7-8: One of the hardest things for a person to do is to take everything he or she has believed their whole life, worked hard at, spent years accomplishing, paid much in both sacrifice and financial investment, taught and raised their families therein, and done so in a supportive and close community of friends and participants they were bonded with and then - throw it all away. Ask any member of Scientology who has left the "church" after being raised in it all their life. Or a Jew, a Muslim, a Catholic, or any other strict religion in which one has been raised and nurtured.

Yet, Paul did so and lost everything including his family with the possible exception of his sister and nephew.<sup>20</sup> He counted all of as a loss he says, "in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ..."

Paul's drive to have an intimate relationship with His Savior is apparent. It surpasses everything else that might be considered as having value in terms of one's credentials, works, pedigrees, social or economic position, or anything else people place before God as their offerings of qualification to enter His kingdom. All these and more are garbage in

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<sup>20</sup> Acts 23:16

comparison to knowing Christ.

This is a worthy goal for any Christian. For too many, their goal is to somehow keep from sinning, but Christ took care of that on the cross. No longer under the Law, the believer is to be led by the Spirit. No place in the New Testament is the believer told to focus on their sins and work to overcome them. Quite the opposite. In fact, 4:8 says, " Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things." And Colossians 3:2, " Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth."

9: So, Paul's goal is to know Christ more intimately and attain righteousness before God, but not based on his own efforts from his blameless works of the Law, that surely fail to do so. No, he casts himself upon Christ in faith knowing that only in Him does God impart righteousness based on faith alone. This is seen early in the Scriptures in Abraham himself (Genesis 15:6).

10-11: The word "know" carries with it the idea of intimacy to the point that Paul longs to share Christ's sufferings with Him, as well as His death and resurrection. The word "attain" does not imply that his life, sufferings or death somehow qualify him for entrance into God's kingdom, but actually means to meet someone, "face to face." Only in death, following a life of faith, does one have the hope of a "face to face" meeting with the Savior. He makes this clear in his following remarks.

12: "Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus."

Paul has not obtained the fullness or completion for that which Christ had laid hold of him ultimately concluding in the resurrection from the dead. He says he pursues (presses on) that for which Christ grasped him. What is this? He has mentioned his goal of knowing the sufferings, death and resurrection of Christ, and being imputed with the righteousness that comes by faith alone. But he also adds in verses 13-14 that he "reaches forward to what lies ahead" which is the prize of the upward call in Christ Jesus. In the larger context, Paul appears to be referencing the opportunity to one day stand face to face with the Savior and be blessed by His presence.

As we continue to read, we get the sense that though Paul is committed to any ministry and work remaining for him to accomplish, his greater longing is to just be in the presence of the Lord, found, after he dies, righteous by his faith.

13-14: He repeats the same theme as in verse 12 (in a typical Parallelism). He again reiterates that he has not obtained it yet but, using the same word as in verse 12 he "presses on." This word, "διώκω" (dee-oh-koh) means "to pursue." Here he uses language reminiscent of the athletic events of the day, especially the runners who race for the prize given to the winner. Two things Paul adds:

1. "Forgetting what lies behind" is a very good counsel for all of us. The past is gone. It has no effect on our relationship with the Lord. Any negative attribute to our lives is washed away in the blood of Christ forever. Far too many Christians fret over things that nothing can be done about. But God is the only one who can do something about it and by His grace through Christ, we are constantly washed clean. Our vision can be on the future, rather than on the stumbling's of the past. Paul knows this only too well.

Years ago, when we were with friends in Pittsburgh, we attended church with them and one of the songs we sang contained these words. "I will never be the same again; I can never return. I've closed the door. I will walk the path, I'll run the race, and I will never be the same again." The pastor then came up and said to the congregation, "Many of you need to close the door on things of your past and move on. They hold you back, tie you up, and keep you from following the Lord with all your heart and prevent you from being the kind of Christian you want and need to be, loving, forgiving, ministering, caring. Close the door on those things".

Sometimes there are those of us hold onto stuff and then throw it in another's face when we want to tear them down. We neither forgive, nor forget. I am thankful that in our family, when someone did something worthy of criticism, condemnation or discipline, once it was dealt with, it was never brought up again.

Our eyes are on the things that bring profit and up-building to each other. This is because of the Lord's mercy and grace in our own lives which we recognize and realize we have no room to hold anything over anyone's head ever again.

I have used an illustration before, but for some it is too late. For others, feel free to adopt it. Imagine yourself sitting on the back porch on one of those large wooden swings with your spouse. You are aged now perhaps in your eighties. As the two of you swing gently you reminisce over how you have spent your lives and what you have accomplished. You know it won't be long before you stand before Jesus. What did your life amount too? What would you like it to amount too? A great deal of possessions? Your name on a building? High honors, awards and degrees by worldly institutions? Great wealth or influence? Political or athletic achievement? All gained by the sacrifice of your family and the things of God? Or would you prefer to look back and see that your children and

grandchildren all love the Lord and are walking humbly with Him, decent, godly people who desire to serve God and others, who love each other and would sacrifice themselves for their spouse and their family, touching others for the Lord, content, hard-working dedicated people who want their lives to count for something good also. Which would you prefer to look back upon while you swing?

If you prefer the latter, well, it doesn't happen by accident. Like any goal, if you are determined, like Paul, to know Jesus and all that that means, this goal excludes anything else that would detract from it.

If you were going to go to a university to study law, medicine, architecture, and you wanted to be the best, this goal would automatically exclude everything that would detract from accomplishing it wouldn't it. Partying, traveling, extra-curricular activities you might enjoy, and a host of other things you might enjoy are put on hold.

Are you putting anything on hold so you can serve your wife or your husband, or your children? Or are you indulging yourself at the expense of these loved ones? Now we can see clearly the point Paul makes in the illustration of Jesus' life and his own, can't we?

2. Paul adds the word "prize" as the definition of what lies ahead and what he calls the "upward call of God in Christ Jesus." Here he looks toward the culmination of his life on this earth. The word "prize" is "βραβεῖον" (bra-bay-eohn) and refers to the award given to those in the public athletic games. He uses the same term in I Corinthians 9:24-25, "Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable."

3:15-21,

15: "Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, have this attitude; and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you; 16: however, let us keep living by that same standard to which we have attained. 17: Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk<sup>21</sup> according to the pattern you have in us. 18: For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, 19: whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things. 20: For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; 21: who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the

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<sup>21</sup> The word "walk" in verses 17 and 18 is "περιπατέω" and means to "conduct one's life" or "behave."

power that He has even to subject all things to Himself."

15: The word "perfect" once again is misleading. No one is "perfect" in the sense we think of something that has no flaw unless you look at a person in Christ from God's viewpoint. But Paul doesn't introduce this idea. So "complete" or "mature" is better. In I Corinthians 2:6 the translators use "mature" for the same word here, " Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away..."

Those who are "mature" ought to have the same perspective. Again, close to "motive or intention of the heart or mind" when it comes to their goal. If not, the Lord will reveal this to them. The "mature" ought to have their goal as described in verses 13-14.

16-18: But he seems to suggest, if they lack maturity then emulate those who are walking in the mature way Paul's describes. Paul's intent is for them is for them to live their lives in the orderly fashion<sup>22</sup> they have achieved and not to slip back into chaos. This harkens back to his instructions for them not to be "alarmed by their opponents" and to watch out for the "dogs" and "false circumcision." In verse 17 he commends those who "walk" according to the pattern of the apostle and those with him then condemns those who "walk" as enemies of Christ to their destruction. The word "walk" is a metaphor for the way one conducts or lives their life - (footnote 20).

There are those who are enemies of the cross who would seek to derail the members of the church from their walk. Paul worries about their influence. At the same time, he "weeps" for them or the situation they are causing among his beloved Philippians.

19: Though not specifically defines here, in Paul's thinking these "enemies" are probably Jews who seek to persuade the new believers to abandon their faith in this Jesus and return to Judaism. These people are called Judaizers in theological terms.

I say this for four reasons. 1: He has spoken of them often before. In chapter 3:1-2 he also says he is going to tell them of things he has warned them about before and then speaks of the "false circumcision" who are false teaching Jews. 2: They are "enemies of the cross", not enemies of the church. 3: He "weeps" for them because they head for destruction. This is reminiscent of Romans 9:1-5 where Paul writes about the Jews,

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<sup>22</sup> The word Paul selects here is "στοιχέω" (stoi-keh-oh) meaning an "orderly row" and often used to describe marching in a military fashion.

1: "I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit, 2: that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart. 3: For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, 4: who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises, 5: whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen."

Jesus lamented over Jerusalem as well. In Luke 13:34 He cries out,

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, just as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not have it!"

The stiff necked and stubborn Jew is a mountain hard to move. And 4: It is because there is no specific identification of these "enemies" that makes them common knowledge among the majority Jewish constituency of the early church. But with that being said, the fact is that those who are opposed to the cross whether Jew or Gentile are lost and headed for destruction. For example, these "enemies" will perish because their god is "appetite." The word is "belly" and it may refer to the strict dietary policies of the Jews in which they took pride and condemned others. If this isn't a reference to Jews, but to Gentiles, then it would refer to their gluttony. Their glory is their "shame." The word means "disgrace." If referring to Jews, it might mean their refusal to believe in what God has said and done adhering to tradition instead. It could include the crucifixion of Christ in which they took pleasure. On the other hand, if referring to Gentiles, it would refer to the decadent and immoral life style or the benefits of being a Roman citizen. As for the Jews, the setting their minds "on earthly things" might be the self-righteousness of the Jews by the Law, as even Paul expressed about his former life, or the ambition of Gentiles glorying in possessions and position. In this regard, pride in being a Roman citizen could well be included.

20: But we do not set our minds or our hopes on the earthly or worldly environment because our citizenship is in heaven. Even Paul's Roman citizenship seems to have failed to be of benefit to him at this writing.

21: Citizenship in heaven assures us of something his world can never provide; namely "transformation" of this weak and decaying body into glory like Jesus's is. The phenomenal power to accomplish this is part of the power He has over all creation.

[4:1 "Therefore, my beloved brethren whom I long to see, my joy and crown, in this way stand firm in the Lord, my beloved."] 4:1 is more suited to the conclusion of this thought than after a chapter break.

# PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE CHURCH AT PHILIPPI

## CHAPTER FOUR

4:1,

1: "Therefore, my beloved brethren whom I long to see, my joy and crown, in this way stand firm in the Lord, my beloved."

1: It would be more fitting to have this in the previous chapter as verse 22 of chapter 3. It concludes and summarizes Paul's discussion there. "Therefore" refers to what he has just said and based on that he instructs them to stand firm. He use the term "beloved" twice in this one sentence revealing once again his affection for them. They are his joy and his "crown." The word "crown" is "στέφανος" ("steph-an-ohs") and is the victory wreath the winner of the race receives. Paul's idea continues from the theme in 3:12-14. His instruction to "stand firm in the Lord" is now his third repetition of this theme (1:27; 2:16).

It is a theme Paul repeats in several other epistles.<sup>23</sup> From this it is clear that there is considerable opposition to Paul, his message, and to the faith in Christ as the Messiah and Savior he has preached. Any study of the early church, including the Book of Acts will bear this out.

4:2-3,

2: "I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord. 3: Indeed, true companion, I ask you also to help these women who have shared my struggle in the cause of the gospel, together with Clement also and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

2: These two women are close friends of Paul and had together, been among those who participated with Paul in his struggle in the cause of the gospel. Now, they are at odds with each other and the reason is not told to us. Their names are not Jewish as we are accustomed, but in Hellenized territories of the empire, many Jews named their children with other than traditional Jewish names for women. He "urges" (para-kah-leh-oh)<sup>24</sup> them to "live" (fro-neh-oh) again - to have the same mind or attitude (see: 2:2 "the same mind" and 2:5, "the same attitude"). Again, close to "motive or intention of the heart or mind."

One member of our study group felt it appropriate to move this from a historical perspective to a present situation and include one's own name in the place of Euodia and

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<sup>23</sup> I Corinthians 16:13; II Corinthians 1:24; Galatians 5:1; Ephesians 6:11-14; I Thessalonians 3:8; II Thessalonians 2:15 etc.

<sup>24</sup> We have looked closely at the attributes of this word on page 14, as part of the commentary of Acts:6:40.



the name of a person one has a hard time getting along with in the place of Syntyche and then follow the counsel or reconciliation. Adding to that, the spirit of harmony, unity and selflessness expressed in 2:1-8, 14-15 would be applicable as well.<sup>25</sup>

His point is well taken. In fact, Paul's earlier theme in chapter two could well be a subtle way of beginning to get to those like Euodia and Syntyche who are having disharmony and squabbles. Whatever they are, they need to be set aside for the sake of Christ as that is not the goal He gave His life for us to pursue.

3: "True companion" is a term with a masculine suffix - "σύζυγος" (suz-oo-gohs). It is not indicated whom this might be. It could be a man thus named, or someone who has shared the ministry with Paul for a long time and been there as a true companion and supporter. Possible candidates are Luke or Aristarchus, both noted as Paul's closest traveling companions (except Timothy who remained in Rome at the time of this writing). Otherwise we have no other idea whom it may have been.

Is Clement being asked to help reconcile the two women? Or is he listed as one among Paul's fellow workers? Most likely the latter. Paul's acquaintance with these people was probably made during the third missionary journey as he passed through Philippi twice at that time.

Some have speculated that this "Clement" could be the same "Clement" who became the third overseer (bishop) of the church at Rome. "Clement of Rome" is a well-known early church father whose publications are still extant. But the name was common and there is no historical evidence to support this view. He was a dedicated Christian at Philippi who participated with Paul in the work of the gospel. That is all we know about him.

"The Book of Life" is better narrowed down to "The Lamb's Book of Life" as seen in Revelation 21 indicating those who are God's. The "Book of life" can simply mean a record of all peoples ever born. Paul would not have known of John's distinction as Revelation had yet to be written.

4:4-7,

4: "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! 5: Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near. 6: Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7: And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

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<sup>25</sup> Comment by Carl Ulbrich

4: Paul moves now to the conclusion of his letter. His instructions from this point on not only apply to the difficulties Euodia and Syntyche are having but to all believers as well. From the beginning Paul has been concerned about the relationship of the church in regard to one another as well as to those outside the church.

He now is in the spirit of joy and positive demeanor. "Rejoice," "be glad," "be of good cheer" all is well in the Lord!

At the end of their journey, (as written in Bunyan's classic "Pilgrim's Progress) the companions Christian and Hopeful face crossing the deep, cold rushing river they must ford in order to enter heaven's city. Hopeful entered first and Christian followed but began to sink. He cried out to his good friend Hopeful, "I sink in the deep waters; the billows go over my head; all the waves go over me!"

Hopeful cried back to him these comforting words, "Be of good cheer, my brother; I feel the bottom and it is sound!" And after they had crossed, Hopeful added these words, "Be of good cheer, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole."

5: "Gentle spirit" is to "yield before" suggesting they not be confrontational with others. "Patient", "understanding", "mild mannered" would also fit. The reason is that for Paul, and so much of the early church, Christ's return seemed on the horizon and it was incumbent that their conduct be such that as many as possible be drawn to Him through the preaching of the gospel as possible while there was still time. This is especially important to the women in question but is good counsel for all.

Nowhere in the epistle does Paul counsel anyone to confront and attack their opponents.

6-7: Though some would apply this to everyday life with its worries and concerns, that is not the counsel here. Remember, context is everything. Paul is instructing them not to be anxious or concerned regarding their trust in Christ, the truth they have believed and God's grace and provision for them in the spiritual realm. If he had included every concern and worry we have throughout our lives he would be a hypocrite because he has used this same term on many occasions to express his concern about others. In fact, in 2:20, this same word is used when he said, "For I have no one else of kindred spirit who will genuinely be '*concerned*' for your welfare" indicating that he himself is concerned or anxious for them. This is the same word he uses here.

In I Corinthians 12:24-25 speaking of the body of Christ he says, "But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked, so that

there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same "*care*" for one another." "*Care*" above (italics mine) is the same word as "anxious" and "concerned."

I Peter 5:6-7 says, "Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you." This is the same word Paul uses.

To add to that, he recognizes that concern, worry or anxiety is a human reality as he instructs them to take these matters to the Lord. If we had no anxieties, worries or concerns about people or circumstances, there would be no instruction to take them to the Lord. It is the taking all the concerns to the Lord that helps alleviate worry as Paul firmly believes in the providential care of the Lord.

Because of that, anxiety and worry can be replaced with a peace that transcends all comprehension. This term means that the peace we have through our relationship with Christ by faith is superior to and above any other "peace" man could ever supply. In John 14:27 the apostle records these words of Jesus, "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful." And in John 16:33 Jesus says to His disciples, "These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world."

Paul agrees as he writes in Romans 5:1, "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ..." And in Romans 8:6, "For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace."

4:8-9,

8: "Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things. 9: The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you."

8: The word "finally" here is different than in 3:1 where it means, "leaving that aside." Here the word is "loi-pohs" meaning, "that which remains to be said" or possibly, "of most important to repeat" or even, "in summary."

We are to dwell on these things rather than on the things that cause relationships to

become confrontational. "Make these things the source of what you say" could be a good meaning as "dwell" is the translation of the Greek λογίζομαι (loh-gid-zoh-mai) meaning a "factual accounting."

Whatever is: "true" - focusing here again of the true gospel message, I would assume, in light of the opposition and false teachers they are dealing with.

"Honorable" is whatever is worthy of their honor, devotion or worship.

"Right" is "righteous" whether in action or conduct, not necessarily just the "right" we think of when comparing "right" and "wrong."

"Pure" is the image of that which is beautiful because it is unspoiled or innocent. "Virginal" would be close to the mark either of persons or things.

"Lovely" is an awkward translation of a Greek word difficult to define. It describes someone who has a caring and friendly disposition and acts accordingly.

"Good"(repute) is not the quality of "goodness" other Greek words are used for,<sup>26</sup> but here the word Paul chooses is used once only in the New Testament in this verse. It is "εὐφημος" (eu-fee-mohs) meaning, "someone with a good reputation", "having a good name" in the community. Proverbs 22:1 says, "A good name is to be more desired than great wealth, Favor is better than silver and gold." "Excellence" is "fine moral character" as in II Peter 1:5, "Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge..."

And finally, "worthy of praise" or simply "praise worthy" "admirable" or "deserving of our praise" - "dwell" - not just think about or meditate upon, but also speak of these things, perhaps in contrast or in place of the things causing the "grumbling" and "disputing" Paul mentions in 2:14.

Another way to express Paul's emphasis in the negative would be to say, "Get you mind off of... then he could list all the things that are stumbling blocks and causes for the grumbling and disputing. But Paul choose the positive approach.

9: For Paul, the best example to emulate in terms of their faith and Christian lives is himself. He is not being ego centric or pride filled here, but he has paid a dear price in

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<sup>26</sup> Kalos and Agathos are the most used words translated "good."

service to the Lord and he knows what he knows. His life is saying that knowing and following the Lord is worth everything. He has learned how to deal with all sorts of circumstances and others can benefit from his experience and wisdom. What he has taught them is the pure gospel, they need to adhere to it and not go astray.

He already has told them that he does not mind repeating these things to them as they will keep them from stumbling. He is concerned about their unity and harmony in what they believe and in how they treat each other as well as others outside of the church. This is the motive for Paul's teachings here. The relationships they have within the body and even in their marriages and homes benefit from all the counsel of this epistle. Paul's dedication, sold out to Christ having burned all other bridges is something he desires for all of them to do.

In so doing, not just the peace of God but God Himself will be with them as they practice the things they have learned from him. Paul now moves into a more personal theme.

4:10-14,

10: "But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at last you have revived your concern for me;<sup>27</sup> indeed, you were concerned before, but you lacked opportunity.<sup>28</sup>  
11: Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. 12: I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. 13: I can do all things through Him who strengthens me. 14: Nevertheless, you have done well to share with me in my affliction."

10: In my opinion, Paul, confined to his quarters in Rome, may have felt forsaken or neglected especially after nearly two years imprisoned in Caesarea, certainly lonely and perhaps somewhat depressed not hearing from his closest friends at Philippi. Though strong and dedicated to Jesus, he was human after all and an emotional man who had need of companionship and encouragement just like the rest of us. With no family anymore, his life of service had been interrupted by nearly five years of imprisonment between Caesarea and Rome. He has not heard from them all that time. He knows they had no real opportunity to do much under those conditions.

The gifts from his friends at Philippi and the visit from Epaphroditus lifted his spirits and raised him to rejoicing and thanksgiving. How important this care is to all of us when we

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<sup>27</sup> A much better translation would be, "...once again your thoughts (or care) for me has flourished."

<sup>28</sup> Perhaps due to his long incarceration in Caesarea and then the lengthy trip to Rome.

are down and hurting. We need each other and Paul's letter makes it clear how thankful he was to hear from them. At last, he receives contact and supporting gifts from those he loves very much.

11-13: Paul does not wish them to think he is in dire straits or that he is not adequately being taken care of. He has learned to be "content" in whatever circumstances. "Content" is actually, "take care of myself" or be "self-sufficient." This is not the idea of "contentment" as we think of as having no care or worry, need or requirement. He simply means he has learned to manage his situation no matter what the circumstance.

Verses 12 and 13 bear this understanding out as he describes what he is talking about. In verse 12, he speaks of the "secret" of "being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need." That "secret" is, "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me." The word "secret" really means "I have been taught the mystery."

We need to be good students in interpreting what Paul means by "all things." Some distort this verse and apply it to every situation in life, some even in areas where the Lord would not support one's effort at all. I am sure that I, or most of you could not go out and run a four minute mile using this verse as some guarantee you could do it without a huge amount of training not to mention needing to be quite young and capable.

So Paul's point is in the context and that context is; "I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need." He has found the strength from Christ to manage and endure these times of personal crises. Verse 12 is the interpretation of verse 13.

14: The point above proves this statement, "Nevertheless, you have done well to share with me in my affliction." In other words, "I could have gotten by without any help, but your support is very much appreciated."

4:15-20,

15: "You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone; 16: for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs. 17: Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account. 18: But I have received everything in full and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have

sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God. 19: And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. 20: Now to our God and Father be the glory forever and ever. Amen."

15-16: The previous thought moves Paul to reminisce a bit. He makes a rather sad statement while at the same time expressing appreciation for their care for him. After his sacrifice in Philippi and Macedonia (including Amphipolis, Apollonia, Thessalonica, and Berea),<sup>29</sup> no church, except the one in Philippi, gave him any support although he gave them his time, energy, suffering and the message of the gospel, even beginning the very church itself. While in Thessalonica, Paul and Silas having left Philippi following a brutal beating and imprisonment, received gifts from the church at Philippi.

17: Paul is clear, that though he appreciates their help, it is to their credit and good work in God's eyes (verse 18) that is most important and will be remembered.

18: The gifts from the church in Philippi must have been significant as Paul notes that he, due to their generosity, is "amply" supplied. "Amplly" is "πληρώω" (pler-rah-oh) and means, "filled up to the brim." Though he cannot repay them, he assures them that God will see their gifts as a "fragrant aroma."

The term "fragrant aroma" comes from the Old Testament sacrifices that pleased God because of the hearts and faithfulness of the people. The NASB translates this in the Old Testament as "soothing aroma" meaning a "restful," "pleasing" or "quieting" scent. The Greek word for "fragrant" is "good scent." Since the readers are principally Jews, they would make the connection. Their gifts are not only welcome by Paul but are also a sweet offering to God as well. Paul knows that it is God who is in them prompting them to sacrifice on his behalf.

19: Another often misapplied verse. The intent is "necessities" not the multitude of "wants" and "wishes" we often have. Our group summarized this very well. The most important "need" is the spiritual relationship we have with God through faith in Christ. This reflects the phrase, "...according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus."

Next, Paul has spoken throughout the entire epistle of the importance of unity, harmony, sacrificial service to others and setting one's mind on the things that are precious in place of the grumbling, bickering, disharmony and so on that seems to be affecting the church. In the way that God has supplied his needs in times of stress and challenge, so He will supply theirs just as God used them to bring him support when he needed it most.

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<sup>29</sup> Acts 17:1-15; II Corinthians 8:1-5.

It is times of difficulty and "affliction" (as Paul notes in verse 14) when, looking back we can see how God used that time for our own benefit. Experience, wisdom, strengthening of faith, drawing closer to our Lord and much more are accomplished during these times though they may be harsh and unpleasant at the time. Most of us will be afflicted with such challenges in our lives. Paul wrote this to the church at Rome, "And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us." (Romans 5:3-5)

God will take our circumstances and work them out for our benefit because he loves us.

On the other hand, we have these words of Jesus, "And He said to His disciples, 'For this reason I say to you, do not worry about your life, as to what you will eat; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap; they have no storeroom nor barn, and yet God feeds them; how much more valuable you are than the birds!'" (Luke 12:22-24)

20: Because of God's providential care, He is to be given glory forever.

4:21-23,

21: "Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren who are with me greet you. 22: All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household. 23: The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit."

21: The word "saint" is commonly used by Paul in describing any and all who trust in God through faith in Christ and are "set apart" to Him (which the word "saint" actually means.) It does not mean, as the distorted view of the Roman Catholic Church declares, that "sainthood is only conferred upon someone in the church through whom a verifiable miracle (also defined by the church) is performed and witnessed." This very ecclesiastical act underscores that the R. C. C. appears to be dependent totally and completely upon works for salvation.

The "brethren" with Paul are not named, except that we know that Timothy is still with him as far as we know. Others might include participants in the house church of Priscilla and Aquila.



22: Imagine telling a Catholic that some members of Nero's own household are considered "saints." It seems a logical conclusion that these believers are among the "brethren" who are with Paul, and among the "saints" who greet them as well.

We also see that Paul's witness for Christ has borne fruit in the highest levels of the empire. Those of Caesar's household are likely servants and workers although some official staff and some distant family members might be included.

23: The typical benediction of Paul. See for example: Romans 16:20; II Corinthians 13:14; Galatians 6:18; I Thessalonians 5:28; Philemon 1:25.

The translation "spirit" means, "With your every breath of life."

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY AND CREDITS**

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