

To the church in Philippi

Philippians



Lesson 1—Greetings and Consolations to the believers in Philippi

Philippians 1:1-30

- I. **Introduction:** *Paul writes this letter to the church in Philippi, evidently from Rome (1:13; 4:22), though some commentators argue for Caesarea or Ephesus. The year of Paul’s writing this letter is A.D. 62. Eleven years earlier, Silas, Timothy, Luke, and Paul first came to Philippi and established a church there (A.D. 51). The Philippian church was the first church which Paul established in Macedonia. He first came there during his second missionary journey as a response to the “Macedonian Call” (Acts 16:9-12), in which God directed him to Macedonia through a vision. During that visit Paul was imprisoned and then set free; the Philippian jailor was also converted and baptized as he witnessed the unusual Christian conduct of Paul and Silas (Acts 16:24-34). At a later time, Paul also visited the Philippians on his third missionary journey (Acts 20:1,6). When the church in Philippi heard of Paul’s Roman Imprisonment, they sent Epaphroditus to bring some financial aid and comfort to him (4:18). Paul sent this letter back with Epaphroditus to the Philippian church (2:25-30). Philippians is one of Paul’s four “prison epistles” since it was written during his imprisonment. This letter was primarily written as a thank you letter to the Philippians for their service in Christ, and also to admonish them to be of “one mind,” faithful in Christ.*

The city of Philippi itself has quite an interesting history. It was first given the name in B.C. 356 by King Philip of Macedonia (the father of Alexander the Great). The Romans captured it in 168 B.C. and it became a Roman colony (compare Acts 16:12) at the hand of Octavian (later Augustus Caesar). It was primarily a military outpost and not a city for commerce. For this reason, not many Jews had settled there and there was no synagogue in that city when Paul first came there (Acts 16:13).

- II. **Warm greetings and prayers from the Apostle (v.1-5)** *Paul is very thankful for the believers in Philippi and he greets them very warmly. He is always thankful to God in prayers for them. “...as often as [he] remembers...” them he prays these things. Paul had reason to rejoice and be thankful for these believers in Christ, for they had been faithful since the first day of receiving the gospel until that current time (v.5). The apostle offered many prayers for them, even as we ought to offer many prayers for each other today.*
- III. **Praying for growth and faithfulness (v.6-11)**
- a. *(v.6,7) Paul had much confidence in the situation and the faith of these believers. The Lord had “begun a good work” in them and was sure to carry it through unto completion. “For it is God who works in us, both to will and to do according to His good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13). The Lord must be the one working in us, to bring the power, strength, and uprightness to transform our characters into His own image. “...for without [Him] we can do nothing” (John 15:4,5). We must invite the Lord into our lives each day so that He may do the work of transformation which He desires to do in us (Revelation 3:20). Paul had these brothers and sisters truly in his heart, because they had also been partakers of the same grace of Jesus Christ which he had experienced.*
- b. *(v.8,9) Jesus Christ and His faithful servants long deeply for holiness, and not just for themselves either, but for all who name the name of Christ!! Paul desired greatly for these brothers and sisters to advance in true holiness in Christ—the true love of Heaven, and to not fall back!! There were to “advance more and more...” **Christ and His sincere servants are never satisfied with mediocrity!** Jesus has a much higher calling for us! Christ wants us to be “perfect” in love, even as our heavenly Father is perfect in love (Matthew 5:46-48)! We should never settle for an earthly experience, mere profession, or just “slightly better than the world” kind of experience! Though we may have love already, yet God desires for us to have more, for “God is love” (1 John 4:8). “...more and more” should our love increase, yet not just as*

some mere kind of feeling, sentimentalism, or sensationalism. We must be real, deep, and genuine, guided by all the principles of God's Holy love (1 Corinthians 13:3-8). Our love must be according to the true knowledge and discernment of God, placed properly, and used properly as it should be. True love is a principle—not a mere emotional experience. It is much higher and holier than what many have termed to be “love”—such things that do not even deserve the name!

- c. (v.10,11) The other danger that has existed among men in this sinful generation is **the danger of backsliding** or of losing their true love for God and man in all righteous purity and holiness. The sinfulness of this world is corrupting if heeded and does not produce true love, but rather makes it cold. See the warnings of Jesus (Matthew 24:12,13; Revelation 2:4,5; Jeremiah 15:6). We need to be “sincere and without offense until the day of Christ,” bearing those true fruits of holiness in our lives (as in Galatians 5:22,23), and bringing glory to the name of God (as states also Romans 12:1,2).

IV. The bonds of the Apostle and the Preaching of Christ (v.12-18) There is a right way and a wrong way to preach Christ! Some were preaching Jesus Christ for the wrong reasons, and yet Paul was thankful that the name of Jesus Christ was becoming known. Others preached Jesus Christ in all sincerity, and from the motive of “love” (v.17). Certainly, we desire Christ to be preached from a sincere heart of love, but Paul was glad the more would here of our beloved Jesus, even if some people went for the wrong reasons...only with the prayer that the name of Jesus Christ “be not blasphemed” for any type of pretense of bad example under Christ's name! As persecution took place towards Paul for the sake of the gospel, others became more ready to preach Christ! They grew bold and had courage to follow Christ's words (Matthew 5:10-12). It is a true saying that “the blood of the Martyrs is seed for the gospel,” though Paul had not yet met this end, his example was encouraging to others! These things had happened to him “rather unto the furtherance of the gospel” (v.12).

V. Wondering whether it was better to die or to live (v.19-26)

- a. (v.19,20) Paul pointed out that there was nothing to lose at this time. Jesus Christ would now be glorified whether by his life, or by his death. If Paul were to die for the gospel, it would yet be for the glory of the gospel in Christ, at this point. The Holy Spirit gave peace to Paul as he considered these things.
- b. (v.21-24) Paul says, “There is some benefit for me to live,” to preach the gospel and further that work. It would also be better to live and bring joy to the other believers (v.26). However, Paul also desired to depart and to “be with Christ,” which would be “far better.” Sometimes death comes as a rest for us from our hard labors (Revelation 14:13). Now what was Paul saying about death here? Was he saying that he was going to go consciously to heaven and “be with the Lord” at his death? Is that correct? What does the Bible teach about death? (See Ecclesiastes 9:5,6; Psalm 6:4,5; John 5:28,29; 11:11-14; 14:1-3; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17; 1 Corinthians 15:51-54). Clearly, Paul was not talking about going immediately and conscientiously to heaven in some way apart from the body. The Bible does not teach that. “In death, who remembers you? In the grave, who shall give thee thanks?” But, to “be with the Lord” is to be at rest in God, as the moment of death has come, our very life is held safely in the hands of God until He restores us to life at the resurrection. See also the words of Christ at death, Luke 23:46.

VI. Striving together for the faith of the Gospel (v.27-30)

- a. (v.27) “...stand fast in one spirit, with one mind **striving together** for the faith of the gospel.” God desires His people to be laboring **together** for the faith of the gospel! He desires for us to be working together with one heart (spirit) and mind for the glory of His name! In Christ we must be centered upon the truth of His word, and have the same heart to share, live, and protect that faith! So fulfill the prayer of Christ (John 17:20,21).
- b. (v.28-30) Do not be terrified of your enemies who may persecute you for the sake of the gospel. To them, it is a sign of your weakness and of their victory. “Do not be afraid...” God tells us over and over again, “...for I am with you.” (Isaiah 41:10-13). We should “be strong and of a good courage...” (Joshua 1:6,7,9).

Taking it Home: Will you choose to pursue God's love and holiness through Christ “more and more”? _____ (and to not settle for a mediocre experience with God)