

PHILLIPIANS CHAPTER ONE

Phillipi was a free Roman colony named after the father of Alexander the Great. There were no synagogues nor churches at Phillipi so the congregations met wherever was convenient, often at the riverside.

This is another of the “prison” epistles and was written around 60 AD. There were no doctrinal errors as at Galatia nor serious moral lapses as there were in the Corinthian churches so these letters are of encouragement and to reassure the Phillipians that though Paul was in prison everything was going according to God's plan. These letters have a light, friendly tone.

1 Paul and Timothy, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:

2 Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul does not mention his apostleship in this letter as he is well known to the Phillipians and is loved by them. Paul and Timothy are servants of Christ, in other words slaves or bondservants to our Lord. They have been purchased by the blood of Christ and are owned by Him. That is exactly the status today of those of us who are saved. Notice in verse two that grace always comes before peace. Grace is the foundation and peace is the result. Bishops are mentioned here. These are overseers and function almost exactly as the deacons though they seem to be a bit above that function. They are always local to the church.

3 I thank my God upon every remembrance of you,

4 Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy,

Paul expresses his personal relationship by the statement “my God”. He is thanking God for two things. First, the gift of money the Phillipians had sent him and second for the strong faith the Phillipians show toward God.

5 For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now;

Always remember that fellowship is a two way street. In this case it is fellowship in the furtherance of the gospel.

6 Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good

work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:

Paul has no doubt about their salvation or their security. In fact, this is one of the greatest promises for eternal security for the believer. He is confident that they will continue in the correct course after he has gone on to his next ministry. Contrast this with the letter to the Galatians where he had no confidence in their ability to resist false teaching.

7 Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace.

8 For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ.

Paul has great love for the Christians at Philippi. They have shared with him by sending him more than one gift of money. They still keep him in their prayers. When Paul says "God is my record", we might say God is my witness. Bowels is not used as we use it today but in biblical usage it means the inner parts of a person, in this case the heart.

9 And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment;

10 That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ;

Many of today's churches promote love without knowledge. Think of how easy these TV con men have it when their congregations neither know, or care, what the Bible says. They can preach anything that sounds good and the people accept it as truth. How many times today do you hear the phrase, "God is love", without any of the important things that should go with that statement.

11 Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

This takes us right back to the fruit of the Spirit we studied in Galatians. Be sure to notice that if we are filled with these it is to the **glory and praise of God.**

12 But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel;

13 So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all

other places;

Now here we have Paul's complete acceptance of his circumstances. Though he is in prison he is clearly able to see God's hand at work. God is using this to give other Christians confidence and Paul is seeing the gospel spread as a direct result of his imprisonment.

14 And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

15 Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will:

Envy, strife and personal gain are the main motives of the Bible changers.

16 The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds:

Some of them speak about Christ for selfish reasons, some from love of Christ and some because they are jealous. Paul says “nevertheless Christ is preached” so some good comes from it. This is similar to what we have today. So much of the preaching today is heresy and false teaching but whatever it is Christ's name is held out to the general public. Paul wishes to bring honour to Christ by his life or death.

17 But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel.

18 What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.

19 For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,

In verse 17 we see that Paul will not tolerate false teaching but will tolerate wrong

Notice in verse 19 that the Holy Spirit is both the gift and the giver. motives.

The salvation Paul mentions in verse 19 is not salvation of the soul but salvation of his life from the executioner.

20 According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death.

21 For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

Paul is praying that he will face death as a Christian should. His statement is

that if he lives his life is for Christ and if he dies then he is better off. A Christian in Heaven is far better off than a Christian on earth.

22 But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not.

23 For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better:

In other words Paul can not decide which is better. He wants to live but he also wants to die so he can be with the Lord sooner. There is a story told about Charles Spurgeon on one of his ocean voyages. A fierce storm came up and a fellow passenger asked if he was afraid to die. He replied, "I have a sister in New York and a mother in Heaven. I don't care which one I see first".

24 Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.

25 And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith;

No sane person, other than a Christian, can say that it is better to die than to live. Keep in mind that while Paul is saying these things that he has already been in Heaven once before so he knows exactly what he is missing.

26 That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again.

27 Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;

Paul is spared this time and is around for seven more years.

28 And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God.

In other words, don't worry about those that oppose you as they are going to Hell anyway. Paul never does mince words and never has a problem judging those who oppose the true gospel..

29 For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;

30 Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me.

Many people believe that suffering and trouble are the result of sin in a

Christians life. That can be true but it can also be the result of an attack by Satan. It is up to the believer to examine himself and determine where the suffering comes from.

PHILLIPIANS CHAPTER TWO

1 If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies,

Paul is pleading for unity and humility.

2 Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.

Paul wants his cup of joy to run over and the Phillipians can do this by staying with his teachings. If they do this then any differences that come up will be dissolved.

3 Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.

Lowliness of mind is again speaking of humility of spirit. We need to always be aware that it is God who accomplishes things through us.

4 Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

Allow the mind of Christ to dominate in your life. This entire chapter deals with humility in one form or another. Nothing is to be done to promote self.

7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

He left the Trinity and became God and man at the same time. Think about this. A teenage Jewish girl carried the Creator of the universe for nine months. She nursed Him and changed his diaper. She treated his cuts and scratches. She shared his wonder as he rediscovered the world he had made. And finally, he allowed his creatures to nail him to a cross.

So, how do I know Mary was a teenager? She was betrothed to Joseph which means if she had been a little older she would have already married him.

8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Ann and I bought a copy of Mel Gibson's "The Passion" when it came out. We watched it and put it up. I do not ever want to see that movie again.

The cross was the most horrible death imaginable. Two pieces of timber were nailed together, either in a "T" shape or an "X". The person was nailed through his hands and feet so that he hung from his hands and had to lift himself against those nails in order to get a breath. This was death by slow suffocation. When he no longer had the strength to lift himself he died. Worse than the torture was the fact that he had all the sins of the world on Him so that even his Father turned away from Him. Do not ever say ours is a cheap salvation.

9 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:

10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;

This means every created being from the angels in heaven to the lowest demon from Hell. This includes us of course.

11 And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

This is the earliest statement of what Christians believe.

12 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

This is more praise for the Phillipians. Paul can trust them to keep the word even when he is not with them.. The theme of Phillipians keeps coming to the top of the pile. Paul loves the Phillipians and they love him. He speaks of them as dear friends. They have even sent him gifts of money at least twice while he has been imprisoned. It would have been hard to work at his trade of tentmaker in prison.

13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

14 Do all things without murmurings and disputings:

15 That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world;

God's loving purpose is that Christians should become mature in their faith.

They should become more like Christ to the point of having the mind of Christ.

16 Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.

This refers to the judgment seat of Christ. He expects to be able to rejoice there because the Phillipians had kept to the gospel.

Beginning with verse seventeen this letter assumes a personal tone as Paul deals with the ministries of his companions Timothy and Epaphroditus.

17 Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all.

18 For the same cause also do ye joy, and rejoice with me.

In other words, if Paul dies in the ministry rejoice and allow Timothy and Epaphroditus to carry on the ministry. Remember from the last chapter that Paul is willing, and even looks forward to dying as he has already seen what Heaven is like. It must have been hard to leave after once seeing it in person.

19 But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state.

20 For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state.

Timothy was the only person who shared Paul's care about their *spiritual health. It would seem further on that Paul shared the same regard for Epaphroditus.

21 For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's.

22 But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel.

23 Him therefore I hope to send presently, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me.

By 'all the other people', Paul means those who were preaching for the wrong reasons. These reasons are the same as the wrong reasons we see today; money, arrogance and those in love with themselves and the sound of their own voice.

24 But I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly.

Paul still has hope of being released from prison and making it back to Phillipi.

25 Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labour, and fellow soldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants.

Epaphroditus was a fellow soldier with Paul and was referred to as a brother. Brothers in Christ have a spiritual relationship. They are companions and minister to the needs of their brethren.

26 For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick.

Epaphroditus was not worried because he was sick. He worried that they would worry.

27 For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.

28 I sent him therefore the more carefully, that, when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful.

When the Phillipians see Epaphroditus they will rejoice that he is well and Paul will get a blessing from this also.

29 Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation:

30 Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me.

Epaphroditus does what the Phillipians were unable to do. Like our missionaries he went while they stayed. He nearly died for the work of Christ.

PHILLIPIANS CHAPTER THREE

1 Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe.

The word “finally here makes it seem as though Paul is finishing up his letter but he is only halfway through. He next goes on to warn them of things to watch for. Be sure to notice that he warns them, just as he warned the Galatians, against those who would have them combine law and grace.

2 Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision.

Dogs, in scripture, usually refer to Gentiles or to homosexuals. This warning puzzles me since this is a predominately Gentile church. I believe Paul is warning them away from the ways of the Gentiles just as he goes on to warn against the law keepers.

3 For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

That is because we worship God by his Holy Spirit. We do not put our trust in a physical sign in the body. Verse three covers again that concept we have covered before. That is, we, who are “born again” have had the spirit cut away from this sinful body. Remember that when the Holy Spirit repeats He intends for us to “get it”. So, the spirit goes to be with the Lord at death and the body goes into a hole in the ground to wait for the resurrection.

That is just another way of saying that the spirit is saved but the body is not until we are given our glorified body.

4 Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more:

5 Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee;

6 Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

Paul had more advantages than anyone else could claim. He lists these advantages to show that he considered them to be of no value. He goes on to say, He was circumcised when he was eight days old as was required by Jewish law. This made him a true child of Abraham. He belonged to Israel by birth so he had a special relationship with God.

He came ‘from the tribe of Benjamin’. Benjamin was the child of Rachel, and was the only son of Jacob that was born in the promised land.

He was Hebrew’. He had studied under Gamaliel, a famous Jewish teacher.

Paul was ‘a Pharisee’. He had chosen to be a Pharisee like his parents (Acts 23:6). Pharisees were the strictest sect of the Jews. They tried to obey even the smallest detail of the Law of Moses.

Now, he said all of these things to show that if anyone was able to boast about his lineage, and the fact that he was a Jew, it was him. He goes on to say that

all those things count for nothing since he is now under grace.

7 But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.

What Paul had considered a heresy he now considers gain. His previous life he now considers “loss” for Christ.

8 Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ,

All the things from his life as a Pharisee he now thinks are no better than dung.

9 And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:

Be united to Him and found in Him. Paul realized he did not possess any goodness of his own.

10 That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;

His one aim was to ‘know’ Christ in this close way.

11 If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

12 Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.

Paul knows that he has a sure and perfect future in heaven with God but he also realizes that he is nearing the end of his life..

Paul knows that his salvation is secure .What he doesn't know is how ,and when,he will die and be resurrected. He knows he can go by a martyr's death or by natural causes or possibly even by the Rapture. Paul was looking for the return of Jesus at any time.

13 Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,

Paul has a singleness of purpose as he stated in Ch 1 vs 21 where he says;”for me to live is Christ”

Do not dwell on the past but press forward in your work for Christ.

14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in

Christ Jesus.

15 Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.

No one is perfect in this body but we are still to try our best to reach perfection. God will reveal to the Christian where he is in error.

16 Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.

Be of the same mind and walk together. The Verse “do not be blown about by every wind of doctrine comes to mind”.

17 Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.

18 (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ:

These are the false teachers again. Paul keeps going back to this since it is so important to the life of the believer. It is grace, grace and grace and nothing else.

19 Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.)

20 For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:

As saved sinners we already have a spiritual connection to heaven. This connection is through the Holy Spirit that dwells in us.

21 Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

OK, this one is a little sticky. We know that our bodies will be changed to be like His. That is, in the prime of life and probably 33 years old. There are those who say all of these resurrection bodies will be male and this is the verse they use for proof text. You can make up your own mind about that since the scripture doesn't go any further and we are always cautioned not to make doctrine on the basis of one verse.

PHILLIPIANS CHAPTER FOUR

1 Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and

crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved.

2 I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord.

Paul is gently correcting these ladies. Both are saved and are hard workers in the church.

3 And I entreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellow laborers, whose names are in the book of life.

Euodia and Syntyche were two well-known Christian workers at Philippi. On one of his previous visits they had both worked hard with Paul to spread the gospel. There had apparently been a serious falling out so that the testimony of both ladies, and the church, was affected. Paul cares for both of them and appeals to each woman by name. He wants their friendship restored.

4 Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice.

5 Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.

We should all be aware that moderation is stressed in both Testaments. That means moderation in all things.

6 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

Here the words, “be careful for nothing”, mean do not worry. Worry shows a lack of trust. Notice that the word “careful” used by itself in verse 10, has an entirely different meaning.

7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Even when our prayers are not all granted we can still have peace, knowing that God has everything worked out for our benefit.

8 Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

He gives a list but is really speaking of the word of God here.

9 Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.

The God of Peace is obviously with Paul as he has gone through all of his trials

10 But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity.

Paul is rejoicing in the Lord and not in the gifts they had sent. Though the Phillipians had sent gifts it was the Lord that moved them to send the gifts.

11 Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.

12 I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

We use this incorrectly sometime. It means that even in prison, in hunger, in chains or whatever other misery he in in he has learned to be content. He well knows that this life is short and he will soon be with the Lord.

13 I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

Another great verse and it goes with the previous two verses. A living Holy Spirit inside can furnish all the power we ever need.

14 Notwithstanding ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction.

15 Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only.

16 For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity.

17 Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account.

18 But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God.

Even though the Phillipians had sacrificed in order to send to Paul they need not worry. God could, and would, supply all their needs.

19 But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

This is one of the greatest promises in the Bible and ranks right alongside

Romans 8:28...And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to [his] purpose.

We need four things and can get along without the rest. We need salvation,comfort,assurance,and wisdom.

God promises to supply our need,not our greed.

20 Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

21 Salute every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren which are with me greet you.

22 All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar's household.

This shows again that Paul had been effective in spreading the gospel while in prison.

23 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.