

Book Studies

Philippians – Epistle to the Church at Philippi

Chapter 1

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

Paul introduces himself as the author, and names the recipients of the letter or epistle. Timothy was a young convert of Paul; whom he took and trained or mentored personally. Please note that Paul doesn't introduce himself as the great apostle, but rather as a servant.

Servant

*The proper meaning of this word servant, δούλος *doulos*, is slave, one who is not free. It expresses the condition of one who has a master, or who is at the control of another (Barnes).*

Paul is thus claiming to be nothing more than a slave of the Lord Jesus; a “Bond-servant” who to the best of his ability performs his master’s wishes without reservation or question.

*The recipients are “all the saints”. Evidently Paul and the early church believed that the designation “saint” was conferred on the new convert by Jesus at the time of his conversion. The word merely means “set-apart one” – or consecrated one. It doesn't imply some personal piety – that develops during the process of **sanctification**. We are to honor all believers (saints), but we only worship God in Christ Jesus. We are called to love and pray for the saints – fellow believers, and fellowship with one another around the Lord.*

Saints

*So called, or influenced by God who had called them, as to become saints. The word “saints,” ἅγιοι *hagioi*, means those who are holy, or those who are devoted or consecrated to God. The radical idea of the word is what is separated from a common to a sacred use, and answers to the Hebrew word, קדוש *qadowsh*. It is applied to any thing that is set apart to the service of God, to the temple, to the sacrifices, to the utensils about the temple, to the garments, etc. of the priests, and to the priests themselves. It was applied to the Jews as a people separated from other nations, and devoted or consecrated to God, while other nations were devoted to the service of idols. It is also applied to Christians, as being a people devoted or set apart to the service of God. The radical idea then, as applied to Christians, is, that “they are separated from other men, and other objects and pursuits, and consecrated to the service of God.” This is the special characteristic of the saints. (Barnes).*

*All believers and children of God are SAINTS. There is **NO SPECIAL CLASS OF CHRISTIANS OR BELIEVERS CALLED SAINTS**. Becoming a saint is not an achievement or goal, but is bestowed upon each and every believer when they were born-again. As noted above – a saint is any member of the “Church” or “Called out group” – set apart for God.*

At Philippi

*Note that Paul doesn't address the recipients by any denominational or organizational name, but rather by the location or city. There is **ONLY ONE CHURCH** in any location – but many parts of that Church – identified by man-made names. We have made these organizations or church-groups points of contention and self-esteem, and sometimes caused divisions and confusion. However, our differences from group to*

group may be our strength in that certain members of society may be reached with the Gospel by one group that another group may not be able to.

If each group would just realize and affirm their oneness and spiritual unity in one body – The Church – we will be able to be far more effective in reaching a lost world for Jesus Christ and His Kingdom.

Bishops and deacons

Here Paul acknowledges the Church Leadership at Philippi.

With the bishops - **σὺν ἐπισκόποις** sun episkopois;

This leadership office is elsewhere designated as “elder” or “presbyter”. The thought is an older, more experienced and “proven” ministry. Note the plurality. The “Pastor” or Shepherd would be the “presiding elder” or senior minister. Elders or bishops or presbyters were the leadership of **local** churches. The term **bishop** must not be understood in its modern day usage, but rather as an **elder-leader in the local church**. The artificial promoting of a bishop to leadership of the Universal Church is not warranted by scripture. It is rather a lust for power and control. That the local area church-leaders would meet for fellowship and discussion of issues is warranted – as seen by the council at Jerusalem to consider the salvation of Gentiles.

The study of Church Leadership or Ministry is a topic for further study. It is dealt with in Paul’s Pastoral Epistles; namely 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus.

And deacons

Gk “diakonos” – basically means servant. This “office” was first brought into existence as recorded in Acts 6. These ones chosen were to take care of the day-to-day temporal affairs and running of the church. As such, their domain is finances and all the necessary temporal affairs of the church to ensure smooth operation, and leaving the Bishops and elders to their ministry in the Word and prayer.

In Acts we see that the “deacons” were chosen by the people – akin to a democratic election. However, strict guidelines were laid down for the selection process – the most important one being that they were **filled with the Holy Spirit**.

Php 1:2 Grace *be* unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and *from* the Lord Jesus Christ.

Grace

This word needs a full study in itself; however a few comments here are in order. The meaning of the word is “Unmerited favor”. The word is cousin “mercy” but not the same. There is a vast difference between grace and mercy. Someone defined it like this:

**Grace is bestowing what you do not deserve.
Mercy is withholding what you do deserve.**

So then grace gives, mercy withholds.

Taking each letter in the word, we can define grace as:

**G – Great or God’s
R – Riches
A – At
C – Christ’s
E – Expense**

Paul taught much on the subject of grace and this is an identifying mark of his epistles.

Once we understand and appropriate grace, peace follows. Grace has dealt with the cause of “dis-peace” or lack of peace. Lack of peace comes from our sinful rebellious nature. God dealt with it. Jesus said to His disciples: “**Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you.**” Jesus is the “**Prince of Peace**” – Isa 9:6

God is our Father, Jesus is our Lord or master. Our source of grace and peace can **ONLY** be found here.

Php 1:3 I thank my God upon every remembrance of you,

It is evident here that Paul thought often of these believers at Philippi; and he was thankful for them. Would to God all believers would be thankful for other believers. Unfortunately this is not always the case. If it were, what Paul says in the next verse will also become our experience and practice.

Php 1:4 Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy,

Paul prayed for them. He **ALWAYS** made request for them. Believers have needs – we are called upon to pray for each other. I believe if we prayed more for those who are not of our group or persuasion we would see God do mighty things. He will change our hearts first then change what is needed in those we pray for. Do it joyfully. Someone once said about JOY. **J – Jesus, O – Others, Y – You.** Somehow, many of us have it mixed up and do not experience the joy that is ours. Praying for others falls in the category of “**seek ye first the Kingdom of God**”

Php 1:5 For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now;

Fellowship

“fellowship” – κοινωνία koinōnia. It denotes that which is in common; that of which we participate with others, communion, fellowship; (Barnes)

Thus it is a “**sharing**” in the gospel. There is so much can be inferred from “**fellowship**” or sharing; both spiritual and material. Paul indicates that these believers were fellowshipping since their conversions and establishment as a local church. Paul’s prayer of thankfulness included this fact. There was visible “**fruit**” of his labors at Philippi – there was fellowship amongst the believers. What passes for “**fellowship**” among believers in the church today is far below the Biblical norm. Meeting in a big, cold and unfriendly auditorium – “fellowshipping” with the backs of heads – falls far short of true fellowship. Thank the Lord for the practice of “**Home cell groups**” that are arising in many circles. This tends more to true Biblical fellowship. There **IS** place for the large group meeting for instruction and worship. But the other must not be neglected, else true fellowship disappears.

Note also that these folks were steadfast and faithful in this aspect of their communal practice – “**from the first day until now**”. The old saying “**It’s not how you start, but how you end.**”; is important to note. The past can surely teach us, but we can’t live or “coast” on the past. God is a God of **NOW**, as well as of yesterday.

Php 1:6 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 now points to the faithfulness of God! “**Being confident of this very thing...**”. What thing? **Faithfulness!** We may and do fail, but God is faithful to perform His part of the covenant. Our part in the transaction is to believe and yield to the Lord. Fellowshipping in every area implied by sharing! God’s part is to complete the work He began in us.

Failure of God’s people is a fact of life. Failure of the Lord is unthinkable and not possible.

Num 23:19 God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? Hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?

2Ti 2:13 If we believe not, yet he abides faithful: he cannot deny himself.

What “good work” has been begun in our lives that the Lord is committed to finish?

Rom 8:29 for whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

There was a time many years ago when it was popular to wear signs printed on t-shirts. One such sign read; “**Don’t give up on me; God is not finished with me yet!**” God is conforming or changing or “metamorphosing” us to be like Jesus – both in word and deed. There is an old song I remember as a youth:

*Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me.
All His wondrous compassion and purity
Oh thou Spirit Divine
All my nature refine
Till the beauty of Jesus be seen in me!*

1Jn 3:2 Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

Another song from my youth;

*Some day I shall be like Him
Some day, like Him
Changed to heavenly beauty
When His face I see
Some day I shall be like Him
Some day, like Him
Hallelujah this wonderful promise
He gives to me.*

This promise is not new. It was revealed in the experience of Jeremiah at the “Potter’s house”.

*Jer 18:1 the word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying;
Jer 18:2 Arise, and go down to the potter’s house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words.
Jer 18:3 Then I went down to the potter’s house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels.
Jer 18:4 and the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it.
Jer 18:5 Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying,
Jer 18:6 O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the LORD. Behold, as the clay is in the potter’s hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel.*

No wonder Paul could write; “**we are more than conquerors**”. Jesus did and does all the fighting and we do all the winning. What marvelous Grace. In Hebrews we read of “**so great a salvation**” – it surely is just that!

Please note “**He... begun... will perform it.; .. until ..**”. Please note the following facts we can deduce from this:

- We cannot change ourselves; we are called upon to yield to the Holy Spirit’s work in us.

- It is a work God began at our spiritual re-birth.
- It is a progressive work with a completion date only God knows.
- It is a sure thing; we cannot get lost along the way. Someone once said; “**It’s no shame for a sheep to go astray. It is however a disgrace for a shepherd to lose a sheep**”. Our Good Shepherd **WILL NEVER LOSE A SINGLE SHEEP!**”
- We have a great future. We are being made ready for Heaven.

Php 1:7 Even as it is appropriate for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace.

Put another way, we post the same verse taken from the “*Bible in Basic English*” version:

Php 1:7 so it is right for me to take thought for you all in this way, because I have you in my heart; for in my chains, and in my arguments before the judges in support of the good news (gospel), making clear that it is true, you all have your part with me in grace.

Paul’s thoughts concerning these believers were positive. No doubt they had problems – what church group doesn’t? But Paul saw their potential in Christ. He saw what God was doing amongst them. He loved them!

It is also evident Paul was at this time in prison for preaching the Gospel. Original scholars thought it was during Paul’s imprisonment at Rome; however recent studies tend to favor his imprisonment at Ephesus. The place is not important. It appears that these believers at Philippi still stood with Paul – even in his dire position. They were part of his ministry.

Php 1:8 For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ.

All newer translations state; “God is my witness”. Paul states the highest authority in the universe as witness to what he is about to say. He is basically saying “**this is the truth!**” What is God witness to? “.. **how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ.**”

The language usage of the King James Version translators is often difficult to understand in today’s world. An explanation of “**bowels**” here has been well put forward by Bible expositor Barnes.

“In the bowels of Jesus Christ”

The word “bowels,” in the Scriptures denotes the upper viscera - the region of the heart and lungs. That region was regarded as the seat of affection, sympathy, and compassion, as the heart is with us. The allusion here is to the sympathy, tenderness, and love of the Redeemer; and probably the meaning is, that Paul regarded them with something of the affection which the Lord Jesus had for them. This was the most tender and strongest expression which he could find to denote the ardor of his attachment. (Barnes)

Other versions of Scripture translate this section as “... **in the tender mercies of Christ Jesus**”.

Paul’s longing for these believers was comparable to the love Jesus had for them. He loved them enough to die for them. The following verse selections are taken from the **American Standard Version** and deal with our attitude towards fellow believers:

Rom 12:10 in love of the brethren; be tenderly affectioned one to another; in honor preferring one another;

1Th 4:9 but concerning love of the brethren ye have no need that one write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another;

Heb 13:1 Let your love of the brethren continue.

1Pe 1:22 Seeing ye have purified your souls in your obedience to the truth unto unfeigned love of the brethren, love one another from the heart fervently:

The one characteristic that should be the hallmark of the Church of Jesus Christ, which seems to be so lacking, is **LOVE**. Who should we love?

- First and foremost, the Lord
- Secondly our immediate family
- Thirdly the saints of God, no matter what denominational tag they may wear
- Fourthly a lost mankind. All men (mankind) have the potential to be Children of God by spiritual re-birth. **“For God so loved the world ...”** has never been rescinded, **“God is not willing that any should perish....but that all should come to repentance”** 2 Peter 3:9. Unfortunately, our Theology sometimes muzzles us and we lose the love for the lost we once felt. We no longer pray for their salvation. No longer support missions nor try at any cost to reach the lost for our King. Revival is something we read about with mild interest; and maybe even hope or wish for – but never seriously seek the Lord for. May the “Lord of the Harvest” begin to stir our hearts anew to follow this injunction:

Hos 10:12 Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the LORD, till he come and rain righteousness upon you.

And this:

2Ch 7:14 If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

A world at its worse needs a Church at its best!!!

Php 1:9 And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment;

Love is a grace and fruit of the spirit in which we may and should grow. We grow in this as we:

- Spend time with the Lord in prayer – God IS love!
- Meditate on His word
- Yield to His Holy Spirit resident in every born-again believer

A statement Jesus made during his earthly ministry has often brought a sense of dread to my heart:

Joh 15:2 Every branch in me that bears not fruit he takes away: and every branch that bears fruit, he purges it, that it may bring forth more fruit.

I certainly do not enjoy being “pruned” or “purged”. It hurts! However whatever the Lord allows or brings into our lives is for our benefit. He has our best interests at heart.

Never think “we’ve arrived”. The development of fruit is a lifelong process, but it should be evident in our lives. We should have more fruit today than yesterday. May our “love” abound more and more. Yield to the Spirit of God. Meditate in His word. Spend time in prayer as often as is possible – and I believe we will avoid the hurtful pruning process.

“...in knowledge and judgment”. We need knowledge and wisdom in the way we dispense our love to others.

*We have been so inundated and brainwashed by what Hollywood considers love, that when we hear the word used in whatever context, our understanding is defiled and corrupt thoughts enter our minds. Love between men is considered in a sinful context because of current trends. Everything associated with “Hollywood love” has sexual overtones. If we ever needed knowledge and wisdom in these matters it is in the society and world we live in today. Just an example: Pastors and counselors should NEVER be alone behind closed doors with members of the opposite sex. Their motives and Christian love may be pure, but they leave themselves open to temptation and unnecessary gossip. Jesus said “...**be ye wise as serpents and harmless as doves**”. (Matt 10:16)*

*We also need wisdom as to what form our love needs to be expressed. To give money or free drugs to a drug-addicted person is in my opinion not love. Jesus always walked in love in everything he said and did. When He made a whip and chased the money-changers out of the temple it was an act of love – to the Gentiles who were not able to approach God, because the area was being wrongly used; and to the money-changers themselves – they were in a position of danger of retribution from God. Our love may sometimes be expressed in **withholding** something. We need knowledge of the situations we face as well as wisdom on how to deal with these situations.*

There is a time for tolerance and a time for intolerance. God grant us knowledge AND wisdom in these matters.

Php 1:10 That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ;

This verse expresses the same things mentioned above. We need wisdom to recognize and test and approve the good. To be enabled to walk without offence in all things. This is sure to happen as we walk in the Love of God. Supporting and promoting sinful and godless practices in society to gain acceptance by the masses is NOT walking in love. This approach merely adds to their condemnation. As mentioned before, Jesus wasn't popular with the leaders of His day – because he exposed their hypocrisy and sin – AND THIS WAS WALKING IN LOVE!

If offences come, let it be because we walk in love and declare the truth – not because of our walk in the world and society.

Php 1:11 Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

“Fruits of righteousness”

These can only develop and become manifest as we walk in the Spirit. What are these “fruits”?

Gal 5:22 but the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

Gal 5:23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

What or who is the source of these fruits? The source is the Lord Jesus, worked into us by agency of the Holy Spirit.

Joh 16:13 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.

Joh 16:14 He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.

Whatever the Holy Spirit does in us or reveals to us is to exalt Jesus. He takes the beauty and character of Jesus and works it into us.

The ultimate is to bring praise and Glory to God. Even the man Christ Jesus never sought His own Glory as man, but rather the glory of the Father:

Joh 12:28 *Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.*

The glory of the Cross glorifies the Father. It demonstrates:

- His hatred and righteous judgment on sin
- His love for lost mankind

So Paul's prayer for these believers is that they be filled with love and how to express it in a proper matter, as well as them being filled with all the fruits of righteousness to bring glory and praise to God. It brings praise when we see the changes wrought in a life by the Spirit of God. If only all saints would seek the Glory of God. Everything we pray for should be to bring glory to Him. Our selfish needs are not so important. The Lord will see to those anyway. Grant that our lives be cause for praise to the Lord. Remember the fruit of the spirit is primarily to feed others, not merely to make us look good – by the way we do look good, but that is no concern of ours. **“Let another's lips praise thee and not thy own.”**

Php 1:12 *But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel;*

Evidently, from what Paul says here, some of the folks at Philippi were concerned about the things that had happened to Paul. The open hostilities against his team, the persecutions and imprisonment had them wondering where God was in it. Hadn't Paul preached Christian liberty to them? Hadn't he taught them about being “blessed with all spiritual blessings”? What then was the reason for all his problems?

This same question is posed by the immature and unlearned in the things of God today. If someone is suffering persecution, rejection, ridicule – even when they have been walking in the Lord's revealed path – they **MUST be out of God's will** – right??? **WRONG!!!** These folks are like **Job's comforters**. Everything must go the way we perceive right if we are in the Lord's will - but is this always so?

So often we miss the big picture. The small piece of the “jigsaw” puzzle we are seeing at the present time may seem so “out of whack”. It may seem like it “doesn't belong” in the total scheme. A good old book that I highly recommend for all believers to read is **“Pilgrim's Progress”**. It's a classic that puts our Christian journey through the world in form of a story of a person named Pilgrim on his journey to the heavenly city. The old English may be a distraction, but I'm sure there are versions in more modern English.

Paul wrote to the Romans – **“all things work together for good...to the called according to His purpose”**. You may say, “But what good is there in persecutions or imprisonment?” Once again, we are looking at the “jigsaw puzzle” piece.

Paul tells the believers at Philippi that what they thought was disastrous with respect to his present condition; had in actuality helped in spreading the Gospel. He was now reaching the “unreachable” with the Good News of the Gospel. How else could he have spoken to the prison guards – Jesus loves even them – even though they were known for their cruelty towards the inmates.

There is a story I once heard told by a missionary that had labored in West Africa; that well illustrates what we are dealing with:

An evangelical missionary was traveling down a dusty, bumpy road, when his vehicle broke down completely. There were no “Cell Phones” to call a tow-truck. In fact he was so far in the

“backwoods”, that even if there had been one available they would not have come to his aid. Like any human he bowed his head and cried “Why me Lord?” I’m doing your work. I’m on my way to a meeting. I am the guest speaker!

Once he had settled down, he looked up and in the distance saw a village. Maybe he saw smoke rising, or saw people walking. He took his Bible, climbed out of the broken down vehicle and walked towards the village.

On his arrival there, he was confronted by the African Headman of the village with the words “Did you bring God’s Book?” The surprised missionary said “Yes”. The headman retorted “What took you so long?”

He was able to preach the Glorious Gospel to these prepared people and a Church was born. They recounted to him the full story of what had happened in their village. The headman had been nominated to take over as Witchdoctor of the village. This is a high honor in African culture and beliefs. Preparations had been made. The beer for the ceremony and “party” brewed. The animal sacrifices for the rituals were ready. The food prepared – for the next day was to be the great day of his inauguration. That night he had a troubled sleep. He dreamt of a man coming to him and telling him not to go through with his plans, but rather overturn the beer pots and get ready for a “Man of God” who would someday come with “God’s Book” and tell them of God’s Son who died on a wooden cross for them.

The would-be witchdoctor obeyed. They put aside their idolatry and ancestral worship and patiently waited for “The man with God’s Book.” A so-called Christian missionary of a certain persuasion arrived one-day. Their question to him was; “Did you bring God’s Book?” When this “missionary” said “No” – he was told to move on. He was not welcome in their village. Then along came the poor struggling missionary with a broken-down automobile – with God’s Book. The rest is history.

What had seemed to be a catastrophe – had “.... fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel;”

Jesus said “Judge nothing before the time.” God is at work, “His wonders to perform.”

Php 1:13 So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places;

*Paul’s bonds – imprisonment – were known everywhere! I dare say, rather the **reason** for his bonds became known. He was in prison for his preaching and stand regarding the Lord Jesus Christ. I suppose we can liken it to the experience of Joseph when his brothers sold him into slavery.*

Gen 50:20 but as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.

*I believe our steadfastness in serving the Lord under dire circumstances is a powerful witness of the validity of what we declare in word. Our lives are “**living letters**”, read by all!*

The Lord knows the end from the beginning – as we said before, we see only the small piece of the puzzle and not the entire picture. How else could Paul have gotten to Rome, but as a prisoner of the Roman government? How else could he have gotten into Caesar’s house-hold except as a prisoner? God loved even Caesar and his family, friends and servants. Paul was the instrument to reach this group for the Living Christ.

We are so prone to see disaster in the reversals of life. We see the hand of Satan and fight a futile battle. The source of the problem may very well be the work of our enemy, but remember the story of Job in the

Old Testament. Job's troubles were from Satan but **permitted** by God. God was working something out in Job's life that could **only** be achieved by the things that happened.

Consider the following about Paul's imprisonment:

- He was able to reach some for the Lord that could never have been otherwise reached.
- God was keeping His servant humble and dependant on Himself. The "**abundance of revelations**" Paul had and was receiving would cause any human to "**think more highly of himself than he ought to**". Hence Paul was given "**a thorn in the flesh**" – something to keep him humble.
- In prison Paul was restricted from doing "**missionary trips**". As a free man he could visit the churches that were experiencing problems and easily solve them. Now he was "**reduced**" to writing letters. Had these imprisonments not happened we would never have had the record of how God dealt with the church problems via His servant. Many of the Books of the Bible we can study and cherish today would not have become available to us. Thank the Lord for His work in the Apostle's life!
- Paul was materially provided for by the State. If we can but see that "**all things work together for good to the called of God**", we would not become despondent and downcast, but see every event as a stepping-stone to greater opportunities in the work of the Lord. How great it would be if we could get some "**tax free**" financing from the government to do the Lord's work.

Php 1:14 And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

Paul's bonds had a further impact that one could never have foreseen. In the natural if someone is in prison or being persecuted for something, wouldn't we rather disassociate ourselves from him and his actions, rather than suffer the same fate? Problems to a person or group soon weed out the "**hangers-on**" – no one will suffer for something they do not believe or are committed to. The "**true believers**" were emboldened by what they saw in Paul's life.

Not only was Paul able to show an example and get "**open doors**" for further ministry, but there was an "**evangelism explosion**" as life after life was set aflame for God.

Jesus taught us the principle we see here:

Joh 12:24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abides alone: but if it die, it brings forth much fruit.

The primary reference was to the Lord's death on the Cross. However, the principle is applicable to our lives as well. We can and will never see success or increase in our ministry and labors for the Lord unless we "**fall into the ground and die**". The "**way of the Cross**" is the path to victory and success in the economy of God.

Php 1:15 Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will:

(Bible in Basic English Version)

Php 1:15 Though some are preaching Christ out of envy and competition, others do it out of a good heart:

Satan is a master at attempting to and often succeeding in corrupting a good work. In this case, the "**good work**" was the increase in witness and sharing of the Gospel. Two groups with different motives are exposed. The one group were contentious and competitive, the other operating in the Love of Christ.

Envy or jealousy in the work of the Lord is an unfortunate by-product of man's sinful fallen nature, and is something we see and must contend with. But before we judge others harshly, let us put our hands into our

own bosoms. We see one of the things God told Moses to do before sending him to speak to Pharaoh, was put his hand to his bosom:

Exo 4:6 and the LORD said furthermore unto him, Put now thine hand into thy bosom. And he put his hand into his bosom: and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous as snow.

I believe this was primarily an object-lesson to Moses to realize how corrupt our hearts are. As Jeremiah the prophet later said, “**Desperately wicked**”. (Jer 17:9) Before we can do anything of value for the Lord, there needs to be a realization of just how corrupt our flesh is. Then, and only then, can we walk humbly and dependant on the Spirit of God to do what He bids us do.

What are our motives for preaching or teaching the Word of God? Is it out of envy or strife? Many times I confess I've been envious of those the Lord is using. We get envious and try by all means to “**show them up**” as charlatans and fakes – even though there is obvious fruit in their lives. Instead of tearing down, we should be praying for them. Don't assist Satan in **tearing** down! Who knows, maybe the Lord will cause us to change or maybe cause them to change as we pray for them. Pricilla and Aquila; a Christian couple in the early church; heard a young preacher, Apollos who was “**off base**”. Note what they did:

Act 18:24 and a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus.

Act 18:25 This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John.

Act 18:26 and he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly.

They could've condemned him or preached against him, but saw his potential in Christ and did what they could to correct the situation. Most times we cannot speak to those we think are wrong – but if our attitudes are right, we can and should pray for them.

God grant that we be as the second group Paul mentions here – preaching Christ out of a good heart, with pure motives and love.

Php 1:16 The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds:

Php 1:17 But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defense of the gospel.

It seems that the Holy Spirit wants to emphasize the point here. Just in case we missed what was being said previously, the two overriding motives for preaching the Gospel here are reiterated.

Contention and Love

These two motivations are contrasted; and put plainly the one is nothing less than hate. We mentioned above how we sometimes react to those the Lord is using in His service. This contentious group wished to add affliction to Paul's bonds. How would they add affliction? They probably wanted to produce strife and discord amongst the believers Paul had been nurturing, which would bring him pain since he couldn't be there to deal with it. Maybe they were the Jewish adherents who opposed Paul's teachings that the Law of Moses couldn't save. This group doggedly followed Paul and tried on every occasion to contradict him. The message of the **Grace of God** and the **finished work of Calvary** are not too well accepted by those who live in the flesh and seek to **establish their own righteousness**. What is said here about this group may be hinted at by the attitude and knowledge of the next group; namely “**I am set for the defense of the Gospel**”. Everyone knew what message Paul was preaching; it was the “**Grace Message**”. He defended it; even to going to Jerusalem when the elders were very slow in accepting it. This message of God's grace

was for **ALL** of mankind – even the Gentiles. The Jews could understand why God would save Jews – but Gentiles?

So the one group opposed the Grace Message and the other in love for Paul and the Lord Jesus embraced it and preached the same glorious message.

I once heard a quotation: “**Grace plucks pride up by the roots!**” Let us **glory in the Lord** and not in our own wisdom and achievements. The cross is a place of humbling. We cannot have resurrection until we’ve tasted of the cross. Grace opens our eyes to the true meaning of the cross.

Php 1:18 What then? Notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.

Paul then reveals his attitude to the described events. In spite of what was happening. In spite of the opposition he was getting. In spite of the obvious pain it caused him. He could still rejoice; because Christ was being preached.

It is an amazing fact that the Lord can call and save people **even if the message is not pure**. The Holy Spirit can take the smallest gem of truth and bring conviction and repentance to the lost. Jesus said He would build His Church and nothing in the entire universe could hinder that fact.

I once asked the late Dr G.S. McLean of Eston, Saskatchewan what he thought of a certain aberration current in the church. He concurred it was not scriptural, but assured me that even in that situation, the Lord was building His Church.

Some guidelines on how to detect and handle doctrinal errors

- Study the scriptures as though your life depended on it – it probably does. When you are nurtured by the Word of God, you will “**smell**” error as soon as you encounter it. A healthy body fights germs and disease, a healthy spirit aided by the Holy Spirit does the same to **spiritual germs and disease**. Jesus said in one of His prayers to the Father “**Thy Word is Truth**”.
- Go to the scriptures to verify that what you “**smell**” is bad doctrine and not just personal bias you’ve learned along the way. This was encouraged in both the Old Testament as well as the New Testament scriptures.

Isa 8:20 to the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.

Act 17:11 These (Believers at Berea) were nobler than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

GOD DOES NOT GET OFFENDED IF WE QUESTION WHAT WE ARE BEING TOLD!

The Lord wants us to be open to teaching we hear or read. Revelation of truth to us is progressive. However there is no new truth. It has already been given to us in the Scriptures; we merely need Holy Spirit illumination on truth. Illumination on truth is progressive. Be open to new illumination, but confirm it is scriptural before committing oneself to it.

- Reject the message but not the messenger. So often when we detect error or read someone else’s comments on the errors or questionable practices of some preachers, we “**crucify**” them and blacken their names – as if we were any better. Rather we should
 - o Teach the truth to confront and refute the error. I heard told that someone once asked a bank teller how they could identify counterfeit money. His reply was quite sobering. “We learn what real money is; how it looks and feels. When we encounter counterfeit we can feel it’s not right and false.” Truth does the same to identify error. We have no need to study error – study and teach **truth** and error will be **smelled out!**

- Teach against the error without branding the messenger as a heretic.
- Thank the Lord that they are preaching and teaching the Word and pray that He; the Great Shepherd of the sheep, lead them into truth.
- Don't get upset or angry about the matter, but rest in the Lord who is building His Church.

Php 1:19 For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,

Some of the “**bad publicity**” Paul was receiving from those who preached out of envy and contention was that Paul was an enemy of Rome and Caesar. They intimated he was preaching revolution and rebellion by preaching about King Jesus. Paul knew this, and knew that if God permitted it to go to its logical conclusion, it would result in his execution and untimely death.

The “**good publicity**” would have the effect of causing such an increase in the number of believers, that the tide would be turned in society resulting in Paul's release from prison.

Either way Paul would have “salvation”. Physical death is but the beginning of our eternal state. We're bound for better places than this world can offer. Death for Paul would be **salvation** in a manner of speaking. His release from prison would also be **salvation** – giving him more time to be a witness of Christ and a blessing to the churches.

There is of course another aspect to **salvation** with respect to Paul's position, and that is his salvation was not dependant on his physical condition but on his inner liberty. Inner strength derived from the Lord through the prayer and ministry of the saints would make Paul look at his problems as “**light afflictions, which are but for a moment**”. Believers who have suffered imprisonment and torture for their faith have made the strange comment that they would not have changed that time for anything! Richard Wurmbrandt who wrote the book; “**Tortured for his faith**” told of the times of blessing and closeness of the Lord Jesus in his times of solitary confinement. That was true liberty.

I think Paul hints at this aspect by the words; “The supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ”. The presence of Christ **IS** liberty. “**Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty**”. (2 Cor 3:17)

Php 1:20 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.

Earnest expectation

This phrase is found only one other place in the New Testament. i.e. Rom 8:19. It basically means earnest desire and hope. It refers to the underlying motives in his life. What was this “**earnest expectation**”?

- That he wouldn't be ashamed of anything or do anything to be ashamed of.
- That he would always be bold in his proclamation of the truth and not vacillate or water down the truth to gain favor with man.
- That Christ may be magnified in his body by his living or by his death. “**Crucified**” people are already **dead**. Ultimate physical death holds no terrors.

Php 1:21 For to me to live *is* Christ, and to die *is* gain.

If Paul was like most people alive today, he would've said “For me to live is Paul!” It doesn't take a genius to note in everything we read or hear over the media that selfishness is the order of the day. How many advertisements of cosmetics; designed to make the user look and feel better, end with the words “Because you're worth it”? Every product or program is designed to play on man's vanity and self-love. Whether it is to provide pleasure or self esteem and promotion, all is done to distract us from what is

actually happening. We're getting older. Death; the ultimate humiliation and leveler, awaits every one of Adam's race. So we are encouraged to buy things to defy ageing. To mask it at all costs. To get a **young** physique and say "I'm 40 years old and in the best condition I've ever been." How deceitful are the hearts of men! Denial doesn't make it go away, it merely makes it more dangerous and damaging and tragic when the event occurs. **What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?**

The Apostle never lived with the mentality we see today. He had died to self. There was no fear in physical death to him. His life was for and by the Lord Jesus Christ.

Joh 15:20 Remember the word that I said unto you; the servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.

Paul was merely experiencing what Jesus had promised His disciples here. Because of the Christianizing influence in the world, we have been spared this as a whole. Of course in pagan lands this is not so and there is a form of persecution in our western societies. However, our "freedom of speech" laws; have tended to minimize persecution of believers. It may, however, be detrimental to the spiritual power and purity of the Church – remember no one will give their lives for something they are not committed to. So while we delight in the liberty we have – and we are encouraged in the scriptures to pray that **we may lead a quiet and peaceable life** – we may be losing out on so much spiritual richness.

Paul's statement "**To die is gain**" indicates where his heart was. He had no fear in this matter.

Luk 12:34 for where your treasure is there will your heart be also.

Our life here is temporary, eternity with Christ is our destination – it will be glorious!

Php 1:22 But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labor: yet what I shall choose I do not know.

There is general perplexity amongst Bible commentators as to what Paul meant by "**this is the fruit of my labor**".

We know that there was much fruit in Paul's life. Many souls saved, many bodies healed, many baptized in the Holy Spirit, many churches established. However, I think **fruit** here applies rather to **result** than spiritual fruit produced. What resulted from his labors and impacted on his physical life? Was it not the persecutions and imprisonment he was suffering for the sake of the gospel? This was not a **nice** situation to be in by any means. Yet being bound in body he was free in spirit. Thus he felt himself to be in a quandary. "**Should I stay or should I go**" – in desire that is. He wasn't sure what he would choose if he could make that choice.

Php 1:23 For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better:

He seems to have had conflicting desires. Two directions of desire were beating in his breast. The first is mentioned here. Now Paul had at one time had an experience that forever changed his perspective on life.

2Co 12:2 I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knows ;) such a one caught up to the third heaven.

2Co 12:3 and I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knows ;)

2Co 12:4 How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

Speaking in the third person about ones experiences was not an uncommon practice. This was in actuality an experience of the apostle. At what occasion this happened is not told, but could possibly have been when he was stoned and left for dead at Antioch. (Acts 14:19)

*Paul had seen what awaited every born-again child of God – and he longed to go there. Our destination is far better than anything or anyplace this world has to offer. The **things that are seen are temporal, but the unseen things are eternal.***

Php 1:24 Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.

Fortunately, even though we may have conflicting desires which may or may not be legitimate; we do not always have the power to choose. In Paul's case he may have chosen to die and go to be with Christ, but God had other plans for His servant. The providential will of God ensured Paul was alive long enough to be a blessing to the church and to be instrumental in writing the scriptures.

In spite of his desire to go, he knew the fledgling churches needed his ministry. There was still work to do.

Php 1:25 And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith;

*Paul had desires as a man, but also had spiritual knowledge of what the Lord's will was concerning him. Knowing the will of God gives one confidence. We can boldly go forth, knowing that Jesus **opens doors that no man can shut and closes doors that no man can open.** The spiritual knowledge Paul had, gave him confidence to assert that he would still be around for awhile to minister to them and aid their spiritual development.*

Joy of faith

If we are lacking joy in our walk of faith, maybe our faith is suspect. True faith obtains the promises, dispels lack and brings joy as we revel in the goodness of the Lord.

Php 1:26 That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again.

It is noteworthy that Paul's first interest was not for himself but others. His ultimate release and personal visit to the church would bring rejoicing amongst the people for what the Lord had done.

Php 1:27 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;

Conversation

*This is an old English word meaning behavior or manner of living. Paul encourages them to live the principles of the gospel of Christ. An inward change **must** issue in an outward change. It must start within. Receiving the gospel brings about the new birth and inward change; which should be evident in our walk in the world.*

Paul is saying that they must be true in their walk. True Christianity is when you're alone. It's easy to put on religious robes and act the part amongst others or when the preacher is visiting. How we act the rest of the time, God sees. So the apostle is saying, whether he was present or absent from them, their manner of living should be the same.

His wish was to hear that they were unified and being a witness to the world.

Php 1:28 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.

The “*Good News Bible*” gives more clarity to this verse:

Php 1:28 Don't be afraid of your enemies; always be courageous, and this will prove to them that they will lose and that you will win, because it is God who gives you the victory.

In a nutshell;

- Don't be terrified by your enemies
- Their judgment is coming and your problems are only transitory.
- God will give you the victory – as He always does.

Php 1:29 For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;

Php 1:30 Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear *to be* in me.

Paul mentions two things that are given to us; not only the grace to believe on Jesus, but also to suffer for him. The faith we had to believe on Christ was a gift from God.

Eph 2:8 for by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

Paul has some final words to say about suffering of the believer. Why do the righteous suffer?

I do not think we are called to suffer sickness, disease, poverty and lack. The following scriptures will suffice to prove this point:

Sickness

Isa 53:4 Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

It is pretty well universally believed that these scriptures in Isaiah refer to spiritual healing; normally by those who disbelieve that physical healing has been provided for in Christ's atonement. Their argument that Jesus never suffered and died for sickness – which is a result of sin – but He died for our sins only. Of course, if they cannot say like Peter, “*Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I unto thee. In the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk!*”, it is understandable they would come to this conclusion. However, I believe we have the Holy Spirit's commentary on this passage in the New Testament.

Mat 8:16 when the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick:

Mat 8:17 that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, **Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.**

That settles it for me. If the penalty for our sins are still been dealt with today by Christ's death 2000 years ago, I somehow think the effects of sin are also being dealt with. **Jesus Christ the same, yesterday, today and forever.**

Poverty

2Co 8:9 for ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.

When was Jesus rich? **AS GOD!** When was Jesus poor? **AS A MAN!** Jesus was **NEVER EVER** spiritually poor – but he was materially poor.

Poverty is part of the curse of sin. There is much that can be said about this, but God's people are NOT called to poverty and lack. I believe we have limited God's desire to bless us lavishly. I read somewhere that we often think God has not answered our prayers because we asked for a **sixpence** and got a **fortune**.

Php 4:19 But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

NOT according to God's stinginess or poverty, but according to His riches.

What suffering **ARE** we called to bear? Persecution and opposition from the world in a response to our testimony and godly living is our lot as children of God. We can never be friends with the world – it is enmity with God. Start preaching the truth and you will soon see opposition from the world.

During my time at Bible School I led a **Kids Club** outreach to a small prairie town. We were privileged to be allowed to use a local church hall for this venture. Once a week we went and taught the kids about Jesus and God's way of salvation.

One day I was called before the church committee and quizzed on what we were teaching the kids. One person in particular was very belligerent and demanded we stop teaching the word of God. The death of Christ for our sins was an obnoxious message as far as they were concerned.

The world hates the Lord Jesus. They hate His purity. They hate His love. They hate the thought of His Lordship. They try desperately to prove sin in the Lord's life. They try desperately to prove He was **just a man**. They try desperately to prove He never rose from the dead. They torture, maim and kill the Lord's messengers who dare to proclaim the truths about Christ. They have no interest in our motives. True some have had bad motives – even Paul mentioned this; but mostly our motives are to serve the Master and lead souls into the Kingdom of God. We have no weapons other than the Spirit and the Word. We rather wish to bring healing in body, mind and spirit to the lost. Yet we are maligned and branded as lunatics. The gift we offer of eternal life in Christ is free. However, the world does not want it.

They hated Jesus, they're going to hate us too – so don't be surprised when all your good intentions are rejected and badly spoken of. Rather rejoice – it proves you are a child of God. The world loves its own, but will hate you as you stand up for the truth. Don't be persecuted for wrongdoing, but always **hold forth the truth in love**.

Paul quotes his experiences as the pattern we too can expect.