

# Paul's Letter to the PHILIPPIANS

*My Dear Friends in Philippi, Greece:*

**G**reetings, to all of you there in Philippi, who, along with your pastors and deacons, are dedicated to Christ Jesus.

This is from Paul and Timothy, slave-servants<sup>a</sup> of Jesus Christ.

<sup>2</sup>May you enjoy peace and all the other undeserved blessings of the Christian life from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.

## ***Paul's Thanksgiving and Prayer***

<sup>3</sup>I thank my God for you every time I think of you dear friends.

<sup>4</sup>Every time I pray for you, I do so with joy, as I think and meditate on your partnership with me in reaching out to everyone with the Great News.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>5</sup>You've been true partners of mine from the very first day that you yourselves heard the Great News, until now.

<sup>6</sup>So there's one thing I feel very confident about, and that is that the Lord will continue the good work He has begun in your lives until He brings it to completion on that Great Day when Jesus Christ returns.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>7</sup>It's only right that I feel this way about all of you,<sup>a</sup> because you've come right into my heart. And the way you did it was by all of you having such a vital part with me, encouraging me in all I

was able to do when I was free to defend the truth and preach the Great News, and strengthening me now that I'm here in chains.

<sup>8</sup>God knows how deeply I long for all of you. I have the same deep, tender affection for you that Jesus Christ has.

<sup>9</sup>I pray that your love<sup>a</sup> will keep on growing in an ever greater way. This will result in ever greater knowledge and deeper insight,<sup>b</sup> so that you will set your hearts only on those things that are truly excellent.

<sup>10</sup>This deeper insight and understanding is absolutely necessary if your lives are to be filled with all the truly good qualities with which Jesus Christ wants to fill them, so that you will be found to be pure and blameless on the Day when He returns.

<sup>11</sup>As this disciplined love continues to grow, you will not only honor God but cause others to praise Him as well.<sup>a</sup>

## ***Paul's Optimism and His Challenge***

<sup>12</sup>But I want you dear friends to know that my being here in jail has had the opposite of its intended effect. It's actually resulted in the Great News going out in greater ways than ever.

<sup>13</sup>The entire palace guard and everyone else in Rome know that I'm in chains because of the uncompromising and unflinching stand I've taken

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**1:1a** See Romans 1:1.

**1:4a** Paul came to Philippi and brought the Great News in response to a vision he received one night in Troas. Acts 16:6-40. His obedience resulted in the start of a movement that swept an entire continent and the whole of western civilization.

**1:6a** Paul was very confident about the ultimate salvation of these people in Philippi. But he wasn't so sure about some in Corinth and Galatia, when he wrote to those churches. Even in this letter he gives some woeful warnings in 2:12-13 and 3:18-19. One great reason for his confidence was because the Philippians were obedient to the Lord in their true concern for the salvation of others. They were doing what they could in sharing the Great News with those who were still lost.

Noted Greek scholar, A. T. Robertson, in *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Vol. 4, p. 436), wrote

in regard to their ultimate salvation, "God began and God will consummate it ... but not without their cooperation and partnership."

**1:7a** They had given firm proof that they were sincere Christians. Having such proof, it was proper that Paul should believe they would finally reach Heaven.

**1:9a** ... *love for the Lord and His word, for each other, and for the lost, ...*

**1:9b** ... *in regard to the choices you make of things and ambitions to love, ...*

**1:11a** By your faithfulness to God, you can be a real encouragement to new Christians, and also to people who haven't yet surrendered to Christ as Lord and Savior. Non-Christians are watching you to see if it's possible to consistently live as Christ demands. Don't disappoint them. To some person you are the best Christian they know.

for our Messiah.

<sup>14</sup>And because of my chains, most of the Lord's followers now have greater courage to speak out and tell others about Him. They're fearlessly sharing the Great News about Christ with more boldness than ever before.

<sup>15</sup>True, some are preaching about Christ out of hatred toward me, because they're jealous of the way God has used me. But others are doing so from pure motives.

<sup>16</sup>Those mentioned first are not sincere. They preach about Christ only because of their selfish ambitions. They're hoping to make me jealous and miserable while in jail.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>17</sup>But the latter are serving Christ because they love Him. They know I've been put here because of my defense of the Great News about Him.

<sup>18</sup>So what's the situation? Well, in one way or another, people are being told the Great News about Christ, whether in a false show or in sincerity. So the message is going out, and I'm happy about that. And I'll continue to be happy about it.

<sup>19</sup>I'm sure that thru your prayers and the further help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, the result will be my release from jail.

<sup>20</sup>I eagerly expect and hope that I'll have no reason to be ashamed of anything I do or say,<sup>a</sup> but that now, as always, with all the courage and boldness necessary, I'll be able to honor Christ, whether I do so by living or dying.

<sup>21</sup>Because to me, to be able to continue living means to continue to live for Christ. But if I die, I'll only gain by that.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>22</sup>But if I continue living in this body, I'll be able to do more worthwhile work for the Lord. So what should I prefer? I really don't know!

<sup>23</sup>I'm torn between the two. I have a deep longing to leave this life and be with Christ, which would be far better than staying here.

<sup>24</sup>But for your good, it's more important that I stay around awhile.

<sup>25</sup>And because I'm sure of this, I know I'll be staying. That means I'll be able to help all of you continue to grow in the faith and be extremely happy in it.

<sup>26</sup>You'll also be able to superabound in your boasting about Christ Jesus when you see me in your presence once again.

<sup>27</sup>But whatever happens, you must continue to conduct yourselves in every situation in a way that's worthy of those who have accepted the Great News about Christ.<sup>a</sup> If you do that, then, whether I'm able to come and see you or not, I'll rejoice in the good reports that you are standing firm, in perfect harmony and agreement, and enthusiastically working together as one to bring others to faith in Jesus as you share the Great News.

<sup>28</sup>Don't be at all terrified by those who are opposing you.<sup>a</sup> Your courage, in both living in obedience to Christ and in faithfully telling others about Him, are convincing them that they are headed for damnation.<sup>b</sup> And your faithfulness is a continual assurance to you that you will be saved.<sup>c</sup> Both convictions are from God.

<sup>29</sup>In the cause of Christ, it's not only your privilege to believe in Him, but it's also your privilege and duty to always be willing to suffer<sup>a</sup> for His sake.<sup>b</sup>

<sup>30</sup>*When you preach the truth without compromise,*<sup>a</sup> you can expect the same severe opposition you saw me experience, and which, as you hear, I still experience.

**2** Have you found real and wonderful encouragement in your situation with God because of Christ, true comfort from His love for you, fellowship with Him thru His Spirit—tenderness, compassion?

<sup>2</sup>If so, then make my joy complete by having the same deep concern for each other that Christ has for each of you—loving each other as Christ loves you—being united in what you plan and do, as if

**1:16a** ... and make trouble for me in the churches.

**1:20a** He's no doubt expressing concern about his coming trial before Caesar.

**1:21a** Is death really gain? See Appendix 216.

**1:27a** , ... by continuing in obedience to Him, and by faithfully telling others that they too can have forgiveness, peace, and everlasting life thru Him.

**1:28a** You can expect persecution from all sides when you give out the full truth. Mark 10:30. But it's our responsibility to do so, because anything less than the full truth is a lie!

**1:28b** John 5:29; Revelation 14:11; 20:10-15.

**1:28c** Romans 10:9-10.

**1:29a** Present tense, denoting continuous action.

**1:29b** Romans 8:16-17; 2 Timothy 3:12.

**1:30a** Implied.

**2:4a** Or *Don't be selfish, rejoicing only when the good things come your way. Be just as concerned for others, and just as happy when they receive the good things.* That's why we must be deeply concerned about the salvation of others. We should be just as concerned as Christ is, and just as concerned for others as we need to be about our own salvation.

**2:6a** John 14:28.

you were only one person.

<sup>3</sup>Don't do anything out of selfish ambition, or from a cheap desire for attention and empty glory. But with a sincere, humble attitude, always look upon others as being of more importance than you are.

<sup>4</sup>Don't be concerned only about what will benefit you, but also with what will benefit others.<sup>a</sup>

### ***Be Humble and Unselfish Like Christ***

<sup>5</sup>You must continue to have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had:

<sup>6</sup>While He is just like God, He didn't consider being like God a highly prized possession<sup>a</sup> that He must tenaciously hang on to for His own good.

<sup>7</sup>But for our good, He willingly gave up all that He was and all that belonged to Him in Heaven, and came to earth in human form as a servant.

<sup>8</sup>And in His human form He was obedient to His Father's plan, even to the point of humbling Himself and allowing Himself to be put to death; and not just death, but death on a cruel cross.

<sup>9</sup>For that reason, God has raised Him to the very highest position in His Kingdom, at His right hand, and has given His name honor that is far above all others.

<sup>10</sup>He did this so that in adoration of the name of Jesus, everyone in Heaven, on the earth, and under the earth should fall to their knees and worship Him,

<sup>11</sup>and openly and joyously declare that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

### ***Be the Person God Wants You to Be***

<sup>12</sup>Therefore,<sup>a</sup> my dear friends, in the same way that you were always diligent about obeying God while I was there with you, now that I'm absent, you must be even more diligently occupied in the business of your own salvation, working at it in fear and trembling to bring it to completion.<sup>b</sup>

<sup>13</sup>Because God is always at work within you. He is helping you first of all to desire and determine

to do what is pleasing to Him, and then helping you to do it.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>14</sup>In everything you are called upon to do, always do it cheerfully without murmuring or complaining,<sup>a</sup> so that your blameless and pure lives as children of God will be above criticism.

<sup>15</sup>In contrast to the many dishonest and perverted people among whom you live and work, your lives will then keep shining like brilliant stars as you share with them the message of Life.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>16</sup>If you do that, I will have cause to greatly rejoice on that Great Day when Christ appears from Heaven,<sup>a</sup> because that will mean that all my work among you was not wasted effort.

<sup>17</sup>Yes, even if my life's blood must be shed in order to make my ministry effective in producing worship, obedience, and service on your part that's acceptable to God, I will rejoice even in that possibility. And I rejoice with all of you.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>18</sup>For the same reason, you must also be glad and rejoice with me.<sup>a</sup>

### ***Timothy and Epaphroditus***

<sup>19</sup>But I hope the Lord Jesus will enable me to send Timothy to you real soon, so that I can be further encouraged when I receive his report as to how you're coming along.

<sup>20</sup>No one else so genuinely shares my concern for your welfare as he does.

<sup>21</sup>All the others are more concerned about the things that interest them than about the things that are of greatest concern to Christ Jesus.

<sup>22</sup>But you all know the genuine concern of Timothy. He's worked alongside me like a faithful son working with his father, as together we've given out the Great News.

<sup>23</sup>So I hope to send him to you just as soon as I find out what's going to happen to me here.

<sup>24</sup>And I'm confident that the Lord will also enable me to come to you shortly.

<sup>25</sup>But I feel it necessary to send Epaphroditus back to you immediately. He's my dear brother, my

**2:12a** Therefore, my dear friends, *seeing that we have such an example of obedience, humiliation, and dedication as we have in Christ ...*

**2:12b** What's this all about? For the answer turn to Appendix 217, page 480.

**2:13a** Does God really do everything for us? See Appendix 218, page 482.

**2:14a** This applies to our relationship to our employer, but it also applies in many other situations. It applies to obedience of the child to parents, of marriage and business relationships, etc. And because of the truth in the previous verse, no doubt

the primary reference is in regard to cheerful obedience to God. We are told that God loves a cheerful giver (2 Corinthians 9:7), and surely He loves the one who desires to always cheerfully obey Him.

**2:15a** Romans 10:9-10.

**2:16a** Matthew 24:29-30; 25:31-46; Acts 1:9-11; Revelation 19:11-16.

**2:17a** ... *for the way God is enabling me to guide you safely Home.*

**2:18a** ... *because of what God has chosen to do thru me, even if I must die because of it.*

fellow worker and fellow soldier. But he's also your messenger, whom you sent to look after my needs.

<sup>26</sup>He's very eager to see all of you. But he's been upset that you'd heard he was sick.

<sup>27</sup>And indeed, he was seriously ill. He almost died. But God was good to him, and not only to him but to me also, because if he had died, I would have had sorrow heaped on top of sorrow.

<sup>28</sup>That's why I've been more than eager to send him on his way to you, so that when you see him again, you may rejoice, and my concern will be lessened.

<sup>29</sup>So receive him as a blessing from the Lord, and let your joy overflow.

<sup>30</sup>You should honor men like him, because he came close to death as a result of working so hard for the Lord. He didn't spare himself at all, as he tried to do everything for me that you were unable to do.

### *Only Christ and His Acceptance*

**3** In addition to that, my dear friends, you must continue to rejoice in who the Lord is, and in all that He means to you! I told you these same things when I was with you in person. Now I write them to you for your added protection. Be assured that it's not a tiresome task for me to do so.

<sup>2</sup>Watch out for those men who behave like dogs, those workers of evil who insist you must be circumcised if you are to be saved.

<sup>3</sup>We are the ones who have been truly circumcised, we who serve and worship God in spirit.<sup>a</sup> We have no confidence in external rites or ceremonies. Our boast is about Christ Jesus, about who He is and what He has taught us and has done for us.

<sup>4</sup>Concerning external advantage and the earthly way of thinking, I certainly could brag about my

credentials. If anyone ever had reason to believe he would be saved because of his heritage and faithful observance of Jewish Law, I have even more reason than he.

<sup>5</sup>I was circumcised eight days after I was born. My ancestry can be traced back in Israel's history thru the tribe of Benjamin. I'm as Hebrew as anyone can be. As a Pharisee, I strictly obeyed the Law of Moses.

<sup>6</sup>As for zeal, I was one of the leading persecutors of the Church of Jesus Christ. As for the Mosaic Law, I did my best to obey it to perfection.

<sup>7</sup>But because of what Christ has taught me and done for me, I now look upon all those things which I once considered so very important, as being totally worthless.

<sup>8</sup>Indeed, as far as things are concerned, I consider all of them totally worthless in comparison with the incomparable value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For His sake I have suffered the loss of all things. I look upon the totality of them as less desirable than worthless trash, in order that I may make certain that I belong to Christ.

<sup>9</sup>My whole desire is to be so unified with Him that there will be no question on Judgment Day as to whom I belong. But in no way am I depending on gaining peace with God by my own efforts, by obeying and observing religious laws and ceremonies. I'm depending on right standing with God by faith in what Christ suffered for me, a righteousness which is mine by faith in what God has done for me thru Christ.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>10</sup>My urgent goal now is to become fully acquainted with all that Christ means to me, and to be overwhelmed with the truth of all that His resurrection can mean for me and for all others.<sup>a</sup> My firm desire is to share with Christ in suffering for the sake of all who are still lost, even as He did, even to be like Him in dying to all self-interests so

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**3:3a** To worship in spirit means to worship God with an utterly sincere mind, to offer one's whole heart to God, not depending on external rites and ceremonies. It is true and sincere worship that comes from deep within your heart. See John 4:23-24 note.

**3:9a** For important comments about *righteousness* see Appendix 219, page 482.

**3:10a** Just how important is Christ's resurrection to our salvation? See Appendix 220, page 483.

**3:11a** How little there is here of the spirit of those who claim they are as sure of Heaven as though they were already there. Paul knew he was still on probation, until his life here was finished, even though he had God's promises of life. Most, if not

all, of God's promises are conditional, although you won't always find the conditions in the same verse or chapter as the promise.

Paul did not take his salvation for granted just because he had once trusted Christ for justification. He realized that regeneration, the new birth (see John 3:1-17 and comments there), was likewise essential if he were to *be included among those who will be raised from among the dead*. The two Greek particles translated *so that* are used when an end is proposed but the possibility of failure to reach it is recognized.

**3:12a** But we each must sincerely *aim* at perfection if we are to be a Christian at all. The true Christian is always humbled by the contrast

that others may also live.

<sup>11</sup>My whole desire and concern is to be so filled with Christ, so like Him—no matter what the cost—so that I may be sure of being included among those who will be raised from among the dead to live with Him forever.<sup>a</sup>

### ***Running Hard toward the Goal***

<sup>12</sup>I'm not claiming I've already arrived, or that I'm now perfect.<sup>a</sup> But I keep pressing on, so that I may become and thereby obtain all that Christ Jesus endured for me that I might achieve.<sup>b</sup>

<sup>13</sup>So, my dear friends, while I can't yet claim to have an altogether secure hold on the resurrection to eternal life, there's one thing I am doing: I am totally forgetting about all the things in the past,<sup>a</sup> and I'm straining forward toward what's ahead.

<sup>14</sup>I'm running straight toward the goal<sup>a</sup> in pursuit of that most highly valued prize of eternal life and blissful happiness with God, to which He is inviting us because of what Christ Jesus has done and is yet doing for us.<sup>b</sup>

<sup>15</sup>All of you who are mature in your understanding of the truth should have the same deep concern that I have.<sup>a</sup> And if there are some of you who haven't yet seen the absolute need for such complete dedication, I'm sure that God will soon make even this most vital truth clear to you.

<sup>16</sup>And in those areas where we have reached maturity of understanding, let us now live according to the light we have, and keep on doing so.

<sup>17</sup>My dear friends, join those who are following my example. Take note of the lives they're living, and use our lives as a pattern for your own.

<sup>18</sup>But there are many others whom you must not imitate! I've told you often, and I now tell you with bitter tears that many in the churches are enemies of the cross of Christ!<sup>a</sup>

between what He is and what he desires to be.

**3:12b** Paul also recognized that this walk with Christ thru life in conformity to His will is not some past accomplishment, but it is a daily accomplishment—a daily dying to self. Jesus put forth His most utmost effort (no matter what the cost) in order that He might be able to offer us eternal life and the glory of God. We must likewise lay hold of Christ and eternal life thru Him (no matter what the cost) by means of both the faith and obedience that God demands of us.

**3:13a** All past sins, failures, mistakes, and even successes.

**3:14a** Paul knew he must run according to the rules, and with all his heart and strength. He never

<sup>19</sup>Their destination is destruction in Hell, because their real god is all the various appetites of their body. Many of these so-called Christians actually glory in their shameful behavior.<sup>a</sup> Their minds are continually centered on the things of this world and this very brief life.<sup>b</sup>

<sup>20</sup>But our heart and citizenship are in Heaven. And we are most eagerly waiting for our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, to return from there.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>21</sup>When He returns, He will transform our weak bodies that die into bodies just like His own glorious, incorruptible body. He will use the same mighty power to accomplish this transformation that He'll use to bring all things under His control.

**4** So for that reason, my dearly loved brothers and sisters, you must always stand firm in your total dedication and devotion to the Lord. Oh, how I long to see you dear friends! I have such joy as I think of you! You represent my joyful reward, my crown!

<sup>2</sup>Euodia, I plead with you, and with you, Syntyche, that you work together in harmony as you serve the Lord.

<sup>3</sup>And I plead with you also, faithful Synzygus,<sup>a</sup> that you give these dear women some genuine assistance. They worked side by side with me so faithfully in giving out the Great News. They also worked with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers whose names are in God's Book of Life.

### ***The Confidence Christians are to Have***

<sup>4</sup>You must all make a practice of always rejoicing when you consider who the Lord is, and what He means to you. I say it again, always rejoice!

<sup>5</sup>Let your gentle and patient attitude be evident to everyone. Always remember that the Lord is right there with you.<sup>a</sup>

taught an easy way to Heaven.

**3:14b** Thru Christ's sacrifice for us (our justification), and thru His enabling us now to obey His teachings and commands (our regeneration).

**3:15a** ... *and should be diligent in putting forth the same effort that I do.*

**3:18a, 19b** Who are these in the church who are enemies of the cross of Christ? See Appendix 221.

**3:19a** ... *and call it freedom in Christ.*

**3:20a** Matthew 24:29-31; Acts 1:9-11; 1 Corinthians 15:51-54; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

**4:3a** A name meaning *partner* or *yokefellow*.

**4:5a** You have no need to worry about anything. Always talk to the Lord about the problem, and trust Him to work it out. Matthew 28:20.

<sup>6</sup>So never allow yourselves to get uptight and anxiously concerned about anything.<sup>a</sup> But in every situation, you must earnestly continue to plead with God in prayer about your problem and the needs you have. And be sure to thank Him for the way He will work everything out, for His great interest in you, and for His many blessings of both the past and present.

<sup>7</sup>When you pray earnestly, with confidence, the peace of God, which is way beyond anything anyone understands or can adequately describe, will guard your hearts and minds from anxiety and irritation,<sup>a</sup> because you have then given yourselves to Christ Jesus to work out His will in the entire matter.

<sup>8</sup>And finally, my dear friends, you must continue to fill your minds with thoughts of whatever is true, noble, just, pure, lovely, excellent, good, and worthy of praise.

<sup>9</sup>You must also continue to put into practice all you have learned and received from me—both from my instructions and the example of my life. If you do, the God who gives everlasting peace will be with you.

#### *Paul's Thanks for their Gifts*

<sup>10</sup>I've been wholeheartedly rejoicing and praising the Lord that your concern and support for me has finally been revived. It's not that you didn't have concern before, but you didn't have any way of getting your help to me.

<sup>11</sup>I'm not saying that I'm in need, because I've learned to be content in whatever circumstance I find myself.

<sup>12</sup>I've learned how to live on next to nothing, as well as with plenty. I've learned to be content in any and every situation, whether I'm well-fed or hungry, whether I have plenty or am in need.

<sup>13</sup>Because I have the strength to meet and overcome every difficulty and circumstance, thru the power that Christ gives me.

<sup>14</sup>But you certainly did well to share with me in this time of trouble here in jail.

<sup>15</sup>You friends in Philippi also know that when I left northern Greece after I first brought you the Great News, not one church, except you people, had any concern about collecting contributions to give toward my needs.

<sup>16</sup>Even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent gifts toward my needs more than once.

<sup>17</sup>It's not that I'm so overly interested in your money, but I'm looking for ever-increasing profits and dividends from your lives, which will be credited to your account in Heaven.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>18</sup>Yes, I now have all I need, and more. I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent with him. They are like fragrant incense, an acceptable sacrifice that pleases God very much.

<sup>19</sup>And because of your generosity,<sup>a</sup> my God will supply all your needs from His glorious riches, which are available to you thru Christ Jesus.

<sup>20</sup>May God our Father receive all the glory forever and ever! May that indeed be absolute and unqualified.

<sup>21</sup>Greetings to everyone who is dedicated to Christ Jesus! The Lord's followers who are here with me send you their greetings.

<sup>22</sup>Everyone else here in Rome who is dedicated to Jesus, especially those who work in the emperor's palace, send you greetings.

<sup>23</sup>May our Lord Jesus Christ be with all of you to bless you. So be it.

Sincerely in Christ,  
Paul and Timothy

**4:6a** Why should you ever be upset, when Christ has promised to be with you always, to strengthen, help, and direct you? Matthew 28:20; Hebrews 13:5-6.

**4:7a** Psalm 119:165; Isaiah 26:3.

**4:17a** See Luke 16:9 note, and Appendix 222.

**4:19a** These words are not in the text but are definitely implied. God doesn't automatically supply all the needs of everyone—not even of every Christian. The promise is to those who meet the conditions of Luke 6:38; 2 Corinthians 9:6-9, etc. And the Philippians had met those conditions.

**M**y whole desire and concern is to be so filled with Christ, so like Him—no matter what the cost—so that I may be sure of being included among those who will be raised from among the dead to live with Him forever.  
—Philippians 3:11