The Epistle of Paul to the PHILIPPIANS

Salutation

1 [1]Paul and Timothy,[1] slaves[2] of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus[3] who are at Philippi, together with the overseers[4] and deacons: [2]Grace to you and peace from God our Father and Sovereign Jesus Christ.

How Paul prays for them

[3]I thank my God every time I remember you; [4]in all my prayers for all of you I always pray with joy, [5]because of your partnership in the Gospel from the first day until now, [6]being certain of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will complete it until the Day of Jesus Christ;[5] [7]just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the Gospel you all are partakers with me of the Grace.[6] [8]God is my witness how I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ.

[9]This is what I pray: that your love may abound yet more and more in real knowledge[7] and full discernment,[8] [10]for you to identify the things that really matter;[9] that you may be sincere and blameless until the Day of Christ,[10] [11]having been filled[11] with the fruits of righteousness that are through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.[12]

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[1] Paul gives recognition to his junior partner.

[2] That is right, slaves.

[3] Paul goes back and forth between "Jesus Christ" and "Christ Jesus" with apparently no difference in meaning.

[4] This term is often translated 'bishop'; along with 'elder' and 'pastor' it refers to a single office in the church. Note that there is a plurality of both overseers and deacons.

[5] Amen!

[6] That is what the Text says, 'the' grace. They identified with Paul and what he was doing.

[7] The compound noun, *epignwsis*, is often rendered as 'full knowledge', but I consider that 'real knowledge' comes closer.

[8] We have all heard that 'love is blind', but *agape* love is just the opposite. Lamentably, I cannot think of a single church that could be said to have "full discernment", and many appear to have none at all.

[9] Yes indeed, "the things that really matter"—the point of identifying them is to concentrate our attention and energy on them.

[10] In verse 6 the emphasis is on God's sovereignty, here it is on our responsibility. "The Day of Christ" is of special relevance to Christians, and the particular aspect in view here is the accounting (see Romans 14:12,14).

[11] "Having been filled"—that is what the Text says. Since the righteousness of Christ is imputed (we cannot earn it), God gives us the best possible start; as it says in 2 Peter 1:3, "His divine power has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness". What we do with it is up to us (see 2:12 below).

[12] The glory of God is the ultimate purpose of all creation (Isaiah 43:7).

News and Instructions

By whatever means, Christ is preached

12Now I want you to know, brothers, that the events against me
have actually turned out for the advancement of the Gospel: **13**as a
result, it has become evident to the whole imperial guard, and to every-
one else, that I am in chains for Christ;[1] **14**also, most of the brothers in
Sovereign have been influenced by my chains to be much bolder, to
speak the Word fearlessly. **15**To be sure, some are even preaching Christ
out of envy and rivalry, but others out of good will; **16**the former proclaim
Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, thinking to add to my
affliction while in chains,[2] **17**but the latter out of love, knowing that I am
set here for the defense of the Gospel.[3] **18**No problem: in every way, be it
in pretense or in truth,[4] Christ is proclaimed, and in this I rejoice—yes,
and will rejoice.

To live is Christ, to die is gain

19You see, I know that this will turn out for my deliverance (through
your supplication and the support of the Spirit of Jesus Christ)[5] **20**accord-
ing to my earnest expectation and hope that I will not be put to shame
in anything but be truly bold, so that now as always Christ will be
glorified in my person, whether by life or by death[6]—**21**to me, to live is
Christ and to die is gain.[7] **22**Now if I am to live on in the flesh it will
mean fruitful labor for me, so I do not know what to choose. **23**I am torn
between the two: I have the desire to depart and be with Christ (far
better),[8] **24**but to remain in the flesh is more necessary, because of you.[9]
25So having been persuaded of this, I know that I will remain and
continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith, **26**so that your

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1 Paul did not hide his light 'under a bushel'.

2 Just a minute: how does insincere preaching (by others) add to his affliction? I suppose we all know 'Christian workers' who are motivated by selfish ambition, and any such would want to 'make hay' while free from Paul's 'shadow', as it were. Judging Paul by themselves, they would think he would be bothered by seeing them gaining prominence at his expense.

3 Even in prison Paul did not lose sight of the job God had given him. Some 10% of the Greek manuscripts transpose verses 16 and 17 (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

4 The Bible is clear to the effect that the means, not just the end, must be appropriate to God's character, so this statement seems a bit strange. Within the community of faith deviations can be treated quite severely, but perhaps for what we might term 'pre-evangelism', getting people who have never heard of Him before to start thinking about Christ, there may be some leeway. Further, Matthew 20:1-16 makes clear that God is prepared to use a variety of types of worker.

5 This is presumably a reference to the Holy Spirit (see John 16:13-15).

6 Although it appears that Paul actually hoped to be freed from prison, he is prepared to die. His main concern is not to do anything that will shame his Master.

7 How can death be a gain? Only if you live for Christ.

8 This is one of a few passages that lead us to believe that when a true believer dies his spirit goes directly to be with Christ in Heaven, not to the good side of Hades/Sheol (the 'bosom of Abraham') as with the Old Testament saints.

9 His commitment to the Cause is more important than his personal desire.

rejoicing over me may be more abundant in Christ Jesus, through my coming to you again.[1]

27Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the Gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you, or am absent, I may hear about you that you stand firm in one spirit, striving together for the faith of the Gospel with one soul, **28**and not being intimidated in any way by your opponents: to them this is an indicator of ruin,[2] but to you of deliverance,[3] and that from God. **29**For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe into Him,[4] but also to suffer for His sake,[5] **30**having the same struggle that you saw in me and now hear to be in me.[6]

About having the mind of Christ

2 **1**Therefore, if there is any encouragement in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship from the Spirit, if any tenderness and acts of compassion, **2**make my joy full by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. **3**Do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard one another as being better than yourselves.[7] **4**Let each of you look out not only for his own concerns, but also for what concerns others.[8]

5In fact, let this mindset be in you that was also in Christ Jesus, **6**who, existing in God's form, did not consider equality with God a thing to be grasped,[9] **7**but divested Himself, taking a slave's form, coming to be in the likeness of men.[10] **8**And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient to the point of death[11]—even death

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1 Evidently Paul had a sincere hope that he would be released from prison.

2 How shall we understand this? What is the effect of our boldness in the face of opposition—do the opponents consider that we are sealing our own fate, or do they suspect that they may be on the wrong side? Perhaps both.

3 Our confidence in God assures us of deliverance, one way or another: by life or by death.

4 The Text never has "believe 'in' Jesus"; we must believe <u>into</u> Him. Being on the outside we must change location. This involves commitment and a change of worldview or value system.

5 If you were taught to expect a 'bed of roses', you had a bad teacher.

6 They had seen him suffer when he first visited Philippi, and he was presently suffering in prison.

7 Personally I have a hard time with this one. But it may have more to do with social level and prestige within the congregation than with personal qualities and abilities.

8 *Agape* love is the opposite of selfishness.

9 Since Jehovah the Son was (and is) equally God, the point appears to be that He did not insist on hanging on to His prerogatives.

10 Note that to be a human being is to be a slave. We are born slaves, live slaves and die slaves. We are born slaves to self, sin and death (with Satan behind the scenes); Christ offers us the option of being slaves to God, good and life. You can't stop being a slave, but you can choose your owner.

11 Hebrews 5:8 says that Jehovah the Son "learned obedience by the things that He suffered". He had never experienced anything like that before. So what happens to us if we have the same mindset?

on a cross! 9Indeed, that is why God highly exalted Him and gave Him the name that is above every name, 10so that at the name of **Jesus**[1] every knee will bow—of those in heaven,[2] those on earth[3] and those under the earth[4]—11and every tongue will acknowledge[5] that Jesus Christ is Sovereign, to the glory of God the Father.

Act like children of God

12So then, my dear ones, just as you have always obeyed (not only in my presence but now much more in my absence), keep working out your own salvation with fear and trembling, 13because God Himself is the One at work in you, both to will and to produce,[6] for *His* good pleasure.

14Do all things without grumbling or arguing,[7] 15so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and depraved generation,[8] among whom you shine as light bearers in the world,[9] 16holding fast the Word of Life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I did not run in vain nor labor for nothing.[10] 17Yes, even if I am a libation being poured on the sacrifice and

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1 Note that it is at the name of Jesus, not Christ or even Jehovah, that every knee will bow. 'Jesus' is His human name—recall that in Revelation the slain Lamb (5:6,12; 7:14; 12:11) receives glory and praise along with the Father. You cannot kill God, so the Lamb is Jesus. Recall further that in John 5:22 Jesus affirmed that the Father had "committed all judgment" to Him, which means that it will be Jesus sitting on the "great white throne" (Revelation 20:11), not to mention a certain "winepress" (Revelation 19:15). Although at the moment I see no way of 'closing the question' (as we say here in Brazil), I verily suspect that the correct transliteration of 'Jesus' into Hebrew will prove to be יֵסוּס (yesus) and not יֵשׁוּעַ (yeshua).

2 This presumably includes the angels, whether or not they have literal 'knees'.

3 Those actually alive on the earth when this decree is imposed; I suppose it will be during the millennial Messianic Kingdom.

4 Since Hades is inside the earth (Matthew 12:40, Ephesians 4:9, 1 Samuel 28:13), this will presumably include the wicked dead, as well as the demons in the Abyss (at least). Just suppose that God wanted to confine evil to this planet; the logical place for a 'prison' would be beneath its crust.

5 The verbs 'bow' and 'acknowledge' are in the subjunctive mood in the Text, so many versions render 'should bow' rather than "will bow". However, the mood of the verbs is governed by the conjunction *hina*, that normally takes the subjunctive; in the context the author evidently does not intend to leave any doubt about the extent of the recognition.

6 Paul places our responsibility and God's sovereignty side by side; we must consciously cooperate with Him.

7 When we grumble or argue we are rejecting the Holy Spirit's control, and the result is not purity.

8 Can there be any doubt that our generation is crooked and depraved? And it is not getting any better.

9 As we both live out and actively promote biblical values, the "Word of Life", we will stand out like a bright torch at night. The darker it is, the farther any light can be seen.

10 At the Accounting, one measure of our success will be the extent to which others bought into our commitment.

service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. 18For the same reason you also be glad and rejoice with me.

About Timothy

19Now I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be encouraged when I know how you are doing. 20For I have no one else like-minded, who will be genuinely concerned about your welfare[1] 21(for all seek their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus).[2] 22But you know the proof of him, that as a son with his father he slaved[3] with me for the Gospel. 23Therefore I hope to send him at once, as soon as I see how things go with me. 24Still, I am confident in the Lord that I myself will come soon.[4]

About Epaphroditus

25However, I considered it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker and fellow soldier; also your messenger and minister to my need; 26since he was longing for you all, and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick. 27Well, he really was sick, nearly to death, but God had mercy on him, and not only on him but also on me, that I might not have sorrow upon sorrow. 28So I sent him the more eagerly, that upon seeing him again you might have joy, and I be less anxious. 29Receive him in Sovereign with great joy, and hold such men in honor, 30because for the work of the Christ he came close to death, not regarding his life,[5] to complete what was lacking in your service toward me.

Paul's example

3 1Finally, my brothers, rejoice in Sovereign. For me to write the same things to you is not troublesome and for you it is the safe thing. 2Watch out for the 'dogs', watch out for the bad workers, watch out for the mutilation![6] 3For it is we who are the circumcision, the ones who

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[1] This statement puzzles me; wouldn't Epaphroditus qualify? Perhaps Paul had in mind a messenger who would return with news, since Epaphroditus would stay there.

[2] Unfortunately, things have not changed much in 2,000 years.

[3] That is what the Text says.

[4] Recall that Paul was writing from prison.

[5] Right. That is the kind the Church and the world need to see.

[6] The repetition of the "watch out for" presumably indicates three distinct objects. Paul evidently considered that the three types of people constituted a threat, but how can we identify and distinguish them? "The mutilation" is explained, by contrast, in the next verse—it refers to those who insisted on physical circumcision, but without a change of heart. This was a heresy within the broader Christian community that had originated in Jerusalem. As for the "bad workers", the adjective used is not 'malignant', that refers to aggressive evil. A bad worker produces work that is inferior, careless, or even sabotage, and in consequence can be damaging and dangerous. I suppose Paul is referring to people within the Christian community who are not really committed to Christ and His Kingdom.

As for the 'dogs', I am obliged to confess that I do not know who Paul was referring to, though the use of the definite article indicates a specific group that the Philippians would recognize. In Deuteronomy 23:18 'dog' apparently refers to a male prostitute, a

worship by God's Spirit and glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in flesh [4](though I myself actually have basis for such confidence).

About Paul

If anyone else thinks he has basis for confidence in flesh, I even more: [5]circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; with respect to the Law, a Pharisee; [6]with respect to zeal, persecuting the Church; with respect to the righteousness that is in the law, blameless.[1]

[7]But such things as were gain to me, these I have considered loss for the sake of the Christ. [8]Yes indeed, in fact I actually consider everything to be a loss for the sake of the excelling thing, the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord[2]—for His sake I have already lost everything[3] (and consider it as trash), so that I may gain Christ [9]and be found in Him, not having as my righteousness that of the Law but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness that comes from God based on that faith; [10]so that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the sharing in His sufferings,[4] becoming like Him in His death,[5] [11]and so, somehow,[6] that I may arrive into the resurrection from among the dead—[12]not that I have already obtained it or have already been perfected; but I press on to actually claim that for which Christ Jesus claimed me.

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catamite, and is declared to be an abomination. In O.T. times dogs were scavengers and therefore unclean, and were generally looked down upon. In Jesus' day Jews referred to Gentiles as 'dogs', but since many Gentiles are in the Church (and the church in Philippi doubtless had a large Gentile contingent) that is certainly not the intended meaning here. The 'dogs' in Matthew 7:6 react in an aggressively hostile manner against what is holy; I take it that they are people who are overtly serving evil, and being malignant they are aggressive. I would say that Paul certainly had a copy of Matthew's Gospel, and may well be following the Lord's use. This text may be referring to that sort of person, and in that event, they would be outside the congregation.

[1] Since Paul did not choose to be born to Hebrew parents, Benjaminites, nor to be circumcised the eighth day, these were advantages of birth. The rest was his choice. He is claiming that if Judaism could save, he was saved.

[2] The most important thing in this life is to know Jesus Christ as Lord. (One is reminded of the parables of the treasure and the pearl.)

[3] Since Paul was born a Roman citizen, his father was wealthy enough to buy that privilege. Had Paul (Saul) remained in Tarsus, he would probably have had an established social position.

[4] The power of His resurrection is something I would really like to have, but if the price is to share in His sufferings…

[5] We cannot resurrect if we have not died.

[6] "And so, somehow"—this really does not sound like 'once saved, always saved'. The writings of the Apostle Paul contain a variety of clear declarations to the effect that God is Sovereign; they equally contain a variety of clear declarations to the effect that we are responsible. In spite of having given up everything for Christ, in spite of being an Apostle, Paul is not resting on his laurels, is not taking anything for granted. He clearly recognizes his own responsibility to "press on".

13Brothers, I do not consider that I have already claimed it, but this: forgetting the things behind and straining toward those ahead,[1] 14I press on toward the goal for the prize, the upward call from God[2] because of Christ Jesus.

Our citizenship is in Heaven

15So then, those of us who are mature should have this mentality, but if on some point you think differently, God will reveal that to you as well.[3] 16Only, in what we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind.[4]

17Brothers, join together in imitating me, and having us[5] as a pattern take note of those who walk in the same way.[6] 18Because many are walking as enemies of the cross of Christ—of whom I told you often, and now tell you even with tears—19whose end is ruin, whose god is their stomach, and whose glory is in their shame; their mind is only on earthly things.[7] 20But our citizenship is in Heaven, and it is from there that we eagerly await *our* Deliverer,[8] Sovereign Jesus Christ; 21who will transform the body of our humiliation[9] so that it will be conformed to the body of His glory, according to the working by which He is indeed able to subject all things to Himself.

4 1So then, my brothers, beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, do stand fast in Sovereign in this way,[10] dear ones.

Concluding considerations

To individuals

2I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to come to agreement in the Lord. 3Yes, I urge you too, genuine yokefellow,[11] help these women who

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1 When Paul (he was still Saul) met Jesus on the road to Damascus he underwent a complete change of direction.

2 "The upward call from God", that is the real prize; and the only reason the Father calls anyone is because of Jesus Christ.

3 Paul is assuming that they will be listening to the Holy Spirit.

4 Less than 2% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit "let us be of the same mind" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

5 By changing from 'me' to 'us' I suppose Paul is including Timothy.

6 I take this as a personal challenge—to be a pattern that others can use to distinguish between friends and enemies of the cross. Since the cross of Christ represents death to self, most people are not interested.

7 Apparently relativistic, humanistic materialists have been around for quite a while.

8 He will deliver us from this world scene, with emphasis upon the glorification of our bodies.

9 Although, as the Psalmist says, we are "fearfully and wonderfully made" (Psalm 139:14), it is also the case that our physical bodies limit us, and not infrequently that limitation reaches the point of being humiliating. Personally, I am ready and waiting for my glorified body, but in the meantime, I am very happy to be able to contribute to Christ's Kingdom down here.

10 "This way" presumably refers to imitating Paul.

11 We have here a common word for 'yokefellow', and although the context seems to ask for a proper name we don't know of any examples elsewhere of such use. Referring back to 2:25, the description of Epaphroditus makes him a good candidate. He is

labored with me in the Gospel, and with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the Book of Life.[1]

Filling the mind with good things

4Rejoice in Sovereign always; again I say, rejoice! 5Let your forbearing spirit be evident to all; the Lord is near. 6Do not be anxious about anything,[2] but in everything, by prayer and petition along with thanksgiving,[3] let your requests be made known to God; 7and the peace of God, that surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.[4]

8Finally, brothers, whatever things are true, whatever things are honorable, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are commendable—whatever is of excellent character and whatever is praiseworthy—ponder <u>such</u> things.[5] 9Put into practice the things that you learned, received, heard and saw in me,[6] and the God of peace will be with you.

Thanks for material support

10I rejoice in the Lord greatly that you have renewed your concern for me once again; of course you were concerned, just lacked the opportunity. 11I am not saying this because of lack, since I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. 12I know what it is to be restricted, and I know what it is to have an abundance; everywhere and in every way I have been initiated both into being well fed and into being hungry, both into having plenty and into having need. 13I can handle anything[7] through Christ who strengthens me. 14Nevertheless you have done well in sharing with me in my trial.

15Now you Philippians know very well that in the beginning of the Gospel,[8] when I left Macedonia, no congregation shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you only. 16Yes, even in Thessalonica, both once and again, you sent aid for my need. 17Not that I want the gift, but I want the fruit that is being added to your account.[9] 18I have

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carrying this letter, and being from Philippi he would be familiar with the facts in the case.

1 The "Book of Life" is <u>the</u> place to have your name.

2 Do not be a worrywart.

3 We need to be careful not to forget the thanksgiving when we pray. Remember past blessings.

4 This is the greatest protection on the market.

5 Is this list the sort of thing you will find on television or the internet? We need to remember Psalm 101:3, "I will set nothing wicked before my eyes".

6 Paul is forthright in offering himself as an example, which is a challenge to us to live in such a way that we can do the same. He even guarantees the blessing of "the God of peace".

7 In the context Paul is not claiming to be all-powerful ('I can do all things'), but God's grace is sufficient for meeting whatever comes his way.

8 I suppose he means the beginning for them.

9 When we die, we cannot take any money or material goods with us, but we can send it on ahead, investing in Christ's Kingdom.

received everything and have plenty; I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the things you sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God. **19**My God will supply every need of yours according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.[1]

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

Sign off

21Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brothers who are with me greet you. **22**All the saints greet you, but especially those who are of Caesar's household.

23The grace of the Sovereign, Jesus Christ, be with you all.[2] Amen.

[1] 2 Corinthians 9:6-12 explains how God's economy works.

[2] Instead of "you all", some 9% of the Greek manuscripts have 'your spirit' (as in NIV, NASB, LB, etc.).