

# Paul's Joy In Christ

**Introduction.** The city of Philippi is located in modern day Greece, on a plain about ten miles inland from the Aegean Sea. The Egnatian Way, a main overland route between Asia and the West, ran through this ancient city. In 356 B.C., it was seized by Philip of Macedonia, the father of Alexander. In 42 B.C., Mark Antony and Octavian combined forces to defeat the armies of Brutus and Cassius, the assassins of Julius Caesar, at Philippi. In celebration of the victory, Philippi was made into a Roman colony; this entitled its inhabitants to the rights and privileges usually granted to those who lived in the cities of Italy. Eleven years later, Octavian defeated the forces of Antony and Cleopatra in a naval battle at Actium, on the west coast of Greece. Octavian punished supporters of Antony by resettling them in Philippi.

The Lord's church at Philippi was established by Paul on his second evangelistic trip in about A.D. 52. He had set out from Antioch of Syria and traveled by land to revisit the churches which he had started on his first journey. Luke records that Timothy had joined him at Lystra (Acts 16:1-10). They sailed from Troas to Neapolis, and from there traveled inland to Philippi (Acts 16:11-12).

Philippi did not have enough Jewish citizens to have a synagogue. There was a meeting place for prayer just outside the city, where Paul found Lydia and a group of women on the Sabbath engaged in worship. To them he preached the first gospel sermon in Europe (Acts 16:13-15). Lydia and her household became the first converts; they were later joined by the jailer and his household (Acts 16:16-34).

Philippians was one of the prison epistles of Paul. The church at Philippi had sent Epaphroditus as their messenger to bring aid to Paul while he was in Rome and he fell ill while in Rome (Philippians 2:27). Upon his recovery, Epaphroditus longed to return home. Paul knew of the concern of the Philippians which prompted the letter. One of the major characteristics of the Philippian letter is its vibrant undertone of spiritual joy and thanksgiving.

## I. ***Christ Is The Purpose Of My Life (Philippians 1:21-24)***

- A. Paul's indifference towards death raises the question of what life and death is. The Stoics had preached indifference and apathy towards death.
- B. Paul announces his principle of life.
  1. Regardless of how others felt, this is what life meant to Paul.
  2. With many, life means money, power, sensual indulgence, vanity, etc.
  3. Paul did not say, "Christ is life," but, "living is Christ and dying is

- gain.”
- C. Christ occupies the whole of Paul’s life -- there were no doors locked to him. Because of this, Paul surrendered his life to the Lord and found victory (1 Corinthians 15:57).
  - D. What about death? That meant simply more of Christ, i.e., “to die is gain.”
    - 1. “Gain” is used for interest, gains and profits, and Paul spoke about “gaining Christ” (Philippians 3:8).
    - 2. Death held no terror for Paul (Hebrews 2:9-18). He looked upon death as a friend in disguise, but he was not dissatisfied with life here on Earth.
  - E. Is Christ really the purpose of your life? He must be or you do not have the proper purpose for your life!

## II. ***Christ Is The Pattern Of My Life (Philippians 2:5-8)***

- A. Paul uses the incarnation of Christ to teach a lesson on humility.
  - 1. John says the word became flesh (John 1:14).
  - 2. As Christ possessed the real attributes of Deity, so He took upon Himself the real attributes of a servant (Hebrews 4:14-16).
  - 3. Jesus followed the Father’s will obediently to death (Hebrews 5:8-9).
  - 4. He cried aloud when His Father forsook Him (Matthew 27:46).
  - 5. The Jews stumbled at the cross and the Greeks thought it was foolish, but to us it is the power of salvation (1 Corinthians 1:20-25).
- B. Christ is the perfect pattern for your life, and you must surrender all that you have so that the Father will be glorified (Romans 12:1-2).

## III. ***Christ Is The Prize Of My Life (Philippians 3:12-14)***

- A. Many people would not understand “perfection” in this life.
  - 1. The word translated as “perfect” (*katartizo*) in the New Testament means “to complete thoroughly, i.e. repair or adjust.”
  - 2. Notice some other uses in the New Testament:
    - a) Matthew 4:21.
    - b) Galatians 6:1.
    - c) 1 Thessalonians 3:10.
    - d) 2 Corinthians 13:11.
- B. Paul pointedly says that he presses on.
  - 1. The verb means “I pursue” or “I follow after” and Paul was in the pursuit of Christ.
  - 2. Christ changed Paul from a persecutor to an apostle (Acts 22:3-5).
- C. Paul’s goal is still ahead and he vividly pictures the tension of the chase.
  - 1. Paul was not forgetting his former career, but he does not allow his

- immediate past to lull him into a false sense of security.
2. He had no time to look back. In fact, the prize only belongs to those who run (1 Corinthians 9:24).
  3. Paul is thinking and contemplating the crown of righteousness (2 Timothy 4:8).

#### IV. ***Christ Is The Power Of My Life (Philippians 4:12-13)***

- A. Paul's strength resides in Christ; He empowers Paul. This power is accessible to all who yield themselves to the will of Christ. Paul uses this great word elsewhere of Christ's relationship to Him.
  1. 1 Timothy 1:12.
  2. 2 Timothy 4:17.
  3. Ephesians 6:10.
- B. Paul learned to do without his way and find joy and satisfaction in God's way.
  1. Men can kill him, but they cannot deprive him of the love and power of Christ in his life (Romans 8:35-39).
  2. Paul leads the victorious life because he lets the word of Christ dwell within him and rule in his life (Colossians 3:16).

**Conclusion.** In Philippians 4:18-23, Paul says farewell to the Philippians. The epistle was brief, but was very rich in thought. In the final verse, Paul emphasizes grace from the Lord Jesus Christ. This is a grace that ennobles and enriches the life. Will you allow that kind of grace into your life? You can have it by loving Him enough to cast away your sin. Your love will compel you to follow after Him and obey His gospel. Would you be free from your burden of sin? Obey the gospel now.