

CHRIST'S LIFE IN THE BELIEVER

PLEASE do not read these comments until you have read the Scriptures for this lesson. First let the Holy Spirit teach you directly from His Word. Summary and Historical Background

Philippians was written by Paul to the church at Philippi around 63 A.D., most likely from prison in Rome. Although the site of Philippi today is in ruins, it was a famous city before and during the Roman era. Crenides, or "The Little Fountains," was its ancient name until it was captured in 356 B.C. by Philip of Macedon, father of Alexander the Great, and it was renamed Philippi. At the time Paul wrote this letter, Philippi was a Roman colony and had a form of government independent of the provincial administration.

Paul was responsible for the establishment of this church on his second missionary journey (Acts 16:12-40). This was the first church founded in Europe and has often been labeled the birthplace of European Christianity. The first converts of Philippi were Lydia, who was a seller of purple, her household, possibly the demon possessed slave girl, and the Philippian jailer and his family.

Paul left this successful church in the hands of Luke and went to Thessalonica to establish another church. The Philippian believers lovingly sent him support for his work (Phil. 4:15; 2 Cor. 11:9). Five years later, while on his third missionary journey, Paul visited Philippi on his way to Corinth and also on his return trip (Acts 20:1-6). There seemed to be a deep love between Paul and the people at Philippi. The Philippian church appears to have been the most free from error of any of the apostolic churches.

The Occasion of the Letter — Philippian believers had heard of Paul's arrest in Jerusalem and his imprisonment in Rome and wanted to aid him. They sent Epaphroditus to Paul in Rome with their offering. The trip from Philippi to Rome took about one month in those days. Epaphroditus then stayed with Paul and ministered to him. Epaphroditus became very ill in Rome (Phil. 2:25-30). When he regained his strength, Paul sent this letter with him when he returned home.

The Theme — **Perfecting** Christians by Christ, Who is perfect and dwells within them.

These Christians were warned of three impending dangers:

1. Judaizers - Jews that put believers under the law of Moses (3:2-9)
2. Anti-nomianism - unbelievers that were against all laws; you can live as you want (3:17-19)
3. Disunity - believers that would not work with other believers (1:27; 3:15-16; 4:2)

Outline

- Chapter 1 — Christ's Life in the Believer
- Chapter 2 — Christ's Mind in the Believer
- Chapter 3 — Christ's Perfection in the Believer
- Chapter 4 — Christ's Strength in the Believer

I. Paul's Greeting — 1:1-2

1:1 — "Paul and Timothy, the servants of Jesus Christ" - Paul showed humility when he placed Timothy on an equal plane with himself. There are two types of servants. One is a servant against his will - maybe a captive from a foreign country; the other is a servant by his will - he has willingly volunteered to be someone's slave. Paul and Timothy were slaves of the latter type. They were bought by Christ, but had willingly submitted to Him (1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23).

"Saints in Christ Jesus" — They were not sinless, but they were "set apart" - that is the meaning of "saints." They were "set apart" from the rest of the world and were special people to God because they were "in Christ Jesus." It was a position of honor and holiness. Even though saints cannot attain sinlessness in this life, they are to strive for holiness. They are a new creation in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17); therefore, they are to practice what they profess.

1:2 — "Grace" - It is a common Greek greeting and has the connotation of receiving what is not deserved.

"Peace" — It is a common Hebrew greeting and refers to restored fellowship between God and man. Peace is not given to unbelievers (Isa. 57:21).

II. Paul's Praise — 1:3-8

1:3-5 — "I thank my God" - Paul's thankfulness toward them was based on his joyful memory of them and their "fellowship" in the Gospel from the beginning. "Fellowship" is what we have in common, i.e., praying, witnessing, singing, serving and all other spiritual activities.

1:6, 7 — "Being confident" - Paul's confidence toward them was based on God's work begun in them (v. 6), Who would perform this good work until the "the day of Jesus Christ" (Rapture and judgment of the believers' works. It was "meet" (right) for him to think this because they shared in His grace.

1:8 — "I have you in my heart" - Paul's love toward them was based on the love (lit. "bowels") of Jesus Christ.

III. Paul's Prayer — 1:9-11

1:9 — "That your love may abound" - Paul was not saying they lacked love, but to increase in their love so that it would "overflow" like a cup that is filled with more than it can hold. Love is seeking the best for another person. It pertains to "knowledge," not necessarily to feelings. It is thinking of ways and means to help others and acting accordingly. This is love. Love also pertains to "judgment." This refers to moral issues. Doing what is holy and right also is showing love to others.

1:10 — "That you may approve things that are excellent" - Paul was telling them to "test" things in order to discern which things are the "best." He wanted them to have a right sense of values.

"That you may be sincere and without offense"— Paul wanted them to choose the best things in living for Christ. To be "sincere" was to be pure, genuine, real. Pottery makers would sometimes sell vessels which had been sealed by putting wax in the cracks. The wax covered up the flaw so that it could not be detected easily without holding it up to the sunlight for examination. Perfect pieces of pottery would be labeled "sincere" which meant they were "without wax." To be "without offense" was to be blameless. It did not mean that they were sinless, but it meant that they would confess their sins and make things right with those that they offended. They were to be a stepping stone, not a stumbling block. This kind of conduct would make them ready for "the day of Christ" (cf 1:6; 2:16). Christ will take Christians to Heaven in the Rapture and judge their works to give them their just rewards (2 Cor. 5:10).

1:11 — "Being filled with the fruits of righteousness" - Paul wanted the fruit of righteousness by Christ's life in them to fill their lives. These fruits would be the work of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22, 23) to do the good works of a believer (Eph. 2:10), and produce the fruit of soul-winning (John 15:16). These fruits cannot be accomplished except by the power of Christ (John 15:5). These fruits are for "the glory and praise of God."

IV. Paul's Persistence — 1:12-19

The Christians at Philippi were grieved and even discouraged because of Paul's imprisonment and trials, but Paul wrote to give them a reason for joy and encouragement. He told them that his imprisonment and trials were blessings in disguise in three ways: they helped spread the Gospel in two ways and in a third way they helped to magnify Christ.

1:13 — "In all the palace" - The "palace" is literally the "praetorium," which seems to refer to the royal guards of Caesar. Paul had a captive audience with these guards. He was guarded so closely that he was actually chained to each guard who watched him. Paul used this opportunity to witness to these guards to further the Gospel. "Furtherance" (v. 12) is a military term having to do with a group of men who would go

before an army to clear the way, so that nothing would stop the army from its advance. Paul cleared the way for the army of the Lord by witnessing to these guards from Caesar's household.

1:14 — "Many of the brethren ... are much more bold to speak" - When these guards received Christ (4:22), it removed fear from the hearts of believers and they witnessed to others like Paul was doing. Thus the Gospel was being spread in two ways by Paul's imprisonment: (1) by Paul among the guards of Caesar, and (2) by the believers, who lost their fear among the people of Rome.

1:15 — "Preach Christ" - This refers to any kind of witnessing, whether public or private, to large groups or small.

1:15-17 — There were two kinds of Christians who were witnessing the Gospel. Some did it out of impure motives and others did it properly. Some did it "of envy and strife," while others did it "of good will." Those who did it from wrong motives wanted to add affliction to Paul by putting him in a bad light, but those who did it from pure motives wanted to stand with Paul in love for him and the Gospel. The latter group of Christians knew that Paul was set for the defense of the Gospel, even to the loss of his life.

1:18 — "Christ is preached" - Both groups were right in their doctrine so that Christ was preached accurately - only the motives of the one group were wrong. They were selfish, envious, and makers of strife. Nevertheless, Christ was preached, so Paul rejoiced. He did not become concerned about his ill treatment. It was Christ that was important to him.

1:19 — "This shall turn to my salvation" - There are many views concerning this phrase. "This" seems to refer to the situation Paul was in - his imprisonment and the brethren who were trying to add to his affliction. His "salvation" could refer to a fuller experience of salvation (cf. Rom. 5:9), his deliverance from prison, or even his vindication of wrong-doing (cf. Job 13:16-18). The last two suggestions are a toss-up. Both have good arguments in favor of them and maybe both ideas are involved when he used "salvation." Paul believed everything would work out to magnify Christ because of their faithful prayers and the lavish supply of the Holy Spirit to meet the needs of this situation.

V. Paul's Purpose — 1:20-26

1:20 — "Earnest expectation" - A picture of someone with his head stretched out trying to see something - like someone straining to see the parade coming down the street. This was Paul's attitude as he waited for God's deliverance. He would not be "ashamed" (disappointed) with God's plan for his life.

"Christ shall be magnified in my body" — Paul was willing to live or to die in order to magnify Christ. Like a microscope he was willing to let his body make small things about Christ appear large, and like a telescope to make distant things about Christ appear.

1:21 — "For to me" - Paul tells what life and death mean to him.

"To live is Christ" — His purpose for living was to magnify Christ (v. 20). He did this by the power of Christ.

"To die is gain" — His purpose and attitude concerning death was not loss, but gain. It would be a gain for Christ because it would cause the Gospel to spread more quickly. Persecution has always spread the Gospel like wild-fire. His death would also be a gain for the believers because it would draw them closer to Christ and teach them the seriousness and shortness of life (Eccl. 7:1-4). Finally, his death would be a gain for himself because it would allow him to enter heaven to be with his Lord. From Him he would receive a crown of righteousness (2 Tim. 4:8) and his physical sufferings (2 Cor. 11:23-28) would come to an end.

1:22-24 — Paul shows indecision at the prospect of living or dying. If he lived, there would be fruit (v. 22), but he preferred to die and be with Christ (v. 23). However, he was willing to sacrifice what he

wanted for their spiritual betterment (v. 24). That was his higher purpose: to help others rather than please himself.

1:25-26 — Paul shows confidence that he was going to live, come to them with help for their spiritual lives, and cause them to overflow with great joy in Christ over this unexpected blessing.

VI. Paul's Plea — 1:27-30

Paul now gives a warning to them lest they let down their guard and fail in their spiritual warfare.

1:27 — Paul wanted them to have **a consistent walk**.

"Conversation" — This refers to the whole manner of one's life.

"Becomes the Gospel" — They were to live in harmony with the message of the Gospel.

"That you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together" — They were to live in harmony with one another.

1:28 — Paul wanted them to have **a fearless walk**.

"Terrified" — This word is used of startled horses that are ready to stampede. They were not to be terrified by the threats and persecutions of their enemies.

"Evident token of perdition" — Their fearlessness would convict their enemies of judgment. They would know they were doomed for Hell.

"But to you of salvation" — Their fearlessness would assure them of God's power in their lives to save them from Hell.

1:29-30 — Paul wanted them to expect **a suffering walk**.

It is not only a privilege to believe on Christ, but also to suffer for Him. The mature believer is known by his readiness to suffer for Christ.

"Same conflict" — The believers were in the same battle as Paul, even though they were separated by many miles.