

Paul's Letter to the Philippians
Lesson 2

Philip. 3:1 Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things *again* is no trouble to me, and it is a safeguard for you.

At the close of last week's lesson and the close of chapter 2, Paul encouraged the Philippians to accept Epaphraditus because he had risked his life for the cause of Christ to provide for Paul something that the Philippians failed to provide. Whatever it was that Epaphraditus did for Paul, it brought him to the door of death and caused a great illness in his life, possibly some great injury! He has recovered and he will deliver this letter to the Philippians to bring them encouragement. In the next line Paul states "Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord." In other words, it is all right that the Philippians did not come through for Paul in his time of need. The Lord had provided through Ephaphroditus and the Lord had not allowed death to come to him. "Rejoice" Paul says because all rejoicing is to be in the Lord.

"To write the same things" means that Paul is not afraid to repeat what he has already said, maybe not in the same words, but in the same thoughts.

Philip. 3:2 Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision; **3**for we are the *true* circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh, **4**although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more: **5**circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; **6**as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless. **7**But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ.

Beware, beware, beware ... of dogs, evil workers and the false circumcision! "The dogs" was a term used by Jews when referring to Gentiles. Jesus once used the term "little dogs," speaking of Gentiles when speaking with the Phoenician woman. But here Paul is turning the term back on the Judaizers themselves. Paul had already called the Judaizers "evil workers" in 2 Cor. 11:13. They were the ones holding that they were the true circumcision but they were the false circumcision. Yes they were Jews, but they had failed to put their trust in the Jew who came and gave His life for each of them. They were still Jewish but they failed to take part in the new covenant.

Paul states that he, as well as the Gentile believers in Philippi, are the true circumcision who worship in the Spirit of God but not in the fact that they are or are not Jewish. Paul could boast in his Jewishness if he wanted to, but that meant nothing. All that was important to him was living in Christ.

Philip. 3:8 More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ, **9**and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from *the* Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which *comes* from God on the basis of faith,

¹⁰that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; ¹¹in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. ¹²Not that I have already obtained *it*, or have already become perfect, but I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. ¹³Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of *it* yet; but one thing *I do*: forgetting what *lies* behind and reaching forward to what *lies* ahead, ¹⁴I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, have this attitude; and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you; ¹⁶however, let us keep living by that same *standard* to which we have attained.

While Paul was a Pharisee, he counted his accomplishments for gain in his self-centered life. But all that was put behind him when he turned his life over to Christ. Paul wanted the Philippians to do what he had done, placing all their personal accomplishments behind them and counting them as nothing for the cause of Christ. When the true knowledge of Christ comes into the life of a person, that knowledge changes that person and alters his life for all eternity. Christians know that it is better to be without all the stuff the world has to offer and find life in Jesus Christ. Paul placed his trust in Christ. Faith is the means by which we receive the benefit of the saving grace of Christ. Paul was willing to suffer so the saints will attain the glorious resurrection found in Christ. It is this point that caused Paul to continue on with his work, never failing to take every opportunity to share the gospel with those who need to know Him.

At the time of this writing, Paul had not attained the goal set before him, yet he was pressing forward toward the finish line and, in reality, he was very near. There is a standard that must be the standard of living for the Christian. Paul was living by that standard and when he reached the finish line, he would receive the prize because he had lived by the standard.

Philip. 3:17 Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us. ¹⁸For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, *that they are enemies of the cross of Christ*, ¹⁹whose end is destruction, whose god is *their* appetite, and *whose* glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things. ²⁰For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; ²¹who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.

Paul pleads for the Philippians to follow his example. He is living by the standard and they need to step up to the bar and do the same. In doing so, the Lord Jesus Christ will one day reward them with a transformation that cannot not be explained with words, yet it will be understood by the almighty power of God.

Philip. 4:1 Therefore, my beloved brethren whom I long *to see*, my joy and crown, so stand firm in the Lord, my beloved.

The Church at Philippi was Paul's joy and crown. They were representative of a labor well worth suffering for and he wanted them to stand firm in their faith in the Lord.

Philip. 4:2 I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord.

3Indeed, true comrade, I ask you also to help these women who have shared my struggle in *the cause of the gospel*, together with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

Two of the women in the church were at odds with each other. The text is clear that they were both Christians, yet their relationship with each other was a cause for alarm. It must have been more than just a simple disagreement for Paul to address it in the Holy Scripture. Regardless of what tore them apart, they were to live together in harmony.

Philip. 4:4 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! **5**Let your forbearing spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near. **6**Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. **7**And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

A better translation for “forbearing spirit” would be “your gentle reasonableness.” Let that be known to all men! People may not all agree with you, but if they know that you are gentle and reasonable, there will be a respect that breaks down barriers.

We need to understand just how close the Lord is in our lives. He is just a prayer away, so we should pray and give thanks at all times. By the way, we should also let God know our desires. He already knows them, but when we speak them to Him, He speaks His answers to us, sometimes out of our own mouths when we hear ourselves ask for that which is silly and unneeded. Doing so will bring that peace that passes all understanding and He will protect our hearts and our minds as we focus on Christ Jesus our Lord.

Philip. 4:8 Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things. **9**The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things; and the God of peace shall be with you.

Do you want the peace of God to dwell in you at all times? If so, look at the writings in the Scripture! If the Bible says it is good ... get at it! If the Bible says it is bad ... run from it! This simple way of thinking will bring the peace of God into your hearts in a heavenly way.

Philip. 4:10 But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned *before*, but you lacked opportunity. **11** Not that I speak from want; for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. **12** I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. **13** I can do all things through Him who strengthens me. **14** Nevertheless, you have done well to share *with me* in my affliction.

Here is the favorite verse of many people. " I can do all things through Him who strengthens me." Yet, it is a verse claimed by many, but many cannot do everything that comes their way in life. Is it because they do not have enough faith? God forbid! What does Paul mean by this? The context of this verse means that whether Paul is wealthy or poor, sick or healthy, in good circumstances or horrible circumstances, he can live through them all because of his relationship with Christ. It doesn't mean that he can accomplish anything that he desires to accomplish. It simply means that he can find God's peace in whatever comes his way. This we should do too.

Philip. 4:15 And you yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone; **16** for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs. **17** Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account. **18** But I have received everything in full, and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God. **19** And my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. **20** Now to our God and Father be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

The Philippians had invested in the needs of Paul several times. Paul makes it clear that he did not ask them to do so, yet it was well received and graciously accepted. They had wanted to make another gift but the opportunity did not make circumstances such that they could help Paul. Epaphroditus provided the gift that must have been discussed with the Philippians but never developed and materialized. So Paul considered the gift from Epaphroditus as if it had come from the Philippians. The gift was all that Paul needed. Now Paul was sending Epaphroditus to the Philippians to show that the Lord had restored his health.

Another favorite scripture is in this passage. " And my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus." Apparently the Philippians had fallen in need themselves. Paul wanted them to know that just as the Lord had supplied all of Paul's needs, so too the Lord would supply all their needs. This was not their wants, but their needs. Many times when the Lord supplies our needs according to His riches in glory, our wants show themselves to be unnecessary.

Philip. 4:21 Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren who are with me greet you. **22** All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household. **23** The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

As Paul ends the letter, he ends with praises to God. In our weakness and fears we should present ourselves before the Lord and let Him have pity on us. Everyone with Paul sent their greetings. Notice that even some of Caesar's household sent their greeting. The gospel was powerful even with in the walls and mortar of the Roman Emperor. When Christ is proclaimed, lives are changed, no matter where they live, no matter how powerful they are, no matter how lowly they may be. God is God of all. The gift of grace of the Lord Jesus Christ lives in the spirit of every Christian.