

# The Year of St. Paul



## The Letter to the Philippi-

**Chapter 1** — Paul begins his epistle with his customary salutation, followed by an expression of thanksgiving and prayer. The Church at Philippi had been a source of great joy to Paul by virtue of their fellowship with him in the proclamation of the gospel. Confident that God will complete the work he began in them, Paul prays that their spiritual growth will continue (1:11).

His circumstances at Rome have actually been for the furtherance of the gospel, despite imprisonment and opposition by false brethren. He is confident that everything will turn out alright, and that he will even come to them again. It is not without mixed feelings, however, for he is torn between a desire to be with Christ and a realization that to remain in the flesh is more needed for them (1:12-26).

At the moment, his desire is that whether absent or present he may hear that they are conducting themselves worthy of the gospel, by standing fast in one spirit and one mind for the gospel and not disturbed by any adversaries. They should take comfort in knowing that, like Paul, they have been granted the honor not only to believe in

Christ, but also to suffer for his sake (1:27-30).

### OVERVIEW OF PHILIPPIANS

Opening (1:1-2)

Paul's prison letter (1:3-2:1a; 4:2-9)

Thanksgiving and prayer (1:3-11)

Paul's present and future situation  
(1:12-26)

Exhortation in unity (1:27-2:5)

The Hymn about Christ (2:6-11)

Further instruction (2:12-18)

Travel Plans (2:19-3:1)

Paul's argument against false teaching  
(3:1b-4:1)

Paul's transformation (3:1b-11)

His present struggle and future hope  
\*3:12-4:1)

Exhortation to unity (4:2-9)

Paul's thank-you note (4:10-20)

Closing 4:21-23)

**Chapter 2** — The last chapter included an exhortation to stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel (1:27). Paul continues

with the call for unity, providing reasons why we should desire unity, the nature of our unity, and attitudes necessary to maintain unity (2:1-4). Stressing the need for humility and sacrificial service towards others, Paul appeals to the example of Christ and expounds upon how far Christ was willing to go to save us (2:1-11).

## GOD FIRST

*Year Three, Part 21*

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He continues with another exhortation to “shine as lights in the world” as they work out their own salvation with fear and trembling. Doing all things without complaining and arguing while holding fast to the word of life, they will prove themselves to be children of God in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. This will also prove to Paul that his labors have not been in vain, and any persecution he endures is viewed as a sacrifice in the service of their faith and a cause for mutual rejoicing (2:12-18).

He then writes of his plans pertaining to Timothy and Epaphroditus. He will send Timothy shortly, that he might learn of their physical condition. But Epaphroditus is coming at once in order to set their hearts at ease in about Epaphroditus' brush with death due to a recent illness (2:19-30).

**Chapter 3** — In this chapter we find a warning against those who place great confidence in the flesh (3:1-3). If anyone had reason to boast about fleshly accomplishments, it was Paul with his Jewish heritage (3:4-6). But all such things were considered rubbish in relation to the excellence of knowing Christ Jesus (3:7-8). Therefore, Paul had as his goal to be found in Christ, having that righteousness which is by faith

in Jesus, knowing Him and even sharing in his sufferings, that he might, by any means, attain to the resurrection from the dead (3:9-11).

Paul then describes his attitude of pressing on, and encourages all to follow his example and that of others who walk likewise (3:12-17). Such an exhortation is necessary in view of the reality that there are many people who are enemies of the cross of Christ, who have made their fleshly appetites the focus of their minds, and indeed their god (3:18-19). Christians, however, should remember that their true citizenship is in heaven, from which we eagerly wait for Jesus Christ who will transform our lowly bodies to be conformed to his glorious body (3:20-21).

### **FOR CONSIDERATION**

1. As I mature, can I see my goals becoming more realistic concerning what I desire out of the world?
2. Has my faith caused me to re-evaluate the ideals and their importance that were established when younger?
3. In the past few years, have I become more confident in sharing my faith with others?
4. What will it take for me to be conformed more closely to Christ?

## **Repeated upon request**

### **The “Christ-Hymn” in St. Paul’s Letter to the Philippians (2:6-11)**

5. *Have among yourselves the same attitude that is also yours in Christ Jesus.*
6. *Who, though he was in the form of God, did not deem equality with God something to be grasped.*
7. *Rather, he emptied himself, taking on the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance,*
8. *he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross.*
9. *Because of this, God greatly exalted him, and bestowed on him the name that is above every other name,*
10. *that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bend, of those in heaven and on earth, and under the earth,*
11. *and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

*This is an early Christian hymn that St. Paul uses concerning the humiliation and exaltation of Christ the Servant of God. And it provides for us an understanding of the beliefs of the early Christian Church.*

*Paul is basically saying, “Jesus, who is equal to God, chose, for our sake, to abandon his equality with the Father, in perfect obedience, and take on the suffering of a shameful death on the cross. This was done for our sake.*

*Because of this, we have offering of self, Jesus is exalted above all else, and all of creation is now free to give proper homage to the Lord and Savior of all creation.*

*Our attitude, therefore, as Paul emphasized with the Church at Philippi, must be one of humbling service to one another, regarding others as better than ourselves. Greater humility and respect among the members of this early Church was expected. It is no different for the Church today.*

*The question for us is: Can we accept the humble task of serving others as readily and completely as Jesus did for us? If not, are we truly giving proper homage to Jesus as our Lord and Savior?*