

AN EXPOSITION, WITH PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS, OF

THE EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL TO

THE PHILIPPIANS

The Philippians felt a very deep interest for the apostle. The scope of the epistle is to confirm them in the faith, to encourage them to walk as becomes the gospel of Christ, to caution them against Judaizing teachers, and to express gratitude for their Christian bounty. This epistle is the only one, among those written by St. Paul, in which no censures are implied or expressed. Full commendation and confidence are in every part, and the Philippians are addressed with a peculiar affection, which every serious reader will perceive.

CHAPTER 1

The apostle offers up thanksgivings and prayers, for the good work of grace in the Philippians. (1-7) He expresses affection, and prays for them. (8-11) Fortifies them against being cast down at his sufferings. (12-20) He stood prepared for glorifying Christ by life, or death. (21-26) Exhortations to zeal, and constancy in professing the gospel. (27-30)

Philippians 1:1

Vs. 1-7: The highest honor of the most eminent ministers is, to be servants of Christ. And those who are not really saints on earth, never will be saints in heaven. Out of Christ, the best saints are sinners, and unable to stand before God. There is no peace without grace. Inward peace springs from a sense of Divine favor. And there is no grace and peace but from God our Father, the fountain and origin of all blessings. At Philippi the apostle was evil entreated, and saw little fruit of his labor; yet he remembers Philippi with joy. We must thank our God for the graces and

comforts, gifts and usefulness of others, as we receive the benefit, and God receives the glory. The work of grace will never be perfected till the day of Jesus Christ, the day of his appearance. But we may always be confident God will perform his good work, in every soul wherein he has really begun it by regeneration; though we must not trust in outward appearances, nor in any thing but a new creation to holiness. People are dear to their ministers, when they receive benefit by their ministry. Fellow-sufferers in the cause of God should be dear one to another.

Philippians 1:8

Vs. 8-11: Shall not we pity and love those souls whom Christ loves and pities? Those who abound in any grace, need to abound more. Try things which differ; that we may approve the things which are excellent. The truths and laws of Christ are excellent; and they recommend themselves as such to any attentive mind. Sincerity is that in which we should have our conversation in the world, and it is the glory of all our graces. Christians should not be apt to take offense, and should be very careful not to offend God or the brethren. The things which most honor God will most benefit us. Let us not leave it doubtful whether any good fruit is found in us or not. A small measure of Christian love, knowledge, and fruitfulness should not satisfy any.

Philippians 1:12

Vs. 12-20: The apostle was a prisoner at Rome; and to take off the offense of the cross, he shows the wisdom and goodness of God in his sufferings. These things made him known, where he would never have otherwise been known; and led some to inquire after the gospel. He suffered from false friends, as well as from enemies. How wretched the temper of those who preached Christ out of envy and contention, and to add affliction to the bonds that oppressed this best of men! The apostle was easy in the midst of all. Since our troubles may tend to the good of many, we ought to rejoice. Whatever turns to our salvation, is by the Spirit of Christ; and prayer is the appointed means of seeking for it. Our earnest expectation and hope should not be to be honored of men, or to escape the cross, but to be upheld amidst temptation, contempt, and affliction. Let us leave it to Christ, which way he will make us serviceable to his glory, whether by

labor or suffering, by diligence or patience, by living to his honor in working for him, or dying to his honor in suffering for him.

Philippians 1:21

Vs. 21-26: Death is a great loss to a carnal, worldly man, for he loses all his earthly comforts and all his hopes; but to a true believer it is gain, for it is the end of all his weakness and misery. It delivers him from all the evils of life, and brings him to possess the chief good. The apostle's difficulty was not between living in this world and living in heaven; between these two there is no comparison; but between serving Christ in this world and enjoying him in another. Not between two evil things, but between two good things; living to Christ and being with him. See the power of faith and of Divine grace; it can make us willing to die. In this world we are compassed with sin; but when with Christ, we shall escape sin and temptation, sorrow and death, for ever. But those who have most reason to desire to depart, should be willing to remain in the world as long as God has any work for them to do. And the more unexpected mercies are before they come, the more of God will be seen in them.

Philippians 1:27

Vs. 27-30: Those who profess the gospel of Christ, should live as becomes those who believe gospel truths, submit to gospel laws, and depend upon gospel promises. The original word "conversation" denotes the conduct of citizens who seek the credit, safety, peace, and prosperity of their city. There is that in the faith of the gospel, which is worth striving for; there is much opposition, and there is need of striving. A man may sleep and go to hell; but he who would go to heaven, must look about him and be diligent. There may be oneness of heart and affection among Christians, where there is diversity of judgment about many things. Faith is God's gift on the behalf of Christ; the ability and disposition to believe are from God. And if we suffer reproach and loss for Christ, we are to reckon them a gift, and prize them accordingly. Yet salvation must not be ascribed to bodily afflictions, as though afflictions and worldly persecutions deserved it; but from God only is salvation: faith and patience are his gifts.

CHAPTER 2

Exhortations to a kind, humble spirit and behavior. (1-4) The example of Christ. (5-11) Diligence in the affairs of salvation, and to be examples to the world. (12-18) The apostle's purpose of visiting Philippi. (19-30)

Philippians 2:1

Vs. 1-4: Here are further exhortations to Christian duties; to like-mindedness and lowly-mindedness, according to the example of the Lord Jesus. Kindness is the law of Christ's kingdom, the lesson of his school, the livery of his family. Several motives to brotherly love are mentioned. If you expect or experience the benefit of God's compassions to yourselves, be compassionate one to another. It is the joy of ministers to see people like-minded. Christ came to humble us, let there not be among us a spirit of pride. We must be severe upon our own faults, and quick in observing our own defects, but ready to make favorable allowances for others. We must kindly care for others, but not be busy-bodies in other men's matters. Neither inward nor outward peace can be enjoyed, without lowliness of mind.

Philippians 2:5

Vs. 5-11: The example of our Lord Jesus Christ is set before us. We must resemble him in his life, if we would have the benefit of his death. Notice the two natures of Christ; his Divine nature, and human nature. Who being in the form of God, partaking the Divine nature, as the eternal and only-begotten Son of God, **John 1:1**, had not thought it a robbery to be equal with God, and to receive Divine worship from men. His human nature; herein he became like us in all things except sin. Thus low, of his own will, he stooped from the glory he had with the Father before the world was. Christ's two states, of humiliation and exaltation, are noticed. Christ not only took upon him the likeness and fashion, or form of a man, but of one in a low state; not appearing in splendor. His whole life was a life of poverty and suffering. But the lowest step was his dying the death of the cross, the death of a malefactor and a slave; exposed to public hatred and scorn. The exaltation was of Christ's human nature, in union with the

Divine. At the name of Jesus, not the mere sound of the word, but the authority of Jesus, all should pay solemn homage. It is to the glory of God the Father, to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord; for it is his will, that all men should honor the Son as they honor the Father, ^{<REF>}John 5:23. Here we see such motives to self-denying love as nothing else can supply. Do we thus love and obey the Son of God?

^{<REF>}Philippians 2:12

Vs. 12-18: We must be diligent in the use of all the means which lead to our salvation, persevering therein to the end. With great care, lest, with all our advantages, we should come short. Work out your salvation, for it is God who worketh in you. This encourages us to do our utmost, because our labor shall not be in vain: we must still depend on the grace of God. The working of God's grace in us, is to quicken and engage our endeavors. God's goodwill to us, is the cause of his good work in us. Do your duty without murmurings. Do it, and do not find fault with it. Mind your work, and do not quarrel with it. By peaceableness; give no just occasion of offense. The children of God should differ from the sons of men. The more perverse others are, the more careful we should be to keep ourselves blameless and harmless. The doctrine and example of consistent believers will enlighten others, and direct their way to Christ and holiness, even as the light-house warns mariners to avoid rocks, and directs their course into the harbor. Let us try thus to shine. The gospel is the word of life, it makes known to us eternal life through Jesus Christ. Running, denotes earnestness and vigor, continual pressing forward; laboring, denotes constancy, and close application. It is the will of God that believers should be much in rejoicing; and those who are so happy as to have good ministers, have great reason to rejoice with them.

^{<REF>}Philippians 2:19

Vs. 19-30: It is best with us, when our duty becomes natural to us. Naturally, that is, sincerely, and not in pretense only; with a willing heart and upright views. We are apt to prefer our own credit, ease, and safety, before truth, holiness, and duty; but Timothy did not so. Paul desired liberty, not that he might take pleasure, but that he might do good. Epaphroditus was willing to go to the Philippians, that he might be comforted with those who had sorrowed for him when he was sick. It

seems, his illness was caused by the work of God. The apostle urges them to love him the more on that account. It is doubly pleasant to have our mercies restored by God, after great danger of their removal; and this should make them more valued. What is given in answer to prayer, should be received with great thankfulness and joy.

CHAPTER 3

The apostle cautions the Philippians against Judaizing false teachers, and renounces his own former privileges. (1-11)

Expresses earnest desire to be found in Christ; also his pressing on toward perfection; and recommends his own example to other believers. (12-21)

Philippians 3:1

Vs. 1-11: Sincere Christians rejoice in Christ Jesus. The prophet calls the false prophets dumb dogs, ²⁵⁶⁰Isaiah 56:10; to which the apostle seems to refer. Dogs, for their malice against faithful professors of the gospel of Christ, barking at them and biting them. They urged human works in opposition to the faith of Christ; but Paul calls them evil-workers. He calls them the concision; as they rent the church of Christ, and cut it to pieces. The work of religion is to no purpose, unless the heart is in it, and we must worship God in the strength and grace of the Divine Spirit. They rejoice in Christ Jesus, not in mere outward enjoyments and performances. Nor can we too earnestly guard against those who oppose or abuse the doctrine of free salvation. If the apostle would have gloried and trusted in the flesh, he had as much cause as any man. But the things which he counted gain while a Pharisee, and had reckoned up, those he counted loss for Christ. The apostle did not persuade them to do any thing but what he himself did; or to venture on any thing but that on which he himself ventured his never-dying soul. He deemed all these things to be but loss, compared with the knowledge of Christ, by faith in his person and salvation. He speaks of all worldly enjoyments and outward privileges which sought a place with Christ in his heart, or could pretend to any merit and desert, and counted them but loss; but it might be said, It is easy to say so; but what would he do when he came to the trial? He had suffered the loss of all for the privileges of a Christian. Nay, he not only counted them loss, but the vilest refuse, offals thrown to dogs; not only less valuable than Christ, but in the highest degree contemptible, when set up as against him. True knowledge of Christ alters and changes men, their judgments and manners, and makes them as if made again anew. The believer prefers Christ, knowing that it is better for us to be without all

worldly riches, than without Christ and his word. Let us see what the apostle resolved to cleave to, and that was Christ and heaven. We are undone, without righteousness wherein to appear before God, for we are guilty. There is a righteousness provided for us in Jesus Christ, and it is a complete and perfect righteousness. None can have benefit by it, who trust in themselves. Faith is the appointed means of applying the saving benefit. It is by faith in Christ's blood. We are made conformable to Christ's death, when we die to sin, as he died for sin; and the world is crucified to us, and we to the world, by the cross of Christ. The apostle was willing to do or to suffer any thing, to attain the glorious resurrection of saints. This hope and prospect carried him through all difficulties in his work. He did not hope to attain it through his own merit and righteousness, but through the merit and righteousness of Jesus Christ.

Philippians 3:12

Vs. 12-21: This simple dependence and earnestness of soul, were not mentioned as if the apostle had gained the prize, or were already made perfect in the Savior's likeness. He forgot the things which were behind, so as not to be content with past labors or present measures of grace. He reached forth, stretched himself forward towards his point; expressions showing great concern to become more and more like unto Christ. He who runs a race, must never stop short of the end, but press forward as fast as he can; so those who have heaven in their view, must still press forward to it, in holy desires and hopes, and constant endeavors. Eternal life is the gift of God, but it is in Christ Jesus; through his hand it must come to us, as it is procured for us by him. There is no getting to heaven as our home, but by Christ as our Way. True believers, in seeking this assurance, as well as to glorify him, will seek more nearly to resemble his sufferings and death, by dying to sin, and by crucifying the flesh with its affections and lusts. In these things there is a great difference among real Christians, but all know something of them. Believers make Christ all in all, and set their hearts upon another world. If they differ from one another, and are not of the same judgment in lesser matters, yet they must not judge one another; while they all meet now in Christ, and hope to meet shortly in heaven. Let them join in all the great things in which they are agreed, and wait for further light as to lesser things wherein they differ. The enemies of the cross of Christ mind nothing but their sensual appetites. Sin is the sinner's

shame, especially when gloried in. The way of those who mind earthly things, may seem pleasant, but death and hell are at the end of it. If we choose their way, we shall share their end. The life of a Christian is in heaven, where his Head and his home are, and where he hopes to be shortly; he sets his affections upon things above; and where his heart is, there will his conversation be. There is glory kept for the bodies of the saints, in which they will appear at the resurrection. Then the body will be made glorious; not only raised again to life, but raised to great advantage. Observe the power by which this change will be wrought. May we be always prepared for the coming of our Judge; looking to have our vile bodies changed by his Almighty power, and applying to him daily to new-create our souls unto holiness; to deliver us from our enemies, and to employ our bodies and souls as instruments of righteousness in his service.

CHAPTER 4

The apostle exhorts the Philippians to stand fast in the Lord. (1) Gives directions to some, and to all in general. (2-9) Expresses contentment in every condition of life. (10-19) He concludes with prayer to God the Father, and his usual blessing. (20-23)

Philippians 4:1

Vs. 1: The believing hope and prospect of eternal life, should make us steady and constant in our Christian course. There is difference of gifts and graces, yet, being renewed by the same Spirit, we are brethren. To stand fast in the Lord, is to stand fast in his strength, and by his grace.

Philippians 4:2

Vs. 2-9: Let believers be of one mind, and ready to help each other. As the apostle had found the benefit of their assistance, he knew how comfortable it would be to his fellow-laborers to have the help of others. Let us seek to give assurance that our names are written in the book of life. Joy in God is of great consequence in the Christian life; and Christians need to be again and again called to it. It more than outweighs all causes for sorrow. Let their enemies perceive how moderate they were as to outward things, and how composedly they suffered loss and hardships. The day of judgment will soon arrive, with full redemption to believers, and destruction to ungodly men. There is a care of diligence which is our duty, and agrees with a wise forecast and due concern; but there is a care of fear and distrust, which is sin and folly, and only perplexes and distracts the mind. As a remedy against perplexing care, constant prayer is recommended. Not only stated times for prayer, but in every thing by prayer. We must join thanksgivings with prayers and supplications; not only seek supplies of good, but own the mercies we have received. God needs not to be told our wants or desires; he knows them better than we do; but he will have us show that we value the mercy, and feel our dependence on him. The peace of God, the comfortable sense of being reconciled to God, and having a part in his favor, and the hope of the heavenly blessedness, are a greater good than can be fully expressed. This peace will keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus; it will keep us from sinning under troubles,

and from sinking under them; keep us calm and with inward satisfaction. Believers are to get and to keep a good name; a name for good things with God and good men. We should walk in all the ways of virtue, and abide therein; then, whether our praise is of men or not, it will be of God. The apostle is for an example. His doctrine and life agreed together. The way to have the God of peace with us, is to keep close to our duty. All our privileges and salvation arise in the free mercy of God; yet the enjoyment of them depends on our sincere and holy conduct. These are works of God, pertaining to God, and to him only are they to be ascribed, and to no other, neither men, words, nor deeds.

Philippians 4:10

Vs. 10-19: It is a good work to succor and help a good minister in trouble. The nature of true Christian sympathy, is not only to feel concern for our friends in their troubles, but to do what we can to help them. The apostle was often in bonds, imprisonments, and necessities; but in all, he learned to be content, to bring his mind to his condition, and make the best of it. Pride, unbelief, vain hankering after something we have not got, and fickle disrelish of present things, make men discontented even under favorable circumstances. Let us pray for patient submission and hope when we are abased; for humility and a heavenly mind when exalted. It is a special grace to have an equal temper of mind always. And in a low state not to lose our comfort in God, nor distrust his providence, nor take any wrong course for our own supply. In a prosperous condition not to be proud, or secure, or worldly. This is a harder lesson than the other; for the temptations of fullness and prosperity are more than those of affliction and want. The apostle had no design to urge them to give more, but to encourage such kindness as will meet a glorious reward hereafter. Through Christ we have grace to do what is good, and through him we must expect the reward; and as we have all things by him, let us do all things for him, and to his glory.

Philippians 4:20

Vs. 20-23: The apostle ends with praises to God. We should look upon God, under all our weakness and fears, not as an enemy, but as a Father, disposed to pity us and help us. We must give glory to God as a Father. God's grace and favor, which reconciled souls enjoy, with the whole of the graces in us, which flow from it, are all purchased for us by Christ's merit,

and applied by his pleading for us; and therefore are justly called the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.