

he might comfort your hearts.

23 ¶ Peace to the brethren, and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus

Christ.

24 Grace *be* with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen.

Paul's Letter To The Philippians

Author

The apostle Paul wrote this letter to the church in Philippi that was established by himself, Luke, Silas and Timothy (See "Author" in introduction to Rm.)

Date

With the letters to the Colossians, Ephesians and Philemon, this letter was also written from Paul's first Roman imprisonment of A.D. 61-63 (See At 28:30). There are some students who believe that the letter could have been written during Paul's stay in the city of Ephesus. If this is true, then the letter would have been written around A.D. 55. However, in the book of Acts, Luke does not refer to Paul's being in prison in Ephesus. Some have suggested that the letter was written from Caesarea while Paul was under custody for two years before traveling to Rome (At 24-26). If the letter were written at this time, then it would have been written somewhere between A.D. 56 and 61. When considering the content of the letter, most students believe that the date of A.D. 61-63 is the most probable date of writing. It was written as a letter of thanksgiving to the Philippian disciples for the gift of things that was sent to Paul through Epaphroditus (4:18).

Theme

There is little question about the theme of this letter. It is expressed in one verse. "*Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!*" (4:4). This is the epistle of joy. Paul wrote to encourage the brethren in the city of Philippi who had captured the spirit of true Christianity from the very beginning of the establishment of the church in Philippi. He had many good memories about their fellowship in the Lord (4:15,16), and thus, when he wrote this letter these fond memories permeated the message of the letter. It brought joy to Paul's heart when he saw Christianity in action in the lives of the members of the Philippian church. It encouraged him to know that his labors were not in vain when churches as the one in Philippi grew spiritually.

Purpose

This letter was stimulated by the arrival of Epaphroditus in Rome with a contribution of things that had been sent by the Philippian church. Paul writes to thank the church for their sacrificial sharing with him in his affliction (4:10-18). In writing this letter of thanksgiving, he takes the opportunity to encourage them to live after the nature of the mind of Christ (2:5). Their lives must be conducted in harmony with the nature of the gospel they received (1:27; 2:16). He exhorts that they seek to be blameless in a perverse generation of mankind (2:15). He warns them concerning the legalistic judaizing teachers who were working among the churches by teaching another gospel (See comments Gl 1:6-9; and comments in introduction to Gl).

Historical Background

In 356 B.C. Philip II of Macedonia, the father of Alexander the Great, changed the name of the city called Crenides to Philippi, meaning, "pertaining to Philip." In 32 B.C. Augustus made the city a Roman colony which meant that all the citizens of the city gained Roman citizenship. Since most of the residents were Roman citizens at the time Paul visited, the city was primarily a Gentile city of retired Roman soldiers who were free from taxation. They also had the right to vote and have their own senate and magistrates. Since this all came to them as a free gift from Rome, we can understand why the magistrates were so fearful when they "*laid many stripes on them*" (At 16:23,37-39). They could have lost all their privileges as Roman colony.

On his second missionary journey, Paul, Silas, Luke and Timothy answered the call of Paul's vision to go into Macedonia (At 16:9,10). Their first converts in the city were Lydia and her household (At 16:14,15). Paul and Silas were beaten and imprisoned for their preaching, and subsequently, the jailor of the prison and his household were also converted (At 16:26-34). When Paul, Silas and

Timothy left the city for Thessalonica, Luke remained behind in order to train this small group of disciples (See comments At 16:9,10; 17:1).

The Philippian church is one of the greatest examples of how one's appreciation for God's grace manifests itself in the obedient response of men and women. At the beginning of the church in Philippi, the church was a small congregation of Lydia, the jailor and their two households. And yet, they sent support for evangelistic efforts that the gospel be freely preached in Thessalonica (4:16). They were a young congregation, but began support of evangelists immediately after their conversion (See comments At 16:12; Ph 4:15,16). They were a congregation that was not blessed with great material wealth, and yet, they contributed to the famine relief for the saints in Judea (2 Co 8:1-4). This was a church of greatly motivated and dedicated Christians who had captured the spirit of Christianity at the very beginning, and thus, the Holy Spirit has epitomized their Christian behavior for all history through the writing of this letter of Paul. The letter was written, therefore, to manifest what appreciation for the grace of God does in the lives of sincere disciples (See comments 1 Co 15:10; 2 Cor 4:15).

Chapter 1

1 ¶ Paul and Timothy, the bondservants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the overseers and menservants.

2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

3 ¶ I thank my God upon every remembrance of you,

4 always in every prayer of mine for you all,

Chapter 1

GREETINGS

1,2 Since Timothy was with Paul at this time in Rome, the letter came from both Paul and Timothy (See "Author" in introduction to 1 Tm). Such would have only been natural since Timothy aided in both the establishment and nurturing of the Philippian church. Luke was not with Paul in Rome at the time of the writing, or the letter would have also included his name. Timothy may have worked as Paul's stenographer in writing this letter. **Bondservants:** Evangelists who have dedicated their lives to the preaching of Jesus are the slaves of Jesus. They have given up personal choice in their lives in order to serve their master (Gl 2:20). "Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord we persuade men ..." (2 Co 5:11). "For woe is me if I do not preach the gospel" (1 Co 9:16). **Saints:** Of all the inhabitants of the city of Philippi, only those of the church were sanctified by the blood of Jesus. When one obeys the gospel through immersion in water for the remission of sins, he is washed or cleansed of sin (At 22:16). Thus, the sanctified are the people of God among the residents of any city or region on earth (See 1 Co 1:2). **Overseers:** In less than the time between the establishment of this church around the middle 50s to the writing of this epistle around 61 or 62, this church had designated overseers and menservants. The word "overseers" comes from the Greek word *episkopos* which means "see over." The overseers are not overseers in the sense that they are designated with authority over the flock of God in order to bind where God has not bound. Their work was to see over the spiritual needs of the disciples (See comments 1 Tm 3:1ff; Ti 1:5ff). In the New Testament, these men are also referred to as elders, pastors and shepherds. There was always a plurality of these men designated by the church in any area (At 14:23; 1 Pt 5:1-4). **Menservants:** The Greek word here (*diakonos*) means "servants." The gender of the word here is masculine, therefore, they were menservants. Menservants are

those among the disciples who have been designated by the church to carry out specific tasks for the church (1 Tm 3:8-13). The Philippian church was established on the second missionary journey of Paul (At 16). This would have taken place somewhere in the mid 50s. He is writing this letter somewhere between A.D. 61-63. Therefore, from the time he had established the church to the time of writing the letter, they had designated elders and menservants in the city. **Grace ... peace:** This is Paul's normal greeting in all his epistles. It is a statement that is so commonly used by Paul by which Bible students identify him to be the author of this letter, as well as other New Testament letters.

EVANGELISTIC ZEAL OF THE CHURCH

3-5 **Remembrance of you:** This is one of the unique churches of the New Testament. It was one that brought fond memories to Paul when he recalled the good things that they had done since their beginning with the first conversions of Lydia, the jailor and their households. **In every prayer:** The Christian stature of this church had affected the thinking of Paul to the extent that in every prayer to God he made mention of them. He even prayed for them while he was in prison. In the prayers of all evangelists should be the mention of churches that are doing the work of God (Ep 1:16; 1 Th 1:2). In this particular case, Paul was making requests to God for the Philippian disciples. **With joy:** Those disciples that maintain their response to the gospel by working to the glory of God will always bring joy to the hearts of those who have established them. "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in the truth" (3 Jn 4; see 1 Th 2:19,20; 2 Jn 4). Paul here begins the book by giving the key word that expresses the key theme of this letter (See vss 18,25; 2:2,17,28,29; 3:1; 4:1). This is the epistle of joy. From the time of the beginning of this church in Acts 16, the Philippians assumed the responsibility of functioning as an assembly of Jesus' disciples should. They financially supported evangelists (4:15,16). They were benevolent (2 Co 8:1-

making request with joy

5 for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now,

6 being confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.

7 For it is right for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, since both in my bonds and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers of

grace with me.

8 For God is my witness, how I greatly long for you all in the affections of Christ Jesus.

9 ¶ And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment,

10 so that you may approve the things that are excellent, *and* that you may be sincere and without offense until the day of Christ,

11 being filled with the fruit of righteous-

4). They did all one would expect of a group of disciples in response to the grace of God. They had captured the spirit of Christianity, and thus, affected the lives of thousands of people, including ours as we study this letter.

Fellowship in the gospel: When one obeys the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus by immersion, he is added by God to the church of believers throughout the world (At 2:47; Rm 6:3-6). It is upon the basis of our common obedience to the gospel, therefore, that God blesses us with fellowship with one another (1 Jn 1:3). We thus have a common purpose and work that has been designated by Jesus. All Christians, therefore, are partners in the preaching of the gospel to the world. In the work of world evangelism, there are those who are sent and those who send (Rm 10:14,15). This letter is to an assembly of believers who assumed their responsibility in God's system of world evangelism from the very beginning of their existence as Christians. From their very beginning they sent support once and again unto Paul for the preaching of the gospel (4:15,16). **From the first day:** At the time of writing, it had been six to eight years since the conversion of Lydia, the jailor and their households. Throughout this time, the Philippian church had financially helped Paul in the preaching of the gospel whenever they had opportunity to do such (4:10).

6 Being confident: Paul had great confidence in the Philippian church. They had proven themselves to be faithful workers for the preaching of the gospel (Ph 2:12,13; 4:15; 2 Co 8:1-4). Since they had been such faithful workers in the past, he commends them for what he knows they will do in the future. It was God who was working in and through them to carry out the goal of preaching the gospel to the world. They were a vital link in God's work of preaching the gospel (Rm 10:14,15). Any church that does not support the preaching of the gospel outside their local region has not assumed their responsibility in continuing the establishment of churches in other areas through the preaching of the gospel. **The day of Jesus Christ:** This would be the last day, the day in which Jesus will come to finalize all things (2:16; Jn 6:44; 1 Co 1:8; 2 Th 1:7-9; compare 2 Pt 2:9; 3:12). **7 Defense and confirmation of the gospel:** The word "defense" is from the Greek word *apologia*. It is a word that refers to a verbal defense of that which one believes. Confirmation here refers to God's working in order to confirm the spoken word of Paul by miraculous signs (Mk 16:17-20; Hb 2:3,4). Therefore, Paul verbally defended the good news of Jesus by referring to Old Testament prophecy that Jesus had fulfilled as the Prophet and Messiah of God (Dt 18; At 17:1-3). God confirmed Paul's preaching through miraculous works. He confirmed him to be His mes-

senger who was sent forth with the good news. It is upon the verbal defense of the gospel that was backed by the miraculous confirmation of miracles, that the gospel was believed throughout the world. Today, we have the record of both the message and confirmation in the New Testament. Through the inspiration of the New Testament, we have an inspired record of Jesus' fulfillment of prophecy that He was the Prophet and Messiah of Israel. Through the record of the confirming miracles of God, our faith is based on the testimony of those who personally experienced God's confirmation of the message. **Partakers of grace with me:** God has extended His grace to all men. Both Paul and the Philippians had responded to the free gift of God's grace by their obedience to the gospel. Therefore, both partook of the blessings of the gospel, and thus, were motivated to work together in order to preach the grace of God to the world (See comments 1 Co 15:10). **8 Long for you:** Prison was certainly a lonely place. The good memories that Paul had with the Philippian church in years past were sweet thoughts upon which he could dwell during times of trials. He had become as Jesus in reference to affection for the church. Jesus loved the church and gave Himself for the church (Ep 5:25,26). With the same love and affection Paul had given himself for the churches.

9 Your love may abound: Love is a growing process. It is a process that begins in Christ because God first loved us through Christ. "*We love because He first loved us*" (1 Jn 4:19; see 1 Jn 4:10). God's love toward us is the spark to begin a life process of developing the same unconditional love of others in our hearts as God manifested love toward us (Rm 5:8). **In knowledge and all discernment:** As one grows in love, he grows to better discern the love of God. "*He who does not love does not know God, for God is love*" (1 Jn 4:8). Such is true of all graces of Christianity. One grows to understand the patience of God by being patient. One grows to understand the mercy of God by exercising mercy toward others. The more one develops the nature of godliness, the more he discerns the God to whom he has given allegiance. Therefore, Christians must "*grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*" (2 Pt 3:18). Through knowledge of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we are able to make better decisions. We are able to better understand the purpose of life, and thus, able to make better judgments in life. The greater our knowledge grows of God, the better we will make decisions concerning life. **10** By understanding the purpose for which all things exist, we can be content to accept the work of God in and through all things (See Rm 8:28). Christians must understand

ness that *comes* through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

12 ¶ But I want you to know, brethren, that the things that *happened* to me have turned out for the furtherance of the gospel,

13 so that it has become manifest throughout the whole Praetorian guard, and to all the

rest, that my chains are in Christ,

14 and many of the brethren in the Lord, being confident by my chains, are more courageous to speak the word without fear.

15 ¶ Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from good will.

16 The latter *do so* out of love, knowing that

all things through the purposes of God. In order to understand all things from the viewpoint of God, we must be students of God's word. **Sincere and without offense:** When one understands God's purposes for all things, then he will make decisions in harmony with the work of God. Instead of working against God, he will work sincerely and without offense in agreement with God's eternal purposes (See Rm 2:18; 12:2). Those who have their minds on the things of this world cannot discern the things of God (See comments 1 Co 3:1-3). Men with transformed minds understand the purpose of God in all things, and thus, conduct their lives in harmony with such purposes. **11 Filled with the fruit of righteousness:** Fruit metaphorically refers to that which is produced by seed that has germinated. The righteousness of God produces such in the lives of those who have submitted themselves to the word of God (2:12,13). Fruit also refers to harvest. Fruit is produced for the purpose of harvest. Therefore, the righteousness of God produces fruit within the hearts and lives of those who have responded to the grace of God (1 Co 15:10; 2 Co 4:15). When Jesus comes again, the fruit will be delivered unto Jesus in the sense that both the spiritual fruit of one's character and the results of one's life in the lives of others will stand as a testimony to the sonship of the saints (See comments 2 Co 5:10). Paul is here picturing the final harvest day wherein the fruits of all Christians will be reaped (Ep 2:10; compare Mt 13:36-40; Gl 6:4-10; Cl 1:6).

FRUIT FROM PAUL'S BONDAGE

12 In order to answer the concerns of the Philippian brethren, Paul wants them to know that his imprisonment has become the opportunity for the preaching of the gospel (Compare 2 Co 11:23-30). He does not say that his misfortunes have been the work of God in his life. We would assume that they were not. What has happened is that Satan's work in the lives of evil men in Jerusalem has accomplished God's purpose of sending Paul to Rome (vs 17, see comments At 23:11). **13 The whole Praetorian:** This would be the Praetorian guard of Rome. Paul's imprisonment led to the conversion of Roman palace guards. Even some of Caesar's household were converted (4:22). **To all the rest:** All of the palace guard knew that Paul was in prison for preaching Jesus. All the brethren also knew that he was there for the sake of the cross. **14 Confident in my chains:** When leaders lead with boldness, brethren follow. In this case Paul preached with boldness even though he was in prison (See comments Rm 1:16). As a result of his not being ashamed of the gospel, the local disciples were encouraged to preach. The environment of Rome was certainly an intimidating environment in which the disciples had to live. However, the influence of only one bold man in the midst of such an environment encouraged the rest to be bold about

preaching the gospel.

15 Envy and strife: It is difficult to understand why some were preaching Jesus with a jealous heart toward Paul. Some preached to generate disagreement. It may have been the result of what he stated in 2:3 as a warning to the Philippians that they do nothing out of selfish ambition and conceit. There may have been some who harbored such ungodliness, and thus, preached out of selfish motives. What may have been happening in Rome is what often happens when the church is intimidated by the environment in which it is. Rome presented a very intimidating environment in which to be a Christian. There were Christians there who were trying to live at peace with the worldly environment in which they lived, and at the same time, maintain some form of Christianity which was often diluted by their compromise with the pressures of society. Paul would not be intimidated to conform his behavior to a worldly society, and thus, compromise his Christian values and behavior with the heathen environment of the Roman culture. Rome was certainly a political environment. However, Paul would not bow to such in any effort to compromise Christ. Those brethren in the Roman church who wanted to maintain a good public image of the church thus spoke against Paul who was in prison on charges of insurrection. Their selfish ambition motivated them to be willing to sacrifice Paul for the benefit of giving the church a good public image in a politically sensitive society. They lost their own distinctiveness as Christians in their efforts to remain accepted by the unbelieving community. **Good will:** In contrast to those who preached out of envy and strife, there were those who were sincere in their preaching of the gospel. These were those who were bold in order not to be ashamed of the gospel. **16 I am appointed for the defense of the gospel:** We must not underestimate the significance of this statement. The calling and ministry of Paul was not simply to select an apostle to the Gentiles. Paul's calling to be a "chosen vessel" was for a greater historical purpose than establishing churches among the Gentiles. His calling was an appointment for the *apologia* of the death and resurrection of the Son of God outside Jerusalem and Palestine. The Greek word *apologia* here refers to a verbal defense of that which one believes. Paul was in Rome, therefore, for a reason that was certainly beyond the thinking of those brethren who were seeking to make the church politically correct. He was there through the work of God in His life that he stand before kings in order to defend the truth of Christianity before the world in a court of law (See introduction to Lk and At). He was not there to deal with the trivialities of church politics. His destiny was greater than the political games men were playing with his imprisonment. God wanted him there in order to defend Christianity before the highest court of the world. Therefore, in knowing his destiny, Paul did not

I am appointed for the defense of the gospel.

17 The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not with pure motives, supposing to add distress to my chains.

18 What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached. And in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice.

19 ¶ For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,

20 according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I will be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether

by life or by death.

21 For to me, to live *is* Christ and to die *is* gain.

22 But if I live in the flesh, this *is* the fruit of my labor. Yet what I will choose, I do not know.

23 For I am torn between the two, having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, *which is* much better.

24 Nevertheless, to abide in the flesh *is* more necessary for you.

25 And being confident of this, I know that I will abide and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith,

26 so that your rejoicing may be more abun-

allow himself to digress in thinking or action to the envious preaching of little men who were driven by selfish ambition and conceit. When great spiritual men are in town, even in chains, the jealousy and selfish ambition of unspiritual minds is flushed out of the closet by their own speech and actions which betray their hearts. **17 Add distress to my chains:** There were some in the church in Rome who were very socially minded in reference to maintaining a good social representation of the church in the community. These politically minded Christians preached in order not to allow the apostle who was in chains to bring the church into disrepute in the community. The position of these compromising preachers certainly did not benefit Paul's case before the Roman court. Their selfish ambition and conceit led them to preach with little consideration for the jail house preacher in a Roman dungeon. One must not underestimate the insensitivity to the preaching of the gospel by those who are driven by either social or political ambitions. **18 Christ is preached:** Great men of destiny will not allow themselves to be diverted from their work by the senseless church politics of envious and selfish minds. Paul rejoiced in the fact that Christ was preached. Though men preached in order to add affliction to the chains of Paul, he did not lash out to defend himself against such preaching that came out of evil motives. The stature of his character is manifested in the fact that he rejoices that the name of Jesus is being proclaimed. He rejoices without seeking to defend his own name.

BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH

19 Turn out for my deliverance: Paul is confident that what has happened will result in his deliverance from prison. He has confidence in such because of the prayers of the Philippians (PI 22). His confidence was in the God who is able to deliver in answer to prayer. **Supply of the Spirit:** Jesus had promised that one of the works of the Spirit with the apostles was that He would guide them in their defense when they stood before courts (See Mt 10:19,20). In this case, Paul knows the promise, and thus, will rely on His defense by the Spirit. **20 Magnified in my body:** Paul speaks of his body in a manner that defined the body as not being the real Paul. It was a little dust in which his soul was trapped. The real Paul would exist beyond the death of

the body. If he were executed in Rome, then his body would have been used by God to accomplish the preaching of the cross to the Gentiles. God would thus have used Paul's martyred body to magnify Jesus. **Whether by life or death:** Christians have presented their bodies as living sacrifices to God (Rm 12:1; Gl 2:20). In life, therefore, their bodies magnify the name of Jesus. In death, the Christian's body is sacrificed for the gospel. Therefore, even in death the name of Jesus is magnified by one's body (See Rv 2:10). **21 To live is Christ:** For Paul to continue living, it would be a benefit for the church because Jesus was living through Paul (See 2:5; 3:1; Gl 2:20). When one is doing the work of Jesus, then Jesus is using the life of an individual for His purposes. **To die is gain:** Paul's martyrdom would benefit the cause of Christ in that his faithfulness, even to death, would be a testimony to many others (See Rv 2:10; 6:9). To die would also be a gain to Paul, for he would then be with the Lord. For him to live would be to live for the work of Christ, but to die would be for his own benefit. **22 Fruit:** Paul thought in terms of saving and edifying souls for Christ (See 1 Co 9:19-22; 1 Pt 3:1). If he remained alive, then he could win more souls. His life would also be a benefit to the global church. **23 I am torn between the two:** It is not that Paul did not know which state of existence was the best. Being with Jesus was far better than life in the struggles of this world (See comments 2 Co 5:1-8). Being with Jesus in eternal glory is certainly far better than the sufferings and trials of this life (Rm 8:18). Therefore, Paul's choice of either life or death was difficult. If he lived, Christ would continue His work through his service. However, in death Paul would cease the work of Christ, and thus, enjoy rest from His labors. From the statements he makes here, it is possible that he had some choice in determining the outcome of his case. **Be with Christ:** From this statement we would conclude that when one dies, his spirit returns to God (Ec 12:7). Therefore, he is with Christ in spirit (Lk 23:43; 2 Co 5:8). One does not go into a state of unconsciousness. He does not go into oblivion. He is in a disembodied state of being with Jesus (See comments Lk 16:19-31; 2 Co 5:1-8). **24-26 More needful for you:** To remain alive would be more beneficial for the Philippians and all the churches. Therefore, Paul is confident that he will live in order to minister to the churches (PI 22). The news of this revelation

dant in Christ Jesus for me by my coming to you again.

27 ¶ Only let your behavior be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel,

28 and in nothing *be* terrified by your adversaries, which is to them proof of destruction, but to you of salvation, and that *too*, from God.

29 For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake,

30 having the same conflict that you saw in me, and now hear *to be* in me.

Chapter 2

1 ¶ Therefore, if *there is* any encouragement in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy,

2 fulfill my joy by being likeminded, having the same love *and being* of one accord, of one mind.

3 *Let nothing be done* through rivalry or empty conceit, but in humility of mind let each esteem others better than themselves.

4 Let each one not look out *merely* for his

from Paul to the Philippian church certainly brought great joy to their hearts. **Coming to you again:** We would assume that after Paul's release from this first imprisonment that he made a journey to Philippi (See concluding remarks of At).

WORTHY CONDUCT

27 Worthy of the gospel: The life style of all Christians must manifest the dignity and integrity of the gospel through which they were called (Ep 4:1; 1 Th 2:12; Cl 1:10). The Philippians must maintain Christian behavior not only when he is in their presence, but also when absent. **Striving together:** Those who would call themselves after Christ must focus on maintaining unity with all others who have done the same (See comments 1 Co 1:10; see Jn 17:20,21; Rm 15:6; 2 Co 13:11; Ep 4:4-6). **The faith of the gospel:** This would be the truth of the death of Jesus for our sins and His resurrection for our hope that must be proclaimed throughout the world (Compare Gl 1:23; 1 Tm 4:1; 5:8; Jd 3). Christians must not only remain steadfast and united, they must strive together in order to preach and teach the gospel (Mt 28:19,20; Mk 16:15,16; 2 Tm 2:2). **28** The life and work of Christians must not be determined by the enemies of the gospel. "*And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul*" (Mt 10:28; see Rv 2:10). Christians must be confident of their salvation. They must be confident that God is working all things together for their good (Rm 8:28). Paul gives as an evidence of our salvation the existence of those who are enemies of the gospel. When enemies exist it is evidence that Christians are doing right. Therefore, the existence of those who are enemies against Christians should give the Philippians and all Christians confidence that they are going in the right direction, a direction that is opposed to the work of Satan. **Proof of destruction:** The fact that the enemies are against those who have given themselves to God is evidence of their lost condition. At the same time, it is evidence of the Christian's salvation. **29** Christians have been granted the right to suffer with and for Jesus. Therefore, "*count it all joy when you fall into various trials*" (Js 1:2; see Mt 5:11,12; At 5:41; Rm 5:3). Christians have been granted both Jesus in whom they have faith (Ep 2:8) and the sufferings that come with faith in Jesus (See comments At

14:22; 2 Tm 3:12). **30** The Philippians had witnessed the beating of Paul when he first established the church in Philippi (At 16:22-24; see 1 Th 2:2; 2 Tm 3:10). They knew that he was now suffering and struggling against the forces of evil in Rome on behalf of the name of Jesus. They were also having the same persecution for the name of Jesus because of their struggle against those who had set themselves against God (See Cl 1:29; 2:1; 1 Th 2:2; 1 Tm 6:12; 2 Tm 4:7; Hb 10:32; 12:1).

Chapter 2

FOLLOWING AFTER HUMILITY

1,2 Paul now reasons for unity on the basis of the nature of Christianity. He reasons that if there is any encouragement, comfort, fellowship, affections and mercy that are of the nature of true Christianity, then all Christians are to be like-minded (1:27; see 1 Co 1:10; 12:13). Those who would be Christians, therefore, must be united because of the very nature of Christianity. Paul's conclusion is that if one does not maintain the principles of behavior and attitude that he states here, then he is not of the nature of Jesus. **3 Rivalry or empty conceit:** When there are those who are seeking either their own glory or hidden agendas, there will be division among brethren (1 Co 4:6,18,19; 5:2; 8:1; Gl 5:26; Js 3:14). Selfish ambition and conceit lead one to seek his own ends. He is not considerate of the desires of others. Therefore, because he is seeking his own ends, he puts himself in conflict with those who are allowing Christ to guide their lives. The primary problem that causes church divisions is personality conflicts that are hidden behind supposed doctrinal differences. Personality conflicts exist because of pride that is generated by selfish ambition and vainglory. **Lowliness of mind:** The true disciples of Jesus will always seek to exalt their fellow disciples above themselves (See comments Mk 10:35-45; Rm 12:10; 1 Pt 5:5). Those who have confidence in themselves will have no problem in building up others. They will have no problem edifying others because their minds are focused on others and not themselves. Because selfish people are always lacking in consideration of others, they do little to edify others. Those who lack self-esteem or confidence in themselves will often tear others down in order to make them-

own interests, but also for the interests of others.

5 ¶ Let this mind be in you that was also in Christ Jesus,

6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God.

7 But *He* made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant *and* being

made in the likeness of men.

8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

9 Therefore, God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name that is above every name,

10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should

selves look better. But such is not the nature of Christianity. The sign of a disciple of Jesus is one who is living as Jesus in order to make himself the servant of others (Ep 5:21). This principle is based upon loving one's neighbor as himself (Mt 22:37-40; Gl 5:14). It is based on loving others as Jesus loved us (Jn 13:34,35).

4 Look out ... for the interests of others: "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Gl 6:2). "Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, especially to those who are of the household of the faith" (Gl 6:10; see 1 Co 13:5; Rm 15:1,2). The church is a community of people who have one another's interest at heart. They are servants of one another in order that they encourage one another through life.

THE MIND OF CHRIST

5 This verse begins one of the greatest sections of Scripture that portrays the mission of the Son of God. In eternity, the Son was in existence in the form of God. However, through incarnation He came to this earth in the form of man. Once the scheme of redemption was accomplished, He was exalted to reign over all things (Ep 1:20-22). **Let this mind be in you:** Paul proposes that if Jesus as God humbled Himself in the fashion he is about to tell us, then certainly every Christian has no right to exalt himself above his fellow brother in Christ. In verses 1-4 he has explained the spirit of Christian humility. In verses 6-11 he tells us how Jesus gave us an example of humility. **6 The form of God:** Before the incarnation and the manifestation of God through Jesus, Jesus was first as God in the totality of the being, essence and existence of God (Jn 1:1; see Gn 1:1,16,17; 2 Co 4:4; Cl 1:15-17; 1 Jn 1:1; Rv 1:17,18). Though God has manifested Himself in history in three ways, He remains one God. We must not confuse the manifestation of God through the incarnation of Jesus to propose that there are three Gods. Such a conclusion only betrays our inability to understand the essence and being of God, which essence and being we try to understand, but in our feeble efforts to understand, often make the mistake of defining God after our own being. **Form:** The Greek word *morphe* is used here to explain the being and essence of Jesus before the incarnation. He was in the "form" of God. The "form" of God is spirit (Jn 4:24). However, we must keep in mind that there are no humanly defined words that would explain God. All dictionaries of this world are void of any concept that would completely define God. Therefore, it is useless to manipulate our words and phrases in conjunction with our finite deductions in order to come up with a complete understanding of the infinite God. If we think that we have defined the "form" of God, then we know that one thing is true. We have defined the wrong god. **Equal with God:** Jesus was equal with God in essence, being, eternity and work. Since He

was God, then He could not have existed in any other state of being than what God is. However, in order to accomplish the redemption of mankind, He did not consider His equality with God something on which to hold. Jesus did not consider His existence as God something to be grasped in view of the state of condemnation in which all humanity dwelt. **7 Himself of no reputation:** Jesus was willing to lay aside or empty Himself of His being and essence as God in order to incarnate in the flesh of man. We must conclude that He gave up something. Though we do not understand all the implications of what He gave up, we must assume that He did not have on earth the totality of that which He had before the incarnation. In some way He made a supreme sacrifice in incarnation in order to accomplish the scheme of redemption for the salvation of man. **Form of a bondservant:** In contrast to lordship, He took on slavehood (Is 42:1; Ez 34:23; Ze 3:8; Mk 10:45; Mt 20:28; Lk 22:27). In contrast to existence in spirit, He took on the physical. In order to become the slave of humanity He had to take on the form of humanity (Hb 2:14). In order to make the divine sacrifice for the sins of humanity, He had to incarnate into the form of those for whom He would die. **Likeness of men:** In every way, therefore, the Son of God became flesh as those He had created after the dust of the earth (Jn 1:14; Rm 1:3; Gl 4:4; Hb 2:17). The concept of God becoming man is far beyond the full comprehension of our finite minds. To comprehend that the Creator of all things (Cl 1:16) would become as that which He created, is a concept foreign to any man-made religion of all history. This principle of divine sacrificial love sets Christianity in contrast to the false gods and religions that are created after the ignorance of men concerning who this true and living God is. If one can only capture a small glimpse of what Paul here explains, then he has more than enough information to understand that Christianity originated from nothing that is of human invention. **8 Obedient unto ... the death of the cross:** In His lowered state of incarnation, the Son of God was not only in the form of man, but also in a different relationship with the Godhead than what He had before the incarnation. In the form of man He maintained an obedient relationship to God (Hb 5:8,9). He voluntarily died on the cross because it was the will of God (Jn 10:17,18). **9 Highly exalted Him:** After Jesus' death on the cross, He was raised up to sit with the Father at His right hand (See Mt 28:18; At 2:33; Ep 1:20-22; Hb 2:8,9; 1 Pt 3:22; Rv 11:15-17; 17:14). Jesus is now in this state of exaltation above every authority in the heavenly places and on earth. This is not a description of something that is yet to occur in the future. It is a description of what Jesus was at the very time Paul wrote and at the time we are now reading this epistle. **10 Every knee should bow:** This statement is in the subjunctive mood. Every knee should bow under the

bow, of those in heaven and those in earth and those under the earth,

11 and *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

12 ¶ Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling,

13 for it is God who works in you both to will and to work for *His* good pleasure.

14 Do all things without grumbling and disputing,

15 so that you may be blameless and harmless children of God, above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, **16** holding fast the word of life so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.

17 ¶ Yes, and if I am being offered on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all.

18 For the same reason also, you be glad and rejoice with me.

19 ¶ But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send

present kingdom reign of Jesus. But every knee does not bow. All things have been put in subjection to Jesus, though we do not see at this time all people living in subjection to Him (Hb 2:8; see Dn 7:13,14). Though there are presently insurrectionists in the kingdom of Jesus, the time will come when all such rebellious insurrectionists will be cast into destruction from the presence of God (Mt 25:41; 2 Th 1:7-9). **11 *Should confess:*** Everyone on earth should confess and submit to the lordship of Jesus (Jn 13:13; Rm 10:9; 14:9). But they do not. We live in a time when all men should confess Jesus as Lord and submit to His will. This is the time of opportunity for confession and submission. However, there is a time coming when it will be too late to confess (Compare Rv 6:15-17). When Jesus comes again, it will not be a time for confession. It will be a time for judgment.

THE LIGHT OF CHRISTIAN BEHAVIOR

12,13 *As you have always obeyed:* Obedience to the will of God in response to God's grace is essential for the saving of our souls (See 1 Co 15:10; Gl 5:6; Hb 5:8,9; compare 2 Co 5:10). It is not that one obeys in order to be saved. He obeys because he is saved by God's grace. The Philippian church began their obedience to the will of the Lord when Paul was in their presence. They were obedient to the gospel in order to be saved by the blood of Jesus (See comments Rm 6:3-6). However, after their initial obedience to the gospel, they were even more obedient when he was not there. They were more obedient because of the grace of God that was preached by Paul, and to which they responded by immersion into Christ for the remission of sins (At 2:38; 22:16). Their work for the Lord, therefore, did not depend on the presence of the evangelist. Churches that assume their responsibility to carry out the work of the Lord without continually being reminded to do such by a preacher, have understood the nature of being motivated by the grace of God (1 Co 15:10; 2 Co 4:15). ***It is God who works in you:*** God works in us as we respond to His work for us. He worked for us through the cross. Our sense of gratitude to the work of God in reference to our salvation, therefore, should move us into action (See Rm 12:3; 1 Co 12:6; 15:10; 2 Co 3:5; 4:15; Hb 13:20,21). In this way God is living in us (Gl 2:20; 1 Tm 4:16). When we are motivated into action by the work of God, then we work according to His purposes (2 Co 3:5). And when we work according to the purposes of

God, it is God who works in us.

14 *Without grumbling and disputing:* It is the nature of the Christian to be a willing worker. God willingly worked for the Christian and the Christian willingly works for others. Those who work simply to do what is their duty to do will digress to murmuring and complaining concerning their responsibilities (1 Pt 4:9; compare Nm 11:1; 16:41; 1 Co 10:10). They will be grudging givers (2 Co 9:7). The commandments of God will be a burden (1 Jn 5:3). The word "disputing" here refers to arguing or questioning (Rm 1:21; 14:1; 1 Co 3:20; 1 Tm 2:8). Those who are working only to fulfill duty usually work as little as possible to satisfy their own conscience. When asked to do more, they feel that their sense of duty has been attacked, and thus, resort to all sorts of defensive arguments and accusations. But those who work for God in appreciation for all that God has done for them, never feel as though they have accomplished enough. They know that they owe more than they can repay. **15 *Shine as lights in the world:*** In contrast to the rest of the world that works while complaining and disputing, Christians work with a spirit of appreciation and joy. The Christian should never allow the demeanor of a crooked and perverse environment in which he lives to affect either his attitude or behavior. He must never allow his light to grow dim from the influences of darkness nor allow the preserving salt of his behavior to be destroyed by worldliness (Mt 5:15,16; Ep 5:8). **16 *Holding fast the word of life:*** It is the responsibility of each disciple to remain faithful. The final salvation of Paul did not depend on the Philippians' faithfulness (See comments 1 Co 3:12-15). However, Paul does exhort them to be faithful to the word of God and to let their light shine forth from their lives in order that he may rejoice over their faithfulness (2 Co 1:14; 1 Th 2:19). If they were not faithful, then his efforts to establish them as the church of Christ in Philippi would have been wasted (Gl 2:2). **17,18 *Sacrifice and service:*** A cup of wine was poured out with the offering of Old Testament sacrifices (Nm 15:1-10). Paul here rejoices that his sacrifices and toil have been poured out in conjunction with the sacrifice and service that has resulted from the Philippians' obedient faith (See comments Rm 12:1). Since the Philippians had also poured out their cup of sacrifices, then they could rejoice with Paul in his sacrifice and service for the Lord. They were disciples of Jesus because of his sacrifice to preach the gospel of God's grace to the world.

Timothy shortly to you so that I may also be of good comfort when I learn of your state.

20 For I have no one like-minded who will genuinely care for your welfare.

21 For all seek their own, not the things that are of Christ Jesus.

22 But you know of his proven worth, that as a son with his father, he has served with me in the gospel.

23 Therefore, I hope to send him immediately, as soon as I see how it goes with me.

24 But I trust in the Lord that I myself will also come shortly.

25 ¶ But I considered it necessary to send to

you Epaphroditus, my brother and companion in labor and fellow soldier, but your apostle and minister to my needs.

26 For he was longing for you all and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick.

27 For indeed he was sick to the point of death. But God had mercy on him, and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.

28 Therefore, I sent him the more eagerly so that when you see him again, you may rejoice and that I may be the less anxious.

29 Therefore, receive him in the Lord with

VISIT OF FELLOW WORKERS

19 Timothy: Timothy had arrived in Rome and was at this time with Paul (See "Author" in introduction to 1 Tm). Paul sent Epaphroditus to Philippi with this letter. After they had received the letter, he wanted to send Timothy to the Philippian church in order that they know of his continued condition in prison. After Timothy's arrival and stay with the Philippian brethren, he was to return to Rome in order to report concerning the state of the Philippian church. **20** In the life of every evangelist there are usually one or two people with whom the evangelist establishes an emotional and spiritual bond that surpasses his relationship with anyone else. It is a life time bond that can endure the harshest of circumstances this world can offer. It is a relationship that neither time nor distance can weaken. Paul had this type of relationship with Timothy, and we suppose Timothy had the same with Paul (1 Co 16:10; 2 Tm 3:10). **21** Timothy was one who had given himself totally to the work of God. While others were driven by selfish ambition and conceit, Timothy had an unfeigned faith that moved him to unselfishly be the slave of the church (2 Tm 1:5). Such is the nature of good evangelists. **22 You know of his proven worth:** Timothy had proven himself to the churches that he was a sacrificial worker. He did not work for money. Preaching was not a job or career to Timothy. His labors for the Lord resulted from knowing the God of grace who had extended Himself to the cross for his sins. All the churches with whom Timothy had contact throughout his ministry knew of his good reputation (See comments At 16:1-3). **Served with me:** Timothy was a servant to the Lord by being a special servant to Paul (1 Co 4:17). He was Paul's assistant to take the gospel to the Gentiles. **23,24** Paul planned to send Timothy on ahead to Philippi. His trust was in the Lord that he would be released from this first imprisonment in order to follow Timothy to Philippi (See Pl 15; see comments At 28:31).

25 Epaphroditus was Paul's brother in the Lord, his fellow worker and fellow soldier who ministered to his needs. **Your apostle:** The Greek word here is *apostolos*. Epaphroditus was a church-sent apostle, sent out from the Philippian church in order to minister to the physical needs of Paul (See 2 Co 8:23). Christ-sent apostles had the specific duty of witnessing to the resurrection of Jesus (See comments Lk 24:48; At 1:8).

Church-sent apostles did not have the authority of Christ-sent apostles. They were apostles sent out by the churches to accomplish the work of the church to preach the gospel to the world. Christ-sent apostles were personally sent out by Jesus to initiate the preaching of the gospel to the world as the special witnesses of Jesus. Since Epaphroditus was their sent out evangelist (missionary), we would assume that this church was a missionary sending church. From the time of its establishment in the middle of the 50s, to the time this letter was written around A.D. 61,62, had maintained their responsibility to send out evangelists (See 4:15,16). **26,27** Epaphroditus almost died because of some sickness he had while in Rome. If Epaphroditus were sick unto death, some might wonder why Paul did not work a miracle in order to heal him. The fact that Paul did not miraculously heal him helps us understand the purpose of miracles. They were not for the selfish gratification and benefit of individuals. Miracles were a sign to the unbelievers (Mk 16:17-20; Hb 2:3,4). We could assume that in this case, God did not allow Epaphroditus to die, though a miracle was not worked by Paul. Paul says that he did not die for the benefit of Paul. Therefore, his recovery was the result of God's initiative. Paul did not heal him because the purpose of miracles was not for personal benefit. Trophimus was also left sick in Paul's presence (2 Tm 4:20), as well as Timothy who suffered from stomach problems (1 Tm 5:23). These cases help us to understand the purpose for which the gift of miracles was given. The gift was not given for personal gratification or benefit among the saints. Miracles were given for the purpose of confirming the message of God's evangelists in the first century. **28** Since Epaphroditus was not well, Paul hastily sent him to Philippi in order to report concerning his own situation as well as the condition of Epaphroditus. The Philippians had great anxiety concerning the situation of Paul, but also concerning their apostle they had sent to Paul. **29,30 Hold such men in great honor:** It is the responsibility of the church to give honor to those evangelists who have risked their lives for the propagation of the gospel (Rm 13:7). Churches that ignore evangelists who have made great sacrifices to take the gospel to all the world are churches who have forgotten their mission, and consequently, have forgotten who they are. They have forgotten their Lord Jesus because they manifest no respect

all gladness, and hold such men in high honor, **30** because for the work of Christ he came close to death, not regarding his life *in order* to supply your lack of service toward me.

Chapter 3

1 ¶ Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you indeed *is* not tedious, but for you *it is* safe.

2 Beware of the dogs. Beware of the evil workers. Beware of the *false* circumcision.

3 For we are the *true* circumcision who wor-

ship God in the spirit. And we rejoice in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh, **4** though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks that he may have confidence in the flesh, I far more.

5 *I was* circumcised the eighth day. *I am* of the nation of Israel, the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews, *and* according to law, a Pharisee;

6 concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness that is in law, blameless.

for the servants of Jesus who have gone forth for the name of Jesus (See comments 3 Jn 5-8). They are no longer churches of Christ with the mission of their Master. They are simply religious bodies of people meeting in assemblies without purpose or a relationship with Jesus and His mission. **For the work of Christ:** Men must arise among us who are willing to make all necessary sacrifices for the preaching of the gospel (At 15:25,26). Men as Epaphroditus did not determine how many things of the world to which he could cling, and at the same time, be a slave of Jesus as an evangelist (See comments Lk 14:25-35). **To supply:** The Philippian church had sent a contribution of things to Paul by the hand of Epaphroditus (See 4:10-18). They had recognized their responsibility to support Paul, and thus, had sent the contribution of things in order to express their love and concern for Paul. Churches that have not forgotten who they are and what they are to be doing as God's sons, will continually support the preaching of the gospel throughout the world. Because of their close relationship with Jesus, they seek the work of Jesus to preach the cross to the world for whom Jesus died. Any individual who claims to be Christian after Christ, and yet, does not carrying out the mission of Christ in his life, has taken on the name Christian without the commitment to live up to that for which the name stands.

Chapter 3

GAINING THE EXCELLENCE OF CHRIST

1 Rejoice in the Lord: In the midst of any environment or at any time in one's life, rejoicing should be the nature of the Christian's spirit (4:4; 2 Co 13:11; 1 Th 5:16). Emphasis here is on the general nature of the Christian character. **To write the same things:** Christians need to be continually reminded of the fact that they are in the Lord, and thus, should rejoice in that fact (2 Pt 1:12-15). They should continue to study concerning the work of the Lord in order to have occasion for rejoicing. **2 Beware:** The descriptive metaphors which Paul here uses to define legalistic judaizing teachers who were going about from church to church in order to recruit churches to their doctrine (Gl 4:17), leave no question as to how serious he is about this threat to Christian liberty (See comments Gl 1:6-9). He is stern in his warning of those who have divided churches over binding those things from which Christians have been set free (See comments Gl 5:1,2). **The false circumci-**

sion: This seemingly derogatory term is here used by Paul to refer to the Jews' practice of circumcision. There were those Jews who were seeking to bring the Gentile brethren under the bondage of law (See At 15:10). In doing this they were binding on the church circumcision and ceremonies of the Old Testament law (At 15:1,2; see comments in introduction to Gl). They were thus binding where God had not bound, and by doing such, were causing confusion among the churches (Rm 16:17,18). **3 We are the true circumcision:** Paul refers to those who are the true sons of Abraham. They are sons of Abraham by faith, not by physical lineage and circumcision (See Rm 2:28,29; 9:6; Cl 2:11; see Gl 6:15). **Worship God in the Spirit:** Those who are sons of Abraham by faith worship God in spirit and truth (See comments Jn 4:24). In contrast to legalistic Judaism that emphasized ceremonial worship of God after the performance of man, Christians worship from the inner spirit. If reference in this passage is to the Holy Spirit, then reference would be to the Spirit-directed worship of the first century church which Paul described in 1 Corinthians 12 & 14. However, in the context here he seems to place emphasis on worship that is in contrast to ceremonial worship that was promoted by the judaizing teachers. **Have no confidence in the flesh:** Reference here could refer to one or both of two things. The judaizing teachers trusted in their physical heritage from Abraham as an advantage in one's relationship with God. But Paul says to have no confidence in any fleshly lineage from Abraham. Secondly, the judaizing teachers emphasized performance of law and meritorious deeds as conditions for salvation in conjunction with God's grace. But Paul says to have no confidence in the ability of the flesh to perform in order to claim justification. Those who are sons of Abraham by faith do not trust in meritorious performance of the flesh in order to be saved. By faith they trust in God's grace (Rm 5:1,2). **4-6** There were those who were boasting about their Jewish heritage and advantages under the Old Testament law. But Paul argues that if anyone could be saved because they were Israelites and descendants of Abraham, he could argue his case better. He was once a militant, fanatical Jew who lived according to the legal requirements of Judaism (See comments Gl 1:13,14). He was devout, even to the point of persecuting the church (At 8:3; 22:4,5; 26:9-11). When it came to considering one righteous according to the law, he was blameless in the sense that he did all in good conscience before God (1 Tm 1:12,13). No one could find

7 ¶ But what things were gain to me, those things I have counted loss for Christ.

8 Indeed more, I count all things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things. I count them rubbish so that I may gain Christ.

9 and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness that is from law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteous-

ness that is from God by faith.

10 I want to know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being like Him in His death,

11 if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

12 Not that I have already attained or have already become perfect. But I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.

fault with Paul concerning his performance of what the Jews considered obedience to the law. And yet, concerning all that he had done in reference to law, he knew that he could not justify himself before God (See comments Gl 2:15,16; 3:11,12). But when he discovered the grace of God through the cross, he worked harder than when he was under law (1 Co 15:10; 2 Co 4:15).

7 Loss for Christ: In the Jewish hierarchy, Paul had gained great fame and position. However, while under the legal system of Judaism that the Jews had constructed, Paul knew that something was wrong. He knew that his performance was always lacking. Neither he nor anyone else could so perform law and good deeds in order to save themselves (See comments Rm 3:20; Gl 2:16). Therefore, when grace and truth were revealed through Jesus (Jn 1:17), Paul and the other Jews by faith realized that grace was the only answer to their dilemma of sin. Paul was willing to sacrifice all power, positions and possessions for the grace of God that was revealed through Jesus (Lk 9:23; Ti 2:11). **8 Count all things loss:** There is nothing of this world that can be measured against the salvation that comes through Jesus. In comparison to the excellence of salvation one receives in Christ, all power, possessions and pomp of this world are worthless. **Count them rubbish:** The Greek word for rubbish here is "dung." Paul's point is clear. Those who would consider their worldly or religious accomplishments as advantageous in reference to putting God in debt to award one with salvation should reconsider what Paul here says concerning his past accomplishments. He tried to make a trade with God by offering his accomplishments of law and good works. However, he finally realized that what he would receive costs more than what he could earn or pay. **9 Not having my own righteousness:** Neither Paul nor anyone else can so keep law as to justify themselves before God. Most men know this. However, in a world of misguided religiosity, men often create their own conditions for justification. They form a system of righteousness by which to justify themselves before God. And such the Jews sought to do in an attempt to justify themselves before God at the time Jesus was in the world. "For they [the Jews] being ignorant of God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God" (Rm 10:3). When religious men establish the conditions for their own righteousness either after religious traditions or emotions, they will often reject the righteousness of God (See comments Mk 7:1-9). **Faith of Christ:** The article is not present, and thus the Greek text here reads "faith of Christ." Faith on the part of two parties is

necessary for our salvation. First, the faith and faithfulness of Jesus was necessary for Him to go to the cross on our behalf (See Rm 3:22,26; Gl 2:16,20; 3:22; Ep 3:12). Secondly, faith on man's part in response to the revelation of grace on the cross is necessary in order to move us to depend on the cross (Ti 2:11). The righteousness that comes from God comes through faith in Christ (Rm 5:1,2). Justification could never come through meritorious works of the Old Testament law or good deeds (Rm 3:20; Gl 2:16; 3:11,12). In reference to man's part, therefore, we must respond to the grace of God that was revealed on the cross through the faithful work of Jesus (See Hb 5:8). **10,11** It was the goal of Paul to know Christ. Such should be the goal of all Christians. There is more to knowing Jesus than intellectual knowledge of who He is and what He did. Our intellectual knowledge of Him must move us into a relationship where our lives are consumed with His will (See comments Gl 2:20). Knowing Jesus is to know the power of God that was unleashed in order to raise Him from the dead (Rm 1:4; Ep 1:20). Knowing Jesus is to willingly fellowship in His sufferings as one lives the Christian life (At 14:22; see comments Mt 5:3-12). **Being like Him in His death:** By obedience to the gospel, the repentant believer conforms to the death of Jesus in order to be raised from the waters of baptism to walk in newness of life (See comments Rm 6:3-6). One must conform to the death of Jesus in baptism in order to attain unto the bodily resurrection when Jesus comes again (Rm 6:5). There will be no resurrection to life unless one has been immersed into the death and burial of Jesus.

PRESSING ON

12 Though Paul was an inspired man, he still had room for both growth in the knowledge of Jesus, as well as, spiritual growth within his heart. There will be a time when we all come to a greater knowledge of Jesus in the heavenly realm. While we are in this world, our knowledge and relationship with Jesus will always be limited. Our understanding of Jesus will excel only when we have been taken from the confines of this world into the next to be in the presence of Jesus. **I press on:** The motivation for pressing on lies in one's realization that he does not yet fully know what he desires to know of Christ. When one realizes that great spiritual growth will occur in the presence of Jesus, then he desires to be with Jesus. Paul, as well as all Christians, press on to acquire that for which we have been called. Therefore, this world is not our home. We are waiting for that transition into the eternal dwelling for which we were

13 Brethren, I count not myself to have laid hold. But one thing *I do*, forgetting those things that are behind and reaching forward to those things that are before.

14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

15 ¶ Let us, therefore, as many as are perfect, have this mind. And if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you.

16 Nevertheless, let us continue to live by the same *rule* to which we have attained.

17 ¶ Brethren, be followers together of me, and note those who so walk according to the example you have in us.

18 For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, *that they are* the enemies of the cross of Christ,

19 whose end *is* destruction, whose God *is* their belly, and *whose* glory *is* in their shame, who set their mind on earthly things.

20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,

created. **13 Laid hold:** The emphasis of the Greek word here means "to lay hold of." In this life the Christian cannot lay hold of that for which he strives. As long as we are in this temple we are separated from that realm which is just beyond the physical world (See comments 2 Co 5:1-8). The greater one grows in the knowledge of Christ the greater his desire to depart and be with Christ (1:23). Because of his confidence in life after death, Paul would rather be present with the Lord (See 2 Co 5:8). **Forgetting those things that are behind:** We do not allow the things of this world to detract us from the goal of eternal dwelling. Christians must never turn back to the things of this world (Lk 9:62). **14 I press toward the mark:** God has set before the Christian the goal of the final rest for which all men were created. The goal is the new heavens and earth wherein dwells righteousness (2 Tm 4:7; Hb 3:1; 6:1; 2 Pt 3:13). The power of this hope in the life of the Christian keeps his life focused on Christ. When one's hope for heaven is strong, then he will submit his life to the narrow way of Christian living (See comments Cl 3:1-4). **15 As many as are perfect:** Reference here is to those who are mature in Christ. These are those who are focused on Christ and the final goal for which we are being prepared (Mt 5:48; 1 Co 2:6). The mature Christian will have his mind focused on those things that will endure the passing of this material world (Cl 3:1,2). His maturity is identified by the fact that he does not consider this world his home. His treasures are laid up in heaven and not on this earth (Mt 6:19-34). Those who are striving to grow spiritually, but have not yet set their minds completely on those things above, must remain confident that they will especially grow to spiritual maturity as they discard their focus on things of this world. They must remain in fellowship with strong Christians in order to be influenced by those whose minds are set on things above (See Gl 6:1,2). **16** Paul wants the Philippians to live up to the spiritual nature of the gospel after which they were called (1:27). They have spiritually come to the point to which they were at the time of writing. They must continue to grow (2 Pt 3:18). **By the same rule:** If Christians will continue to allow the word of God to direct their lives, they will press on to greater spiritual heights. They will be able to do such because it is through the word of God that the Holy Spirit communicates the nature and character of God after whom we are to pattern our lives (Compare At 20:32). Obedience to the same rule assumes the same mind. When Christians submit to the gospel, they have given themselves

over to the one head and King of all things. They are thus brought into fellowship with one another and are focused in the same direction (See comments 1 Co 1:10).

HEAVENLY CITIZENSHIP

17 Followers together of me: "Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ" (1 Co 11:1; see Ph 4:9; 1 Co 4:16; Ep 5:1; 1 Th 1:6; 2:14). The Holy Spirit places Paul as an example to be followed. **The example:** What they were to follow was the Christian behavior of how Paul put into action the principles of Christ in his own life (See Ti 2:7,8; 1 Pt 5:3). **18 Enemies of the cross:** Reference here is to those who were preaching the other gospel about which Paul spoke to the Galatians (See comments Gl 1:6-9). They were preaching the gospel plus works. Judaizing teachers were preaching a legalistic religious system of meritorious law-keeping and good deeds. In their system of theology, God's grace through the cross had to be supplemented with the legal works of law (See introduction to Gl; see Rm 16:17,18; Gl 1:17; 2:21). By teaching such a doctrine, they were actually enemies of the grace of God that was revealed on the cross. **19 Whose end is destruction:** This destruction refers to the eternal consequences of their teaching. "You have been severed from Christ, you who seek to be justified by law. You have fallen from grace" (See comments Gl 5:4). To be estranged from Christ will result in one's final destruction as a result of being separated from the presence of God (2 Co 11:15; 2 Th 1:7-9). Paul is not complimentary of these religionists who have set themselves against all that God was trying to do through the cross. They were those who lived after the flesh in order to glorify themselves after the flesh. That in which they glorified themselves was actually shameful in the sight of God. **20 Our citizenship is in heaven:** In contrast to the worldly nature of those he has just described, Paul states that Christians have their minds set where they have their citizenship (Ep 2:6,19; Ph 1:27; Cl 3:1-3; Hb 12:22; 13:14). Because their citizenship is in heaven, their life is a journey through this world. They look forward to the return of Jesus in order to come to the end of their journey and to be at home with Jesus (At 1:11; 1 Co 1:7; 1 Th 1:10; Rv 22:20). **21 Transform our lowly body:** The spiritually minded seek to be clothed with a spiritual body (See comments 2 Co 5:1-8). We do not know the nature of this spiritual body. However, we do know that we will be like Jesus (1 Jn 3:2). We could make a

21 who will transform our lowly body so that it may be fashioned according to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.

Chapter 4

1 ¶ Therefore, my beloved brethren whom I long to see, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my beloved.

2 ¶ I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord.

3 And I ask you also, loyal companion, help

these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers whose names are in the book of life.

4 ¶ Rejoice in the Lord always. And again I say, rejoice!

5 ¶ Let your forbearance be known to all men. The Lord is at hand.

6 ¶ Do not be anxious for anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

7 And the peace of God that surpasses all

verbal journey through endless speculation concerning the spiritual and immortal body with which our spirit will be clothed in eternity. However, our imaginations can never take us beyond the confinement of our dictionary. Therefore, we thus content ourselves to trust in God whose business it is to clothe us with our habitation from heaven (See comments 1 Co 15:50-58; Cl 3:4). We do know that the same God who worked through the resurrection of Jesus and subsequent subjection of all things to Jesus, is able also to transform our lowly bodies to conform to Jesus' glorious body.

Chapter 4

JOY AND PEACE

1 In view of the preceding facts about which Paul has encouraged the Philippians, they must stand fast in the Lord (1:27; Ep 6:10ff). **My joy and crown:** The *stephanos* (crown) was the crown that returning victors wore after a victorious war. The faithfulness of the Philippians brought joy to Paul's heart, but they were also a symbol of victory which he had over the forces of evil in the city of Philippi (See 2 Co 1:14; 1 Th 2:19). 2,3 In giving instruction concerning these two sisters who evidently had a personality conflict, Paul did not take sides over whatever issue they were at odds with one another. He lays the responsibility for reconciliation on the shoulders of both Euodia and Syntyche. They must sort out this problem (See comments Mt 5:23ff; 18:15-18). **Loyal companion:** Paul does not identify the one who is to function as the third party in helping to sort out the above disagreement. He does want this fellow laborer to help these two women to come to an agreement because they worked close at his side in the preaching of the gospel. **Names are in the Book of Life:** The personality or work disagreement that these two sisters had did not lead to their names being blotted out of the Book of Life (See Rv 3:5; 20:12; 21:27; compare Is 4:3; Ez 13:9; 12:1). We must not be too quick to judge and condemn our fellow brethren with whom we may disagree. We must remember the warning the Holy Spirit gave through the hand of James. "For judgment will be without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. And mercy rejoices over judgment" (Js 2:13).

4 **Rejoice:** Paul's emphasis here is to define the nature of the Christian life. One rejoices over specific incidents. However, the demeanor of the Christian lifestyle is one of rejoicing (Rm 12:12; 1 Th 5:16; 1 Pt 4:13;

Js 1:2). 5 **Let your forbearance be known:** One result of the rejoicing life is gentleness or forbearance toward others (Js 2:13). Every Christian should have a reputation for being a patient and longsuffering person toward the faults and weaknesses of others (Cl 3:12-15). If one is not forbearing, then his joy will be stolen away by his own impatience with others. In areas of opinion, Christians should bear with one another's differences (See comments Rm 14). **The Lord is at hand:** Paul may be bringing the omnipresence of the Lord to their minds in order that they be made sober about the things he has just mentioned. There is a certain soberness in understanding the presence of the Lord. On the other hand, this letter was written at a time when the Jewish rebellion and tension with Rome was intensifying. In six to eight years from the time of the writing of the letter, God brought down judgment on national Israel through the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish State. In this sense, therefore, the judgment of the Lord was near (See comments Mt 24; Js 5:7,8). 6 Christians should put their trust in God, for it is He who is working all things together according to His purposes (Ps 55:22; Pv 16:3; Mt 6:25-34; Rm 8:28; 1 Pt 5:7). Christians must not worry, for to worry is to doubt God's ability to take care of all things and to work all things together for the good of the Christian. In order not to worry about the environment and events that are happening, Paul states that Christians should communicate with God in prayer. Supplication is offering petitions to God for help. Prayer and petitions are to be made in a spirit of thanking God for all that He has done in our lives. Thanksgiving should be the motivation that encourages one to pray. The unthankful have nothing to ask of God for they have assumed that their own performance has brought about all physical and spiritual blessings they have in their lives. The unthankful man is not driven to make prayers and petitions to God for he has assumed that he has control over his own destiny. 7 **The peace of God:** The result of one's prayerful communication with God that is based on faith (Js 1:6), is an inner tranquility that cannot be expressed in words (vs 9; Cl 3:15; see Is 26:3; Jn 14:27). It is the peace of God that protects one's heart and produces consistency in one's thoughts. When our prayers are offered to God upon the basis of faith and knowing that God will work in answer to our prayers, we will gain an inner peace of heart and mind. Disciples must have faith in the fact that God answers prayer.

understanding will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

8 ¶ Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things *are* honest, whatever things *are* just, whatever things *are* pure, whatever things *are* lovely, whatever things *are* of good report, if *there is* any virtue, and if *there is* any praise, think on these things.

9 The things that you have both learned and received and heard and seen in me, do these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

10 But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your concern for me has flourished

again; though you were concerned, but you lacked opportunity *to show it*.

11 Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am to be content.

12 I know how to be in need and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

13 I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.

14 ¶ Nevertheless, you have done well that you shared in my affliction.

8 *Think on these things:* Paul lists the things upon which Christians must meditate. He exhorts the Philippians to bring their minds into control. They must focus on that which is true (Ep 4:25). They must focus on that which is noble (2 Co 8:21). They must concentrate on that which is right (1 Th 5:22; Js 3:17). They must keep their minds on the pure, lovely and admirable things of life (1 Co 13:4-7). If one will only meditate on these things, then his thoughts will be optimistic about life. There is no room in the Christian mentality for pessimistic thinking. When one understands that all things are under the control of the God who can do all things, then he sees the best things of life. His focus is on that which is good and after the nature of God who is working all things together for good (Rm 8:28). This is the life about which Jesus said, "*I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly*" (Jn 10:10). **9** Paul manifested in his life a positive view of all things. He thus exhorts the Philippians to follow the demeanor of his life (1 Co 11:1). The brief time he had with the brethren in Philippi was enough for them to recognize the godly nature of his behavior and spirit. They were thus to follow his response to the work of God in his life (1 Th 5:22).

CHURCH-MISSIONARY RELATIONSHIPS

Paul concludes this letter by explaining the true mission-mindedness of this church that had captured the spirit of Christ. In this historical section of the letter, he begins with the arrival of Epaphroditus in Rome who had brought to him the contribution of the Philippian church. By referring to the time of his first visit to Philippi, he reviews the contributing fellowship of this church as a result of their thankfulness to God for their salvation (See 2 Co 4:15).

10 *Concern for me:* Churches that are after the nature of Jesus care for those who have gone forth for the sake of the name of Jesus (See comments 3 Jn 5-8). **Again:** This church once again sent support unto Paul as they had done before (2 Co 11:9). When Paul, Silas and Timothy left Philippi on Paul's second missionary journey, they had sent support once and again (vss 15,16). However, after the third missionary journey, they had lost contact with Paul in his travels. Word finally came to Philippi that Paul was in prison in Rome. The church immediately made a collection of things which they sent to Paul by the hand of Epaphroditus (vs 18; 2:25). They had lacked the opportunity to give until

this time when they had finally discovered where he was.

11 *In whatever state ... to be content:* Paul is not making these statements in order to plead for their continued help. He did not ask for the support they had just sent. The contribution that they gave came as a spontaneous desire on their part to express their love for Paul and their evangelistic spirit of freely giving the gospel to others as it had freely been given to them (1:5; Mt 28:19,20; Mk 16:15). The reason Paul did not ask or need to ask was that he had learned to be financially content with those things he had. **Learned:** It is a process of learning to be content with the things one has. Contentment is not an attitude of mind with which one is born. It is not something one learns from ungodly materialistic neighbors. It is not something we can learn in institutions that focus on teaching us how to make money. It is an attitude of mind that one develops by focusing on that which is above this material world (See comments Cl 3:1-4). **12 *Abased:*** Paul had learned how to be poor without complaining about his circumstances. He knew how to go without food and shelter (1 Co 4:11). Most men are continually greedy for more money, regardless of their financial state of being. Regardless of whether one is poor or rich, most men seek to continually acquire more things of this world. Those Christians who are poor must learn not to complain and murmur about their situation and blame others for their predicament. Contentment of mind must be learned by those who are poor. **Know how to abound:** At times in his ministry Paul had plenty of money. In those times he learned how to possess money without money possessing him. Therefore, the rich have to learn also to be content with their financial well-being. They must learn not to allow money to become the idol of their lives. **13** Paul explains in this verse how one learns to be content in poverty and in wealth. It is only in Christ that one understands the purpose of all things. When in poverty, it is Christ who gives strength to overcome discouragement and despair. When in riches, it is Christ who gives strength not to be controlled by money. In any circumstance of life, therefore, the Christian has the power to endure because of Christ who works in him (See 1:12,13; Jn 15:5; Gl 2:20). **14 *You have done well:*** The well-doing that this church did was in their work of sending support for the purpose of preaching the gospel. This Spirit-inspired commendation has been written for all history in order that churches know what God considers to be a well-doing church. It is a

15 Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only.

16 For even in Thessalonica you sent once and again for my needs.

17 Not because I desire the gift, but I desire the fruit that abounds to your account.

18 But I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things *that were sent* from you, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice *that is* well-pleasing to God.

19 But my God will supply all your need according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

church that has performed as the Philippian church in sending support to evangelists in order that the gospel be preached (Rm 10:14,15; see comments 3 Jn 1-8).

Shared: The word here is from the Greek word *koinonia* which refers to joint partnership. This church is thus having fellowship with Paul in his sufferings, which thing they had done before in their contribution to the famine stricken victims of Judea (See comments 2 Co 8:1-4). In other words, they were willing to go without things in order to contribute things to Paul (1:7). **15 The beginning of the gospel:** Paul now takes their minds back about ten years to the time he first visited Philippi on his second missionary journey (See comments At 16). On that first visit Paul, Silas, Timothy and Luke baptized Lydia and her household and the jailor and his household. When Paul, Silas and Timothy went on to Thessalonica, Luke was left with this small group of disciples of two households (At 17:1). According to 2 Corinthians 8:1-3 they were evidently a poor church. At the time Paul left Philippi, the church had two wage earners, Lydia, a businesswoman who traded in purple, and the jailor, who had a government job. When Paul left for Thessalonica, these households had been disciples for only a few days (At 16:12). Nevertheless, this small, poor and young church financially sent support once and again to Paul, Silas and Timothy for the continuation of their mission trip to other areas. These young disciples had thus captured the spirit of Christianity, that is, freely they received, freely they gave. It was only natural that they support the preaching of the gospel to other areas because it had been freely preached to them. They had freely received the gift of God's grace, and thus, they were motivated to freely deliver the grace of God to others. From their very beginning, they were a church that understood the nature of Christianity. **16 You sent once and again:** This church did not give a one time contribution to relieve themselves of a feeling of guilt. They continued sending someone over to Thessalonica and into Achaia with a contribution in order that the preaching of the gospel continue. Though they could not give much, they cheerfully gave what they could on a continuing basis. Paul worked to support himself by tentmaking wherever he went. However, churches as the Philippian church sent contributions to make up his lack (See comments 2 Co 11:9). **17 Not... desire the gift:** Paul wanted to remind them that he was not preaching for money. Preaching was not a job. It was his compulsion. Those who are men of God will preach regardless of support. Hirelings preach in order to get paid. God's men preach without consideration of how they are supported, either by the brethren or by making tents. Those who make their tents and preach are truly dedicated men of God who have a commitment that must be praised and admired. **The fruit that abounds to your account:** The fruit of Paul's labors in

Thessalonica and other places where people were converted went to the spiritual account of those who supported him. Therefore, the Philippians were gaining fruit in other areas by sending financial support for the preaching of the gospel. The fruit went to their account, not the account of the supported evangelists. When evangelists support themselves, they get the fruit. However, when the brethren support them, the brethren get the fruit. When the Christian works as a laborer at a job in the world, the contributions he makes to support evangelism bring fruit to his account. His job in the world, therefore, is a work for the Lord. There are those who are supported and sent in God's system of world evangelism. There are those who send (Rm 10:14,15). Therefore, it is a partnership between the sent and the senders that accomplishes the work of world evangelism. **¶18 I have all and abound:** The Philippians had contributed a great deal to Paul on this occasion. He thus lets them know that he is now abounding as a result of their contribution. **The things:** He had received the things that came through their apostle Epaphroditus. Their contribution was more than money. The word here refers to material things that could have included blankets, food, shoes or other clothing. Contribution is not confined to the giving of money. Disciples have liberty to contribute anything to the work of the Lord (See comments At 4:32-37). God does not restrict that which is to be contributed. From a cheerful heart, one must contribute whatever he can and how much he can. **A fragrant aroma:** From the Old Testament animal sacrifices, Paul metaphorically explains that the contribution that the Philippians sent was an aroma to God which is considered by God to be a sacrificial commitment to Him. The sacrifice was well pleasing to God. When brethren contribute to the preaching of the gospel, it is well pleasing to God. Such sends a message to God that brethren love Him and have captured the spirit of His Son who came as a missionary to them with the gospel of His grace (2:5-8). **19 Supply all your need:** Emphasis here is not on material needs, but on riches in glory. God did not make the Philippians physically wealthy because of their contribution. Contribution must not be given out of selfish motives. The Christian does not selfishly give in order that he receive in return more things of this world. The reward of the Christian is not in things of this world, but in the glory that will be revealed to us (Rm 8:18). The Christian is motivated to give because of what God has given through His grace that will be realized in the world to come.

CLOSING

20 To God all glory must go. All glory must go to Him because it was in the plan of God to redeem us from sin and death through the sacrificial offering of His Son on the cross. **21-23 Those of Caesar's house-**

20 Now to our God and Father *be* glory forever and ever. Amen.

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 our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you all. Amen.

hold: There were different brethren with Paul at different times during his Roman imprisonment. These brethren are mentioned in Ephesians, Colossians and Philemon. However, only here does he mention the result of his evangelistic work among the royal family of

Nero. The godly influence, reputation and boldness of Paul reached even unto Caesar's household through the preaching of the gospel. We must never underestimate the power of the gospel to change the lives of men (Rm 1:16).

Paul's Letter To The Colossians

Author

The Spirit-inspired letter of Colossians was written to the churches in the cities of Colosse and Laodicea (4:16) by the apostle Paul (See "Author" in the introduction to Rm).

Date

This was one of the four letters that Paul wrote during his first Roman imprisonment. He was imprisoned in Rome for about two years somewhere between A.D. 61-63. During this first Roman imprisonment, he wrote Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon. He may have written this letter before the letter to the Ephesians because the letter to the Ephesians seems to expand on the thoughts that he presents in this letter.

Theme

The theme of this letter is taken from 1:16-18. The key verse would be 1:18. *"And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that in all things He might have the preeminence."* Paul focuses on the present exaltation of Christ. It is in Christ that all the fullness of the Godhead dwells. Therefore, He is over all things since all things were created by Him (1:16).

Purpose

The Colossian church, as well as all other churches in western Asia Minor, were located in a religious culture that was greatly influenced by Far East mysticism. A mixture of eastern mysticism with Judaism produced a Judaeo-gnosticism that had permeated the synagogues when the church was first established in the region. Jewish converts seemed to have brought some of their world views into the church, and thus, were attacking the nature of who Jesus is in reference to His being and authority as one with the Godhead.

The heresy of Gnosticism is not dealt with directly in the letter. From what Paul says in this letter, there was the prevalent belief that Jesus was at least above the level of man. It was believed that He was superior to man, but not great enough to qualify Him to be the sacrificial offering of the incarnate God on behalf of humanity. He was superhuman. However, He was not deity as God.

In conjunction with the preceding false concepts that seemed to permeate the world view of some of the Colossians, a system of legalistic religiosity came into the church as a substitute for salvation by God's grace (See comments Gl 1:6-9). This system of religion was common in the religious institutions of the culture among both the Jews and the Gentiles. Those of this system of religion taught that through legal actions of religious obedience one could place demands on God in order to merit salvation (See comments in the introduction to Gl).

Epaphras, who was one of the evangelists of the region, was experiencing the invasion of Judaeo-gnosticism among the Colossian disciples. The influence of this teaching was possibly affecting the church in the neighboring cities of Laodicea and Hierapolis (4:13,16). Epaphras thus traveled to Rome where he explained the situation to Paul. Realizing that the very foundation of the church was under attack by a teaching that corrupted the nature of who Jesus Christ was, the Holy Spirit moves Paul to write this letter to the churches in the region of Colosse. The letter was directed primarily to