

Bible Thoughts

with
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The Letter of Paul the Apostle to the Philippians

The thoughts and note material given on these pages are only a possible suggestion of the meaning, they must not be taken as inspired, however they are prayerfully prepared and compared with other similar material. There are many ways in which God's Word can be analyzed and none must be taken in place of the Word of God itself.

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Introduction

Paul's Letter to Philippians

WRITER. The letter to the Philippians was written by Paul while in prison in Rome. There is some indication that Paul was twice imprisoned, so it is not known if Philippians was written during the first or second imprisonment. However it is thought to be written about 62 A.D.

The Situation.

Paul had started this local church while on his second missionary journey [Acts 16](#). Epaphroditus, a member of this church had come to Paul in Rome with a financial offering to help Paul.

This letter is a thank you letter to the Philippi but also shows that Paul is full of joy and wanting to encourage them, even though he was in prison.

The main theme of the letter is Christian experience.

We are told in [Acts 28:30](#) that he was a prisoner in his own house, and in [Act 28:16](#) we are also told that he was guarded by a Roman soldier all the time.

Why is he so happy? We find that Paul uses the following words in this letter, "mind," "think," it shows how Paul thinks, it shows his own attitude to his situation, he lives for Christ, to glorify Christ and accepts that God has put him here in prison.

The letter is broken up as follows:

Introduction, greetings. 1:1-7.

Triumph over suffering. 1:8-30.

The Believers pattern is Jesus. 2:1-30.

Believer rejoices even with failures. 3:1-21.

The Believers source of strength. 4:1-23.

Chapter 1

Fellowship of the Gospel.

v1-2 Opening greetings to all the Saints at Philippi.

v3-11 Paul prays for the church.

v3-6 I have you in my mind.

See [Acts 16:10](#) - to see some of the events that happened to Paul in Philippi. His time in prison should have given him bad memories but he was full of joy for his position. "Fellowship" v5 may show their sharing in Paul's support. "The good work" v6 may also show a sharing. Slaves for Christ. A work which God would complete and finish until Jesus comes again. See [1 John 3:2](#) to see the end result.

v7,8 You are in my heart.

Love for them, shown by his suffering for the Gospel, a prisoner for Christ. It was the love of Christ for them through Paul. See [Rom 5:5](#).

v9-11 You are in my prayers.

A prayer for them to grow in love and knowledge, to be able to know wrong from right, that their lives bring praise to God and do not fail any testing by the world.

Thoughts:

1) Will my life cause others to turn away from Christ?

2) Will I be sad (ashamed) if Jesus returned today?

See [Rom 1:13](#); [Rom 6:22](#); [Gal 5:22-23](#); [John 15:5](#).

We should always think [Phil 1:21](#).

v12-26 Personal News.

Paul talks of the **past** (v12), **present** (v13-18) and **future** (v19-26) See [Acts 21:17-28:31](#) for details.

v12-14 Paul in Chains.

Putting Paul in prison did not stop the spread of the Gospel, the exact opposite happened:

(1) Daily contact with the Roman soldiers, who were his guards, spread the message through Caesar's Praetorian Guard.

(2) The possible danger for the nation from belief in this "new Christian" religion brought Paul in contact with Roman officials checking it out.

(3) Many of the "Letters of Paul" were written from prison.

v15-19 Objectors to Paul.

The church of Rome was divided over Paul's imprisonment, some were preaching for their own selfish benefit. v16 "contention" means 'seek office.' Paul was not against these people he was just glad the gospel was being preached v18.

v20-26 Paul has a problem.

There was a possibility of Paul being found guilty and sentenced to death. Paul thought about this and says that for him to remain alive was to the benefit of the Philippians's (v24) but to die and be with Christ was even better for Paul. Paul felt that Christ wanted him to remain alive to help for now, to not depart for heaven. Note v21 a key verse for each of us.

1:27 - 2:18 **A call for a united stand.**

v27 **Walking.**

"Conversation" originally meant 'to walk' Paul is telling them to live as if they were already living in heaven, a bad life will turn people away from God. They must have one mind, one spirit for the gospel, working (striving) together for the faith. See [Eph 4:1](#); [Col 1:10](#); compare [3 John 9](#); [Matt 20:20-28](#).

From Chapter 4 we know there was a split in the Philippi church.

v28-30 **The Battle.**

Do not be frightened by the enemy, these battles prove we are saved, we must expect suffer for Jesus, he suffered for us, it is a privilege to suffer for him.

v30 Paul reminds them others are also suffering for Jesus.

Chapter 2

United stand.

There is more than a hint of a number of splits in the church, v1-3 suggests false teachers. v1-3 church members fighting.

v1-4 **Paul calls for unity.**

Paul tells them there is a spiritual problem, which can only be corrected through humbling themselves before Christ and each other. We should do nothing for self.

A person who is humble or has humility is someone who never thinks of himself (herself) [Rom 3:3](#), the true humble person submits to Christ as his servant. This does not mean that a person is everyone's "slave" to do what ever they want. [Luke 14:11](#); [Matt 5:3](#). Paul follows with an examples.

2:5-8 **Our Attitude.**

Our attitude should be the same as Jesus v5,6. Jesus, who was equal to God became a man v6. Became a servant v7. He then took our punishment in his death on the cross as a perfect man. He was willing to pay the price for his submission. What grace this shows to us. Look at [Matt 20:28](#); [John 13](#).

Many are willing to serve others as long as it does not cost them anything, but it cost Jesus v8. All for love. [1 Peter 5:6](#); [Eph 1:6,12,14](#).

2:9-11 **His action Glorifies God.** [John 17:1ff](#).

This should be our aim.

God now lifts up Jesus back to glory, gives him a name and position that everything has to bow to. He is Lord.

One day all people will have to submit to him, but you can do it today. We may not see glory today but we will on the return of Jesus.

v12-18 **Christian living.**

God works in us v13. [Gal 2:20](#).

v12 "Work out our salvation" does not mean working for salvation, it is like a field which needs to be worked to get all the crop out, God's 'fruit' for us is to be Christ like, [Rom 8:28](#); [Eph 2:10](#).

v13 It is worth noting that each of us is different, we will not be the imitations of each

other, God works differently in each person. But he may need to work in us (teach) before he can work through us. Compare life of Moses, 40 years training in wilderness before God used him to free Israel.

v14,15 Paul now compares the worldly life with a Christians. Note, we are "to shine in the world," not lock ourselves away from world.

v16-18 Paul wants them to keep carrying God's message of salvation, so that he will be proud of them on Christ return. Even if he is executed he is full of joy that he helped them find Jesus and they glorified him with their lives. [1 Cor 15:58](#). v17 Paul sees himself like a sacrifice for their faith.

People will say "I cannot live up to Jesus or even Paul" so now he shows two normal people who have done it.

[2:19-24 Timothy](#).

see [Acts 14:6](#) forward; [2 Tim 1:3-5](#) for details of Timothy.

Paul was worried about the church at Philippi and wanted to send someone but he is unable to find anyone in Rome who was willing to do it [Phil 2:20,21](#); [1:15,16](#), so he sends Timothy.

v19-21 Timothy has the mind of a servant and had trained and worked at the churches in Derbe & Lystra [Acts 16:1](#).

v22,23 Now Paul has so much faith in Timothy he sends him in his place. See [1 Tim 1:1-11](#) where he recommends Timothy carries on Paul's work.

v25-30 Epaphroditus.

From the Philippi church, probably a gentile who risked his life to bring the offering to Paul from the church. v26,27; 4:18.

v25. Paul calls him "a brother, companion in labour, soldier, messenger and servant for Paul."

v26-27,30, concerned for Paul, willing to take risk to help him, a blessing to Paul standing by him in prison, but also concerned for others.

Chapter 3

Paul thinks about the **past** v1-11, **present** v12-16 and **future** v17-21.

v1-3 Lookout.

There were many Jews who felt that you had to become a Jew before becoming a Christian. see Acts 10 to Acts 15 as the gospel goes directly to the Gentiles, but still many refused to accept this, Paul calls them:-

"Dogs" dirty scavengers.

"Evil workers" who taught faith plus good works, especially the Law, was needed for salvation.

"Concision" means mutilation, they taught circumcision was needed for salvation. compare [Col 2:11](#).

No physical act, Baptism, circumcision, attending church, attending Lord's supper etc. can bring salvation, only faith in Jesus.

v4-7 Paul's life as an example.

See [Acts 22:3](#); [Gal 1:13-14](#); [Acts 7:54-60](#); [Act 8:1-3](#); [Acts 22:1-5](#); [Acts 26:1-11](#). Paul had all the religious training and experience as a Pharisee, but he gave it up for Christ

when he realized it was only using man's standard, not God's.

v7-9 Paul compared them with what Jesus offered, all position, power, religion is loss for Christ. Knowledge of Christ, not know about but to personally know Jesus.

v9 Get right with God. not self made but faith in Jesus. To gain righteousness of God. [2 Cor 5:21](#).

v10-12 I gave up all this old religion to know the power of his resurrection, to share in the suffering of Jesus.

3:13 - 16 The target for life.

v13 Paul says "I have not got there yet, but I'm well on the way," forgetting the past looking only to the prize offered by God through Jesus. You must be like this.

The Bible warns us about a false spiritual condition, see The churches in [Rev 3:1](#).

Paul knew he must "still keep pressing toward the mark."

"One thing I do" An important sentence, Christians so often get involved in many things and forget the main point of their work. Most athletes specialize on one sport and put all their effort into being best at that.

We must not look back, that is past and can do nothing about it, it is the future we should look at.

v14 "I press" means like a hunter chasing the animal, you need to work at it, let God work through you, not sit in a church just listening, John 15:5.

The athlete gets a prize at the end and so do we when we reach heaven.

v15-16 Discipline.

All games have rules which must be obeyed, anyone breaking rules must expect to be punished in some way. Paul reminds us we must obey the spiritual rules in God's Word. One day we will be judged for our actions while serving Him. Rom 14:10-12 This judgement is not reference to salvation, once you have salvation through Jesus you cannot lose it.

See Also [Heb 12:1-2](#)

v17-21 Living for the future.

"Use me as an example for there are many who are enemies of the cross" Paul is so sad that these people are here. We are not told who they are but probably those who taught 'Jesus plus works' for salvation, The 'Judaizers' who added the 'Law of Moses.' Paul is talking about those who say they are saved, not those outside the church, they were emphasizing the things of the world, Old testament dietary laws, (God is their belly), circumcision, earthly rituals and beliefs. They were living in the past, real Christians look to the future, v20.

Many people think that to be 'spiritual' they must pray with a special voice, informing God of things He already knows, to go to every meeting etc. To be 'spiritually minded' is to think from heavens view point, we are citizens of heaven, taking actions and making decisions using heavenly basis. [Luke 12:40-48](#).

Your name is written in heaven. [Luke 10:20](#) once and for all.

We must speak, act in a manner which glorifies God, just quoting verses at everyone does not always give glory to Him [Col 4:6](#); [Eph 4:29](#).

[Matt 12:34-37](#). We speak Heaven's language [1 Cor 2:14-16](#); [1 John 4:4-6](#).

Chapter 4

v1-9 Problems and worry.

Paul heard of the problems at the church, he should have been worried of this getting into a bigger split, but no he tells the people to keep to the Lord and be of one mind. Do not worry about anything, just take it to the Lord and the peace of God will fill you. Who's name is in the Book of Life v3, God first, others second, self last. We must meet the conditions set by God:

v6-7 Praying the right way.

Thanking God for His love and worshipping Him [Eph 5:20](#); [Col 3:15-17](#). Take everything to Him in Prayer, sincerely asking for your needs knowing, that He can supply if they are according to His will, and accept His decision. Thanksgiving for His action, what ever they are.

Really take v8, 9 in to your heart. The way to live and have right thinking. [2 Cor 10:5](#). Satan is a liar [John 8:44](#) and he wants to turn you from God with these lies, if you believe them Satan takes over. Be learners of God's Word then [James 1:22](#).

If we have the peace of God then this shows if we are in His will. [Col 3:15](#); Also consider [Matt 6:24-34](#).

v10-23 Peace in God.

v10 Paul is full of happiness for the Philippians for their care for him.

Paul has learned to be satisfied in the Lord, v11. God knows all we need and with God's help we can do all things v13. Jesus will never fail us and He has all the facilities needed through God the Father. v19

v15-19 Thanks for help received.

A sacrifice gift, it cost them something, pleasing God. v18 see [1 Peter 2:5](#); [Rom 12:1-2](#); [Heb 13:15,16](#); [Rom 15:16](#).

v19, you met my need, God will give all your needs.

v20-23 Paul ends with a Benediction, note there were even converts in Caesar's household.