

Messages on Philippians

by

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CHAPTER ONE

THE PURPOSE OF THE BOOK

Paul's letter to the Philippians is permeated with joy and happiness, gladness and sweetness, song and service. Its message gives wings to the feet of God's people, lifts their burdens and enables them to rejoice in song and to serve the Lord with gladness.

Paul was a prisoner when he wrote this lovely epistle and he wrote it to a church that began in prison. It began in an earthquake; so Paul writes much about peace. It began in stocks, stripes and bonds; so Paul makes mention of rejoicing in the Lord.

There is no note of sadness in this precious letter, although it was written by a prisoner in a prison.

Many excellent things have been written in prison. Sir Walter Raleigh wrote his *History of the World* while in prison. Cervantes wrote *Don Quixote* from his prison cell. Marco Polo wrote his *Travels* while incarcerated. Bunyan wrote his celebrated *Pilgrim's Progress* from his dungeon. Oscar Wilde wrote the famous *Ballad of Reading Gaol* from a cell. John wrote the book of Revelation from the barren, rocky confines on the Island of Patmos. How indebted we are to jails and prisons for bringing out the sweetest things that are in human life!

Paul's purpose in writing the Philippians was that they might know Christ and rejoice in Him, want Him, be like Him, rest in Him, serve Him, suffer with Him and wait for Him. Paul wrote much about happiness, rejoicing, joy and gladness because he knew that:

- The happy Christian would not be a quarrelsome Christian;
- The glad Christian would not be a critical Christian;
- The rejoicing Christian would not be a fussy Christian, but instead would be a fruit-bearing Christian.

There were two women at Philippi who were at "outs" with each other. Paul wisely and beautifully seeks to tune up their hearts with his beautiful message about rejoicing before he recommends that they quit their quarrel and become reconciled so that they may again sing together in the joyful service of the King.

Paul was a master at soothing souls and healing the hurt of God's people.

In the case of Philemon and Onesimus you will note how beautifully and wisely he plays upon the feelings of Philemon, how he arouses a feeling of fellowship and love, and then presents his petition for Onesimus. So it is in Philippi. He assures these two quarreling sisters of his love for them, of his desire for their fellowship and his need of their ministry. In three beautiful chapters, he opens up his own heart and then very graciously requests that they lay aside their private complaints and join in with him and with the other saints at Philippi in the great work of winning souls and blessing saints.

Paul knew that those who present a common front against the enemy and stand firm with one heart and one soul will not easily fall out with one another. Paul knew that those who have the mind of Christ do not exhibit the mind of Satan. How sweetly Paul presents his unanswerable argument in order to cause God's saints to love one another and to serve together as with one shoulder (Zephaniah 3:9, margin).

In this happy message Paul speaks very graciously of those who labored with him in the blessed service of the King. He speaks of Timothy, Clement and Epaphroditus. He feels also the need of Euodias and Syntyche in this same happy service. He misses their co-operation. He desires their fellowship, and so he pleads with them to lay aside their personal troubles and join with God's saints in the battle for God.

Let us seek to emulate his example in our own dealings with God's people.

Each one has some fault or failure. Who does not? None are all that we would like them to be, but neither are we ourselves. Let us therefore use grace and patience, wisdom and kindness as we seek to heal the hurt of the daughter of my people. Let us not widen the breach and deepen the wound. Oil and wine heal much more effectively than a sword and salt.

~ end of chapter 1 ~

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