

In Paul's Absence

Philippians 2:12-30 ESV 12 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but 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 or questioning, 15 that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, 16 holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain. 17 Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. 18 Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me. 19 I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I too may be cheered by news of you. 20 For I have no one like him, who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare. 21 For they all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. 22 But you know Timothy's proven worth, how as a son with a father he has served with me in the gospel. 23 I hope therefore to send him just as soon as I see how it will go with me, 24 and I trust in the Lord that shortly I myself will come also. 25 I have thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, and your messenger and minister to my need, 26 for he has been longing for you all and has been distressed because you heard that he was ill. 27 Indeed he was ill, near to death. But God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. 28 I am the more eager to send him, therefore, that you may rejoice at seeing him again, and that I may be less anxious. 29 So receive him in the Lord with all joy, and honor such men, 30 for he nearly died for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was lacking in your service to me.

- I. Introduction
 - a. Paul is in prison.
 - i. Writing to the church at Philippi
 - ii. Encouraging them to be joyful in the Lord along with him
 - b. He is unable to be with them
 - i. Although he greatly desire to be there
 - ii. So he writes to tell them his will for them in his absence
- II. He wanted them to continue their faithful obedience, to serve the Lord in a way that would cause him to rejoice whether he lived or died, and to be ministered to by true and faithful brethren
- III. Continue their faithful obedience (v. 12-13)
 - a. Keep obeying
 - i. Even more now that he is gone
 - ii. Working out their own salvation – to work unto completion
 - iii. Fear and trembling
 - b. God works in you
 - i. This work is the idea of energizing
 - ii. To will and work
 - 1. Will – to desire God's will

- 2. Work – to be motivated by Him
 - iii. To accomplish what pleases Him – make the boss happy!
 - IV. Serve in a way that would cause him to rejoice (v. 14-18)
 - a. How they would serve
 - i. Without grumbling or questioning
 - 1. murmuring like the Israelites did
 - 2. Questioning – not disputing with each other, but stopping to doubt whether God is right or not
 - ii. Without the shortcomings of the first generation of Israelites
 - 1. Contrast Dt. 32:5 – The Israelites were disqualified because they were everything Paul wanted the Philippian Christians not to be
 - a. Blemished
 - b. Impure – mixed with evil and sin
 - c. Crooked and perverse – not walking straight, going out of the way
 - d. That is the way the world is around us today, and in many respects, even the religious world around us is defiled and crooked
 - e. We must be different from that.
 - f. If we are we will stand out and be manifested as the children of God
 - iii. Lumaries – like the sun, moon and stars in creation Gen. 1:14,16 – for signs and for seasons and for years – showing others the way to go, so that if they are lost it is not because God did not provide guidance, but because man does not look
 - 1. They fulfill that role by holding fast to and holding forth the word of life
 - a. Give me the Bible
 - i. Precious words by Jesus spoken
 - ii. Hold up that splendor by the open grave
 - 2. Don't let it be taken from us
 - 3. And do not let it be obscured by anything
 - a. Let your lights so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your father in heaven – matt. 5:16
 - iv. The result
 - 1. Paul's joy
 - a. Whether he remain until Christ returns
 - b. Or sheds his blood as an accompaniment to their living sacrifice
 - c. Knowing of their faithful service would be cause for pride and joy
 - 2. They should share in it
- V. Be ministered to by faithful brethren
 - a. Likely Timothy (v. 19-22)

- i. That Paul might be cheered by hearing of their faithful obedience
 - ii. His Character
 - 1. no one like him – “no one equal in soul to him”
 - a. Naturally anxious for their spiritual well-being
 - b. Even among the Christians there few were of the self-sacrificing nature of Timothy
 - c. Most seek their own too much to accomplish what Paul desired for the Christians at Philippi
 - 2. They knew his character, and his work with Paul
 - iii. What a sacrifice it would have been to send Timothy
 - 1. But it was what he wanted for them
 - b. Perhaps himself (v. 23-24)
 - i. He thought he may be executed soon
 - 1. Perhaps another hearing was expected
 - 2. But he may be acquitted
 - 3. In which case he would come himself
 - ii. We have reason to believe that he was able to return to Philippi
 - c. Definitely Ephaphroditus (v. 25-30)
 - i. His relation to Paul
 - 1. Brother – common faith and father
 - 2. fellow worker – common labor
 - 3. fellow soldier – common struggle and endurance
 - ii. His relation to Philippi
 - 1. Their messenger to Paul
 - 2. to minister to him
 - iii. His condition
 - 1. Nearly died
 - 2. Through sickness
 - 3. Gambled his life to serve Paul and them
 - 4. Added burden, knowing they knew of his illness and would be concerned about him
 - 5. Apparently Paul did not heal him miraculously
 - iv. Their duty
 - 1. Receive him
 - 2. Rejoice in him
 - 3. Honor him and men like him
- VI. What Paul wanted for them in his absence, Christ wants for us in His absence
 - a. Our continued faithful obedience
 - b. Service that will cause Him pride and joy upon His return
 - c. For our congregation to be ministered to by faithful brethren
 - i. Paul sent those men, and went himself when he could
 - ii. Christ has brought us together as a congregation of His people
 - 1. As he pleases – 1 Cor. 12:18
 - 2. He gives ministers to the church – Eph. 4:11
 - 3. For a purpose – v. 12-16
 - 4. He builds the building for a purpose – Eph. 2:21-22

- iii. He intends for us to minister to each other
 - 1. Not to be ministered to but to minister
 - 2. Like Jesus
- iv. What can you be doing for the brethren
- v. And for the cause of Christ in this community
- vi. What did Christ bring you here for?

VII. Conclusion

- a. We are living as Christians without the benefit of the physical presence of Christ or the apostles
 - i. Someday we will rejoice in their presence
 - ii. That will be wonderful
- b. But we have not been left without help
 - i. We have everything we need to live lives of joyful, faithful obedience to Christ every day of our lives
 - ii. Let's do it
 - iii. Work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, knowing that it is our heavenly father working in us to will and work for his good pleasure
- c. Invitation