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Fearless Eagle Publishing, Toronto, Ontario

Table of Contents

No table of contents entries found.

Preface

An Exposition, With Practical Observations, of The Epistle of St. Paul to the Philippians

Philippi was a chief city of the western part of Macedonia, *propterea quod meritis quibus Macedoniae polis*, Acts 16:12. It took its name from Philip, the famous king of Macedon, who repaired and beautified it, and it was afterwards made a Roman colony. Near this place were the *Campi Philippici*, remarkable for the famous battles between Julius Caesar and Pompey the Great, and that between Augustus and Antony on one side and Cassius and Brutus on the other. But it is most remarkable among Christians for this epistle, which was written when Paul was a prisoner at Rome, A.D. 62. Paul seems to have had a very particular kindness for the church at Philippi, which he himself had been instrumental in planting; and, though he had *the care of all the churches*, he had, upon that account, a particular fatherly tender care of this. To those to whom God has employed us to do any good we should look upon ourselves both as encouraged and engaged to study to do more good. He looked upon them as his children, and, having *begotten them by the gospel*, he was desirous by the same gospel to nourish and nurse them up. I. He was called in an extraordinary manner to preach the gospel at Philippi, Acts 16:9. A vision appeared to Paul in the night: *There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us*. He saw God going before him, and was encouraged to use all means for carrying on the good work which was begun among them, and building upon the foundation which was laid. II. At Philippi he suffered hard things; he was scourged, and put into the stocks (Acts 16:23, 24); yet he had not the less kindness for the place for the hard usage he met with there. We must never love our friends the less for the ill treatment which our enemies give us. III. The beginnings of that church were very small; Lydia was converted there, and the jailer, and a few more: yet that did not discourage him. If good be not done at first, it may be done afterwards, and the last works may be more abundant. We must not be discouraged by small beginnings. IV. It seems, by many passages in this epistle, that this church at Philippi grew into a flourishing church, and particularly that the brethren were very kind to Paul. He had reaped of their temporal things, and he made a return in spiritual things. He acknowledges the receipt of a present they had sent him (4:18), and this when no other church communicated with him as concerning giving and receiving (v. 15); and he gives them a prophet's, an apostle's reward, in this epistle, which is of more value than thousands of gold and silver.

Chapter 1

He begins with the inscription and benediction (v. 1, 2). He gives thanks for the saints at Philippi (v. 3-6). He speaks of his great affection and concern for their spiritual welfare (v. 7, 8), his prayers for them (v. 9-11), his care to prevent their offence at his sufferings (v. 12-20), his readiness to glorify Christ by life or death (v. 21-26), and then concludes with a double exhortation to strictness and constancy (v. 27-30).

Verses 1-2

We have here the inscription and benediction. Observe,

I. The persons writing the epistle—*Paul and Timotheus*. Though Paul was alone divinely inspired, he joins Timothy with himself, to express his own humility, and put honour upon Timothy. Those who are aged, and strong, and eminent, should pay respect to, and support the reputation of, those who are younger, and weaker, and of less note. *The servants of Jesus Christ*; not only in the common relation of his disciples, but in the peculiar work of the ministry, the high office of an apostle and an evangelist. Observe, The highest honour of the greatest apostle, and most eminent ministers, is to be the servants of Jesus Christ; not the masters of the churches, but the servants of Christ. Observe,

II. The persons to whom it is directed. 1. To *all the saints in Christ who are at Philippi*. He mentions the church before the ministers, because the ministers are for the church, for their edification and benefit, not the churches for the ministers, for their dignity, dominion, and wealth. *Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy*, 2 Co. 1:24. They are not only the servants of Christ, but the servants of the church for his sake. *Ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake*, 2 Co. 4:5. Observe, The Christians here are called saints; set apart for God, or sanctified by his Spirit, either by visible profession or real holiness. And those who are not really saints on earth will never be saints in heaven. Observe, It is directed to *all the saints*, one as well as another, even the meanest, the poorest, and those of the least gifts. Christ makes no difference; the rich and the poor meet together in him: and the ministers must not make a difference in their care and tenderness upon these accounts. We must not *have the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ with respect of persons*, James 2:1. *Saints in Christ Jesus*; saints are accepted only by virtue of their being in Christ Jesus, or as they are Christians. Out of Christ the best saints will appear sinners, and unable to stand before God. 2. It is directed to the ministers, or church-officers—*with the bishops and deacons*, the bishops or elders, in the first place, whose office it was to teach and rule, and the deacons, or overseers of the poor, who took care of the outward business of the house of God: the place, the furniture, the maintenance of the ministers, and provision for the poor. These were all the offices which were then known in the church, and which were of divine appointment. The apostle, in the direction of his epistle to a Christian church, acknowledges but two orders, which he calls bishops and deacons. And whosoever shall consider that the same characters and titles, the same qualifications, the same acts of office, and the same honour and respect, are every where ascribed throughout the New Testament to those who are called bishops and presbyters (as Dr. Hammond and other learned men allow), will find it difficult to make them a different office or distinct order of ministry in the scripture times.

III. Here is the apostolical benediction: *Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ*, v. 2. This is the same, almost word for word, in all the epistles, to teach us that we must not be shy of forms, though we are not to be tied down to them, especially such as are not scriptural. The only form in the Old Testament is that of a benediction (Num. 6:23–26), *On this wise you shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them, The Lord bless thee and keep thee: the Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: the Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace*. So in the New Testament, the good which is wished is spiritual good, *grace and peace*—the free favour and good-will of God, and all the blessed fruits and effects of it, and that *from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ*, jointly from them both, though in a different way. Observe, 1. No peace without grace. Inward peace springs from a sense of divine favour. 2. No grace and peace but from God our Father, the fountain and original of all blessings, the *Father of lights, from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift*, James 1:17. 3. No grace and peace from God our Father, but in and through our Lord Jesus Christ. Christ, as Mediator, is the channel of conveyance of all spiritual blessings to the church, and directs the disposal of them to all his members.

Verses 3-6

The apostle proceeds after the inscription and benediction to thanksgiving for the saints at Philippi. He tells them what it was he thanked God for, upon their account. Observe here,

I. Paul remembered them: he bore them much in his thoughts; and though they were out of sight, and he was at a distance from them, yet they were not out of his mind: or, *Upon every mention of you—epi paseu teu mneia*. As he often thought of them, so he often spoke of them, and delighted to hear them spoken of. The very mention of them was grateful to him: it is a pleasure to hear of the welfare of an absent friend.

II. He remembered them with joy. At Philippi he was maltreated; there he was scourged and put into the stocks, and for the present saw little of the fruit of his labour; and yet he remembers Philippi with joy. He looked upon his sufferings for Christ as his credit, his comfort, his crown, and was pleased at every mention of the place where he suffered. So far was he from being ashamed of them, or loth to hear of the scene of his sufferings, that he remembered it with joy.

III. He remembered them in prayer: *Always in every prayer of mine for you all*, v. 4. The best remembrance of our friends is to remember them at the throne of grace. Paul was much in prayer for his friends, for all his friends, for these particularly. It should seem, by this manner of expression, that he mentioned at the throne of grace the several churches he was interested in and concerned for particularly and by name. He had seasons of prayer for the church at Philippi. God gives us leave to be thus free with him, though, for our comfort, he knows whom we mean when we do not name them.

IV. He thanked God upon every joyful remembrance of them. Observe, Thanksgiving must have a part in every prayer; and whatsoever is the matter of our rejoicing ought to be the matter of our thanksgiving. What we have the comfort of, God must have the glory of. He thanked God, as well as made requests with joy. As holy joy is the heart and soul of thankful praise, so thankful praise is the lip and language of holy joy.

V. As in our prayers, so in our thanksgiving, we must eye God as our God: *I thank my God*. It encourages us in prayer, and

enlarges the heart in praise, to see every mercy coming from the hand of God as our God.—*I thank my God upon every remembrance of you.* We must thank our God for others' graces and comforts, and gifts and usefulness, as we receive the benefit of them, and God receives glory by them. But what is the matter of this thanksgiving? 1. He gives thanks to God for the comfort he had in them: for *your fellowship in the gospel, from the first day until now*, v. 5. Observe, Gospel fellowship is a good fellowship; and the meanest Christians have fellowship in the gospel with the greatest apostles, for the gospel salvation is a *common salvation* (Jude 3), and they *obtain like precious faith* with them, 2 Pt. 1:1. Those who sincerely receive and embrace the gospel have fellowship in it *from the very first day*: a new-born Christian, if he is true-born, is interested in all the promises and privileges of the gospel from the first day of his becoming such.—*Until now.* Observe, It is a great comfort to ministers when those who begin well hold on and persevere. Some, by their *fellowship in the gospel*, understand their liberality towards propagating the gospel, and translate *koinonía*, not *communion*, but *communication*. But, comparing it with Paul's thanksgiving on the account of other churches, it rather seems to be taken more generally for the fellowship which they had, in faith, and hope, and holy love, with all good Christians—a fellowship in gospel promises, ordinances, privileges, and hopes; and this from the *first day until now*. 2. For the confidence he had concerning them (v. 6): *Being confident of this very thing*, etc. Observe, The confidence of Christians is the great comfort of Christians, and we may fetch matter of praise from our hopes as well as from our joys; we must give thanks not only for what we have the present possession and evidence of, but for what we have the future prospect of. Paul speaks with much confidence concerning the good estate of others, hoping well concerning them in the judgment of charity, and being confident in the judgment of faith that if they were sincere they would be happy: *That he who has begun a good work in you will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ.* A good work *among you—en hymin*, so it may be read: understand it, in the general, of the planting of the church among them. He who hath planted Christianity in the world will preserve it as long as the world stands. Christ will have a church till the mystery of God shall be finished and the mystical body completed. The church is built upon a rock, and the *gates of hell shall not prevail against it*. But it is rather to be applied to particular persons, and then it speaks of the certain accomplishment of the work of grace wherever it is begun. Observe here, (1.) The work of grace is a good work, a blessed work; for it makes us good, and is an earnest of good to us. It makes us like God, and fits us for the enjoyment of God. That may well be called a good work which does us the greatest good. (2.) Wherever this good work is begun it is of God's beginning: *He has begun a good work in you.* We could not begin it ourselves, for we are by nature *dead in trespasses and sins*: and what can dead men do towards raising themselves to life; or how can they begin to act till they are enlivened in the same respect in which they are said to be dead? It is God who quickens those who are thus dead, Eph. 2:1; Col. 2:13. (3.) The work of grace is but begun in this life; it is not finished here; as long as we are in this imperfect state there is something more to be done. (4.) If the same God who begins the good work did not undertake the carrying on and finishing of it, it would lie for ever unfinished. He must perform it who began it. (5.) We may be confident, or well persuaded, that God not only will not forsake, but that he will finish and crown the work of his own hands. For, *as for God, his work is perfect*. (6.) The work of grace will never be perfected *till the day of Jesus Christ*, the day of his appearance. When he shall come to judge the world, and finish his mediation, then this work will be complete, and the

top-stone will be brought forth with shouting. We have the same expression, v. 10.

Verses 7-8

The apostle expresses the ardent affection he had for them, and his concern for their spiritual welfare: *I have you in my heart*, v. 7. He loved them as his own soul, and they lay near his heart. He thought much of them, and was in care about them.

Observe, 1. Why he had them in his heart: *Inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers of my grace*; that is, they had received benefit by him and by his ministry; they were partakers of that grace of God which by him, and through his hands, was communicated to them. This makes people dear to their ministers—their receiving benefit by their ministry. Or, "*You are partakers of my grace, you have joined with me in doing and suffering.*" They were partakers of his affliction by sympathy and concern, and readiness to assist him. Thus he calls being partakers of his grace; for those who suffer with the saints are and shall be comforted with them; and those shall share in the reward, who bear their part of the burden. He loved them because they adhered to him in his bonds, and in the *defence and confirmation of the gospel*: they were as ready to appear in their places, and according to their capacity, for the defence of the gospel, as the apostle was in his; and therefore he had them in his heart. Fellow sufferers should be dear one to another; those who have ventured and suffered in the same good cause of God and religion should for that reason love one another dearly: or, because *you have me at heart— $\delta\iota\alpha\ \tau\omicron\ \epsilon\chi\epsilon\iota\mu\epsilon\ \epsilon\ \nu\ \tau\epsilon\mu\ \kappa\alpha\rho\delta\iota\alpha\ \eta\mu\alpha\varsigma$* . They manifested their respect for him by adhering firmly to the doctrine he preached, and readily suffering for it along with him. The truest mark of respect towards our ministers is receiving and abiding by the doctrine they preach. 2. The evidence of it: *It is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart*. By this it appeared that he had them in his heart, because he had a good opinion of them and good hopes concerning them. Observe, It is very proper to think the best of other people, and as well as we can of them—to suppose as well of them as the matter will admit in all cases. 3. An appeal to God concerning the truth of this (v. 8): *For God is my record how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ*. Having them in his heart, he longed after them; either he longed to see them, longed to hear from them, or he longed for their spiritual welfare and their increase and improvement in knowledge and grace. He had *joy in them* (v. 4), because of the good he saw and heard of among them; yet still he longed after them, to hear of more of it among them; and he *longed after them all*, not only those among them who were witty and wealthy, but even the meanest and poorest; and he *longed greatly* after them, or with strong affection and great good-will; and this *in the bowels of Jesus Christ*, with that tender concern which Christ himself has and has shown to precious souls. Paul was herein a follower of Christ, and all good ministers should aim to be so. O the bowels of compassion which are in Jesus Christ to poor souls! It was in compassion to them that he undertook their salvation, and put himself to so vast an expense to compass it. Now, in conformity to the example of Christ, Paul had a compassion for them, and longed after them all *in the bowels of Jesus Christ*. Shall not we pity and love those souls whom Christ had such a love and pity for? For this he appeals to God: *God is my record*. It was an inward disposition of mind that he expressed towards them, to the sincerity of which God only was witness, and therefore to him he appeals. "Whether you know it or not, or are sensible of it, God, who knows the heart, knows it."

Verses 9-11

These verses contain the prayers he put up for them. Paul often let his friends know what it was he begged of God for them, that they might know what to beg for themselves and be directed in their own prayers, and that they might be encouraged to hope they should receive from God the quickening, strengthening, everlasting, comforting grace, which so powerful an intercessor as Paul asked of God for them. It is an encouragement to us to know that we are prayed for by our friends, who, we have reason to think, have an interest at the throne of grace. It was intended likewise for their direction in their walk, and that they might labour to answer his prayers for them; for by this it would appear that God had answered them. Paul, in praying thus for them, expected good concerning them. It is an inducement to us to do our duty, that we may not disappoint the expectations of praying friends and ministers. He prayed, 1. That they might be a loving people, and that good affections might abound among them; *That your love might abound yet more and more*. He means it of their love to God, and one another, and all men. Love is the fulfilling both of the law and of the gospel. Observe, Those who abound much in any grace have still need to abound more and more, because there is still something wanting in it and we are imperfect in our best attainments. 2. That they might be a knowing and judicious people: that love might abound *in knowledge and in all judgment*. It is not a blind love that will recommend us to God, but a love grounded upon knowledge and judgment. We must love God because of his infinite excellence and loveliness, and love our brethren because of what we see of the image of God upon them. Strong passions, without knowledge and a settled judgment, will not make us complete in the will of God, and sometimes do more hurt than good. The Jews had a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge, and were transported by it to violence and rage, Rom. 10:2; Jn. 16:2. 3. That they might be a discerning people. This would be the effect of their knowledge and judgment: *That you may approve the things which are excellent* (v. 10); or, as it is in the margin, *Try the things which differ; eis to dokimazein*, that we may approve the things which are excellent upon the trial of them, and discern their difference from other things. Observe, The truths and laws of Christ are excellent things; and it is necessary that we every one approve them, and esteem them such. We only need to try them, to approve of them; and they will easily recommend themselves to any searching and discerning mind. 4. That they might be an honest upright-hearted people: *That you may be sincere*. Sincerity is our gospel perfection, that in which we should have our conversation in the world, and which is the glory of all our graces. When the eye is single, when we are inward with God in what we do, are really what we appear to be, and mean honestly, then we are sincere. 5. That they might be an inoffensive people: that you may be *without offence until the day of Christ*; not apt to take offence; and very careful not to give offence to God or their brethren, to *live in all good conscience before God* (Acts 23:1), and to *exercise ourselves to have always a conscience void of offence towards God and towards men*, Acts 24:16. And we must continue to the end *blameless*, that we may be presented so at the *day of Christ*. He will present the church *without spot or wrinkle* (Eph. 5:27), and *present believers faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy*, Jude 24. 6. That they might be a fruitful useful people (v. 11): *Being filled with the fruits of righteousness*, etc. From God is our fruit found, and therefore from him it must be asked. The *fruits of righteousness* are the evidences and effects of our sanctification, the duties of holiness springing from a renewed heart, the *root of the matter in us*. *Being filled* with them. Observe, Those who do much good should still endeavour to do more. The fruits of righteousness, brought forth for the glory of God and edification of his church, should

really fill us, and wholly take us up. Fear not being emptied by bringing forth the fruits of righteousness, for you will be filled with them. These fruits are *by Jesus Christ*, by his strength and grace, for *without him we can do nothing*. He is the root of the good olive, from which it derives its fatness. We are *strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus* (2 Tim. 2:1) and *strengthened with might by his Spirit* (Eph. 3:16), and they are *unto the glory and praise of God*. We must not aim at our own glory in our fruitfulness, but at the *praise and glory of God*, that *God may be glorified in all things* (1 Peter 4:11), and *whatsoever we do we must do all to the glory of God*, 1 Co. 10:31. It is much for the honour of God, when Christians not only are good, but do good, and *abound in good works*.

Verses 12-20

We see here the care the apostle takes to prevent their being offended at his sufferings. He was now a prisoner at Rome; this might be a stumbling-block to those who had received the gospel by his ministry. They might be tempted to think, If this doctrine were indeed of God, God would not suffer one who was so active and instrumental in preaching and propagating it to be thrown by as a despised broken vessel. They might be shy of owning this doctrine, lest they should be involved in the same trouble themselves. Now to take off the offence of the cross, he expounds this dark and hard chapter of his sufferings, and makes it very easy and intelligible, and reconcilable to the wisdom and goodness of God who employed him.

I. He suffered by the sworn enemies of the gospel, who laid him in prison, and aimed at taking away his life; but they should not be stumbled at this, for good was brought out of it, and it tended to the furtherance of the gospel (v. 12): *The things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel*. A strange chemistry of Providence this, to extract so great a good as the enlargement of the gospel out of so great an evil as the confinement of the apostle. *"I suffer trouble as an evil-doer, even unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound, 2 Tim. 2:9*. They cannot imprison the word of God; that has its free course, though I am confined." But how was this?

1. It alarmed those who were without (v. 13): *"My bonds in Christ, or for Christ, are manifest in all the palace and in all other places*. The emperor, the courtiers, the magistrates, are convinced that I do not suffer as an evil-doer, but as an honest man, with a good conscience. They know that I suffer for Christ, and not for any wickedness." Observe, (1.) Paul's sufferings made him known at court, where perhaps he would never have otherwise been known; and this might lead some of them to enquire after the gospel for which he suffered, which they might otherwise have never heard of. (2.) When his bonds were manifest in the palace, they were manifest in all other places. *The sentiments of the court have a great influence on the sentiments of all people—Regis ad exemplum totus componitur orbis*.

2. It emboldened those who were within. As his enemies were startled at his sufferings, so his friends were encouraged by them. *Upright men shall be astonished at this, and the innocent shall stir up himself against the hypocrite. The righteous also shall hold on his way, and he who has clean hands shall be stronger and stronger, Job 17:8, 9*. So it was here: *Many of the brethren in the Lord waxing confident by my bonds, v. 14*. The expectation of trouble for their religion, in general, perhaps disheartened and discouraged them; but, when they saw Paul imprisoned for Christ, they were so far from being deterred from preaching Christ and praising his name, that it made them the more bold; for they could gladly suffer in Paul's company. If

they should be hurried from the pulpit to the prison, they could be reconciled to it, because they would be there in such good company. Besides, the comfort which Paul had in his sufferings, his extraordinary consolations received from Christ in a suffering state, greatly encouraged them. They saw that those who served Christ served a good Master, who could both bear them up and bear them out, in their sufferings for him. *Waxing confident by my bonds. Pepoithotas.* They were more fully satisfied and persuaded by what they saw. Observe the power of divine grace; that which was intended by the enemy to discourage the preachers of the gospel was overruled for their encouragement. And *are much more bold to speak the word without fear*; they see the worst of it, and therefore are not afraid to venture. Their confidence gave them courage, and their courage preserved them from the power of fear.

II. He suffered from false friends as well as from enemies (v. 15, 16): *Some preach Christ even of envy and strife. The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely.* Now this would be a stumbling-block and discouragement to some, that there were those who envied Paul's reputation in the churches, and the interest he had among the Christians, and endeavoured to supplant and undermine him. They were secretly pleased when he was laid up in prison, that they might have the better opportunity to steal away the people's affections; and they laid themselves out the more in preaching, that they might gain to themselves the reputation they envied him: *Supposing to add affliction to my bonds.* They thought hereby to grieve his spirit, and make him afraid of losing his interest, uneasy under his confinement, and impatient for release. It is sad that there should be men who profess the gospel, especially who preach it, who are governed by such principles as these, who should preach Christ in spite to Paul, and to increase the affliction of his bonds. Let us not think it strange if in these later and more degenerate ages of the church there should be any such. However, there were others who were animated by Paul's sufferings to preach Christ the more vigorously: *Some also of good will, and love:* from sincere affection to the gospel, that the work might not stand while the workman was laid up.—*Knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel.* They knew that he was appointed to support and propagate the gospel in the world, against all the violence and opposition of its enemies, and were afraid lest the gospel should suffer by his confinement. This made them the more bold to preach the word and *supply his lack of service* to the church.

III. It is very affecting to see how easy he was in the midst of all: *Notwithstanding every way, whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and I will rejoice,* v. 18. Note, The preaching of Christ is the joy of all who wish well to his kingdom among men. Since it may tend to the good of many, we ought to rejoice in it, though it be done in pretence, and not in reality. It is God's prerogative to judge of the principles men act upon; this is out of our line. Paul was so far from envying those who had liberty to preach the gospel while he was under confinement that he rejoiced in the preaching of it even by those who do it in pretence, and not in truth. How much more then should we rejoice in the preaching of the gospel by those who do it in truth, yea, though it should be with much weakness and some mistake! Two things made the apostle rejoice in the preaching of the gospel:—

1. Because it tended to the salvation of the souls of men: *I know that this shall turn to my salvation,* v. 19. Observe, God can bring good out of evil; and what does not turn to the salvation of the ministers may yet, by the grace of God, be made to turn to the salvation of the people. What reward can those expect who preach Christ out of *strife, and envy, and contention,* and to add

affliction to a faithful minister's bonds? who preach in pretence, and not in truth? And yet even this may turn to the salvation of others; and Paul's rejoicing in it turned to his salvation too. This is one of the things which *accompany salvation*—to be able to rejoice that Christ is preached, though it be to the diminution of us and our reputation. This noble spirit appeared in John the Baptist, at the first public preaching of Christ: "*This my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease*, Jn. 3:29, 30. Let him shine, though I be obscured; and his glory be exalted, though upon my ruins." Others understand this expression of the malice of his enemies being defeated, and contributing towards his deliverance from his confinement.

Through your prayers, and the supply of the Spirit of Christ. Note, Whatever turns to our salvation is by the supply or the aids and assistance of the Spirit of Christ; and prayer is the appointed means of fetching in that supply. The prayers of the people may bring a supply of the Spirit to their ministers, to support them in suffering, as well as in preaching the gospel.

2. Because it would turn to the glory of Christ, v. 20, where he takes occasion to mention his own entire devotedness to the service and honour of Christ: *According to my earnest expectation and hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed*, etc. Here observe, (1.) The great desire of every true Christian is that Christ may be magnified and glorified, that his name may be great, and his kingdom come. (2.) Those who truly desire that Christ may be magnified desire that he may be *magnified in their body*. They present their *bodies a living sacrifice* (Rom. 12:1), and *yield their members as instruments of righteousness unto God*, Rom. 6:13. They are willing to serve his designs, and be instrumental to his glory, with every member of their body, as well as faculty of their soul. (3.) It is much for the glory of Christ that we should serve him boldly and not be ashamed of him, with freedom and liberty of mind, and without discouragement: *That in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness Christ may be magnified*. The boldness of Christians is the honour of Christ. (4.) Those who make Christ's glory their desire and design may make it their expectation and hope. If it be truly aimed at, it shall certainly be attained. If in sincerity we pray, *Father, glorify thy name*, we may be sure of the same answer to that prayer which Christ had: *I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again*, Jn. 12:28. (5.) Those who desire that Christ may be magnified in their bodies have a holy indifference *whether it be by life or by death*. They refer it to him which way he will make them serviceable to his glory, whether by their labours or sufferings, by their diligence or patience, by their living to his honour in working for him or dying to his honour in suffering for him.

Verses 21-26

We have here an account of the life and death of blessed Paul: his life was Christ, and his death was gain. Observe, 1. It is the undoubted character of every good Christian that to him to live is Christ. The glory of Christ ought to be the end of our life, the grace of Christ the principle of our life, and the word of Christ the rule of it. The Christian life is derived from Christ, and directed to him. He is the principle, rule, and end of it. 2. All those to whom to live is Christ to them to die *will be gain*: it is great gain, a present gain, everlasting gain. Death is a great loss to a carnal worldly man; for he loses all his comforts and all his hopes: but to a good Christian it is gain, for it is the end of all his weakness and misery and the perfection of his comforts and accomplishment of his hopes; it delivers him from all the evils of life, and brings him to the possession of the chief good. Or, *To me to die is gain*; that is, "to the gospel as well as to myself, which will receive a further confirmation by the seal of my

blood, as it had before by the labours of my life." So Christ would be *magnified by his death*, v. 20. Some read the whole expression thus: *To me, living and dying, Christ is gain*; that is, "I desire no more, neither while I live nor when I die, but to win Christ and be found in him." It might be thought, if death were gain to him, he would be weary of life, and impatient for death. No, says he,

I. *If I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour* (v. 22), that is, Christ is. He reckoned his labour well bestowed, if he could be instrumental to advance the honour and interest of the kingdom of Christ in the world. It is *the fruit of my labour—karpos ergou—operae pretium*. It is worth while for a good Christian and a good minister to live in the world as long as he can glorify God and do good to his church. *Yet what I shall choose I wot not; for I am in a strait betwixt two*. It was a blessed strait which Paul was in, not between two evil things, but between two good things. David was in a strait by three judgments—sword, famine, and pestilence: Paul was in a strait between two blessings—living to Christ, and being with him. Here we have him reasoning with himself upon the matter.

1. His inclination was for death. See the power of faith and of divine grace; it can reconcile the mind to death, and make us willing to die, though death is the destruction of our present nature and the greatest natural evil. We have naturally an aversion to death, but he had an inclination to it (v. 23); *Having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ*, Observe, (1.) It is being with Christ which makes a departure desirable to a good man. It is not simply dying, or putting off the body, it is not of itself and for its own sake a desirable thing; but it may be necessarily connected with something else which may make it truly so. If I cannot be with Christ without departing, I shall reckon it desirable on that account to depart. (2.) As soon as ever the soul departs, it is immediately with Christ. *This day shalt thou be with me in paradise*, Lu. 23:43. *Absent from the body and present with the Lord* (2 Co. 5:8), without any interval between. *Which is far better, polloy gar mallon kreisson—very much exceeding, or vastly preferable*. Those who know the value of Christ and heaven will readily acknowledge it far better to be in heaven than to be in this world, to be with Christ than to be with any creature; for in this world we are compassed about with sin, born to trouble, born again to it; but, if we come to be with Christ, farewell sin and temptation, farewell sorrow and death, for ever.

2. His judgment was rather to live awhile longer in this world, for the service of the church (v. 24): *Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you*. It is needful for the church to have ministers; and faithful ministers can ill be spared when the *harvest is plenteous and the labourers are few*. Observe, Those who have most reason to desire to depart should be willing to continue in the world as long as God has any work for them to do. Paul's strait was not between living in this world and living in heaven; between these two there is no comparison: but his strait was between serving Christ in this world and enjoying him in another. Still it was Christ that his heart was upon: though, to advance the interest of Christ and his church, he chose rather to tarry here, where he met with oppositions and difficulties, and to deny himself for awhile the satisfaction of his reward.

II. *And, having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith*, v. 25. Observe here, 1. What a great confidence Paul had in the divine Providence, that it would order all for the best to him. "Having this confidence that it will be needful for you that I should abide in the flesh, I know that I shall abide." 2. Whatsoever is best

for the church, we may be sure God will do. If we know what is needful for building up the body of Christ, we may certainly know what will be; for he will take care of its interests, and do what is best, all things considered, in every condition it is in. 3. Observe what ministers are continued for: *For our furtherance and joy of faith*, our further advancement in holiness and comfort. 4. What promotes our *faith and joy of faith* is very much for our furtherance in the way to heaven. The more faith the more joy, and the more faith and joy the more we are furthered in our Christian course. 5. There is need of a settled ministry, not only for the conviction and conversion of sinners, but for the edification of saints, and their furtherance in spiritual attainments.

III. *That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me, by my coming to you again*, v. 26. They rejoiced in the hope of seeing him, and enjoying his further labours among them. Observe, 1. The continuance of ministers with the church ought to be the rejoicing of all who wish well to the church, and to its interests. 2. All our joys should terminate in Christ. Our joy in good ministers should be our joy *in Christ Jesus for them*; for they are but the *friends of the bridegroom*, and are to be received in his name, and for his sake.

Verses 27-30

The apostle concludes the chapter with two exhortations:—

I. He exhorts them to strictness of conversation (v. 27): *Only let your conversation be as becometh the gospel of Christ*. Observe, Those who profess the gospel of Christ should have their conversation as becomes the gospel, or in a suitableness and agreeableness to it. Let it be as becomes those who believe gospel truths, submit to gospel laws, and depend upon gospel promises; and with an answerable faith, holiness, and comfort. Let it be in all respects as those who belong to the kingdom of God among men, and are members and subjects of it. It is an ornament to our profession when our conversation is of a piece with it.—*That whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs*. He had spoken in v. 26 of his coming to them again, and had spoken it with some assurance, though he was now a prisoner; but he would not have them build upon that. Our religion must not be bound up in the hands of our ministers: "Whether I come or no, let me hear well of you, and do you stand fast." Whether ministers come or no, Christ is always at hand. He is nigh to us, never far from us; and hastens his second coming. *The coming of the Lord draws nigh*, James 5:8. Let me hear of you *that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel*. Three things he desired to hear of them; and they are all such as become the gospel:—1. It becomes those who profess the gospel to strive for it, to use a holy violence in taking the kingdom of heaven. The *faith of the gospel* is the doctrine of faith, or the religion of the gospel. There is that in the faith of the gospel which is worth striving for. If religion is worth any thing, it is worth every thing. There is much opposition, and there is need of striving. A man may sleep and go to hell; but he who will go to heaven must look about him and be diligent. 2. The unity and unanimity of Christians become the gospel: *Strive together*, not strive one with another; all of you must strive against the common adversary. One spirit and one mind become the gospel; for *there is one Lord, one faith, one baptism*. There may be a oneness of heart and affection among Christians, where there is diversity of judgment and apprehensions about many things. 3. Stedfastness becomes the gospel: *Stand fast in one spirit, with one mind*. Be *stedfast and immovable* by any opposition. It is a

shame to religion when the professors of it are off and on, unfixed in their minds, and unstable as water; for they will never excel. Those who would strive for the faith of the gospel must stand firm to it.

II. He exhorts them to courage and constancy in suffering: *And in nothing terrified by your adversaries*, v. 28. The professors of the gospel have all along met with adversaries, especially at the first planting of Christianity. Our great care must be to keep close to our profession, and be constant to it: whatever oppositions we meet with, we must not be frightened at them, considering that the condition of the persecuted is much better and more desirable than the condition of the persecutors; for persecuting is an *evident token of perdition*. Those who oppose the gospel of Christ, and injure the professors of it, are marked out for ruin. But being persecuted is a token of salvation. Not that it is a certain mark; many hypocrites have suffered for their religion; but it is a good sign that we are in good earnest in religion, and designed for salvation, when we are enabled in a right manner to suffer for the cause of Christ.—*For to you it is given on the behalf of Christ not only to believe, but also to suffer for his name*, v. 29. Here are two precious gifts given, and both on the behalf of Christ:—1. To believe in him. Faith is God's gift on the behalf of Christ, who purchased for us not only the blessedness which is the object of faith, but the grace of faith itself: the ability or disposition to believe is from God. 2. To suffer for the sake of Christ is a valuable gift too: it is a great honour and a great advantage; for we may be very serviceable to the glory of God, which is the end of our creation, and encourage and confirm the faith of others. And there is a great reward attending it too: *Blessed are you when men shall persecute you, for great is your reward in heaven*, Mt. 5:11, 12. And, *if we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him*, 2 Tim. 2:12. If we suffer reproach and loss for Christ, we are to reckon it a great gift, and prize it accordingly, always provided we behave under our sufferings with the genuine temper of martyrs and confessors (v. 30): *"Having the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear to be in me; that is, suffering in the same manner as you saw and now hear of me that I suffer."* It is not simply the suffering, but the cause, and not only the cause, but the spirit, which makes the martyr. A man may suffer in a bad cause, and then he suffers justly; or in a good cause, but with a wrong mind, and then his sufferings lose their value

Chapter 2

The apostle proceeds to further exhortations to several duties, to be like-minded, and lowly-minded, which he presses from the example of Christ (v. 1–11), to be diligent and serious in the Christian course (v. 12, 13), and to adorn their Christian profession by several suitable graces (v. 14–18). He then concludes with particular notice and commendation of two good ministers, Timothy and Epaphroditus, whom he designed to send to them (v. 19–30).

Verses 1-11

The apostle proceeds in this chapter where he left off in the last, with further exhortations to Christian duties. He presses them largely to like-mindedness and lowly-mindedness, in conformity to the example of the Lord Jesus, the great pattern of humility and love. Here we may observe,

I. The great gospel precept passed upon us; that is, to love one another. This is the law of Christ's kingdom, the lesson of his school, the livery of his family. This he represents (v. 2) by being *like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind*. We are of a like mind when we have the same love. Christians should be one in affection, whether they can be one in apprehension or no. This is always in their power, and always their duty, and is the likeliest way to bring them nearer in judgment. *Having the same love*. Observe, The same love that we are required to express to others, others are bound to express to us. Christian love ought to be mutual love. Love, and you shall be loved. *Being of one accord, and of one mind*; not crossing and thwarting, or driving on separate interests, but unanimously agreeing in the great things of God and keeping the *unity of the Spirit* in other differences. Here observe,

1. The pathetic pressing of the duty. He is very importunate with them, knowing what an evidence it is of our sincerity, and what a means of the preservation and edification of the body of Christ. The inducements to brotherly love are these:—(1.) "If there is any *consolation in Christ*. Have you experienced consolation in Christ? Evidence that experience by loving one another." The sweetness we have found in the doctrine of Christ should sweeten our spirits. Do we expect consolation in Christ? If we would not be disappointed, we must love one another. If we have not consolation in Christ, where else can we expect it? Those who have an interest in Christ have consolation in him, strong and everlasting consolation (Heb. 6:18; 2 Th. 2:16), and therefore ought to love one another. (2.) "*Comfort of love*. If there is any comfort in Christian love, in God's love to you, in your love to God, or in your brethren's love to us, in consideration of all this, be you like-minded. If you have ever found that comfort, if you would find it, if you indeed believe that the grace of love is a comfortable grace, abound in it." (3.) "*Fellowship of the Spirit*. If there is such a thing as communion with God and Christ by the Spirit, such a thing as the communion of saints, by virtue of their being animated and actuated by *one and the same Spirit*, be you like-minded; for Christian love and like-mindedness will preserve to us our communion with God and with one another." (4.) "*Any bowels and mercies*, in God and Christ, towards you. If you expect the benefit of God's compassions to yourselves, be you compassionate one to another. If there is such a thing as mercy to be found among the followers of Christ, if all who are sanctified have a disposition to holy pity, make it appear this way." How cogent are these arguments! One would think them enough to tame the

most fierce, and mollify the hardest, heart. (5.) Another argument he insinuates is the comfort it would be to him: *Fulfil you my joy*. It is the joy of ministers to see people like-minded and living in love. He had been instrumental in bringing them to the grace of Christ and the love of God. "Now," says he, "if you have found any benefit by your participation of the gospel of Christ, if you have any comfort in it, or advantage by it, *fulfil the joy* of your poor minister, who preached the gospel to you."

2. He proposes some means to promote it. (1.) *Do nothing through strife and vain glory*, v. 3. There is no greater enemy to Christian love than pride and passion. If we do things in contradiction to our brethren, this is doing them through strife; if we do them through ostentation of ourselves, this is doing them through vain-glory: both are destructive of Christian love and kindle unchristian heats. Christ came to slay all enmities; therefore let there not be among Christians a spirit of opposition. Christ came to humble us, and therefore let there not be among us a spirit of pride. (2.) We must *esteem others in lowliness of mind better than ourselves*, be severe upon our own faults and charitable in our judgments of others, be quick in observing our own defects and infirmities, but ready to overlook and make favourable allowances for the defects of others. We must esteem the good which is in others above that which is in ourselves; for we best know our own unworthiness and imperfections. (3.) We must interest ourselves in the concerns of others, not in a way of curiosity and censoriousness, or as *busy-bodies in other men's matters*, but in Christian love and sympathy: *Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others*, v. 4. A selfish spirit is destructive of Christian love. We must be concerned not only for our own credit, and ease, and safety, but for those of others also; and rejoice in the prosperity of others as truly as in our own. We must love our neighbour as ourselves, and make his case our own.

II. Here is a gospel pattern proposed to our imitation, and that is the example of our Lord Jesus Christ: *Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus*, v. 5. Observe, Christians must be of Christ's mind. We must bear a resemblance to his life, if we would have the benefit of his death. *If we have not the Spirit of Christ, we are none of his*, Rom. 8:9. Now what was the mind of Christ? He was eminently humble, and this is what we are peculiarly to learn of him. *Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart*, Mt. 11:29. If we were lowly-minded, we should be like-minded; and, if we were like Christ, we should be lowly-minded. We must walk in the same spirit and in the same steps with the Lord Jesus, who humbled himself to sufferings and death for us; not only to satisfy God's justice, and pay the price of our redemption, but to set us an example, and that we might *follow his steps*. Now here we have the two natures and the two states of our Lord Jesus. It is observable that the apostle, having occasion to mention the Lord Jesus, and the mind which was in him, takes the hint to enlarge upon his person, and to give a particular description of him. It is a pleasing subject, and a gospel minister needs not think himself out of the way when he is upon it; any fit occasion should be readily taken.

1. Here are the two natures of Christ: his divine nature and his human nature. (1.) Here is his divine nature: *Who being in the form of God* (v. 6), partaking of the divine nature, as the eternal and only begotten Son of God. This agrees with Jn. 1:1, *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God*: it is of the same import with being the *image of the invisible* God (Col. 1:15), and the *brightness of his glory, and express image of his person*, Heb. 1:3. *He thought it no robbery to be equal with God*; did not think himself guilty of any invasion of what did not belong to him, or assuming another's right. He said, *I and my*

Father are one, Jn. 10:30. It is the highest degree of robbery for any mere man or mere creature to pretend to be equal with God, or profess himself *one with the Father*. This is for a man to rob God, not in tithes and offerings, but of the rights of his Godhead, Mal. 3:8. Some understand *being in the form of God*—*en morpheu Theou hyparchoyn*, of his appearance in a divine majestic glory to the patriarchs, and the Jews, under the Old Testament, which was often called the *glory*, and the *Shechinah*. The word is used in such a sense by the Septuagint and in the New Testament. *He appeared to the two disciples*, *en hetera morpheu*—*In another form*, Mk. 16:12. *Metemorphoutheu*—*he was transfigured* before them, Mt. 17:2. And *he thought it no robbery to be equal with God*; he did not greedily *catch at*, nor covet and affect to appear in that glory; he laid aside the majesty of his former appearance while he was here on earth, which is supposed to be the sense of the peculiar expression, *ouk harpagmon heugeusato*. Vid. *Bishop Bull's Def.* cap. 2 sect. 4 et alibi, and *Whitby* in loc. (2.) His human nature: He was *made in the likeness of men*, and *found in fashion as a man*. He was really and truly man, *took part of our flesh and blood*, appeared in the nature and habit of man. And he voluntarily assumed human nature; it was his own act, and by his own consent. We cannot say that our participation of the human nature is so. Herein he *emptied himself*, divested himself of the honours and glories of the upper world, and of his former appearance, to clothe himself with the rags of human nature. *He was in all things like to us*, Heb. 2:17.

2. Here are his two estates, of humiliation and exaltation. (1.) His estate of humiliation. He not only took upon him the likeness and fashion of a man, but the *form of a servant*, that is, a man of mean estate. He was not only God's servant whom he had chosen, but he came to minister to men, and was among them as one who serveth in a mean and servile state. One would think that the Lord Jesus, if he would be a man, should have been a prince, and appeared in splendour. But quite the contrary: *He took upon him the form of a servant*. He was brought up meanly, probably working with his supposed father at his trade. His whole life was a life of humiliation, meanness, poverty, and disgrace; he had nowhere to lay his head, lived upon alms, was a *man of sorrows and acquainted with grief*, did not appear with external pomp, or any marks of distinction from other men. This was the humiliation of his life. But the lowest step of his humiliation was his dying the death of the cross. *He became obedient to death, even the death of the cross*. He not only suffered, but was actually and voluntarily obedient; he obeyed the law which he brought himself under as Mediator, and by which he was obliged to die. *I have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it again: this commandment have I received of my Father*, Jn. 10:18. And he was *made under the law*, Gal. 4:4. There is an emphasis laid upon the manner of his dying, which had in it all the circumstances possible which are humbling: *Even the death of the cross*, a cursed, painful, and shameful death,—a death accursed by the law (*Cursed is he that hangeth on a tree*)—full of pain, the body nailed through the nervous parts (the hands and feet) and hanging with all its weight upon the cross,—and the death of a malefactor and a slave, not of a free-man,—exposed as a public spectacle. Such was the condescension of the blessed Jesus. (2.) His exaltation: *Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him*. His exaltation was the reward of his humiliation. Because he humbled himself, God exalted him; and he *highly exalted him, hyperypsouse*, raised him to an exceeding height. He exalted his whole person, the human nature as well as the divine; for he is spoken of as being in the form of God as well as in the fashion of man. As it respects the divine nature, it could only be the recognizing of his

rights, or the display and appearance of the *glory he had with the Father before the world was* (Jn. 17:5), not any new acquisition of glory; and so the Father himself is said to be exalted. But the proper exaltation was of his human nature, which alone seems to be capable of it, though in conjunction with the divine. His exaltation here is made to consist in honour and power. In honour; so *he had a name above every name*, a title of dignity above all the creatures, men and angels. And in power: *Every knee must bow to him*. The whole creation must be in subjection to him: *things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth*, the inhabitants of heaven and earth, the living and the dead. *At the name of Jesus*; not at the sound of the word, but the authority of Jesus; all should pay a solemn homage. And that *every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord*—every nation and language should publicly own the universal empire of the exalted Redeemer, and that *all power in heaven and earth is given to him*, Mt. 28:18. Observe the vast extent of the kingdom of Christ; it reaches to heaven and earth, and to all the creatures in each, to angels as well as men, and to the dead as well as the living.—*To the glory of God the Father*. Observe, It is to the glory of God the Father to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord; for it is his will that *all men should honour the Son as they honour the Father*, Jn. 5:23. Whatever respect is paid to Christ redounds to the honour of the Father. *He who receiveth me receiveth him who sent me*, Mt. 10:40.

Verses 12-13

I. He exhorts them to diligence and seriousness in the Christian course: *Work out your own salvation*. It is the salvation of our souls (1 Pt. 1:9), and our eternal salvation (Heb. 5:9), and contains deliverance from all the evils sin had brought upon us and exposed us to, and the possession of all good and whatsoever is necessary to our complete and final happiness. Observe, It concerns us above all things to secure the welfare of our souls: whatever becomes of other things, let us take care of our best interests. It is our own salvation, the salvation of our own souls. It is not for us to judge other people; we have enough to do to look to ourselves; and, though we must promote the common salvation (Jude 3) as much as we can, yet we must upon no account neglect our own. We are required to *work out our salvation, katergazesthe*. The word signifies *working thoroughly* at a thing, and taking *true pains*. Observe, We must be diligent in the use of all the means which conduce to our salvation. We must not only work at our salvation, by doing something now and then about it; but we must work out our salvation, by doing all that is to be done, and persevering therein to the end. Salvation is the great thing we should mind, and set our hearts upon; and we cannot attain salvation without the utmost care and diligence. He adds, *With fear and trembling*, that is, with great care and circumspection: "Trembling for fear lest you miscarry and come short. Be careful to do every thing in religion in the best manner, and fear lest under all your advantages you should so much as *seem to come short*," Heb. 4:1. Fear is a great guard and preservative from evil.

II. He urges this from the consideration of their readiness always to obey the gospel: *"As you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, v. 12*. You have been always willing to comply with every discovery of the will of God; and that in my absence as well as presence. You make it to appear that regard to Christ, and care of your souls, sway more with you than any mode of showing respect whatsoever." They were not merely awed by the apostle's presence, but did it even *much more in his absence*. "And because *it is God who worketh in you*, do you work out your salvation. Work, for

he worketh." It should encourage us to do our utmost, because our *labour shall not be in vain*. God is ready to concur with his grace, and assist our faithful endeavours. Observe, Though we must use our utmost endeavours in working out our salvation, yet still we must go forth, and go on, in a dependence upon the grace of God. His grace works in us in a way suitable to our natures, and in concurrence with our endeavours; and the operations of God's grace in us are so far from excusing, that they are intended to quicken and engage our endeavours. "And work out our salvation *with fear and trembling*, for *he worketh in you*." All our working depends upon his working in us. "Do not trifle with God by neglects and delays, lest you provoke him to withdraw his help, and all your endeavours prove in vain. Work with *fear*, for he works of his *good pleasure*."—*To will and to do*: he gives the whole ability. It is the grace of God which inclines the will to that which is good: and then enables us to perform it, and to act according to our principles. *Thou hast wrought all our works in us*, Isa. 26:12. *Of his good pleasure*. As there is no strength in us, so there is no merit in us. As we cannot act without God's grace, so we cannot claim it, nor pretend to deserve it. God's good will to us is the cause of his good work in us; and he is under no engagements to his creatures, but those of his gracious promise.

Verses 14-18

The apostle exhorts them in these verses to adorn their Christian profession by a suitable temper and behaviour, in several instances. 1. By a cheerful obedience to the commands of God (v. 14): "*Do all things*, do your duty in every branch of it, *without murmurings*. Do it, and do not find fault with it. Mind your work, and do not quarrel with it." God's commands were given to be obeyed, not to be disputed. This greatly adorns our profession, and shows we serve a good Master, whose service is freedom and whose work is its own reward. 2. By peaceableness and love one to another. "Do all things *without disputing*, wrangling, and debating one another; because the light of truth and the life of religion are often lost in the heats and mists of disputation." 3. By a blameless conversation towards all men (v. 15): "*That you may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke*; that you be not injurious to any in word or deed, and give no just occasion of offence." We should endeavour not only to be harmless, but to be blameless; not only not to do hurt, but not to come under the just suspicion of it. *Blameless and sincere*; so some read it. Blameless before men, sincere towards God. The *sons of God*. It becomes those to be blameless and harmless who stand in such a relation, and are favoured with such a privilege. The children of God should differ from the sons of men. *Without rebuke— $\alpha\mu\omicron\mu\epsilon\mu\epsilon\tau\alpha$* . Momus was a carping deity among the Greeks, mentioned by Hesiod and Lucian, who did nothing himself, and found fault with every body and every thing. From him all carpers at other men, and rigid censurers of their works, were called *Momi*. The sense of the expression is, "Walk so circumspectly that Momus himself may have no occasion to cavil at you, that the severest censurer may find no fault with you." We should aim and endeavour, not only to get to heaven, but to get thither without a blot; and, like Demetrius, to *have a good report of all men, and of the truth*, 3 Jn. 12. *In the midst of a crooked and perverse generation*; that is, among the heathens, and those who are without. Observe, Where there is no true religion, little is to be expected but crookedness and perverseness; and the more crooked and perverse others are among whom we live, and the more apt to cavil, the more careful we should be to keep ourselves blameless and harmless. Abraham and Lot must not *strive, because the Canaanite and Perizzite dwelt in the land*, Gen. 13:7. *Among*

whom you shine as lights in the world. Christ is the light of the world, and good Christians are lights in the world. When God raises up a good man in any place, he sets up a light in that place. Or it may be read imperatively: *Among whom shine you as lights:* compare Mt. 5:16, *Let your light so shine before men.* Christians should endeavour not only to approve themselves to God, but to recommend themselves to others, that they may also glorify God. They must shine as well as be sincere.—*Holding forth the word of life*, v. 16. The gospel is called the word of life because it reveals and proposes to us eternal life through Jesus Christ. *Life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel*, 2 Tim. 1:10. It is our duty not only to hold fast, but to hold forth the word of life; not only to hold it fast for our own benefit, but to hold it forth for the benefit of others, to hold it forth as the candlestick holds forth the candle, which makes it appear to advantage all around, or as the luminaries of the heavens, which shed their influence far and wide. This Paul tells them would be his joy: *"That I may rejoice in the day of Christ; not only rejoice in your stedfastness, but in your usefulness."* He would have them think his pains well bestowed, and that *he had not run in vain, nor laboured in vain.* Observe, (1.) The work of the ministry requires the putting forth of the whole man: all that is within us is little enough to be employed in it; as in running and labouring. Running denotes vehemence and vigour, and continual pressing forward; labour denotes constancy and close application. (2.) It is a great joy to ministers when they perceive that they have not *run in vain, nor laboured in vain;* and it will be their rejoicing in the day of Christ, when their converts will be their crown. *What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For you are our glory and joy*, 1 Th. 2:19, 20. The apostle not only ran and laboured for them with satisfaction, but shows that he was ready to suffer for their good (v. 17): *Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all.* He could reckon himself happy if he could promote the honour of Christ, the edification of the church, and the welfare of the souls of men; though it were not only by hazarding, but by laying down, his life: he could willingly be a sacrifice at their altars, to serve the faith of God's elect. Could Paul think it worth while to shed his blood for the service of the church, and shall we think it much to take a little pains? Is not that worth our labour which he thought worth his life? *If I be offered, or poured out as the wine of the drink-offerings, spendomai.* 2 Tim. 4:6, *I am now ready to be offered.* He could rejoice to seal his doctrine with his blood (v. 18): *For the same cause also do you joy and rejoice with me.* It is the will of God that good Christians should be much in rejoicing; and those who are happy in good ministers have a great deal of reason to joy and rejoice with them. If the minister loves the people, and is willing to spend and be spent for their welfare, the people have reason to love the minister and to *joy and rejoice with him.*

Verses 19-30

Paul takes particular notice of two good ministers; for though he was himself a great apostle, and *laboured more abundantly than they all*, yet he took all occasions to speak with respect of those who were far his inferiors.

I. He speaks of Timothy, whom he intended to send to the Philippians, that he might have an account of their state. See Paul's care of the churches, and the comfort he had in their well-doing. He was in pain when he had not heard of them for a good while, and therefore would send Timothy to enquire, and bring him an account: *For I have no man like-minded, who will naturally care for your state.* Timothy was a non-such. There were, no doubt, many good ministers, who were in care for the

souls of those for whom they preached; but none comparable to Timothy, a man of an excellent spirit and tender heart. *Who will naturally care for your state.* Observe, It is best with us when our duty becomes in a manner natural to us. Timothy was a genuine son of blessed Paul, and walked in the same spirit and the same steps. *Naturally*, that is, sincerely, and not in pretence only: with a willing heart and upright view, so agreeably to the make of his mind. Note, 1. It is the duty of ministers to care for the state of their people and be concerned for their welfare: *I seek not yours, but you*, 2 Co. 12:14. 2. It is a rare thing to find one who does it naturally: such a one is remarkable and distinguished among his brethren. *All seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's*, v. 21. Did Paul say this in haste, as David said, *All men are liars*? Ps. 116:11. Was there so general a corruption among ministers so early that there was not one among them who cared for the state of their people? We must not understand it so: he means the generality; *all*, that is, either the most, or all in comparison of Timothy. Note, Seeking our own interest to the neglect of Jesus Christ is a very great sin, and very common among Christians and ministers. Many prefer their own credit, ease, and safety, before truth, holiness, and duty, the things of their own pleasure and reputation before the things of Christ's kingdom and his honour and interest in the world: but Timothy was none of these.—*You know the proof of him*, v. 22. Timothy was a man who had been tried, and had made *full proof of his ministry* (2 Tim. 4:5), and was faithful in all that befel him. All the churches with whom he had acquaintance knew the proof of him. He was a man as good as he seemed to be; and *served Christ so as to be acceptable to God, and approved of men*, Rom. 14:18. "You not only know the name of him, and the face of him, but the proof of him, and have experienced his affection and fidelity in your service," *that, as a son with a father, he hath served with me in the gospel.* He was Paul's assistant in many places where he preached, and served with him in the gospel with all the dutiful respect which a child pays to a father, and with all the love and cheerfulness with which a child is serviceable to his father. Their ministrations together were with great respect on the one side and great tenderness and kindness on the other—an admirable example to elder and younger ministers united in the same service. Paul designed to send him shortly: *Him therefore I hope to send presently, as soon as I shall see how it will go with me*, v. 23. He was now a prisoner, and did not know what would be the issue; but, according as it turned, he would dispose of Timothy. Nay, he hoped to come himself (v. 24): *But I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly.* He hoped he should soon be set at liberty, and be able to pay them a visit. Paul desired his liberty, not that he might take his pleasure, but that he might do good.—*I trust in the Lord.* He expresses his hope and confidence of seeing them, with a humble dependence and submission to the divine will. See Acts 18:21; 1 Co. 4:19; James 4:15; and Heb. 6:3.

II. Concerning Epaphroditus, whom he calls *his brother, and companion in labour, and fellow-soldier*, his Christian brother, to whom he bore a tender affection,—his companion in the work and sufferings of the gospel, who submitted to the same labours and hardships with himself,—and their messenger, one who was sent by them to him, probably to consult him about some affairs relating to their church, or to bring a present from them for his relief for he adds, and *who ministered to my wants.* He seems to be the same who is called *Epaphras*, Col. 4:12. He had an earnest desire to come to them, and Paul was willing he should. It seems, 1. Epaphroditus had been sick: *They had heard that he had been sick*, v. 26. And *indeed he was sick, nigh unto death*, v. 27. Sickness is a calamity common to men, to good men and ministers. But why did not the apostle heal him,

who was endued with a power of curing diseases, as well as raising the dead? Acts 20:10. Probably because that was intended as a sign to others, and to confirm the truth of the gospel, and therefore needed not be exercised one towards another. *These signs shall follow those who believe, they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover*, Mk. 16:17, 18. And perhaps they had not that power at all times, and at their own discretion, but only when some great end was to be served by it, and when God saw fit. It was proper to Christ, who had *the Spirit above measure*. 2. The Philippians were exceedingly sorry to hear of his sickness. They were full of heaviness, as well as he, upon the tidings of it: for he was one, it seems, for whom they had a particular respect and affection, and thought fit to choose out to send to the apostle. 3. It pleased God to recover and spare him: *But God had mercy on him*, v. 27. The apostle owns it is a great mercy to himself, as well as to Epaphroditus and others. Though the church was blessed at that time with extraordinary gifts, they could even then ill spare a good minister. He was sensibly touched with the thoughts of so great a loss: *Lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow*; that is, "Lest, besides the sorrow of my own imprisonment, I should have the sorrow of his death." Or perhaps some other good ministers had died lately, which had been a great affliction to him: and, if this had died now, it would have been a fresh grief to him, and *sorrow added to sorrow*. 4. Epaphroditus was willing to pay a visit to the Philippians, that he might be comforted with those who had sorrowed for him when he was sick: *That when you see him again you may rejoice* (v. 28), that you may yourselves see how well he has recovered, and what reason you have for the thankfulness and joy upon his account." He gave himself the pleasure of comforting them by the sight of so dear a friend. 5. Paul recommends him to their esteem and affection: *Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness, and hold such in reputation*: account such men valuable, who are zealous and faithful, and let them be highly loved and regarded. Show your joy and respect by all the expressions of hearty affection and good opinion." It seems he had caught his illness in the work of God: *It was for the work of Christ that he was nigh to death, and to supply their lack of service to him*. The apostle does not blame him for his indiscretion in hazarding his life, but reckons they ought to love him the more upon that account. Observe, (1.) Those who truly love Christ, and are hearty in the interests of his kingdom, will think it very well worth their while to hazard their health and life to do him service, and promote the edification of his church. (2.) They were to receive him with joy, as newly recovered from sickness. It is an endearing consideration to have our mercies restored to us after danger of removal, and should make them the more valued and improved. What is given us in answer to prayer should be received with great thankfulness and joy

Chapter 3

He cautions them against judaizing seducers (v. 1-3) and proposes his own example: and here he enumerates the privileges of his Jewish state which he rejected (v. 4-8), describes the matter of his own choice (v. 9-16), and closes with an exhortation to beware of wicked men, and to follow his example (v. 17-21).

Verses 1-3

It seems the church of the Philippians, though a faithful and flourishing church, was disturbed by the judaizing teachers, who endeavoured to keep up the law of Moses, and mix the observances of it with the doctrine of Christ and his institutions. He begins the chapter with warnings against these seducers.

I. He exhorts them to *rejoice in the Lord* (v. 1), to rest satisfied in the interest they had in him and the benefit they hoped for by him. It is the character and temper of sincere Christians to rejoice in Christ Jesus. The more we take of the comfort of our religion the more closely we shall cleave to it: the more we rejoice in Christ the more willing we shall be to do and suffer for him, and the less danger we shall be in of being drawn away from him. The *joy of the Lord is our strength*, Neh. 8:10.

II. He cautions them to take heed of those false teachers: *To write the same thing to you to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe*; that is, the same things which I have already preached to you; as if he had said, "What has been presented to your ears shall be presented to your eyes: what I have spoken formerly shall now be written; to show that I am still of the same mind." *To me indeed is not grievous*. Observe, 1. Ministers must not think any thing grievous to themselves which they have reason to believe is safe and edifying to the people. 2. It is good for us often to hear the same truths, to revive the remembrance and strengthen the impression of things of importance. It is a wanton curiosity to desire always to hear some new thing. It is a needful caution he here gives: *Beware of dogs*, v. 2. The prophet calls the false prophets dumb dogs (Isa. 56:10), to which the apostle here seems to refer. *Dogs*, for their malice against the faithful professors of the gospel of Christ, barking at them and biting them. They cried up good works in opposition to the faith of Christ; but Paul calls them evil workers: they boasted themselves to be of the circumcision; but he calls them the concision: they rent and tore the church of Christ, and cut it to pieces; or contended for an abolished rite, a mere insignificant cutting of the flesh.

III. He describes true Christians, who are indeed the circumcision, the spiritual circumcision, the peculiar of people of God, who are in covenant with him, as the Old-Testament Israelites were: *We are the circumcision, who worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh*. Here are three characters:—1. They worshipped in the spirit, in opposition to the carnal ordinances of the Old-Testament, which consist in meats, and drinks, and divers washings, etc. Christianity takes us off from these things, and teaches us to be inward with God in all the duties of religious worship. We must *worship God in spirit*, Jn. 4:24. The work of religion is to no purpose any further than the heart is employed in it. *Whatsoever we do, we must do it heartily as unto the Lord*; and we must worship God in the strength and grace of the Divine Spirit, which is so peculiar to the gospel state, which is the *ministration of the spirit*, 2 Co. 3:8. 2. They *rejoice in Christ Jesus*, and not in the peculiar privileges of the Jewish church, or what answers to them in the Christian church—mere outward

enjoyments and performances. They rejoice in their relation to Christ and interest in him. God made it the duty of the Israelites to rejoice before him in the courts of his house; but now that the substance has come the shadows are done away, and we are to rejoice in Christ Jesus only. 3. They have no *confidence in the flesh*, in those carnal ordinances and outward performances. We must be taken off from trusting in our own bottom, that we may build only on Jesus Christ, the everlasting foundation. Our confidence, as well as our joy, is proper to him.

Verses 4-8

The apostle here proposes himself for an example of trusting in Christ only, and not in his privileges as an Israelite.

I. He shows what he had to boast of as a Jew and a Pharisee. Let none think that the apostle despised these things (as men commonly do) because he had them not himself to glory in. No, if he would have gloried and trusted in the flesh, he had as much cause to do so as any man: *If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof to trust in the flesh, I more*, v. 4. He had as much to boast of as any Jew of them all. 1. His birth-right privileges. He was not a proselyte, but a native Israelite: *of the stock of Israel*. And he was *of the tribe of Benjamin*, in which tribe the temple stood, and which adhered to Judah when all the other tribes revolted. Benjamin was the father's darling, and this was a favourite tribe. *A Hebrew of the Hebrews*, an Israelite on both sides, by father and mother, and from one generation to another; none of his ancestors had matched with Gentiles. 2. He could boast of his relations to the church and the covenant, for he was *circumcised the eighth day*; he had the token of God's covenant in his flesh, and was circumcised the very day which God had appointed. 3. For learning, he was a Pharisee, brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, an eminent doctor of the law: and was a scholar learned in all the learning of the Jews, taught according to the perfect manner of the laws of the fathers, Acts 22:3. He was a *Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee* (Acts 23:6), and *after the most strict sect of his religion lived a Pharisee*, Acts 26:5. 4. He had a blameless conversation: *Toughing the righteousness which is of the law, blameless*: as far as the Pharisees' exposition of the law went, and as to the mere letter of the law and outward observance of it, he could acquit himself from the breach of it and could not be accused by any. 5. He had been an active man for his religion. As he made a strict profession of it, under the title and character of a Pharisee, so he persecuted those whom he looked upon as enemies to it. *Concerning zeal, persecuting the church*. 6. He showed that he was in good earnest, though he had a zeal without knowledge to direct and govern the exercise of it: *I was zealous towards God, as you all are this day, and I persecuted this way unto the death*, Acts 22:3, 4. All this was enough to have made a proud Jew confident, and was stock sufficient to set up with for his justification. But,

II. The apostle tells us here how little account he made of these, in comparison of his interest in Christ and his expectations from him: *But what things were gain to me those have I counted loss for Christ* (v. 7); that is, those things which he had counted gain while he was a Pharisee, and which he had before reckoned up, *these he counted loss for Christ*. "I should have reckoned myself an unspeakable loser of, to adhere to them, I had lost my interest in Jesus Christ." He counted them loss; not only insufficient to enrich him, but what would certainly impoverish and ruin him, if he trusted to them, in opposition to Christ. Observe, The apostle did not persuade them to do any thing but what he had himself did, to quit any thing but what he had himself quitted, nor venture on any bottom but what he himself had ventured his immortal soul upon.—*Yea doubtless, and*

I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, v. 8. Here the apostle explains himself.

1. He tells us what it was that he was ambitious of and reached after: it was the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord, a believing experimental acquaintance with Christ as Lord; not a merely notional and speculative, but a practical and efficacious knowledge of him. So knowledge is sometimes put for faith: *By his knowledge*, or the knowledge of him, *shall my righteous servant justify many*, Isa. 53:11. And it is the excellency of knowledge. There is an abundant and transcendent excellency in the doctrine of Christ, or the Christian religion above all the knowledge of nature, and improvements of human wisdom; for it is suited to the case of fallen sinners, and furnishes them with all they need and all they can desire and hope for, with all saving wisdom and saving grace. 2. He shows how he had quitted his privileges as a Jew and a Pharisee: *Yea doubtless*; his expression rises with a holy triumph and elevation, *alla men oun ge kai*. There are five particles in the original: *But indeed even also do I count all things but loss*. He had spoken before of *those things*, his Jewish privileges: here he speaks of *all things*, all worldly enjoyments and mere outward privileges whatsoever, things of a like kind or any other kind which could stand in competition with Christ for the throne in his heart, or pretend to merit and desert. There he had said that he did count them but loss; but it might be asked, "Did he continue still in the same mind, did he not repent his renouncing them?" No, now he speaks in the present tense: *Yea doubtless, I do count them but loss*. But it may be said, "It is easy to say so; but what would he do when he came to the trial?" Why he tells us that he had himself practised according to this estimate of the case: *For whom I have suffered the loss of all things*. He had quitted all his honours and advantages, as a Jew and a Pharisee, and submitted to all the disgrace and suffering which attended the profession and preaching of the gospel. When he embarked in the bottom of the Christian religion, he ventured all in it, and suffered the loss of all for the privileges of a Christian. Nay, he not only counted them loss, but dung, *skybala*—*offals* thrown to dogs; they are not only less valuable than Christ, but in the highest degree contemptible, when they come in competition with him. Note, The New Testament never speaks of saving grace in any terms of diminution, but on the contrary represents it as the fruits of the divine Spirit and the image of God in the soul of man; as a divine nature, and the seed of God: and faith is called precious faith; and meekness is in the *sight of God of great price*, 1 Pt. 3:4; 2 Pt. 1:1, etc.

Verses 9-14

We now heard what the apostle renounced; let us now see what he laid hold on, and resolved to cleave to, namely, Christ and heaven. He had his heart on these two great peculiarities of the Christian religion.

I. The apostle had his heart upon Christ as his righteousness. This is illustrated in several instances. 1. He desired to win Christ; and an unspeakable gainer he would reckon himself if he had but an interest in Christ and his righteousness, and if Christ became his Lord and his Saviour: *That I may win him*; as the runner wins the prize, as the sailor makes the port he is bound for. The expression intimates that we have need to strive for him and after him, and that all is little enough to win him. 2. That he *might be found in him* (v. 9), as the manslayer was found in the city of refuge, where he was safe from the avenger of blood, Num. 35:25. Or it alludes to a judicial appearance; so we are to be found of our Judge in peace, 2 Pt. 3:14. We are undone without a righteousness wherein to appear before God, for we are guilty. There is a righteousness provided for us in Jesus

Christ, and it is a complete and perfect righteousness. None can have interest or benefit by it but those who come off from confidence in themselves, and are brought heartily to believe in him. *"Not having my own righteousness, which is of the law; not thinking that my outward observances and good deeds are able to atone for my bad ones, or that by setting the one over against the other I can come to balance accounts with God. No, the righteousness which I depend upon is that which is through the faith of Christ, not a legal, but evangelical righteousness: The righteousness which is of God by faith, ordained and appointed of God."* The Lord Jesus Christ is the Lord our righteousness, Isa. 45:24; Jer. 23:6. Had he not been God, he could not have been our righteousness; the transcendent excellence of the divine nature put such a value upon, and such a virtue into, his sufferings, that they became sufficient to satisfy for the sins of the world, and to bring in a righteousness which will be effectual to all that believe. Faith is the ordained means of actual interest and saving benefit in all the purchase of his blood. It is *by faith in his blood*, Rom. 3:25. 3. That he might know Christ (v. 10): *That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings*. Faith is called knowledge, Isa. 53:11. Knowing him here is believing in him: it is an experimental knowledge of the *power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings*, or feeling the transforming efficacy and virtue of them. Observe, The apostle was as ambitious of being sanctified as he was of being justified. He was as desirous to know the power of Christ's death and resurrection killing sin in him, and raising him up to newness of life, as he was to receive the benefit of Christ's death and resurrection in his justification. 4. That he might be conformable unto him, and this also is meant of his sanctification. We are then made conformable to his death when we die to sin, as Christ died for sin, when we are crucified with Christ, the flesh and affections of it mortified, and the *world is crucified to us, and we to the world, by virtue of the cross of Christ*. This is our conformity to his death.

II. The apostle had his heart upon heaven as his happiness: *If by any means I might attain to the resurrection of the dead*, v. 11.

1. The happiness of heaven is here called the resurrection of the dead, because, though the souls of the faithful, when they depart, are immediately with Christ, yet their happiness will not be complete till the general resurrection of the dead at the last day, when soul and body shall be glorified together. *Anastasis* sometimes signifies the future state. This the apostle had his eye upon; this he would attain. There will be a resurrection of the unjust, who shall arise to *shame and everlasting contempt*; and our care must be to escape that: but the joyful and glorious resurrection of saints is called *the resurrection, kat'ō exochēun*—*by eminence*, because it is in virtue of Christ's resurrection, as their head and first-fruits; whereas the wicked shall rise only by the power of Christ, as their judge. To the saints it will be indeed a resurrection, a return to bliss, and life, and glory; while the resurrection of the wicked is a rising from the grave, but a return to a second death. It is called the *resurrection of the just*, and the *resurrection of life* (Jn. 5:29), and they are *counted worthy to obtain that world and the resurrection from the dead*, Lu. 20:35.

2. This joyful resurrection the apostle pressed towards. He was willing to do any thing, or suffer any thing, that he might attain that resurrection. The hope and prospect of it carried him with so much courage and constancy through all the difficulties he met with in his work. He speaks as if they were in danger of missing it, and coming short of it. A holy fear of coming short is an excellent means of perseverance. Observe, His care to be found in Christ was in order to his attaining the resurrection of the

dead. Paul himself did not hope to attain it through his own merit and righteousness, but through the merit and righteousness of Jesus Christ. "Let me be found in Christ, that I may attain the resurrection of the dead, be found a believer in him, and interested in him by faith," Observe,

(1.) He looks upon himself to be in a state of imperfection and trial: *Not as though I had already attained, or were already perfect*, v. 12. Observe, The best men in the world will readily own their imperfection in the present state. We have not yet attained, are not already perfect; there is still much wanting in all our duties, and graces, and comforts. If Paul had not attained to perfection (who had reached to so high a pitch of holiness), much less have we. Again, *Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended* (v. 13), *ou logizomai*. "I make this judgment of the case; I thus reason with myself." Observe, Those who think they have grace enough give proof that they have little enough, or rather that they have none at all; because, wherever there is true grace, there is a desire of more grace, and a pressing towards the perfection of grace.

(2.) What the apostle's actings were under this conviction. Considering that he had not already attained, and had not apprehended, he pressed forward: *"I follow after* (v. 12), *διωκομῶ*—*I pursue* with vigour, as one following after the game. I endeavour to get more grace and do more good, and never think I have done enough: *If that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.*" Observe, [1.] Whence our grace comes—from our being apprehended of Christ Jesus. It is not our laying hold of Christ first, but his laying hold of us, which is our happiness and salvation. *We love him because he first loved us*, 1 Jn. 4:19. Not our keeping hold of Christ, but his keeping hold of us, is our safety. *We are kept by his mighty power through faith unto salvation*, 1 Pt. 1:5. Observe, [2.] What the happiness of heaven is: it is *to apprehend that for which we are apprehended of Christ*. When Christ laid hold of us, it was to bring us to heaven; and to apprehend that for which he apprehended us is to attain the perfection of our bliss. He adds further (v. 13): *This one thing I do* (this was his great care and concern), *forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth to those things which are before*. There is a sinful forgetting of past sins and past mercies, which ought to be remembered for the exercise of constant repentance and thankfulness to God. But Paul forgot the things which were behind so as not to be content with present measures of grace: he was still for having more and more. So he *reaches forth*, *επεκτεινόμενος*—*stretched* himself forward, bearing towards his point: it is expressive of a vehement concern.

(3.) The apostle's aim in these actings: *I press towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*, v. 14. He pressed towards the mark. As he who runs a race never takes up short of the end, but is still making forwards as fast as he can, so those who have heaven in their eye must still be pressing forward to it in holy desires and hopes, and constant endeavours and preparations. The fitter we grow for heaven the faster we must press towards it. Heaven is called here the mark, because it is that which every good Christian has in his eye; as the archer has his eye fixed upon the mark he designs to hit. *For the prize of the high calling*. Observe, A Christian's calling is a high calling: it is from heaven, as its original; and it is to heaven in its tendency. Heaven is the *prize of the high calling*; *to brabeion*—*the prize* we fight for, and run for, and wrestle for, what we aim at in all we do, and what will reward all our pains. It is of great use in the Christian course to keep our eye upon heaven. This is proper to give us measures in all our service, and to quicken us every step we take; and it is of God, from

whom we are to expect it. *Eternal life is the gift of God* (Rom. 6:23), but it is in Christ Jesus; through his hand it must come to us, as it is procured for us by him. There is no getting to heaven as our home but by Christ as our way.

Verses 15-16

The apostle, having proposed himself as an example, urges the Philippians to follow it. Let the same mind be in us which was in blessed Paul. We see here how he was minded; let us be like-minded, and set our hearts upon Christ and heaven, as he did.

1. He shows that this was the thing wherein all good Christians were agreed, to make Christ all in all, and set their hearts upon another world. This is that whereto we have all attained. However good Christians may differ in their sentiments about other things, this is what they are agreed in, that Christ is a Christian's all, that to win Christ and to be found in him involve our happiness both here and hereafter. And therefore let us walk by the same rule, and mind the same thing. Having made Christ our all, *to us to live must be Christ*. Let us agree to press towards the mark, and make heaven our end. 2. That this is a good reason why Christians who differ in smaller matters should yet bear with one another, because they are agreed in the main matter: "*If in any thing you be otherwise minded—if you differ from one another, and are not of the same judgment as to meats and days, and other matters of the Jewish law—yet you must not judge one another, while you all meet now in Christ as your centre, and hope to meet shortly in heaven as your home. As for other matters of difference, lay no great stress upon them, God shall reveal even this unto you. Whatever it is wherein you differ, you must wait till God give you a better understanding, which he will do in his due time. In the mean time, as far as you have attained, you must go together in the ways of God, join together in all the great things in which you are agreed, and wait for further light in the minor things wherein you differ.*"

Verses 17-21

He closes the chapter with warnings and exhortations.

I. He warns them against following the examples of seducers and evil teachers (v. 18, 19): *Many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ*. Observe,

1. There are many called by Christ's name who are enemies to Christ's cross, and the design and intention of it. Their walk is a surer evidence what they are than their profession. By *their fruits you shall know them*, Mt. 7:20. The apostle warns people against such, (1.) Very frequently: *I have told you often*. We so little heed the warnings given us that we have need to have them repeated. *To write the same things is safe*, v. 1. (2.) Feelingly and affectionately: *I now tell you weeping*. Paul was upon proper occasions a weeping preacher, as Jeremiah was a weeping prophet. Observe, An old sermon may be preached with new affections; what we say often we may say again, if we say it affectionately, and are ourselves under the power of it.

2. He gives us the characters of those who were the enemies of the cross of Christ. (1.) Whose God is their belly. They minded nothing but their sensual appetites. A wretched idol it is, and a scandal for any, but especially for Christians, to sacrifice the favour of God, the peace of their conscience, and their eternal happiness to it. Gluttons and drunkards make a god of their belly, and all their care is to please it and make provision for it. The same observance which good people give to God epicures give to their appetites. Of such he says, *They serve not the Lord Jesus Christ, but their own bellies*, Rom. 16:18. (2.) They glory in their shame. They not only sinned, but boasted of it and gloried in that of which they ought to have been ashamed. Sin

is the sinner's shame, especially when it is gloried in. "They value themselves for what is their blemish and reproach." (3.) They mind earthly things. Christ came by his cross to *crucify the world to us and us to the world*; and those who mind earthly things act directly contrary to the cross of Christ, and this great design of it. They relish earthly things, and have no relish of the things which are spiritual and heavenly. They set their hearts and affections on earthly things; they love them, and even dote upon them, and have a confidence and complacency in them. He gives them this character, to show how absurd it would be for Christians to follow the example of such or be led away by them; and, to deter us all from so doing, he reads their doom. (4.) Whose end is destruction. Their way seems pleasant, but death and hell are at the end of it. *What fruit had you then in those things whereof you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death*, Rom. 6:21. It is dangerous following them, though it is going down the stream; for, if we choose their way, we have reason to fear their end. Perhaps he alludes to the total destruction of the Jewish nation.

II. He proposes himself and his brethren for an example, in opposition to these evil examples: *Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark those who walk as you have us for an example*, v. 17. Mark them out for your pattern. He explains himself (v. 20) by their regard to Christ and heaven: *For our conversation is in heaven*. Observe, Good Christians, even while they are here on earth, have their conversation in heaven. Their *citizenship* is there, *politeuma*. As if he had said, We stand related to that world, and are citizens of the New Jerusalem. This world is not our home, but that is. There our greatest privileges and concerns lie. And, because our citizenship is there, our conversation is there; being related to that world, we keep up a correspondence with it. The life of a Christian is in heaven, where his head is, and his home is, and where he hopes to be shortly; he *sets his affections upon things above*; and where his heart is there will his conversation be. The apostle had pressed them to follow him and other ministers of Christ: "Why," might they say, "you are a company of poor, despised, persecuted people, who make no figure, and pretend to no advantages in the world; who will follow you?" "Nay," says he, "but our conversation is in heaven. We have a near relation and a great pretension to the other world, and are not so mean and despicable as we are represented." It is good having fellowship with those who have fellowship with Christ, and conversation with those whose conversation is in heaven.

1. Because we look for the Saviour from heaven (v. 20): *Whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ*. He is not here, he has ascended, he has entered within the veil for us; and we expect his second coming thence, to gather in all the citizens of that New Jerusalem to himself.

2. Because at the second coming of Christ we expect to be happy and glorified there. There is good reason to have our conversation in heaven, not only because Christ is now there, but because we hope to be there shortly: *Who shall change our vile bodies, that they may be fashioned like unto his glorious body*, v. 21. There is a glory reserved for the bodies of the saints, which they will be instated in at the resurrection. The body is now at the best a *vile body*, *to souma teus tapeinouseous heμμου*—*the body of our humiliation*: it has its rise and origin from the earth, it is supported out of the earth, and is subject to many diseases and to death at last. Besides, it is often the occasion and instrument of much sin, which is called the *body of this death*, Rom. 7:24. Or it may be understood of its vileness when it lies in the grave; at the resurrection it will be found a

vile body, resolved into rottenness and dust; the *dust will return to the earth as it was*, Eccl. 12:7. But it will be made a glorious body; and not only raised again to life, but raised to great advantage. Observe, (1.) The sample of this change, and that is, the glorious body of Christ; when he was transfigured upon the mount, *his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light*, Mt. 17:2. He went to heaven clothed with a body, that he might take possession of the inheritance in our nature, and be not only the *first-born from the dead*, but the *first-born of the children of the resurrection*. We shall be *conformed to the image of his Son, that he may be the first-born among many brethren*, Rom. 8:29. (2.) The power by which this change will be wrought: *According to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself*. There is an efficacy of power, an *exceeding greatness of power*, and the *working of mighty power*, Eph. 1:19. It is matter of comfort to us that he can subdue all things to himself, and sooner or later will bring over all into his interest. And the resurrection will be wrought by this power. *I will raise him up at the last day*, Jn. 6:44. Let this confirm our faith of the resurrection, that we not only have the scriptures, which assure us it shall be, but we *know the power of God*, which can effect it, Mt. 22:29. At Christ's resurrection was a glorious instance of the divine power, and therefore *he is declared to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead* (Rom. 1:4), so will our resurrection be: and his resurrection is a standing evidence, as well as pattern, of ours. And then all the enemies of the Redeemer's kingdom will be completely conquered. Not only he *who had the power of death*, that is, *the devil* (Heb. 2:14), but the *last enemy, shall be destroyed*, that is, *death*, 1 Co. 15:26, *shall be swallowed up in victory*, v. 54.

Chapter 4

Exhortations to several Christian duties, as steadfastness, unanimity, joy, etc. (v. 1-9). The apostle's grateful acknowledgments of the Philippians' kindness to him, with expressions of his own content, and desire of their good (v. 10–19). He concludes the epistle with praise, salutations, and blessing (v. 20–23).

Verses 1-9

The apostle begins the chapter with exhortations to divers Christian duties.

I. To steadfastness in our Christian profession, v. 1. It is inferred from the close of the foregoing chapter: *Therefore stand fast*, etc. Seeing our *conversation is in heaven*, and we look for the Saviour to come thence and fetch us thither, *therefore let us stand fast*. Note, The believing hope and prospect of eternal life should engage us to be steady, even, and constant, in our Christian course. Observe here,

1. The compellations are very endearing: *My brethren, dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown*; and again, *My dearly beloved*. Thus he expresses the pleasure he took in them, the kindness he had for them, to convey his exhortations to them with so much the greater advantage. He looked upon them as his brethren, though he was a great apostle. *All we are brethren*. There is difference of gifts, graces, and attainments, yet, being renewed by the same Spirit, after the same image, we are brethren; as the children of the same parents, though of different ages, statures, and complexions. Being brethren, (1.) He loved them, and loved them dearly: *Dearly beloved*; and again, *My dearly beloved*. Warm affections become ministers and Christians towards one another. Brotherly love must always go along with brotherly relation. (2.) He loved them and longed for them, longed to see them and hear from them, longed for their welfare and was earnestly desirous of it. *I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ*, ch. 1:8. (3.) He loved them and rejoiced in them. They were his joy; he had no greater joy than to hear of their spiritual health and prosperity. *I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in the truth*, 2 Jn. 4; 3 Jn. 4. (4.) he loved them and gloried in them. They were his crown as well as his joy. Never was proud ambitious man more pleased with the ensigns of honour than Paul was with the evidences of the sincerity of their faith and obedience. All this is to prepare his way to greater regard.

2. The exhortation itself: *So stand fast in the Lord*. Being in Christ, they must stand fast in him, be even and steady in their walk with him, and close and constant unto the end. Or, To *stand fast in the Lord* is to stand fast in his strength and by his grace; not trusting in ourselves, and disclaiming any sufficiency of our own. We must be *strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might*, Eph. 6:10. "So stand fast, so as you have done hitherto, stand fast unto the end, so as you are by beloved, and my joy and crown; so stand fast as those in whose welfare and perseverance I am so nearly interested and concerned."

II. He exhorts them to unanimity and mutual assistance (v. 2, 3): *I beseech Euodias and Syntyche that they be of the same mind in the Lord*. This is directed to some particular persons. Sometimes there is need of applying the general precepts of the gospel to particular persons and cases. Euodias and Syntyche, it seems, were at variance, either one with the other or with the church; either upon a civil account (it may be they were engaged in a law-suit) or upon a religious account-it may be they were of

different opinions and sentiments. "Pray," says he, "desire them from me to be of the same mind in the Lord, to keep the peace and live in love, to be of the same mind one with another, not thwarting and contradicting, and to be of the same mind with the rest of the church, not acting in opposition to them." Then he exhorts to mutual assistance (v. 3), and this exhortation he directs to particular persons: *I entreat thee also, true yoke-fellow*. Who this person was whom he calls true yoke-fellow is uncertain. Some think Epaphroditus, who is supposed to have been one of the pastors of the church of the Philippians. Others think it was some eminently good woman, perhaps Paul's wife, because he exhorts his yoke-fellow to *help the women who laboured with him*. Whoever was the yoke-fellow with the apostle must be a yoke-fellow too with his friends. It seems, there were women who laboured with Paul in the gospel; not in the public ministry (for the apostle expressly forbids that, 1 Tim. 2:12, *I suffer not a woman to teach*), but by entertaining the ministers, visiting the sick, instructing the ignorant, convincing the erroneous. Thus women may be helpful to ministers in the work of the gospel. Now, says the apostle, *do thou help them*. Those who help others should be helped themselves when there is occasion. "*Help them*, that is, join with them, strengthen their hands, encourage them in their difficulties."—*With Clement also, and other my fellow-labourers*. Paul had a kindness for all his fellow-labourers; and, as he had found the benefit of their assistance, he concluded how comfortable it would be to them to have the assistance of others. Of his fellow-labourers he says, *Whose names are in the book of life*; either they were chosen of God from all eternity, or registered and enrolled in the corporation and society to which the privilege of eternal life belongs, alluding to the custom among the Jews and Gentiles of registering the inhabitants or the freemen of the city. So we read of their *names being written in heaven* (Lu. 10:20), *not blotting his name out of the book of life* (Rev. 3:5), and of *those who are written in the Lamb's book of life*, Rev. 21:27. Observe, There is a book of life; there are names in that book and not characters and conditions only. We cannot search into that book, or know whose names are written there; but we may, in a judgment of charity, conclude that those who labour in the gospel, and are faithful to the interest of Christ and souls, have their names in the book of life.

III. He exhorts to holy joy and delight in God: *Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, Rejoice*, v. 4. All our joy must terminate in God; and our thoughts of God must be delightful thoughts. *Delight thyself in the Lord* (Ps. 37:4), *in the multitude of our thoughts within us* (grievous and afflicting thoughts) *his comforts delight our souls* (Ps. 94:19), and our *meditation of him is sweet*, Ps. 104:34. Observe, It is our duty and privilege to rejoice in God, and to rejoice in him always; at all times, in all conditions; even when we suffer for him, or are afflicted by him. We must not think the worse of him or of his ways for the hardships we meet with in his service. There is enough in God to furnish us with matter of joy in the worst circumstance on earth. He had said it before (ch. 3:1): *Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord*. Here he says it again, *Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say Rejoice*. Joy in God is a duty of great consequence in the Christian life; and Christians need to be again and again called to it. If good men have not a continual feast, it is their own fault.

IV. We are here exhorted to candour and gentleness, and good temper towards our brethren: "*Let your moderation be known to all men*, v. 5. In things indifferent do not run into extremes; avoid bigotry and animosity; judge charitably concerning one another." The word *to epieikes* signifies a good disposition towards other men; and this moderation is explained, Rom. 14.

Some understand it of the patient bearing of afflictions, or the sober enjoyment of worldly good; and so it well agrees with the following verse. The reason is, *the Lord is at hand*. The consideration of our Master's approach, and our final account, should keep us from smiting our fellow-servants, support us under present sufferings, and moderate our affections to outward good. "He will take vengeance on your enemies, and reward your patience."

V. Here is a caution against disquieting perplexing care (v. 6): *Be careful for nothing*—*μεμuden merimnate*: the same expression with that Mt. 6:25, *Take no thought for your life*; that is, avoid anxious care and distracting thought in the wants and difficulties of life. Observe, It is the duty and interest of Christians to live without care. There is a care of diligence which is our duty, and consists in a wise forecast and due concern; but there is a care of diffidence and distrust which is our sin and folly, and which only perplexes and distracts the mind. "*Be careful for nothing*, so as by your care to distrust God, and unfit yourselves for his service."

VI. As a sovereign antidote against perplexing care he recommends to us constant prayer: *In every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God*. Observe, 1. We must not only keep up stated times for prayer, but we must pray upon every particular emergency: *In every thing by prayer*. When any thing burdens our spirits, we must ease our minds by prayer; when our affairs are perplexed or distressed, we must seek direction and support. 2. We must join thanksgiving with our prayers and supplications. We must not only seek supplies of good, but own receipts of mercy. Grateful acknowledgments of what we have argue a right disposition of mind, and are prevailing motives for further blessings. 3. Prayer is the offering up of our desires to God, or making them known to him: *Let your requests be made known to God*. Not that God needs to be told either our wants or desires; for he knows them better than we can tell him: but he will know them from us, and have us show our regards and concern, express our value of the mercy and sense of our dependence on him. 4. The effect of this will be the *peace of God keeping our hearts*, v. 7. The *peace of God*, that is, the comfortable sense of our reconciliation to God and interest in his favour, and the hope of the heavenly blessedness, and enjoyment of God hereafter, *which passeth all understanding*, is a great good than can be sufficiently valued or duly expressed. *It has not entered into the heart of man*, 1 Co. 2:9. This peace will *keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus*; it will keep us from sinning under our troubles, and from sinking under them; keep us calm and sedate, without discomposure of passion, and with inward satisfaction. *Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee*, Isa. 26:3.

VII. We are exhorted to get and keep a good name, a name for good things with God and good men: *Whatsoever things are true and honest* (v. 8), a regard to truth in our words and engagements, and to decency and becomingness in our behaviour, suitable to our circumstances and condition of life. *Whatsoever things are just and pure*,—agreeable to the rules of justice and righteousness in all our dealings with men, and without the impurity or mixture of sin. *Whatsoever things are lovely and of good report*, that is, amiable; that will render us beloved, and make us well spoken of, as well as well thought of, by others. *If there is any virtue, if there is any praise*—any thing really virtuous of any kind and worthy of commendation. Observe, 1. The apostle would have the Christians learn any thing which was good of their heathen neighbours: "*If there be any virtue, think of these things*—imitate them in what is truly excellent among them, and let not them outdo you in any instance of goodness." We

should not be ashamed to learn any good thing of bad men, or those who have not our advantages. 2. Virtue has its praise, and will have. We should walk in all the ways of virtue, and abide therein; and then, whether our praise be of men or no, it will be of God, Rom. 2:29.

In these things he proposes himself to them for an example (v. 9): *Those things which you have learned, and received, and heard and seen in me, do.* Observe, Paul's doctrine and life were of a piece. What they saw in him was the same thing with what they heard from him. He could propose himself as well as his doctrine to their imitation. It gives a great force to what we say to others when we can appeal to what they have seen in us. And this is the way to have the *God of peace with us*—to keep close to our duty to him. The *Lord is with us while we are with him.*

Verses 10-19

In these verses we have the thankful grateful acknowledgment which the apostle makes of the kindness of the Philippians in sending him a present for his support, now that he was a prisoner at Rome. And here,

I. He takes occasion to acknowledge their former kindnesses to him, and to make mention of them, v. 15, 16. Paul had a grateful spirit; for, though what his friends did for him was nothing in comparison of what he deserved from them and the obligations he had laid upon them, yet he speaks of their kindness as if it had been a piece of generous charity, when it was really far short of a just debt. If they had each of them contributed half their estates to him, they had not given him too much, since they *owed to him even their own souls*; and yet, when they send a small present to him, how kindly does he take it, how thankfully does he mention it, even in this epistle which was to be left upon record, and read in the churches, through all ages; so that wherever this epistle shall be read there shall this which they did to Paul be told for a memorial of them. Surely never was present so well repaid. He reminds them that *in the beginning of the gospel no church communicated with him as to giving and receiving but they only*, v. 15. They not only maintained him comfortably while he was with them, but when *he departed from Macedonia* they sent tokens of their kindness after him; and this when no other church did so. None besides sent after him of their carnal things, in consideration of what they had reaped of his spiritual things. In works of charity, we are ready to ask what other people do. But the church of the Philippians never considered that. It redounded so much the more to their honour that they were the only church who were thus just and generous. *Even in Thessalonica* (after he had departed from Macedonia) *you sent once and again to my necessity*, v. 16. Observe, 1. It was but little which they sent; they sent only to his necessity, just such things as he had need of; perhaps it was according to their ability, and he did not desire superfluities nor dainties. 2. It is an excellent thing to see those to whom God has abounded in the gifts of his grace abounding in grateful returns to his people and ministers, according to their own ability and their necessity: *You sent once and again.* Many people make it an excuse for their charity that they have given once; why should the charge come upon them again? But the Philippians sent once and again; they often relieved and refreshed him in his necessities. He makes this mention of their former kindness, not only out of gratitude, but for their encouragement.

II. He excuses their neglect of late. It seems, for some time they had not sent to enquire after him, or sent him any present; but *now at the last their care of him flourished again* (v. 10), like a tree in the spring, which seemed all the winter to be quite dead.

Now, in conformity to the example of his great Master, instead of upbraiding them for their neglect, he makes an excuse for them: *Wherein you were also careful, but you lacked opportunity*. How could they lack opportunity, if they had been resolved upon it? They might have sent a messenger on purpose. But the apostle is willing to suppose, in favour of them, that they would have done it if a fair opportunity had offered. How contrary is this to the behaviour of many to their friends, by whom neglects which really are excusable are resented very heinously, when Paul excused that which he had reason enough to resent.

III. He commends their present liberality: *Notwithstanding, you have well done that you did communicate with my affliction*, v. 14. It is a good work to succour and help a good minister in trouble. Here see what is the nature of true Christian sympathy; not only to be concerned for our friends in their troubles, but to do what we can to help them. They *communicated with his affliction*, in relieving him under it. He who says, *Be you warmed, be you filled, and giveth not those things they have need of, what doth it profit?* Jam. 2:16. He rejoiced greatly in it (v. 10), because it was an evidence of their affection to him and the success of his ministry among them. When the fruit of their charity abounded towards the apostle, it appeared that the fruit of his ministry abounded among them.

IV. He takes care to obviate the bad use some might make of his taking so much notice of what was sent him. It did not proceed either from discontent and distrust (v. 11) or from covetousness and love of the world, v. 12. 1. It did not come from discontent, or distrust of Providence: *Not that I speak in respect of want* (v. 11); not in respect of any want he felt, nor of any want he feared. As to the former, he was content with the little he had, and that satisfied him; as to the latter, he depended upon the providence of God to provide for him from day to day, and that satisfied him: so that he did not speak in respect of want any way. *For I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content*. We have here an account of Paul's learning, not that which he got at the feet of Gamaliel, but that which he got at the feet of Christ. He had learnt to be content; and that was the lesson he had as much need to learn as most men, considering the hardships and sufferings with which he was exercised. He was in bonds, and imprisonments, and necessities, often; but in all he had learnt to be content, that is, to bring his mind to his condition, and make the best of it.—*I know both how to be abased and I know how to abound*, v. 12. This is a special act of grace, to accommodate ourselves to every condition of life, and carry an equal temper of mind through all the varieties of our state. (1.) To accommodate ourselves to an afflicted condition—to know how to be abased, how to be hungry, how to suffer want, so as not to be overcome by the temptations of it, either to lose our comfort in God or distrust his providence, or to take any indirect course for our own supply. (2.) To a prosperous condition—to know how to abound, how to be full, so as not to be proud, or secure, or luxurious. And this is as hard a lesson as the other; for the temptations of fulness and prosperity are not less than those of affliction and want. But how must we learn it? *I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me*, v. 13. We have need of strength from Christ, to enable us to perform not only those duties which are purely Christian, but even those which are the fruit of moral virtue. We need his strength to teach us to be content in every condition. The apostle had seemed to boast of himself, and of his own strength: *I know how to be abased* (v. 12); but here he transfers all the praise to Christ. "What do I talk of *knowing how to be abased, and how to abound?* It is only *through Christ who strengthens me* that I can do it, not in my own strength." So we are required to be *strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might* (Eph. 6:10), and to be

strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus (2 Tim. 2:1); and we are *strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man*, Eph. 3:16. The word in the original is a participle of the present tense, *en tou endynamounti me Christou*, and denotes a present and continued act; as if he had said, "Through Christ, who is strengthening me, and does continually strengthen me; it is by his constant and renewed strength I am enabled to act in every thing; I wholly depend upon him for all my spiritual power." 2. It did not come from covetousness, or an affection to worldly wealth: "*Not because I desired a gift* (v. 17): that is, I welcome your kindness, not because it adds to my enjoyments, but because it adds to your account." He desired not so much for his own sake, but theirs: "*I desire fruit that may abound to your account*, that is, that you may be enabled to make such a good use of your worldly possessions that you may give an account of them with joy." It is not with any design to draw more from you, but to encourage you to such an exercise of beneficence as will meet with a glorious reward hereafter. "For my part," says he, "*I have all, and abound*, v. 18. What can a man desire more than enough? I do not desire a gift for the gift's sake, for *I have all, and abound*." They sent him a small token, and he desired no more; he was not solicitous for a present superfluity, or a future supply: *I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things which were sent by you*. Note, A good man will soon have enough of this world; not only of living in it, but of receiving from it. A covetous worldling, if he has ever so much, would still have more; but a heavenly Christian, though he has little, has enough.

V. The apostle assures them that God did accept, and would recompense, their kindness to him. 1. He did accept it: *It is an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God*. Not a sacrifice of atonement, for none makes atonement for sin but Christ; but a sacrifice of acknowledgment, and *well-pleasing to God*. It was more acceptable to God as it was the fruit of their grace than it was to Paul as it was the supply of his want. *With such sacrifices God is well pleased*, Heb. 13:16. 2. He would recompense it: *But my God shall supply all your wants according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus*, v. 19. He does as it were draw a bill upon the exchequer in heaven, and leaves it to God to make them amends for the kindness they had shown him. "He shall do it, not only as your God, but as my God, who takes what is done to me as done to himself. You supplied my needs, according to your poverty; and he shall supply yours, according to his riches." But still it is by Christ Jesus; through him we have grace to do that which is good, and through him we must expect the reward of it. Not of debt, but of grace; for the more we do for God the more we are indebted to him, because we receive the more from him.

Verses 20-23

The apostle concludes the epistle in these verses,

1. With praises to God: *Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever, Amen*, v. 20. Observe, (1.) God is to be considered by us as our Father: *Now unto God and our Father*. It is a great condescension and favour in God to own the relation of Father to sinners, and allow us to say to him, *Our Father*; and it is a title peculiar to the gospel dispensation. It is also a great privilege and encouragement to us to consider him as our Father, as one so nearly related and who bears so tender an affection towards us. We should look upon God, under all our weaknesses and fears, not as a tyrant or an enemy, but as a Father, who is disposed to pity us and help us. (2.) We must ascribe glory to God as a Father, the glory of his own excellence and of all his mercy unto us. We must thankfully own the receipt of all from him, and give the praise of all to him. And our

praise must be constant and perpetual; it must be *glory for ever and ever*.

2. With salutations to his friends at Philippi: "*Salute every saint in Christ Jesus* (v. 21); give my hearty love to all the Christians in your parts." He desires remembrances not only to the bishops and deacons, and the church in general, but to every particular saint. Paul had a kind affection to all good Christians.

3. He sends salutations from those who were at Rome: "*The brethren who are with me salute you; the ministers, and all the saints here, send their affectionate remembrances to you. Chiefly those who are of Caesar's household; the Christian converts who belonged to the emperor's court.*" Observe, (1.) There were saints in Caesar's household. Though Paul was imprisoned at Rome, for preaching the gospel, by the emperor's command, yet there were some Christians in his own family. The gospel early obtained among some of the rich and great. Perhaps the apostle fared the better, and received some favour, by means of his friends at court. (2.) *Chiefly those*, etc. Observe, They, being bred at court, were more complaisant than the rest. See what an ornament to religion sanctified civility is.

4. The apostolical benediction, as usual: "*The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all, Amen.* The free favour and good will of Christ be your portion and happiness."