

Adam Clarke:

Introduction

Paul, in conjunction with Timothy, addresses himself to the saints at Philippi, and gives them his apostolical benediction, Philemon 1:1, Philemon 1:2. Thanks God for their conversion and union, and expresses his persuasion that God will continue his work among them, Philemon 1:3-6. Tells them of his strong affection for them, and prays that they may be filled with the salvation of God, Philemon 1:7-11. Shows them how much his persecution had contributed to the success of the Gospel, Philemon 1:12-14. Informs that there were some at Rome who preached the Gospel from unworthy motives; yet he was convinced that this, which was designed to injure him, should turn to his advantage, Philemon 1:15-19. Mentions his uncertainty whether he should be liberated or martyred, and his perfect readiness to meet either; yet, on the whole, expresses a hope that he should again visit them, Philemon 1:20-26. Exhorts them to a holy life, and comforts them under their tribulations, Philemon 1:27-30.

Verse 1

Paul and Timotheus - That Timothy was at this time with the apostle in Rome we learn from Philemon 2:19, and also that he was very high in the apostle's estimation. He had also accompanied the apostle on his two voyages to Philippi, see Acts 16 and 20., and was therefore deservedly dear to the Church in that city. It was on these accounts that St. Paul joined his name to his own, not because he was in any part the author of this epistle, but he might have been the apostle's amanuensis, though the subscription to the epistle gives this office to Epaphroditus. Neither in this epistle, nor in those to the Thessalonians and to Philemon does St. Paul call himself an apostle; the reason of which appears to be, that in none of these places was his apostolical authority called in question.

Bishops and deacons - ἱερεῖς καὶ διακόνες. The overseers of the Church of God, and those who ministered to the poor, and preached occasionally. There has been a great deal of paper wasted on the inquiry, "Who is meant by bishops here, as no place could have more than one bishop?" To which it has been answered: "Philippi was a metropolitan see, and might have several bishops." This is the extravagance of trifling. I believe no such officer is meant as we now term bishop.

Verse 2

Grace be unto you - See on Romans 1:7 (note).

Verse 3

Upon every remembrance - As often as you recur to my mind, so often do I thank God for the great work wrought among you. Some think that the words should be translated, for all your kind remembrance; referring to their kind attention to the apostle, in supplying his wants, etc.

Verse 4

Always in every prayer - I pray often for you, and have great pleasure in doing it, seeing what God has already wrought among you.

Verse 5

For your fellowship in the Gospel - if we consider κοινωνία as implying spiritual fellowship or communion, then it signifies, not only their attention to the Gospel, their readiness to continue it, and perseverance in it, but also their unity and affection among themselves. Some understand the word as expressing their liberality to the apostle, and to the Gospel in general; for the term may not only be applied to communion among themselves, but to communications to others. This sense, though followed by Chrysostom and Theophylact, does not appear to be the best; though we know it to be a fact that they were liberal in supplying the apostle's necessities, and, no doubt, in ministering to the support of others.

Verse 6

Being confident - There shall be nothing lacking on God's part to support you; and to make you wise, holy and happy; and bring you at last to his kingdom and glory.

Verse 7

It is meet for me to think this - ἡμεῖς ἡμεῖς. It is just that I should think so, because I have you in my heart - you live in my warmest love and most affectionate remembrance.

Inasmuch as both in my bonds - Because you have set your hearts upon me in my bonds, sending









made fast in the stocks. This was the conflict they had seen in him; and now they heard that he had been sent prisoner to Rome as an evil doer, and that he was at present in bonds, and shortly to be tried for his life before the Roman emperor to whom he had been obliged to appeal.

1.It was no small encouragement to these persons,

- (1.) That whatever sufferings they met with they were supported under them.
- (2.) That they suffered in the same cause in which their illustrious apostle was suffering.
- (3.) That they suffered, not because they had done any evil, or could be accused of any, but because they believed in the Son of God, who died for them and for all mankind.
- (4.) That all these sufferings were sanctified to their eternal good.

2.And God is able to make the same grace abound towards us in like circumstances; it is for this purpose that such consolatory portions are left on record. He who is persecuted or afflicted for Christ's sake, is most eminently honored by his Creator.