sermon index

# Adam Clarke Commentary Philippians 1

### 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 filed 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 apostleâ€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 apostleâ€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 - ΕΕÎfÎÎÎοΕοΕοηÎ,· 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.

### Varsa A

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 ÎŶοινωνια 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 apostleâ€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 -  $\hat{I} = \hat{I} = \hat$ 

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

Epaphroditus to minister to me in my necessities, Philemon 2:25, and contributing of your own substance to me, Philemon 4:14, sending once and again to me while I was in bonds for the defense of the faith, Philemon 4:15, Philemon 4:16; those things which being a sweet savor, a sacrifice well pleasing and acceptable to God, Philemon 4:18, confirm my hope concerning you; especially when I find you yet standing firm under the like afflictions, having the same conflict which ye saw in me, when I was among you, Acts 16:12, etc., and now hear to be in me, Philemon 1:30. Whitby.

### Verse 8

For God is my record - I call God to witness that I have the strongest affection for you, and that I love you with that same kind of tender concern with which Christ loved the world when he gave himself for it; for I am even ready to be offered on the sacrifice and service of your faith, Philemon 2:17.

#### Verse 9

This I pray - This is the substance of all my prayers for you, that your love to God, to one another, and to all mankind, may abound yet more and more, εÏ,,ι μαλλον και μαλλον πεϕιÏfÏpϵÏ...η, that it may be like a river, perpetually fed with rain and fresh streams so that it continues to swell and increase till it fills all its banks, and floods the adjacent plains.

In knowledge - Of God†s nature, perfections, your own duty and interest, his work upon your souls, and his great designs in the Gospel.

And in all judgment - Και παÏfá¿f αιÏfθηÏfει· In all spiritual or moral feeling; that you may at once have the clearest perception and the fullest enjoyment of those things which concern your salvation; that ye may not only know but feel that you are of God, by the Spirit which he has given you; and that your feeling may become more exercised in Divine things, so that it may he increasingly sensible and refined.

### Verse 10

That ye may approve things that are excellent - ΕιÏ, Ï"ο ιĴ¿ÎºÎ¹Î¼Î±Î¶ÎµÎ¹Î½ á½ÎμαÏ, Ï"α ιιαφεϕονÏ"α· To the end that ye may put to proof the things that differ, or the things that are in are more profitable. By the pure and abundant love which they received from God they would be able to try whatever differed from the teaching they had received, and from the experience they had in spiritual things.

That ye may be sincere - Ἱνα ηÏ"ε ειλιΰΰινειÏ, . The word ειλικΰινεια, which we translate sincerity, is compounded of ειλη, the splendor of the sun, and κϕινω, I judge; a thing which may be examined in the clearest and strongest light, without the possibility of detecting a single flaw or imperfection. "A metaphor,― says Mr. Leigh, "taken from the usual practice of chapmen, in the view and choice of their wares, that bring them forth into the light and hold up the cloth against the sun, to see if they can espy any default in them. Pure as the sun.― Be so purified and refined in your souls, by the indwelling Spirit, that even the light of God shining into your hearts, shall not be able to discover a fault that the love of God has not purged away.

Our word sincerity is from the Latin sinceritas, which is compounded of sine, without, and cera, wax, and is a metaphor taken from clarified honey; for the mel sincerum, pure or clarified honey, is that which is sine cera, without wax, no part of the comb being left in it. Sincerity, taken in its full meaning, is a word of the most extensive import; and, when applied in reference to the state of the soul, is as strong as the word perfection itself. The soul that is sincere is the soul that is without sin.

Without offense - ΑÏ€ĨėĨ¿ĨfĨºĨ¿Ï€Ĩ¿Ĩ¹Â· Neither offending God nor your neighbor; neither being stumbled yourselves, nor the cause of stumbling to others.

Till the day of Christ - Till he comes to judge the world, or, till the day in which you are called into the eternal world. According to this prayer, a man, under the power and influence of the grace of God, may so love as never to offend his Maker, to the latest period of his life. Those who deny this, must believe that the Spirit of God either cannot or will not do it; or, that the blood of Christ cannot cleanse from all unrighteousness. And this would be not only antiscriptural, but also blasphemous.

### Verse 11

Being filled with the fruits of righteousness - By righteousness we may understand, here, the whole work of the Spirit of God, in the soul of a believer; and by the fruits of righteousness, all holy tempers, holy words, and right actions. And with these they are to be filled, πεπληϰωμενοι, filled up, filled full; the whole soul and life occupied with them, ever doing something by which glory is brought to God, or good done to man.

By Jesus Christ - That is, according to his doctrine, through the power of his grace, and by the agency of his Spirit.

Unto the glory and praise of God - God being honored when the work of his grace thus appears to men in the fruits of righteousness; and God is praised by all the faithful when his work thus appears. Every genuine follower of God has his glory in view by all that he does, says, or intends. He loves to glorify God, and he glorifies him by showing forth in his conversion the glorious working of the glorious power of the Lord.

#### Verse 12

That the things which happened unto me - St. Paul was at this time a prisoner at Rome, and it appears probable that he had already been called to make a defense for himself, and to vindicate the doctrines of the Gospel; and this he had been enabled to do in such a manner that the honor of the Gospel had been greatly promoted by it. As the Philippians loved him greatly, he felt it right to give them this information relative to his state, and how God had turned his bonds to the advantage of that cause on account of which he was bound.

### Verse 13

My bonds - are manifest in all the palace - In consequence of the public defense which he was obliged to make, his doctrines must be fully known in the court, and throughout the whole city, as on his trial he would necessarily explain the whole. The praetorium, İ\(\vec{\text{i}}\)

### Verse 14

Waxing confident - Finding the effect produced by the public defense which the apostle made, they were greatly encouraged, and the more boldly and openly proclaimed the doctrine of Christ crucified.

The word - The doctrine of Christ; several excellent MSS. and versions add, some l̂ lµl̂¿l̈..., others l̂sl̈...l̄•l̂¹l̂¿l̈..., the word of God, or the word of the Lord. This is a respectable reading, and is probably genuine.

# Verse 15

Some - preach Christ even of envy and strife - These must have been the Judaizing teachers, who insisted on the necessity of connecting the Mosaic rites with the Christian institutions; and, probably, denounced Paul to the Jews dwelling at Rome as not only an enemy to the law and the prophets, but also as a very imperfect Christian, because he declared strongly against the doctrine of circumcision, etc.; and no doubt endeavored to prejudice him with the heathen Romans.

The word preach is not to be taken here as implying that the different persons mentioned were what we call preachers of the Gospel: all that we can understand from St. Paulâ€s use of the word is, that they proclaimed Christ as the promised Messiah, espoused the Christian cause, and contended, whether in public or private, that this Jesus was the Christ; but nothing of this kind appears to have been intended in reference to the conversion of sinners.

Some also of good will - Some, through mere benevolence to the apostle, both espoused his doctrine and vindicated his cause.

### Verse 16

Preach Christ of contention - The Judaizing teachers, they also preach Christ; they acknowledge that Jesus is the Christ or promised Messiah, and preach him as such.

Not sincerely -  $\hat{I}\ddot{Y}\ddot{I}...\ddot{I}^{\dagger}$   $\acute{a}^{i}\sqrt{a}\hat{I}^{j}\ddot{Z}\ddot{I}\ddot{W}\ddot{I}$ ,  $\hat{A}$ . Not chastely, garbling the Gospel; not speaking the whole truth, but just what served their purpose; and at the same time they denounced the apostle as an enemy to the Divine institutions, because he spoke against circumcision.

### Verse 17

The other of love - Through a sincere desire, not only to make known the way of salvation to the people, but also to vindicate and help the apostle, because they considered him as appointed by God to preach and defend the Gospel. The 16th and 17th verses are transposed by ABDEFG, and several others; the Syriac, Arabic of Erpen, Coptic, Sahidic, Ethiopic, Armenian, Vulgate, Itala, and several of the fathers. On this evidence Griesbach transposed them in his edition.

### Verse 18

What then? - It is a matter of little importance to me how Christ is preached, provided he be preached. I rejoice that any thing is known of him; and am truly glad that the Gospel is even made partially known, for this will lead to farther inquiries, and in the end be of service to the truth.

#### Verse 19

Through your prayer - Knowing them to be genuine followers of Christ, he was satisfied that their prayers would be very available in his behalf; and under God he places much dependence upon them.

The supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ - The word επιχοϕηγια, which we translate supply, signifies also furnishing whatever is necessary. The Spirit of God he expected to help all his infirmities, and to furnish him with all the wisdom, prudence, strength of reason, and argument, which might be necessary for him in the different trials he had to pass through with his persecutors, and the civil powers, at whose judgment-seat he stood.

#### Verse 20

Earnest expectation - He had the most confident expectation that God would stand by him, so that he should be enabled, with the utmost liberty of speech,  $\hat{l}\mu\hat{l}'_2$   $\hat{l}\in\hat{l}\pm\hat{l}'f$   $\hat{a}_2$   $\hat{l}\in\hat{l}\pm\hat{l}'$  in to testify the Gospel of the grace of God; and, should he have the liberty of doing so, he was utterly regardless what the issue might be relative to himself. Whether life or death, was to him perfectly equal, and perfectly indifferent, providing Christ were magnified - his person, nature, doctrine, etc., shown to be, what they really are, most noble, most excellent, most necessary, and most glorious.

### Verse 21

For to me to live is Christ - Whether I live or die, Christ is gain to me. While I live I am Christâ€s property and servant, and Christ is my portion; if I die - if I be called to witness the truth at the expense of my life, this will be gain; I shall be saved from the remaining troubles and difficulties in life, and be put immediately in possession of my heavenly inheritance. As, therefore, it respects myself, it is a matter of perfect indifference to me whether I be taken off by a violent death, or whether I be permitted to continue here longer; in either case I can lose nothing.

# Verse 22

But if I live in the flesh - Should I be spared longer, I shall labor for Christ as I have done; and this is the fruit of my labor, that Christ shall be magnified by my longer life, Philemon 1:20.

Yet what I shall choose I wot not - Had I the two conditions left to my own choice, whether to die now and go to glory, or whether to live longer in persecutions and affliction, (glorifying Christ by spreading the Gospel), I could not tell which to prefer.

### Verse 23

For I am in a strait betwixt two - Viz. the dying now, and being immediately with God; or living longer to preach and spread the Gospel, and thus glorify Christ among men.

Having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ - ΤÎ-ν εÏ=ÊÎθÎ...μÎÎαν εχων εÎÎ, Ï,,ο αναλÏ...Ïfαι . It appears to be a metaphor taken from the commander of a vessel, in a foreign port, who feels a strong desire αναλÏ...Ïfαι , to set sail, and get to his own country and family; but this desire is counterbalanced by a conviction that the general interests of the voyage may be best answered by his longer stay in the port where his vessel now rides; for he is not in dock, he is not aground, but rides at anchor in the port, and may any hour weigh and be gone. Such was the condition of the apostle: he was not at home, but although he was abroad it was on his employerâ€̃s business; he wishes to return, and is cleared out and ready to set sail, but he has not received his last orders from his owner, and whatever desire he may feel to be at home he will faithfully wait till his final orders arrive.

Which is far better - Πολλῳ - μαλλον κϕειÏfÏfον· Multo magis melior, Vulgate; much more better. The reader will at once see that the words are very emphatic.

#### Verse 24

To abide in the flesh - It would certainly be gain to myself to die, but it will be a gain to you if I live. If I die I shall go immediately to glory; if I live I shall continue to minister to you, and strengthen you in the faith.

### Verse 25

Having this confidence, I know that I shall abide - Convinced that it is necessary that I should live longer, for the spreading and defense of the Gospel, I am persuaded that I shall now be liberated. This was in fact the case, for, after having been two years in bonds at Rome, he was released.

For your furtherance - In the way of righteousness.

And joy of faith - And happiness in that way. The farther a man proceeds in the way of truth, the stronger his faith will be; and the stronger his faith, the greater his joy or happiness.

#### Verse 26

That your rejoicing may be more abundant - Men rejoice more in recovering a thing that was lost, than they do in a continual possession of what is of much greater value.

#### Verse 27

Let your conversation be as it becometh the Gospel - The apostle considers the Church at Philippi as a free or imperial city, which possesses great honors, dignities, and privileges; and he exhorts them to act,  $\hat{\mathbf{l}} \pm \hat{\mathbf{l}}^3 \hat{\mathbf{l}}^1 \hat{\mathbf{l}} \otimes \hat{\mathbf{l}}$ , worthy of or suitably to those honors and privileges. This is the idea that is expressed by the word  $\hat{\mathbf{l}} \in \hat{\mathbf{l}}  

Whether I come and see you - Leaving the matter still in doubt as to them, whether he should again visit them.

In one spirit - Being all of one mind under the influence of the Holy Ghost.

Striving together - ΣÏ...ναθλοÏ...νÏ,,εÏ,· Wrestling together, not in contention with each other, but in union against the enemies of the Gospel faith - the doctrine of Christ crucified, and freedom from all Mosaic rites and ceremonies, as well as from sin and perdition, through his passion and sacrifice.

### Verse 28

In nothing terrified by your adversaries - So it appears that the Church at Philippi was then under persecution.

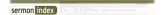
Which is to them - ἩÏ,,ιÏ, αÏ...Ï,Ĵ¿Î¹Ï, εÏfÏ,Ĵ¹Ï½ . Some very judicious critics consider ἡÏ,Ĵ¹Ï, as referring to πιÏfÏ,Ĵ¹Ï, , the faith of the Gospel, which they, the heathen, considered to be a token of perdition to all them who embraced it; but, as the apostle says, it was to them the Philippians, on the contrary, the most evident token of salvation; for, having embraced the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, they were incontestably in the way to eternal blessedness.

# Verse 29

Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ - Ὑμιν εχαϕιÏfθη· To you it is graciously given; it is no small privilege that God has so far honored you as to permit you to suffer on Christ†saccount. It is only his most faithful servants that he thus honors. Be not therefore terrified by your enemies; they can do nothing to you which God will not turn to your eternal advantage. We learn from this that it is as great a privilege to suffer for Christ as to believe on him; and the former in certain cases (as far as the latter in all cases) becomes the means of salvation to them who are thus exercised.

### Verse 30

Having the same conflict - When Paul preached the Gospel at Philippi he was grievously persecuted, as we learn from Acts 16:19-40, being stripped, scourged, thrown into prison, even into the dungeon, and his feet



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.lt 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 Christâ€s sake, is most eminently honored by his Creator.