

**THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE
PHILIPPIANS**

MIAMI NAVS
SPRING 2015

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION		3
ABOUT THIS STUDY		4–5
STUDY 1	Background	6–7
STUDY 2	Philippians 1:1–11	8–10
STUDY 3	Philippians 1:12–30	11–13
STUDY 4	Philippians 2:1–11	14–16
STUDY 5	Philippians 2:12–30	17–19
STUDY 6	Philippians 3:1–11	20–22
STUDY 7	Philippians 3:12–4:1	23–25
STUDY 8	Philippians 4:2–23	26–28
STUDY 9	Summary	29
MATTHEW HENRY'S CONCISE COMMENTARY		30–34

INTRODUCTION

Philippians is a letter from Paul to a church in Philippi. Seems pretty straight forward, right?

Well... Paul is writing from prison, but he is full of hope. The church is an encouragement to Paul, but he urges them to new levels of love and service. Paul talks about the worth of our efforts, the true path to prestige, the example we have in Christ, the practices of giving and service, and much more!

This book is full of theological teachings and their practical outworkings in the life of someone following Jesus.

As you approach this book for study prepare to be changed!

If you are new to studying the Bible, Welcome! If you have been studying the Bible for years, Welcome! As it has been said, "The Gospel is shallow enough for a child to play in, but deep enough for an elephant to drown in." No matter your experience or background, this study is meant to help you get to the heart of Philippians and apply it to your life.

Philippians 1:9–11 New Living Translation

I pray that your love will overflow more and more, and that you will keep on growing in knowledge and understanding. For I want you to understand what really matters, so that you may live pure and blameless lives until the day of Christ's return. May you always be filled with the fruit of your salvation—the righteous character produced in your life by Jesus Christ—for this will bring much glory and praise to God.

ABOUT THIS STUDY

This is an **inductive study**. That means you will be using a set of tools to get to the heart of what Paul is really saying. Just like any author, Paul has something to say. The goal of any Bible study is to understand what the author is saying and then consider how it applies to our life today.

The first study and the last study are a little bit different. You will begin by looking at the background of the Philippian church. This is an exciting point of view that we don't have for all of the New Testament letters. The last study will help you condense what you have learned through the semester and give you a sense of ownership over Philippians.

Studies 2–8 are inductive and are laid out the same way:

STUDY 1
PHILIPPIANS 1:1-11

The work of grace will never be perfected till the day of Jesus Christ, the day of his appearance, but we may always be confident God will perform his good work, as every soul abideth he has really begun it by regeneration; though we must not trust in outward appearances, nor in any thing but a new creation by holiness.
Matthew Henry

Read
Read Philippians 1:1-11 a few times. You might even want to read several different translations. Check out ESV, NIV, NET, Philips Amplified, or The Message to name a few!

Study
Use the following pages to study this passage inductively. Once you finish your study and are confident you have a handle on the passage, consider the following questions.

Consider

1. What do you think Paul means by "partnership" or "participation" in the Gospel?
2. Do you believe that God will continue the work of his salvation in you? Do you see him doing that?
3. Why do you think Paul connects love and discernment?
4. These verses contain a prayer of Paul's for the Philippian church. Look at another prayer of Paul's for the Corinthian church in 1 Corinthians 14-9. What similarities do you notice?

Memorize
[NIV] 1:6 being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.
[ESV] 1:6 And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

5

Read the whole passage to begin the study.

Study the passage using the tools on the following pages (more on that in a minute.)

Consider the questions for each study as a way to check/deepen your understanding of the passage. You may also want to use this time to consider the quote at the top of the study.

Lastly, *Memorize* the key verse listed at the bottom of the page. This is a verse chosen to exemplify the passage you just studied.

PHILIPPIANS 1:1-11 ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

CONTEXT

OBSERVATIONS

QUESTIONS

6

For each passage study, the next two pages will be identical except for the reference at the top of the page. Because of that, as you get farther into this study you will become more and more experienced in inductive study.

As you begin each study, take time to consider the **context** of the passage. What was the previous section talking about? What does the section after deal with? Consider the audience, tone, topic, and other elements that will help you get an accurate picture of where Paul might be going in this section.

Because each of us bring biases when we learn about something we need to be careful to separate what the text says from what we think it says, especially early in our study. The step of **observations** gives you opportunity to simply look at what the passage says. As you read through the passage ask the question, "What does this say?" Some observations may be as simple as: Paul is writing to Christians; Paul is thankful for this church; Paul prays for this church. Have a goal of making at least one observation per verse – but you can make more!

ABOUT THIS STUDY

While making observations you will inevitably have **questions**. Questions will help guide your study, and will enliven discussion with your Bible study group. Try to focus your questions at the heart of the passage. Be careful that they are not tangential or idle. Your aim should be to peel back the layers of the text so you can get to the heart of it.

PHILIPPIANS 1:1-11 ☆☆☆☆
KEY WORDS
CORRELATION
INTERPRETATION
APPLICATION

During your study you may notice certain words that are repeated, unclear, or are central to your understanding of the passage. These are **key words**. By looking at them in depth you can gain a fuller grasp on the passage. Consider using a resource like blueletterbible.com to look up the meaning of the original Greek. You could also use a dictionary to consider the full meaning behind the English word.

When you get to the step of **correlation** it is helpful to think of a ripple in a pond. As the ripple moves out from the point of origin it gets larger and larger. If you run across something Paul says that is confusing, it could be helpful if he taught on that same topic elsewhere. Consider the following ripple progression: chapter, book, author, testament, whole Bible. Blue Letter Bible is a great resource to find correlating passages,

as is any study Bible.

At this point in your study you should have a pretty good handle on what Paul is talking about. The **interpretation** section is a place for you to distill your thoughts thus far and to write out your answer to the question, "What does this passage mean?" It might also help to consider this question, "How would you explain the meaning of this passage to someone who had never read/studied it?"

The last component to your study is **application**. This is where the rubber meets the road. Consider all that you have learned and what Paul is teaching and make some practical applications that would be a natural fit for you and your life. This is perhaps the most important part of application – apply it to YOUR life. Don't worry about how others might apply this section, simply pray and ask God if there are natural ways for this study to transform your life.



STUDY 1

PHILIPPIANS BACKGROUND



Read Acts 16 in its entirety.

How does God lead Paul to Philippi?

We see the beginnings of the church in Philippi in this chapter, and with these individuals. It is helpful to get a glimpse into how this church started, and the people who made up its backbone.

One of these people is **LYDIA**. We see her conversion in verses 11–15.

Record any observations about Lydia.

1. What was Lydia's background?
2. What type of person would you compare her to in this day and age?
3. How was Lydia prepared for the Gospel?



STUDY 1

PHILIPPIANS BACKGROUND



Another person is only referred to as the **PHILIPPIAN JAILER**.

Record any observations about the Jailer.

1. What do you notice about Paul & Silas' time in prison?
2. How do you see God at work in this story? What events occur that lead to the jailer's conversion?

We get a general sense of the state of Philippi, as well as the spiritual environment, in verses 16–24, and 35–40.

1. What can you observe about the general state of Philippi?
2. Would this be a challenging or an easy place to plant a church, in your opinion? What challenges might a Christian church have in this city?
3. How long can you ascertain that Paul & Timothy spent here?
4. What does it say about the power of God that a thriving church began in this city, a city that Paul hadn't even planned to travel to?

Take some time and *Pray* about your study this year, asking God to further the work he has already begun in you (1:6).



STUDY 2

PHILIPPIANS 1:1–11



The work of grace will never be perfected till the day of Jesus Christ, the day of his appearance. But we may always be confident God will perform his good work, in every soul wherein he has really begun it by regeneration; though we must not trust in outward appearances, nor in any thing but a new creation to holiness.

Matthew Henry

Read

Read the passage a few times. You might even want to read several different translations. Check out ESV, NIV, NLT, Phillips, Amplified, or The Message to name a few!

Study

Use the following pages to study this passage inductively. Once you finish your study and are confident you have a handle on the passage, consider the following questions.

Consider

1. What do you think Paul means by "partnership" or "participation" in the Gospel?
2. Do you believe that God will continue the work of his salvation in you? Do you see him doing this?
3. Why do you think Paul connects love and discernment?
4. These verses contain a prayer of Paul's for the Philippian church. Look at another prayer of Paul's for the Corinthian church, in 1 Corinthians 1:4–9. What similarities do you notice?

Memorize

[NIV] 1:6 being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

[ESV] 1:6 And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

PHILIPPIANS 1:1-11



CONTEXT

OBSERVATIONS

QUESTIONS

PHILIPPIANS 1:1-11



KEY WORDS

CORRELATION

INTERPRETATION

APPLICATION

STUDY 3

PHILIPPIANS 1:12-30

Your life ain't wrapped up in what you drive, The clothes you wear, the job you work, the color of your skin, Naw, you Christian first. People living for job, make a little money, start living for a car. Get 'em a wife, a house, kids and a dog, Then they retire, they're living high on the hog. But guess what? They didn't ever really live at all. To live is Christ and that's Paul I recall, To die is gain, so for Christ we give it all. He's the treasure you'll never find in a mall. You see, your money, your singleness, marriage, talent, your time, They were loaned to you to show the world that Christ is divine.

Lecrae, *Don't Waste Your Life*

Read

Read the passage a few times. You might even want to read several different translations. Check out ESV, NIV, NLT, Phillips, Amplified, or The Message to name a few!

Study

Use the following pages to study this passage inductively. Once you finish your study and are confident you have a handle on the passage, consider the following questions.

Consider

1. What challenges in your life have "really served to advance the Gospel" as Paul's imprisonment has for him?
2. What does it mean for our manner of life to be worthy of the Gospel? (Paul lists a few examples.) Are there ways in which your life isn't reflecting the Gospel?
3. How is Paul suffering in this passage? What does Paul say about suffering?
4. Do you think that you, like Paul, can say that "to live is Christ, and to die is gain?" Why or why not?

Memorize

Keep working on 1:6! If you have that down memorize 1:27.

[NIV] 1:27 Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel

[ESV] 1:27 Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel,

PHILIPPIANS 1:12-30



CONTEXT

OBSERVATIONS

QUESTIONS

PHILIPPIANS 1:12-30



KEY WORDS

CORRELATION

INTERPRETATION

APPLICATION



STUDY 4

PHILIPPIANS 2:1–11



Has it ever occurred to you that one hundred pianos all tuned to the same fork are automatically tuned to each other? They are of one accord by being tuned, not to each other, but to another standard to which each one must individually bow. So one hundred worshipers met together, each one looking away to Christ, are in heart nearer to each other than they could possibly be, were they to become 'unity' conscious and turn their eyes away from God to strive for closer fellowship.

A.W. Tozer, *The Pursuit of God*

Read

Read the passage a few times. You might even want to read several different translations. Check out ESV, NIV, NLT, Phillips, Amplified, or The Message to name a few!

Study

Use the following pages to study this passage inductively. Once you finish your study and are confident you have a handle on the passage, consider the following questions.

Consider

1. Humility is key in this passage. Look at what these other verses say about humility: James 4:6, 1 Peter 5:5, Proverbs 22:4.
2. What steps of humility does this passage describe Jesus taking (verses 6–8)?
3. How have you been contributing to or subtracting from the unity of your Christian communities?
4. If we have the same attitude as Christ, how does that change our relationships?
5. How could you actively seek to look to the interests of others this week?

Memorize

[NIV] 2:3–4 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

[ESV] 2:3–4 Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

PHILIPPIANS 2:1-11



CONTEXT

OBSERVATIONS

QUESTIONS

PHILIPPIANS 2:1-11



KEY WORDS

CORRELATION

INTERPRETATION

APPLICATION

STUDY 5

PHILIPPIANS 2:12–30

Do everything without complaining and arguing, so that no one can criticize you. Live clean, innocent lives as children of God, shining like bright lights in a world full of crooked and perverse people. Hold firmly to the word of life; then, on the day of Christ's return, I will be proud that I did not run the race in vain and that my work was not useless.

PHIL 2:14–16, NLT

Read

Read the passage a few times. You might even want to read several different translations. Check out ESV, NIV, NLT, Phillips, Amplified, or The Message to name a few!

Study

Use the following pages to study this passage inductively. Once you finish your study and are confident you have a handle on the passage, consider the following questions.

Consider

1. What is our part and God's part in our salvation, according to 2:12–13, and looking back at 1:6?
2. Have you seen grumbling and complaining play out in your life, especially as it relates to your aim to reflect Jesus? What does grumbling and complaining reflect about our hearts?
3. What does it look like to hold firmly to the word of life? What is the word of life, and what might this entail?

Memorize

[NIV] 2:14–15 Do everything without grumbling or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, "children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation." Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky

[ESV] 2:14–15 Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world,

PHILIPPIANS 2:12-30 ★ ★ ★ ★

CONTEXT

OBSERVATIONS

QUESTIONS

PHILIPPIANS 2:12-30



KEY WORDS

CORRELATION

INTERPRETATION

APPLICATION



STUDY 6

PHILIPPIANS 3:1-11



○ God, I have tasted Thy goodness, and it has both satisfied me and made me thirsty for more. I am painfully conscious of my need of further grace. I am ashamed of my lack of desire. ○ God, the Triune God, I want to want Thee; I long to be filled with longing; I thirst to be made more thirsty still. Show me Thy glory, I pray Thee, that so I may know Thee indeed. Begin in mercy a new work of love within me. Say to my soul, "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away." Then give me grace to rise and follow Thee up from this misty lowland where I have wandered so long. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

A.W. Tozer, *The Pursuit of God*

Read

Read the passage a few times. You might even want to read several different translations. Check out ESV, NIV, NLT, Phillips, Amplified, or The Message to name a few!

Study

Use the following pages to study this passage inductively. Once you finish your study and are confident you have a handle on the passage, consider the following questions.

Consider

1. What does it mean to put confidence in the flesh? How do you see yourself doing this?
2. What "gains" have you considered "loss" for the sake of knowing Christ?
3. How do you experience the power of his resurrection? What impact does Christ's resurrection have in your life?
4. What things are you holding on to that you need to consider "garbage" or "rubbish" in order to know Christ more?

Memorize

[NIV] 3:7-8 But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. 8 What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ

[ESV] 3:7-8 But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ

PHILIPPIANS 3:1-11



CONTEXT

OBSERVATIONS

QUESTIONS

PHILIPPIANS 3:1-11

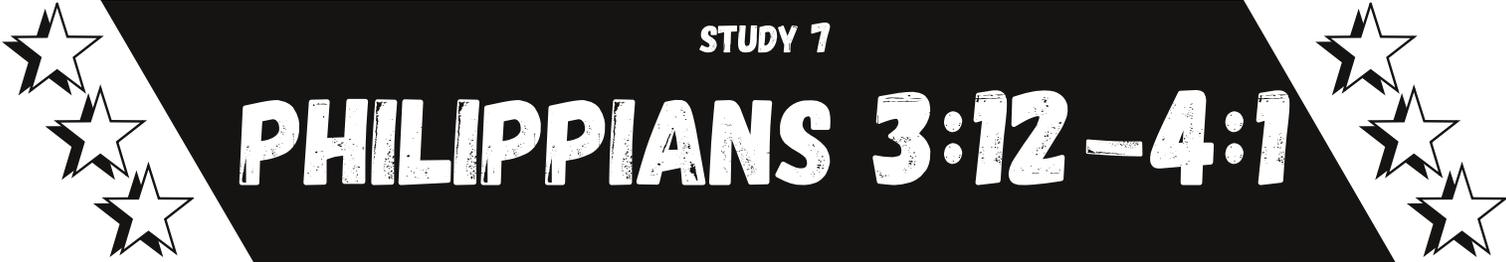


KEY WORDS

CORRELATION

INTERPRETATION

APPLICATION



STUDY 7

PHILIPPIANS 3:12–4:1

If you read history you will find that the Christians who did most for the present world were precisely those who thought most of the next. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this.

C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*

Read

Read the passage a few times. You might even want to read several different translations. Check out ESV, NIV, NLT, Phillips, Amplified, or The Message to name a few!

Study

Use the following pages to study this passage inductively. Once you finish your study and are confident you have a handle on the passage, consider the following questions.

Consider

1. Throughout the Bible it talks about our citizenship being in heaven, as Paul does here. Look up some other verses on this topic and record what they illuminate about this idea:

Hebrews 11:16, 13:14

Eph. 2:19

1 Peter 2:9

2. How do you see verse 19 playing out in our culture and in your life?
3. What does it look like to eagerly await a Savior?

Memorize

Keep working on 3:7–8! If you have those down, start on 9.

[NIV] 3:9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith.

[ESV] 3:9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—

PHILIPPIANS 3:12-4:1



CONTEXT

OBSERVATIONS

QUESTIONS

PHILIPPIANS 3:12-4:1



KEY WORDS

CORRELATION

INTERPRETATION

APPLICATION



STUDY 8

PHILIPPIANS 4:2–23



To learn how to be content, learn to...

- ...Never allow yourself to complain about anything, not even the weather.
- ...Never picture yourself in a different circumstance or someplace else.
- ...Never compare your lot with the lot of another.
- ...Never allow yourself to wish this or that had been otherwise.
- ...Never be anxious about tomorrow. Remember it is God's, and not ours.

Paraphrased from Calm My Anxious Heart

Read

Read the passage a few times. You might even want to read several different translations. Check out ESV, NIV, NLT, Phillips, Amplified, or The Message to name a few!

Study

Use the following pages to study this passage inductively. Once you finish your study and are confident you have a handle on the passage, consider the following questions.

Consider

1. Do you ever evaluate your thoughts based on verse 8? When do you find yourself thinking about things that are not true or believing lies?
2. Are you putting what you are seeing, learning, and hearing into practice? (verse 9)
3. What do you see about contentment in verses 10–13?
4. Do you believe verse 19?

Memorize

[NIV] 4:6–7 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

[ESV] 4:6–7 do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

PHILIPPIANS 4:2-23



CONTEXT

OBSERVATIONS

QUESTIONS

PHILIPPIANS 4:2-23



KEY WORDS

CORRELATION

INTERPRETATION

APPLICATION

PHILIPPIANS SUMMARY

Re Read Philippians in its entirety. Ask God to solidify your understanding during this time.

Book Summary

Give Philippians a title in your own words:

Key Verse:

Write a 2–3 sentence summary of the whole book:

Key Lessons

What are the 5 key lessons you have taken away from your study of Philippians?

- ➔
- ➔
- ➔
- ➔
- ➔

Key Application

Consider how God has used Philippians in your life. Think about something from your study of Philippians that will characterize your life 20 years from now. Make sure it is specific enough that you will know if you are continuing to follow through on it or not.

MATTHEW HENRY'S CONCISE COMMENTARY

Chapter 1

Verses 1–7 The highest honour of the most eminent ministers is, to be servants of Christ. And those who are not really saints on earth, never will be saints in heaven. Out of Christ, the best saints are sinners, and unable to stand before God. There is no peace without grace. Inward peace springs from a sense of Divine favour. And there is no grace and peace but from God our Father, the fountain and origin of all blessings. At Philippi the apostle was evil entreated, and saw little fruit of his labour; yet he remembers Philippi with joy. We must thank our God for the graces and comforts, gifts and usefulness of others, as we receive the benefit, and God receives the glory. The work of grace will never be perfected till the day of Jesus Christ, the day of his appearance. But we may always be confident God will perform his good work, in every soul wherein he has really begun it by regeneration; though we must not trust in outward appearances, nor in any thing but a new creation to holiness. People are dear to their ministers, when they receive benefit by their ministry. Fellow-sufferers in the cause of God should be dear one to another.

Verses 8–11 Shall not we pity and love those souls whom Christ loves and pities? Those who abound in any grace, need to abound more. Try things which differ; that we may approve the things which are excellent. The truths and laws of Christ are excellent; and they recommend themselves as such to any attentive mind. Sincerity is that in which we should have our conversation in the world, and it is the glory of all our graces. Christians should not be apt to take offence, and should be very careful not to offend God or the brethren. The things which most honour God will most benefit us. Let us not leave it doubtful whether any good fruit is found in us or not. A small measure of Christian love, knowledge, and fruitfulness should not satisfy any.

Verses 12–20 The apostle was a prisoner at Rome; and to take off the offence of the cross, he shows the wisdom and goodness of God in his sufferings. These things made him known, where he would never have otherwise been known; and led some to inquire after the gospel. He suffered from false friends, as well as from enemies. How wretched the temper of those who preached Christ out of envy and contention, and to add affliction to the bonds that oppressed this best of men! The apostle was easy in the midst of all. Since our troubles may tend to the good of many, we ought to rejoice. Whatever turns to our salvation, is by the Spirit of Christ; and prayer is the appointed means of seeking for it. Our earnest expectation and hope should not be to be honoured of men, or to escape the cross, but to be upheld amidst temptation, contempt, and affliction. Let us leave it to Christ, which way he will make us serviceable to his glory, whether by labour or suffering, by diligence or patience, by living to his honour in working for him, or dying to his honour in suffering for him.

Verses 21–26 Death is a great loss to a carnal, worldly man, for he loses all his earthly comforts and all his hopes; but to a true believer it is gain, for it is the end of all his weakness and misery. It delivers him from all the evils of life, and brings him to possess the chief good. The apostle's difficulty was not between living in this world and living in heaven; between these two there is no comparison; but between serving Christ in this world and enjoying him in another. Not between two evil things, but between two good things; living to Christ and being with him. See the power of faith and of Divine grace; it can make us willing to die. In this world we are compassed with sin; but when with Christ, we shall escape sin and temptation, sorrow and death, for ever. But those who have most reason to desire to depart, should be willing to remain in the world as long as God has any work for them to do. And the more unexpected mercies are before they come, the more of God will be seen in them.

MATTHEW HENRY'S CONCISE COMMENTARY

Chapter 1 cont.

Verses 27–30 Those who profess the gospel of Christ, should live as becomes those who believe gospel truths, submit to gospel laws, and depend upon gospel promises. The original word "conversation" denotes the conduct of citizens who seek the credit, safety, peace, and prosperity of their city. There is that in the faith of the gospel, which is worth striving for; there is much opposition, and there is need of striving. A man may sleep and go to hell; but he who would go to heaven, must look about him and be diligent. There may be oneness of heart and affection among Christians, where there is diversity of judgment about many things. Faith is God's gift on the behalf of Christ; the ability and disposition to believe are from God. And if we suffer reproach and loss for Christ, we are to reckon them a gift, and prize them accordingly. Yet salvation must not be ascribed to bodily afflictions, as though afflictions and worldly persecutions deserved it; but from God only is salvation: faith and patience are his gifts.

Chapter 2

Verses 1–7 The highest honour of the most eminent ministers is, to be servants of Christ. And those who are not really saints on earth, never will be saints in heaven. Out of Christ, the best saints are sinners, and unable to stand before God. There is no peace without grace. Inward peace springs from a sense of Divine favour. And there is no grace and peace but from God our Father, the fountain and origin of all blessings. At Philippi the apostle was evil entreated, and saw little fruit of his labour; yet he remembers Philippi with joy. We must thank our God for the graces and comforts, gifts and usefulness of others, as we receive the benefit, and God receives the glory. The work of grace will never be perfected till the day of Jesus Christ, the day of his appearance. But we may always be confident God will perform his good work, in every soul wherein he has really begun it by regeneration; though we must not trust in outward appearances, nor in any thing but a new creation to holiness. People are dear to their ministers, when they receive benefit by their ministry. Fellow-sufferers in the cause of God should be dear one to another.

Verses 8–11 Shall not we pity and love those souls whom Christ loves and pities? Those who abound in any grace, need to abound more. Try things which differ; that we may approve the things which are excellent. The truths and laws of Christ are excellent; and they recommend themselves as such to any attentive mind. Sincerity is that in which we should have our conversation in the world, and it is the glory of all our graces. Christians should not be apt to take offence, and should be very careful not to offend God or the brethren. The things which most honour God will most benefit us. Let us not leave it doubtful whether any good fruit is found in us or not. A small measure of Christian love, knowledge, and fruitfulness should not satisfy any.

Verses 12–20 The apostle was a prisoner at Rome; and to take off the offence of the cross, he shows the wisdom and goodness of God in his sufferings. These things made him known, where he would never have otherwise been known; and led some to inquire after the gospel. He suffered from false friends, as well as from enemies. How wretched the temper of those who preached Christ out of envy and contention, and to add affliction to the bonds that oppressed this best of men! The apostle was easy in the midst of all. Since our troubles may tend to the good of many, we ought to rejoice. Whatever turns to our salvation, is by the Spirit of Christ; and prayer is the appointed means of seeking for it. Our earnest expectation and hope should not be to be honoured of men, or to escape the cross, but to be upheld amidst temptation, contempt, and affliction. Let us leave it to Christ, which way he will make us serviceable to his glory, whether by labour or suffering, by diligence or patience, by living to his honour in working for him, or dying to his honour in suffering for him.

MATTHEW HENRY'S CONCISE COMMENTARY

Chapter 2 cont.

Verses 21–26 Death is a great loss to a carnal, worldly man, for he loses all his earthly comforts and all his hopes; but to a true believer it is gain, for it is the end of all his weakness and misery. It delivers him from all the evils of life, and brings him to possess the chief good. The apostle's difficulty was not between living in this world and living in heaven; between these two there is no comparison; but between serving Christ in this world and enjoying him in another. Not between two evil things, but between two good things; living to Christ and being with him. See the power of faith and of Divine grace; it can make us willing to die. In this world we are compassed with sin; but when with Christ, we shall escape sin and temptation, sorrow and death, for ever. But those who have most reason to desire to depart, should be willing to remain in the world as long as God has any work for them to do. And the more unexpected mercies are before they come, the more of God will be seen in them.

Chapter 3

Verses 1–11 Sincere Christians rejoice in Christ Jesus. The prophet calls the false prophets dumb dogs, (Isaiah 56:10) ; to which the apostle seems to refer. Dogs, for their malice against faithful professors of the gospel of Christ, barking at them and biting them. They urged human works in opposition to the faith of Christ; but Paul calls them evil-workers. He calls them the concision; as they rent the church of Christ, and cut it to pieces. The work of religion is to no purpose, unless the heart is in it, and we must worship God in the strength and grace of the Divine Spirit. They rejoice in Christ Jesus, not in mere outward enjoyments and performances. Nor can we too earnestly guard against those who oppose or abuse the doctrine of free salvation. If the apostle would have gloried and trusted in the flesh, he had as much cause as any man. But the things which he counted gain while a Pharisee, and had reckoned up, those he counted loss for Christ. The apostle did not persuade them to do any thing but what he himself did; or to venture on any thing but that on which he himself ventured his never-dying soul. He deemed all these things to be but loss, compared with the knowledge of Christ, by faith in his person and salvation. He speaks of all worldly enjoyments and outward privileges which sought a place with Christ in his heart, or could pretend to any merit and desert, and counted them but loss; but it might be said, It is easy to say so; but what would he do when he came to the trial? He had suffered the loss of all for the privileges of a Christian. Nay, he not only counted them loss, but the vilest refuse, offals thrown to dogs; not only less valuable than Christ, but in the highest degree contemptible, when set up as against him. True knowledge of Christ alters and changes men, their judgments and manners, and makes them as if made again anew. The believer prefers Christ, knowing that it is better for us to be without all worldly riches, than without Christ and his word. Let us see what the apostle resolved to cleave to, and that was Christ and heaven. We are undone, without 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 benefit by it, who trust in themselves. Faith is the appointed means of applying the saving benefit. It is by faith in Christ's blood. We are made conformable to Christ's death, when we die to sin, as he died for sin; and the world is crucified to us, and we to the world, by the cross of Christ. The apostle was willing to do or to suffer any thing, to attain the glorious resurrection of saints. This hope and prospect carried him through all difficulties in his work. He did not hope to attain it through his own merit and righteousness, but through the merit and righteousness of Jesus Christ.

MATTHEW HENRY'S CONCISE COMMENTARY

Chapter 3 cont.

Verses 12–21 This simple dependence and earnestness of soul, were not mentioned as if the apostle had gained the prize, or were already made perfect in the Saviour's likeness. He forgot the things which were behind, so as not to be content with past labours or present measures of grace. He reached forth, stretched himself forward towards his point; expressions showing great concern to become more and more like unto Christ. He who runs a race, must never stop short of the end, but press forward as fast as he can; so those who have heaven in their view, must still press forward to it, in holy desires and hopes, and constant endeavours. Eternal life is the gift of God, 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. True believers, in seeking this assurance, as well as to glorify him, will seek more nearly to resemble his sufferings and death, by dying to sin, and by crucifying the flesh with its affections and lusts. In these things there is a great difference among real Christians, but all know something of them. Believers make Christ all in all, and set their hearts upon another world. If they differ from one another, and are not of the same judgment in lesser matters, yet they must not judge one another; while they all meet now in Christ, and hope to meet shortly in heaven. Let them join in all the great things in which they are agreed, and wait for further light as to lesser things wherein they differ. The enemies of the cross of Christ mind nothing but their sensual appetites. Sin is the sinner's shame, especially when gloried in. The way of those who mind earthly things, may seem pleasant, but death and hell are at the end of it. If we choose their way, we shall share their end. The life of a Christian is in heaven, where his Head and his home are, and where he hopes to be shortly; he sets his affections upon things above; and where his heart is, there will his conversation be. There is glory kept for the bodies of the saints, in which they will appear at the resurrection. Then the body will be made glorious; not only raised again to life, but raised to great advantage. Observe the power by which this change will be wrought. May we be always prepared for the coming of our Judge; looking to have our vile bodies changed by his Almighty power, and applying to him daily to new—create our souls unto holiness; to deliver us from our enemies, and to employ our bodies and souls as instruments of righteousness in his service.

Chapter 4

Verse 1 The believing hope and prospect of eternal life, should make us steady and constant in our Christian course. There is difference of gifts and graces, yet, being renewed by the same Spirit, we are brethren. To stand fast in the Lord, is to stand fast in his strength, and by his grace.

Verses 2–9 Let believers be of one mind, and ready to help each other. As the apostle had found the benefit of their assistance, he knew how comfortable it would be to his fellow—labourers to have the help of others. Let us seek to give assurance that our names are written in the book of life. Joy in God is of great consequence in the Christian life; and Christians need to be again and again called to it. It more than outweighs all causes for sorrow. Let their enemies perceive how moderate they were as to outward things, and how composedly they suffered loss and hardships. The day of judgment will soon arrive, with full redemption to believers, and destruction to ungodly men. There is a care of diligence which is our duty, and agrees with a wise forecast and due concern; but there is a care of fear and distrust, which is sin and folly, and only perplexes and distracts the mind. As a remedy against perplexing care, constant prayer is recommended. Not only stated times for prayer, but in every thing by prayer. We must join thanksgivings with prayers and supplications; not only seek supplies of good, but own the mercies we have received. God needs not to be told our wants or desires; he knows them better than we do; but he will have us show that we value the mercy, and feel our dependence on him.

MATTHEW HENRY'S CONCISE COMMENTARY

Chapter 4 cont.

Verses 2–9 cont. The peace of God, the comfortable sense of being reconciled to God, and having a part in his favour, and the hope of the heavenly blessedness, are a greater good than can be fully expressed. This peace will keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus; it will keep us from sinning under troubles, and from sinking under them; keep us calm and with inward satisfaction. Believers are to get and to keep a good name; a name for good things with God and good men. We should walk in all the ways of virtue, and abide therein; then, whether our praise is of men or not, it will be of God. The apostle is for an example. His doctrine and life agreed together. The way to have the God of peace with us, is to keep close to our duty. All our privileges and salvation arise in the free mercy of God; yet the enjoyment of them depends on our sincere and holy conduct. These are works of God, pertaining to God, and to him only are they to be ascribed, and to no other, neither men, words, nor deeds.

Verses 10–19 It is a good work to succour and help a good minister in trouble. The nature of true Christian sympathy, is not only to feel concern for our friends in their troubles, but to do what we can to help them. The apostle was often in bonds, imprisonments, and necessities; but in all, he learned to be content, to bring his mind to his condition, and make the best of it. Pride, unbelief, vain hankering after something we have not got, and fickle disrelish of present things, make men discontented even under favourable circumstances. Let us pray for patient submission and hope when we are abased; for humility and a heavenly mind when exalted. It is a special grace to have an equal temper of mind always. And in a low state not to lose our comfort in God, nor distrust his providence, nor take any wrong course for our own supply. In a prosperous condition not to be proud, or secure, or worldly. This is a harder lesson than the other; for the temptations of fulness and prosperity are more than those of affliction and want. The apostle had no design to urge them to give more, but to encourage such kindness as will meet a glorious reward hereafter. Through Christ we have grace to do what is good, and through him we must expect the reward; and as we have all things by him, let us do all things for him, and to his glory.

Verses 20–23 The apostle ends with praises to God. We should look upon God, under all our weakness and fears, not as an enemy, but as a Father, disposed to pity us and help us. We must give glory to God as a Father. God's grace and favour, which reconciled souls enjoy, with the whole of the graces in us, which flow from it, are all purchased for us by Christ's merit, and applied by his pleading for us; and therefore are justly called the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

ABOUT MATTHEW HENRY FROM BLUELETTERBIBLE.COM

He was a 17th and early 18th Century minister of the Gospel in Chester, England, and died in 1714. Quoting Charles Spurgeon: "First among the mighty for general usefulness we are bound to mention the man whose name is a household word, Matthew Henry. He is most pious and pithy, sound and sensible, suggestive and sober, terse and trustworthy...."