

Sharing God's Grace

Key Verse: *"Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel."*
—Philippians 1:27

Selected Scripture:
Philippians 1

in knowledge and in all judgment; That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God. But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel; So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places."vss. 9-13

Another favorable outcome of Paul's imprisonment

THE APOSTLE PAUL COM-menced this epistle by identifying himself as well as his companion, Timothy, and proceeded to express gratitude to God for his brethren in Philippi. Paul was always joyful as he prayed for the Philippian brethren and, because of their zeal in proclaiming the gospel, the memory of their faithful service made him long to be with them again despite his being kept as a prisoner in Rome. "God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ."—Phil. 1:1-8

"This I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more

was the fact that his example of fearless witnessing inspired many in Rome to manifest greater courage in speaking boldly as they testified about Christ. “Many of the brethren in the Lord, . . . are much more bold to speak the word without fear.” (vs. 14) Evidently, there were two types of Christians who were engaged in this preaching. Some may have had a desire for greater personal prominence or even to add affliction to Paul out of envy, whereas others with sincere desires wished to further the work which the apostle had begun.—vss. 15,16

Those who preached with loving motives recognized Paul’s determination to defend the gospel, realizing that he had been imprisoned because of his bold stand. Thus, the apostle was able to rejoice because even though his activities caused his loss of freedom, he derived pleasure from seeing the Heavenly Father’s name glorified—“I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.”—vss. 17,18

Paul’s life was totally consumed in serving Christ; but if he were to die, it would have been a personal gain for him to have rested from all the rigors associated with being spent while carrying out his sacrificial course. “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” (vs. 21) Having yielded himself to God’s will, he had no personal preference as to whether that should be his portion, or instead, to be relieved from toil by the sleep of death. Nevertheless, the apostle continues by expressing a desire for a third option—the return of Christ—because he knew that he then would be resurrected and rewarded for his faithfulness.—vss. 22,23

In the Key Verse of our lesson, Paul expressed a desire that the brethren should speak truth with sobriety, and honor God by a walk of consistency based upon divine principles.

This sage counsel is applicable to all who would serve as divine mouthpieces. “Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.”—Ps. 19:14 ■