

## JOY WAY

An Exposition of the Epistle of Paul

TO THE PHILIPPIANS

by

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CHRISTIAN LITERATURE CRUSADE Pennsylvania

### CHAPTER SIXTEEN

#### GOOD-BYE, SAINTS! - Philippians 4:21-23

WE come now to the closing salutations of this delightful Letter.

"**The salutation of me Paul with mine own hand**", I Corinthians 16:21. "**Ye see how large a letter** [perhaps, with what large letters] **I have written unto you with mine own hand**", Galatians 6:11. "**The salutation by the hand of me Paul**", Colossians 4:18 - "**remember my bonds**", he adds, possibly by way of explanation of his large, bad writing: you can't write very well when your wrist is in chains. "**The salutation of Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every Epistle: so I write**", II Thessalonians 3:17.

It would appear that it was his practice, after dictating his letters to an amanuensis, to take the stylo, and, in his own handwriting, to add a concluding word of farewell salutation.

Doubtless to the great delight of his readers. I feel pretty sure that these closing three verses belong to the same category; and that when Epaphroditus delivers the letter, all those Philippian Christians will gather round to hear the thrice welcome communication, and that when he shows them the actual manuscript, they will recognise with glee the authentic calligraphy.

Dear old Paul, his writing is as bad as ever - but what else can you expect: "**Remember, my bonds**"! So he addresses himself to "**the saints**". I do not propose to deal here now with Who, and What they are - we went into that in our first chapter but Where they are. We consider, therefore, the suggestions of their four locations.

#### SAINTS - IN THE PLACE OF BLESSING

"**Salute every saint in Christ Jesus**" (21). Here is the last occurrence of this wonderful "**in**" - as we have seen over and over again in the course of the Epistle, all that we are, all that we do, all that we can, all that we have, is "**in**" Him - as old John Newton sang,

"My never failing treasury, tilled  
With boundless stores of grace."

This is our dwelling-place, our fount of blessing.

Do you notice that it says, not "all", which would indicate the company of believers as a whole, but "**every**", which represents that company as individuals. Christians are not saved in the mass but as separate persons.

The old word may be applied, "**Ye shall be gathered one by one**", Isaiah 27:12. And we have abundant evidence in the Gospels that, while "**I have compassion on the multitude**", Matthew 15:32.

He gave Himself unreservedly, untiringly, to the blessing of individuals - what an amount of time He gave to the ones:

- as Nicodemus, and the Samaritan woman; how wonderfully He prayed for the particular person: as in Luke 22:31-32

- "**Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you [all], that he may sift you as wheat, but I have prayed for thee [personally] that thy faith fail not**".

And how conscious of the individual He was even in the crowd - "**His disciples said unto Him, Thou seest the multitude thronging Thee, and sayest Thou, who touched Me?**" Mark 5:31. He was aware of that one in the crowd and of her need. Yes, Paul, we note the distinction between your "**all**", and your "**every**".

Each one of the everyone has one thing in common. They are amazingly different in so many ways - some have made very little progress in the Christian life; some are at a complete standstill; some have come into a very high level of spiritual experience; but satisfactory or unsatisfactory, each alike has this enormous privilege and blessing, that he is "**in Christ Jesus**" - so that the satisfactory may grow yet further, and the unsatisfactory may become what He wants him to be.

Praise GOD for such a place of blessing. What an inspiration it might be if our waking thought each morning were, to repeat, "**in Christ Jesus**".

### **SAINTS - IN THE PLACE OF PRIVILEGE**

**"The brethren which are with me" (21).**

"The companions who visited him most frequently in his imprisonment," says Plummer. "Probably Tychicus, of the Ephesians, Timothy and Epaphroditus, of the Philippians; possibly, Onesimus, who, erstwhile thief that he had been, was now amongst the blessed body of "**brethren**"; Aristarchus, "**my fellowprisoner**", Mark, Jesus Justus, Epaphras, and Dr. Luke, of the Colossians."

All these were with the apostle in Rome, and were apparently allowed to go and see him in his prison room, and to go on errands for him. But, what a privilege to be with him like that - to help him with his correspondence, to listen to his talk of the things of GOD, to join with him in his prayers, to watch his patience and cheerfulness that could enable him to write such a letter as the Joy Way. Again we say, what a privilege!

How great and deep can be the influence upon us lesser men by our association with the big men of the Kingdom of GOD.

H. M. Stanley bore glad testimony to the spiritual influence that the godly life of Dr. Livingstone had on him during the time he stayed with him, after he had "found" him, in Darkest Africa.

How can I measure the effect of my working under Dr. R. A. Torrey, during his month's wonderful Mission at the Royal Albert Hall, London; or thank GOD enough for the influence on my life and ministry these many years, of my beloved friend, that great man of GOD, Richard Hudson Pope, to whom I owe more than I can ever say, or pay; or to that remarkable man, Robert Charles Joynt, my boyhood's vicar, at Christ Church, Gipsy Hill.

To what a host of men and women I am indebted! You, too, my reader, can bear like witness to those who have meant much to you - first leading you to CHRIST, and then leading you on for CHRIST.

Can we, I wonder, such small people, be enabled to exercise any little degree of such influence on any life? Someone, perhaps, coming up behind. At any rate, let us, on the negative side, be careful not to exercise a bad, or doubtful, influence - as we quoted earlier, "**Make straight paths for your feet lest, that which is lame be turned out of the way,**" Hebrews 12:13.

### **SAINTS - IN THE PLACE OF COMMUNITY**

**"All the saints salute you"** (22).

He has thought of them as individuals, now it is the company as a united body. They all, as a church, in Rome, send their love to them all, the church in Philippi.

It is a fact of very great importance, both for the spiritual welfare of the Christian, as also for the strength of the testimony to the world, that each soul won to CHRIST should remember that he is thus "**born again**" into a family, into a company, and that no believer can be properly developed, in the things of GOD, unless he realises, and exercises, the church life, unless he have this sense, and obligation, of community.

- the Christian songster is not just a soloist, but a member of a choir;
- the Christian soldier is not just a solitary figure, but a member of an army;
- the Christian scholar is not just a privately tutored learner, but a member of a school;
- the Christian son is not just a lonely child, but a member of a family;
- the Christian sprinter is not just an individual performer, but a member of a team.

**"For by one Spirit are we all baptised into one body,"** I Corinthians 12:13.

So let us be zealous in the discharge of our responsibilities in connection with whatever outward body of believers we happen to belong - pulling our weight in all its life and activity.

We shall, of course, fail in that if we are for ever running after distinguished preachers in other churches, or rushing off to exciting campaigns far and wide and never settling to the ordinary life of work and worship in our own church. We can't grow strong in the spiritual life if we are continually feeding upon the attractive and delightful pastries of special missions and movements, we need normally the steady, solid feeding upon the bread and meat of the Word.

Moreover, let us see to it that our relationship with our fellowmembers of the Christian community is all that it ought to be as members of the same Family of GOD. It is sad beyond measure that we sometimes find in churches such an unholy brood of grudges, cliques, criticisms, even antagonisms. The Philippian church was not free of such unworthy squabbles, as we have seen. Anyhow, my reader, be sure that you are not party to any of these unchristian things. Differences of opinion, of course, there must be, but why cannot they be held, and stated, in love? How grievous it is to find church members at "logger-heads".

Let us heed the injunction, in this as in all matters, "**Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption,**" Ephesians 4:30, "**endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace,**" verse 3.

### **SAINTS - IN THE PLACE OF SURPRISE**

**"They that are of Caesar's household" (22).**

Lightfoot has established the fact that "**Caesar's household**" was a description embracing the whole wide range of imperial employees - not just his family and house servants, but his slaves, his army, his officials; the most important and the most insignificant, both near and far.

It would be amongst these that the prevailing idolatry would be likely to be more rampant, especially the fairly recently fostered cult of the worship of the emperor. Yet, we get the surprising news that there had arisen "**saints... [in] Caesar's household**"!

It is not difficult to realise how this came about. Take such a phrase as we saw in 1:13, "**My bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace**". There is more in that than appears on the surface - this prisoner was attracting some very special attention, everybody was talking about him, they had never had one like him.

Those soldiers who were placed on the rota for guarding him were, at least some of them, not only interested, but intrigued and impressed. There were some whom this prisoner led to the Saviour; and on their next term of duty with him there would be Christian fellowship and instruction.

One such, perhaps, would be thrilled as Paul made up a sermon on the pieces of his armour, and dictated it as part of a letter he was writing: Ephesians 6:14-18. And now the apostle includes the little band of military converts - the first Soldiers' Christian Association - in the greetings to the

Philippian believers. It was a lovely surprise to find that happy company in such a place.

It only goes to show - doesn't it - that you can bear your witness, and see fruit, in the most unlikely places. Paul was not going to be silenced because he was in prison - he would find opportunity for Christian testimony, wherever he was, and whatever his circumstances.

Wasn't it when he was ill at Troas, that he won the doctor, Dr. Luke, to CHRIST? We don't know that; but it was so like the apostle: always at it. And the results came.

Are you in a situation seemingly uncongenial to Christian witness - an office, a factory, a shop, a club, a home, a circle. Be on the look-out - and, perhaps all of a sudden, most unexpectedly, you may get a chance to say a word for the Master to some individual, which by the work of the HOLY SPIRIT shall lead to conversion. There is no place where the SPIRIT'S influence is impossible, though many where it might be surprising. Let us seek only that we may walk closely with GOD, so that, at any moment, He may be able to arrange the opportunity for us to help some soul heavenward.

"Lord, lay some soul upon my heart,  
And bless that soul through me;  
And may I humbly do my part  
To bring that soul to Thee."

Be that our attitude, and our prayer, wherever we may be called to be - however unlikely it may all seem to be.

**"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen."**

Almost the first word of the Epistle was "**grace**" (1:2); and now, almost the last word is "**grace**" (4:23). Type of the Christian life itself - which begins in grace, Ephesians 2:8; which is pursued all along in grace, I Corinthians 15:10; and which will usher us into eternal bliss by that same grace.

"Oh, to grace how great a debtor  
Daily I'm constrained to be."

What better, prayerful, good wish could the apostle close his letter with. All kinds of saints, and the whole body of saints - "**every**", and "**all**" - find the variety of their need met, and the sufficiency of their problems met, in this all-embracing and eternal grace of GOD.

And the "**great grace**" of Acts 4:33 will soon be followed by the "**great joy**" of Acts 8:8 - this is the Joy Way. Amen!

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