

**Church Bible School (GBS)** + **Internet-Bible-School (IBS)**

**Philippians** (Lesson 06)

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### **Concerning the studying**

I **recommend** you to read through the respective book in the bible at first. Our manual is the bible. And then to go through one or two pages of the material every day, which implies to also look up and read the given bible scriptures to become thoroughly acquainted with the subject. Another suggestion would be to use this material as one's regular devotion.

If you would like to **obtain a degree (certificate) at the end of the seminary**, you need to answer the **test questions** at the end of each lesson and send or email it to us with your full name and address. And now I wish you lots of joy and spiritual profit during your bible study.

Pastor Joh. W. Matutis

### **Miscellaneous**

**The city of Philippi** is called after Philipp, the king of Macedonia and father Alexander the Great. It was an ancient Greek city (Acts 6.12). Some time after its establishment Octavian conquered the city. It became a Roman colony with Italian citizenship. Colonies of this kind were ruled by governors called Duumvirat. In this place the first European Christian church was established (Acts 16, 9-40)

### **Author**

The christian antiquity accredited this letter to the **Apostle Paul** on one accord. The name of Paul on the letterhead was usually a sufficient evidence for the church. Furthermore the whole letter carries the handwriting of the apostle of the Gentiles. The many expressions of the personal relationship between the author and the reader also applies to Paul's relationship to the church of Philippi.

On his **second mission journey** (about the year 49 AD) the church of Philippi was founded (Acts 16, 12-40).

**Paul** was born in Tarsus at Sicily (Acts 21, 39/ 22.3). He came from a very pious Jewish family (2.Tim. 1,3 / 2.Cor.11, 22), **originated from the tribe of Benjamin** (Phil.3, 5/ Rom.11,1). Benjamin was the favorite son of Jacob, he received a special blessing (Gen.49, 27 /Deut.33,12). From this tribe came forth the first king of Israel (King Saul), within the borders of the tribe was Jerusalem, etc. He emphasizes, that he comes from one of the most favored tribes. His father was a Pharisee (Acts 23, 6). Through his parents he had the Roman citizenship by birth (Acts 16, 37 / 22,25-29). He learned the profession of a tentmaker (Acts 18, 3). In his early years he came to Jerusalem for his studies to become a teacher or a scribe. One of his teachers was Gamaliel (Acts.22, 3). Paul became a Pharisee (Acts.26.5) One part in 2.Cor.5.1 brings to our mind, that he might have seen and known Jesus in the days of His incarnated life. He became a determined enemy of Jesus and his disciples (Acts.8,3 /9,4 /22,4-5 /26,9-11). His chastisement is mentioned in Acts.9,1-22. We also hear about from him personally (Acts 22,6-16). From the moment of his conversion at Damascus on he became a "servant of Jesus Christ", (Phil.1,1) and an apostle for the Gentiles (Act.22.21).

### **RECEIPIENTS**

This church is adressed to the church of Philippi (Phil.1, 1), the first Christian church on European ground. It consisted mainly of converted heathens. A minority of Jews probably joined them.

The biblical account explains to us **the establishment of the church** (Acts 16,12-40). Paul came to Philippi by the guidance of the holy spirit, inspite of his original destination (Acts 16, 8-12). When he arrived, about the end of the year 52 AD, he turned to the Jews first, which was his custom. Because of their small numbers they did not own synagogues and held their services at the river. The first person who converted was a Proselyte, Lydia of Asia-Minor. Her house became the shelter of the missionaries. A short time later there was a conflict between Paul, Silas and the municipality. Paul and Silas were sued and had to endure chastisement and imprisonment. The fruit of this situation was the conversion of the jailer and his family. After the release of the jail Paul had to stop his work there (Acts 16,40), the missionaries moved on and left a young church. One of the first Christian men in Europe was the jailer of Philippi. (Acts 16,16-34).

Later, on the **third mission journey** about the year of 58 AD, Paul visited the city for the second time (Acts 20, 6). The relationship between him and this church always remained especially affectionate (Phil.1,5 / 4,1.10). With their honest interest and warm evidence of their love these Christians followed him everywhere.

And Paul, who usually preferred to insist on his independence, did not even hesitate to receive their offerings facing a relationship of deep trust towards each other. It was probably the members of this church who partly supported him with money in Rome (Phil. 2, 25/ 4,10.18).

## **Composition**

Many interpreters agree that the letter must have been written in Rome. The hope of release and a happy end of the process seemed closer than it could have ever been in Caesarea (Phil.1, 23. 24). There Paul invoked the „Emperor“, why he had to expect a prolonged imprisonment (Acts 25, 11).

The word praetorium refers to the Roman barracks where the soldiers of the praetorian cohorts who formed the personal guard of the Emperor. The expression „the house of Caesar“ (Phil.4, 22) cannot be referred to the house of the governor Felix, but only to Christians who belonged to the house of the Emperor.

As far as *the timeframe* of the composition is concerned, we believe that the letter was written during the last time of his imprisonment in Rome. Some reinforcing arguments:

*At the time of his writing Paul is expecting a soon and happy ending of the trial and is hoping for deliverance (Phil.1, 23-27; 2, 23-24). This was only possible about the end of his imprisonment.*

The church of Philippi had experienced difficult situations and hard times to send to him Epaphroditus and financial support (Phil.2, 25). But to enforce such a mission it took a lot of time.

Finally Luke and Aristarchus, who went to Rome together with Paul (Act. 27, 1-2), were not there anymore, because there are no greetings mentioned in this letter, whereas they are mentioned in the letters of Philemon and Colossians (Col. 4, 10. 14; Philem. 24).

Because of the biblical evidence and the undisputed testimony of the ancient church tradition we believe that the composition of Philippians took place about the end of 63 AD or the beginning of 64 AD in Rome.

## **PURPOSE AND GOAL**

The immediate purpose of this letter is clear: It describes the return of Epaphroditus who was very sick during the stay in Rome. Paul therefore sent him back home, to console the Philippians (Phil.2, 25). This opened the opportunity for Paul to prove his gratefulness to the Philippians for the generous gift they sent him in the form of their messenger Epaphroditus (Phil.4, 10-20). Paul used this occasion to recommend Epaphroditus and to give him an excellent testimony (Phil.2, 26-30,) and to the Philippians some personal messages and to exhort them to walk worthy of the calling of the Lord.

## **MISCELLANEOUS**

### **Special characteristics**

This letter is the only document, that complements the information of the book of Acts (Act.28, 30-31) about the stay of Paul in Rome. Grace to the special relationship between the author and the receiver it is a very personal letter.

The letter shows us a church that is conform to the overall expectation of the the apostle. It does not excell in extraordinary **gifts** of the spirit, it is rather rich in the **fruits** of the spirit.

This letter also gives us insight into the great spiritual tolerance of the apostle (Phil.1, 15-18).

The Christologie (Phil.2, 6-11) renders a certain value to this letter.

Paul knew by own experience, that there is only one way to release the inner man from the natural heart of man, which is beholding the son of God with your own eyes. The one who freely left the divine throne to come down to the deepest depths of the human abyss. Therewith he brought us out with him, by sharing with us the resurrection by faith, which means that he enabled us in the spirit to rise with him to his throne.

17 time the word „**joy**“ is mentioned in this letter. And it is also the topical theme of it. It is a characteristic of the letter. (Phil.1,18.25 / 2.2,17,18,28,29 / 3,1 /4,1,410)

**Keyverse: „Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say: Rejoice!“ (Phil.4, 4).**

## **The center of Philippians is the person Jesus**

### The person Jesus

His Divinitychkeit	Ch.	2, 6a
His equality with God	„	2, 6b
His incarnation	„	2, 7
His death	„	2, 8
His resurrection	„	3, 10
His glory	„	2, 9
His sovereignty	„	2, 10-11
His second coming	„	3, 20

### ***Christ, all in all***

Christ, beginning and end of faith	„	1, 6
Christ, my righteousness	„	3, 9
Christ, my life	„	1, 21
Christ, my highest revelation	„	3, 8
Christ, my strength	„	4, 13
Christ, my goal.	„	3, 14
Christ, my joy	„	4, 4
Christ, my hope	„	3, 20-21
Christ, my wealth	„	4, 19
Christ, my price	„	3, 8
Christ, my peace	„	4, 7

### ***The Christian joy***

Joy in prayer	„	1, 4
Joy about the proclamation of Christ	„	1, 18
Joy of hope	„	1, 20-21
Joy by faith	„	1, 25
Joy of unity	„	2, 2
Joy of sacrifice	„	2, 17
Joy of reunion	„	2, 28
Joy of hospitality	„	2, 29
Joy in the Lord	„	3, 1; 4, 4
Joy of giving and receiving	„	4, 10
Joy of brotherhood	„	4, 1
Joy at all times	„	4, 4

### ***Unity of Christianity***

One Lord	„	1, 18
One spirit	„	1, 27
One love	„	2, 2
One goal	„	2, 4
One mind	„	2, 5; 4, 2
One glory	„	3, 3

## **THE CONTENT OF PHILIPPIANS**

Introduction	Ch. 1,1-11
From of adress	Ch. 1, 1-2
Danksagung und Fürbitte	„ 1, 3-11

1. <b>Personal Messages</b>	Ch. 1, 12-26
Preaching of the gospel inspite of imprisonment	Ch. 1, 12-18
Joyful endurance of the time in prison	„ 1, 19-21
Hopeful perspective of the future	„ 1, 22-26
2. <b>Exhortation to perfect change</b>	Ch. 1, 27-2, 18
Steadfastness in suffering	Ch. 1, 27-30
Humility according to Jesus	„ 2, 1-11
Total dedication and obedience	„ 2, 12-18
3. <b>News about the coworkers</b>	Ch. 2, 19
Recommendation of Timothy	Ch. 2, 19
Return of Epaphroditus .	„ 2, 25
4. <b>Warning to the churches</b>	Ch. 3, 1-4, 3
about evil coworkers .	Ch. 3, 1-3
about lawfulness and selfrighteousness	„ 3, 4
false holiness	„ 3, 12-14
pride of ambition	„ 3, 15-21
arguements and separation	„ 4, 1-3
5. <b>Exhorting the church</b>	Kap. 4, 4
concerning the joy of the Lord	Kap. 4, 4
trust and faith	„ 4, 5
inner peace	„ 4, 7
virtuous change	„ 4, 8-9
6. <b>Final Word</b>	Kap. 4,10
Thanksgiving for the gifts of the church	Kap. 4, 10
Greetings and blessings	„ 4, 21-23

## The Epistle to the Philippians

Phil.1.1-11: **Greetings form Paul and Timothy.** Paul wants to send Timothy to Philippi soon and therefore wants to provide for him authority and respect before he introduces them.

**Timothy** was the son of a Greek Gentile father from Lystra. The mother was a Jewish woman who believed in Christ (Acts.16.1), just like his grandmother who diligently taught him in the holy scriptures (2.Tim.1,5 / 3,15). Timothy was lead to the faith in Jesus by Paul (1.Tim.1,2). He was called and equipped for ministry in his early years (1.Tim.4,1 / 4,14). From Act.16,3 on Paul took him on his mission journeys. He was a great help for him (Phil.2,19-22). Paul assigned him as a proven helps minister for special service ( s. 1.Thess. 3,1-2 / 1.Cor.4,14/ 16.10 / Act.19,22 / 1.Tim.1,3). Timothy was in jail at least once for the cause of Jesus (Hebr.13.23 / Also read the letters of Timothy).

**In Philippi Timothy was no stranger.** according to Act.16 he accompanied apostle Paul when he first wen to Asia with Luke and Silas to preach the gospel.

Paul called himself and Timothy „**servants of Jesus Christ**“. They served God unconditionally (Acts 9,6), and consciously gave up every form of „self-control“. They did not want to be „Masters“ (Mat.23.8), and they also decided not to be servants of man (Joh.8,31-36 /Gal.5,1 /1.Cor.7,23).

The letter was adressed to the „Saints in Christ... including bishops and servants (deacons).

It was dedicated to people who were connected with Christ on the inside (in the Lord, In Him, etc. Those terms are used over 150 times in the New Testament)

**The bishops**, those were the overseers and eldest who were the leaders of the church and responsible for the care and growth of the church (Act.14.23 /20,28 /1.Tim.3,1-7/ 1.Cor.4,1-2).

**The servants** (helpers and deacons), consisted of the church members, whose serving and supporting works were taking part in the building of the church (Acts.61-6 /1.Petr.4,10-11 / 1.Tim.3.8-10).

### **Phil.1, 12-26 Personal messages**

Paul was still in prison in Rome when he wrote this letter. Vers 12 introduces a new chapter and is first of all an answer to the worried questions of the Philippians about Paul's conditions. The answer is also teaching us a lesson, because it shows how Paul deals with the circumstances on the inside. He tried to guide their worried way of thinking into a direction of thinking according to the faith. He turns the matter of God's kingdom into a matter of priority. HE wants to tell the Philippians: We are the carriers of the blessing, therefore we are all well, even though our way is paved with suffering and self-denial.

The whole **travel plan of the apostles** was frustrated by the arrest (Rom.15,29). Over three years he was arrested for interrogation. During the past 2 years he was given a certain freedom within the prison, but he was always chained to a soldier. But he was allowed to receive visitors in his own apartment (Ac.28,30-31). This was granted to him, because he possessed the Roman citizenship (Act.22,28).

### **Phil.1,12-18 Preaching of the gospel inspite of imprisonment**

The faith and the service of the apostles was always above the circumstances (2.Cor.4,7-11,16-18/ Ro.8.35-37). Paul could proclaim the gospel with even more boldness when he was in chains (1.Thes.2,2 /Eph.6,18-20). This made a strong impression on the soldiers (guards). You are able to serve God under the most unfortunate circumstances. Here Paul shows the Philippians an example of his willingness to suffer (Act.20,23-24 /21,13 /Rom.8,17-18/ Col.1,24) His service was severely aggravated by this condition (2.Cor.11,23-28). He wants to explain to them, that suffering for the cause of Christ do not only aggravate the service, but at the same time fertilize it. Thereby he motivates the reader by his example to also give their all and suffer for the Kingdom (2.Tim.1,8 /3,12). He describes to them, how even the „evil“ can be turned into sth good by God (Gen.50,20).

In **Phil.1,15-17** he describes what he found in the church of Rome and what he had to deal with. Especially how he had to deal with the desingenuousness. He acknowledges: „Many preach the gospel of Christ...“ but with different motives than his. Because the church in Rome was not established by Paul (Rom.16,3-15 / 1,9-15/15,22-24). Now he come to Rome, in a different way than he thought. „In spite of his chains“ he was able to serve (Rom.15,29). But this provoked some of the local servants to jealousy and envy. This is typical for the kingdom of God, Numb 12,1-10. They undermined the respect of the apostle to suppress him for the sake of their own glory and authority. Such men Paul opposed with men who did their service with the right motivation (2.Cor.2,17).

**Paul remains objective and free from personal emotions.** In Phil.1.18 he simply says: „**What then...**“ He ignores their „private thoughts“, even though they are not worthy of the gospel. He preferred to step back to make Christ step forth. Salvation was not depending on him, but on Christ. A man is never a carrier of salvation, but only a messenger of salvation. Therefore he was still able to rejoice that the message of salvation was proclaimed. In those verses we see the spiritual maturity of Paul and how selfless he became a Christian. **He is free of all bitterness** (Hebr.12,15 /1.Cor.13,5). To him Jesus and the proclamation of the gospel is the center of his thoughts.

**Phil.1,19-21. With joy he endures the imprisonment and the consequences.** Because he knows for sure, that all the circumstances on earth must serve his blessedness (Job13,16). He feels that all those burdens and trials, only made him go deeper in the Lord. Therefore it was a daily work of salvation on his own soul (2.Cor.7,1 /Hebr.12,10 -11,14). The Christian is united with Christ by baptism, so that he is able to endure all things with joy (1.Cor.6,15 /10,17 /12,12,27 /Gal.2.20 /Eph.5,30). Through all of this he wants to glorify Jesus (1.Cor.6.20 / Rom.14,8). This affiliation is very sincere for the apostle (2.Cor.4,10 / Col.1,24). Paul is especially thankful for all their „**intercession in the spirit**“, which he had experienced by the Philippians. Paul only told the Philippians about his trials and needs to let them know what they should pray for (Rom.15,30 /2.Thes.3,1 /2.Cor.1,10-11).

Because of their intercession Paul experienced again and again the „intercession of the spirit“ so that God strengthened and comforted him in order to enable him to do his ministry. Paul gives the Philippians the impression that Christ working within him is the one to be praised. He joyfully gives the Lord a yes to every circumstance and guidance of his way. He said: „**Christ is my life and my death is my gain**“. This is probably the shortest and most beautiful Christian confession of faith (Hebr.10,23). Christ fills all of his life. No matter if he lives or dies, he always belongs to the Lord. Jesus is the reason of his existence. In Jesus he has „eternal life“ (Joh.8,51 /Rom.8,17).

His **life attitude** is totally strange to the natural man (1.Cor.2,14 /Eph.4,18). Most of the people are seeking the meaning of their being in usefull and well paid work, gain and pleasure (Luk.12,16-19 /16,19).

Furthermore they see their purpose of life in understanding intellectual values or just want to run free and are satisfied with it (1.Cor.15,32).

**For Paul death has lost its power over him.** For him the death is not the end of life (Ps.146,4 / Luk.12,20), also not deliverance of suffering, etc. Death also does not bring him freedom (Job3,21-22) which we might seek. He already has eternal life that is predestined for fulfillment (Joh.11,26).

**Phil.1,22-26. As Christians he has a hope for the future,** he wants to be with the Lord but he also sees the work that still has to be done and is far from being fulfilled.

**Phil.1,27-30 Exhortation to virtuous change** in agreement with the gospel. „Live together as a church.“ as the new unity of the kingdom of God (Phil.3,20 /Eph.2,19). God has opened a new way through Christ, on this path they were supposed to stay whether he was there or not. Basically it did not matter to HIM if Paul was there or not, because the Philippians were not supposed to be the servants of Paul but of the Lord.

**Paul exhorts them to be of one mind and one spirit,** which means to be of one mind (Eph.6.15) and then to fight for the gospel. „Our life by faith“ is a „battle by faith“, to be a Christ means to be a warrior (1.Tim.6,12). The most important meaning of our faith is not primarily to defend our faith, but rather to live faith as a witness of truth, which means to walk by faith all the time. Vers 28 says: „*Do not fear your enemy*“. Even facing sacrifices they were supposed to be without fear and stay persistent. Vers 29: „Because it was not only given to you from God to do the will of Christ, and to believe in him, but also to keep the kind of faith that will help also to suffer for his cause.“ To suffer for Christ is a privilege (Mat.5,10-12/ 1.Petr.4,13-16). These sufferings do not take our joy, but they only deepen it. Battles and suffering are no reasons to give up (Hebr.10,35-39).

**Our enemy and adversary is satan,** the great frustrator of God's plan (1.Petr.5,8-9). This adversary uses and misuses people who are blinded (2.Cor.4.4.) as tools (1.Cor.16.9.)

### **Phil.2.1-11 Exhortation to live and serve each other according to the image of Christ**

**Information about exhortation** Phil.2.1: *It is a consolation in Christ, comfort in love, fellowship of the spirit, affection and mercy...* He almost evokes us to receive exhortations with willingness. It is such an expressly and strong exhortation to unity, that it is obvious that the church was going through a great trial and attacks of separation (Phil.1,27 /2,14 /4,2 ), therefore he is addressing all the members of the church (Phil.1,1,4,7,25 / 2,17,26 /4,21).

**Exhortation is God's assignment for the church.** Believers should take exhortations by **the holy spirit** (Hebr.13.33), and be open for criticism (Jam.3,17).

First of all the servants of God / his church is assigned to exhort others in the name of Christ. The apostles also practiced this (Act. 20,2 /1.Thes.2,11 /4,10).

Furthermore it is the assignment and duty of all Christians to exhort / encourage each other, because they are responsible for one another as keepers on the behalf of God (1.Thes.5.1 /2.Thes.3,5 /Eph.4,25). The bible forbids to speak evil behind another's back (1.Petr.2,1 /Jam.3,5-6 /4,11).

**The requirement** for those who should or would like to exhort / encourage others (Hebr.3.13).

- A divine assignment (1.Cor.10/1.Thes.4,1).
- The spiritual ability (Rom.15,14).
- A sense of tact (1.Tim.5.1-2).
- Patience and prayer (2.Tim.4,2 /Act.20,31/ 2.Thes.2,16-17).
- Much love to comfort others.
- Those who have been comforted, exhorted and encouraged by the Lord are the ones who are able to comfort, exhort and encourage (2.Cor.1,3-5 / 7,4),
- Those who are able to exhort others are the ones who live in the fellowship of the holy spirit and are filled with the holy spirit.
- To exhort or encourage another you have to be able to live in community with others filled with passionate love and compassion.
- The way to other Christians is always through God (1.Thes.4,9).

### Phil.2.2-5 Paul asks the Philippians to make his joy full... by...

- **„being of one mind“**. He felt like the Philippians were threatened by disagreement ( Eph.4,3-6) and wanted to counteract this lack.
- **Disagreement is always a work of the devil** (Jam.3,14-16). He is the destroyer of all unity, he separates that what God has purposed together. He is also the war monger. He tempts the whole world into confusion (Rev.12.9) and by sin separates the man from God (Is.59,2 /Ps.5.5.), separates people from one another (Gen.4,8-9) tears a people, families and hearts apart (Pro.14.34). But Christ brings the separated back together and brings joy and peace (Mat.5,23-24,43-45 /Col.3.13). He unites people with God (Joh.3.12 /Gal.3,26 /1.Joh.3,1) and with each other (1.Joh.1,7 /4,19-21 / Eph.2,17-18 /Phil.2,22).
- **„being of one accord“**. He says: Have **„the same love“** towards the Lord and the brethren (1. Joh.4,7-8). Every lack with the Lord will turn into a lack with the brethren and vice versa (1.Joh.4,20-21). He is asking them to be like the first Christians **„be of one accord and one mind“**, which means **„to be one heart and one soul“** (like the first church was Act.4.32).
- **„let nothing be done through selfish ambition or deceit ...“** Those are two things disturbing the peace: termagancy (dogmatism) and need for admiration Pro. 28,25.
- **„but in lowliness of mind let each esteem the others better than himself...“** To become humble is grace... (Jam.4,1), to stay humble is a double portion of grace (1.Petr.5.5).
- **„each be like minded as Jesus Christ was...“** The center of godliness is the heart attitude. God always looks at our heart / thoughts (1.Sam.16,7 /Hebr.8,10). To become a Christian is not only about a new opinion, but rather a new way of thinking. The natural way of thinking is corrupted by sin (Gen.8,21/ Mat.15,19 / Rom. 7,14,18/ Tit.3.3.).

The natural attitude of man reveals itself as an earthly mind (Phil.3,19), a fleshly mind (Col.2,18 / Rom.8.6), a proud mind (Luk.1,51), an unclean mind (Tit.1.15 ) a wrong mind (Eph.4,17), as a blinded mind (1.Tim.6,5 /2.Tim.3,8) a rebellious mind (2.Cor.3,14). Only by the grace of God we receive a new life element, a new drive, that enables us to have a new mind and then only the requirement of being like minded with Christ applies. Before Jesus can become our role model, he has to become our saviour first. The mind of Christ is revealed in the following verses:

**Phil.2.6-11: The mind of Christ** these verses are an early Christian hymn where the secret of Christ is portrayed in few sentences: the divine pre-existence of Jesus, the humiliation of his incarnation, the humiliation of death, the heavenly glorification, the worship of all creation and the new title “Christ”. Paul describes Jesus’ condition before his incarnation. He had a divine image. He was equal with God and also possessed the fullness of God’s glory (Joh.1,1-2 /17,5,24). The message of Christmas does not lead us to the place of Christ’s birth but to an “outcome” from eternity (1.Tim.3,16). He did not hold on to the fullness of glory like it was a possession.

Because of love he was ready to give himself up in every way. **He freely chose to give up his Godhead** and by his incarnation chose to be nothing. He freely gave up all divine attributes and privileges to bring salvation into reality according to the plan of his father (1.Petr.1,20 / Ps.40,8-9). Jesu’s kenosis was the victory through love.

**He entered the world by taking on the „form of a servant“**, He left the divine image and became a „man“ (Is.53,11 /Joh.1,29/ 1.Petr.2,24). He, the Lord of all things became a servant (Mat.20,28). He therefore took on the lowest position to realize the divine purpose in the form of a servant. „He was like a slave“, he took on

the image of / the life of a slave. This stands in total opposition to the title „Lord“. The incarnated Christ chose the way of submission and humble obedience.

It was a total kenosis and his incarnation was real (Joh.1.14 /Hebr.2,14,17). He came in the form of a sinful man (Rom.8,3) and lived a life just like we do. He was like any other man. Since Jesus existed before the foundation of the world (Joh.8,58 /Hebr.7,3), his birth was not a creation of a new being, but only his entry into our world in the form of man.

Therefore he could not be born according to men, His incarnation was a creative act of power by God. The holy spirit placed the Christ into the bosom of Mary (Is.7,14 /Mat.1.20 ) and submitted him under all earthly and natural rules of life (Ps.139,13-14).

**He was born a man** (Luk.22.7), grew up (Luk.2,52), he worked and fought (Jes.53,11), he grew tired (Joh.4,6), he was hungry (Mat.21,18), he slept (Mark.4,38), he suffered mortal danger (Luk.22,44), he died (Mat.27,50) and he was buried (Mat.27,59-60).

**„He humbled himself“**.. as a man he did not take on a special or preferential position among men. He consciously chose the way of lowliness. His life was full of humiliations and he **“was obedient unto death“**. (Hebr.5,8). He always submitted to the will of his father (Gal.1,4 /Joh.4.34 /6,38). His death was the last low place. It was not only a very painful death, but also the most severe humiliation.

**Phil.2.9. Therefore God exalted him.** (Hebr.5.5. /Eph.1.20-22). The end of all divine ways is the exaltation of his children (Luk.1.52). And therefore God **gave him a name that was above all names**.. This name is the key to the fullness of salvation. Under this name one day, at the end of this world when Jesus returns as the king of kings, every knee will have to bow. (Rev.19,16). Because then all power will be given to him and he as the judge will have the last word, (Joh.5,22/ 2.Tim.4.1 / 1.Petr. 4,5 / Act.10,42-43 /16,31). Then all of the world will have to bow before him when he judges them with his righteousness.

**Phil. 2.11: Und „every tongue must confess that Jesus Christ is Lord..“**

To Christianity this is the foundational confession of faith (Rom.10,9 /1.Cor.12,3). Jesus is called **„Lord“**. God made him the Lord of this world. This is the confession of all creation, that Jesus is the Lord. But this is not a free adoration and worship, otherwise Paul would not have included the ones under the earth. It will be the same kind of worship that Jesus experienced by the spirits and demons in his lifetime ( Mat.8,29 / Luk8,28).

**The good fight of faith** is described by the apostle with the help of the image of a foot racer. This was a well known image of the ancient era. In every Greek city there were schools for sports, where the athletes were trained for competitions. They were chasing a goal to receive the admired price of victory. (1.Cor.9,24-27).

**Phil.2,12-18: You have to work out your own salvation.** In his exhortations Paul praises the Philippians, before he rebukes them. You are not only obedient in my presence but also in my absence. This was a great praise for the Philippians, but soon the first rebuke follows: **„Work out your own salvation with trembling and fear“**. They were supposed to work out their salvation and give their best. The foot racers of the ancient era usually abstained from wine and such nourishment that would render the body heavy and lazy. The victory and the triumph come at a price. They were saved (Col.1,12-14) and on the right way, but not close to the finish line at all. On the way to the throne of God there are so many dangers and possibilities to become lukewarm or even lose the faith (Hebr 3,12-14 /2.Petr.2.20-21 /1.Tim.1,19 /6,10 /1.Tim4,10 /Hebr.4.1 /Rom.11.22).

The Philippians experienced so many works of grace by God, that all of that had to be protected and they had to prove themselves. Every work of God is also a responsibility, because God makes us partakers of the perfection of salvation (1.Petr.1,5 / Col.1.23 / Joh.16.33 /2.Thes.3.3. /1.Thes,5,23-24).

**Phil.2.14: Do it all without complaining and doubting.** (without objection). Why was this necessary? It was God who created or wants to create our salvation. He gives us wisdom according to his own way, method and principles. We should not complain about his guidance (1.Cor.10,10 / Numb.14,36 / Ex.16.8).

**Without complaining**— do all that he tells you (Joh.2,5 /15.14),

Carry what he gives you (Job 2,10 /Luk.9,23),

Give what he asks for (Hebr.11.17),



Let go what he takes away (Hiob 1,12).

Vers 14 is an important requirement for the following exhortation. „**So that**“ – you will be clean, without flaw, blameless children of God, etc. This contains some important teachings for the Philippians.

**They were supposed to be flawless.** This does not speak about perfection without sin. We human beings are not free from weakness an imperfection (Jam.3,2), but we should be free from unrighteousness (2.Tim.2,19 /1.Joh.3.4. / 1.Joh.3,6-9 / Rom. 8:1,33).

**The Philippians were supposed to be sincere children of God.** They were supposed to be pure and not belong partly to God and partly to the world, which is impossible. The life of a Christian is supposed to be real and true (Ps.119,30). We have to be acknowledged as such (1.Joh.3,1 /Joh.1,12).

**The Philippians were supposed to be righteous,** without blame. They are in this world, but not of this world (Joh.17,14-15 / 1.Joh.5.19 /Luk.11.29 /Gal.1,4). They were not supposed to take part in the criminal doings of this world (Eph 5,7,11), and not become defiled and infected of this world's lifestyle ( Jam.1,27 / 2.Cor.6,14,17). Christians should not condemn this world (Mat.7,1) but serve in it (Mat.20,28), not escape from this world but overcome it (1.Joh.5,4). They should not be equal with this world but live by faith (Rom.12.2). Christians should serve as lights in this world and show others the way (Joh.8,12/12,35-36 / Mat.5,14 /2.Cor.4,6 /Eph.5.8.)

And what for?

- **„Holding fast the word of life...“** (Phil.2,16). For Paul this means the word of God, the element that communicates and maintains divine life (Jer.15,16). It is the tool of the holy spirit (1.Petr.1,23 /Jam.1,18 /Rom.10.17 /Col.3,16 /Joh.6,68 /Eph. 6,17 /Mat.4.4.).
- **„...so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ...“**; Paul is working for the wage of God. If he was looking for glory, he was only searching for it in God (1.Cor.1.31 / Jer.9,23 / Rom 5.11). It is very important to him to bring forth eternal fruit (Joh.15,16).
- **...that I have not run or laboured in vain.** And the Philippians shall not hear his message in vain (2.Cor.6,1). The grace of God had worked within him (1.Tim.1,13,16) and it was not in vain (1.Cor.15,10). His Philosophy was probably: The life of a Christian and their works shall bring forth eternal fruit with eternal value.

**Phil.2.17: And if I am poured out as a drink offering...** The service of the apostle as a messenger of Christ (2.Cor.5,20) has always been (Acts 9,15-16) a way of sacrifice all these years (Rom.8,36). It was a daily **„self-sacrifice“** (1.Cor.15,31). All those years he was living under the danger of his life (2.Cor.11,23-28/4,8-11/ 1.Cor.4,9,11-13). Paul uses the terminology: **„If I was poured out as a drink offering...“**. A Greek and Jewish custom of sacrifice is used to describe the spiritual ministry of the new era (Phil.3.3./4,18 /2.Tim.4,6 ). Paul knew that the present imprisonment could have ended with a sentence to death any time. He was sure, no matter how the trial would end, that one day he would sacrifice his life on behalf of the gospel (2.Tim.4,6). No price was too high for the apostle to carry on the tradition of the gospel, even at the risk of losing his life (Acts 20.24). Also the Philippians only received the faith at the risk of Paul's life (Acts 16,22-24 /1.Thes.2,2).

Paul does not want the Philippians to be sad because of his suffering and difficulties and pity him for it (Eph.3,13). He says: **„therefore I rejoice...and you should also rejoice...“**. The earthly need is fading away one day (Petr.5.10).

#### **Phil.2,19-30: News about the co-workers**

**He hopes to be able to send Timothy to Philippi soon.** He spares him under personal sacrifice. He is very important to him. He was one the few who wer able, free and ready to deny himself and offer his life up for ministry (2.Tim.4,10-12). All of the others „seek their own, not the things of Christ“ (Phil.2.21). Another translation says: **They are so busy with their own things, nobody has time for the things of Christ.** Or: „all seek their own advantage...“.

**Timothy is a righteous, faithful man.** He was the company of Paul during almost all of his mission journeys. Paul praises him. His faith had been tested. There was no need that could move him to escape. He

was unselfish, courageous and shared all of Paul's trouble. He would have done everything for the gospel. He even was even circumcised (Apg.16.3). The circumcision of a Christian who was baptised did not line up with 1.Cor.7,18 /Gal.2,3/52,11). He did it only for the sake of the gospel, so that he could go to the Jews with Paul and be accepted. It was not necessary for his salvation at all! In Phil.2.22 Paul said: „... he served with me in the gospel“ (1.Cor.16,10). Several times Paul sends him to the churches as his messenger and representative (1.Thes.3,1-6 /1.Cor.4,17/16,10 /2.Cor.1,19).

**Paul also sends Epaphroditus back to Philippi** (Phil.2.25). He was sent to Rome as a messenger by the church of Philippi to deliver a gift to Paul (Phil.4.18).

This gift was meant to provide for Paul's alimentation. Even though he was a prisoner he lived in his own apartment (Acts.28,30-31).

**Epaphroditus** was a help and companion for Paul (Phil.2,25,30 / Rom.12,13).

It is remarkable how Paul calls him:

- **„Brother“**. This terminology expresses the relationship between the believers of Christ and is the name of the children of God. Jesus himself called the disciples brothers (Mat.23,8). Therefore the true believers always called each other „brothers“ and „sisters of the Lord“ (Phil.4,21/Col.1,2 /Gal.1,2/ Rev.1,9). Through the rebirth (birth of God) they shared the same life foundation (1.Joh.3,1 / Joh1,12-13). Where there is life of God, there is also the love of God (1.Joh.4,7-8). The most noble form is the „brotherly love“ (1.Joh.1 /1.Petr.1.22-23).
- **Helper or co-worker**. Epaphroditus was assigned to help Paul for a season (Phil.2,30). He probably also took care of assignments that served not only Paul but also the other churches (1.Tes.3,2) and ministered to the body of Christ (Col.1.24).
- **Companion**. Epaphroditus did not only work within the churches but also took part in the testimonies to the world outside (Col.4.5./1.Thes.4,12/ 1.Tim3,7). He must have defended the message of salvation. To proclaim the name of Jesus also caused the messengers in Rome severe and dangerous threats. Saints are always also contenders of Christ (2.Tim.2,3 /Phil.1,27 /Jud.3).
- **Messenger**. The churches assigned him to deliver a gift to him. In this service and ministry Epaphroditus was „a messenger of Jesus Christ“. He was supposed to support Paul in his ministry in the gospel (1.Petr.4.10).
- **Servant**. This reveals the mind of Epaphroditus. It points out his humility. He is not only a brother, helper, contender and messenger, he is also a „servant“ who does not mind taking on the lowest position if necessary ( Mat.20,26 / 1.Kor.3,5). He was ready for any good work and also able (2.Tim.3,17). Paul wrote: „servant of my relief“, which means that he was servant of his needs and therefore indirectly a tool of God, serving the matter of the gospel. Therefore he was also a „servant of Christ“ (Eph.6.7 /Col.1.7).

### **Phil.2.26-29: Reasons why Paul sent him back.**

**He was homesick**. Especially when he heard that they were worried about him when they heard that he was sick and on the edge of death (1.Kor.12,26). Perhaps some of them had a bad conscience that they offered him up for this service. This might have troubled Ephraditus. With the progressing restoration of his health he felt a deep longing to return to Philippi as soon as possible. Paul wanted to meet his desire and confirms that the worries of the Philippians were justified. „**He was sick unto death, but had mercy with him**“ (Phil.2.27).

### **Some thoughts about sickness:**

- **Saints also suffer sickness** (Joh.11,1 /1.Tim.5,23 /2.Tim.4.20). Because they also are subject to the natural laws that were imposed on the world due to sin (Rom.8,19-25).
- **Just like nature** has not yet experienced renewal through the act of redemption of Christ, the body of man is still subject to death and weakness. If the soul receives eternal life through Christ, the body will still die „because of the sin clinging to it (Rom.8,10). The redemption of our bodies from the

power of death is prospective (Rom,8,23 / Phil. 3,21). Nevertheless God has reserved for us his power to meet our weaknesses with special living power for his children.

- **Sickness inherently originates** from sin, because by sin we are cut off from God as our source of life (Rom.5.12).

Many diseases **proceed from the laws of nature**, that still control our physical life. Many diseases originate from natural procedures. A flu, a tumble, injuries, etc. are usually followed by consequences (2.Kin.1.2 ff). A wrong lifestyle usually takes its toll (often years later). A weak disposition can cause much trouble (1.Tim.5.23). An infection can lead to a disease, etc. Sure, God can save us from it but does he have to?

**God allows many sicknesses.** Diseases are often a consequence of sin and disobedience (Lev.26,14,16), sometimes they even have a divine character of judgment (Numb12,9-10 /2.Kin.5,20-27 / Dan,4,25-30 / 2.Chron.21.12-15,18-19 /26,16-21 /Rev.16,2). Sometimes God even speaks to us through sickness (Rev.2.4 / Heb.12,25), on the other side we experience that obedience and repentance often activates mercy (Ex.15,26).

**God allows many Saints to get sick** and even die prematurely, because they celebrate the communion dishonorably (1.Cor.11,29-30), which means they sin against the congregation, speak evil of other brethren or mock them. Or they are criticising and touching the anointed ones of God. By their bad talking they want to exalt themselves. Miriam turned into a leper because of this sin (Numb.12). God says here „revenge is mine“ (Deut.32,35 / Rom. 12.19 /Hebr.10,30).

**God sometimes** allows us to become sick **incoherent of sin** (Joh.9,2.3) and remain sick (2.Tim. 4,20 /Hos.2,16 /Jer.29,11).

**Diseases are only one way of several means that God has submitted us to:**

- 1) Affliction. So that man would come to God. Sickness brought Naman to obedience to God (2.Kin.5)
- 2) Chastisement and refinement (Hebr 12,7-10/ 1.Cor.11,32),
- 3) Education and preservation (2.Cor.12,7),
- 4) Tests and probation (Jam.5,11).

**Some diseases are caused by satan.** God allowed it. (Job 2,6-8/Luk.13.11/Mat.15,22/Luk.8,29/Mark9,17-27). Also some misfortunes and accidents are caused by the enemy. But we owe God more than we can imagine and thank him for the preservation of our body (Ps.91,3-4,10-11).

**How should we react when we get sick?**

- **The saint takes his need to God first** (2.Chr.16,12) and then he goes to the doctor. One does not exclude the other. God can heal with his right and his left hand.
- Submit under the hand of God (1.Petr.5,6).
- Seek the Lord (ask God what the meaning is, sickness is the language of the body).
- Purification and dedication to God (Jam.5,14-15). Often (not always) there is a connection between sickness and sin.
- If we do not receive his help in this situation (Joh.11.6), His thoughts are surely higher than ours (Joh.11.40 /13,7). Nevertheless the believer is supposed to persist in prayer (Rom.2.12 / Mat.15.21-28).
- People who have already followed in the footsteps of the Lord (Mat.25,35-36,40 /Ps.41,2,4 /Hebr.13,16 /Mat.5,7), often experience great help, love and compassion in their times of distress as a reward for their ministry. But God is also able to withhold his mercies from people who have shown hard heartedness (Jak.2,13).
- Also unforgiveness sometimes keeps us from receiving our healing.(2.Kin.1,16)

**Does the consultation of a doctor oppose our faith?** Actually not (Col.2,23 /1.Tim.4,4-5 /5,23, Col.4.14 and Luk.5,31). Just like it takes several means to strengthen and nourish our body, we should also tend our body in times of sickness (Rom.13,13-14). Everything we do without submission to God, without prayer and faith turns into sin (Rom.14,23). Jam. 5,14 does not foreclose a healing under 1.Tim,4,5.

**What about healing by prayer and faith?** If the required spirit guidance is provided, the believer can experience the healing power of the Lord by prayer and faith – find healing through a word of his mouth.

Faith is a requirement for that. Also the Old Testament testifies some healings as an evidence of the power and grace of God (2.Kin.5,1-15/ 20,1-7). In the new Testament Jesus healed many sick and attacked the kingdom of death with authority (Mat.4,23-24/10,1/ Luk. 4,40 /Mark.5.22-43 / Luk.7.11-15/ Joh.11,43-44).

It must be considered that the evidence of Jesus' power was always connected with the coming of God's kingdom to us (Joh.20,30-31), which was revealed to us in a special way by Jesus' intervention in the kingdom of darkness.

The healing by the disciples was always connected with the proclamation of the gospel and was part of the restoration of the kingdom of heaven in the lives of the people.(1.Cor.12.9 /Jam.5,14-15 /Mark.16.18). The healing of the bible are connected with breakthrough in the kingdom of God. It is also remarkable that many healings that the bible speaks of were referring to sicknesses that could not be healed.

**The sickness of Epaphroditus** took the natural progress of a serious disease. Eventhough Paul had worked with apostolic authority in other situations (Act.19,11-12 /28,8-9/ 2.Cor.12,12), Eupaphroditus was not healed in a supernatural way or through a miracle. Paul had to spend days hoping and trembling and could only do what we also can do: Continue to intercede before God. The prayer was answered and Epaphroditus did not die. God had mercy on him (Ps.118,18). Paul's thoughts were in agreement with God and natural. It was a contradiction against the biblical principle, that God would call somebody out of life before the completion of the work he had begun (Ps.91,16). The high age of many women and men in the bible nourish this thought. Even if God allows that some people die early (Is.38,12), the principle remains: Christians have an assignment and a battle to fight in their life (Hebr.12,1). This also applied to Epaphroditus, and Paul also said it about himself (Phil.1,21-24). The first priority is to live for the Lord and die for the Lord. The Lord did not take Epaphroditus out of his life and work, but had mercy and sent him back into the mission field (2.Cor.1,1-11).

**The death of Epaphroditus** would have been another painful sacrifice for Paul and would have grieved him even more (2.Cor.11,28). The Lord spared him. He said: „lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow...“ (Phil.2.27).

**Paul suffered so much sorrow,** that he would have been grateful to have one less. How does this line up with Phil.4.4? Because the joy of a Christian is not a dormant possession, that is never threatened. Real Christian joy is rather a constant overcoming of all sadness. It is a yes to a way of pain under preservation joy in the depth of the heart. It is not insensitiveness but it is a victory over the attacks of sadness (Neh.8,1 /Ps.30,12-13 / Joh.16,22 / 17,13).

**When Epaphroditus was restored.** Paul immediately sent him back (Phil.2.28), so that the Philippians would have reasons to rejoice and give thanks. It was important to close a season of need and lack. Out of suffering we shall always be happy again. This is always the will of God for us (Ps.42,12 /Jes.61,3,10 / Kgl.3,32-33 /Jer.31,13 /1.Petr.1,6-8).

**Paulus encourages the Philippians** to receive Epaphroditus with „all joy“ (Phil.2.29), because by grace God gave him his life and his ministry back. Maybe Paul wanted to plead them not to blame Epaphroditus for anything. He might have overworked or neglected his health. Paul is implicitly ministering to the church as a counselor. He is approaching a delicate „Christian issue“.

**Who does not make mistakes?** (Jam.3.2). To make a mistake or to do wrong are two pairs of shoes. It was obvious that the Lord had re-established him and in such a case we should spare reprovals. Paul said: Esteem them very highly (1.Thes.5.13). **Because Epaphroditus got sick while he served the Lord** because he took this assignment so serious. His effort was much, that Paul wrote: **“He did not regard his life...”** (Phil.2.30).

**„Finally, dear brethren, rejoice...”**, “Actually this was the end of the letter to the Philippians and Paul was already formulating the final greetings when suddenly another problem arises.

**Phil.3.1- 4.4: Warning to the churches.** Paul must have written one or more letters to the Philippians. He writes: “To write the same things to you...” (Phil.3.1) In the first two chapters he exhorted them because of Epaphroditus. But now he is also encouraging them not to „stop“, which means „not to stand still“, „fall back“ or even worse to „go back“. Even standing still is decline. Who does not gain is losing. Therefore he encourages them to „move on“ (2.Cor.7,1 /Hebr.6,1), „increase“ (1.Petr.2,2 / 1.Cor.15,58 /1.Tim.4,15) and to „grow“ (Eph.4,15 /2.Petr,3,18) and not to get stuck with a Jewish mindset about righteous deeds.

**Paul saw the danger that** Jewish false teachers who had caused damage in other places could invade Philippi (2.Petr.2,1). The church seemed threatened (Act.20,29-30). Grace was threatened to mix with righteous deeds (Gal.1.9, 2.Cor.11,3 /2.Petr.3,17). Paul opposed the false teachers of that era, who twisted the message of the gospel, for example presented the church of Christ as a continuation or supplement of Judaism. They mixed Judaism with Christianity and law with the gospel (Gal.5.4.), whereas the Old Testament found its end and fulfilment in Christ (Rom.10,4 / Gal.3,23-26) /5,1-8). Therefore the teaching about righteous deeds was twisted into working for blessings, instead of counting blessings and righteous deeds a river of faith and love and evidence of divine living (Jam.2,17). The apostles also had to fight against the mingling of Christianity and Paganism (2.Cor.6, 14-18 /Eph.5, 11) and of „blessed by God“ and „blessed by the world“ (1.Joh.2,15-17 /Jak.4.4.). This defense was supposed to prevent that the glory of the gospel would be hidden (2.Cor.4.4), eyes would be blind for its light, or the foundations could be destroyed (1.Cor.3, 11). This danger is still a threat and demands all of our watchfulness (Eph.2, 20-23).

With strong words he warned the Philippians of the false teachings that boast in earthly advantages and perfection and confronts it with his own earthly advantages that he regards as nothing and rather takes on the righteousness that originates from the faith in Jesus.

#### **This is what Paul called those false teachers:**

**Dogs:** (a curse word, that the Jews gave to the Gentiles (Mat.15,26). In the Orient dogs were not known as pets or shepherds. It was rather a troublesome, masterless and greedy animal and was used as an image for people with a quarrelsome, feisty spirit. This image totally applied to the doings of the wrong teachers. They were also masterless, and did not come as servants of „Christ“ but in their own name and wherever they went they caused anger and disputes (Rom.16,17). Such were to be avoided (2.Tim.3,5 / Tit.3,9-10). Jesus even calls them „wolfes“ (Mat.7,15).

**Evil workers:** therewith Paul described the works of them, which was not to establish the work of Christ but to hinder or destroy it. Therefore they were not only useless but also harmful workers (2.Cor.11,13-15). They did not work according to a divine plan, but ate up details of the plan or changed the measure of things: for example they made the great things small and exalted small things with the result of a destroyed foundation of the divine work. Evil workers are the opposite of righteous workers (2.Tim.2,15 / Rev.2,3), who proved themselves to be servants of Christ (1.Tim.4,6 /1.Cor.3,9-13).

**The concision:** This is where Paul touched the main aspect of the false teachers. They claimed that nobody who is uncircumcised could be worthy of the gospel (an image of consecration for God in the Old Testament / covenant). Such a person was not considered a part of the people of the covenant and outside of the law of Israel (Act.15.1), which was supposed to be the foundation of the Christian church. This false teaching / requirement (laws and rituals) added to the gospel were to render the believer: „more holy, more determined, deeper, more serious, etc“. This always troubled the earnest ones of the church. Wherever those teachings were spread they caused arguments and separation. At that time it was determined by the topic **„circumcision“**. Therefore Paul ironically wrote: “concision”, which means the corruption and separation of the church (Act.15.2 /Col.2,18-19 /2.Tim,2,23).

The circumcision as a symbolic act of consecration only applied to the people of the covenant of the OT, and even then the outward sign was submitted to an inner responsibility (Deut.10,16 /30,6 /Rom.2,28-29). A return to the symbolical acts of the OT way of service would have taken the pictorial character from it and made it seem an essential thing.

It was supposed to be clearly expressed that the gospel was not a continuation of the old covenant but rather as a fulfillment of all prophecies (Col.2,17 /Hebr.10,1) brought a new covenant based on a new foundation.

It applies to: “The old (covenant) has passed and a new thing (the church of Christ) has begun. (2.Cor.5,17). This results in the sharp denial of the apostle Paul and his fight against the Jewish false teachers, which can be seen in his letters again and again (Gal.5,1-2).

The gospel is the end of the old covenant and the establishment of a new covenant. Paul also emphasizes in Phil.3,3: „for we are the circumcision“. He highlights the goal of the church of Christ, the role model of God, the possession of the Lord (Eph.1.11 /3,10-11 /2.Tim.1,9 /Rom.8,29/ .Petr,2,9). He says, „we are the circumcision“, which means „the ones set apart for God“ (Joh.17.19 /Hebr.10,10 /Col.2,10-13).

Why this is the case Paul argues: „...we who worship God in spirit...“. That was and remains the purpose of man (Deu.10,12 /Ps.102,2 /1.Thes.1,9 /Hebr,12,28). But how can a man, the creature of God, serve the creator of all things? (Act.17,25). God himself chose the service of man. The man was supposed to offer his service freely. This readiness must be a continuous inner determination that a saint presumes in the spirit. This is not something that is only revealed in particular actions, but it determines his whole attitude and all of his actions. Therefore he serves God according to Joh.4,24. This is only possible where the spirit of God is dwelling within (Joh.14,16-17,23), and has therefore become the zeal of the human spirit (Rom.8,14). You can only serve God in the spirit if the holy spirit is dwelling and working in a person (Rom.8, 9), therewith the human body becomes the temple of God (Act.17,24 /1.Cor.3,16). To serve God in the spirit (Rom.7, 6) is opposed by the religious service of the Jews, which is not taking place on the inside of men, but rather on the outside determined by location where the inner relationship with God was missing (1.Cor.6, 19 / Mat.15,8-9). Christ enabled us to serve God in the spirit by the sending of the holy spirit to his church. Therefore he says “...and we boast in Christ Jesus...“.

To him Jesus is the author and finisher of salvation (Hebr.12, 2). He redeemed us (Eph. 1,7) and he alone paid for our salvation (Act.4.12). This glory is a strong contrast to the trust of the Jewish Pharisees who even commanded those who recently accepted God to keep all of the Jewish traditions and customs to experience the fullness of salvation: faithfulness to the temple, strict adherence to the law, offering of sacrifice. This was the only way to obtain perfect salvation. But this was a wrong attitude (Rom.3,23). The opponent of all that was the first church, a testimony of his perfect work, an assurance of blessedness (Rom.3,24-26 /Col.1,15-17 /1.Cor.1,30-31).

That is why the apostle Paul said: „we have no confidence in the flesh“ (Phil.3, 3). This terminology was supposed to point to the wrong trust in false teachers. Many rely on the efforts and advantages of human nature. Flesh cannot buy salvation. He faces this statement and says: „I could boast in my flesh“ (Phil.3,4). He did not lack religious advantages. He had enough inherited and obtained advantages. He was „one of the tribe of Israel“. He was able to trace his family tree down to the fathers of faith. He was a son of the tribe of Benjamin, one of the last and most sophisticated tribes (Deut.33,12 /Ps.68,28). He was „a Hebrew of Hebrews“. There was no foreign blood running through his veins. Furthermore he remained faithful to the customs and the language of his ancestors (Act.21,40 /23,6) other than the Hellenists (Act.6,1). The „Hebrews“ read their bible in Hebrew, the Hellenists in Greek. According to that Paul was considered a conservative. This resulted in many privileges. He was introduced to the book of revelation by God and his life was determined by strict laws. He was a Pharisee and therefore belonged to the strictest group of Judaism (Act.26, 5). All of his devotion was to the law of God. No Jewish regulations could have been claimed against him in court. Towards the law he always stayed faithful and obedient. This is why he persecuted the Christian church (Act.26, 9-11 /Gal.1,13-14 /1.Cor.15,9).

- He was one who was not born and raised among the Gentiles (Eph.4,18)
- His past was not an unrighteous, sinful life (Eph.4.19).
- His motives were never betrayal or corrupt gain (Tit.1.11).
- He had never sold his soul on behalf of earthly treasures (Mat.16, 26 /Hebr.12,16).
- Ever since he was young he adhered to the Jewish law and grew up with it (Act.2.31 /26,4-5)

One with such a lifestory as Paul, now says this: „**What things were gain (advantage) for me I have counted loss (disadvantage) for Christ**“...(Phil.3.7). His advantages would have opened many doors to glory and high positions among his people, if he would have stayed the same. But for Christ he left everything behind and gave it up. He even goes so far to say **“I consider it nothing”**, so that he could have Christ. His new goal of life is to be found **„in Christ”**. This is one of his favorite terminologies.

**To be „in Christ” means for him** a great inner change, a transformation (Col.1.13 /2.Cor.5,17), a fantastic description of his personal relationship to his Lord (1.Cor.6,17/Joh.15,4-5), to be a member of the church of the Lord, or to be a member of his body (1.Cor,12,27 /Eph.5,30).

For Paul someone is a Christian if he is „in Christ” (Eph.1,19 /3,20). This is why Paul wanted to be made new through Christ again and again, to make sure that his righteousness does not originate from the law (Phil.2.9).

Paul teaches, that by faith in Christ we are counted the righteousness of God (Phil.3.9). Out of himself man has no righteousness that could count before God. Only God himself can work righteousness pleasing unto him (Rom.8, 3-4) and forgive the sin of a sinner (Rom.3,28). This righteousness was purchased by Christ (1.Petr.1,18-19), and it can only be obtained through the confession and knowledge of Christ (Col.2,2-3), by acknowledgment of the miracle of salvation (Eph.1.19-20) and experiencing it through baptism (Rom.6,5) and therewith becomes like minded with Christ (Rom.8,17-18). **One of the most important things of Christianity is to know Christ himself** (Joh.4,10,42/ 17,8/6,69/ 4,42/ 2.Cor.4,6 / 1.Cor.2,6-8). In this knowledge we must continuously grow (Col.1,11 / 2.Petr. 3,18 /Eph.4,13), unto the full measure of Christ (Eph.3,8). This knowledge is based on revelation from God only. He has to reveal it (Phil.3.10-11), to show us the way out of lawfulness, self-righteousness and false perfection (2.Petr.1,8). Because also the resurrection of Jesus was a powerful work of God and his divine vital energy which is also predestined for us (Rom.6, 4).

**True believers are humble and modest.** Paul says here: **„...not that I have attained already...”** (Phil.3,12). He does not doubt his redemption or his salvation. No he is saved, but not finished yet. **Paul was and stayed a „becomer”**. The assurance of his salvation was not based on having already attained everything. He tries to rebuke the Philippians in that point.

The claim of Christ's gifts of grace (Eph..3) are not **at the end of the way** but already available in the beginning of faith. **Paul warns of false self-assuredness**, by telling them: we have not reached the goal yet” (1.Joh.3.2), we do not yet belong to the perfect, triumphing church in heaven (Rev.7,14-17 /12,11), we are still here on the battlefield (1.Tim.1,18/6,12 /Hebr.12,1 /Eph.6,12-13). There were still many dangers and tests to pass (Rev.2,4/ Mat.24,13/ 1.Tim.6.20 /Hebr.4.1./1.Petr.5.8). **Christian assurance and spiritual watchfulness are therefore inseparable.** It is emphasized expressly and clear in this epistle (Phil.1,6 /212). Paul had not yet attained or reached the goal. He was not yet „perfect”, even though he had passed many tests. He did not yet have the full picture of the Lord (1.Cor.15,49), his “**transformation**” was not yet complete (2.Cor.3,18). This is why he says: **“I am chasing...”**. He only knows that he is **„captured by Christ”** which is the greatest incident of his life and calling (1.Cor.1,9 /1.Thes. 2,12/ Rom.8,39-30). With emphasis he faces the **dangerous self-deception** of the Philippians by presenting himself in the divine light, saying: **I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before...”** (Phil.3.13-14). He consequently closes up his pious past, his inner man of the old days, his former flaws and shortcomings (1.Tim. 1,13), for he is a new creature now (2.Cor.5.17) and is turning towards the goals of God, that which is **before”** (1.Cor.9,26), the **„heavenly calling”** .

#### **Thoughts about the calling:**

- Christians are people called and appointed by God through the gospel (2.Thes.2,14, Rom.1,7/ 8,28,30 /Hebr.3,1).
- The calling is activated by faith (1.Joh.3, 23). To say yes by faith to the calling of God is necessary gives us assurance and happiness (1.Thes.1,4 /2.Thes.2,13/1.Per,2,9 / Col.3,12 /Rom.8,33 / Mat.24,31 /Rev.17,14).
- We are called from darkness to light (1.Petr. 2,9).
- We are called to holiness (1.Thes. 4,7). Furthermore to peace (Col. 3,15), hope (Eph. 1,18 /4,4), freedom (Gal. 5,13), glory (1.Petr. 5,1 /1.Thes. 2,12), to the wedding of the lamb (Rev.19,9)etc.

**Phil. 3.15-21: Paul warns of selfish ambitions to follow Christ.** The ones who pretend to be perfect and of spiritual maturity, so that they do not sin and make mistakes anymore. The Christian is not without sin (1.Joh.18), but dead to sin (Rom.6.11). The Christian is no longer a prisoner of his sin. He is no longer ruled by the elements opposing God. Now he is only striving to life for God, inspite of all shortcomings (2.Cor.7,1). He takes Jesus and himself as a role model for the following of Christ (Phil.3,17 /1.Co.11,19), and points out that, **„many walk as enemies of the cross“** (Phil.3.18). Paul obviously describes very evil things, because he is doing it under tears. He calls those people enemies of the cross. The cross was the center of the apostolic proclamation (1.Cor. 1,18-23 / 2,2).

It is the quintessence of the work of redemption of Christ and an image of the salvation that the Lord had purchased for us. To take a stand against the cross means to reject salvation. In Phil. 3,18,19 Paul was probably speaking of the false teachers of Phil. 3,2 gemeint.

**Phil.4,1-3: Warning of arguments and separation.** Paul emphasizes the value and purpose of fellowship. There were tensions between two influential women (Evodia and Syntyche) within the church. The two women did not find a way to agree. Maybe that is the reason why there were two groups within the church. Different opinions are not supposed to separate us from another. The two women had argued in public, therefore they were rebuked in public. The letter was publicly read in the gathering of the church. In vers 3 Paul tries to convince a brother to help those sisters get along with each other (Rom.12,13 / Jam.5,19-20). Here we hear from Paul that those sisters must have been faithful co-workers of the apostle. The served in the gospel with Paul together. A person named **„Clemens“** is also mentioned. Some bible interpreters claim this is the former jailer.

Phil 4,4-9, **exhortations to the church.** The church is especially **exhorted to joy** (encouragement). A deep, life-grasping joy, this is the privilege of those who know God (Ps.5,12 /9,3 /16,11 /30,12 / 32,11 /43,4 /73,28 / 84,3 /100,2 /103,5 /126,3 / 1.Chron,16.10).

**The Christian joy is an assignment** (1.Thes. 5,16), yes almost a command. It does not deal with a good mood but with a joyful spirit (Luk.1,47 /Ps.51,14), even a fruit of the work of the holy spirit (Act.13.52 / Rom.14,17 /Gal.5.22 /1.Thes.1,6 / Luk.10.21). It is always available, no matter what the circumstances are (2. Cor.4,8 /7,4). The reason of the joy is first of all the Lord God himself (Ps. 64,11 /70,5 / Hab. 3,18) and then the gift of salvation and grace (Is.12,3 / 25,9 / 61.10). The Christian **„rejoices in the Lord at all times“**, which means in every situation where the Lord guides them, whatever burden he gives them and no matter what assignment.

The joy of the Lord always brings us back up (Pro.18,14 /Neh.8,10 /2.Cor.6,1 /7,4). The joy of the Lord is the joy in the battle (Act.5,41 / 1.Thes.2,2, /2.Thes.1,4 / 2.Tim. 2,3), the joy in sorrow (Col.1,24 / Rom.8,18 / 2.Cor.1,5), joy in affliction ( Jam,1,2 /1,Thes.1,6 / 1.Petr.1,6 /4,13), the joy to give away ( Hebr.10,34), the joy of hope (Ro.,12.12 /15,1 /2.Cor.3,12). This is an everlasting and eternal joy, (Is. 35,10 / 1. Per. 1,8/Mat. 25,21 / Rev. 19,7-9). The joy of / in the Lord makes us **„polite“** (Spr.15,13 /Eph.4,32), and **„gentle“** (Col.3.5).

**Exhortation not to worry** (Phil4.6). Recklessness is a child of faith (Mat .6,25-32). Worries disturb and destroy the joy. A spirit of storing up leads to greed (Luk.12,15-21) and the spirit of worry leads to disbelief. The believer is not worried (not afraid).

The Christian is not supposed to live as if he would have to deal with his worries alone. Prayer is better than to worry, (Mat.21,23 / Jam.1,6-7). Prayer destroys all worries. Prayer leads to the end of worry, it delivers the heart and keeps it free (Ps.62.2).

**Furthermore Paul encourages the Philippians to stay positiv** (Phil. 4,8-9). They should think about what is „true“. As Christians we should lay down all masks and false labels and become true from the inside (Pro. 12,1 /Eph. 4,25 /Col. 3,9). True children of God deny all false appearance, because it belongs to the sin of lying. And a lie is the oldest invention of the devil ( Joh.8.44) and it will be judged with him one day (Rev.22,15 /21,18). Because the true Christian is striving for truth he should be interested in / lean towards things that are „noble“, righteous, clean, good and loving. Harshness and ugliness, everything that hurts should not be able to take room among the Christians (Eph. 4,26-27,31-32 /Kol.3,8-10). Therefore he advises to think about the good things. Because only from a good thought, a good and pure life can come forth.



Thoughts are the messengers of our actions. That which rules our inner being influences our every day life. .

**Phil.4.7: The peace of the Lord** is higher than all understanding. It comes from God, who is a God of peace (Rom.16,20 /1.Cor.14,33 /2.Cor13,11 /1.Thes.5,23). Out of him alone true peace comes to us (Numb.6,26/ Ps.4.9 /29,11). If God is not there, there is no peace (Is.48,22 /Rom.3,17). The peace of the Lord has a sustaining power. It sustains our heart and mind. The peace of God is like a secure fence surrounding us. In this way the peace of God is watching over all our decisions, emotions, actions, plans and thoughts. All that disturbs or steals this peace away is not of God (Is.48,17-18).

**Phil. 4.10-20: Paul gives thanks to the Philippians for the gifts of the church.** Obviously they were going through tough times and financially (economically) they were not doing good. To many this was a hard test. Paul is praising the church because even in times like this they did not forget the assignment of the Lord and even brought a greater sacrifice than before. He gratefully receives the gift from the hand of the Lord.

The church of Philippi was a missionary church who supported Paul from the beginning. He mentions where they supported him in a special way. Paul did not ask for gifts (2.Cor. 12,14 /1.Thes.2,5 / 2.Thes.3,8-9/ 1.Cor.9,13-15 /Act. 20,33-34). In the other churches he always made a living as a handy man. Only the Philippians were allowed to support him financially.

**Phil. 4.21-23: Greetings and blessings.** He closes his letter by concluding everything and again giving thanks for all things. He tells them that he can do all things through Christ. He is able to be low and exalted, and successful in all things. Through Christ he is able, endures and bears everything with patience. (Phil.4,11-13,18-19).

**Test:**

1. What was the primary purpose of the letter?
2. What kind of problem was there in Philippi?
3. Why does Paul praise his origin?
4. What is the most important reason of Christian knowledge?
5. Of what does Paul warn the Philippians?
6. Why did Paul send Epaphroditus back?
7. What are the theologian „core themes“ of the Epistle to the Philippians?
8. What is an important requirement for people who want to exhort others?
9. What should the Philippians do to bring joy to Paul?
10. How does Paul describe the incarnation of Jesus to the Philippians?
11. Why do so many Christians become sick?
12. What is the „main“ point of the false teachers that Paul is dealing with?
13. What is the effect of the joy of the Lord?

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