

The Epistle of St. Paul to the Philippians

1- Objectives

- ❖ Study the Epistle to the Philippians

2- References

- ❖ St. John Chrysostom interpretation (<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/2302.htm>)

3- Scriptural verse

- ❖ “For, to you, he says, it has been granted of God, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer in His behalf” (Philippians 1:29)
- ❖ “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13)

4- Lesson Guidelines

Introduction

- ❖ The Philippians are of a city in Macedonia where Lydia and the ruler of the synagogue believed; here was St. Paul scourged with Silas but the magistrates requested them to depart, and were afraid of them while their preaching had a brilliant beginning. St. Paul was in bonds and St. Timothy was with him when he wrote the epistle. He bears them many and high testimonies calling them his own crown, and praising their sufferings as a gift from God.
- ❖ The Philippians lovingly had sent to him Epaphroditus, to carry him money, and to know the things concerning him that’s why he said: “I want you to know that the things which happened to me have turned out for the furtherance of the Gospel”. He was urging them to be of one mind, and showing that unanimity comes of humility, then he was aiming a shaft at those Jews who were everywhere corrupting the doctrine under a show of Christianity, and giving admonition to keep away from them.
- ❖ He offers them abundant consolation and has written to them not in the way of rebuke, but throughout in the way of encouragement. He bears testimony to them in faith, in perils and in well-doing. He taught them to be ready to suffer for Christ through their whole life. For it is not once that we have to please God, but constantly.

Chapter 1

- ❖ St. Paul, as writing to those of equal honor, calls himself a servant, but when he was about to order things, he assumed his rank as an Apostle as in the epistles to the Corinthians and to St. Timothy.
- ❖ He specified the clergy in his greeting (only in this letter), because it was them that labored, and sent Epaphroditus to him.
- ❖ He witnesses of them that they left nothing undone to be sharers of his labors, being everywhere at hand and working with him, and taking part in his preaching always, from the time they believed even sharing in his tribulations; so then it is a fellowship in furtherance of the Gospel and sharing in his crown.

- ❖ St. Paul has the Philippians in his heart wherever he goes (V.7), and it is not a little to the praise of these men. He teaches them in verse 6 to be humble. He did not rob them of the achievement or praise but direct their confidence to be in God's work in them.
- ❖ St. Paul explained to them how his tribulations turned out for the furtherance of the Gospel; declaring that whether in pretence or in truth, the Lord Jesus Christ is preached, and in this he rejoiced. He also proclaimed that the Lord Jesus Christ will be magnified in his body whether by life or by death considering death a gain to live with Him. Although he wanted to depart, yet he found that remaining in the flesh is more needful for them.

Chapter 2

- ❖ St. Paul calls for love saying if you wish to give me any comfort, encouragement or consolation, I have gained all this, if you love one another.
- ❖ He calls again for unity and humbleness: each counting other better than himself to avoid envy and falling into anger when ill-treated and always looking at the Lord Jesus Christ Who emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, humbled Himself and obeyed unto the humiliating death but God highly exalted Him... every knee should bow and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.
- ❖ St. Paul calls them for obedience with fear and to do all things without murmuring and disputing for God's sake for it is God who works in us both to will and to do for His good pleasure and this is what deserves admiration: being blameless and straight in a crooked and perverse generation.
- ❖ The death of the just is no subject for tears, but for joy: "I am being poured outI am glad and rejoice with you all You also be glad and rejoice with me" (2: 17-18).
- ❖ St. Paul praises the love and the work of St. Timothy and Epaphroditus.

Chapter 3

- ❖ St. Paul is warning them for some disgraceful Jews, who, desiring to draw aside many of the faithful, preached both Christianity and Judaism at the same time, corrupting the Gospel. He calls them dogs referring that they are now stranger to God like were previously the gentiles.
- ❖ He did well when he said I have confidence in the flesh (a Hebrew of Hebrews); for if he had been of the Gentiles, and had condemned circumcision, it would have seemed that he was running it down, because he lacked the high ancestry of Judaism and its solemn rites; even more, he was found blameless according to the righteousness which is in the law.
- ❖ St. Paul counted everything as a loss that he might win the Lord Jesus Christ and the excellence of his knowledge through faith in Him and believing the righteousness which is of God. This, he cannot attain except by suffering for His sake.
- ❖ The Lord Jesus Christ is the fulfilling of the Law, and the end of the Law; he who obeys the Law, leaves the Law itself for when the sun has appeared, it is a loss to sit by a candle. So, then knowledge is through faith, and without faith it is impossible to know Him.
- ❖ St. Paul is warning them from over confidence: I believed in Him, and in the power of His resurrection, and that I have fellowship with His sufferings, and that I become

conformed to His death. Not that I have already obtained, or am already made perfect: but I press on, if so be that I may apprehend that for which also I was apprehended by Christ Jesus (12); the same meaning he said in (1 Corinthians 9:27) “I fear lest I myself should be rejected.”

- ❖ Solution: forgetting the things which are behind (Good and bad), and stretching forward to the things which are before, for our citizenship is in heaven, there is the prize; teach your feet to be sure, for there are many slippery places, and if you fall, straightway you lose much. But yet if you fall, rise up again in the Lord Christ Jesus.

Chapter 4

- ❖ Greetings and praise (my joy and my crown) and care about the 2 women who labored with him (Euodia and Syntyche). A message of joy and hope as the Lord is at hand with commandments of thanksgiving and prayer accompanied by his blessings to them.
- ❖ We choose to be afflicted here, that there, in heaven, we may have rest, and obtain the unspeakable blessings, with our Lord Christ Jesus.
- ❖ A clear invitation for joy and peace; followed by a clear and strong message to mourn and avoid laughing. Grieve for our own sins and our afflictions, and rejoice in Christ (they returned from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to be scourged for His name. Acts 5:41).
- ❖ Final teachings for the righteous path that they should go through (8-9) confirming that they can do everything through Christ who strengthen them as himself (13).
- ❖ Concluding by appreciating again their good deeds and support, giving peace to everyone and praying for them.

5- Conclusion

- ❖ Stand fast in the Lord and keep the Christian unity.
- ❖ God does not regard the amount of the gifts, but the will of the givers who is directing his eyes to God. Let us take our stand upon the rock, that we both escape being easily turned about, and that we may obtain the good things to come, by the grace and loving-kindness of our Lord Jesus Christ Who is our joy here and there in Heaven.

6- Activities / Discussion Points

- ❖ Make groups with references to all what St. Paul asked the Philippians to do and discuss together the verse: “Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ” (Philippians 1: 27).