

PHILIPPIANS

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF PHILIPPIANS

Philippi was a Roman colony, and the chief city of one part of Macedonia, (~~Acts~~ Acts 16:12), it is by Appianus called Dato which was its original name; and by Diodorus Siculus it is called Crenidae^{fl}, from, the fountains about it; and it took its name Philippi, from Philip king of Macedon, father of Alexander the great, who rebuilt and fortified it; near this place a famous battle was fought, and a victory obtained by Augustus Caesar and Mark Antony, over Brutus and Cassius; it is now called Chrixopolis, properly Chrysopolis, from the plenty of golden mines near it: here the apostle was directed by a vision, to go and preach the Gospel; and which was succeeded, to the conversion of Lydia, and the jailer, and their families; which laid the foundation of a Gospel church in this place, to whom this epistle is written; and which was written by the apostle when he was a prisoner at Rome, as many things in it show; for he more than once makes mention of his bonds, and of these being made manifest in Caesar's palace, and of some of Caesar's household sending their Christian salutations to this church: Dr. Hammond makes the date of this epistle to be the year 59, and Dr. Lightfoot places it in the year 60, and the sixth of Nero; the occasion of it was this, the Philippians, to whom the apostle was very dear, he being the first preacher of the Gospel to them, and the instrument of their conversion, hearing that he was a prisoner at Rome, send their minister and pastor Epaphroditus to him, to visit him, and by him a present to support him under his afflicted circumstances, and who related to him the case of this church; and at his departure he sent by him this letter; the design of which is, to express his love and affection to them; to give them an account of his bonds, and the usefulness of them, and how he was supported under them; to encourage them under all the afflictions and persecutions, they endured for the sake of Christ; to excite them to love, unity, and peace, among themselves; to caution them against false teachers, judaizing Christians, that were for joining Moses and Christ, law and Gospel, works and grace together, in the business of salvation; to exhort them to a holy life and conversation, and to return them thanks for their kind present.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO PHILIPPIANS 1

This chapter contains the inscription of the epistle; the apostle's salutation of the Philippians; an account of his thanksgivings, prayers, and affection for them, and confidence of them; a narrative of his sufferings, and the use of them; and an exhortation to a conversation becoming the Gospel, to abide by it, and suffer cheerfully for it. The inscription is in (~~3000~~Philippians 1:1), in which are mentioned by name the persons that subscribed the epistle, Paul and Timothy; and who are described by their character, servants of Jesus Christ; and also the persons to whom the epistle was sent, by the place of their abode, Philippi; the members of the church by their general character, saints in Christ Jesus; and the officers of it, by those that are peculiar to them as such, bishops and deacons: the salutation is in (~~3000~~Philippians 1:2), and then follows a thanksgiving for them to God, which was made in prayer, and upon every remembrance of them at the throne of grace, and that for their constant fellowship in the Gospel, (~~3000~~Philippians 1:3-5), and the apostle expresses his strong confidence of the good work of grace being begun in them, and of the performance of it, until the day of Christ; grounded upon a judgment of charity, and a belief of their being partakers of the same grace with himself, (~~3000~~Philippians 1:6,7), and declares the most tender and affectionate love to them, for the truth of which he calls God to witness, (~~3000~~Philippians 1:8), and as a proof of it, puts up several petitions for them; that they might have an increase of love, and spiritual knowledge, judgment, and sense, that so they might be capable of trying and approving things that differ, and which are the most excellent of them; that they might be sincere and harmless in their lives, and always doing good works in the strength of Christ, and to the glory of God, (~~3000~~Philippians 1:9-11), next follows an account of his bonds and imprisonment, and the usefulness of them, as that they were for the further spread of the Gospel in many places, and even in Caesar's palace, (~~3000~~Philippians 1:12,13), yea, by means of them several of the ministering brethren were the more emboldened to preach the Gospel without fear of men; though there was a difference among them, some preached Christ of envy, strife, and contention, thinking to add to the apostle's troubles, and

others, of good will, and of love to the apostle, who they knew was set for the defence of the Gospel, (^{<5014>}Philippians 1:14-17), upon all which the apostle gives his sentiments, and makes his reflections, that whatever were the views of some men in preaching, it was, and ever would be, constant matter of joy to him that Christ was preached, (^{<5018>}Philippians 1:18), yea, he was satisfied, that the ill designed by some to him would be overruled for his good, by means of the prayers of the saints, and the supply of the Spirit; for he had a pure and well grounded hope and expectation, that he should never be brought to shame and confusion, but that Christ would be magnified in him living and dying; for he knew that both his life, and his death, would be gain to Christ, or that it would be for the glory of Christ for him to live, and his own gain should he die, (^{<5019>}Philippians 1:19-21), which put him in a strait what was most eligible in this case, whether, to live in the flesh, or depart out of the world; seeing to live in the flesh, and labour in the ministry, were fruitful and profitable, and more necessary and useful for the churches of Christ, and to die, and be with Christ, were better for himself, (^{<5022>}Philippians 1:22-24), but upon maturely weighing things on both sides, like one of a truly noble public spirit, he inclines to the former; nay, is persuaded, that he should continue longer to be an instrument of increasing the faith and joy of the Lord's people, which he knew would abound in Christ on his account, should he be restored again, (^{<5025>}Philippians 1:25,26), and then he concludes the chapter with an exhortation to the Philippians, to order their conversation agreeably to the Gospel of Christ, and to continue firm and unanimous in it, and use their utmost endeavours to keep it themselves, and spread it among others, (^{<5027>}Philippians 1:27), being not daunted and intimidated by the persecutions of men, which to the persecutors was a sign of perdition, looked darkly, and with an ill aspect upon them, but to the persecuted was a token that they had an interest in that salvation which is of God, (^{<5028>}Philippians 1:28), for as it is a gift of grace to believe in Christ, so likewise to suffer for him, (^{<5029>}Philippians 1:29), to which the apostle animates them by his own example, that which they were called unto being no other than what they had seen endured by him, and had heard concerning him, (^{<5030>}Philippians 1:30).

Ver. 1. *Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ*, etc.] The apostle sets his own name first, as being not only superior to Timothy in age, in office, and in character, but the sole writer of this epistle. The reasons of his joining Timothy with him are, because he was with him when he first

preached at Philippi, and so was known unto the Philippians, and respected by them; and because he was about to send him to them again, whose commendations he enlarges on in the epistle itself; and to let them see, that there was a continued agreement between them in affection and doctrine. It shows indeed great humility in the apostle to join with him one so young, and so much inferior to him on all accounts; though it must be observed, that Timothy was not a partner with him in composing the epistle; he only joined in the salutation to this church, and approved of the letter to it, and might be the amanuensis of the apostle; but had no hand in the epistle itself, which was dictated by Paul under divine inspiration. He chooses a character which agreed to them both; he does not say apostles, for Timothy was no apostle, though he himself was, but “servants of Jesus Christ”; not of men; nor did they seek to please men by preaching the doctrines and commandments of men, and which are suited to the carnal reasonings, lusts, and pleasures of men; for then the character here assumed would not belong to them: but servants of Christ; and that not in such sense only as all mankind are, or in right ought to be, since all are his creatures, and therefore ought to serve him; nor merely as all the saints in common are, being bought with the price of Christ's blood, and being effectually called by his grace, and so made willing to serve him from a principle of love, without servile fear, and with a view to his glory; but as ministers of the word, and preachers of the Gospel; they were his servants in the Gospel, they served him under the ministerial character, and as such were the servants of the most high God, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; so that this title is far from being mean and despicable, it is high, honourable, and glorious.

To all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons. The persons to whom this epistle is inscribed are here described by the place of their abode, Philippi, and by the various characters they bore in the church; which was at this time very numerous, consisting of many members, and of proper officers, and are both taken notice of here. The members are meant by “all the saints in Christ Jesus”; they were saints or holy persons, not by Moses and his law; not by ceremonial ablutions and sacrifices, which only sanctified to the purifying of the flesh, but could not take away sin, or cleanse from it; nor by themselves and their moral righteousness; for though thereby men, nay outwardly appear holy and righteous, yet they remain inwardly unholy and impure; nor by baptism, which has no regenerating nor sanctifying virtue in

it; if persons are not saints before that, they are never by it; it leaves them as it finds them, and neither takes away original or actual sin: but these were saints in and by Christ; they were become holy in consequence of being in Christ; men are first in Christ, and then saints in him; they are chosen “in him” before the world began to be holy, and in time are made new men, new creatures, are created in him unto good works by virtue of their being in him; hence he sanctifies his church and people by his blood, they being so nearly related to him, and interested in him, and he in them; hence they being first of God in Christ, he is made sanctification to them; and hence internal holiness is wrought in them from Christ, by his Spirit; which being begun is carried on, and will be performed until the day of Christ; and which was the happy case of these Philippians, as the apostle was confident of. The officers of this church were “the bishops and deacons”. The “bishops” were the pastors, elders, and overseers of the church, for a bishop and an elder is one and the same; (see ~~ACTS~~ Acts 20:17,28); where the elders of the church at Ephesus are called “overseers” or “bishops”; for the same word is used there as here; and the Syriac version here renders the word by **ac̄yçq̄**, “elders”: and they design no other than common and ordinary pastors; who have the name of elders from their age, gravity, and seniority; and that of bishops and overseers from the nature of their office, which is to feed, watch, inspect, and take the oversight of the flock, minister sound doctrine to them, and preserve them from error and heresies. It seems by this, and the instance of the church at Ephesus, that there were, and so may be, where there is necessity for it, more pastors or bishops than one in a church; unless it can be thought that there were more churches than one in each of these cities; or that the pastors of adjacent churches are here included; neither of which seem to be a clear case, but the contrary: but then these pastors or bishops were all upon an equal foot; one had not any authority or power over another, or more authority than another; they were not metropolitan or diocesan bishops, but pastors of a particular church; and were neither lords over one another, nor of God's heritage. The “deacons” were such as served tables, the Lord's table, the minister's table, and the poor's table; took care of the secular affairs of the church, received and disbursed moneys, kept the church's accounts, and provided everything necessary for its temporal good. The one sort of these officers were concerned with the souls and spiritual estate of the members of the church; the others with their bodies and temporal estate, by visiting the sick, relieving the poor, etc. and both these exhibit the true primitive plan of church offices and

discipline; there being no other order of offices or officers, in a Christian church of divine institution, but pastors and deacons; whatever else is introduced is without warrant, and comes from the man of sin. These officers are mentioned by the apostle, not only to show his respect to them, but to observe to the members of this church, that they ought to esteem them highly for their works' sake; these being offices of great importance and usefulness to the church, which, by having such, was a truly organized church of Christ.

Ver. 2. *Grace be unto you*, etc.] This form of salutation is used by the apostle in all his epistles; (see Gill on “~~ROM~~Romans 1:7”);

Ver. 3. *I thank my God*, etc.] After the inscription and salutation follows a thanksgiving, the object of which is God; to whom thanks is to be given at the remembrance of his name, and the perfections of his nature, and for all his mercies, temporal and spiritual. The apostle expresses his propriety and interest in him, calling him “my God”; thereby distinguishing him from all others, the nominal and fictitious gods of the Gentiles, and the idols and lusts of men's hearts; he was the God whom he served in the Gospel, by whom he was sent, and from whom he received all his possessions, and to whom he was accountable. He had a special, particular, covenant interest in him, had knowledge of it, and faith in it; and therefore could draw nigh to God with freedom, use confidence, plead promises, expect favours, and do all he did, whether in a way of prayer, or praise in faith, and therefore was acceptable unto God. This work of thanksgiving he was often employed in on account of these Philippians, even, says he,

upon every remembrance of you; that is, as often as I remember you, or make mention of you to God at the throne of grace, it being a customary thing with the apostle to mention by name the several churches, the care of which was upon him, in his prayers to God; (see ~~ROM~~Romans 1:9 ~~EPH~~Ephesians 1:16 ~~1~~1 Thessalonians 1:2); and so he used to mention this church; and whenever he did, it was with thankfulness. The Arabic version reads it, “for”, or “concerning all your remembrance”; meaning of himself, and as if the sense was, that he gave thanks to God for their remembrance of him at all times, and particularly at that time, by sending him relief in his present circumstances. But the former sense is preferable.

Ver. 4. *Always in every prayer of mine for you all*, etc.] The apostle was a praying believer, and a praying minister: notwithstanding all his gifts, and graces, and high attainments, he was not above the work and duty of

prayer, and in which he was sensible he stood in need of the assistance and direction of the Spirit of God, As soon as he was converted he prayed, and continued to do so without ceasing, as he himself directs; he was constant and assiduous at the throne of grace, and was concerned for others, as well as himself, for all the churches, and for this church, and all the saints in it.

Making request with joy; for what God had done for them, and continued with them. Requests are to be made known to God with thanksgiving. When we request a favour of him, it becomes us to return thanks for what we have received from him. Thanksgiving is a branch of prayer; as we have always mercies to ask for, we have always mercies to be thankful for.

Ver. 5. *For your fellowship in the Gospel*, etc.] Or “for your communication unto the Gospel”; that is, to the support of it. These Philippians were one of the churches of Macedonia the apostle so highly commends for their liberality in (~~4001~~2 Corinthians 8:1-3); they had been very communicative to him, and those that were with him, from the beginning of the Gospel being preached to them: as the instances of Lydia and the jailer show, and which are taken notice of in this epistle, (~~3045~~Philippians 4:15,16); And this same generous spirit still continued, of which their present by Epaphroditus was an evidence; and for this the apostle gives thanks, not only that they had an ability to support the Gospel, and assist Gospel ministers, but that they were willing to communicate, and did communicate, readily and cheerfully, largely and liberally; or this may intend their “participation in the Gospel”, as the Arabic version renders it. The Gospel was in a very wonderful and providential manner brought unto them, and it was attended with mighty power to the conversion of them; they received it with joy and gladness, and cheerfully submitted to the ordinances of it; they had much light into it, and spiritual knowledge of it; and were made partakers of the blessings of grace, which are revealed and exhibited in it, and of the exceeding great and precious promises of it, for which the apostle gives thanks to God; for all this was from him, and a wonderful instance of his grace it was. Moreover, through the Gospel being thus brought unto them, and succeeded among them, they became a Gospel church, and had, through the Gospel, and the ordinances of it, fellowship one with another; yea, they had fellowship with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ, unto which they were called by the Gospel; and in this they remained

from the first day until now; they continued in the Gospel which they were made partakers of, and in fellowship with one another, in breaking of bread, and in prayer, and in hearing the word, which they constantly attended to, and were blessed with communion with Father, Son, and Spirit, to that time; and therefore the apostle continued from the first of their receiving the Gospel, to that moment, to give thanks to God for them on that account: for this last clause may be connected with the words in (^{SCOB}Philippians 1:3), “I thank my God”, as well as with those immediately preceding, “your fellowship in the Gospel”; and shows not only their perseverance in the Gospel, from the first to the present time, as the Ethiopic version renders it, for which he was abundantly thankful; but the continuance of his thankfulness on that account, from his first acquaintance with them to that time.

Ver. 6. *Being confident of this very thing*, etc.] The reason of his thanksgiving, and of his making request with joy continually on the behalf of this church, was the confidence and full persuasion he had of this same thing, of which he could be as much assured as of any thing in the world:

that he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform [it] until the day of Jesus Christ: by this good work is not meant the preaching of the Gospel among them, nor a Gospel church state set up in the midst of them: for though the preaching of the Gospel was a good work, and issued well in the conversion of many, in their edification and comfort, and which was still continued; and though a Gospel church state was erected among them, and was now flourishing, yet the apostle could not assure himself of the continuance of either of them, especially until the day of Christ; and both have been removed from thence many hundreds of years ago: nor is their liberal communication to the support of the Gospel intended; for though this was a good work, yet this was not wrought by God, but by themselves, and was not wrought in them, but done by them; nor their good lives and conversations. The Syriac version indeed renders it “good works”, but these cannot be designed, for the same reasons as before; for though they are good things, and answer many valuable ends and purposes, yet they are external works done by men, and not internal ones wrought in them by God; wherefore by it is undoubtedly meant the work of grace upon their hearts, sometimes called the work of faith, because that is a principal part of it: this is God's work, and not man's, as may be concluded from the nature of the work itself, which is the transforming of a man by the reviewing of him, a regeneration, a resurrection, and a creation, and

therefore requires almighty power; and from the condition man is in by nature, he is dead in sin, and has no power to act spiritually, and much less what is equal to such a work as this; he has no will, desire, and inclination to it, but all the reverse; and if he had, he could no more effect it, than the dry bones in Ezekiel's vision could cause themselves to live. This is the work of God. Sometimes it is ascribed to the Father, who regenerates, calls by his grace, reveals his Son, and draws souls unto him; and sometimes to the Son, who quickens whom he will, whose Spirit is given, whose image is stamped, and out of whose fulness grace is received; but more commonly it is attributed to the Spirit, who is a spirit of regeneration, sanctification, and faith: and this is a "good work", as it must needs be, since it is God's work; he is the efficient cause of it; his good will and pleasure, his grace and mercy are the moving cause of it, and not men's works; and his good word is the means of it. The matter of it is good; it is an illumination of the understanding, a subduing of the will, a taking away of the stony heart, and a giving of an heart of flesh, an infusion of spiritual life, a formation of Christ in the soul, and an implantation of all grace there: it is good in its effects; it makes a man a good man, and fits and qualifies him to perform good works, which without it he cannot do; it makes a man a proper habitation for God, and gives him meetness for the heavenly inheritance. And this is an internal work, a work begun "in" the saints; nothing external is this work; not an outward reformation, which, when right, is the fruit of this good work; nor external humiliation for sin; nor a cessation from the grosser acts of sin; nor a conformity and submission to Gospel ordinances; all which may be where this work is not; but it is something within a man; as appears from the names by which it goes; such as spirit, so called, because it is of a spiritual nature, wrought by the Spirit of God, and has its seat in the spirit of man; it is called the inward man, which is renewed day by day; a seed that remains in him, and a root which is out of sight, and oil in the vessel, the heart, as distinct from the lamp of an outward profession: as also from the several things, which, together, make up the subject of it; it is the understanding which is enlightened; the will which is subdued; the heart and inward parts in which the laws of God are written; the mind and conscience, which are sprinkled with the blood of Christ, and cleansed; and the affections, which are set on divine objects. This is a begun work, and but a begun one. It may be said to be begun as soon as light is let into the soul by the Spirit of God; when it sees its lost state, and need of a Saviour, for as the first thing in the old creation was light, so in the new; when the fear of God is put into the heart, which is the beginning of wisdom; when

love appears in the soul to God, to Christ, to his people, word, and ordinances; and when there are the seeing, venturing, and relying acts of faith on Christ, though there is a great deal of darkness, trembling, and unbelief; and when it is got thus far, and even much further, it is but a begun work; it is not yet finished and perfect: this appears from the several parts of this work, which are imperfect, as faith, hope, love, knowledge, etc. from the indwelling of sin, and corruption in the best of saints; from their various continual wants and necessities; from their disclaiming perfection in this life, and their desires after it. But the apostle was confident, and so may every good man be confident, both for himself and others, that God who has, and wherever he has begun the good work of grace, will “perform”, finish it, or bring it to an end, as the word here used signifies: and this the saints may assure themselves of, from many considerations; as from the nature of the work itself, which is called living water, because it always continues, a well of it, because of its abundance, and is said to spring up to eternal life; because it is inseparably connected with it, where there is grace, there will be glory; grace is the beginning of glory, and glory the perfection of grace; this work of grace is an incorruptible seed, and which remains in the saints, and can never be lost; it is a principle of life, the root of which is hid in Christ, and that itself is maintained by him, and can never be destroyed by men or devils: and also from the concern God has in it, who is unchangeable in his nature, purposes, promises, gifts, and calling; who is a rock, and his work is perfect sooner or later; who is faithful, and will never forsake the work of his hands, and has power to accomplish it; and who has promised his people, that they shall grow stronger and stronger, that they shall not depart from him, and he will never leave them. Moreover, this may be concluded from the indwelling of the Spirit, as a spirit of sanctification, as the earnest and seal of the inheritance, and that for ever; and from the intercession and fulness of grace in Christ, and the saints' union to him, and standing in him; as well as from the impotency of any to hinder the performance of this work, as sin, Satan, or the world: to which may be added the glory of all the three Persons herein concerned; for if this work is not finished, the glory of God the Father in election, in the covenant of grace, in the contrivance of salvation, in the mission of his Son, the glory of Christ in redemption, and of the Spirit in sanctification, would be entirely lost: wherefore it may be depended on, this work will be performed wherever it is begun, and that “until the day of Jesus Christ”; meaning either the day of death, when Christ takes the souls of believers to himself,

and they shall be for ever with him, when this work of grace upon the soul will be finished; for God, who is the guide of his people, will be their God and guide even unto death: or else the last day, the day of judgment, the resurrection day, when Christ shall appear and raise the dead, and free the bodies of the saints from all their bondage, corruption, vileness, and weakness, which will be putting the last and finishing hand to this good work; nor will even the bodies of the saints be quitted by the Spirit of God till this is done.

Ver. 7. *Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all*, etc.] Some connect these words with (^{308B}Philippians 1:3-5); as if the apostle's sense was, that it became him to be thus affected to them, and mindful of them in his prayers, to make request for them with joy, and give thanks for their fellowship in the Gospel, and continuance in it; but they seem rather to refer to his confidence of the good work begun in them, being performed until the day of Christ, and which was but just and right in him to entertain and assert; and may be understood either of a judgment of faith, or a judgment of charity: in a judgment of faith the apostle might be confident, and so may every other man, that all that believe in Christ truly, and have a good work begun in them, that shall be finished; for nothing is more certain, nor is there anything that a man can be more confident of, than this, that he that believes in Christ shall be saved; and this the apostle was fully persuaded of with respect to everyone in this church, that was a believer in Christ; and in a judgment of charity, it was meet and proper, just and right, to think, judge, hope, and believe so of everyone of them, since there was nothing in their profession, conduct, and conversation, showing the contrary:

because I have you in my heart; or “you have me in your heart”; and either reading carries in it a reason why it was fit and right that he should so think and judge concerning them; because they were, as the Syriac version renders it, “put” or “laid” upon his heart; whenever he was at the throne of grace, his heart was enlarged on their account, his affections were wonderfully drawn out towards them, and they were ever in his mind, “both in [his] bonds, and in the defence of the Gospel”; whether in the prison, or in the pulpit, or whatever he was about in the cause or affairs of religion, they were in his heart and thoughts; from whence he concluded they must belong to God, the good work must be in them, and would be performed; it is a token for good when the Lord lays the case of any upon the hearts of his ministers, or any of his people; and also, because they had

him in their hearts, they were affectionate to him, ever thoughtful and mindful of him; and had lately given a specimen of their love to him, as a servant of Christ, and prisoner of the Lord; and as they, so he might know, that they had passed from death to life, because they loved the brethren, and him in particular for his works' sake, who had been an useful instrument in the hand of God among them: and another reason follows,

inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the Gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace; or “partakers with me of grace”; meaning either that they were partakers of the same electing, redeeming, adopting, justifying, pardoning, and regenerating grace, as he was; had obtained the same like precious faith in Christ, and knowledge of him, as he had, though not to the same degree; and therefore might well be assured of the performance of the good work in them, having no more to doubt of their salvation than of his own: or rather by “grace”, or as the Vulgate Latin version reads it, “joy”, he designs his sufferings for Christ, and the sake of his Gospel; which he so calls, because it was given him by God, as a token of his favour, and a mark of honour and respect, to suffer for Christ, as well as believe in him; and therefore rejoiced that he was counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. Now these Philippians were partakers with him of this, both in his “bonds”, by sympathizing with him, praying for him, sending relief unto him, and by suffering such like things themselves; and “in the defence and confirmation of the Gospel”, whether by suffering, preaching, or writing; they stood by him, encouraged and assisted him, when others forsook him, and laid difficulties and discouragements in his way; on account of all which it was but meet and proper he should entertain such sentiments of them as before expressed.

Ver. 8. *For God is my record*, etc.] Which is all one as swearing by him; it is in form of an oath, being a solemn appeal to him as the searcher of hearts, for the uprightness of his mind, the sincerity of his expressions, and the strength of his affections:

how greatly I long after you all; the common members, as well as the bishops and deacons, the weak as well as the strong believers, the poor as well as the rich; the apostle's respects were universal, and without distinction: he longed after their spiritual welfare, an increase of gifts and grace among them; he was their spiritual father, and he hankered after them; as parents after their children; he longed to see them, that he might

enjoy their company and conversation, have communion with them, and impart some spiritual gift unto them: and this he did

in the bowels of Jesus Christ; not with an human and carnal affection, but with a Christian and spiritual one; with a love which came from Christ, and was in imitation of him, and on account of their being in him, loved by him, belonging to him, and being believers in him: it was in the most tender manner that he loved them, and was affected to them; the phrase denotes, that his love towards them was internal, in his heart, and was most tender and strong; and like to that tender concern Christ had for them, and which he stirred up in him.

Ver. 9. *And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more,* etc.] As a proof of his great affection for them, he puts up this petition on their account; which supposes that they had love, as they must certainly have, since the good work of grace was begun in them; for wherever the work of the Spirit of God is, there is love, which is a fruit of the Spirit; and where there is not love, there cannot be that good work; for it signifies nothing what a man says, nor what he has, nor what he does, if love be wanting; but this grace was in these Philippians, they had love to God, to Christ, to one another, to all the saints, and to the ministers of the Gospel, and particularly to the apostle, of which they had lately given him a proof: and it also supposes, that this grace, which was implanted in them in regeneration, was in exercise, which is meant by its “abounding”; it was not only a principle in the heart, and expressed by the mouth, but it was in action; it lay not in word, and in tongue, but showed itself towards the objects of it in deed and in truth; and it was in a very larger and lively exercise; it abounded, it flowed and overflowed; it rose up out of the heart, as water out of a fountain; it was as grace is said to be, a well of living water, springing up, and spreading itself various ways; wherefore the apostle did not pray that they might have love, nor merely that their love might abound, but that it might abound “yet”, might continue to abound, that there might be no stop put to its flow and exercise, and so concerns the perseverance of it, and its actings; and that it might abound “more and more”; which regards the increase of it, and enlargement of its exercise. The Syriac version reads it, that it “may be multiplied and abound”; intimating, that spiritual love cannot be exceeded in; there is no going to an extreme in the exercise of it; natural love may, but not spiritual; God and Christ can never be loved too much, nor saints, as saints, though they may as men: wherefore let love abound ever so much to these objects, it is

capable of abounding more and more, without any danger of excess; and it is to be wished for; for where it is ever so large and abundant in its actings, it is not perfect, nor will it be in this life; so that there is always room for such a petition; besides, the apostle knew how apt love is to grow cold, and saints to sink in their spiritual affections through the prevalence of sin, the cares of the world, and temptations of Satan: he adds,

in knowledge and [in] all judgment; that is, either with knowledge and judgment; and the sense be, that as their love abounded, so their knowledge might be increased, and their judgment in spiritual things be better informed and established. Some Christians are more affectionate, and less knowing; others are more knowing, and less affectionate; it is well when love and knowledge go and keep pace together: or it may be rendered “by knowledge”, suggesting, that love is increased thereby, which is true; for the more saints know of God and Christ, the more they love them; and the more they know of one another's grace and experience, the more they love each other: by “knowledge” may be meant the knowledge of God; not that which is general, is by the light of nature, and is very obscure and insufficient to salvation; but that which is special, is of God in Christ, as a God gracious and merciful, as a covenant God and Father in him; and which at best is imperfect, and needs increasing: and also knowledge of Christ; not general, notional, and speculative, as that he is the Son of God, the Messiah, and Saviour of the world in common; but that which is special, spiritual, and saving; and which is a knowledge of approbation, whereby a soul approves of Christ above all others, as a Saviour; a fiducial one, whereby it trusts in him, and commits itself to him; an experimental and practical one, to which is joined a cheerful obedience to his commands and ordinances, and becomes an appropriating one; yet is in this life imperfect, and so needs increasing; and all means should be used in order thereunto: moreover, the knowledge of one another may be included; an increase of which is necessary to promote brotherly love, and make communion with one another delightful and profitable. By all “judgment”, or “sense”, as in the Greek text, is designed a spiritual apprehension, judgment, and sensation of things. The Syriac version renders it, “all spiritual understanding”, and may intend a spiritual perception, and sense of the love of God shed abroad in the heart, an enlarged experience of the grace of God, and particularly faith, which is expressed by all the live senses; as by “seeing” the Son, the glory, fulness, suitableness, and excellency of him, and the unseen glories of another

world; by “hearing” the joyful sound, the voice of Christ in the Gospel, so as to understand and distinguish it; by “smelling” a sweet smell in the person, blood, righteousness, and sacrifice of Christ, which are of a sweet smelling savour to faith, as are also the things of God, and of the Spirit of God; and by “tasting” how good the Lord is, how sweet is his word, and delicious his fruit; and by “feeling”, laying hold on Christ, embracing and handling him, the word of life: and now a believer having these his spiritual senses exercised, he is capable of discerning between good and evil, and so of approving things most excellent; which is the end of this petition, as appears from the following words.

Ver. 10. *That ye may approve things that are excellent*, etc.] Or “try things that differ”. There are some things that differ one from other; as morality and grace, earthly things, and heavenly things, carnal and spiritual, temporal and eternal things, law and Gospel, the doctrines of men, and the doctrines of Christ; all which differ as much as chaff and wheat, as gold, silver, precious stones, and wood, hay, stubble. These are to be tried and proved; they are not to be received without distinction, but should be examined, which is right and best to be chosen and preferred; and to such trial and examination it is necessary that a man should be transformed, by the renewing of his mind, that he should have spiritual light, knowledge, and experience, have his spiritual senses exercised to discern the difference of things, and also the guidance, direction, and influence of the Spirit of God: and this trial must be made, not according to carnal reason, and the judgment and dictates of it; for the most excellent things are above it, and out of its sphere, and therefore judged foolish, and rejected by it; but according to the word of God, the Scriptures of truth, in the light of the divine Spirit, and with spiritual judgment and sense; when some things will be found excellent, as Christ, and the knowledge of him in his person, offices, grace, righteousness, blood, sacrifice, and satisfaction, and the several truths of the Gospel relating to peace, pardon, justification, adoption, sanctification, and eternal life; and of the several doctrines of the Gospel, some will appear in their nature and use more excellent than others, more grand and sublime; such as concern the sovereign and distinguishing grace of God, the glory of Christ, and the salvation of the elect; some being milk for babes, others meat for strong men. And these being tried and proved, first by the word of God, and then by the experience of the saints, are to be approved above thousands of gold and silver, and esteemed more than our necessary food; even the sincere milk

of the word, as it is by newborn babes, as well as the strong meat of it by the adult, and all to be highly valued and abode by, and held fast.

That ye may be sincere; or “pure”, as the Syriac version renders it; pure as the sun, discerned and judged by the light of it, as the word signifies, which discovers motes, faults, and flaws; in which, some think, is a metaphor taken either from the eagle, which holds up its young against the sun, and such as can bear the light of it she retains as her own, but such that cannot she rejects as a spurious brood; or from persons in business, who hold up the goods they are buying to the sun, to see if they can observe any fault in them: so such may be said to be sincere, or pure, who are pure in heart, life, and conversation, whose principles and practices will bear the test of light; such are sincere, who are like honey without wax, and fine flour without leaven, that have no mixture of corruption in doctrine, life, or manners; whose grace is genuine and right; whose faith is unfeigned; whose love to God, and Christ, and one another, is without dissimulation; whose hope is lively, and of a soul purifying nature, and is built on a good foundation; and whose repentance is attended with genuine effects, and proper fruits; whose principles are unmixed; who do not corrupt or adulterate the word of God, but desire and retain the sincere milk of it, and hold the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience; whose worship is also pure and spiritual, who worship God in spirit and truth, under the influence, and by the assistance of the Spirit of God, and with their whole hearts and spirits, and according to the truth of the Gospel; who keep the ordinances as they were delivered, without any human inventions, corruptions, and mixtures; who are sincere in their hearts, pure and sound in heart, simple, plain hearted, and single eyed; choose to be good, rather than seem to be so; whose desires after God, and divine things, and whose affections for them, are true and real, and proceed from the bottom of their hearts; and who have their conversation in the world by the grace of God, in simplicity and godly sincerity; and such the apostle wishes these saints to be, and adds,

and without offence until the day of Christ; to God, as considered in the righteousness of Christ, in which they are perfectly without offence, and will always continue so; or in their walk and conversation before God, in which, though they may in many things offend, yet not be guilty of any notorious iniquity, and much less of living in it: and to themselves, to their own consciences, exercising a conscience void of offence towards God and men; acting according to that light they have received, and those principles

they have embraced and professed; desiring to be kept from all evil, that it might not grieve and wound them; and doing nothing in things of an indifferent nature, with offence, or against the dictates of conscience, and to the violation of it: and also to others, to Jew or Gentile, to the world, or to the church of God, by avoiding every thing that is offensive to either; not good things, but evil ones, and those that are indifferent; that peace may be preserved, and their own good may not be evil spoken of; that the children of God may not be grieved, staggered, and stumbled, nor sinners hardened, or have any occasion to blaspheme. The phrase denotes an harmless life and conversation, and a continuance in it to the end, to the day of death, or coming of our Lord, which is to be loved, longed, wished, and looked for, and to be always had in view; and that to engage to a becoming life and conversation, with sincerity, and without offence, since in that day all hearts and actions will be exposed and laid open.

Ver. 11. *Being filled with the fruits of righteousness*, etc.] Good works. Some think alms deeds, or acts of liberality and bounty, are here particularly intended; and that respect is had to the generosity of these Philippians to the apostle, and others: and true it is, that these are sometimes so called, as in (2 Corinthians 9:10), but rather good works in general are meant, which are called “fruits”, because, like fruits, they spring from a seed, even from the incorruptible seed of grace in the heart, implanted there in regeneration; and because they are owing, as the fruits of the earth are, to divine bounty and goodness, to the dews of grace, the rising and bright shining of the sun of righteousness, and to the south gale of the blessed Spirit, when brought forth aright; and also because they are pleasant and delightful, they are well pleasing to Christ, and are acceptable to God through Christ; and likewise, because they are profitable, not to God, but to men: and they are styled fruits of “righteousness”, either of imputed righteousness, the righteousness of Christ imputed without works, the effects of which are good works; for nothing more strongly influences and engages men to the performance of good works, than a view of their free justification by the righteousness of Christ; hence there can be no justification by works, since these are the fruits and effects of justification, and not the cause: or of righteousness and holiness implanted in the soul by the Spirit of God, the new man, which is created unto good works, and in or unto righteousness and true holiness; and which naturally tends thereunto, and which stimulates and qualifies men for the performance of the same: or good works are so called, because they are performed by a

righteous man; for as none but a good tree can bring forth good fruit, so none but a tree of righteousness can bear fruits of righteousness; or none but a righteous man do works of righteousness, which are truly such: or because they are such as are done according to the righteous law of God; for this is a necessary requisite of a good work, that it be according to the command and will of God; for otherwise, let it have never such a show of religion and goodness, it is no good work. The Alexandrian copy, the Vulgate Latin, and Ethiopic versions, read, “fruit”, in the singular number, but other copies and versions, read, “fruits”; and the apostle wishes, that these saints might be “filled” with them; that is, that they might be like trees laden with fruit, which have fruit on every branch, bough, and twig; that they might abound in the performance of them, be ready to, and fruitful in every good work; not doing a few of one sort only, but performing continually all manner of good works; and so be like fruitful trees that yield their fruit in their season, and do not cease from so doing, but still bring forth fruit, and that in large quantities:

which are by Jesus Christ; who is the green fir tree, from whom all fruit, as of grace, so of good works, is found; for all good works, which are truly and properly so, spring from union to Christ, and are owing to his grace: souls are married to Christ, that they may bring forth fruit unto God; they are created in him unto good works, and are ingrafted in him the true vine; and through abiding in him, and deriving life, grace, and strength from him, bear fruit, which otherwise they could not do: without Christ no good work can be performed; it is through him, strengthening his people, they do all they do; for they are insufficient to do anything of themselves, but his grace is sufficient for them, and his strength is made perfect in their weakness. He is the exemplar and pattern, according to which they do their good works; and they are motives drawn and taken from him, from his love, from the doctrines of grace relating to him, which are the most powerful, and do most strongly work upon the saints to perform these things; and which, under his grace, and the influence of it, are directed

unto the glory and praise of God: they are done by believers in Christ, not in order to obtain eternal life and happiness for themselves, which they know is the gift of God, and entirely owing to his free grace and abundant mercy; nor to gain honour and applause from men, but to glorify God; who is glorified when his people bring forth much fruit, and which also is the occasion of others glorifying him likewise: and this end is necessary to a good work, that it be done to the glory of God; for if anything else is in

view and not that, let it have ever such an appearance of a good work, it is none at all: and indeed, here we have all the requisites of a good work; as that it should be done according to the righteous law and will of God; that it springs from a principle of grace and holiness; that it be performed in the name, grace, and strength of Christ, and with a view to the honour and glory of God. The Ethiopic version reads, “in” or “to his [Christ's] glory, and the praise of God”; and the Arabic version thus, “to the glory of God and his praise”; and so the design of the clause is to show, either that both the glory of Christ and the praise of God are concerned in every truly good work; or that the glory of God secretly, and his praise openly, are to be sought therein; even all honour and glory, an abundance of it, and that continually; ascribing nothing to ourselves, but attributing all to him, acknowledging, when we have done all we can, we are but unprofitable servants.

Ver. 12. *But I would ye should understand, brethren,* etc.] The church at Philippi having heard of the apostle's troubles, he was very desirous that they should have a true and right understanding of them, and especially of the use they had been of, and were like to be of more and more; and that partly that such as were weak among them might not be offended and staggered, and partly that all might be comforted; as also that they might be animated and encouraged hereby to endure, with patience and cheerfulness, whatsoever afflictions might befall them for the sake of Christ: his sufferings are more obscurely expressed in the next clause, and more clearly in (⁵⁰¹³Philippians 1:13),

that the things [which happened] unto me; by which he intends, not anything done by him, or his labour in the ministry, which had been greatly succeeded for the spread of the Gospel; as the Syriac version suggests, rendering the phrase, *yl yd ynr [wsd,* “that my work makes more abundant progress in the Gospel”: but his sufferings on account of the Gospel, which though said to happen, were not things of chance but of appointment; for as all the sufferings of Christ the head, were by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, so are those of all the members of his mystical body, and of his ministers who are appointed to these things, and they for them; of which Christ has given previous notice, so that they do not come unexpected, but are looked for by them; nor are they over distressed with them, being supported with the presence, Spirit, grace, and favour of God; hence they can rejoice in them, in hope of the glory of God; and as the afflictions of Gospel ministers, the quality and

quantity of them, are fixed and settled by divine appointment, and which accordingly come upon them, so the use of them is also determined, and which have their sure and certain effect as the apostle's had; for the very things by which men designed to have hindered the spread of the Gospel, he says,

have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the Gospel. The Gospel, though it is good news and glad tidings of peace, pardon, righteousness, and salvation by Christ; yet is very disagreeable to carnal men, they are enemies to it; and do all they can to stop its progress, to shut the open door of it, and hinder its course by speaking reproachfully of it, and writing against it, and especially by persecuting its professors, and particularly its ministers; which oftentimes proves rather a furtherance than an hinderance of it; for hereby the Gospel, like gold and silver tried in the fire, shines out the more brightly, with more lustre and glory, and has the greater influence on the minds of men; persecution in one place has often been the means of carrying and spreading the Gospel in many others; (see ~~400~~ Acts 8:1,5,6 11:19-21); and has been God's ordinance for the conversion of multitudes of souls, where it has been the fiercest and hottest; insomuch that it became a common saying in primitive times, that the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church; and hereby also the Gospel has been confirmed, and they that have embraced it have been the more established in it. The apostle's sufferings and bonds were for the confirmation and defence of the Gospel.

Ver. 13. *So that my bonds in Christ,* etc.] What he had more darkly hinted before, he more clearly expresses here; the things that happened to him were his bonds; he was now a prisoner at Rome and in chains; though he had the liberty of dwelling alone in his own hired house, and of his friends coming to see him and hear him, yet he was bound with a chain, and under the care and guard of a soldier continually, who held one end of it. These bonds of his were not for debt, which he took care not to run into, but chose rather to work with his own hands, and so ministering to his own and the necessities of others, that he might not eat any man's bread for nought; nor for any capital crime, as murder, or theft, or anything that was worthy of death or of bonds; but his bonds were in Christ, or for Christ's sake, for professing Christ and preaching his Gospel; he was a prisoner in the Lord, or for his sake; (see ~~400~~ Ephesians 4:1). The use of his sufferings, which is more generally signified in (~~5002~~ Philippians 1:12), is here and in

(³⁰¹⁴Philippians 1:14) more particularly related, and the several instances of it given, these his bonds for the sake of Christ, he says,

are manifest in all the palace, and in all other [places], or “my bonds are manifest in Christ”, as the words may be read; that is, by the means of Christ, he causing them to be taken notice of by men, and some of the first rank: by his bonds being manifest may be meant he himself who was bound; who by his bonds became known to persons, to whom in all probability he would otherwise have remained unknown; as to Felix, and Festus, and King Agrippa, and others in Caesar's court: or the Gospel for the sake of which he was bound; this was made manifest and became known, not barely notionally, but savingly and experimentally; and even Christ himself the substance of it, for whom he was laid in bonds, by this means came to be known, “in all the palace”. The Arabic version reads it, “in the palace of the emperor”. The word “praetorium”, here used, signifies sometimes the judgment hall, or court of judicature belonging to the Roman governors, as Herod and Pilate; (see ⁴²³⁵Acts 23:35 ⁴¹⁸³John 18:28,33 19:9); and if it designs any such court at Rome, then the sense is, that through the apostle's being sent a prisoner to Rome, and his cause heard in the praetorium, or judgment hall, he and the cause of his bonds came to be known by the judges in that court; and which might be the means of the conversion of some of them: sometimes it signifies the general's pavilion in the camp, and sometimes the emperor's palace at Rome, he being the chief “praetor”, or magistrate; and so here it seems to design Nero's house or court, where the Gospel, through the apostle's bonds, had made its way to the conversion of many there; (see ³¹⁰²Philippians 4:22); and in all other places; or as the Arabic version renders it, “with all other men”; for it may be understood either of men or places; and that Christ and his Gospel came to be known through the apostle's sufferings, not only in the court of judicature where his cause was tried, or in Caesar's palace, and to many of his courtiers, but in other places in Rome, and parts of the empire, and to many persons there, both Jews and Gentiles; so that what was intended for the disadvantage of the Gospel, proved for the service of it.

Ver. 14. *And many of the brethren in the Lord*, etc.] This is another instance of the usefulness of the apostle's sufferings, and another proof of their being for the furtherance of the Gospel; they were not only the means of the conversion of many that were without, but were very encouraging and strengthening to them that were within the church, and to many that

were in the ministry; who are called “brethren”, some real, others nominal; being partakers of the grace of God, at least in profession, or otherwise they would not have been fit to have been ministers of the word, nor members of a Gospel church, which was necessary to their being regularly sent forth; and whom the apostle calls and owns as brethren in the ministry, being sent forth by Christ, at least some of them, and having the same commission to preach the Gospel as he had; though they had not equal gifts and qualifications with him: he styles them brethren “in the Lord”, to distinguish them from the Jews at Rome, who were his brethren according to the flesh; and to express their spiritual character and relation, and point out the work of the Lord, in which they were jointly concerned with him: now though not all the brethren, yet many of them were greatly affected with, and influenced by the apostle's patient and cheerfully suffering for Christ; insomuch that, as he says,

waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear; or as some read it, “waxing confident in the Lord”; connecting the phrase, “in the Lord”, with this word, and so make the ground and object of their confidence the Lord; whose presence, power, grace, and Spirit, emboldened them the more by the apostle's bonds to preach the Gospel with courage and intrepidity; the Lord being on their side, and their helper, they feared not what men could do unto them; or else being animated by the apostle's patience and firmness of mind in suffering, and by the use they saw his bonds were of for the spread of the Gospel, they took heart and courage to “speak the word”; the word “of God”, as the Vulgate Latin, Syriac, and Ethiopic versions read; and so the Alexandrian, Claromontane, and two of Stephens's copies: meaning either the essential word, the Lord Jesus Christ, who was the subject of their ministry; or the written word, the writings of Moses and the prophets, the books of the Old Testament, according to which they spoke; or the Gospel, called often the word, and sometimes with an addition, the word of truth, the word of faith, the word of reconciliation, the word of righteousness, the word of life, and the word of our salvation, from the several subjects of it: this they spake boldly and freely, as it ought to be spoken, and “without fear”, not without fear and reverence of God, whose word it is; nor of themselves and their own weakness and inabilities, which cause much fear and trembling; but without the fear of man, which brings a snare; they had no regard to the threats and menaces, the reproaches and persecutions of men; none of these things moved them; they feared God and not man, and

so went on boldly, preaching the Gospel; which is related with pleasure, as a fruit and effect of the apostle's sufferings, and which he doubted not would be very delightful to the Philippians to hear of.

Ver. 15. *Some, indeed, preach Christ*, etc.] That is, some of them, as the Arabic version reads; some of the brethren, that were only so in profession; wherefore these could not be the unbelieving Jews, who preached the Messiah in general, but did not believe Jesus of Nazareth to be he, and opened the prophecies of the Old Testament relating to him, to the Gentiles; at which the apostle is by some thought to rejoice; inasmuch as this might be a means of giving light to them that were without any knowledge of the Messiah, and of leading them into an inquiry concerning him, whereby they might come to know the true Messiah, and believe in him: for these men were brethren, were members of the church, and whom the apostle owned as brethren in the ministry; neither of which could have been admitted had they been unbelievers to Jesus being the Messiah; nor would the apostle have rejoiced in their ministry; and besides, they preached the same Christ as other Gospel ministers, only on different principles and with different views; they preached the pure Gospel of Christ, they did not preach themselves, or any doctrines of their own, but Christ, nor the doctrines of other men; nor did they read lectures of mere morality, as the Gentiles did; nor were they legalists, as the Jews; they did not insist on the doctrine of works, or preach up justification and salvation by the works of the law, a doctrine the apostle always militated against, nor would he ever express any pleasure and satisfaction in it; nor did they preach a mixed Gospel, partly of grace and partly of works; they were not such as joined Moses and Christ, the law and Gospel, works and grace, together in men's salvation; nor did they corrupt and adulterate the word of God, or blend it with their own, or other men's inventions, but they preached Christ clearly and fully; he was the sum and substance of their ministry; they preached up his person as the true God, the Son of God equal with the Father, and possessed of all divine perfections; as truly man, having assumed a true body and a reasonable soul, and as God and man in one person; they preached him in all his offices, as prophet, priest, and King; justification by his righteousness alone, pardon through his blood, atonement and satisfaction by his sacrifice and salvation alone by him; they directed souls to him for all grace, and every supply of it; and assured them that though he died, he rose again from the dead, is ascended on high, is set down at the right hand of God, is an advocate with the Father, and ever

lives to make intercession for his people; and when he has gathered them all in, he will come a second time to judge the world in righteousness, and take then, to himself, that they may be ever with him: and yet all this they did,

even of envy and strife; not of “envy” to Christ, whom they preached, but of envy to the apostle; they envied his gifts, his usefulness and success in the ministry; and he being now in bonds, they thought it a proper opportunity to exert themselves, and set up preaching Christ as he had done, in the clearest manner; hoping they should meet with the same success, and gain great honour and applause in the church, and even be able to transfer to themselves that glory which belonged to the apostle: as for their “strife” and “contention”, of which they also preached Christ; it was not with other faithful ministers of the word, about the doctrines of the Gospel; for in these they were agreed with them, at least, in appearance and profession, and in their ministry ever did they raise strifes and contentions about words, from which comes envying among the brethren; for this would not have answered their ends, which were vain glory and popular applause; but they strove and contended one with another, who should preach Christ best and clearest, or with the apostle to get his glory and honour from him; they strove to out vie one another, and particularly him in preaching Christ: but there were others of the brethren who were truly such, who preached Christ as well as they, and upon better principles, and with better views;

and some also of good will; or “willingly” and “freely”, as the Arabic version renders it; without any selfish end or sinister view of vain glory; not moved unto it by envy or ambition; not doing it in a contentious manner, and with an ill design; but of pure “good will” to the Gospel, having a real liking of it, an hearty love for it, a sincere desire to spread it, and promote the interest of a Redeemer, and the good of souls by it; having in a spiritual and experimental manner felt the power, and tasted the sweetness of it themselves: and so were inwardly affected and truly disposed to preach it, clear of all external motives and ambitious views; and as having a good will to the apostle himself, whose heart they knew was in the Gospel, though he was now hindered from the ministry of it; and therefore to the best of their abilities were desirous of supplying his place without the least injury to his character.

Ver. 16. *The one preach Christ of contention*, etc.] That is, those that preached of envy and strife, an not of good will to Christ, to the Gospel, to the souls of men, or to the apostle; and though they preached Christ, yet

not sincerely or “purely”; not but that they delivered the sincere milk of the word, and preached the pure Gospel of Christ, without any mixture and adulteration; but then they did not preach it with a sincere heart, and a pure intention; for this respects not the doctrine they preached, but their views in it, which were not honest and upright; they did not preach Christ from a principle of love to his person, and from an inward experience of the power of his Gospel, and a zealous affection for it, and firm attachment to it, and with a view to the glory of God, the honour of Christ, and the good of immortal souls; but were influenced by avarice, ambition, and envy: they had very evil designs upon the apostle,

supposing to add affliction to my bonds; imagining that by their free and bold way of preaching Christ openly in the city without control, and with impunity, it might be thought that the apostle did not lie in bonds for preaching Christ, but for some other crime; or otherwise why were not they laid hold on and put under confinement also? or thinking that by such numbers of them frequently preaching Christ about the city, it would either incense and stir up the Jews, Paul's accusers, to prosecute him more vigorously; or excite Nero to take more cognizance of his case, and either more closely confine him, or hasten the bringing his cause to a hearing, and him to punishment, as the ringleader of this sect, to the terror of others; but this they could not do without exposing themselves to great danger, unless they were determined to recant, as soon as they should be taken up; wherefore it should rather seem that their view was in preaching Christ to carry away the glory of it from the apostle, and take it to themselves; and fancying that he was a man of the same cast with them, desirous of vain glory, they thought it would afflict and distress him, he being in bonds, and not at liberty to exert himself, and make use of his superior gifts and abilities; but in this they were mistaken, he was so far from being made uneasy hereby, that he rejoiced at the preaching of Christ, let their intentions be what they would; and therefore he does not say that they did add affliction to his bonds; but they “supposed”, or thought, that the method they took would do it.

Ver. 17. *But the other of love*, etc.] Those that were truly brethren in the Lord, who had received the grace of God in truth, to whom the Gospel

was come in power, and who had a spiritual and experimental knowledge of Christ, and of the mysteries of his grace; these preached Christ of love, “out of the love of him”, as the Ethiopic version reads; that is, out of love to Christ, who to them was exceeding precious, altogether lovely, the chiefest among ten thousands, and their hearts being hot and burning with love to him, they therefore spoke of him with their tongues; and out of love to the Gospel of Christ, which with them was the pearl of great price, and every truth of it more valuable than gold, silver, and precious stones; and out of love to the church of Christ and the members of it, that their souls might be fed and nourished with the wholesome words of Christ, might be comforted with the doctrines of grace, and be established and built up in their most holy faith; and out of love to the souls of others, knowing their miserable estate by nature, and the danger they were in, and therefore preached Christ as the only way of salvation, whereby they could escape the wrath to come; and out of love to the apostle likewise, which the following clause shows;

knowing that I am set for the defence of the Gospel; meaning either that they knew he was a chosen vessel, to bear the name of Christ, and preach his Gospel in the world; that he was ordained and appointed a minister of it before the world was; separated to it from his mother's womb, and was called unto, and sent to preach it by Christ, and was set apart for it by the church; and was in a very eminent manner qualified to defend it, by preaching, disputing, writing, and suffering: or that they knew that he was laid, or lay, as the words may be rendered, in prison, for defending the Gospel of Christ; yea, they knew that his lying in prison was in defence of the Gospel; and therefore, out of love to him, they joined issue with him to defend the Gospel; as he by suffering for it, so they by preaching it, which they knew full well would be matter of great joy to him.

Ver. 18. *What then? notwithstanding every way*, etc.] What follows from hence? what is to be concluded from all this? what is to be thought or said in this case? this, that notwithstanding these brethren acted on those different principles, and with those different views:

whether in pretence: of love to Christ, zeal for the Gospel, and concern for the good of souls; though their real views were their own applause, and detriment to the apostle's character; or *at l [b*, “by occasion”, as the Syriac version renders the word, and as many interpreters think is the sense

of it; occasionally preaching Christ, and making a handle of this to gain some other points, and get, advantages to themselves as some:

or in truth; as the hearty friends of Christ and the apostle did; they not only preached Christ who is the truth, and the truth as it is in Jesus, and every truth of the Gospel; and especially that fundamental one, salvation alone by a crucified Christ, and that without any adulteration or concealing any part of it; but with great purity of mind, with integrity of heart, and in the uprightness of their souls; as of sincerity, and in the sight of God; without selfish and sinister ends, and any ambitious views and evil designs: whether it was now in the one or the other way, upon the one or the other principles and views, the apostle stood thus affected; and these were his sentiments, reflections, and resolutions, that inasmuch as

Christ is preached; in the glory of his person, in the fulness of his grace, in the suitableness of his offices and great salvation, in the excellency of his righteousness, and the virtue of his blood, and the efficacy of his sacrifice;

and therein I do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice; not that it was an indifferent thing with him, whether Christ was sincerely or hypocritically preached; or that he could take any pleasure in the manner of preaching, and in the principles and views of one sort of these preachers; for nothing was more disagreeable to him than envy and ambition, strife and contention, hypocrisy and insincerity; but he rejoiced in the subject matter of their ministry, which was Christ Jesus the Lord, whom he dearly loved, and whose interest, if served by any means, or any sort of persons, was a pleasure to him; and also in the effects and consequences of their ministry, the establishing of the saints, the conversion of sinners, the spread of the Gospel, and the enlargement of the interest of Christ: all which may be answered through the preaching of Christ, by evil designing men; for Christ and his Gospel are the same by whomsoever preached, and God may make use of his own truths to answer his ends and purposes, whoever are the dispensers of them, and though they themselves may be cast away, as Judas and others.

Ver. 19. *For I know that this shall turn to my salvation*, etc.] Or “to salvation”, to the salvation of others; that is, the preaching of Christ by these men, though designed by them to the hurt of the apostle; yet he knew that by the power and grace of God it should be made useful to the conversion, and for the salvation of many souls; and this was matter of rejoicing to him: or that affliction which they thought to have added to his

bonds, should it befall him, he knew either from a divine revelation, or from the word of God in general, which gives reason to believe that all things work together for good to the saints, and from his own experience; that this also would turn to his advantage, and be for his good, either temporal, spiritual, or eternal, and would work for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory in the world to come; and even in this world, he knew that every reproach, indignity, and suffering he endured, did but increase his fame and his honour, and make his name the more illustrious among the saints; which was the very thing these men envied in him, and strove to take from him; yea, he knew that the method they took would, quite contrary to their expectation, be the means of his enlargement and liberty, of his salvation and deliverance from his bonds: (see ^{<50125>}Philippians 1:25,26); and which he believed would be brought about by the prayers of the saints, and particularly these Philippians:

through your prayer; as Peter was delivered out of prison through the incessant prayer of the church for him. The apostle knew that the prayer of a righteous man availeth much with God, and is very prevalent with him, and much more the prayers of a whole church; wherefore he frequently desired them for him on many accounts; and among others, that he might be delivered out of the hands of unreasonable men; and he firmly believed that he should be delivered by such means:

and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ; which he had reason to expect and hope would be given him through their prayers for him; for though God has made large provisions for the supply of the wants of his people, in his Son and in his covenant, to be dispensed unto them by his Spirit, yet for these will he be sought unto by them: the supply of the Spirit is a supply of gifts from Christ, fitting and qualifying men for his service, and which are ministered by the Spirit to them severally as he will; and a supply of grace out of the fulness of Christ, which the Spirit of grace is the applier of; and a supply of strength from the same by him, to enable the saints both to do and suffer whatever he is pleased to call, them to; it is in short a supply of all their need, which the Spirit of God helps them to, according to the riches of grace, in glory by Christ: this the apostle knew would be sufficient for him, to support him under his present troubles, to deliver him out of them, and to fit him for whatever future work and service his Lord and master had for him to do.

Ver. 20. *According to my earnest expectation and [my] hope,* etc.] These words are so placed as that they may refer both to what goes before and what follows after; and the sense be either that the apostle had earnest expectation and hope, even a strong confidence of his salvation, or deliverance from his confinement; and also of his having an interest in the prayers of the saints, and that hereby a supply of the Spirit would be given him; for as he knew and was sure that his God would supply the wants of others, he had great reason to believe he would supply his own; and especially since he had been told by Christ that his grace was sufficient for him: or as in connection with what follows; he had a full persuasion that he should not be put to shame on any account;

that in nothing I shall be ashamed; not of his hope, neither the grace of hope, which makes not ashamed; nor the object of hope, Christ Jesus; nor the thing hoped for, eternal life and happiness, or any of the above things about which this grace was conversant; nor of his reproaches and sufferings for the sake of Christ and his Gospel, which he esteemed as an honour to him, as jewels in his crown, as chains of gold about his neck, and as great riches; nor of the Gospel which he preached, so as to retract and deny it, drop the whole, or conceal any part of it, lay down his profession of it, or cease to preach it: “but” his earnest desire and his firm hope and faith were,

[that] with all boldness, as always; that as he had, so he should continue to use boldness in the exercise of faith at the throne of grace, come with freedom thither, and stand before God with intrepidity, through the blood and righteousness of his Son; and that as he had met with afflictions and sufferings for Christ's sake, with cheerfulness and an undaunted spirit, none of these things had moved him, so he believed he never should; and that as he had all along, throughout the whole course of his ministry, preached the Gospel with plainness, openness, and freedom, without any guise or reserve, and that with an holy courage and boldness in the face of all opposition;

[so] now also Christ shall be magnified in my body; for this being Christ's, his great concern was to glorify him in it; and though it was a poor, weak, and crazy body, yet rich treasure being put into this earthen vessel, Christ had been greatly magnified, extolled, and made very high in it; never was there, as the apostle, such a magnifier of Christ, by preaching him in the transcendent glories of his person as the Son of God, in the riches of his

grace as Mediator, in all his offices of prophet, priest, and King; and particularly in the justification and salvation of men, where he made him to be all in all. Christ was also magnified by him, by his life and conversation, which influenced by his grace, was in obedience to his will, was directed to his glory, was as became his Gospel, and what adorned his doctrine in all things; and also by enduring such hardships and so great sufferings on his account; the power of Christ was greatly magnified in supporting him under them, and carrying him through them; and as this had been the case ever since he was in the ministry, it being the main thing he had in view, he had a well grounded hope and confidence, that it would ever be so:

whether [it be] by life or by death; that is, should he live longer, should he be delivered from his present confinement, and be spared a little longer among men, he comfortably assured Christ would be magnified by him in his body, and as long as he was in it; for his determination was to preach him and him only, to spend his life in his service, and to seek not his own things, but the things of Christ; or should he be put to death quickly by the order of Nero, he doubted not but Christ would have some glory thereby; he should die calling upon his name with fervency, professing his constant and unshaken faith in him, and sealing the Gospel by his blood, with the greatest cheerfulness.

Ver. 21. *For to me to live is Christ*, etc.] Christ was his life “efficiently”, the efficient cause and author of his spiritual life; he spoke it into him, produced it in him, and disciplined him with it: and he was his life, objectively, the matter and object of his life, that on which he lived; yea, it was not so much he that lived, as Christ that lived in him; he lived by faith on Christ, and his spiritual life was maintained and supported by feeding on him as the bread of life: and he was his life, “finally”, the end of his life; what he aimed at throughout the whole course of his life was the glory of Christ, the good of his church and people, the spread of his Gospel, the honour of his name, and the increase of his interest; and this last seems to be the true sense of the phrase here;

and to die is gain; to himself, for death is gain to believers: it is not easy to say what a believer gains by dying; he is released thereby, and delivered from all the troubles and distresses of this life, arising from diseases of body, losses and disappointments in worldly things; from the oppressions and persecutions of wicked men; from indwelling sin, unbelief, doubts, and fears, and the temptations of Satan; he as soon as dies enters into the

presence of God, where is fulness of joy, and is immediately with Christ, which is far better than being here, beholding his glory and enjoying communion with him; he is at once in the company of angels and glorified saints; is possessed of perfect holiness and knowledge; inherits a kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world, and wears a crown of life, righteousness, and glory; enters upon an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled; is received into everlasting habitations, into mansions of light, life, love, joy, peace, and comfort; is at perfect rest, and surrounded with endless pleasures. This is the common interpretation, and is countenanced by the Syriac, Arabic, and Ethiopic versions, which read, “to die”, or “if I die, it is gain to me”: but instead of reading the words as consisting of two propositions, they may be considered as one, and the sense be either this; Christ is gain to me living or dying in life or in death; for Christ is the believer's gain in life; he is all in all, his righteousness, his wisdom, his sanctification, his redemption, his life, his light, his food, his raiment, his riches, his joy, peace, and comfort; he is everything to him he wants, can wish for, or desire: and he is his gain in death; the hope he then has is founded on him, and the triumphs of his faith over death and the grave arise from redemption by him; his expectation is to be immediately with him; and the glory he will then enter into will lie in communion with him, in conformity to him, and in an everlasting vision of him: or thus, for me to live and to die is Christ's gain; his life being spent in his service, in living according to his will, in preaching his Gospel, serving his churches, and suffering for his sake, was for his glory; and his death being for his sake, in the faith of him, and the steady profession of it, would be what would glorify him, and so be his gain likewise; and this seems to be the genuine sense of the words, which contain a reason of the apostle's faith, why he was persuaded Christ would be magnified or glorified in his body, whether by life or by death.

Ver. 22. *But if I live in the flesh*, etc.] To be in the flesh sometimes signifies to be in a state of nature and unregeneracy, and to live in and after the flesh, to live according to the dictates of corrupt nature; but here it signifies living in the body, or the life which is in the flesh, as the Syriac version renders the phrase here, and as the apostle expresses it in (~~412~~ Galatians 2:20), and the sense is, if I should live any longer in the body, and be continued for some time in this world:

this [is] the fruit of my labour; or “I have fruit in my works”, as the above version renders it:

yet what I shall choose I wot not, or “know not”; whether life or death; since my life will be for the honour and glory of Christ, and though a toilsome and laborious one, yet useful and fruitful: by his “labour”, he means his ministerial work and service; the ministry is a work, a good and honourable work, and a laborious one. Christ's faithful ministers are labourers; they labour in the word and doctrine, both in studying and preaching it; and such a labourer was the apostle, who by the grace of God laboured more abundantly than others; the “fruit” of which was the conversion of many sinners, the edification, comfort, and establishment of the saints, their fruitfulness in grace and works, the spread of the Gospel far and near, the enlargement of the kingdom of Christ, and the weakening of Satan's kingdom, and the glorifying of Christ in his person, offices, and great salvation; all which was a strong and swaying argument with him, to desire to live longer in the body, and made it on the one hand so difficult with him what to choose: for as a certain Jew ^{f2} says,

“the righteous man desires to live to do the will of God while he lives;”

but not with that view, he adds,

“to increase the reward of the soul in the world to come.”

Ver. 23. *For I am in a strait betwixt two*, etc.] Life and death; or between these “two counsels”, as the Arabic version reads; two thoughts and desires of the mind, a desire to live for the reasons above, and a desire to die for a reason following. The apostle was pressed with a difficulty in his mind about this, as David was when he was bid to choose which he would, either seven years' famine, or three months' flight before his enemies, or three days' pestilence; upon which he said, I am in a great strait, (¹⁰¹⁴2 Samuel 24:14); to which passage it is thought the apostle alludes; the same word as here is used by Christ, (¹⁰²⁰ Luke 12:50);

having a desire to depart; to die, a way of speaking much in use with the Jews, as expressive of death; thus Abraham is represented by them speaking after this manner on account of his two sons Isaac and Ishmael, the one being righteous and the other wicked ^{f3};

“says he, if I bless Isaac, lo, Ishmael will seek to be blessed, and he is wicked; but a servant am I, flesh and blood am I, and tomorrow מִלְּחַמֵּי קָדְשׁ *ml w[h ^m rj ka*, “I shall depart out of the world”, or “die”; and

what pleases the holy blessed God himself in his own world, let him do: **rj pnčk**, “when Abraham was dismissed” or “departed”, the holy blessed God appeared to Isaac and blessed him:”

and again it is said ^{f4},

“iniquities are not atoned for, until **aml [m rj ptad**, “a man is dismissed”, or “departs out of the world”;

and once more ^{f5},

“when a man **μl w[h j zm rj pn**, “departs out of this world”; according to his merit he ascends above;”

(see Gill on “~~John~~ John 13:1”); the same word is used in the Syriac version here; death is departing out of this life, a going out of the body, a removal out of this world; it is like moving from one place to another, from the world below to the world above; with the saints it is no other than a removing from one house to another, from the earthly house of their tabernacle, the body, to their Father's house, and the mansions of glory in it, preparing for them. Death is not an annihilation of men, neither of soul nor body; it is a separation of them, but not a destruction of either; it is a dissolution of the union between them for a while, when both remain in a separate state till the resurrection: now this the apostle had a desire unto, which was not a new and sudden motion of mind; it was a thought that had long dwelt with him, and still continued; and this desire after death was not for the sake of death, for death in itself is a king of terrors, very formidable and terrible, and not desirable; it is an enemy, the last enemy that shall be destroyed; it is contrary to nature, and to desire it is contrary to a first principle in nature, self-preservation; but death is desired for some other end; wicked men desire it, and desire others to put an end to their lives, or do it themselves to free them from some trouble they are in; or because they are not able to support under a disappointment of what their ambition or lust have prompted them to: good men desire death, though always when right, with a submission to the will of God, that they may be rid of sin, which so much dishonours God as well as distresses themselves; and that they may be clothed upon with the shining robes of immortality and glory; and as the apostle here,

to be with Christ: for the former clause is to be strictly connected with this; he did not desire merely to depart this life, but chiefly to be with Christ,

and the former only in order to the latter; the saints are in Christ now, chosen in him, set upon his heart, and put into his hands, are created in him, and brought to believe in him, and are in him as branches in the vine; and he is in them, formed in their hearts, lives and dwells in them by faith, and they have sometimes communion with him in private duties and public worship; he comes into them and sups with them, and they with him: but this is only at times, he is as a wayfaring man that continues but for a night; hence the present state of the saints is a state of absence from Christ; while they are at home in the body, they are absent from the Lord, especially as to his bodily presence; but after death they are immediately with him, where he is in his human nature; and their souls in their separate state continue with him till the resurrection morn, when their bodies will be raised and reunited to their souls, and be both for ever with him, beholding his glory, and enjoying uninterrupted communion with him; which will be the completion and full end of Christ's preparations and prayers: hence it appears that there is a future being and state after death: the apostle desires to depart this life, and "be", exist, be somewhere, "with Christ"; for the only happy being after death is with him; if souls are not with him, they are with devils and damned spirits, in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone: and it is also manifest that souls do not sleep with the body in the grave until the resurrection; the souls of the saints are immediately with Christ, in the enjoyment of his presence, in happiness and glory, hoping, believing, and waiting for the resurrection of their bodies; had the apostle known that he must have remained after death in a state of inactivity and uselessness, deprived of the communion of Christ and of his church, it would have been no difficulty with him to determine which was most eligible, to live or die; and it would have been much better for him, and more to the advantage of the churches, if he had continued upon earth to this day, than to be sleeping in his grave, senseless and inactive; whereas he adds,

which is far better: to depart and be with Christ is better than to live in the flesh in this sinful world, in the midst of a variety of sorrows and troubles, and in which communion with Christ is but now and then enjoyed, though such a life is better than sleeping in the grave; but upon a soul's departure and being with Christ, it is free from sin and sorrow, and in the utmost pleasure, enjoying communion with him without interruption; and this is better than labouring in the ministry: for though no man took more pleasure in the work of the ministry than the apostle did, and no man's

ministry was more profitable and useful; yet it was toilsome, laborious, and wearisome to the flesh; wherefore dying and being with Jesus could not but be desirable, since he should then rest from his labours, and his works would follow him; at least it was better for him, and so the Syriac version adds, *yl*, “to me”, far better for me; and so the Arabic: to live longer might be better and more to the advantage of Christ, the glory of his name, the good of his churches, it might be better for others; but leaving the world and being with Christ were better for him; and this was an argument swaying on the side of death, and inclining him to desire that, and made it so difficult with him what to choose.

Ver. 24. *Nevertheless to abide in the flesh*, etc.] To continue in the body, not always, but a little longer,

[is] more needful for you; for their comfort, edification, and instruction, their further profiting: and increase in faith, and the joy of it. The Syriac version renders the words thus, “but business for you”, or “a good will towards you compels me to abide in the body”; and the Arabic version thus, “notwithstanding I choose to remain in the flesh, and this I think very necessary for you”; so that upon the whole, the argument for living longer on consideration of glorifying Christ, and of being more useful to the good of souls, preponderated with him; inclined him to desire rather to live than die; though the latter was better for him, and more to his personal advantage; and thus, like a brave and good man, he prefers a public good to a private one.

Ver. 25. *And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide*, etc.] In the flesh, in the body, live a little longer in the world. These words must be understood either of a certain infallible knowledge, arising from a divine revelation, and a firm persuasion and confidence founded upon that which the apostle had, of his being delivered from his bonds, and spared a little longer for further usefulness among the churches; and accordingly some have thought that he was after this set at liberty, and travelled through several countries preaching the Gospel, and after that was committed to prison and suffered death; but of this there is no sufficient proof: or rather therefore of a conjectural knowledge arising from the present state of things, and his view of it; being willing to hope, and persuade himself that he should be delivered from his confinement, and his life be spared for the good of the interest of Christ, and the glory of his name; it being what his heart was set upon, and he was very desirous of:

and continue with you all; not only with the Philippians, but other saints, and other churches, who were dear to him, and he to them; though he may mean more especially these believers:

for your furtherance, or “profiting”; in divine and spiritual things, in the knowledge of Christ, and the truths of the Gospel:

and joy of faith; for the furtherance, or increase of that joy which faith is attended with, and which springs from it; for true solid joy springs from faith in the person, blood, righteousness, and atonement of Christ; and is what may be increased, and is often done by and through the ministry of the word, and the ministers of the Gospel; who do not pretend to a dominion over the faith of men, only to be helpers of their joy, as they sometimes are, as also of their faith, which as it comes by hearing is increased the same way. The phrase is Jewish; mention is made in the writings of the Jews^{f6} of *atwnmyhmd hwdj*, “the joy of faith”.

Ver. 26. *That your rejoicing may be more abundant*, etc.] They had rejoiced greatly on his account already, blessing God that ever they had seen his face, or heard his voice; as they had great reason to do, he being the happy instrument of first bringing the Gospel to them, and of their conversion; and now he hoped he should be delivered out of prison, and see them again, that their joy might be increased and abound yet more and more, upon his deliverance, they had so earnestly prayed and so much longed for, and at the sight of him they so dearly loved: and yet to show that this their joy was not looked upon by him as a carnal one, or as arising from a natural affection, he observes that it was

in Jesus Christ; though they rejoiced in him as an instrument, and therefore he adds,

for me; yet it was on account of Jesus Christ, the subject of his ministry; their joy did not centre in the apostle, but had Christ for its object, whose person, righteousness, and salvation were held forth by him to their view and comfort; and though they would still more and more rejoice should he return to them once more,

by my coming to you again; yet still it would be in Christ, and because of the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ, in which he should come to them.

Ver. 27. *Only let your conversation be as it becometh the Gospel of Christ*, etc.] Or “behave as citizens worthy of the Gospel”; for not so much their outward conversation in the world is here intended, which ought to be in wisdom towards them that are without; so as to give no offence to any, and to put to, silence, the ignorance of foolish men, and them to confusion and: shame, who falsely accuse their good conversation in Christ; though this is what is highly becoming professors of the Gospel; and a moral conversation proceeding from principles of grace, under the influence of the Spirit of God, is very ornamental to the Gospel, being what that requires and powerfully teaches; but the conversation of the saints one with another, in their church state, is here meant. The allusion is to cities which have their peculiar laws and rules, to which the citizens are to conform; and such as behave according to them act up to the character of good citizens, and becoming, and worthy of the charter by which they hold their privileges and immunities. A church of Christ is as a city, and is often so called; the members of it are citizens, fellow citizens, one with another, and of the household of God, and have laws and rules according to which they are to conduct themselves; as such do who walk worthy of their calling, and becoming the charter of the Gospel by which they have and hold their freedom and privileges, as citizens of the new Jerusalem: and such a Gospel walk and conversation lies in such things as these; constant attendance on the preaching of the Gospel, and on the administration of Gospel ordinances; a strict observation of the rules of behaviour towards persons that have given offence, either in public or private; a just regard to the discipline of Christ's house, in admonitions; reproofs, censures and excommunications, as cases require; cultivating love, unity, and peace; keeping the ordinances as they were delivered; retaining and striving for the doctrines of the Gospel; holding the mysteries of it in a pure conscience, and adorning: it by a becoming life and conversation. This the apostle recommends as the “only”, the main and principal thing these saints should attend to; and as what would give him the greatest joy and pleasure to hear of, whether he should ever come and see them again or not:

that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs. The Vulgate Latin version reads “hear of you”; and so do the Syriac and Ethiopic versions:

that ye stand fast in one spirit; meaning either the Gospel, which is the Spirit that giveth life; so called because it is from the, Spirit of God, and that by which he is conveyed into the souls of men, and contains spiritual

things: this is one, uniform, consistent scheme of truths; find in this believers ought to stand fast, and should abide by it, and never give up, or part with anyone branch of it; and so to do is one part of their Gospel conversation; for the apostle in this and the following things points out the several parts of that conversation he exhorts to: or else the holy Spirit of God is intended, who as he is the beginner of the good work of grace on the soul, is he also who carries it on and will perfect it; and therefore to him should the people of God look for grace and strength, to enable them to stand fast in the profession of their faith, to hold fast without wavering, and to persevere to the end; who is that one Spirit by which they are baptized into one body, and become fellow citizens with the saints: or the spirit of love, unity, and peace is here meant: true Christian love makes the saints to be of one heart and soul; and in this single affection to one another should they stand fast; brotherly love should continue, and all endeavours be used to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace; which is another branch of becoming Gospel conversation: the apostle adds,

with one mind, or “soul”; either signifying the same as before, or else that they should be of one judgment in the doctrines and ordinances of the Gospel, and abide therein; which is necessary to their harmonious walk and conversation together, as citizens of Zion:

striving together for the faith of the Gospel: by the “faith of the Gospel”, may be designed the grace of faith, which comes by the Gospel; as the means of it, and by which the Gospel becomes useful and beneficial to the souls of men, and which has the Gospel for its object; for faith comes by hearing the word, and that is only profitable when it is mixed with it, and is that grace which gives credit to every truth of it, upon the testimony of divine revelation: now as the doctrine of faith is that which the saints are to strive for, the grace of faith is that by which they strive for it; by which they resist Satan, oppose false teachers, and overcome the world; and agreeably to this sense the Arabic version reads, “by the faith of the Gospel”: though rather the doctrine of faith is intended, that word of faith, or faith, which is the Gospel itself, and which is often so called; and for this, in all its parts and branches, believers should strive; as for all those doctrines of faith, which concern the unity of God, the trinity of persons in the Godhead, the divine sonship of Christ, the proper deity and distinct personality of him and the blessed Spirit; and for all such doctrines as regard the state and condition of men by the fall of Adam, as that the guilt

of his sin is imputed to all his posterity, the pollution of nature by it derived and communicated to them, that the bias of man's mind is naturally to that which is evil, and is averse to that which is good, and that he is impotent to everything that is spiritually good; and for all those doctrines which regard the free and distinguishing grace of God; of election, as eternal, personal, and irrespective of faith, holiness, and good works, as motives and conditions of it; of the covenant of grace, as from everlasting, absolute and unconditional, sure and firm; of redemption, as particular, and as proceeding upon a full satisfaction for sin to law and justice; of justification by the righteousness of Christ; of peace and pardon by his blood; of regeneration, conversion, and sanctification, as entirely owing to powerful and efficacious grace, and not to man's free will; of the saints' final perseverance, the resurrection of the dead, a future judgment, and eternal life, as the free gift of God: striving for these, as wrestlers do with one another, to which the allusion is, supposes persons to strive and wrestle against; and they are such as oppose truth and themselves unto it; as all such that deny divine revelation, or the authority of the Scriptures; that say that Jesus is not the Messiah; or that Christ is not the natural and eternal Son of God; or that deny his proper deity, his satisfaction and righteousness; that reject the efficacious grace of God, and the operations of the Spirit as unnecessary, to regeneration and conversion; that advance and plead for the purity of human nature, the power of man's free will, and ascribe justification and salvation to the works of men: all such are to be contended with and strove against, and that not with carnal weapons, but with spiritual ones, with the Scriptures of truth; by which a good warfare with them may be warred, and the good fight of faith fought with much success; and the whole requires great care and solicitude, earnestness, zeal, constancy, and courage: striving together for these, intends either striving with the apostle, and as they had him both as a fellow soldier, and for an example; or rather striving one with another, their ministers with their members, and their members with their ministers; the one by preaching, writing, and disputing more especially, the other by bearing a constant testimony to truth, and praying for the success of it; and both by dying for it when required; and so to do is to have the conversation as becomes the Gospel of Christ.

Ver. 28. *And in nothing terrified by your adversaries,* etc.] Not by Satan, though a roaring lion, for Christ is greater than he; nor by the world which Christ has overcome; nor by false teachers, though men of art and cunning;

nor by violent persecutors, who can do no more than kill, the body; let not the power, the rage, the cunning, or the violence of one or the other, move, discourage, or affright from a close attachment to the Gospel and the truths of it:

which is to them an evident token of perdition; when men wilfully oppose themselves to the truth, and show a malicious hatred to it, and hold it in unrighteousness, and either turn the grace of God into lasciviousness, or persecute it with rage and fury, it looks as if they were given up to reprobate minds, to say and do things not convenient; as if they were foreordained to condemnation; and were consigned over to destruction and perdition; and very rare it is, that such persons are ever called by grace:

but to you of salvation; when men are reproached and ridiculed, are threatened and persecuted for the sake of the Gospel, and are enabled to take all patiently, and persevere in the truth with constancy, it is a manifest token that such are counted worthy of the kingdom of God; that God has a design of salvation for them, and that they shall be saved with an everlasting one: so that the different effects of the opposition of the one, and the constancy of the other, are made use of as so many reasons why the saints should not be terrified by their enemies: it is added,

and that of God; meaning either that the whole of this is of God, as that there are adversaries, heretics, and persecutors; this is by divine permission, and in order to answer some ends and purpose of God, and the perdition or everlasting punishment of such persons will be righteously inflicted upon them by him; and that the constancy, faith, patience, and perseverance of the saints and their salvation, are all of God: or it particularly respects the latter, the salvation of those who persevere to the end; this is not of themselves, or merited by their constancy, patience, and perseverance, but is God's free gift. The Syriac, Arabic, and Ethiopic versions, join this clause to the beginning of (³⁰²⁹Philippians 1:29), thus, “and this is given of God to you”, etc.

Ver. 29. *For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ*, etc.] For the sake of his Gospel, for the good of his interest, and the glory of his name. The Alexandrian copy reads, “to us it is given”, etc.

not only to believe in him; for faith in Christ, which is not merely believing that he is the Christ, and all that is said of him, or all that he himself says, but is a seeing of the Son, a going to him, receiving, embracing, leaning,

relying, and living upon him, as God's salvation, is a pure gift of grace; it is not in nature, nor in every man, and in whom it is, it is not of themselves, it is the gift of God; the first implantation of it, all its acts and exercise, its increase, and the performance of it at last with power, are all owing to the grace of God; and this is only given to the elect, for it is a distinguishing gift; it is given to them, and them alone, and, therefore called the faith of God's elect:

but also to suffer for his sake; for the sake of Christ personal; for the sake of Christ mystical, for his body's sake the church; for the sake of his Gospel, and for the sake of his cause and interest in the world: now to suffer in name and character, in estate or person, not as an evildoer, but as a Christian, is a gift of God, as faith in Christ is; all the sufferings of the saints are appointed by God; their being called forth to suffer shame for the sake of Christ, is an high honour conferred upon them; all the grace and strength by which they are supported under sufferings for Christ are given to them; and all the glory consequent upon them is not merited by them, which are by no meant to be compared with it, but is the free gift of God through Christ. The same persons to whom it is given to believe in Christ, to them it is given to suffer for him; and they all do in some shape or another, though some more, others less; yet all are partakers of sufferings for Christ, and so are conformed to him their head, and hereby enter the kingdom: now all this is said, as containing so many reasons to encourage believers to have their conversation as becomes the Gospel of Christ, by a steady adherence to it, and a joint contention and striving for it, without being intimidated by their enemies.

Ver. 30. *Having the same conflict*, etc.] For it seems that the Philippians were now under persecution for the Gospel of Christ; but this was no new or strange thing; it was the same the apostle was under formerly, and at that time:

which ye saw in me, and now hear [to be] in me; when he and Silas were at Philippi, and first preached the Gospel there, they were exceedingly ill used, and shamefully entreated; they were dragged to the market place, or court, were beaten and scourged, and put into the inner prison, and their feet made fast in the stocks, (~~416~~Acts 16:19,22-24 ~~511~~1 Thessalonians 2:2); of all this the Philippians were eyewitnesses, and to which he here refers when he says, which ye saw in me; and now he was a prisoner at Rome, as they had heard, hence he says, “and now hear to be in me”; for they had

sent Epaphroditus to him with a present, as a token of their love to him, and to support him under his affliction; and which he mentions, in order to animate them to bear their sufferings patiently for Christ's sake, since the same were accomplished in him, as well as in the rest of their brethren and fellow Christians in the world.