



Following the upward call through Philippians ...

## Closing Comments

It is amazing how God has communicated His message in the midst of the matrix of human history. The chronicles of the history of Israel intersect the chronicles of the ancient nations of the world. The spectacle of Jesus Christ, in the words of the apostle Paul, was not carried out in a corner; it was in the full sight of the Jewish and Roman worlds. The great doctrines concerning the Christ and His church are often revealed in the courtroom defenses of the apostles and other exponents of the gospel. And the encouragement, correction, redirection, and motivation of the early churches are

accomplished by epistles to individuals and congregations. These letters are not fake or stilted; they have the ring of real epistles to real people, written with real concern and real love. The apostle Paul, for example, knew and loved the saints in Philippi, and they knew and loved him.

- **Proper praise** — The congregation in Philippi was certainly one of the greatest congregations, by any spiritual measure, in the history of the church as a whole. It is fitting, therefore, that this epistle should close with appropriate adoration to the great and mighty God who orchestrates it all. "Now to our God and Father," is Paul's expression of praise, "be the glory forever and ever. Amen" (Philippians 4:20). Certainly all the praise and glory rightfully belongs to the Father, and there should never be any shortage of praise to Him.
- **Closing greetings** — This letter opened with greetings to all the saints in Philippi, with special note of the elders and deacons. The apostle wants to bring everything to a close by completing the circle, as is often done in exiting a conversation. "Greet every saint in Christ Jesus," says he. "The brethren who are with me," he adds, "greet you. All the saints greet you," he has the opportunity to superadd, "especially those of Caesar's household" (Philippians 4:21,22). What an awesome nugget of information for the faithful brethren in the Roman garrison town of Philippi! This congregation began to be on solid footing with the conversion of the Roman official, the jailer. For them to hear that the gospel had now reached right into the very household of the Roman emperor would be tremendously uplifting and exciting!!
- **The grace of God** — The letters always begin with comments on and appeals for God's grace, and often close with a expressed desire for that grace as well, and this epistle is no exception. "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit," is how Paul finishes this letter (Philippians 4:23). This is interesting phraseology. The prayer is that all of God's bountiful provision — which is what His grace really is — be used to strengthen the individual spirits of the brethren in Philippi. Such an appeal is not surprising coming from the apostle Paul, who clearly had laid his life down for these brethren as well as many others.

**These letters ring true, and confirm the truthfulness of the testimony.**

The elements which run through the letter to the Philippians, though unique, are still typical of the types of things which the apostle would bring to the surface. The use of the names of saints inside the congregation, and a discussion of strengths, weaknesses, and solutions to their problems, all shout that these are real people and that this is not a faked letter. What it also shows, along with the other epistles of the New Testament writings, is that these congregations represent the real spread of the gospel throughout the Roman world and beyond. In spite of their being persecuted, in many cases to the maximum, these common people believed in the resurrection of the Jesus Christ and were willing to go to their graves without denying God or compromising the doctrinal truths connected with Jesus' death, burial, resurrection, and ascension. These letters ring true, and confirm in a totally different way the truthfulness of the first century testimony.

JAY WILSON