



Following the upward call through Philippians ...

Paul's Plans

The memories would have flooded through the apostle Paul's mind. Forbidden by the Holy Spirit to go preach in Ephesus and the surrounding area, and pushed by circumstances to the extremities of the peninsula at Troas, he received a vision of a man from Macedonia saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us" (Acts 16:9). Drawing from this vision the conclusion that God had called them Macedonia to preach the gospel, Paul and his traveling companions crossed over to Europe and started the work at Philippi. The apostle remembered the first meetings along the river: first the immersions of Lydia and her household, and then preaching and teaching day after day in the open air, trying to gain traction at the same time as an evil spirit working through a slave girl worked to block the progress of the gospel. He recalled the casting out of the evil spirit, and the chaos that ensued as the slave girl's owners were successful in getting Paul and Silas thrown into prison. He could still experience the memories of the earthquake that occurred while the two preachers were fastened in stocks, and that miracle that none of the suddenly freed prisoners escaped. Paul could picture meeting with the jailer, and the immersions of his household; he in his mind could see the consternation of the magistrates as they personally had to apologize to Paul and Silas who were Roman citizens. Visions of the last views of the city flitted across the pages of his mind as he recalled how they were asked to leave town, to move thence to Thessalonica, leaving the infant congregation in the hands of Dr. Luke.

- ▼ **Remembrance** — The salvation of each soul was important to the apostle. It was exciting for him to see how the spark that first started the congregation in Philippi was nurtured until it became a much larger flame, burgeoning into a sizeable congregation — bustling with life and the desire to keep the gospel rolling forward. "I thank my God in all my remembrance of you," he states, "always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all" (Philippians 1:3,4). What a blessing those saints, overseers, and deacons were! For Paul to be thankful for every remembrance is highly significant. The fact that his prayers were offered in joy greatly contrasts some of the prayers he would be praying for other congregations.
- ▼ **Appreciation for participation** — When Paul, on the same missionary journey in which he started the congregation in Philippi, ended up nearly broke in Corinth, it was Philippi which sent money to enable the apostle to preach full time. Time after time, this generous and committed congregation sent financial assistance to Paul to enable him to keep on doing the only thing with eternal value — spreading the gospel. The apostle was thankful in his prayers and remembrances, he says, "in view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now" (Philippians 1:5). The financial backing of congregations like Philippi is extremely helpful to those out on the front lines, taking the saving gospel of Jesus Christ into a needy, but hostile and rebellious world.
- ▼ **God's working** — God, through His word and through His Holy Spirit, works inside each Christian, if the Christian is willing to work with God. The apostle had seen God's working in the brethren in Philippi, and had experienced their backing and generosity. "For I am confident of this very thing," he comments, "that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus" (Philippians 1:6). God, through His divine Providence, is orchestrating the events around each of the willing Christians to conform them to the image of God.

The congregation at Philippi stood for more than 50 years as a shining example of what a local church should be. May we emulate and imitate their example, that the gospel of Christ might go forward with power "until the day of Christ Jesus."

**MAY MODERN
CONGREGATIONS
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IMITATE THEIR
EXAMPLE!**

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