



Following the upward call through Philippians ...

Paul's Anticipated Visit

The apostle Paul truly loved the brethren with whom he worked. "Love," said he in another place, "bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things" (1 Corinthians 13:7). Love never falls down in doing its job; it keeps working when all else has been shunted aside. Love powered our Lord Jesus Christ through the events leading up to and including the cross. This love which comes from God, said the apostle, "has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us" (Romans 5:5). Thus Paul could go through all

the tribulations and vicissitudes connected with teaching and preaching the gospel to the lost and edifying the saints because he was empowered with this love. He loved the people in the congregation at Philippi as he was in the process of starting it, and he did not quit loving them just because he moved on to another location.

- **The saints' progress** — The apostle Paul, having had visions of Paradise, was really pulled in that direction. But, because he loved the brethren, he chose to stay on and continue to work on earth. "I know," says he, "that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith ..." (Philippians 1:25). The growth of individual Christians and congregations is not automatic. It is clear that the labors of Paul were an integral part in the process of helping the saints' progress in the faith of Christ until the Lord saw fit to call him home. Not only did the saints need to make progress in their faith, but labor was needed to help them develop the joy that comes with a full understanding of God's will as revealed in the pages of the New Testament. This perspective on joy is something modern saints need to mull over in their minds.
- **The faith** — The term *the faith* shows up in various ways in a consistent manner throughout the New Testament writings. It is clear that there is only one faith that God will recognize as that which will justify the individual. Furthermore, it is a system of thought called "the faith of Christ" as contrasted to "the law of Moses," and the discussion of its tenets and effects is the major theme of the books of the New Testament. There is therefore a lot of meaning packed into the phrase "your progress and joy in the faith."
- **Their proud confidence** — Most of the brethren were looking to Paul to provide continued leadership. The positive and faithful way he conducted himself in prison encouraged the Christians on the outside so that they had "far more courage to speak the word of God without fear." This assurance that the disciples of Christ drew from Paul's example he calls "proud confidence in me." Having stated that he knew he was going to remain on earth to do his part to develop progress and joy in the faith, he adds, "so that your proud confidence in me may abound in Christ Jesus through my coming to you" (Philippians 1:26). This "proud confidence" in Paul was going to result in the strongest possibility of his being able to come to the brethren in Philippi once he was released from prison in Rome.

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Their confidence would *abound* in the apostle's coming to them. Major strings were going to have to be pulled by God to get Paul out of prison in Rome, and then to orchestrate his eventual coming to Philippi. Paul loved these brethren, and, furthermore, most of them loved him! Properly understood, all real joy is found in deepening relationships with other people, especially between Christians. For these brethren to have a reunion this side of glory would be the fulfillment of the *abundance in Christ Jesus* which Paul indicated could happen at some future point. This, of course, would result in much anticipation of the apostle's eventual visit.

JAY WILSON