



# PHILIPPIANS

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**...holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain. Philippians 2:16**

The words of the first clause, "holding fast the word of life," are given as a continued contrast to one thought in the previous verse, and as an added exhortation to another thought.

Verse 15 said, "...in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world,"

In contrast to the "crooked and perverse generation, the saints "shine as lights in the world." Further, instead of being crooked, they are to hold "fast the word of life." In other words, "holding fast the word of life" is how they can "shine as lights in the world." They are as beacons to those around them, but they are so because of the message they profess. The message of Jesus is the word of life. He said as much in John 5:39 –

"You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me."

Jesus was referring to the Old Testament Scriptures at that time. They spoke of Him, and they were intended to direct the people's attention to Him. Likewise, the words of the apostles which then explain Christ to the saints also contain this same word. Jesus said as much in John 15 –

"But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. 27 And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning." John 15:26, 27

The Spirit would continue to testify of Christ through these men, carrying the word of life to the people of Israel and to the nations of the world. It is this message which Paul calls “the word of life.” His petition is that they hold fast to it “so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ.” He was an apostle, chosen to carry this message and to establish it among the gentiles. With each church that he planted, his hope was that it would continue and prosper insofar as it would adhere to the truth of Scripture.

To him, prospering did not mean wealth, fancy presentations, or big events scheduled to impress the masses. Instead, it meant holding fast to the word and then radiating that word out to others, carrying on the gospel which he had presented to them. If they were to follow this path, he could then feel confident “that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.”

His metaphor here is one he uses elsewhere. He was as if a runner in a marathon, striving with all of his might to reach the finish line. If those he shared the gospel with held fast to it, not introducing heresies such as the false teachings of the Judaizers, he would feel that he had run his race well. As his message is still being faithfully carried out by many churches today, he can rejoice in that. As his message has been shunned and rejected by many churches today, he can feel disheartened by that.

In the end, Paul’s words are the words of the Lord, having come to us under divine inspiration. Therefore, we are to hold fast to them as the precious word of life that is so desperately needed in this darkened world.

Life application: Church is a serious business. It should not be treated like a social club or a place where “good works” replace sound doctrine. Instead, church is to be a place where the word is examined and explained. If this is not the case, then the church is a failed church.

**Yes, and if I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all.** Philippians 2:17

In the previous verses, Paul has asked for the Philippians obedience (vs. 12). He then said in verse 16, “so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.” With this in mind, he now explains what the result of this will be for him. The translation begins with “Yes,” however, the word in Greek is a strong adversative conjunction. It means, “but” as in “but instead,” or more literally “otherwise.” He is showing that a contrasting thought exists in him, but with which he is fully content as long as their obedience is realized.

This contrast is, “...if I am being poured out as a drink offering.” The word is *spendó*, and it means “to make a libation. It is a drink offering poured out which symbolizes total surrender, even to the point of death. It is use here and in 2 Timothy 4:6. The KJV unfortunately misses

the metaphor here and simply calls it an “offering.” There are many types of offerings, even some that do not lead to death, but this one is specific. The Bible says that the life is in the blood. Therefore, to be poured out as a drink offering has a special meaning. Even if his life-blood is poured out, he will be content.

He then notes that this pouring out is “on the sacrifice and service of your faith.” In other words, if his work in leading them to the obedience mentioned above was effective, then his death would have meaning and purpose. There was obviously some sort of internal problem in the church at Philippi that was causing them to not be like-minded. In attempting to correct them, he gave them the example par-excellence of Christ in verses 2:5-2:11. This was then followed up by his call for obedience. It is this idea of harmony within the fellowship which he is especially directing his hopes towards.

Not only then had they been brought to the faith, but he was looking for obedience in “the sacrifice and service of” it. The word “sacrifice” is generally agreed by scholars to be referring not to the act of sacrificing, but to the thing sacrificed. They were to be (as he said to those in Rome) “a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service” (Romans 12:1).

That they were living sacrifices would lead to the “service of your faith.” The two ideas are given here after the example of Christ of the previous verses. They have been given the pattern, and now they were being asked to follow in like-minded living. If they were to do so, the pouring of out Paul’s life-blood would be well worth it. His death would mean so little in comparison to their obedience that he says, “I am glad and rejoice with you all.”

As can be seen, proper conduct and living before the Lord was of such importance to him that his life would be considered well spent if this were to come about. And because his words are recorded in Scripture, each church that is likewise obedient today carries on the same great tradition of that which he would be well pleased with.

Life application: Someday we will stand before Jesus and give an account for our conduct in our lives, and in our dealings with our fellow congregants. Paul will be there as well, and the words “well done” from Jesus will surely bring a happy smile from him as well. We are to look to the New Testament epistles as our tools of instruction for proper church-age doctrine. Let us do so with hopes of bringing honor to the Lord Jesus.

**For the same reason you also be glad and rejoice with me. Philippians 2:18**

Paul had just said, “Yes, and if I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all.”

Now, building upon that, he says, “For the same reason.” The “same reason” is being tied to his being poured out, or made a sacrifice as if a drink offering, which is based on the sacrifice and service of their faith. In that, he rejoiced. His death, if it was to come, would have meaning and purpose. Because of this, there was no need to be sad or mourn for him. Rather, he tells them, “you also be glad and rejoice with me.”

The word translated here as “glad” is probably better translated as “joy.” He instructs them to have joy at such a prospect. The whole epistle stresses possessing this state of joy as more than some type of privilege, but even as a Christian obligation. We are to have joy in the accomplishment of the work of the Lord, even if it ends in a way which would otherwise seem heartbreaking to the world at large.

The words “rejoice with me” are correct, but they also carry the sense of “congratulate me.” He had run his race well and had not failed in his duties. And more than that, he had high expectations that his ministry would continue to be fruitful from their obedience to the Lord. With this, he noted that congratulations were due. It is reminiscent of the words he surely anticipated – “Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.” Matthew 25:23

Life application: If you have stayed the course and faithfully heeded the word and lived your utmost to the Lord, you are to be congratulated for your efforts. There should be no sense of loss at the possibility of your demise. Instead, there should be joy in understanding that the Lord is pleased with the life you have lived.