

# Paul's Wishing Well

## A Study in Philippians



Lionel D C Hartley

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## Using Paul as an example

He that gives good advice, builds with one hand, he that gives good counsel and example, builds with both; but he that gives good admonition and bad example, builds with one hand and pulls down with the other. -- Francis Bacon

3:17 Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.;

4:9 Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.

# 1. I, Paul, wish to know Christ

The wish: 3:10 That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;

How? 1:9,10 And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgement; That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ.

Begins and ends with grace 1:2 Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.; 4:23 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

Grace (is) a supernatural assistance to human endeavour, which overcomes empirical limitations of personality. Iris Murdoch - The Sovereignty of God

## 2. I, Paul, wish to win Christ

The wish: 3:8 Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ,

How? Forsake all things/put him first 3:7, 8 But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ,

and 13b, 14 ...This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching

forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ

Jesus.

"We are to strive to enter at the strait gate. But this gate does not swing loosely on its hinges. It will not admit doubtful characters. We must now strive for eternal life with an intensity that is proportionate to the value of the prize before us. It is not money or lands or position, but the possession of a Christ-like character, which will open to us the gates of Paradise. It is not dignity, it is not intellectual attainments, that will win for us the crown of immortality. Only the meek and lowly ones, who have made God their efficiency, will receive this gift." - Southern Watchman, April 16, 1903.

### **3. I, Paul, wish to magnify Christ (in body)**

The wish: 1:20 According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death.

Humility 2:5-11 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in



heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

"In choosing men and women for his service, God does not ask whether they possess learning or eloquence or worldly wealth. He asks, 'Do they walk in such humility that I can teach them my way? Can I put my words into their lips? Will they represent me?'" - Testimonies Vol 7, p144

"Before honour is humility. To fill a high place before men, Heaven chooses the worker who, like John the Baptist, takes a lowly place before God. The most childlike discipline is the most efficient labour for God. The Heavenly intelligences can co-operate with him who is seeking, not to exalt self, but to save souls." - Desire of Ages, p436

b) Contentment 4:11-13 Not that I

speaking in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

c) Praising him 4:20 Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

"We are to praise God by tangible service, by doing all in our power to advance the glory of his name." - Christ's Object Lessons, p300

## **4. I, Paul, wish to be conformed to Christ**

The wish: 3:10 That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.

"A Christ-like life is the most powerful argument that can be advanced in favour of Christianity." - Testimonies Vol 9, p21

a) Filled with the fruits of Righteousness 1:11 Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

"The doing principle is the fruit that Christ requires us to bear; doing deeds of benevolence, speaking kind words, and manifesting tender regard for the poor, the needy, the afflicted." -Review & Herald, Aug 6, 1889

Fruit also a pun: 4:15-18 Now ye Philippians know also, that in the

beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity. Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account. But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God.

b) Acknowledge source of gifts  
4:19,20 But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

"When you return from your missionary work, do not praise yourself, but exalt Jesus; lift up the cross of Calvary." - EG White, Testimonies Vol 5, p596

## **5. I, Paul, wish to be found in Christ**

The wish: 3:9 And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:

a) Prayer intercessory 1:4 Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with

joy, ("A despairing man should have the devotion of his friends...."

Job 6:14 NIV)

b) Prayer in general 4:6 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

c) Witnessing 1:13-15 So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places; And many

of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will:

"In a town in New England (USA) a well was being dug. When the work was nearly finished, while one man was still at the bottom, the earth caved in and buried him. Instantly the alarm was sent out, and mechanic, farmers, merchants, lawyers, hurried breathlessly to the rescue. Ropes, ladders, spades, and shovels were brought by eager willing hands. 'Save him, O save him!' was the cry.

Men worked with desperate energy, till the sweat stood in beads upon their brows and their arms trembled with exertion. At length a pipe was thrust down, through which they shouted to the man to answer if he were still alive. The response came, 'Alive, but make haste. It is fearful in here.' With a shout of joy they

renewed their efforts, and at last he was reached and saved, and the cheer that went up seemed to pierce the very heavens. 'He is saved!' echoed through every street in town.

Was this too great zeal and interest, too great enthusiasm, to save one man? It surely was not; but what is loss of temporal life in comparison to the loss of a soul? If the threatened loss of a life will arouse in human hearts a feeling so intense, should not the loss of a soul arouse even deeper solicitude in men who claim to realise the danger of those apart from Christ? Shall the servants of God show as great zeal in labouring in the salvation of souls as was shown for the life of that one man buried in a well?" - Gospel Workers, p31, 32

d) Living a Christian example 1:27  
Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be

absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.

e) Christian unity & love 2:1-5 If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.

"The secret of our success in the work of God will be found in the harmonious working of our people. There must be concentrated action. Every member of the body of Christ must act his part in the cause of God according to the ability that



God has given him. We must press together against obstructions and difficulties, shoulder to shoulder, heart to heart." - Review & Herald, Dec 2, 1890

f) Humility 2:12-15 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Do all things without murmurings and disputings: That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world.

Loving humility is marvellously strong, the strongest of things, and there is nothing else like it.

-- Fyodor Dostoevsky

“In peace, there's nothing so becomes

a man, / As modest stillness and humility”  
-- King Henry, William Shakespeare's  
Henry V, Act 3, Scene 1, [Lines 3 & 4 of  
the well-known “Once more to the  
breach, dear friends, once more,” speech].

“Real humility requires that you forget  
... sacrifices, as though they were nothing.  
... We should take our sacrifices without  
thought of earthly glory: of applause, of  
fame, of admiration. We should sacrifice  
for the joy we will get on the other side of  
death, and for that only. If we have this  
attitude, our pride will be no barrier to  
those we serve....

But this requires a change of attitude  
so deep there is nothing for it but prayer.  
It is beyond our reach. Only God can  
help.” (Tim Stafford, *The Friendship Gap:  
Reaching Out Across Cultures*, Intervarsity  
Press, Illinois, 1984, pp138,139)

g) Read his word 2:16 Holding forth  
the word of life; that I may rejoice in the

day of Christ, that I have not run in vain,  
neither laboured in vain.

## **6. I, Paul, wish to rejoice in the day of Christ**

The wish: 2:16 Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.

When? 1:6 Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ: vs10 That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ. 3:20, 21 For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

a) Stand fast 4:1 Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for,

my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved.

b) Rejoice in the Lord 3:1 Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe. 4:4 Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice.

"The choice to rejoice leads to an attitude of gratitude." Anon - courtesy of Jim and Carolyn Wheeler

How can we stand fast and rejoice?  
4:19 But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

## 7. I, Paul, wish to be with Christ

The wish: 1:23 For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better

**KEY:** 4:8, 9 Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.

