

PHILIPPIANS

1:1 *To whom do the terms "bishops" and "deacons" refer and what is their role in the New Testament church?*

Bishops is simply another name for the ruling body of elders to whom God has committed the oversight of the New Testament church (CP 1Ti 3:1-7; Tit 1:4-9 with Ac 20:17, 28; 1Pe 5:1-3). The word *overseers* in Ac 20:28 also means *bishops*. They are both derived from the same Greek word, **episkopos**. (For more detailed studies on this subject see comments also on Ac 1:15-17, 20:17, 1Ti 3:1-7 and 1Pe 5:1-3).

The term *deacon* primarily denotes a servant – one who ministers to the needs of others – without reference to the character of the work. In the New Testament, **diakonos**, the Greek word for deacon is used to refer to domestic servants (CP Jn 2:5,9); civil rulers (CP Ro 13:3-4); Christ (CP Ro 15:8; Ga 2:17); the followers of Christ in relation to their Lord (CP Jn 12:26; Eph 6:21; Col 1:7; 4:7); the followers of Christ in relation to one another (CP Mt 20:26; 23:11; Mk 9:35; 10:43); the servants of Christ in relation to preaching and teaching (CP 1Cor 3:5; 2Cor 3:6; 6:4; 11:23; Eph 3:7; Col 1:23,25; 1Th 3:2; 1Ti 4:6); a servant of the church (CP Ro 16:1); servants in the church (CP Php 1:1; 1Ti 3:8,12), and false apostles – servants of Satan (CP 2Cor 11:15).

We can see from those scriptures that the term *deacon* has a much broader application than most Christians in the contemporary church realise. The general conception of deacons among Christians in the contemporary church is that they do most of the menial tasks in the church – they open the hall up for meetings, switch on the lights, arrange the seating, distribute the emblems for communion, and take up the collection, etc, but as is seen here scriptures do not teach that. The confusion surrounding deacons in the contemporary church emanates from the teaching that the role of deacons in the New Testament church is defined in Ac 6:1-6, yet scriptures do not designate the seven men in Ac 6:1-6 who were chosen to distribute the alms and minister to the material needs of the Greek widows in the church at Jerusalem as deacons (CP Ac 6:1-6 with 1Ti 3:1-13). It is obvious from 1Ti 3:8-13 that the office of deacon in the New Testament church is more than dealing with temporal things as distinct from spiritual things. Temporal things have to be dealt with, but to limit the office of a deacon to just dealing with temporal things is to limit the effectiveness of the church in God's eternal purpose. In the context of 1Ti 3:1-13 it is significant that the term deacons is used side by side with bishops, or elders. This indicates that deacons are assistant ministers or that they assist the ruling elders in the performance of their duties. They are the scriptural counterparts to the non-scriptural assistant pastors and elders in the contemporary church (CP Php 1:1). The qualifications for deacons, like bishops, and their role in the New Testament church, are defined in 1Ti 3:8-13 not in Ac 6:1-6 as so many Christians in the contemporary church have been taught.

It should be noted here also that although deacons assist the elders in the performance of their duties they have no ruling authority in the New Testament church. Their ministry office as 1Ti 3:13 clearly teaches is a

proving ground leading to greater responsibilities, but it is not a leadership position to start with, and for any local New Testament church to be under the authority of a "board of deacons" is totally unscriptural. We cannot supplant God's order for the church and replace it with another. He has decreed the church to be under the authority of ruling elders, not deacons. (See also comments on Act 6:1-6, Ro 16:1-2, 1Ti 3:8-13).

1:6 *Does this mean that once saved believers cannot lose their salvation, as some teach?*

No (CP Eze 18:20-32 and 33:10-20 with Php 2:12-13). If there was no possibility of failing God's grace, there would be no need for fear and trembling, as Paul teaches in Php 2:12-13 (CP 1Cor 9:27; 10:12-14; 1Th 3:8; He 3:6, 12-14; 4:11; 6:4-6, 11-12; 10:26-31, 35-39; 12:14-15; 2Pe 2:20-22). Clearly these scriptures all refute the teaching that once saved believers cannot lose their salvation. Php 1:6 simply means that there will be nothing lacking on god's part in performing the work He has started in us until He performs the final work of grace on the day of redemption (CP Ro 8:17-25; 1Cor 1:4-8; Eph 1:10; 3:20-21). See comments also on Php 1:10; He 3:7-11, 6:4-6, 10:26-31, 2Pe 2:20-22.

1:9 *See comments on 1Th 3:12*

1:10 *What does the phrase "the day of Jesus Christ" refer to here?*

(CP also 1Cor 1:7-8, 5:5, 15:20-23; 2Cor 1:14; Php 1:6, 2:16; 1Th 2:19, 3:13, 5:23; 2Th 2:1; 2Ti 1:12; Jas 5:7; 1Jn 2:28). Together with Php 1:10 these scriptures all refer to the first resurrection, when Jesus comes again to take all the saints of God, Old Testament and New Testament alike, both living and dead, back to heaven with him (CP Jn 14:1-3; 1Cor 15:51-58; 1Th 4:13-18; Rev 3:10; 20:6). See also comments on Lu 21:36, Jn 5:28-29, 14:1-3; Ro 14:10-12; 1Cor 1:8, 15:51-58, Php 1:6; 1Th 4:13-18; 2Th 2:7; Rev 19:11-21, 20:6.

1:13 *What palace is Paul referring to here?*

Paul is most probably referring to Caesar's palace here (CP 4:22). The general consensus among bible scholars is that this letter was written to the Philippians from Rome where the emperor had his palace. Paul was in prison in Rome but had the opportunity to preach the gospel, and many got saved as a result (CP 1:7, 12 with Ac 28:16, 23-24, 30-31).

1:15-18 *What exactly is Paul saying here?*

Paul was telling the Philippians here that his detractors in Rome did really preach the gospel, but from selfish ambition. Their motives were not pure. They used Paul's imprisonment as an opportunity to promote themselves and discredit Paul. Paul's supporters on the other hand were motivated by genuine affection for Paul and preached from their love for him. They knew that Paul's imprisonment was fulfilling God's purpose for him at that time while

furthering the gospel (CP Ac 23:11; 27:23-24; 28:16, 30-31).

1:19 ***What does the word "salvation" (KJV) mean here?***

Here the word *salvation*, which also means *deliverance* and *preservation*, refers to the prayers of the Philippians and the Holy Spirit's empowering preserving Paul's bold and fearless testimony of the gospel even though he was still in prison and in danger of failing to maintain it. Many Christians believe that Paul is talking about being delivered from prison here, but that is not correct, as V 20 teaches (CP V20). Paul's passionate desire and eager longing and hope was that he would not be found wanting in his witness for Christ, both in word and conduct while in prison (CP Ac 4:29; Ro 14:8; Eph 6:19-20; Col 4:2-4). Paul wanted God to be magnified and glorified through him, whether he lived or died. For Paul, to live was Christ – his life in Paul – and to die was gain – the gain of eternal glory (CP Php 1:21 with Ac 21:13).

Though Paul would have preferred to depart this life and be with Christ he knew that while ever he lived he had extended opportunities to be even more fruitful for Christ (CP Php 1:22-26 with 2Cor 5:1-4, 8-9; 2Ti 4:6). Paul goes on in Php 1:27-30 to exhort the Philippians to stand true in suffering for Christ as they knew he stood (CP V27-30).

2:5-8 ***What do we learn from what Paul says here?***

Paul is exhorting Christians here to think of themselves as Christ thought of Himself (CP V1-4; Ro 12:3; 15:1-3; Ga 5:13; 1Pe 5:5). Christians are to live in humility toward others, esteeming them as being more important than ourselves. Christ had equal status with God from all eternity (CP Jn 1:1-3; 10:30; 17:5; Ro 9:5; Col 2:8-9; 1Ti 3:16; Tit 2:13; 2Pe 1:1-2; 1Jn 1:1-3). But when He entered the human race at His incarnation, Jesus surrendered all the privileges of deity – "He made Himself of no reputation" - and took upon Himself the form of a servant.

Php 2:5-8 does not teach as so many in the church believe, that at His incarnation Jesus renounced His Deity, or that His humanity displaced Deity in His personality. Rather, it teaches that He took upon Himself, in addition to His divinity, self abnegation and humility. During His earthly life Jesus did not claim any special privileges. Instead He lived a selfless, obedient life and then died a selfless, obedient death - the worst kind of death: crucifixion (CP Php 2:7-8; with Psa 22:6; 40:6-8; Isa 42:1-4; 53:1-12; Mt 26:36-39, 42, 44; Jn 10:17-18; Ro 5:19; He 5:5-8). Because of His obedience unto death, God has exalted Jesus above every other created being, both living and dead (CP Php 2:9-11). See also comments on Mt 1:18-21, 3:16-17; Lu 1:35(B); Jn 1:1, 5:16-23, 12:41; Ac 13:33, 20:28, Col 2:9; 1Ti 3:16; He 1:5, 5:5; 1Jn 5:6-9; Rev 1:8.

2:12-13 ***What does Paul mean when he says "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling"?***

Paul is exhorting Christians here to make the self-abnegation and humility displayed by Jesus in V5-8 a fact in their own lives (CP V5-8). The words *work out* mean to "carry out to its ultimate conclusion." This does not mean that salvation is by works, but that Christians are individually responsible for obedience to God's word in the process of sanctification (CP Mt 6:19-20; Jn 6:27; 2Cor 13:5; 1Ti 6:17-19; 2Pe 1:10; Jude 1-3). *Fear and trembling* in Php 2:12 refers to the attitude with which Christians are to pursue their sanctification. It involves a healthy fear of offending God and a dread of sinning against Him, and of the consequences that may follow (CP Psa 2:11-12; 15:1-5; 85:9; 119:119-120; Pr 3:7-8, 9:10; 14:27; 16:6; Ecc 12:13; Isa 66:1-2; Lu 12:4-5; 1Cor 9:26-27; 10:12-14; Eph 6:5-8; He 6:4-6; 10:26-31). While believers are responsible for working out their salvation, it is God who actually produces the good works and spiritual fruit in their lives (CP Php 2:13 with Hos 14:8; Jn 15:5; 1Cor 12:6; 2Cor 3:5; 1Ti 1:12). It must be clearly understood though that God can only produce good works and fruit in those who conform to His word and allow the Holy Spirit to outwork in them. "Once saved" does not mean "always saved", as some teach (CP Mt 3:10; 7:19-27; Lu 13:6-9; Jn 15:1-8; Col 1:22-23). See also comments on 1Pe 1:17.

2:16 ***See comments on Php 1:10***

2:25-30 ***Does not the fact that Epaphroditus was sick prove that Paul had lost the power to heal as some teach?***

No, because Epaphroditus got healed as V27 clearly teaches, which Paul had undoubtedly prayed for (CP V27). Epaphroditus was not sick as such, but had suffered a physical breakdown from overwork. He had been sent out by the Philippian church to Rome, from where this letter was written, to minister to Paul's needs and assist him in the gospel. In so doing he exposed his life to the point of death (CP V30). Paul sent Epaphroditus home because he was homesick (CP V25-26). *Longed after* in V26 refers to a continuous yearning, and *full of heaviness* means troubled, distressed. Epaphroditus was heavy-hearted because of a continuous yearning to be home with the Philippian saints. Php 2:25-30 is used by some in the church to teach that the power to heal was only vested in the disciples for a time, and that Paul had either lost it completely or was in the process of losing it. They also use 2Ti 4:20 (CP 2Ti 4:20). Trophimus' sickness here was undoubtedly the result of overwork also, because he too laboured in the gospel with Paul (CP Ac 20:4; 21:29).

Christians should never sit under any teaching that could repress or undermine in any way their faith in God's willingness to heal them. God's redemptive plan includes healing for our bodies as well as salvation for our souls (CP Isa 53:4-6 with Ga 3:13-14). *Griefs* and *sorrows* in Isa 53:4 (KJV), means sickness and pains. Jesus bore our sicknesses and our pains on the cross so that we could be healed of them, the same as he became our sin offering in V 5, that we could be forgiven our sins (CP 1Pe 2:24). To teach as some do that healing ceased with the first century church, and that Paul and the other apostles had all lost the power to heal, or could only heal occasionally

when this letter was written, is inconsistent with scripture (CP Jn 14:12-14). What Jesus is saying here is that because His earthly ministry was ended and He had to go to the Father, His disciples, which includes every Christian from that day forth, would receive the same empowering He had to enable them to carry on building His church. Jesus qualifies the life-span of that promise in Mt 28:20 (CP Mt 28:18-20). When Jesus said in V20 "... and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world", He was not only talking to His disciples of that era, but to His disciples throughout the whole of the church age. *Until the end of the world* means until the end of the church age. So what Jesus said then still applies.

3:2 *Who are the "dogs" Paul refers to here?*

Paul uses the term *dogs* here metaphorically of the Judaizers – the Jewish teachers – who he also refers to as "evil workers", and "the concision". *Concision* means a mutilation of the flesh. Paul uses this word contemptuously for the Jewish circumcision with its Judaistic influence, in contrast to the true spiritual circumcision – the circumcision of the heart (CP Ac 15:1, 5, 24 with De 30:6; Ro 2:25-29; Ga 5:2, 6; Php 3:3; Col 2:8-13). The Jews were mutilating the gospel message by adding law to grace (CP Ro 9:31-33; 10:3-4 with Ro 2:21-26; 4:16; Eph 2:4-9). The Judaizers taught that the outward circumcision of the flesh was necessary to salvation, while at the same time they had not undergone the circumcision of the heart – the true spiritual circumcision necessary to salvation. The outward symbol is nothing without the inward reality (CP Mt 3:9-10; Ro 2:27-29; 7:4-6; 2 Cor 3:5-6; Ga 6:13-16).

3:7-11 *What do we learn from what Paul says here?*

The clear teaching here is that Christians must be prepared to give up everything to follow Christ (CP Mt 10:37-39; Mk 8:34-38). Paul counted everything else as worthless compared to the surpassing worth of becoming more deeply and better acquainted with Christ (CP Php 3:7-9 with 1Cor 2:2; Ga 2:20; 6:14). Paul did not want mere intellectual knowledge of Christ, but to be one with Him - to experience His resurrection power, to share in His sufferings, and to die, even as He died. (CP Php 3:10-11 with Ro 8:14-18; 2 Cor 4:8-12; 2Ti 1:8; 1Pe 2:20-21). Paul had experienced the resurrection power of Christ in his ministry; he had entered into a joint – participation with Christ in his suffering for righteousness sake; he had also exhibited the selflessness and self-abnegation of Christ to some degree, but he had not laid hold upon these in the fullest measure.

Paul wanted to experience the fullness of the divine life of Christ motivating his being. His desire to attain to the resurrection of the dead in Php 3:11 does not refer, as a great many Christians believe, to the future resurrection of the physical body when Christ returns – that is assured to all believers (CP Dan 12:1-2; Jn 5:28-29; 14:1-3; 1Cor 15:51-58; 1Th 4:13-18). The resurrection to which Paul attains in Php 3:11 is spiritual: the resurrection of repentant sinners out from a state of being dead in their trespasses and sin. Paul is referring to his desire for a present experience

of resurrection life now as he seeks more of Jesus. He is striving for Christlikeness, but has not yet attained it (CP V12-14). Paul saw Christlikeness as a prize to be won, and pursued it with all his might, straining every spiritual muscle to win (CP 1Cor 9:24-27; 1Ti 6:12; He 12:1). Attaining to Christlikeness should be the goal of every Christian (CP Php 3:15-17). Paul's directive here to the Philippians to pursue Christlikeness is for our admonition also.

3:20-21 *What future event in time is Paul alluding to here?*

(CP also Lu 12:35-36; Ro 8:23; 1Cor 1:6-8; 2Cor 5:1-2; Php 1:19, 4:5; Col 3:4; 1Th 1:10; 2:19-20; 3:13; 2Ti 4:8; Tit 2:13; He 9:28; Jas 5:7-9; 1Pe 1:7, 4:7; 1Jn 2:28, 3:2; Rev 3:7, 11) The future event alluded to in all these passages is the first resurrection, of which the "rapture" of the church forms part, when Jesus comes again to take all the saints of God – Old Testament and New Testament alike – both living and dead, back to heaven with Him (CP Jn 14:1-3; 1Cor 15:51-58; 1Th 4:13-18). The first resurrection is when Jesus comes *for* the saints, to meet them in the air. It is not to be confused with the second coming of Christ, which is when He comes back to earth *with* the saints for the battle of Armageddon, when He defeats Antichrist prior to setting up His millennial (one thousand years) reign on earth (CP Isa 63:1-6; Eze 39:1-16; Dan 2:44-45; 7:13-14, 18, 27; Joel 3:1-21; Zech 14:1-5, 9, 16-21; Mt 24:27-44; 25:31-33; Mk 13:14-27; Lu 21:21-28; 2 Th 1:7-10; Jude 14-15; Rev 1:7; 14:17-20; 19:11-21). Those scriptures all refer to the second coming of Christ, not the first resurrection. They relate to the Antichrist, the great tribulation, the battle of Armageddon, the judgement of the nations, and the setting up of the millennial kingdom etc.

There will be two resurrections of the dead: the first is to eternal life for the righteous dead, and the second is to eternal damnation for the wicked dead (CP Dan 12:1-2; Jn 5:28-29). While the two resurrections are merged into one in these scriptures there are however over one thousand years separating them (CP Rev 20:4-6, 11-15). The righteous rule and reign with Christ for the thousand years, at the end of which the unrighteous dead are resurrected and consigned to hell. The word *conversation* in Php 3:20 is used metaphorically here of Christians in reference to their citizenship of heaven (CP V20). See also comments on Lu 21:36, Jn 5:28-29, 14:1-3, 1Cor 15:51-58, 1Th 4:13-18, 5:1-11; 2Th 2:1-3, 2:6-8; Rev 1:19, 3:7-13.

4:3 *What is the book of life?*

(CP Also Rev 3:5; 17:8; 20:11-15; 22:18-19). The *book of life* in these scriptures is also called *thy book* in Ex 32, Psa 56 and 139 (CP Ex 32:33; Psa 56:8; 139:15-16); also *my book* in Ex 32 (CP Ex 32:33); *the book of the living* in Psa 69 (CP Psa 69:28); *the book* in Dan 12 (CP Dan 12:1); *the book of life of the lamb* in Rev 13 (CP Rev 13:8); and *the lamb's book of life* in Rev 21 (CP Rev 21:27). These are all one and the same book in which, as Psa 139:15-16 teaches, God has written the name of every soul who ever lived. Reference is also made to names being in the book of life in De 9, Psa 109 and Lu 10 (CP De 9:13-14; Psa 109:13-14; Lu 10:20). There is another clear

teaching we learn from these scriptures also: Ex 32:32-33, De 9:13-14, Psa 69:28 and 109:13, Rev 3:5 and 20:15 all refute the teaching by some in the church that *once saved* means *always saved*. These scriptures all teach that names can be, and have been, blotted out of the book of life – salvation is not an unforfeitable possession in this life (CP Pr 21:16; Eze 18:20, 24-26; 33:12-13, 18; Jn 15:5-6; He 6:4-8; 10:26-31; 2Pe 2:20-22). These scriptures all prove that salvation is not an unforfeitable possession in this life. It only becomes an unforfeitable possession at the end of life if one is sowing to the spirit (CP Rev 22:11-12).

4:5 *How is the word “moderation” defined here?*

Moderation means equitable, fair, mild, gentle; to be lenient, yielding, unassertive (CP 1Ti 3:3; Tit 3:2; Jas 3:17; 1Pe 2:18). In Php 4:5 it is used as a noun, meaning forbearance, gentleness, tolerance, clemency. *The Lord is at hand* means that the Lord will be coming soon.

4:6-7 *What do we learn from what Paul says here?*

We learn from this that Christians are not to let anxiety over anything at all overcome them. All they have to do is pray for the requests they desire, and thank God in advance for granting them. By praying this way they are assured of answered prayer, because the peace of God will come upon them and settle their hearts and minds in Christ. This means that anxious care is forbidden by Christians. God will grant the requests they desire. This is His promise throughout scripture, conditional upon Christians remaining in Christ. Every Christian is promised everything they ask for in prayer provided they qualify for an answer (CP Psa 66:18 with Mt 21:21-22; Mk 11:22-26; Jn 14:12-14; 15:7-8; 2Cor 1:19-20; 1Jn 5:14-15). See also comments on Mt 21:17-22; Jn 14:12-14, 15:7; 2Cor 1:19-20; 1Jn 5:14-15.

4:8 *How are the things defined that Paul admonishes us to think on here?*

The word *think* here means to occupy oneself with reckonings or calculations, to put together with one's mind, to carefully reflect on. Paul is admonishing Christians here to only occupy their minds with things that harmonise with eternal truth - *whatsoever things are true* (CP Jn 16:13; 17:17; Eph 4:17-25); that are venerable – worthy of reverence; the sacred as opposed to the profane – *whatsoever things are honest* (CP Ro 12:17; 2Cor 8:21; 1Pe 1:13-16; 2:12); that

are righteous – *whatsoever things are just* (CP De 16:20; Ro 8:4; 2Pe 1:4-10); that are chaste and holy – *whatsoever things are pure* (CP Ro 12:1-2; 1Cor 3:16-17; 2Cor 7:1; 1Th 5:22; Jas 3:16-17; 1Jn 3:2-3); that are pleasing and a blessing to others – *whatsoever things are lovely* (CP 1Cor 13:4-7; Ga 5:22-23); that are in harmony with the best public good – *whatsoever things are of good report, virtuous and praise worthy* (CP Pr 16:21, 24; Ro 13:1-10; 2Pe 1:3-10). Thinking on these things is a prerequisite for experiencing the peace of God (CP Php 4:9). The consequence of thinking on unholy things of the world is that the joy of knowing the peace of God is lost, and our hearts are no longer guarded (CP Php 4:7).

4:19 *How are we to understand what Paul says here - is this an open-ended promise that God will supply every professing Christian's needs?*

It is important that we understand the correct teaching behind this verse. It is often taken out of context and used as an open-ended promise that God will supply the needs of every professing Christian, but that is not correct. It only applies to those who support the cause of the gospel, as the Philippian church did (CP V15-19). The Philippian church supported Paul when he started up the church in Thessalonica, and Paul was assuring them in V19 that as they gave so liberally to supply his needs, so God in return would also give liberally to supply theirs. This illustrates the principle of God's law of sowing and reaping, which applies to every aspect of our Christian walk – to our financial support of the ministry; the giving of ourselves, our finances and our time to others; our moral behaviour, and our Christian service (CP Psa 126:6; Pr 3:9-10; 11:24-26; 19:17; 22:9; 28:27; Ecc 11:1-4; Mal 3:10-12; 2Cor 9:6; Ga 6:6-8).

Christians must never delude themselves into believing they can reap kingdom benefits without first sowing into the kingdom (CP Lu 6:38). Notice here that Jesus first said *give*, then He said, *and it will be given unto you...* this clarifies how giving and receiving go together in God's order. If we do not give we will not receive. Yet many Christians expect to receive the kingdom benefits without giving anything into the kingdom. But how can God bless us with all the fullness of His blessings for giving, if we do not obey His command to give in the first place. And how can His kingdom be extended if Christians withhold their financial support. Withholding from God is meanness, and the awful finality of meanness is the judgement of God on those who practice it (CP Mt 25:31-46). See also comments on Lu 6:38, 2Cor 9:6, Ga 6:7-8.