
BELOVED PEOPLE

Philippians 4:2-3

by Daniel A. Brown, PhD

INTRODUCTION:

As Paul writes what he imagines will be his last words to a group of very good friends who have supported his ministry for many years, his heart is drawn to some of the specific people with whom he has shared so much. In this tender epistle (letter) to the Philippians, we see just how central people are to Paul's life and ministry. He was neither an isolated scholar, far removed from ordinary people, nor a "Lone-Ranger" in ministry who stayed aloof from human contact. Paul loves people—lots of people.

He writes in order to help his fellow workers in the kingdom of God. Paul has invested himself in real people. As he says to other friends in Thessalonica:

"Having so fond an affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us." ~1 Thessalonians 2:8

Real people have real issues and conflicts. The Bible does not try to hyper-spiritualize life and relationships. What we see in the verses of Scripture is the reality that not all believers automatically get along with all *other* believers. We have to keep working at some relationships to make them work. As we see from a parallel passage, Romans 16, the real focus of the Apostle Paul was on the people for whom Jesus died.

Lastly, Paul mentions the "*book of life*." The following paragraphs will shed some light on what he was referring to.

"Two Books and the Judgment Day," excerpts from the book, "What the Bible Reveals About HEAVEN" by Daniel A. Brown PhD:

On the great Judgment Day, every soul/spirit that has been held in the confines of Hades/Sheol will stand before the court of Heaven to be judged. In solemn contrast to God's eagerness to offer forgiveness for people's sins while they are alive on the earth, will be His purposeful intent to judge the people of the world after they have died) after they have died ("*who did not believe the truth,*" see 2 Thessalonians 2:12-13). As the Bible says, "*It is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment*" (Hebrews 9:27).

Jesus is the "One" who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead. He will preside in judgment over what people have done on the earth. The ruling will seal the eternal destiny of people's souls/spirits. Believers in Christ are "*not judged;*" we are spared the verdict and sentence because our life is "*hidden with Christ*" (Colossians 3:3). Our sins have been forgiven; therefore, there is nothing for which to be judged.

The Bible tells us that everyone else, those who ignored Jesus' words and offer of forgiveness, will be judged according to what is written in two books that will be read on the Day of Judgment. One of the books is a simple record of every person's words actions and reflections during their life on earth. It will contain all the thoughts and intents of their hearts, their motives and secrets, and all their hidden deeds. When the portions of this book that relate to each individual are read before all the assembled hosts of Heaven and Earth, no one will be able to claim that he or she is a good person. Every mouth will be stopped—not by force, but by sheer self-realization of each person's wickedness.

The other book will offer the dead who are still in Hades even less hope for Eternity. It is called the *book of life*, and it is a simple roster of names without notation or commentary. In the *book of life* are recorded all the "righteous" who have aligned themselves with the purposes of God through the ages. When people invite Jesus Christ into their hearts, their names are added to the *book of life*, and Jesus promises to "confess" them before the Father.

In many ways, the outcome of the Judgment Day is a foregone conclusion; since the righteous souls/spirits of the dead will be with Jesus in the heavenlies, Hades will not contain anyone who was righteous in their deeds while alive on earth, or whose name is in the *book of life*. Consequently, all the souls/spirits still in Hades at the Day of Judgment will remain forever separated from God in Hell (Gehenna). Hell is also called the *lake of fire* that "*burns with brimstone,*" perhaps a symbolic picture of excruciating spiritual pain that is comparable to the physical pain of being burned. Jesus calls Hell (Gehenna) "*the outer darkness,*" meaning the furthest possible distance away from the light of God. In that *place* or *state*, there will be "*weeping and gnashing of teeth*" (Matthew 8:12).

Jesus told His disciples that having their names recorded in the book of life in Heaven, is far more significant than the fact that demonic forces are subject to them on earth. Though spirit forces

from the *second heaven* can and do affect our lives, nothing has greater weight in the eternal outcome of our souls/spirits than whether or not our names are recorded in the “*Lamb’s book of life*.”