



# PHILIPPIANS

## *A Verse-By-Verse Commentary*

*(Originally written one verse per day)*

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## CHAPTER 1

**Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ,**

**To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:**

Philippians 1:1

Welcome to the book of Philippians! It is comprised of 104 verses, or 51 verses shorter than the book of Ephesians. Therefore, it will take us (one day at a time, just as the sun rises) about three and one half months to analyze it.

Please be blessed each day with wonderful insights into this beautiful epistle which comes from the mind of God and through the hand of Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles.

Paul begins by greeting his audience on behalf of himself and Timothy. Timothy is jointly named here as he is in quite a few other letters. In fact, he is mentioned in this way along with Paul in every single epistle in which another name is given, with the exception of 1 Corinthians. There, only Sosthenes is mentioned.

The naming of Timothy is for a couple of reasons. First, he was very well known to the saints at Philippi. Paul will be sending him there shortly as well. This is noted in Philippians 2:19. Although unstated, Timothy may have been Paul's scribe in the writing of the letter. This is merely speculation though.

Together, they are listed as "bondservants of Jesus Christ." Unlike all of his other letters except Philemon and 1 & 2 Thessalonians, he does not claim his official title of "Apostle" here. The churches of Philippi and Thessalonica were Macedonian churches. The leaving off of the title "Apostle" probably indicates a special intimacy between them.

They knew his qualifications and there was no need to state them because of this deeply rooted fraternal bond. Instead, he says that he and Timothy are "bondservants of Jesus Christ."

Though free men in the world, they were bound to their true Master. Paul felt that such a title to his close friends in Macedonia was right and appropriate to note. Another reason for not stating his title could be the personal nature of the letter itself. This is seen in the next words.

They are directed "To all the saints." The words "saints" here applies to any and all who have received Jesus Christ, believing in His work, and being saved by it. This is in

complete contrast to the idea of “saints” which is found in the Roman Catholic Church. Their idea of being a “saint” has nothing to do with biblical reality.

For the true saint, it is those who are “in Christ Jesus.” All believers are saints. This means that they are set apart as holy and declared righteous before God the Father because of the work of Christ. It is to this group of people “who are in Philippi” that this letter is written. It is further noted to include “the bishops and deacons.”

This doesn’t mean these categories are not saints. What it means is that all are saints, and these categories are specifically chosen for ministering within the body. Again, this is in complete contrast to the idea of “saints” as defined by the RCC.

The “bishops” are from the Greek word *episkopos*; literally “overseer.” In the letters of the apostles, it is a term which is synonymous with a presbyter or elder. The “deacons” are from the Greek word *diakonos*. It signifies a servant in his duties, coming from two words which indicate “through” and “dust.” It is a distinct class of officers who carry out duties assigned by those above them.

As a note to consider, the term “all,” as in “all the saints,” is used frequently in this letter, and so it may be that there was an underlying sense that some thought they were more or less favored than the others.

There is a noted dissension between two ladies in Chapter 4, and so Paul may be carefully using the term to show that all are one in the Lord; saints saved by His work. It also may be that he is simply noting everyone as being on an equal footing, regardless of how much they individually contributed to his needs and the needs of the church.

Life application: If you have received Jesus Christ as your Savior, you are a saint of God and set apart as holy. Be sure to act as if this is so. Continue to pursue Him, reading His word and being formed more and more into His image each day. Let nothing hinder you from your steady walk in faith and holiness each and every day.

*Lord God, You have called out people from every land, culture, race, and family to be a part of the church You are building. As believers in Christ, we are all saints, equally saved and equally loved by You. Help us to put aside the petty divisions which exist or arise, and to focus our eyes, our hearts, and our affections on You, and also to remain at peace with those who are in You. Guide us in this, and help us to be faithful followers of You. To Your glory we pray. Amen.*

**Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Philippians 1:2**

After identifying himself, his calling, who was accompanying him, and who the letter is directed to, Paul now gives the standard greeting which is found in most of his epistles. It begins with "Grace to you and peace to you."

Grace is unmerited favor which cannot be earned. This is the common greeting among the Greek people. Peace however is the common greeting among the Hebrew people. In their language, the word is *shalom*. This is more than a greeting for calm or quiet, but is a state of wholeness and completion in all ways. Paul unites the two terms just as the church is being united between Jew and Gentile during his time. This grace precedes the peace because only after receiving the grace of God can a person experience the peace of God.

Paul extends this wonderful blessing to them "from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

It is a greeting from the eternal God – both the unseen Father and His Son who reveals the Father to us. Rather than being an argument against the divinity of Jesus Christ, it is an argument for it. He is tying the two in as one - Jesus being a member of the Godhead. He is not making some type of great division, but a harmonious blending of the two.

Throughout Paul's letters, as with the entire Bible, the deity of Jesus Christ is a concept and a precept which simply can't be missed. It is the very heart of what God has done for the reconciliation of the people of the world.

Life application: Outside of God's creation, which reveals Him in a general way, we cannot comprehend Him except through His special revelation. One way we receive special revelation is through the mouths of His prophets. But these prophets all testified to the same thing - Jesus Christ (John 5:39).

The most magnificent special revelation of God that we have received is the incarnation of Jesus. But for us, even this isn't by sight. Instead, it is found in the testimony of those who have recorded what they knew into the New Testament.

So, in order to understand God, one must know Jesus Christ, and one cannot understand Jesus Christ unless they know their Bible. Know your Bible!

*Heavenly Father, how grateful we are that we can fellowship with You personally. We can read Your word and know who You are. We can have personal talks with You as we pray in a quiet place or on a bustling city street. You are with us as we rise in the morning, and when we retire at the end of the day. We can feel Your presence with us in church and during fellowship with others, praising You and giving You thanks for Your wonderful care of us. It is a comfort to our soul to know that You are always there with us. Thank You for allowing us to fellowship with You, O God. Amen.*

### **I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, Philippians 1:3**

Rather than “every remembrance,” a more proper reading would be “all my remembrance.” It is that of a continuous action. The Philippians were on Paul’s mind at all times, and he was in constant thanks to God as he remembered them. His relationship to God in the Greek reads *to Theo mou* – “the God of me,” and hence “my God.”

The Pulpit Commentary says, “The pronoun expresses the inner consciousness of personal relations with God.”

Paul carried his relationship with God in his mind at all times, personally interacting with Him through thought, and expressing it in his words, actions, and interactions. In the case of those at Philippi, it was in thanks to God for them. As often as they entered into the stream of his thoughts, which was a constant thing, he was grateful to God for them.

Life application: Our relationship with God should be more than just in times of great distress – “Oh God, I need You now,” or Sunday morning at church as we sit and listen to a sermon. Rather, He should be our constant companion and confidant.

As thoughts enter our minds, we should have reactions to those thoughts streaming to Him. “Lord, thank You for my beautiful wife;” “I am sorry about that thought Lord, it was inappropriate;” “O God, it is such a beautiful day.” Let us have our thoughts tuned into God at each moment so that we share our lives in an intimate way with Him at all times.

*Lord God Almighty, You are in all places at all times. And so how can we think we could live our lives apart from You? Help us to not treat You like a “Sunday morning thing,” or the One to call out to only when we need something. Instead, help us to interact with You in our thoughts at all times. When we see a loved one with our eyes, help us to remember to thank You for him or her in our mind. When we think a thought which isn’t so great, help us to confess it immediately to You, knowing that You are there with us in*

*this struggle. Help our lives to be lived, moment by moment, understanding that You are right here with us. Amen.*

**...always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, Philippians 1:4**

This verse continues from the previous one. Taken together, they read –

“I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, <sup>4</sup> always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy...”

Paul is writing to the congregation as a whole, but his words are directed to each person individually. As he contemplated the congregation that he had come to love, each individual would come to mind, and he would thank God for them as noted in verse 3. However, there was more that would come from these thoughts. He was including them “always in every prayer” which he made. In those prayers, he says to them that he is “making request for you all with joy.”

The word translated as both “prayer” and “request” in this verse is the same word, *deésis*. It means a “heart-felt petition, arising out of deep personal need (sense of lack, want)” (HELPS Word Studies).

And so, the thought would read – “...always in every supplication of mine making supplication for you all with joy.”

In other words, these weren’t general prayers that were going up. Instead, he contemplated the needs of each one of his fellow believers, and he would include that need in his plea. “Lord, look after Kristinius as she takes care of her family;” “Oh God, Sergious Paulos needs Your hand with him at the brick factory;” and etc.

This would have been the constant practice of Paul, remembering those he loved, praying for them, and doing so “with joy.” This is the first of five times that *chara*, or joy, is used by Paul. It indicates “... properly, the awareness (of God’s) *grace, favor; joy* (‘grace recognized’)” (HELPS Word Studies). From its frequent use, “joy” is considered the main theme of the epistle.

The scholar Bengel notes then that, “This epistle on joy aptly follows that to the Ephesians, where love reigns... The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy. Joy particularly gives animation to prayers.”

As Paul is writing from a Roman prison, it is a remarkable thing that he speaks so much of joy. His circumstances would be otherwise bleak and miserable. But with the thought of his beloved family in Philippi always on his mind, he remained filled with joy. He was able to redirect his thoughts to the needs of others, petitioning God for them, wisely using his time while incarcerated.

Life application: Joy is something which is not difficult to obtain when one knows the Lord Jesus. No matter how bad the circumstances which surround us may be, when we have the full confidence of the many great and enduring promises of Scripture, we can be filled with joy even when in completely miserable surroundings or circumstances. Let us keep our hearts, eyes, and thoughts on the Lord, and so transcend the difficulties which come our way.

*Heavenly Father, there are many ways of finding pleasure, but there are so few ways of finding true joy. But thanks be to You for sending Christ Jesus. In Him, we can have true joy, even when our surroundings are completely miserable. Pleasure may be lacking, pain may fill our bodies, and trials may afflict us in our souls, and yet we can still have a sense of joy because of our hope which is grounded in Him. It is a hope which transcends this world, and which elevates us to a wonderful place where the world cannot harm us. Thank You for the joy which is found in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.*

**...for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now, Philippians 1:5**

This clause is to be mentally connected to the words “I thank my God” from verse 3. First, it reads as follows –

“I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, <sup>4</sup>always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, <sup>5</sup>for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now...”

Mentally we can make the connection as such – “I thank my God ... for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now...”

Paul is grateful for their “fellowship in the gospel.”

There are many opinions on what this means. Some claim it is pointing to their reception of the blessings of the gospel. Others say that it is speaking of their continuance in the gospel, being steadfast in adhering to it. What Paul is certainly referring to, however, is



their contributing to the furtherance of the gospel. This is what he will allude to both in this epistle and elsewhere.

For example, in 2 Corinthians 8 he says the following concerning those in Macedonia, which includes the Philippians –

“Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia: <sup>2</sup> that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality. <sup>3</sup> For I bear witness that according to *their* ability, yes, and beyond *their* ability, *they were* freely willing, <sup>4</sup> imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. <sup>5</sup> And not *only* as we had hoped, but they first gave themselves to the Lord, and *then* to us by the will of God.”

-2 Corinthians 8:1-5

It is this then which Paul is referring to as “fellowship in the gospel” which they had participated in “from the first day.”

They helped Paul, supporting him even when he was preaching in other areas. Their willingness to give was so great that it appears he simply could not refuse their generosity. Because of this, he used an exceptional term, “robbed,” to show that he was relying on their generosity in a way that he felt almost uncomfortable with –

“I robbed other churches, taking wages *from them* to minister to you. <sup>9</sup> And when I was present with you, and in need, I was a burden to no one, for what I lacked the brethren who came from Macedonia supplied. And in everything I kept myself from being burdensome to you, and so I will keep *myself*. <sup>10</sup> As the truth of Christ is in me, no one shall stop me from this boasting in the regions of Achaia. <sup>11</sup> Why? Because I do not love you? God knows!” 2 Corinthians 11:8-11

This is what Paul was so grateful for. The poorest of the churches he ministered to were the greatest givers of all!

Life application: The poor tend to give above their ability, even out of their poverty. At the same time, those who are well off tend to give less in proportion to their wealth. Let our hearts be willing to give at all times and in all ways if the cause is right. This is especially so with the furtherance of the gospel. In such cases, it is always right to so give.

*Lord God, thank You for those who are willing to expend themselves for the furtherance of the gospel. Some go even beyond their ability because they have such a passion for this marvelous good news which You have allowed us to share with others. There is hope and reconciliation with You through the shed blood of Christ. May we never be found stingy in the giving of ourselves for this purpose, but rather willing to go to any and all extremes to share this marvelous good news. Amen.*

**...being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete *it* until the day of Jesus Christ; Philippians 1:6**

Paul continues with his long thought which began in verse 3. Taken together, the verses read –

“I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, <sup>4</sup>always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, <sup>5</sup>for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now, <sup>6</sup>being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete *it* until the day of Jesus Christ...”

The words of verse 6 begin with “being confident.” This is connected to “for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now.”

That sentiment was speaking of the endurance of the Philippians – “from the first day until now.” He now builds upon that with words of marvelous reassurance. They are words which he is fully confident to proclaim, and they are words which should give us the greatest sense of calm, especially when we blow it and do something really stupid.

They should also be taken to heart by unsound teachers who state that we can, in fact, lose our salvation. Such a notion

- 1) flies in the face of Paul’s words now;
- 2) call into question the integrity of God which Paul will relay in his words ahead; and
- 3) is not supported by any other sentiment in Scripture which is taken in proper context.

He says that he is “confident of this very thing...”

In other words, what he is about to proclaim is something that he is completely assured of. There are no doubts as to the truth of the statement, and as they are now recorded

as a part of Scripture, God is also fully confident in what Paul wrote. He accepted the words as written because He inspired the words to be written.

The word he uses means to be completely and firmly convinced. It is a perfect participle active – I am fully persuaded, I am perfectly persuaded, and I will remain so persuaded.

And the object of this persuasion is “He who began a good work in you will complete *it* until the day of Jesus Christ.” It is God who began a good work in each of us. He offered grace and we received it (Ephesians 2:8, 9).

In the reception of His grace, we were saved (Romans 10:9, 10). In the salvation which came upon belief in the work of Christ, we were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise which is our guarantee of our inheritance (Ephesians 1:13, 14).

It is this process, this “good work,” which began by God’s gracious offer that He “will complete *it* until the day of Jesus Christ.”

The Greek verb for “will complete *it*” is in the future indicative active. It is coming; it is a simple statement of fact, not conjecture; and it is a continuous hope that we possess.

As Charles Ellicott notes of these words, “He would complete what He had begun. In his view, God’s grace is the beginning and the end; man’s co-operation lies in the intermediate process linking both together.”

We cooperate only so far as the interim process is concerned, but from the beginning it was God’s grace, and this grace is spoken of into the future, even unto “the day of Jesus Christ.” This means the final day when we shall stand before Him fully healed, fully known, and fully perfected. Nothing can change this, and it is completely sure.

God began the process, He has a purpose and a final intent for the process, He will not abandon the process, He has promised the completion of the process, and He has sealed this promise in us by the giving of His Spirit. If we are not eternally saved, then we might as well toss out the Bible and go live it up. If it is up to us, we will fall and we will be condemned. But it is not up to us. Thank God that it is not up to us.

Life application: Have you received Jesus as your Savior? You are saved.

*Heavenly Father, thank You for the grace found in Jesus Christ; having saved us from our sins through His shed blood. And thank You for the eternal guarantee which comes from*

*that salvation. We are saved, once and for all. Thank You that it is not up to us to complete this journey. What could we do to add to what Christ has done? If it were up to us, we would fail and we would stand condemned. But the words "It is finished" tell that it is not up to us. Thank You, O God, for the finished work of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

**...just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers with me of grace. Philippians 1:7**

Paul's long thought continues on in this verse. The words are connected to the preceding verse –

“...being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete *it* until the day of Jesus Christ; <sup>7</sup> just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers with me of grace.”

His confidence in those at Philippi was that “He who has begun a good work in you will complete *it*.” Now he supports this note of confidence by saying, “just as it is right for me to think this of you all.”

In other words, his confidence is not an arbitrary or unfounded confidence. He has a sound reason for it. The word he uses which is translated as “think” is one which deals with a constant state, not just a one-time thought. He habitually thought this about them, and the reason is that “I have you in my heart.”

Paul carried them affectionately with him at all times. They were dear and close to him, even in his heart. He then explains this with the next clause, “inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel...”

What he is saying is that the Philippians never wavered in their convictions concerning him. In his chains, they held fast to him and his teachings, and in his “defense and confirmation of the gospel” they continued to hold fast to him and his teachings.

The implication is that others abandoned him when they should have stayed with him. When the going got tough, they got going... away from him. Such was not the case with the Philippians. Because of this, he notes that, “you are all partakers of grace with me.”

The proof of his confidence in them was their confidence in him and in the message he proclaimed. Their steadfast attitude towards his message was the proof that “He who has begun a good work in you will complete *it*.” They had received the grace, and were partakers of it even “until the day of Christ Jesus.”

Life application: How strong is your faith? Will it hold fast and true when the day of testing and trial comes? Will you be willing to give up property, friends, or family in the testing of your faith? Will you be willing to give up life itself? Paul shows that such tests prove to those around us that our faith is unshakeable.

*Heavenly Father – and indeed You are our heavenly Father because of Christ Jesus – how strong is the faith we profess? Should You send trials our way, will we remain steadfast in following You, or will we abandon all outward notion that we are servants of our Lord? Help us to think on this now, while things are good, so that we will be prepared if and when they turn bad. Help our feet to be firmly planted, and our allegiance to You to be fixed and resolved. Instill in us this so that we will be faithful to the end – whatever end You determine for us. Amen.*

**For God is my witness, how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ.**  
Philippians 1:8

Paul now makes a solemn adjuration concerning his love for those in Philippi by stating, “For God is my witness.”

He says this, or the same general idea at least four more times in his other epistles using the same word, *martus*. It is apparent that he is following in the admonition of the Lord not to swear by anything in heaven or on earth.

Rather, if one is to vow, swear, or make an oath, they are to do it in the name of the Lord alone, or with the general use of the word “God.” In other words, it is not true that we are not to make such oaths as some Christians have incorrectly concluded. Rather, when we make oaths, they are to be made on nothing less than God. To do so would be idolatry because it would elevate that thing to His level. His oath before God says, “...how greatly I long for you.”

It seems like this is something that would not require an oath at all. However, the content of the surrounding verses explains the oath. He has told them of his knowledge of their faith, and the great promises which pertain to that faith. He will next speak of his desire for them to mature in the faith.

So, they are fully aware that his words concerning these promises are true, and thus the importance of their continued growth in the Lord is necessary, he makes this vow concerning how he longs for them “with the affection of Jesus Christ.”

This phrase is a remarkable one indeed. First, the word translated as “affection” is *splagchnon*. It refers to the upper visceral organs – the heart, liver, and lungs. Thus, it is a metaphor for one’s capability to feel and express deep emotions. Paul claims this affection not of himself, but of Jesus Christ.

In other words, it is well expressed by his words of Galatians 2:20, “...it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.” His connection to Christ was so close and personal that his feelings were those of Christ, and thus they were expressions of Christ who dwelt in him.

Life application: How close are you to the One who redeemed you? Is He the first thought of your moment to moment existence? Or does He only come to mind when you need something? We are admonished to pursue Christ, to be filled with His Spirit, and to fix our eyes and thoughts on Him. If we don’t have the emotional and spiritual connection to Christ that Paul writes about, we have more maturity ahead of us. Let us pursue it!

*Glorious, marvelous heavenly Father, where am I lacking in my faith and in my daily walk with You? Help each of us to ask this with a sincere heart, and then to purposefully look for opportunities to become people of greater faith. Help us also to become more like Christ, reading the word, applying it to our lives, and being transformed into His glorious image – from glory to glory! May we radiantly shine forth His majesty more and more each day. Amen.*

**And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, Philippians 1:9**

This verse ties back to verses 3 & 4. There, he said –

“I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, <sup>4</sup> always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy...”

Since then, he has stated some things which were included in his prayers for them, and then he has built upon what he said. Now he returns to more specific items which concern them in his prayers. It is well worthy of consideration that he has not mentioned earthly, physical things here.

Despite the poverty of the Macedonian churches, which includes Philippi, he doesn't ask for the windows of heaven to open up and drop money on their heads. Instead, his prayers are for spiritual things. How different that is from the "name it and claim it" false teachers of the world! Specifically here, he prays "that your love may abound still more and more."

Paul is certainly thinking of all aspects of love from a Christian perspective. This would include love of God, love of His word, love of fellow Christians, and love of those not yet in the faith, but who were created in God's image and in need of Christ's saving grace. These things are certain because he continues on. This love should grow "in knowledge and all discernment."

The word for "knowledge" here is more than just the knowledge of something, but a fully complete knowledge of it. In other words, I may know about the newest phone on the market, but I may not know the details of it. Likewise, I may know about God, and I may even have a saving knowledge of Christ Jesus, but I may still be weak and uninformed in sound theology.

Paul would ask for us to grow into a complete knowledge of how He has revealed Himself to us. This can only be done through His general and specific revelations of Himself.

The general revelation is what we can deduce about Him from His creation. The special revelation is how He has specifically revealed Himself apart from creation – such as in the words of the prophets and apostles. These things are now recorded in His word. We are to love this word and to desire to learn it more and more. In so doing, we will gain that knowledge and discernment Paul has mentioned.

We will know about the true God, and know about false presentations of Him. We will learn about true and faithful believers, and we will be able to discern those who are false. We will know how to properly explain to the unsaved about the message of Christ as well.

As you can see, the knowledge and discernment are tied up in the abounding of our love. If we fail to grow in these things, our love will be misdirected. Paul will continue with his specific prayer list, and how it is related to this love he speaks of in the verses ahead.

Life application: Jesus said, “If you love Me, keep My commandments” (John 14:15). Which commandments are being referred to? Are we to keep the commandments which He fulfilled on our behalf in the Law of Moses? If so, then why did He fulfill them for us? How can we be loving of what God has done for us if we continue to try to merit His favor above and beyond what Christ has done? In order to love God, we are to trust Him and His provision, not attempt to outdo Him. How do we grow in the love that the Bible speaks of? By knowing and discerning His word, in context, and as He has revealed it to us.

*Lord God, it sure is good to know that Christ fulfilled the law for us. It stood opposed to us, and it brought death, not life. But through His fulfillment of it, which included His atoning death, we are now set on a new and bright path of hope. Help us to trust in the finished work of Christ, and to never set aside Your grace, offered through His perfect work and shed blood. Surely with this, You are most pleased of all. Thank You for Christ Jesus our Lord! Amen.*

**...that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, Philippians 1:10**

For a clearer picture of what is being conveyed, this should be taken together with the preceding verse –

“And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, <sup>10</sup> that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ...”

The abounding of love “in knowledge and all discernment” is so that the believer “may approve the things that are excellent.”

It is with a view to testing and trying through the knowledge and discernment we possess, that we will then approve and hold fast to that which is excellent. The word for “approve” is one which gives the idea of testing metals for their purity. This is how we are to look for that which is excellent - testing that which is good, and then testing that which is even better.

We are to compare all things in order to hold fast to the very highest purity of doctrine and conduct. Jamieson-Faucett-Brown says, “Ask as to things, not merely, ‘Is there no harm, but is there any good, and which is the best?’” In so doing, we will “be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ.”



The word translated as “sincere” here is a rare one, found only here and in 2 Peter 3:1. It is *eilikrinés*, and it is evident from the two words that it comes from what it means. The first part comes from *heilé*, the sun's rays, and the second half comes from *krinó*, to judge. And so, it means “that which is judged in sunshine,” and thus, “that which is clear and fully viewable.”

There are no clouds to obscure the sun's rays, there are no trees in the way to darken the view. Rather, there is only brightness which allows us first to rightly discern, and then to fully shine forth without hiding anything. Translating this word as “sincere” is appropriate because “sincere” comes from the root meaning of “without wax.” It is reflective of honey which is pure and perfectly clear.

This is what we are to be. There should be no hint of unsound doctrine in our lives, and there should be only the most noble of conduct in how we act. In this, we will then also be “without offense.” When something is hidden and later exposed, offense will result.

When doctrine is tainted and impure, offense will result. These things should not be at any time in our lives, even “till the day of Christ.”

From the moment we come to Christ, until the day He comes for us, we are to continuously search out and test all things, approving only that which is excellent, and then applying it to our life and doctrine.

Life application: One cannot fulfill the exhortation in this verse if they do not seek out the directions for it to come about from the pages of Scripture. Do we think that we can walk perfectly apart from what God expects of us? Read your Bible!

*Lord God, Your word exhorts us to seek out what is good, to test it, and to only apply to our life, our conduct, and our doctrine that which is the most excellent of all. Our lives should be so beautifully in line with Your will, that we can be judged by others in the full light of the sun. And when they inspect us, we should be as pure as the purest of honey which has no wax at all. Instead, when we are looked at, the purity that we possess should be as the sweetest of all of the bees' labors – pleasing and delightful to those around us, and especially to You. Help us to be this way. To Your glory we pray. Amen.*

**...being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.** Philippians 1:11

The context needs to be given in order to follow what Paul now says –

“...that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, <sup>11</sup> being filled with the fruits of righteousness which *are* by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.”

He asks us to “be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ.” He then explains that thought. The words translated here as “being filled” are better translated as “having been filled.” It is a participle in the perfect tense. In other words, it is done; we have been filled. And the filling was with “the fruits of righteousness.”

Again, there is disagreement as to whether the word should be “fruit” or “fruits.” The Old Testament speaks of the fruit in the singular in verses such as this one from the book of Proverbs –

“The fruit of the righteous *is a* tree of life,  
And he who wins souls *is* wise.” Proverbs 11:30

It is also singular in Amos 6:12. In the New Testament, the “fruit of righteousness” is mentioned in James 3:18 and in this verse from Hebrews 12 –

“Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.” Hebrews 12:11

Thus, it is more than probable that the correct rendering of this verse is also singular. Regardless of this, the filling with the fruit of righteousness is not ongoing until the day of Christ. Instead, we *have been filled* with the fruit of righteousness (meaning it was imputed to us upon belief in Christ), and that will sustain us until the day of Christ. It is already available to us, and it is up to us to tap that source and act upon it.

And this filling with the fruit of righteousness is “to the praise of God.” He so filled us with the righteousness of Christ so that He might be glorified in us and through us. In the Bible, fruit is the outcome of something. Christ’s work confirmed His righteousness and thus it is symbolized by fruit – the end result of what He accomplished.

In our receiving Him, we are granted that outcome as if we had ourselves accomplished it. This is what is called “imputation.” God imputed Christ’s righteousness to us, having filled us with this fruit. Now we are asked to demonstrate that by being “sincere and without offense till the day of Christ.”

Life application: Proper theology comes at a cost of time and effort. We don't just get it by an external infusion of the Holy Spirit. That is a cheap and easy way of looking at doctrine, but it is wrong. It says, "I will rely on the Holy Spirit to form me while I do all the other things in life that I want to do." Sorry... it just doesn't work that way. The Bible tells us to study to show ourselves approved. Get to work.

*Glorious God, Your word puts it on us to learn proper doctrine, and that involves hard work and study. How sad it is that so many Christians feel that all they need is an external infusion of the Holy Spirit in order for them to know what You expect of them. When You admonish us to study in order to show ourselves approved, it is because the onus is on us. Help each of us to be responsible, faithful servants of Yours. Be with us as we seek out Your word and then rightly apply it to our lives. Doctrine may be hard work, but the benefits are heavenly. Instill in us a hunger for right doctrine. Amen.*

**But I want you to know, brethren, that the things *which happened* to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel, Philippians 1:12**

A conjunction is introduced here which can be translated as "but," "and," "now," or even "moreover." Paul is tying this verse in with what he said in verse 7. There he noted his chains and also his "defense and confirmation of the gospel."

It was a note that he was bound and imprisoned because of his proclamation. It would seem that this would hinder his efforts. However, the exact opposite was true. He says, "But I want you to know, brethren..."

He will impart news to them which will bolster their own faith and show that the divine hand of God is with them in their efforts. The word, "brethren" is given to show that they are one united force. Regardless of their circumstances, their efforts were directed towards the same good end. From this note of unity, he then tells them "that the things *which happened* to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel."

As noted, his bonds have brought about exactly the outcome that one would expect. Instead of the transmission of the gospel being hampered, it was being furthered. This is seen in Paul's selection of terminology. The word translated as "furtherance" here is *prokopé*. It is an unusual word which is used only by Paul.

He uses it here, again in verse 1:25, and then in 1 Timothy 4:15. It comes from two words – *pró*, meaning "in front of," and *kóptō*, which indicates "cut" or "chop down." The sense is one of people who are designated to go before an army, cutting down trees in

order to continue their march unabated. It can also pertain to pioneers who clear away trees as they move forward in order to settle the land.

Paul's chains had actually gone forth in this manner, chopping down any resistance to the gospel. What this shows is that those who saw him and heard his words were convinced that the chains were on a man who was otherwise freer than those who had no chains.

His physical person may have been bound, but there was a freedom in him that all around him desired to possess. This is the same type of thought that was expressed by Paul when he stood before King Agrippa in Acts 26 –

<sup>24</sup> Now as he thus made his defense, Festus said with a loud voice, "Paul, you are beside yourself! Much learning is driving you mad!"

<sup>25</sup> But he said, "I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak the words of truth and reason. <sup>26</sup> For the king, before whom I also speak freely, knows these things; for I am convinced that none of these things escapes his attention, since this thing was not done in a corner. <sup>27</sup> King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you do believe."

<sup>28</sup> Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You almost persuade me to become a Christian."

<sup>29</sup> And Paul said, "I would to God that not only you, but also all who hear me today, might become both almost and altogether such as I am, except for these chains."

<sup>30</sup> When he had said these things, the king stood up, as well as the governor and Bernice and those who sat with them; <sup>31</sup> and when they had gone aside, they talked among themselves, saying, "This man is doing nothing deserving of death or chains."

<sup>32</sup> Then Agrippa said to Festus, "This man might have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar." Acts 26:24-32

Life application: If the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed. No earthly bonds can hinder the spirit of a person who has been freed by Christ Jesus. The chains a believer may bear on his physical body can be used to present a freedom that no one around him could actually imagine.

*Lord God, no matter what our station in life, if we have Christ, we have a freedom which cannot hold back our spirits. Help us to use our circumstances, whatever they are, to share with others the hope that we possess. Surely the message of Jesus is one that goes before us, clearing out the obstacles which would otherwise stand in the way. And so,*

*Lord, give us the boldness to simply speak it out. The message will have its intended effect if we will simply open our mouths and speak. Give us this heart and desire. To Your glory we pray. Amen.*

**...so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ; Philippians 1:13**

The reading of this verse is disputed, but the overall sense is still available. Several translations will help us to see this –

- As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. (NIV)
- For everyone here, including the whole palace guard, knows that I am in chains because of Christ. (NLT)
- So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other *places*; (KJV)
- so that my bonds have become manifest in Christ in the whole praetorium, and to the other places -- all, (YLT)

As you can see, the KJV says “bonds in Christ.”

The YLT says “bonds have become manifest in Christ.” The latter is correct. The spacing in the Greek is too far apart to tie “bonds” in with “Christ.” It undermines the intent of what Paul is saying.

The NIV takes those same words and paraphrases them for the sake of clarity. As far as “the whole palace guard,” the words are translated by the KJV as “palace” and “praetorium” by the YLT. “Palace” is not correct. “Praetorium” is a literal rendering of the Greek, but it doesn’t explain what is the case for us to understand. The term “palace guard” does.

Vincent’s Word Studies gives a long and detailed explanation of the meaning, but for brevity’s sake, the Pulpit Commentary gives a shorter, but less detailed explanation –

“...literally, in the whole praetorium, The word elsewhere means a governor's house: Pilate's house in the Gospels, Herod's palace in Acts 23:35. But at Rome the name so used would give unnecessary offense, and there is no proof that it was ever used for the palatium there. St. Paul must have heard it constantly as the name of the Praetorian regiment; he was kept chained to a soldier of that corps (Acts 28:16); and as his guard

was continually relieved, his name and sufferings for Christ would become gradually known throughout the force.”

The substance of this verse can be summed up with the thought that Paul was handed over to the palace guard along with many other prisoners, as was (and still is today) a common thing.

When he arrived, he was just another offender along with all the others. But afterwards, the palace guard began to realize that he was different, and his imprisonment was not for an offense against Rome, but it was because of his witness for Christ. Eventually, as the guards rotated their assigned duties of taking charge of Paul, they all came to know and understand his position.

From there, the word had spread “to all the rest.” The talk of this particular prisoner went beyond the guards, and the gospel message spread because of Paul’s imprisonment. His chains had thus “been made manifest” in Christ, or as the NKJV reads, the fact “has become evident.” Good news had spread from dire circumstances.

Life application: Reading a single version of the Bible is fine, but to understand what is actually the true rendering of any given passage takes hard work, studying Hebrew and Greek scholar’s writings, and knowing the Bible more than just superficially. The more one reads, the more various accounts will tie together to form a picture of what is being transmitted in any given passage.

*Lord God, many have gone before us proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ. And yet, having suffered for that proclamation, in many instances, it has been their trials, imprisonments, and even deaths which have made the message grow and flourish.. Should we face such evil times in our generation, help us to be strong and steadfast in our willingness to proclaim this beautiful message. Why should we be silent about the most wonderful thing that has ever happened? May we tell of our precious Lord and what He has done for us – bravely and boldly! Amen.*

**...and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.** Philippians 1:14

The words of this verse (which follow after the KJV) are incorrectly translated. It would be a redundancy to say, “brethren in the Lord.”

If one is a brother, he is in the Lord. The words “brethren” and “in the Lord” are never connected in the Bible in this way. Instead, the words “in the Lord” should be connected to the word “confident.” This follows along with the same connection as is found in Galatians 5:10, Philippians 2:24, and 2 Thessalonians 3:4. Therefore, this verse should be translated as is found in the Berean Study Bible –

“And most of the brothers, confident in the Lord by my chains, now dare more greatly to speak the word without fear.”

As you can see, the translation makes sense, and it avoids what would otherwise be a theological error. Further, the words “in the Lord” are in the emphatic position in the Greek. Therefore, the idea is that “most of the brethren” have a renewed confidence IN THE LORD because of Paul’s chains. From this confidence, they are now “more bold to speak the word without fear.”

This is a normal attitude which is often seen among people. If there is a call to arms in a nation, people may be reticent to get up and respond. But if Renny Ready-to-Go jumps to his feet and says, “I stand with freedom!” then suddenly others will be emboldened to rise and join the call as well.

Likewise, if there is a need to accomplish a special task in the bad side of town, the church may make the call for volunteers. But until Phil Faithful stands up and says, “I’ll go down there! The Lord will prevail!” the people may be timid and reticent to respond. However, in his bold stand, others will quickly join in to help.

This is what is being described by Paul here. The Lord used his chains to spur on the brothers. They were emboldened in Him through the use of Paul’s circumstances and his faithful proclamation despite them.

Life application: When a call is made for something to be accomplished, don’t be afraid to be the first to stand and accept the challenge. Your willingness to rise to the challenge may be just what is needed to spur others on to meeting the need.

*Heavenly Father, there are many needs to be filled in our churches, but normally only a small percentage of the people actually participate in meeting those needs. The sidelines are safe and comfortable, but staying there doesn’t help out anyone or anything. As followers of Christ Jesus, help us to be bold and willing to meet the needs which arise. Help us to be faithful stewards of the time and resources You have given to us. Amen.*

**Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from goodwill:**  
Philippians 1:15

Paul now introduces two clauses which he will expand upon in the verses ahead. However, at the same time, they are based on what he has just said concerning the “furtherance of the gospel.”

His chains had caused others to speak boldly and confidently in the Lord. Of these, he names two separate groups. The first actually forms a paradox – “Some preach Christ from envy and strife.” In Christ, there should be no such envy or strife, and yet this was the motivation behind their preaching.

Who he is speaking of here is plainly evident from his comments elsewhere, both in Philippians and in his other epistles, and even in the book of Acts. It is the sect known as the “Judaizers.” They were envious in two ways.

First, they were envious of Paul. He was a champion among the Gentiles, he was tireless in his proclamation of Christ, he was a chosen apostle even though he had once persecuted the church, and he preached freedom from the bondage of the law. Secondly, they were envious of the freedom which he possessed and which he preached.

They loved the bondage of the Law of Moses because it implied that they had in some way merited a right standing before God. If they “did” things in order to please God, then they felt that made them “better” than the heathens who Paul explained were justified by mere faith in the finished work of Christ. But the stupidity of their argument is evident in the fact that they – while adhering to the Law of Moses – had to then observe the Day of Atonement.

This was a day given for the purpose of granting mercy on those who had failed to meet the demands of the law. If they needed this day for being made right with God, then it nullified the very premise they held to – that they were able to boast in who they were as Jews who observed the Law of Moses.

This is because the Law of Moses only condemned them. It could not save them. The badge of circumcision which they bore didn’t nullify their need for justification; it highlighted it.



These Judaizers were not just envious though. Their message was also one of strife. They were contentious and argumentative. And this is fully evident in Paul's writings elsewhere. The book of Galatians, in particular, highlights their strife. However, they are also mentioned later in this epistle –

“Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation!”

-Philippians 3:2

The meaning of these words will be explained when we arrive there, but he is specifically speaking of the Judaizers. This angry, contentious, and jealous group was an infection within the body. Unfortunately, they remain until this day.

The Hebrew Roots movement, and other groups of Judaizers are still out there, tearing people away from the freedom which is found in Jesus Christ. They reinsert the law, and they bring upon themselves and those they teach only bondage and condemnation, not freedom and salvation.

There are many other classes of envious people out there as well. We need to be careful to ensure that those who preach do so with a full adherence to the word of God, in context, and with the foundational message that man is saved by Christ alone, by faith alone, and through grace alone.

Those who so preach do so “from goodwill.” The word translated as such indicates that which is good and beneficial to others. HELPS Word Studies further defines it by saying, “God's good pleasure requires something is done through His work of inbirthing faith.”

Life application: Pay attention to the teachings, various videos, and sermons you watch. Are the words you hear based on adherence to God's word, free from adherence to the law, and based solely on the grace of Jesus Christ? If not, then get away from there! Let there be no hint of envy or strife in your life and doctrine. Instead, do all to the glory of God.

*Heavenly Father, it is so wonderful to know that we are not bound to a law which only highlights our sin nature, but which does nothing to take care of the sin-problem. Instead, we are brought into a New Covenant through the finished work of Christ. We are free from dietary restrictions, the observance of certain days or feasts, and we can worship You in spirit and in truth. Thank God that through Christ, we are dead to the law, but alive in You! Thank You for Jesus our Lord. Amen.*

**The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains; Philippians 1:16**

Based on which Greek text is used for the Bible translation, the order of verses 16 & 17 is reversed from more modern translations. This change to the new translations is generally accepted as correct, and thus the words of Paul form a sort of chiasm as he reverses the thought of the preceding verse.

Either way though, the intent is unchanged. He begins the thought with words which speak of those who “preach Christ even from envy and strife.” Expanding on that, he says that they “preach from selfish ambition.”

Their intent is to divide the body into factions and then place themselves as the head of the faction they lead. This was exactly what is seen in the Judaizers who formed against Paul in other places, both in Acts and in his epistles.

Their desire was to not allow Christ to be the Head, but themselves. There was no sincerity in their devotion to the Lord, and their intent against Paul was “to add affliction to” his chains. When understanding one of the premises of the book of Acts, it is not hard to know how they intended to do this.

Acts is, at least in part, intended to show that Christianity grew out of the Jewish faith and religious practice. By doing this, it was considered as a legitimate religion within the Roman Empire. Therefore, it could be practiced without hindrance or fear of reprisal. Time and again Luke records leaders within the Roman government aligning the faith of Paul under the greater umbrella of Judaism. One of many examples is found in Acts 18 –

<sup>12</sup>““When Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul and brought him to the judgment seat, <sup>13</sup> saying, “This *fellow* persuades men to worship God contrary to the law.”

<sup>14</sup> And when Paul was about to open *his* mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, “If it were a matter of wrongdoing or wicked crimes, O Jews, there would be reason why I should bear with you. <sup>15</sup> But if it is a question of words and names and your own law, look *to it* yourselves; for I do not want to be a judge of such *matters*.” <sup>16</sup> And he drove them from the judgment seat.”” Acts 18:12-16

In their attempt to find Paul’s beliefs not in accord with the Law of Moses, it would then mean that he was practicing a religion unsanctioned by Rome. If this were so, then he would be counted as an offender worthy of punishment or even death. Time and again

though, the Roman authorities found Paul's religious expression as merely a subset of biblical Judaism, and it in fact is.

The Law of Moses pointed to its own termination accompanied by the introduction of a New Covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah (Jeremiah 31:31). As this is so, then it is a valid expression of the religion of the Jews.

In fact, it is the only valid expression authorized by the now obsolete Law of Moses. However, having misunderstood this, they clung to the Law of Moses as a means to an end. They attempted to have Paul maligned and harmed by their selfish ambition.

Life application: Though we are not normally in chains for our faith today, we who hold to the grace which is found in Jesus Christ actually face the same type of abuse as Paul did. Those in the Hebrew Roots Movement, and other aberrant sects which cling to the Law of Moses as still binding, do so out of selfish ambition and without sincerity.

They malign those who believe that we are saved apart from deeds of the law, and they outrageously attack those willing to stand on salvation by grace alone and by faith alone through the work of Christ alone. Watch out for such dogs and mutilators of the flesh.

*Lord God, I trust in the finished work of Jesus Christ alone for my reconciliation to You. What more could I add to that? Amen.*

**...but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel.**  
Philippians 1:17

As noted in the previous verse, based on which Greek text is used, the order of verses 16 & 17 is reversed from more modern translations. This change to the new translations is generally accepted as correct, and thus the words of Paul form a sort of chiasm as he reverses the thought of the preceding verse. Either way though, he had just noted the two types of attitude towards the proclamation of the gospel –

“Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from goodwill:”

Now, he speaks of those whose attitude towards this message was from goodwill. He says that this attitude was “out of love.” They genuinely felt love towards this message and wanted it furthered because of this attitude of goodwill. They had become confident in the Lord, declaring the gospel without fear because of this. They had seen

that Paul had been put in prison “for the defense of the gospel” and it emboldened them.

The word translated as “appointed” is *keimai*. It is a word which means “to place” or “to lie down.” However, it also indicates “destined” or “specially appointed.” He was appointed, or set there for the very purpose of defending the gospel. His bonds were no mistake, but were serving the purpose of gospel defense. Those with loving hearts saw this and grasped it. They were emboldened by his example to act in a like manner.

Life application: Paul was acting as an ambassador for Christ, and yet he was imprisoned for his efforts. In seeing this, there were some who understood that his condition was exactly as was intended for him. The Lord had placed him in this position so that the gospel could be defended.

The words are recorded for us to consider. If we run into a difficult situation because we have proclaimed Christ, we should look at it as an opportunity to continue our proclamation, not withhold it. It is our duty as Christians to be bold in the face of such things. In doing so, we may very well embolden others and bring about a great harvest of change.

*Lord God, there is a lot of strife against the message of Jesus. It's hard to figure out why. You have done the work through Him: we simply accept that premise and receive it, and we are reconciled to You. Why all the anger and hatred at such a simple and beautiful gift? Help us to be all the more bold in our stand that Jesus Christ is available to any and all who will simply receive what He has already done. The world sure needs this good news. Amen.*

**What then? Only *that* in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice. Philippians 1:18**

Care needs to be exercised when contemplating Paul’s words here. He was always concerned about proper doctrine. If someone gave an incorrect presentation of Christ, he would correct them.

If someone gave heretical views of Christ, he would openly rebuke and condemn their proclamation. To him, proper doctrine was of the very highest importance. It is for this very reason that he wrote most of his epistles.

What he is speaking about here is the character of the person who proclaimed Christ. This is why he first asks, “What then?” He has just noted the difference in character between different heralds of the message. Some proclaimed it sincerely, and some out of selfish motives. To him, it didn’t matter what the motive of the person was as long as the message was Christ.

Today as then, and as in all times since then, there are countless people who preach because they know that they can profit off of those they preach to. There are those who preach Jesus because they love the adoration that comes with the job. There are those who preach because it keeps them from some other physical labor that they might loathe... whatever.

On the other side of the coin are those who preach “in truth.” They truly love the gospel message, and the benefits from proclaiming it are a secondary matter to them. The heart, full of love for Christ, is their motivation. And so, Paul says, “Only *that* in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached.”

As long as they preach Jesus, the message is being proclaimed. The Lord will deal with the motives behind the preaching, but at least the message is getting out. For this he says, “...and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice.”

If there are people in a church with a pastor who is a great orator and a sound theologian, but who doesn’t really care about the message at all, who is harmed? Only the pastor. Those in the church are being fed, and they are unaware of the hypocritical heart of their leader, but God is. He will sort out the motives behind each person’s actions, and He will reward them accordingly.

Life application: If a person is teaching or preaching bad or false doctrine, we cannot rejoice in this. Instead, it must be called out. But if a person is preaching Jesus out of pretense, and yet their message is in accord with the Bible, let it go. We are not the discerners of the heart, and we may be wrong in our evaluation of the person. Stick to the facts; stick to doctrine; and hold fast to that which is in line with the Bible.

*Lord, purify our hearts today. Take away the things which interfere with a close and personal intimacy with You. Keep us from greed, from the lust of the eyes, and also from the pride of life which step in and so easily take over. Help us to be content with our station, free of coveting, and humble in our hearts. Surely with these, You will be pleased. And so, help us in this today. Amen.*

**For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, Philippians 1:19**

Paul's words in this verse are debated, but the intent is not uncertain when looked at from his perspective. He says, "For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance."

The word "deliverance" is also translated as "salvation." It is the word which indicates both, *sótéria*. Because of this, some argue that it must mean his "salvation" from captivity. This is what one would expect, especially when translated as "deliverance." But this is not correct because this was completely uncertain to him, as he will note in the next verse.

However confident he was in his heart, and he was still uncertain in reality concerning what would happen to him. This is seen in verses 25 & 26. His confidence notwithstanding, it is not speaking of specifically his deliverance from captivity.

The term "salvation" or "deliverance" is also not speaking of his salvation in regard to his state before God. That was determined when he received Christ. And so there is only a third option left to consider. His words actually quote Job 13:16, which he then applies to himself –

"Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him.  
Even so, I will defend my own ways before Him.  
<sup>16</sup> He also *shall* be my salvation,  
For a hypocrite could not come before Him."

Understanding this, we see that he is speaking of the simple form of the word as we would think of it. There is nothing specific in the "salvation," such as release from captivity or standing approved before God. Rather it is the fact that through good or bad he will be delivered. If he is to be executed, he will be delivered from that death. If he is to go on living, he will be delivered from whatever trial or trouble he faces.

He may have to go through those trials or troubles, but they will not be the end for him. A good example to think of is a man standing at the side of his wife who is on her death-bed. There is no doubt that she will die, and yet he says, "We will get through this." It is a simple statement of fact that deliverance is at hand, regardless of the outcome. This is the intent of Paul's words.

And he notes to them that this “deliverance” is to come “through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.” There is an intimate connection in the Greek between the two nouns, “prayer” and “supply.” This is accomplished by the use of one preposition and one article. As Jamieson-Faucett-Brown states it –

“Through your prayer and (the consequent) supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ (obtained for me through your prayer).”

He is aware that they are praying for him, and he earnestly believes that those prayers help him in the process of his deliverance. The prayers are raised, and the Spirit is returned in answer to the prayers.

Life application: We should never underestimate the power of prayer. Paul didn’t, the other apostles and the prophets didn’t, and even more – Jesus didn’t. They are all recorded as praying and expecting that those prayers were heard. If this is so, and as we are now sealed with God’s Spirit unto salvation, why should we think that our prayers are not heard?

Let us be people of prayer, willing to expend those prayers for the needs of others and for the desires of our hearts as well.

*Most gracious heavenly Father, Your word shows us that prayers are important in our relationship with You. There we see that the prophets and the apostles were people of prayer. And they were also strengthened through the prayers of others – both individuals and groups. And even more, Jesus prayed heartily unto You. Why should we think that our prayers are somehow unimportant to You? You have sealed believers in Christ with Your Spirit. No closer intimacy than that can ever exist! Thank You for the knowledge that our prayers are heard. Help us to be people of powerful prayer. Amen.*

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

The opening words of this verse tie back to Paul’s note in the preceding verse that “this will turn out for my deliverance.” That was not speaking of deliverance from prison, nor his salvation as a Christian, but rather salvation as a simple fact. No matter what occurs, he would be saved through it. Understanding this, he says that it is “according to my earnest expectation and hope.”

The word translated as “earnest expectation” is found only here and in Romans 8:19 when speaking that “the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God.” It is a word, *apokaradokia*, which comes from three separate words – *apó*, “away from;” *kara*, “the head;” and *dokéō*, “thinking.” It gives the idea of “thinking forward” as if the head is literally outstretched.

And so, in turn, it refers to eager and even intense expectation. One would then mentally think of the eager straining of a marathon runner, running with his head outstretched and his eyes only on the finish line. For Paul, it means that he has ignored all that is lesser and has his eyes focused solely on that which is greater, the exaltation of Christ in his body. This is why he next says, “that in nothing I shall be ashamed.”

The word for “shall be ashamed” is in the passive in the Greek. It is better rendered, “I shall be put to shame.” He is in prison, and yet he finds no shame in this, but to let down his Lord while in prison by not preaching the gospel would be accounted to his shame. By failing to represent Christ, he would then “be put to shame.”

Instead of such a thing, he makes a contrasting proclamation that “with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body.”

Again, he uses a passive word for “will be magnified.” He has just spoken of boldness in his actions, and so one might expect him to state this in an active form, such as “I shall magnify” Christ. But he chooses rather the passive. “Boldness of speech was to be his part, the glory should be Christ’s” (Pulpit Commentary).

Thus, we see in Paul’s view of his walk (and which should be ours), the idea that when failure comes our way, it is our own fault, but when success, triumph, or glory comes our way, it is the work of Christ. As Charles Ellicott notes, “If he fails, it must be through his own fault; if he triumphs, it will be through his Master’s strength.”

Paul finishes up this marvelous thought with the words, “whether by life or by death.” Thus, we see that the “deliverance” or “salvation” which was referred to in the previous verse is one which is a simple fact. He will be saved through any circumstance; he will get through it, and it will be by the power of Christ working in him and for him.

Life application: We should never fear that we will not get through any and every ordeal we face. It may not be the way we expect, but we will get through it as Christ has ordained. What we should fear is failing the Lord along the way.



All error and failure is to be reckoned to our account. All glory is to be reckoned to Him, simply because if we do something right, it is because He has already ordained that the right thing is the thing we are to do. We are merely showing obedience to our heavenly Master in doing that which is appropriate. This begs the question, “How can we know what is the right thing to do? Anyone?... Yes, you in the back row. What do you say?”  
“Know your Bible.”

“Very good! Excellent! A++++! No homework for you tonight!”

*Lord God of all power and might, we are the work of Your hands, but because of our own free-will, we often fail to bring You the glory You deserve. In our failings, only we are to blame, but in our triumphs, only You are to receive the praise. You have already shown us what is right and just and what is wrong and unjust. Should we do what is right, it is in obedience to You – to You be the glory. Should we do what is wrong, it is because we have failed You – the shame is ours alone. Help us to remember this simple truth so that our lives will be in accord with Your will at all times. Amen.*

**For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.** Philippians 1:21

In the preceding verse, he said, “Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death.” To now explain that thought, he gives one of the most comforting verses ever to be given by him to the saints in Christ. He begins with “For to me...”

The words “to me” are emphatic. To him, it didn’t matter what others thought about this physical life. To him it was only about one thing – “...to live *is* Christ.” It was Christ and nothing else. This is complementary to his words of Galatians 2:20 –

“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”

Paul regarded his life complete and solely as that of being in Christ. This state is not that Christ is merely the source of our life (which He is, meaning our true life), nor is it that He is the main life which is in us (which is also true), but rather Paul is saying that He is (or He should be) the absolute state of our lives so that He is manifest in all we are and do.

When we are seen, people should see Christ. When we speak, people should hear Christ. To live is Christ, or as the Greek literally reads, “The living is Christ.” Our lives

should be lived for Christ, and to His glory, at all times. This is what Paul means in his words.

But in addition to that marvelous state, he next complements the words “by death” of the previous verse with the thought, “...and to die *is* gain.”

Here, he is referring to the state of death rather than the occurrence of death. When we die, a new state will be realized. It is one that will make our current state pale in comparison to it, thus the word “gain” is used. Elsewhere, he speaks about the gain which is found in our deaths. In 2 Corinthians 5, he states the following –

“So *we are* always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. <sup>7</sup> For we walk by faith, not by sight.” 2 Corinthians 5:6, 7

For those who die in Christ, there is a completely new state which we enter. If this life is to be lived as Christ, and our death is gain, then it is not just an emulation of Him, but it must be an even more intimate uniting with Him.

It is that state which Paul now speaks of. And it is a state which will be even further highlighted when new bodies are given to those who are dead in Christ. This is referred to in detail in 1 Corinthians 15, but it is also alluded to in Colossians 3 –

“When Christ *who is* our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.”  
-Colossians 3:4

Life application: Christ has risen from the dead, never to die again. He promises the same to all who die in Him. And so, let us not fear the passing of our mortal, fallen bodies. When we die, we will be in a state far more wonderful than we are now. And at some point after that, He will give us new and eternal bodies which will be more glorious still. Thank God for the sure promises which are found in Jesus Christ our Lord!

*Heavenly Father, Your word tells us that You have a wonderful plan for those who are in Christ. Now, we are given the chance to emulate Him. In our passing, we are promised a state which is more intimate than mere emulation, but a new stage of intimacy with Him. And at some point, the dead in Christ will be raised to eternal life with bodies that will never wear out. There will be complete and familiar access to Your very throne through Christ our Lord. Why should we fear death? Let us stand confident in the sure and faithful promises You have made! Amen.*

**But if I live on in the flesh, this *will mean* fruit from *my* labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell.** Philippians 1:22

Greek scholars note the immensely complicated nature of this verse, admitting that it could be translated in a variety of ways. It is as if Paul was laboring to express himself in a manner that would convey both his heart for his apostolic position which required him to bear fruit, and yet his great desire for his life to end in order to be with Christ. He was torn between the two. In choosing one, he might show that the other was unimportant to him.

Imagine the dilemma! If he were to say, “I desire to stay and continue with my apostolic duties” then his audience may feel that death was an unknown and even scary thing to him. Thus, his words concerning what it is like after death were not grounded in any true hope. Further, they might assume that holding onto this life was something that even an apostle desired the most. What would that speak of his relationship with the Lord?

On the other hand, if he were to say that he just wanted to go and be with the Lord, then it would mean that his duties as an apostle meant little to him. They may even think that he was running from the responsibilities of this life that the Lord had placed him in. This could even be taken as a streak of disobedience to his calling.

And so, he is faced with expressing himself in a manner which was as difficult as any other he might face. Because of this, his words are most difficult to translate. Charles Ellicott notes that “The construction is clearly broken by emotion or absorption in thought; it can only be supplied by conjecture.”

Understanding this, any commentary must also be that of, at least partially, conjecture. The basic intent, however, is not difficult to grasp. He is caught in a dilemma concerning remaining alive or dying.

If he is to continue on “in the flesh” then his labors would continue to bear fruit. The term “in the flesh” indicates the fallen world in which he is and of which he participates in. The “flesh” speaks of that which is earthly and fallen, and yet it is the life which we currently live in.

To cast off the flesh means to cast off corruption, trouble, trial, and difficulty. But to remain in the flesh, at least for Paul, would mean benefit for others. As the scholar Bengel notes, “Another seeks fruit from [by means of] his labour; Paul regards the labour

itself as the fruit.” Understanding the dilemma, he next pens, “...yet what shall I choose I cannot tell.”

He is being caught up in the difficulty of expressing one choice over another, and it is one which he is actively evaluating, even as his words flow from his mind – “What shall I do? What is right? How do I express this difficult situation?”

In essence, he has come to the point of simply saying, “If I know that living will be the best option for the church as a whole, then my personal desire must go unspoken, and I will refrain from stating it. I must be obedient in whichever occurs.”

Life application: The words of this verse should be the same struggle that every Christian faces. This may be true especially with pastors and preachers, but every Christian should say, “I really, really want to be with Christ, but I know that my work here may necessitate me staying.” How unfortunate that neither thought fits the minds of most.

They neither “want to be with Christ,” nor do they “want to bear fruit for Christ.” They simply live for this world, clinging onto it as if distrusting any of the promises of the word. They distrust that their labors now will be realized in eternal rewards from Christ, and they distrust that death is truly “gain.”

*Lord God, if Your word is true, and if the promises in it are true, then two things should be evident in our lives as followers of Christ. We should be living this life in an attempt to bear fruit for Your church, and we should at the same time be in hopeful, even eager, expectation of the ending of this earthly life. We should be so caught between the two that we are constantly struggling with the dilemma of which is the best option. If we don't do the first, it shows we care little about sharing the truth about Christ. If we don't do the second, it shows that we distrust the promises of a far better life to come. Help us in this Lord God. May we always expend ourselves for You, while also placing You as our greatest hope of all. Amen.*

**For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.** Philippians 1:23

This verse is referring to Paul's internal conflict concerning living on in the flesh or dying and going to be with Christ. He now gives highly emphatic words – “For I am hard pressed between the two.” The two options were both straining at him. To him, he was hemmed in by both as they called out to his soul.

It is as if he were a miner working in a camp. His tent is tied down and there was safety and much productive work to be done which would bear fruit. His work there would be profitable and a great help to the other miners. And yet, there was the finest gold awaiting him in the mountains, calling to him.

The wealth there was more than could ever be imagined or realized while staying in the camp. And so, he was being pressed heavily by both options, only one of which he could pursue. Understanding this dilemma, he continues by saying, "...having a desire to depart and be with Christ."

The word "depart" here means, "to unloose for departure." His desire was to head to the place of the most precious riches of all. In so doing, he would have to unloose his tent and strike off towards his destination. In this, he is equating life as the movement of a tent where there is the pulling up of the restraining cords in order to move.

In order to go to the mountain of riches, he would have to pull up the cords for the last time. This move is equated with his death, but he says that this option is "far better."

Some scholars see the unloosing for the departure to be a nautical one. He was equating himself with a ship being drawn out to sea. No matter what analogy one makes, Paul faced a decision which truly pressed on him from both sides. The two called out to him and vexed him in his soul.

Among other things, this verse shows us quite clearly that the person who dies in Christ is immediately transported to be with Him, even if it is without a body. It will be a place of great gain. People may argue over the details of what occurs, but the simple surety that we will be with Christ in a far better place is made completely clear to us.

Life application: There should be no fear for the believer in Christ concerning death. This world is a temporary one, and our lives here are to be productive for His kingdom, but the unloosing of our tent cords is to be a happy occasion. The move we will make is one which will take us to the place of highest joy and eternal riches.

Let us not fear death as the world does. Instead, we should be in the greatest anticipation that we will be in the presence of Christ; the most wonderful place of all.

*Heavenly Father, the Bible tells us that the one who has trusted Christ should never be worried about his death. Whether in this life or whether in our death, we belong to Christ and are safe and secure in His grasp. We are even told that to be absent from the body is*

*to be with Him; the most marvelous place of all. Help us to be fixed in our faith that this is true, and to never fear what lies ahead. Your word is true; Your promises are sure; and our hope is not in vain. Thank You for such surety. Amen.*

**Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you.** Philippians 1:24

Paul has been expressing in writing his struggle between his desire to depart this life and be with Christ, and that of continuing on in this life in order to bear fruit for the gospel. It is as if his mental struggle will actually be determined by the words he writes. And in reality, this is the case.

He is writing under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and so one can see the duality of how Scripture comes about in his conflict. There is the carnal man who is thinking out his thoughts as a carnal man, unsure about what lies ahead, and revealing his own thoughts and desires. And then there is the inspired prophet of God who is being led, as if a ship directed by the wind through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The man's thoughts remain his, and they are expressed clearly, and yet the Holy Spirit's will is what takes precedence in order to bring us God's word. Paul is not the only one where this is seen.

Rather, throughout the Bible, we see exactly this occurring, time and time again. Even a cursory read through Isaiah, Daniel, Jeremiah, Habakkuk, or any of the other prophetic writings will show this to be the case. Because it is also true with Paul, he now writes the words of this verse, "Nevertheless to remain in the flesh *is* more needful for you."

He had no idea which option to choose, but the Holy Spirit did. He wrote what he knew in his inner being because of the Spirit's prompting. Despite the conflict, he yielded to the Spirit – "Nevertheless."

In so yielding, the oracle came through – he would "remain in the flesh." This was what God had determined, and this is what would come to pass. He would not go to be with the Lord at this time, but rather he would remain in his earthly body. And the reason is that it was "more needful for" those he ministered to at Philippi and elsewhere.

This need was certainly 1) to ensure that all of the word of God, which was to come from his pen would, in fact, come. And 2) to ensure that those he had brought to Christ would be prepared for the time when he was no longer with them. This is seen, for example, in the words he spoke to those of the Ephesian church in Acts 20 –

<sup>28</sup>“Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. <sup>29</sup>For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. <sup>30</sup>Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. <sup>31</sup>Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.” Acts 20:28-31

For these, and whatever other reasons, Paul was inspired to write the words of this verse. It should not be considered unusual that the Spirit impelled him in this way. As noted above, this type of dual working between the man and the Spirit is found throughout Scripture. If there was ever a conflict or misunderstanding between the two, the Spirit would prevail. Jeremiah shows us a marvelous example of this –

<sup>7</sup>“O Lord, You induced me, and I was persuaded;  
You are stronger than I, and have prevailed.

I am in derision daily;  
Everyone mocks me.

<sup>8</sup>For when I spoke, I cried out;  
I shouted, ‘Violence and plunder!’  
Because the word of the Lord was made to me  
A reproach and a derision daily.

<sup>9</sup>Then I said, ‘I will not make mention of Him,  
Nor speak anymore in His name.’  
But *His word* was in my heart like a burning fire  
Shut up in my bones;  
I was weary of holding *it* back,  
And I could not.” Jeremiah 20:7-9

Jeremiah strived against the word of the Lord, and the Spirit of God prevailed in the struggle. Paul was unsure of what would happen in his future, but the Spirit settled the matter with the word which he uttered, and which was confirmed by the issue of ink from the pen held in the scribe’s hand.

Life application: We don’t know the future, but God does. Let us not worry about what lies ahead, but rather let us trust that His plan will unfold exactly as it should. God’s plan cannot be thwarted. As it is a good plan, let it come and have no fear as it does.

*Lord God, we often struggle with what the future holds. It is scary at times because we don't see the outcome of things that intimately concern us. But we are shown in Your word that You have a plan, a good plan, which is being worked out in the stream of time. As we (who have called on Jesus) are a part of the good end of that plan, then why should we be anxious at all? Your good plan for us cannot be thwarted, and so let us not look at the future with fear, but with a sense of relief! It is all in control according to Your wisdom. Hallelujah for such comfort. Amen.*

**And being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith, Philippians 1:25**

As noted in the previous verse, there is a hint of the overriding of the Spirit in Paul's words. He may not be speaking as if he is fully aware of the matter in his human nature, and yet his words are being directed by the Spirit.

This is evidenced by the fact that they are included in the pages of the Bible. There are other times where Paul spoke of the future as if he was certain of a matter, and yet his words were proven incorrect.

This occurs when the narrative is speaking about what he is saying, and it is intended to show that he and the other apostles and prophets were not fully aware of the future in their humanity. And yet, when writing or prophesying, they were guided by the Spirit. It is an amazing thing to see unfold in Scripture! In this feeling of surety, which is both lacking in his humanity, and yet prophetic because of the prompting of the Spirit, he states, "And being confident of this..."

In these words, he yields himself to the prompting which is from the Spirit. Again, this must be the case as the words are now included in Scripture. And yet, other scholars disagree and state that he is simply voicing a confidence which is one of continued uncertainty. Because of this, the next words have to be somewhat manipulated. He says, "I know that I shall remain and continue with you all."

Albert Barnes states, "The word "know," however, ... is not to be pressed as denoting absolute necessity - for it appears from Philippians 1:27 and Philippians 2:17, that there was some ground for doubt whether he would live - but is to be taken in a popular sense, as denoting good courage, and an earnest hope that he would be permitted to live and visit them."



This is a possible explanation of Paul's words, but it does not coincide with the conflict which he was struggling with. It was suddenly resolved with the words of this verse. Further, if Paul had instead died, the words which he wrote, as part of an epistle of doctrine to the Philippians, would have been proven false. Such would not be the case if it was inspired by the Spirit. And so, in his confidence, he notes that he will continue with these disciples "for your progress and joy of faith."

It was necessary for their continued doctrinal education that he stay. The Spirit had so indicated it, and he came to realize that this was true. And in receiving this, it would strengthen their joy of faith. Faith is something we possess in varying measure. When our faith is weak, our joy in what our faith is directed to is weak. But when our faith is strong, our joy in what it is directed to is also strong.

If we are certain of the outcome of a presidential race, having faith that our candidate will win, we will be joyous in that fact. However, as the odds of probability drop, so will our level of joy in what lies ahead.

Paul understood that he had not yet given the full measure of doctrinal knowledge that would be necessary for full joy and confidence in the work of the Lord. And so, as led by the Spirit, he assured his audience (and thus us!) that he would continue on until that work was complete.

Life application: If the surety of our "joy of faith" is based on our knowledge of the work of Christ, and if that knowledge is only imparted to us in the pages of Scripture, then why on earth would we not want to know this marvelous body of doctrine completely and perfectly?

How sad it is that Christians waffle in their faith because they are not well-grounded in the word of that faith! Whose fault is it then when we struggle with life's uncertainties? Read the word! Study to show yourself approved!

*Lord God, we all have varying levels of faith. Some of us are weak in our faith; others are strong. Those who are weak, are like little boats tossed about on a giant sea of confusion. And whose fault is that? You have given us everything we need to know for life, doctrine, and fully-assured faith, right in the pages of the Bible. And yet, so many would rather remain on the sea of chaos, struggling with every little thing that happens, than to devote the time and hard work necessary to be well-grounded in Your word. That is a sad thing to consider. Help us to be people of faith by being people of sound doctrine. To Your glory! Amen.*

**...that your rejoicing for me may be more abundant in Jesus Christ by my coming to you again. Philippians 1:26**

This verse is to be taken together with the previous verse for context –

<sup>25</sup>“And being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith, <sup>26</sup> that your rejoicing for me may be more abundant in Jesus Christ by my coming to you again.”

Paul, led by the prompting of the Spirit, was confident that he would live and not die at this time. This would then result in the rejoicing of those in Philippi “in Jesus Christ.” The rejoicing in Him is the full result of what would occur, but it would also be in Paul’s return to them.

The translation is not literal, but it catches the intent of what is being said. This, unlike that of the KJV, which does not convey the correct meaning. The Greek of the verse says, “...in Jesus Christ in me through my coming again to you.”

There is a parallelism in the repetition of the use of “in” by Paul to show that even though the presence of Paul is the immediate cause of their joy, it is a joy which has arisen out of the fact that Christ Jesus lives in him. They would rejoice “in Jesus Christ” for what had come about.

This verse shows us that it is acceptable to rejoice in the accomplishments, or even in the presence, of another. However, that rejoicing needs to be considered in light of the greater rejoicing which comes through Christ who dwells in that person.

In other words, we can rejoice in a great preacher of the gospel. However, it is that Christ is in him that the rejoicing finds its fullest sense. The use of the parallel “in” is thus instructive. In the end, all rejoicing finds its true home in the Lord. In the case of Paul, the Philippian church would receive its joy when he was released to come to them again, and it would be a rejoicing in him and in Christ Jesus.

Life application: Rejoicing in the Lord is good. Let’s do it today!

*Heavenly Father, there is nothing better than to rejoice in You. You are the Source of all things and the Giver of all good blessings. Where could we go to find anything to rejoice in apart from You? As all things came from You, then You are ultimately where our*

*rejoicing comes from, and so... let us rejoice in You! Great are You, O God, and greatly to be praised. Amen.*

**Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel, Philippians 1:27**

Paul has just penned his certainty that he will remain in his earthly body and continue with those at Philippi “for progress and joy of faith.”

After this, he noted that this rejoicing would abound “in Jesus Christ by my coming to you again.” Having said that, he now gives words of exhortation for them to consider. He begins with “Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ.” The word he uses for “your conduct” is *politeuomai*. It specifically means, “to live as a citizen.”

Most translations make this word to indicate “conduct” or “manner of life,” but Paul was probably thinking more on the idea of citizenship itself. Thus, the NLT translates this verse as –

“Above all, you must live as citizens of heaven, conducting yourselves in a manner worthy of the Good News about Christ.” NLT

The word is only used elsewhere in Acts 23:1 where Paul was thinking on the same terms. He was a citizen of Rome and had exercised his citizenship as a Roman to make an appeal for his case directly to Caesar. Therefore, he was living his citizenship in Rome, as well as his citizenship in heaven, in order to meet the goals of the gospel.

This is certainly what he is thinking now, because he uses a variant of this word again in verse 3:20 where he says, “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ...”

In this letter to Philippi, he is writing to a location mostly inhabited by Roman citizens. This is because Philippi was a Roman colony. He had even declared his own Roman citizenship there in Acts 16 –

“But Paul said to them, ‘They have beaten us openly, uncondemned Romans, *and* have thrown *us* into prison. And now do they put us out secretly? No indeed! Let them come themselves and get us out.’” Acts 16:37

Understanding this, we can see that in his words to this group, he was reminding them that even if some of them were Roman citizens, they had a higher citizenship by which they should conduct their lives. He then explains the reason for this – “...so that whether I come and see you or am absent, that you stand fast in one spirit.”

There was to be no division among them based on their earthly status. Those who were citizens of Rome were to be in the same spirit with those who were slaves. The principle passes down to us today. We are to be united without regard to social status, fame, or any other lesser division. Rather, we are to be “in one spirit.”

The spirit is the higher connection to God which comes through faith in Christ. A person who is not in Christ is “dead” in his spirit, but through Christ, the spirit is quickened to life and the connection to God is repaired to the state it was originally intended to be. In this spiritual connection, believers are to be united as one.

Further, he notes that they are to be “with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.” The word translated as “mind” here is *psuché*. It refers specifically to the “soul.” As the spirit is the higher connection to God, the soul is the human connection to one another. In essence, we could think of Paul’s intent here as – “Let your spiritual connection to God be as one, and let your earthly lives strive together for the faith of the gospel.”

There was to be a uniting of their spiritual and earthly efforts for harmony among one another, and for that harmony to be employed in their earthly conduct in order to build one another up in the faith.

Life application: There is nothing wrong with living out our earthly lives as citizens of the country in which we live, as long as we realize that our true citizenship is in heaven. The earthly citizenship should never be conducted without considering the heavenly. And this goes for personal conduct as well as interactions with other believers.

*Lord God, though we live in this world and are citizens of various nations, in Christ we are one and we are to direct our lives first and foremost in regard to our heavenly citizenship. Help us to live out our personal lives in this way, and help us to conduct our personal interactions with other believers in this manner as well. Let us not divide our allegiance to You in ways which are not glorifying of You or which are not helpful to our fellows in Christ. Amen.*

**...and not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from God. Philippians 1:28**

Paul just spoke of their need to “stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.” He now adds to this by saying, “and not in any way terrified by your adversaries.” The word translated as “terrified” is found only here in the Bible. It means to be terrified, like a horse when frightened. It is then a mind of terror and confusion.

We are not to be startled and terrified in such a way when facing our adversaries. For those in Philippi, they had both the Judaizers and the pagans as their enemies. These people came at them in hopes of terrifying them, probably to undermine their faith so that they would then follow them, as a horse is eventually subdued and led away. But he has already told them to “stand fast” and to be “striving together.” In so doing, they will not be susceptible to being so terrified.

Their ability to not be terrified in this way was to be “to them a proof of perdition.” Their enemies were on the wrong path, and in their inability to shake the resolve of the faithful, it was to demonstrate that fact. This would leave them with two choices: 1) They could repent of their ways and turn to the truth of Christ, or 2) they could continue down the path to perdition, meaning condemnation and an eternal swim in the Lake of Fire.

And not only was this a proof of their perdition, but it was also a proof of the believer’s state concerning salvation. If one stands fast, there must be something that they are standing fast on. If they were “striving together for the sake of the gospel,” it means that they were aware of the gospel, they understood its meaning and ramifications, and they were able to keep it faithfully.

These two things, the fear of perdition for those opposed to the gospel, and the hope of salvation for those who were saved by the gospel, are tokens “from God.” The one will stand as a witness against the lost when they stand before Him, and the other will stand as a witness for the saved when they come before Him. The gospel is the token of condemnation for some and of salvation for others. It is like the pillar of cloud described by Moses –

“Thus it was a cloud and darkness *to the one*, and it gave light by night *to the other*, so that the one did not come near the other all that night.” Exodus 14:20

Life application: Don't be led astray by universalist teachings which say that everyone eventually goes to heaven. That is proven false here, and in numerous other verses of Scripture. It is a heretical lie. Stand fast on the gospel which says that only those who come to Christ will be saved.

*Glorious God Almighty, it is a comfort to know the gospel of Jesus Christ, and to understand that it means salvation for mankind, if we will but receive the Gift and accept it. The message itself is a witness against those who reject it, and it is a token of salvation to those who receive it. Thank You for the surety we possess through this marvelous message of peace and reconciliation with You! Thank You for Jesus who has made all things new. Amen.*

**For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, Philippians 1:29**

Paul's words, though written to the people at Philippi in this instance, are doctrine for the church age. With this in mind, it would be ultra-mega-hyper-fantabulous for Christians to stop tearing verses out of their intended context in order to justify a "prosperity gospel," and to keep Paul's writings as the main guide of their church-age doctrine.

This is especially so with verses like the one we now come to. How marvelous it would be if professing Christians would set aside the goofy, put away the self-centered, and assimilate truths which are intended to help us through times of trial, not claim our way out of them.

Within the past few days before analyzing this verse, a "prosperity gospel" church in Nigeria collapsed and destroyed 160 lives. They were not able to "claim" their way out of that mess, and they will all stand before God and give an account of what they believed and what doctrine they adhered to.

Paul, speaking to those at Philippi (and thus to us!) says, "For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ..." The verb is in the aorist indicative passive. It has been given since first belief, and it is a simple statement of fact. And what has been granted is "on behalf of Christ."

In other words, because of the cause of Christ, and/or in a view towards honoring Christ, this has been granted to us as believers. It is not something unexpected or unfavorable. Instead, what he will state is something we are both to expect, and something that we

are to feel honored to have occur. Continuing on, he says, "...not only to believe in Him..."

This is a reference to the fact that belief in Christ is a gift and a privilege. God orchestrated the time and circumstances of our lives to give us a chance to believe. He granted this honor to us so that we might in fact believe. When we demonstrate faith in Christ, we are saved. But this is not the end of the honors that we can expect. Paul will next tell us of another great honor and privilege that we are granted on behalf of Christ. Let us try to guess what it is!

Johnny: Is it that we will always be happy and have our path filled with scented flowers?

Susan: Is it that we will be free from troubles and fill out our days in health just as Heretic Hinn implies when he is asking for donations?

Matthew: Is it that we will be rich, just like Pastor Promise told us last Sunday?

Ralph: Is it that we will have power over demons, devils, and physical afflictions so that we can claim healing? This is what Minister Marvelous said at Bible class last week \*Oh boy!\*

Nice try, but none of these are what Paul will tell us. Rather, he tells us that we are "also to suffer for His sake." \*Sound of crickets chirping\*

Paul's words here are consistent with other passages in the New Testament. Unlike the false teachings described above by our confused class of Christians, none of which are to be found in a proper evaluation of Scripture, Paul tells us directly and – without ambiguity or vagueness – that it is an honor and a privilege to suffer for the name of Christ.

In Acts 5, the apostles who were beaten by order of the leading council in Jerusalem left rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Jesus. In Colossians 1:24, Paul states –

"I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church..."

Peter tells his audience –

"Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; <sup>13</sup> but rejoice to the extent that you

partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy." 1 Peter 4:12, 13

Elsewhere as well, we are shown that to suffer for Christ and as a Christian is an honorable thing. Not all of these are prescriptive verses, but they are given to highlight that our life in Christ is not to be one which expects wealth, health, prosperity, fancy things, or any such nonsense.

Instead, we have been given the high honor of emulating the Lord in His sufferings. Let us take this to heart and remove our ears from the false whisperings of teachers who would promise that the blessings of heaven will open up on us if we simply pass money to them.

Life application: As a Christian, you can expect suffering.

*Lord God, Your word directly and without ambiguity promises that believers in Christ have been granted the privilege of suffering for Him. There are no promises of wealth, health, prosperity, or physical healing handed to us as guarantees. But we are guaranteed that we will suffer for His sake. And what a high honor that is. Help us to put away false teachings and to be ready for the times of trial when they come. Help us never to try to claim our way out of (or into) certain circumstances – certainly that is presumptuous and sinful. Instead, grant us wisdom to work hard for that which we want, and strength to endure well through those things which are difficult to face. To the glory of Christ alone may we act in this life that You have granted to us. Amen.*

**...having the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear *is* in me.** Philippians 1:30

The likely construction of Paul's words is that this completes the thought of verse 27, and thus verses 28 and 29 are parenthetical. If we leave out 28 and 29, it would read –

“Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel, ... <sup>30</sup> having the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear *is* in me.”

In his words “having the same conflict which you saw in me,” he refers to a conflict which they were aware of, and one which they had personally seen. This then is what is recorded in Acts 16, having occurred at Philippi. After noting this, he continues with “and now hear *is* in me.”



He is showing them that, once again, he is having a conflict. This is the reason for their need to “stand fast” and to continue “striving together.” The ordeals were sure to come, and they were likely to be continuous. This is what they could expect because of their faith in Christ.

The word he uses which is translated as “conflict” is introduced here. It is used by Paul five times, and once in Hebrews. It is the Greek word *agon*, and it is the source of our word “agony” or to “agonize.” It indicates an arduous conflict and comes from the idea of the athletic contests of ancient Greece. These were so grueling that even the toughest of the competitors were known to weaken and crumble.

Paul’s choice of wording here shows the true nature of what it can mean to be a Christian. He didn’t simply snap his fingers and claim his way out of his trials. Instead, he suffered these agonizing ordeals for the sake of Christ and His gospel message. He notes that those in Philippi were having the same type of conflict as well.

Life application: If we are in dire straits and are facing crushing troubles because we are Christians, we can actually find encouragement from knowing that we were not the first. Further, we can know that we will be saved through them.

This is the great value of reading and remembering the words of Scripture. Let us endeavor to keep such things in mind just in case we too face such immense trials. Let us stand fast and strive together with others in our pursuit of Christ.

*Lord God, when we face big trials, it is such a comfort to go to Your word and see that our situation is not unique. Your faithful servant David suffered greatly, but You got him through it. Jeremiah was treated shamefully by his own people, but You were there with him. Paul went through countless physical tortures, but he persevered because he knew You were there, saving him each time. Your word shows us that we are not alone in this great struggle of faith, and that You will get us through it, just as You did for them. Thank You for this reassurance. Amen.*

## CHAPTER 2

**Therefore if *there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy*, Philippians 2:1**

This verse is necessarily tied to the upcoming verse. He makes four statements preparing us for a heartfelt petition. He begins with “Therefore” in order to show that his thoughts now are dependent on the words of the previous chapter, especially verses 27-29. Based on those things (therefore), he first says, “If *there is any consolation in Christ.*”

The word is *paráklēsis*, and it indicates “a call (urging), done by someone ‘close beside,’ i.e. a *personal exhortation* that delivers the ‘evidence that stands up in God's court’” (HELPS Word Studies). One can almost feel Paul’s intent. There is the Spirit of Christ, right there beside us, exhorting us and encouraging us.

Next, he says, “...if any comfort of love.” This is the comfort of love which is found in Christ. We are to understand the significance of His cross, and we are to feel surrounded by the love which it imparts to us. This in turn is then passed on between believers in Christ who, hopefully, will have the same love towards one another because of Christ’s love which sets the example.

After that comes, “...if any fellowship of the Spirit.” This is speaking of the intimate bond between the Spirit and us. It is the comfort we have knowing of His presence. It is the rejoicing in Him for Christ’s deeds on our behalf, and the anticipation of eternal intimacy because of what He has done.

It is the reconnection to God which was lost at the fall, and which says that we are once again sons of God through adoption. These things, and so much more, are realized through the work of Christ, and the Spirit testifies to them.

And he then states, “...if any affection and mercy.” These are traits that are to be found among believers. Christ showed these to us, and we are to turn and have them in us now as well.

Each of these clauses is given in order for Paul to next make his heartfelt petition to them. In like manner, we are to use this same thought process as we encounter similar circumstances in our own Christian lives.

Life application: Paul asked “if” in each of these cases, implying that it is the way it should be with us. We are not to be devoid of the things he has asked about, but rather we are to have them as a part of who we are in Christ.

*Lord God, You are more than glorious! It is beyond imagination that You stepped out of Your infinite realm and united with flesh in order to redeem us. And it was in the most remarkable way of all. Instead of forcing Your will upon us, You came to serve and offer first. Help us to share this marvelous message that You love us enough to come in such a humble and caring way. Thank You, Lord God, for Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

**...fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, *being* of one accord, of one mind.** Philippians 2:2

In verse 1, Paul gave four statements which were a preparation for a heartfelt petition. Now, he makes that petition in four exhortations. In doing this, he notes that they will “fulfill my joy.”

Paul’s joy as an apostle, and one who is responsible for their growth and maturity in Christ, was to be found in the things he now asks of them. The same should be true with teachers and preachers of the word today.

The evidence of these things in a congregation should be the rejoicing of the heart of one whose allegiance is to Christ, and whose hope is for a strong fellowship of people who are united in the ways he will now state.

First, he says that they are to be “like minded.” The Greek states, “that you think the same thing.” His heart for them is that they would have one mind, one intent, no splits or divisions, and to not be striving against one another. To be like minded would indicate harmony and good will. In the end, a congregation like this would desire that people would be saved, that others would be built up, and that Christ would be magnified.

Next he says, “...having the same love.” This would be both a vertical and horizontal petition. They should have the same love towards Christ, and they should have the same love towards one another. They may not be in complete agreement on all things, but they were to be in agreement in such love.

After this, he mentions that they should be, “...of one accord.” The word he uses, *sumpsuchos*, is found only here in the Bible. It is derived from two words which indicate “with” and “soul.” In other words, they are to be “of one soul.” Because they are in

Christ, their souls should be united to one another just as they are united to Him. If this is so, then their allegiances and hopes for the fellowship would also be united.

Finally, he says they should be “of one mind.” They should be thinking the same thoughts, and agreed on what those thoughts are to be directed to.

Life application: Paul’s desire for those at Philippi should be the hope for all congregations who are properly directed towards the Lord, and who hold to proper and reasonable doctrine.

Though differences on minor points of doctrine may exist, there should at least be fellowship between the people to the point that they can overlook those differences. Only if extremely bad doctrine, or even heresy, is involved should a schism be allowed to arise.

*Lord God, it is immensely difficult to be at fellowship with other Christians when there is so much disagreement on doctrine. But it isn't because we have an unsure word. It is because we are unsure of Your word. And that comes from an unwillingness to spend an acceptable amount of time in this precious gift. If people would put aside their petty arguments and study to show themselves approved, there would be a lot less contention in the church. Help us in this. Grant us a desire to really dig into it and apply it to our lives. And won't it be a marvelous day when we are in Your presence and have the final and full fellowship which will never sour! May that day be soon. Amen.*

**Let nothing *be done* through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.** Philippians 2:3

Paul continues his exhortations to those at Philippi (and thus to us!) in this verse. He begins with, “*Let nothing be done* through selfish ambition or conceit.” The Greek simply reads “...nothing according to selfish ambition or conceit.”

He is tying these words to the previous verse which dealt with being like-minded. In being like-minded, they were not to act (thinking or doing) according to personal ambitions or conceit. Should they do this, they would not be “like-minded” at all.

The word “selfish ambition” gives the idea of a faction. They were not to divide one another into factions, but this is what a person of selfish ambition does. It is contrary to like-mindedness. The word translated as “conceit” is found only here in the NT, but it has a kindred adjective which is found in Galatians 5:26.

It is comprised of two words which give the sense of “vain glory.” It indicates a person who is always elevating himself in an attempt to be the highlight of the room. Such attitudes are not becoming of followers of Christ. Instead, the exhortation now continues with a contrast – “...but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.”

The term “lowliness of mind” indicates modesty or humility. It is found in one who is humble and shuns praise. This is a trait that the Lord looks favorably upon –

“Surely He scorns the scornful,  
But gives grace to the humble.” Proverbs 4:24

This proverb is then quoted by both James and Peter, demonstrating that the apostles clearly understood and agreed upon this precept. Finally, to “esteem others better than” oneself is a similar quality. One who is humble will look at those around him and see their positives, not their negatives. He will seek to highlight their strengths and overlook their weaknesses.

This goes so far as to comparing those strengths against their own and finding them of better quality. In other words, if someone is an athlete that can run a race in ten seconds, he cannot esteem someone else as a better athlete if they run the same race in 2 minutes.

Rather, he will overlook his strengths and accomplishments and highlight a different strength which is found in others – “Markus Paulus, you are the finest theologian I have ever known. I wish I had one-tenth of your ability to interpret and explain Scripture.” In choosing this avenue, he is overlooking the deficiencies and highlighting the strengths. This is what is good and appropriate for the believer in Christ.

Life application: By exalting others, you are showing that you care about them and that their strengths are important to you. Likewise, by not seeking your own glory, you are giving room to others to be like-minded with you. In so doing the group will be able to focus in a united way on seeking the glory of the Lord. There won't be time for factious rivalry.

*Lord God, Your word asks us to be like-minded in our devotion to you. We are not to act out of selfish ambition or conceit, both of which will destroy a like-minded attitude among Your people. Rather, you ask us to look away from our own strengths, and to exalt the strengths of others, building them up instead of ourselves. This is right and*

*good, and so help us to follow through with this. Let us not be dividers of the flock, but people who are set on harmony and the continuance of spreading the gospel. Amen.*

**Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.** Philippians 2:4

These words here continue to explain Paul's plea of verse 2. He has asked them to be "like-minded, having the same love, *being* of one accord, of one mind."

In order to fulfill this request, he now adds in, "Let each of you look out not only for his own interests." The word is an exhortation to not be self-consumed, to be a braggart, to be selfish, or to be conceited. The verb translated as "look out" here is described by Thayer's Greek Lexicon as –

"When the physical sense recedes, equivalent to **to fix one's (mind's) eye on, direct one's attention to**, a thing in order to get it, or owing to interest in it, or a duty toward it. Hence, often equivalent to **aim at, care for**, etc."

In other words, don't direct your attention to yourself as if you are the center of the universe. Instead, we are to also look out "for the interests of others." The verb is used just once in the Greek, but it is implied in both clauses none-the-less. We are to carefully look out and direct our attention to the needs of others, aiming for them and then tending to them.

Further, the Pulpit Commentary notes that, "The participles esteeming and looking are used with the force of imperatives." This means these are things we are to actively do, taking Paul's words as obligations.

However, there is a note to consider here. The word "also" is specifically stated by Paul to show that care of oneself is something we are to actually tend to. We are not to neglect ourselves, and the idea of complete self-denial is not taught in Scripture. Asceticism which is taught by some is wholly unbiblical.

Life application: Paul's words of this verse, as noted above, are imperatives. We are not to neglect careful attention of others. Instead, we are to actively look out for others and place their needs and interests on a high priority. At the same time, we are not to neglect the care of ourselves, loving our bodies and spirits and thus feeding them properly.

*Heavenly Father, help us to fulfill Your word which asks us to not only look out for our own interests, but to place a high priority on looking out for the needs of others, caring for them and helping them as is good and beneficial. It is so easy to get self-consumed and to forget that others have needs as well. But in our zeal to tend to others, give us wisdom to also care for ourselves, especially in spiritual matters. Help us never to neglect feeding ourselves on Your superior word! Amen.*

**Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, Philippians 2:5**

Paul just said to his audience (and thus to us!) “Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.” With that as a springboard for one of the most profound statements to be penned in the entire Bible, he now says, “Let this mind be in you...”

In other words, what he will say follows naturally after the previous verse which dealt with “the interest of others,” and so it will explain what that means in a particular way.

The word translated as “let mind be” is *phronéō*. It literally means, “the midriff or diaphragm; the parts around the heart.” From that it indicates to “regulate (moderate) from within, as inner-perspective (*insight*) shows itself in corresponding, outward behavior... [it] “essentially equates to *personal opinion fleshing itself out in action...*” (HELPS Word Studies).

Paul is asking us to think on what he will say, and then to have that thought turn into actual behavior which is in line with that thought. Understanding this, he then explains what “mind” we are to have in us. It is one “which was also in Christ Jesus.”

The mind of Christ Jesus, and which then was reflected in His outward behavior, is what we are to have in us. If we can contemplate and then act on what we will be told, we will be truly faithful and obedient followers of Jesus Christ.

The words ahead, and which include this introduction, are known as the kenotic hymn. They are marvelous words which reveal the very glory of what God has done through the Person and work of Jesus Christ. It is this which Paul now implores us to consider and emulate.

Life application: We cannot emulate that which we don’t know about. But God has revealed to us His will in Scripture. Let us never tire of coming to this fount of wisdom, and let us apply its truths to our lives.

*Lord God, it is hard to imagine the depth of the love which prompted You to come and reside among us, instructing us, allowing us to see Your glory, and allowing us to exercise our will against You in the most horrifying way. And yet, instead of wrath, You poured out mercy. For all who will simply come and receive the Gift. Thank You, O God, for Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

**...who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,**  
Philippians 2:6

When considered, the words of this verse are as important to handle properly as any found in Scripture. And yet, unless a complete denial already exists of who Jesus really is, the main view of what is being said is still perfectly obvious, even despite lesser disputes concerning the verse's wording. The word "who" is speaking of Christ Jesus of verse 5 –

“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup>who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God...”

Thus, the next words are essential to understanding the true nature of Christ Jesus. He, “being in the form of God” is a phrase which is critical to grasp. The word “form” is one found only in Mark 16:12 and here in verses 2:6 & 2:7. It is *morphé*, and it means “*form* (outward expression) that *embodies essential* (inner) substance so that the *form* is in complete harmony with the inner *essence*” (HELPS Word Studies).

Thus, without any other words before or after to assist us, we can see that Christ Jesus is, in fact, in the “form” of God. It doesn't say that He is in the form of angels, or man, or any other created thing. His true nature is that of God. Further, the word “being” in the Greek carries the more emphatic position.

There is a “stress on the reality of existence. Hence it calls attention to the essential being of Christ, corresponding to the idea embodied in the name Jehovah” (Charles Ellicott).

In other words, Paul is carefully constructing the Greek to demonstrate that I AM THAT I AM of Exodus 3:14, is the same “being” that is revealed in Jesus Christ. He is the incarnation of the Lord Jehovah of the Old Testament; something made obvious in hundreds of other ways in Scripture.



Thus, “being in the form of God” means that His essence is that of Jehovah God; His eternal and essential being is being spoken of. He possessed this before His incarnation, and He then took upon the form of Man, Jesus, upon His incarnation. To understand this, we can go to the other use of *morphé* in Mark 16 –

“After that, He appeared in another form to two of them as they walked and went into the country.” Mark 16:12

In Mark, He was in one form, and then He appeared in another form. For what Paul is saying, Christ Jesus was in the form of Jehovah God, and then He appeared as a Man. But this is not unheard of, even in Scripture itself.

The Old Testament reveals quite a few times where the LORD Jehovah was seen in the *morphé*, or form, of a Man. It is seen when He appeared to Abraham, to Joshua, to Gideon, to the parents of Samson, and elsewhere. Therefore, this is neither a stretch, nor are Paul’s words without abundant textual support.

The “form” that He possessed was all of the glory of God, radiant, resplendent, and refulgent. This is the true essence, or “form,” of Christ Jesus. And yet, He “did not consider it robbery to be equal with God.”

The word translated as “robbery” is *harpagmos*. It is only found here in the Bible, and it indicates either the act of seizing a thing, or the thing seized. In the case of Paul’s words, it is certainly speaking of the thing seized. Vincent’s Word Studies explains the meaning of what Paul is conveying to us –

“...we understand Paul to say that Christ, being, before His incarnation, in the form of God, did not regard His divine equality as a prize which was to be grasped at and retained at all hazards, but, on the contrary, laid aside the form of God, and took upon Himself the nature of man.

The emphasis in the passage is upon Christ's humiliation. The fact of His equality with God is stated as a background, in order to throw the circumstances of His incarnation into stronger relief. Hence the peculiar form of Paul's statement Christ's great object was to identify Himself with humanity; not to appear to men as divine but as human. Had He come into the world emphasizing His equality with God, the world would have been amazed, but not saved He did not grasp at this. The rather He counted humanity His prize, and so laid aside the conditions of His preexistent state, and became man.”

This verse does not argue against His Deity; rather, it argues for it in the very strongest sense of all. It is an explanation of the marvel of the Incarnation. Christ Jesus set aside His Deity, precious as it is, in order to reveal God to us in a manner which we could understand and relate to. It is the highest expression of God's love for mankind that could possibly be conceived of.

Life application: Jesus Christ is fully God. Jesus Christ is fully Man. Think on the magnitude of that today.

*Lord God, You possessed all of the riches of the glory of heaven. You are eternal, unchanging, without pain or anguish or any limitation. You are all-present, all-knowing, and all-powerful. And yet, in the Incarnation, these were all set aside in the Person of Christ Jesus. Just as Jehovah walked up to Abraham in the Old Testament, Christ Jesus walked up to the people of Israel in the New. You have revealed Yourself to us in a form that we can relate to, and so we can see the full extent of Your love for the people of the world. How great must be that love that you would do this for us! All praise to the Name above all names. All praise to Christ Jesus. Amen.*

**...but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.** Philippians 2:7

Paul continues with his astonishing description of what Christ did in the Incarnation, beginning with "but." He is making a contrast to the words of the previous verse –

“...who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God...”

In contrast to that, He “made Himself of no reputation.” Scholars generally agree that this translation is lacking. The word is *kenóō*, and it means “properly, to empty out, render void; (passive) be emptied – hence, *without recognition*, perceived as *valueless*” (HELPS Word Studies).

Christ emptied Himself of His divine glory by taking on a different outward appearance. Being God, He never stopped being God, but the divine nature was obscured in order for us to be able to perceive Him as only a Man.

When the sun is obscured by the clouds, it does not stop being the sun. If a laser beam is hidden within a chamber, the laser beam doesn't cease to exist. In like manner, the presentation of Christ's glory was cloaked away, or emptied from view, so that we could

only see a different form. As Vincent's Word Studies states it, "He was not unable to assert equality with God. He was able not to assert it."

In this state, He took on a different form by "taking on the form of a bondservant." These words are set in contrast to "being in the form of God" of the previous verse. Christ, who bore all of the divine glory of God for all of eternity, stripped Himself of this glory in order to take "the form of a bondservant."

The idea here is that He became the lowliest of all humanity, performing the functions of one who is below all others in the social strata. This is not, as some scholars state, that He became a servant of God. A servant of God can be any position in any realm. The high priest of Israel could be called a servant of God. The Archangel Michael is a servant of God. And so on. However, Christ took on the form of a bondservant of men.

He humbled himself to the point that "certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities—Mary called Magdalene, out of whom had come seven demons, and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others who provided for Him from their substance" (Luke 8:2, 3)

In other words, He made Himself dependent on even the females of Israel to support Him. He, who knew the infinite glory of God, revealed that glory to us in the most humble and lowly manner of all, and He pursued this state throughout His earthly ministry. He didn't start at the bottom and work His way to the top.

If He had done this, His example would have been that we should do what it takes to succeed in business. He didn't start as a private and work up to being a general, showing us that we should take on military challenges. Rather, He came as a Servant, He lived out this life as a Servant, and He continued this way to the end, dying on a cross for us, serving us with the very blood of His earthly existence.

Paul finishes this verse with, "...and coming in the likeness of men." Care needs to be used when considering these words. In Romans 8:3, it says that Christ was sent "in the likeness of sinful flesh."

There was a likeness to us, but it is clear that He was without sin, as is seen in Hebrews 4:15. Thus, to be "in the likeness of men" shows a similarity, but yet a contrast. Though He was in the likeness of men, He never stopped being fully God.

Thus, the magnitude of the Incarnation is seen and understood. God – infinitely glorious and majestic, united with human flesh, obscuring His glory. He came in the likeness of men and took on the form of a servant in this state.

Again, Vincent’s Word Studies, carefully explains this state –

“Humanly He was like men, but regarded with reference to His whole self, He was not identical with man, because there was an element of His personality which did not dwell in them - equality with God. Hence the statement of His human manifestation is necessarily limited by this fact, and is confined to likeness and does not extend to identity. ‘To affirm likeness is at once to assert similarity and to deny sameness’ (Dickson).”

John personally beheld this marvel and he wrote about it for us to consider –

“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life— <sup>2</sup>the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us— <sup>3</sup>that which we have seen and heard we declare to you.”

-1 John 1:1-3

Life application: In considering this verse, we can then know what it means to be “Christ-like.” Regardless of our earthly station – whether we are born into nobility or into poverty, whether we are wealthy or we are poor, we are to be servants of others. We are to set aside ourselves and become like those around us in order to serve them.

The “pope” from time to time has a foot-washing ceremony for migrants or other lowly groups of people. It is a time of photos and applause. But the “pope” doesn’t obscure his “popiness.” He comes out in full pomp in order to impress the masses.

This is the polar opposite of what Christ did. He so obscured His glory, that it was completely unknown and unseen to those around Him. This is how we are to be to those around us. Let our servanthood be true servanthood, so that when others find out who we truly are, they are all the more grateful for our Christ-like attitude.

*Lord God Almighty, when Christ Jesus came and walked among us, nobody knew His true identity. Even unto the last night before His cross, they still did not realize the true nature of the Man. Are we that willing to set aside whatever station we possess and to tend to*

*our fellow man on his level? What good is it to wash another's feet when we bear garments of majesty, showing that we are better than those whose feet we wash? Help us to look at those around us with the eyes of Christ, and the heart of true servants. To Your glory alone, O God. Amen.*

**And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of death, even the death of the cross.*** Philippians 2:8

The division of this verse is not entirely certain. Some translations place the words “And being found in appearance as a man” as part of the previous verse –

“But emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and in habit found as a man. He humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross.” Douay Rheims

This is a point to be made aware of, but the substance of the message is not largely affected by the change. There is just a more abrupt nature to the introduction of the next sentence because of it.

As for the words, “And being found in appearance as a man,” they are speaking of the fashion of Christ rather than His form. In other words, the previous verse spoke of His *morphé* (form) of a bondservant. This verse now speaks of His *schéma* (fashion) of appearance.

The *schéma* is that which is outward and visible. It “is used of Jesus' earthly body. Christ incarnated into a *genuine physical* body, which was not an ‘exact match with typical humanity’ because His body was *never touched or tainted by sin* (even original sin)” (HELPS Word Studies). This fashion of body was one specifically referred to 700 years earlier by Isaiah –

“For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant,  
And as a root out of dry ground.  
He has no form or comeliness;  
And when we see Him,  
*There is no beauty that we should desire Him.*” Isaiah 53:2

The humanity of Jesus was not one of marvelous physical looks. He was not an impressive figure in size or in musculature. He was not formed with great height, or exceptionally broad shoulders. He was just a common looking person that, when passed

by on the street, would draw nobody's attention to Him. This simple and unadorned fashion of Christ was what we saw in Him as a Man. And, in this plain appearance "He humbled Himself and became obedient."

The Deity of Christ, which bore all the fashion and glory of the infinite Creator God, and which held all the power of the universe and beyond, was set aside. He took on a lowly fashion and form, and He submitted to the will of His Father and to the law which He had written, binding Himself to it in a state of human limitation.

The idea of His humility here is not the same as that of His emptying Himself noted in the previous verse. Rather it is a definition of that emptying. The word is *tapeinoó*. It indicates a complete and absolute reliance on another. He so humbled Himself that He was left completely open and exposed to the will of Another, trusting in the God and not Himself. This is reflected in His words of John 6:38 –

"For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me."

The author of Hebrews picks up on this aspect of Christ as well, noting His obedience to the will of the Father. This obedience, reflected in His humility, is then explained in its most magnificent sense by the words, "to the point of death."

Christ was born in order to die. The death would be an atoning death for the sin of the world. This is seen in Revelation 13:8. However, His atoning death is not the focus here. Rather, His obedience is what is highlighted, even to the point of death. Thus, it sets a pattern for those who would follow Him ("Let this mind be in you..." – verse 5).

But there is yet more to Paul's words. Christ was obedient to the point of death, but as he highlights, "...even the death of the cross." The Law of Moses said –

"If a man has committed a sin deserving of death, and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, <sup>23</sup> his body shall not remain overnight on the tree, but you shall surely bury him that day, so that you do not defile the land which the Lord

your God is giving you *as* an inheritance; for he who is hanged *is* accursed of God."  
-Deuteronomy 21:22, 23

Christ died on a tree and Paul explains the magnitude of this in Galatians 3:13 –

“Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, ‘Cursed *is* everyone who hangs on a tree’)...”

Christ’s death on the cross was, to the people of Israel, a point of shame. This is reflected again in the words of Hebrews 12:2 which specifically notes this. Further, in the Greek of this verse, there is no article in front of “cross.” It says, “even cross death.”

The utterly shameful nature of the death is brought forth in Paul’s choice of words. It shows the enormity of the level of obedience and humility which Christ endured for us. This... this is what Paul asks us to have in our minds. It is what he asks for us to emulate.

Life application: How willing are you to be obedient to the word of God? Christ went to an extreme that we cannot even comprehend. Let us endeavor to follow Him, even to the point of the highest shame before our fellow man.

*Lord God, Jesus Christ was brought to the point of highest shame according to the Law of Moses in His being hung on a tree for our sins. The cross-death which He endured was for the sake of His people. How can we refuse obedience to Your word when such an example has been set before us? Are we better than the One who fashioned us? Help us to be obedient, just as we have been shown by His amazing example. Grant us to have this mind of Christ that nothing will hinder our walk with You. Amen.*

**Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, Philippians 2:9**

“Therefore” is based upon the words of verses 5-8. Because of His work, setting aside His authority, power, and glory which resulted in His passion and death upon the cross for sinful man, “God also has highly exalted Him.”

This is realized in the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ. He was found worthy, and thus death could not hold Him. He was raised by the power of God to an indestructible life, and He was raised further still to the place of all power and authority. The aorist verb translated as “highly exalted” refers to the documented facts concerning both the resurrection and ascension. Along with this exaltation, it says that God has “given Him the name which is above every name.”

Again, this is an aorist verb, and it thus also points to the resurrection and ascension. These two events prove that His work was sufficient and that He had faithfully carried

out the work the Father had set forth for Him to accomplish. The exaltation and the proclamation of the name are the rewards for His meritorious deeds.

Scholars argue over what “the name” is. Some point to Revelation 19:13 which says, “He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God.”

Some point back to the Old Testament, saying that He has been granted the name of the Lord, meaning “Jehovah” or “I AM” of the Old Testament. But both of these overlook the obvious. The name “Jesus” is stated directly after the word “name” in verse 10, and then it is repeated in verse 11. It is this name, Jesus, which is above every name.

Though it was given to Mary to name Him this before His birth, it was given in the sense of a prophecy –

And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.” Matthew 1:21

Upon completion of His work, validated by the resurrection and bestowal of all authority and power, the name took on its full significance. He had saved His people from their sins. This is the name which is being referred to here.

Other names and titles have their own significance, but it is by the name of JESUS that we see the full honor and glory of the Person who came to save humanity. It is this recognizable name that we honor Him for His work.

Life application: The name which is cherished and loved around the world, regardless of how it is pronounced in individual cultures, is the name which is above every name. In the English speaking world, we call Him JESUS.

Let us carry that name with us with every step we take, and let us meditate on the Man who bears that name, contemplating the marvelous deeds which He has done for us.

*Heavenly Father, there can be only one name which is above every name. You have spoken, and that name is Yeshua. It may be pronounced in a variety of ways around the world, but the meaning remains the same. He is our JESUS, our Salvation. He is our hope, our aim, our desire, and our Lord. May we take His name upon our lips and keep it in our hearts. With every step we take, may we meditate on the marvelous glory that surrounds our King. Great things have You done, O God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*



**...that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, Philippians 2:10**

This verse needs to be taken in context with the previous verse –

“Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, <sup>10</sup> that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth...”

Because Christ Jesus has been so exalted to have “the name which is above every name,” the honor is His to receive all praise and worship from His creation. The words “at the name of Jesus” are not rightly rendered from the Greek.

Instead it says, “...in the name of Jesus.” Paul follows the theme from Hebrew worship where blessing and honor are said to be “in” the name of the Lord. This is to be found, for example, in the 63<sup>rd</sup> Psalm –

“Thus I will bless You while I live;  
I will lift up my hands in Your name.” Psalm 63:4

The psalmist lifted his hands in the name of the Lord, meaning “to the Lord.” By saying “at the name of Jesus,” it gives the impression that each time the name Jesus is spoken, the knee is to be bowed. This is incorrect, but it has led to this type of custom in some circles.

As Jesus is simply a name, it would be inappropriate to bow to the name if it was not indicating the name of the Lord. But “in the name of Jesus,” meaning the Lord, “every knee should bow.”

This thought is taken directly from Isaiah 45, and it is an implicit reference to the deity of Jesus –

“I have sworn by Myself;  
The word has gone out of My mouth *in* righteousness,  
And shall not return,  
That to Me every knee shall bow,  
Every tongue shall take an oath.” Isaiah 45:23

The Lord of the Old Testament, meaning “Jehovah,” swore by Himself that every knee would bow to Him. It would be the highest of blasphemy for Paul to use this concept, applying it to Christ Jesus, unless he understood that “Jehovah” of the Old Testament is “Jesus” of the New. But this is exactly the connection he is making. To solidify this, he makes an all-encompassing statement, “...of those in heaven, and of those on the earth, and of those under the earth.”

All beings will bow in the name of Jesus. Paul’s words lead us to the understanding that Jesus is God. Only a perverse and twisted reading of Scripture could lead us to any other interpretation. Understanding this, the coming verse will then reveal a further truth concerning the nature of the Trinity.

Life application: Words in the Bible are selected with precision and intent. We are asked to study to show ourselves approved, and one way to do that is to understand what the original language is saying and then to compare it to the translation we use. If there are discrepancies, we should note them and assimilate only the original intent of what is being conveyed to us.

*Glorious Lord, Your word says that every knee shall bow to You and in Your name. It is an honor and a privilege to do so now, voluntarily and with complete submission to You. For those who refuse to do so now, they will still bow and acknowledge You. In the end, You will receive all the glory and honor You are due. May we be pleased to voluntarily humble our hearts and our lives now, and acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord – to the glory of God the Father. Amen.*

**...and *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.** Philippians 2:11

One must understand the context fully in order to make a right determination about this verse. First, Paul wrote about Christ’s emptying Himself and coming in the form of a bondservant and in the likeness of man. Then he entered into the glory of what that has resulted in –

“Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, <sup>10</sup> that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, <sup>11</sup> and *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Therefore, the words “*that every tongue*” are given in accord with the list provided in verse 10, meaning “those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth.” It is an all-inclusive statement. From angels to demons, and from the living to the dead, all tongues “should confess.”

The word translated “confess” signifies a frank and open confession. No sentient being is excepted, and all will confess openly and without a doubt, “that Jesus Christ *is* Lord.”

These words, in particular, necessitated understanding the context. What does it mean when Paul says, “Lord?” Albert Barnes argues that –

“The word “Lord,” here, is used in its primitive and proper sense, as denoting owner, ruler, sovereign; compare the notes at Romans 14:9. The meaning is, that all should acknowledge him as the universal sovereign.”

His words are true, but they fail to fully explain the meaning of “Lord.” The term *kurios*, which is used here, means exactly as Barnes described, but there is more to be understood from it.

The Old Testament Greek translation of the Bible translated the term “Jehovah” as “Lord” again and again. These are the Scriptures that Paul and the other apostles most frequently cited, and this is what Paul is conveying here.

Although the term *kurios* doesn’t adequately and completely explain the divine name, neither does the Hebrew term Adonai which is often used in place of Jehovah. However, it gives us an understanding of who is being referred to. The context of verse 2:6, and the all-encompassing statement given in verses 10 & 11 demand that *kurios* is, in fact, speaking of Jehovah.

Only with this intent do the final words of the verse have their fullest significance. Paul says that all will confess Jesus as Lord (meaning Jehovah) “to the glory of God the Father.”

How can this be? The answer permeates Scripture, but a few verses draw the two together as One in the Godhead –

“For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son, <sup>23</sup> that all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.” John 5:22, 23

“I and My Father are one.” John 10:30

“Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also.” 1 John 2:23

The intimate relationship between the Father and the Son is highlighted so that we can understand what God has done. He has united with humanity and dwelt among us. The two are One in essence. Jesus is Jehovah ever revealing the unseen Father to us.

Life application: Paul’s confession in Romans 10:9, 10 is asking us to believe exactly what is relayed here today. We are not merely acknowledging that Jesus Christ is a sovereign over us, but that He is our God. If you do not recognize the Son in this capacity, you do not have the Father. It is time to apply the truth of Scripture to your life for the salvation of your soul.

*Heavenly Father, Your word tells us without any ambiguity that if we do not have the Son, we have no part in You. What You did through Jesus Christ can be shunned, it can be denied, it can be ignored, but it cannot be separated from the truth. Either we will bow our knees to Jesus Christ to Your glory now, or we will do it at our condemnation, but either way the knee will bow. Thank You for the chance to come home to You now through the glorious work of the exalted Christ, our Lord Jesus. Amen.*

**Therefore, my beloved, as you 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;**  
Philippians 2:12

The verse begins with “Therefore” in order to have us contemplate, consider, and then apply what has previously been stated. In verses 1-3, he spoke of unity of faith among the believers, doing that which is right and appropriate towards one another in order to maintain the fellowship. This was followed with an explanation of what he meant in verses 5 through 11. There he began with, “Let this mind be in you.”

This is the context then of the “Therefore” we have now been presented. He follows up with “my beloved” in order to set the tone for what he will next say. They are near and dear to his heart, and he would ask them to understand this. It is an appeal that because of this heartfelt bond, they would be all the more willing to receive and apply his words which are coming.

He immediately follows this with, “as you have always obeyed me.” His words show that he knew of their faithfulness to his words, just as if they were from the Lord Himself. He was the apostle designated to bring the word of the Lord to them, and they understood it to be such. Because of this, they were obedient to the words of instruction he passed on to them.

Next, he again builds upon the thought. He is working from one point to the next to come to his main exhortation. In other words, the reason for “Therefore” still lies ahead. They had always obeyed, but he notes that it was more than just in his “presence only, but now much more in” his absence that he desired them to do so.

It is one thing to be obedient when the boss is around, but when he goes out, how will the employees act? Paul is using his absence as a way of spurring them on to faithful obedience. After these words of commendation and encouragement, he states next the reason for the “Therefore” by saying, “...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.”

The phrase he writes has produced an unhealthy amount of bad doctrine over the ages, and for no valid reason. Context is king, and a verse (or thought) taken out of context is a pretext. Paul is in no way implying that they need to work in order to be saved.

First, even from this one verse, it is apparent that they are saved. The word “brethren” implies this. Therefore, he is not speaking of works in order to be saved. The word for “work out” in Greek is *katergázomai*. It comes from *katá*, meaning “down, exactly according to,” and it intensifies *ergázomai*, which means “work, accomplish.” Thus literally it means “work down to the end-point.” In other words “to an exact, definite conclusion.” Paul is asking his already-saved brethren to work their salvation down to its conclusion.

The context of the thought is based especially on the opening words of verse 5 mentioned above, “Let this mind be in you...”

We have been given an example of what Christ did by coming in His humbled state as a Man in order to save humanity. It is Christ’s work which, therefore, saves. Paul’s words are asking us to “work out” our salvation, not in anticipation of being saved, but in the state of salvation which we already possess.

Looking to the example of Christ, which is what the “Therefore” is based on, will show us what he means quite clearly. In Revelation 13:8, Christ Jesus is called “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.”

This was a position that was determined from the very beginning. Nothing could thwart it, and nothing could change it. And yet, He had to come and “work out” that position within the stream of time. This is why Paul first explained the work of Christ and then said, “Therefore.”

We too have been predestined for salvation. In our acceptance of the work of Christ Jesus, it is a done deal. Nothing can change it, and nothing can thwart it. However, we still have to live out the life that we have been handed. We may only live four minutes after our salvation, or we may have 99 years of living ahead, but we are to work out that salvation; a salvation which is already accomplished, to the glory of God.

Finally, this process is to be “with fear and trembling.” Vincent’s Word Studies, citing a scholar named Wardlaw, provides us the meaning of these words –

“This fear is self-distrust; it is tenderness of conscience; it is vigilance against temptation; it is the fear which inspiration opposes to high-mindedness in the admonition 'be not highminded but fear.' It is taking heed lest we fall; it is a constant apprehension of the deceitfulness of the heart, and of the insidiousness and power of inward corruption. It is the caution and circumspection which timidly shrinks from whatever would offend and dishonor God and the Savior. And these the child of God will feel and exercise the more he rises above the enfeebling, disheartening, distressing influence of the fear which hath torment. Well might Solomon say of such fear, “happy is the man that feareth always.”

When a person receives an inheritance, there is nothing they need to do in order to earn it. It is simply theirs. However, each will work out how they handle what they have been given differently. Paul’s exhortation is one which asks his readers to obey the gift of their salvation, not only while he is present, but also in his absence. We are now to do likewise.

Life application: Context matters.

*Lord God, Your word asks us to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. Jesus is called “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” It was determined that He would die for our sins, even from the moment of creation. And yet, He had to come and follow through with what was ordained. We who have trusted Christ are saved*

*according to what You have predetermined, but we still have to live out the life we have been handed. And so help us to work out what has already been granted, with a reverent fear of Your glory. Help us not to bring shame, but only glory, to Your name. Amen.*

**...for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for *His* good pleasure.**

Philippians 2:13

The words of this verse, which complete those of the last verse, seem almost contradictory. Taken side by side, they read –

- work out your own salvation with fear and trembling
- for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for *His* good pleasure

How can it be that we are to “work out our own salvation,” when it is God who works in us? It does, at first, seem contradictory, but it is not. The word “works” in verse 13 is *energeó*. It is derived from two parts, *en* meaning “engaged in” which then intensifies *érgon* which signifies “work.” And so it indicates “to energize” and thus “working *in* a situation which brings it from one stage (point) to the next, like an electrical current *energizing* a wire, bringing it to a *shining light bulb*” (HELPS Word Studies).

This reveals that God is working to produce a certain result or effect in us. This then leads us “to will and to do.” Paul doesn’t tell us how this is done. Rather, he simply avows that this is the case. Understanding this, we need to then reflect on the greater part of what is left unstated. In so doing, we can make several logical deductions.

- 1) It says that God works in us “to will and to do.” It does not say that He does; instead, we do. He merely prompts us to do so according to His will. It cannot be that He compels us to do, because all Christians fail to do rightly at one time or another, and some chronically. If our resulting actions were according to His will, we would never err, but err we do.
- 2) There is no physical force compelling us to do what Paul is speaking of, and even the prophets of old, and the apostles themselves, were prone to resist His will (for two of innumerable examples, read 1 Kings 13 for an Old Testament example, and Galatians 2:11-21 for a New). Therefore, the influence Paul is speaking about is a moral force. As it is not a physical force, it cannot mean that we are “compelled” in the sense of action. We are still free moral agents allowed to work our will against His will. In doing so, it is we who err, and it is we who will fail and reap the consequences of the failure.

3) Therefore, if we are not compelled by force to act, then His will which is being exercised can, in fact, be resisted. The example of Peter, if nothing else (and there is more) shows us this truth beyond a doubt. The influence of God is there actively working in us to energize us to obedience and right living. As a light bulb that shines, He works in us to illuminate His glory, but unlike the lightbulb which has no moral disconnect, man does. We can, and often do, fail to shine as God would intend for us.

Understanding this, we cannot use this verse as either a means of claiming that we are under an externally leading force of the Spirit which gives us all the guidance we need, nor can we claim that God is responsible when we sin.

Both of these are errors in logic. The first diminishes our need for study and active obedience to God's word, and the second imputes wrongdoing to Him. Both of these are to be rejected because they are false.

Context must be considered, and so let us look at our responsibilities in the surrounding verses, and see this truth highlighted –

<sup>12</sup>“Therefore, my beloved, as you 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; <sup>13</sup>for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for *His* good pleasure.

<sup>14</sup>Do all things without complaining and disputing, <sup>15</sup>that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, <sup>16</sup>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.

Life application: If you do not “hold fast to the word of life,” then God's efforts in you will be neither according to His will, nor His good pleasure. Hold fast to the word of life.

*“Studying the Bible is so hard! I guess I wasn't given the right brain. Time is short, I will read the Bible tomorrow. I have the Holy Spirit in me, I can rely on that to keep me straight. Now that I have that settled, I am going to spend the day planning out a detailed map of my financial future so that I can fit in vacations to Hawaii, hikes in the mountains, and trips to Israel. I can even figure how to take along my girlfriend without my wife knowing! Once this is done, I am going to the movies. Wow Lord, I am blessed*



*and favored.” Where are our priorities? Help us Lord to put You and Your word first in our lives. Amen.*

**Do all things without complaining and disputing, Philippians 2:14**

Paul now brings in a thought which is quite similar to that which he had introduced just a few verses ago. It is almost parallel to 2:3 & 2:4, and it seems to indicate that this type of strife was a besetting sin of the church at Philippi, and one which he is intent on highlighting in order for the people to see it and correct it. The strife of verses 3 & 4 were among one another, and the strife here is more directed towards God. He petitions them to “Do all things without...”

In other words, in everything they do, they are to conduct their actions in accord with what will next follow. It is an all-encompassing thought that asks them to live out every aspect of their lives in this manner. What they are to do without includes two separate things –

- 1) Complaining. The Greek word is *goggusmos*. It is a word that was used repeatedly in the Greek translation of the Old Testament concerning the murmurings of the children of Israel as they wandered in the wilderness. It indicates murmuring, muttering, and grumbling. They are to refrain from these as they “do all things.”
- 2) Disputing. The Greek word is *dialogismos*. Though translated as “disputings” which gives the sense of arguing between people, it is probably more inclined to mean “suspicions” or “doubts” which cause a person to inwardly question the reliability of a matter. If this is so, and it seems more probable, it would then contrast with the first word.

In these then, there is a moral aspect to rebellion against God, just as the Israelites grumbled against Him in the wilderness. There is also an intellectual rebellion against Him, where they inwardly call into question His perfect will towards them. Paul asks them to do all things without these negative aspects in their hearts and minds.

Life application: When we experience trials, do we grumble against God as they come? Or do we trust that they are a perfect part of His will for us? And likewise, do we internally reason out that God is unfair with us? Or do we rather set our minds on contemplating how difficult times actually are serving a greater purpose in our lives? Let us endeavor to not grumble against the Lord, and let us endeavor to intellectually be confident that He has our lives safe and secure in His capable hands.

*Lord God, it sure is easy to grumble when things don't go well, but ultimately that grumbling is against You. It is as if we distrust that what is happening is out of Your control. And it sure is easy to be suspicious that You do not have our best in mind when troubles surround us. Help us not to be this way – either outwardly in grumbling, or inwardly through doubts. Instead, give us hearts which are fixed on praising You, and minds that are set on trusting You. Even when things are at their worst, may we never call into question Your goodness towards us. Amen.*

**...that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, Philippians 2:15**

The words of this verse are intended to explain the result of complying with the previous verse –

“Do all things without complaining and disputing, <sup>15</sup> that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world...”

By doing all things without complaining or disputing, we will “become blameless and harmless.” The word blameless gives the sense of being without fault. This then would be in relation to laws which exist, be they religious, moral, or civil. It indicates adherence to such laws so that nobody can call into question our obedience to those laws which are rightly imposed upon us.

The word in Greek indicates being above reproach because of moral purity. When we act within morally pure guidelines, we will be sincere towards ourselves, in our relationship with God, and in our dealings with others. No harm will come when we so confine ourselves to such a state. Following this, Paul explains what the result of this will be. We will be “children of God without fault.”

The two are to be taken together. One can be a child of God, but bearing fault. And one can certainly have fault while not being a child of God. Paul's intent is that because we are children of God, we are to act as such, not having fault as we live “in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation.” The words here are reminiscent of those found in Deuteronomy 32:5, especially the Greek translation of it. That verse says –

“They have corrupted themselves;  
*They are not His children,*

Because of their blemish:  
A perverse and crooked generation.”

Moses’ words there spoke of the children of Israel who had rejected the ways of the Lord and had gone completely astray. There is no reason to assume that this isn’t exactly what was on Paul’s mind as well. The Jews in Philippi, and indeed around all of the churches, were crooked and perverse, trying to creep in among the churches and introduce heresy into the congregations.

The Judaizing factions led faithful Christians astray with their “works based salvation.” The same type of people have continued to exist in the church since then. Moses says that they are “not His children,” but Paul is speaking to those at Philippi (and thus us!) as “children of God.” Therefore, we are to live our lives as separate from such people, and yet Paul says, “among whom you shine as lights in the world.”

The idea is that we are to conduct our lives in such a manner that we will be the light that these people need in order to turn to the Lord and away from their crooked and perverse ways. The word for “shine” is found only here and in Revelation 21:11. It specifically refers to luminaries, such as the stars in heaven, or some other shining beacon.

The idea we are to see here is that of a beacon which warns of disaster ahead, such as a lighthouse on a rocky shoal. Our light is to shine in order to keep such crooked and perverse people from finding their final ruin, but rather to find the truth of the ways of the Lord. It is our job to be seen in the world as such beacons.

Life application: As noted above, the words of this verse are tied to the admonition that we are to do all things without complaining or disputing. Should we fail in this, then we will be ineffective in the testimony which we are asked to present in Paul’s words of verse 15. How we conduct ourselves has importance in many ways, including leading the lost to Christ. Let us always be careful to conduct ourselves with this in mind.

*Heavenly Father, the Bible says that we live in a world which is a crooked and perverse generation. Such has been the case all along, and we are told that it is our job to be beacons of righteousness to those wayward souls. Help us to be blameless and harmless in our conduct so that people will see our behavior and respond to it favorably. Remind us of who we are and what we are responsible for each day. To Your glory we ask this. Amen.*

**...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. <sup>27</sup> 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.

*Heavenly Father, You have presented us with a challenge in Your word. It is to hold fast to the word of life. We have all kinds of churches in the world, but not all of them are pleasing to You. A church cannot be considered a success if it is merely a place where people socialize. A church cannot be considered a success just because it has large numbers or great wealth. Nor can a church be considered a success if it does good works which replace sound adherence to Your word. Only a church which proclaims Your word, and which holds fast to that word, can be considered a success. Help us to put You and Your word first in our church lives. Amen.*

**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.

*Heavenly Father, remind us daily of the brevity of this life. Help us to keep all things in their proper perspective, and to live for the eternal, rather than the temporary. Each choice we make now has a bearing on what lies ahead. So please help us to not be consumed with what is passing away, but in that which shall be unto the ages of ages. Help us to fix our eyes on Jesus, and to carry Your word with us, being obedient to it so that we are found pleasing in Your sight. Amen.*

**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.

*Lord God, all people have an end, and none of us are exempt. We live as if we will go on and on, but each of us will eventually come to that end. What will be our thoughts on that day? “I wish I had made a bit more money.” “It would have been great to travel to one more country.” Is this what our lives are about? In another moment we will be standing before You. Will we then say any such thing, or will we realize how greatly we have wasted our one life? We will see that each moment not directed to You was one of futility. Help us to consider the eternal now, while we have the chance. Amen.*

**But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, that I also may be encouraged when I know your state.** Philippians 2:19

In verse 17, Paul had noted his condition, which bore even the possibility of his death. Regardless of life or death, he intended to continue on with the ministry towards those at Philippi, and with the full assurance that the Lord would direct all things according to His wisdom. He now says based on this, “But.”

The word can mean “but,” “moreover,” etc. It is a contrast, or a complement, to his own state. He then notes that “I trust in the Lord Jesus...”

Despite being an apostle, he was limited in what he knew concerning future events. He only prophesied when the Lord revealed His intentions. Other than that, he remained dependent on the Lord’s ability to take care of future events as they would come to pass; he trusted in that notion. For now, his trust in the Lord was that he would be able “to send Timothy to you shortly.”



It is of note that he speaks of Timothy in the third person even though the opening to the epistle stated, “Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ...” Though they were together as greeters in the opening salutation, the words of the epistle belong to Paul alone. Only his words are of divine inspiration for the doctrinal matters of the epistle.

His intent in sending Timothy was “that I also may be encouraged when I know your state.” He is writing the epistle as an encouragement to them. In sending Timothy, he would then hear about them and receive the same encouragement. It appears from this that Timothy did not carry the letter, but would only be sent at a later date.

The sequence of events, when compared to Acts 16, shows the possibility of the events as laid out in the epistle, but they must be inferred from both. In other words, the two books stand alone, and one was certainly not copied off another as deniers of the Bible claim.

Rather, they are independent accounts which sew together seamlessly, but with a precision that avoids any chance that they were intentionally manipulated in order to simply have one confirm the other.

Life application: Getting a note or a word of encouragement out of the blue is a wonderful thing to receive. Take time today to pen a note, make a post, or give a call to someone that hasn’t heard from you in a while.

*Lord God, it surely is good and pleasant to be at harmony with other believers. It is so easy to tear one another apart over issues which we are passionate about, but unless they involve truly bad doctrine, is it worth it? One or the other is lacking in proper understanding, but that does not make them a criminal. It means that there is just a need for more study. And it is more than possible that the one in need of study isn’t the other person! Help us to be willing to work in harmony towards a complete understanding and appreciation of Your word. Amen.*

**For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state.** Philippians 2:20

The word translated as “For” is referring back to the previous verse and its content –

“But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, that I also may be encouraged when I know your state.”

Timothy was with Paul and he was a treasured fellow Christian because he could fully rely on him. Paul sincerely cared for the Philippians and how they were faring, and he knew that Timothy felt the same. His words, “I have no one like-minded,” demonstrate a trust in him that went beyond mere friendship.

The word translated as “like-minded” is *isopsuchos*. This is its only use in the Bible, and it means literally “of equal soul.” Timothy would have care and concern for those in Philippi in the same Spirit-produced manner as Paul would have.

He then confirms this by saying that Timothy would “sincerely care for your state.” The word translated as “sincerely” is an adverb only found here in the Bible, *gnésíós*. It signifies “genuinely” or “truly.” There would be nothing false in his dealings. His intent was not profit or fame, but the care of others. The word has a kindred adjective which is found a few times in Scripture, once where Paul calls Timothy his “true son” in the faith.

It was understood that he could be fully trusted because of this like-minded heart and attitude. He was one that realized the importance of the concept found in Hebrews 13:17 –

“...for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account.”

Life application: There are many who act rightly, but for the wrong reasons. It is a joy when one can rely on another, knowing full well that they are not only determined to do right, but to do so for the right reasons.

Such a person can be fully trusted in all matters. Let each of us endeavor to have our heart aligned with our actions, working together in sincerity and understanding that we are accountable to Christ Jesus for all we do.

*Lord God, how often it is that we do the right thing, but we do it for the wrong reasons. Help us to not serve with our actions only, but with our hearts and with a right attitude. In so doing, others will see that we are fully trustworthy, not only when the eye is upon us, but when we are left to handle things on our own. In the end, Your eye is always upon us, and it is to You that we should always endeavor to be pleasing. To Your glory! Amen.*

**For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus. Philippians 2:21**

The term used in this verse is literally “the all.” It is a way of saying “all of them.” This is speaking of those around him in connection to the previous verses. He was going to

send Timothy to Philippi because he found he had “no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state.”

None of the others could be relied on in this way. The reason is then given, “For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus.”

They were more concerned about their own state, security, and comfort than they were about getting the message of Christ out. It is a sad indictment on the attitude of those around him. However, this must exclude those mentioned in verses 1:14 & 1:17. They had become confident and were emboldened to speak without fear.

Therefore, this cannot be an all-encompassing statement, but one to be taken generally. Further, what Timothy was asked to do was something that a person without specific obligations could do. Others who may have been just as reliable would simply not be able.

The words do not indicate this, but they must be read into it based on his previous comments. Those who were able were those who sought their own, not those things which were of Christ Jesus.

Life application: If you are able, are you willing? There are things that must be done in order for the carrying on of the message of Christ – in the church and beyond. In some cases, it is not reasonable to ask someone with obligations to carry on a specific task. However, they are probably able to help pay for the task. A church without people to give cannot continue.

Let each of us consider how we will help with the needs of our churches, missionaries, etc.

*Lord God, thank You for stirring up the hearts of the people to meet every need according to Your wisdom. There is a need for someone to go over land and sea to spread the word, and there is someone to fill the need. We need pastors, and they come along. Churches need to be sustained, and You spur the hearts of the people on to giving. In the end, if there is a need, it always gets filled according to Your wisdom. There is even an internet now where people can be fed from afar. It is wonderful to see how everything fits into place according to Your wisdom! Praises to You, our need-Filler. Amen.*

**But you know his proven character, that as a son with *his* father he served with me in the gospel.** Philippians 2:22

Paul now issues a hearty commendation, and a heartfelt note of approval, upon his son in the faith. Still speaking of Timothy, he says, “But you know his proven character.”

Those at Philippi were already aware of him and his faithfulness to the gospel message. The verse proves that Timothy did, in fact, travel with Paul to Philippi. While there, they saw his conduct, both towards the gospel itself, and towards Paul. Thus Paul says, “...that as a son with his father.”

This is the close relationship that he had with Timothy, one which permeates his writings. As noted above, he considered him a “true son in the faith” (1 Timothy 1:2). The word he uses is an endearing one, *teknon*. It emphasizes a childlike (but not childish) approach towards his father, and especially towards his heavenly Father. For this reason, Paul then makes an apparent break in the sentence by saying, “he served with me in the gospel.”

First he equates him “as a son with *his* father.” Then he diminishes his own position and says that “he served with me.” The words for serve, *douleuó*, is a verb which indicates serving as a slave where all personal rights and possessions belong to the owner. Together, even in a father-son relationship, they were slaves as they worked for the gospel.

Paul’s words are truly of the heart, both for Timothy and with Timothy as they served under their true Master from heaven.

Life application: We can have a person we mentor who is wholly devoted to us, following our lead and carrying out our every direction, but that may not be glorifying of God. Unless the one we mentor is also serving the Lord with us, we have our priorities out of whack. We are not to be served, but to serve.

Let us be careful to not assume that someone we are leading is serving us while we serve Christ. Rather, let us ensure that all are serving only the Lord.

*Lord God, help each of us to direct those around us to You. This is especially so with those we may be tutoring or guiding along life’s path. We may be a spiritual parent to them, but that doesn’t mean they are to serve us so that we can serve You. Instead, we should make sure they serve along with us under You. In the end, we are Yours. Help us to be obedient to You in all ways, leading others to You alone. Amen.*

**Therefore I hope to send him at once, as soon as I see how it goes with me.**

Philippians 2:23

“Therefore” is given based on the words of verses 19-22. First, it is connected to Paul’s desire to know the state of those in Philippi. Secondly, it concerns the notable character of Timothy who was being sent for that very task. Because of his proven character, and because of his faithful service in the gospel, Paul hoped to send him without any delay with the exception of waiting to see “how it goes with me.”

He was awaiting notice of his state as a prisoner. Would he be released? Would he be confined longer? Would he face the executioner? These things needed to be determined, and once that word was known, then Timothy would be dispatched as a follow-up to this letter.

As we can see, the letter of Paul was to be sent immediately. To him, the matter of doctrine and harmony within the congregation was of paramount importance. Such should always be the case. We should count our own state as of less importance than that of others who are facing doctrinal error or conflict in Christ.

Life application: Let us continually magnify the Lord and His word in all we say and do. We should never withhold that which will build up others for our own personal reasons. In all things, let us let God be magnified first and foremost.

*Lord God, we sure are in need of living properly from day to day. What You expect of us is right there in Your word. It is such a simple thing to pick it up and read it, or to have it on a CD and listen. And yet, we are unsure of even the most simple matters of doctrine because we have been unwilling to spend the most minimal amount of time in this regard. Forgive us of our faulty priorities, and help us to redirect our minds and our use of time to You... to You first and foremost, and always. Amen.*

**But I trust in the Lord that I myself shall also come shortly.** Philippians 2:24

Paul had just previously indicated that it was his hope to send Timothy to him immediately, and at a time when he had determined his own fate. Now he continues with this thought with the word “But...”

It is less of a contrast than it is a complement to what he just said. For this reason, it is often translated as “And” instead of “But.” His next words, “I trust,” show that he has expectations which he feels confident will come about.

In chapter 1, he indicated his surety that he would be released in accord with the Lord's will for him. This is repeated now with a confidence that is "in the Lord." The tenor of his words shows that his state of confidence – not just in this matter, but in his every thought – was in complete harmony with his faith in the Lord. As surrounded by the air he needed to breathe, so he was surrounded in his surety of the Lord's presence around him and guiding him.

Finally, his trust in the Lord was a confidence "that I myself shall also come shortly." His decision to send Timothy was to be carried out as soon as word concerning him was given. It would be as if a runner was sent with news from the battle lines ahead of the returning army. After that, and as quickly as his affairs could be set in order, he intended to follow after Timothy to join the brothers at Philippi.

It could also be that Timothy would be told to visit other churches, quickly carrying the message of Paul's release from one to another. In time, he would make a slower and longer visit to each of the churches. Thus, Timothy's visit would be one of exciting news and comfort; Paul's visit would be of fellowship and more comfort. His words in these verses are rather similar to those found in 1 Corinthians 4 –

"For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church. ... But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord wills..."

-1 Corinthians 4:17 & 19

Paul was consistent in his mind, thoughts, and attitude concerning the major outline of his life. Because of this, the lesser details would eventually find their proper place. Of this, he was sure.

Life application: We should be careful in our personal words to not ascribe things to the Lord of which we are unsure. It is very common to hear people say, "The Lord spoke to me," or "I got a word from the Lord." However, if we follow up with their claim, way too often, the "word" they claimed never came to pass.

This is a bad place to be when we stand before Him. We can show a hope and a confidence in something without making false claims.

*Lord God, it is more than wonderful to know that because of the work of Christ, we have an intimate fellowship with You once again. Help us to be confident in this relationship even when times are difficult and uncertain. Our hope is in You and in Your promises.*

*Why should we be downcast or miserable when we have the outline of the glory which lies ahead? Instead, let us be trusting that the temporary trials are simply bumps on the sure road to glory. Amen.*

**Yet I considered it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier, but your messenger and the one who ministered to my need;**  
Philippians 2:25

Paul has noted that he would send Timothy when the time was right to carry the message about his status to the churches. Before that time, and probably also carrying this epistle back to them, he was sending Epaphroditus. The name is often associated with Epaphras who is mentioned in Colossians and Philemon, but this is not likely. Epaphras was a shortened form of the name, but it was also a very common name.

Based on the context of those passages, the two are probably not the same person. Whether the same or not, however, the name is derived from Aphrodite, or Venus. It means “Charming.”

This Epaphroditus was being sent back by necessity which will be explained in the coming verses. For now, we are just given the following three descriptions of him. He was, according to Paul –

- 1) My brother. This is not to be taken literally, but as a brother in Christ. It is an affectionate term which is still commonly shared among believers today.
- 2) Fellow worker. He obviously worked alongside Paul as will be seen, especially in verse 30. They may have worked together in Philippi, or it may be that he was simply sent to work with Paul while he was imprisoned. Either way, he is given the credit for being a fellow worker with him.
- 3) Fellow soldier. This is not the only time that Christians are considered as soldiers, carrying out military style work. Paul notes the same idea in Philemon 1:2, and in 2 Timothy 2:3, 4. Further, Paul notes that we are in a spiritual battle in Ephesians 6:10-20. If we are in a battle, we are then soldiers. These and other examples confirm and explain the term.

Next he says about Epaphroditus, “...but your messenger.”

He labored with Paul, but he was sent from Philippi to do so. The word used is *apostolos*, and it is the same word used to speak of the designated apostles of Christ. Care needs to be taken with this word. The term simply means a messenger, or “someone sent.” In the

case of Epaphroditus, he was sent by the church at Philippi, and thus he is an apostle of Philippi. The term is not to then be carried over to mean that he is an apostle of Christ.

Christ sent certain men who are known as His apostles. Others sent certain men who are known as their apostles. There are no “apostles” of Christ today who carry the authority of Christ. A church can send someone and call him an apostle, but there is no need for such a title. Whatever word is common to that church’s language would be better suited than confusing the term “apostle” with that found in the Bible when speaking of the “apostles” or “sent ones” of Jesus.

Such titles are unnecessary and often only lead to a false impression of the status and authority of the person given that title. The “apostolic era” ended with the death of the last apostle who was given that title by Christ. They had to meet certain criteria which are laid out elsewhere in Scripture, chief among which is having personally seen the Lord Jesus and been directly commissioned by him.

Having said this, Epaphroditus is called “your messenger and the one who ministered to my need.” He was the messenger from Philippi to Paul, and he was the minister of Philippi to tend to Paul’s need.

Life application: Use caution not to be swayed by fancy titles which people either grant, or which they may even claim for themselves. In the church, there are designated positions, and there are people who fill those positions, but high and lofty titles often produce unhealthy levels of adoration.

We are to adore Christ alone. Pastors, preachers, missionaries, priests, bishops, deacons, popes, elders, etc. are all just folks who are not to be elevated above others, with the noted exceptions found in Scripture concerning granting certain workers “double honor” (See 1 Timothy 5:17). But this honor is for the work they do, not for who they are as individuals.

*Lord God, thank You for those faithful missionaries who sacrifice their own lives in order to bring the message of Christ to the people of the world. They often go without the comforts that those who send them enjoy. They have times of loneliness, sorrow, and the like, and yet they continue their work for the sake of bringing others to know You. Be with our missionaries, confirm Your presence is with them, and comfort them in their lives and in their work. This we pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.*



**...since he was longing for you all, and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick. Philippians 2:26**

Speaking of Epaphroditus, Paul now notes two reasons why he is sending him back to Philippi. The first is “since he was longing for you all.” There is a strong emphasis in these words which shows that he was truly homesick. He longed and continually longed to be with them.

Secondly, he “was distressed because you had heard that he was sick.” This second reason probably only exacerbated the longing of the first. It had been reported to them that he was sick. As we will see in the next verse, it wasn’t just something simple like a cold, but something life-threatening.

Without a second report (which is now being written by Paul) their emotions would run high. This caused his to run high as well. Because of these things, Paul was determined that sending him home was the right thing to do.

Think over what is being said here, and what will be said in the next verse carefully. See if you can contemplate why these words of Paul are so relevant to Christianity today? What is it about them that shouts out “Doctrine matters?” In the next verse, the answer will be made clear.

Life application: Often, what is left undone or unspoken is as important to doctrine as what is actually recorded. Pay attention to such things and then evaluate them in connection with how various churches act, and what they claim Scripture is telling us. In so doing, you can cut out a lot of unnecessary fat from your Christian diet.

*Lord, You have given us a book full of wisdom to ponder. There are many things which are explicitly stated for us to read and understand. However, there are many things which are left unstated, but which provide us with a wealth of information to process concerning doctrine. In the end, doctrine matters to You. Your word is a book of doctrine. Help us to properly evaluate it, and then apply it to our lives. Surely with this, You are pleased. Amen.*

**For indeed he was sick almost unto death; but God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. Philippians 2:27**

Speaking of Epaphroditus still, Paul notes that “he was sick almost unto death.”

Whatever affliction he had, it was so severe that those around him had all but given him up for dead. It is a striking comment coming from an apostle, isn't it. Paul, like the other apostles, had healed many. Both he and Peter had called the dead to life by the power of Christ, and yet there is no hint of this in him now.

Instead, he had been unable to heal him as is evidenced by the later words of this verse. Epaphroditus had a life-threatening affliction, but good news came when "God had mercy on him."

He was, in fact, restored to health by the providence of God. Whatever afflicted him took its course and he was finally restored to vigor. Paul then notes that this mercy extended not only to him, "but on me also."

The tenderness of the words shows his love for both Epaphroditus and those in Philippi. His heart would have been broken over the death of the beloved brother and in his inability to restore him to them. Should that not have been the case, Paul says, "...lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow."

From this statement, it is evident that Paul had nothing to do with the healing. If he could have gone up and claimed healing over Epaphroditus, these words could not be included in the letter. Further, they add a touch of confirmation that this letter is genuine and not written by any other than Paul.

Otherwise, a miraculous healing would have been noted. The use of the accusative in this verse gives the sense of motion. "Sorrow upon sorrow" mentally provides the image of wave after wave of sorrow coming upon him.

The importance of this verse, and several others in the New Testament (such as Paul's telling Timothy to drink a little wine for his stomach problems, and etc.) demonstrate as clearly as can be seen, that the healing claims of the Charismatic movement are to be rejected as false.

It is God who heals, not false teachers who wave their hands over others and supposedly restore them to health. Their deceitfulness is an affront to the truth of God which is found in Scripture. Even the apostles only healed on certain occasions, and only in order to substantiate their apostolic authority. These gifts ended with the termination of the apostolic age.

Now, Christians are to pray for healing of others, but are never to act in a presumptuous and sinful manner by claiming healing. Such notions are to be rejected by those who hold faithfully to God's word, and to the notion of God's sovereignty over all things, including the affliction of his people.

Life application: Doctrine matters.

*Heavenly Father, You alone are the great Physician. Help us to never sinfully and presumptuously claim anything in Your name. Rather, when we, or those around us, are afflicted, give us the right sense to petition You for healing, and to wait on Your sovereign hand to respond. Should You withhold Your healing, it is because You are God. Keep us from rudely claiming that which belongs to You alone. Instead, may our faith remain through sickness or health, life or death. To Your glory alone. Amen.*

**Therefore I sent him the more eagerly, that when you see him again you may rejoice, and I may be less sorrowful.** Philippians 2:28

"Therefore" connects the dots of the previous verses concerning Epaphroditus. Verse 25 spoke of Paul's necessity in sending him back. This was then explained in the next two verses. Now, he sums that up by saying, "I sent him the more eagerly."

It can be inferred that he didn't want to send him at all, but because of the sickness, he sent him back, and even with eagerness. What was right and fitting was this course of action. To explain it, he then says, "...that when you see him again, you may rejoice."

These words follow from verse 26 which said that he "was distressed because you had heard that he was sick." Epaphroditus' distress was increased because of their worry for him. Neither he nor Paul wanted that, and so he was going to back to Philippi to give them a chance to rejoice. However, there is a note of sadness which follows from this. Paul says that "I may be less sorrowful."

Being less of something implies that the thing still exists. He has been talking about rejoicing, even in his imprisonment, but that rejoicing does not cancel out his sorrows. Instead, they are separate boxes which he had packaged up.

The rejoicing was in the spirit and in the hope of Christ; the sadness was in the flesh and in the loss of his much-needed help in the return of Epaphroditus. The words then are reminiscent of his note in 2 Corinthians 6:10 which say, "as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing."

Life application: There is nothing wrong with being a Christian and being sorrowful. We are human beings with human limitations. We should always, and in all situations, rejoice in Christ and in the hope that He has our difficulties all safely guarded in His capable hands.

And yet, we can also express the human emotions and frailties that God has instilled in us. There is nothing dishonoring of God in this. He created us to express ourselves in a godly manner in each of our emotional and spiritual states.

*Lord God, though we may not mourn as the world mourns, we are still emotional creatures. When we encounter trials, or pains, or even death in our lives, we know that it is being worked out for a good end and so we can rejoice. But in our human condition, we can still mourn for the situation we are in. This is a constant theme in Your word. On one hand, we have a great hope, but on the other, we are in a weak body which must face the effects of the world we live in. Help us as we look ahead to glory, but endure now the effects of a fallen world. Be with us in both, O God. Amen.*

**Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness, and hold such men in esteem;**  
Philippians 2:29

There is a hint of near concern here in Paul's words. He is sending Epaphroditus back after a great sickness that almost led to death. Using this as an opportunity to obtain favor for him, he says, "Receive him therefore in the Lord."

The "therefore" is what gives us a hint that he may not have been received back as he should have been otherwise. What may be the case, but which is left unstated, is that the divisions in the church could have had some agreeing with the sending of Epaphroditus, while others not having agreed to it.

Solely as a means of example, we could guess that he was too young in the faith for some to think sending him was a good idea. However, now that Paul has spoken so highly of him, and with his service almost ending in death, he is asking for him to be received with honor. Whatever the true reason for his words, he is asking that his return to them be "with all gladness."

If there were divisions about him, they should be dropped. He has faithfully served, and he has been willing to expend himself in the service he was called to. Nothing was lacking in his performance and, therefore, he should be welcomed home heartily. Further, Paul notes that the church is to "hold such men in esteem."

In the Bible, we are to give honor where honor is due. In the case of Epaphroditus, it was certainly due. He was to be given the honor of a true and faithful soul who has carried out his duties in a way which was worthy of note.

Life application: Whatever task we have been assigned, or to which we volunteer, we should do it as unto the Lord, not expecting anything from our work except the honor of pleasing Him. However, we are to honor those who perform their duties well, remembering that they need encouragement as all people do. In honoring others, they will hopefully be willing to honor our notable deeds as well.

*Lord God, help us to have servants' hearts, not expecting anything from our labors except the joy of having faithfully served you. And yet, help us to be willing to recognize the faithful performance of others as they do their work. Let us be others-centered in all things, not seeking for our own praise. May our every moment be one willing to expend ourselves for You. Amen.*

**...because for the work of Christ he came close to death, not regarding his life, to supply what was lacking in your service toward me.** Philippians 2:30

There are several variations in Greek texts which are argued among scholars. Determining which is the correct and original is important, but apparently no variation is of great weight, and does not change the overall intent of the words.

The words, "...because for the work of Christ he came close to death" are still talking about Epaphroditus. His efforts in his duties probably wore him down physically to the point where he was without the ability to ward off sickness.

It shows the mental determination of a person who was willing to put the needs of Paul, and the work of Christ, ahead of his own personal well-being. In this determined state, Paul says that he was "not regarding his own life."

The correct Greek wording is argued here, but Vincent's Word Studies notes that his choice of the original indicates "to venture, to expose one's self. It was also a gambler's word, to throw down a stake. Hence Paul says that Epaphroditus recklessly exposed his life. The Greek word was used as a descriptor in the early church for those who took care of the sick at the risk of their own lives. Thus they were the reckless people.

Epaphroditus was so engaged in his duties that he fell into this category. And this was, according to Paul, "to supply what was lacking in your service toward me."

The wording in the English almost makes it sound like a reproach, but Greek scholars ensure us that the Greek carries no such implication. Rather, it was simply that he filled up a need which could not be filled up otherwise. Rather than a rebuke, it is a compliment. He was sent by them to fill this need, and the need was then met.

Life application: We have one shot at this life. Should we stay in bed and get a bit more sleep? Should we go see one more movie instead of dedicating that time to the Lord? In the end, we all need a break from our labors, but the more frivolous activities we engage in, the less we are doing for His glory. Each of us should be willing to say, “Use me up now Lord. This one life is for You.”

*Use me up now Lord. This earthly life I live is for You! Amen.*

## CHAPTER 3

**Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. For me to write the same things to you *is* not tedious, but for you *it is* safe.** Philippians 3:1

Paul begins chapter 3 with “Finally.”

Rather than, “to sum up,” the word indicates “something remaining,” and so this begins the last major section of the letter. In it, he will provide warnings against various ills that he is sure they will face.

He will speak against the teachings of the Judaizers, he will speak against those who live for this world rather than setting their minds on that which pertains to our heavenly position, and he will warn against factions and divisions within the body. These, along with other words of admonition and encouragement, are to be a part of this “Finally” which is now given. Next he notes “my brethren.”

He is speaking to those who are united as one in the family of Christ. It is those who have received Him who are as his own brothers in the faith. To these, he again reminds them to “rejoice in the Lord.”

It is a reminder that they are, in fact, “in the Lord.” He has saved them, and so no matter what occurs, they should look to the glory ahead as a means of enduring whatever trials now exist. In Christ, there is a hope which transcends all earthly troubles, and so he asks them to be joyful in that fact. His next words form a new thought, and are not logically tied to “rejoice in the Lord.” He says, “For me to write the same things to you is not tedious.”

It is uncertain what exactly he is referring to. It could be another letter, or letters, he wrote to them. It could be what he has told them while with them. Or it could be what he has said already in this letter, and which he will say again in this “Finally” section. What is important is that whatever he is referring to specifically, it is not a burdensome thing to repeat himself. Rather, he notes that “for you *it is* safe.”

In other words, the repetition will instill in them the importance of his instruction. If someone reads the Bible only once, he will have a very general view of its significance. But for the one who reads it again and again, it will continue to have more and more importance.

The warnings will call out more notably; the grace will be more evident; the glory will radiate out more fully. Paul is instilling in them the same words so that they will remember what he has said and be more likely to apply them to their (and thus also we to our) lives. For his audience, this is a safe measure.

Life application: Doctrine matters. The more we look into the word of God, the more fully we will understand matters of doctrine, and the more likely we will be to apply them to our lives. But we must come to it as the word of God which is to be revered. For those who read the Bible with the view that it is not the word of God, the warnings and admonitions will harden, not soften their hearts.

Let us be wise in our pursuit of this magnificent, superior word.

*Glorious heavenly Father, You have given us the greatest treasure in Your wonderful word. It is a light and a beacon to guide us in our daily walk. It is a roadmap to a place of peaceful rest. It is a sword which defends against immorality and wickedness. It is a rule and guide for honest, sincere, and holy living. Thank You, O God, for this marvelous and superior word which You have given to us. Amen.*

**Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation!** Philippians 3:2

Paul now actually begins his words of warning and admonition which he hinted at in the preceding verse. Although his words can include other parties who are harmful to the faith, they are directed specifically at one group of people, the Judaizers.

These are the Jews, or those following the Jews, who have come to reinsert the law, in part or in whole. They are those who, by one work or many, set aside the grace of Jesus Christ in order to establish a righteousness of their own. He begins with “Beware of dogs.”

The translation unfortunately leaves off an article before “dogs.” It is necessary and it makes the warning less forceful than it should be. “Beware of THE dogs.”

The word “beware” in Greek is *blepó*, and “it carries *what is seen* into the non-physical (immaterial) realm so a person can take the needed action (respond, beware, be alert)” (HELPS Word Studies).

Paul is asking them to mark out and be spiritually aware of these wicked people. They are “the dogs.” The term “dog” is highly derogatory. It indicates a raging unclean animal.



Dogs in the Middle East, even to this day, are not considered with the delight of folks in the west. They travel in packs, eat corpses and other dirty things, and are considered disease-ridden nuisances.

This is seen in both testaments of the Bible. Paul's words probably go beyond mere uncleanness, but also to the fact that they are snarling savages which tear and bite at those around them. This is how severely he treats those who would come in and attempt to reintroduce the law, in part or in whole. It is the greatest offense to the purity of the gospel. In Revelation 22:15, we read this about such people –

“But outside *are* dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie.”

By trampling on His grace, Jesus places these evil-doers first in a list of the worst of all offenders. Next he says to “beware of evil workers.”

Again, an article has been dropped which takes away the severity of his words. It says, “...beware of THE evil workers.”

The Judaizers are the epitome of such evil workers. There are those who are caught in sin and may not even realize it, but these people willingly cut themselves off from the grace of Christ, and they actively work evil against His name. Jesus has strong words for them, again from Revelation –

“Indeed I will make *those* of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie—indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you.” Revelation 3:9

A true Jew would come to Christ, understanding He is the fulfillment of all that is spoken in Scripture. A false Jew will work against Christ, demanding the law be adhered to in part or in whole. This is truly one who is the evil worker. He warns against them in several epistles. In 2 Corinthians, he identifies them and their false works with their true master –

“For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. <sup>14</sup>And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. <sup>15</sup>Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.” 2 Corinthians 11:13-15

He completes the verse with, "...beware of the mutilation."

This is a scathing phrase directed to the very heart of the sect of Judaizers, circumcision. He uses a word found only here in the NT. It indicates to mutilate or to spoil. A word in English which meets the irony of this word would be concision, which would then stand opposed to circumcision.

Paul, in essence, is saying that those who are Jews in flesh only are simply flesh-mutilated and flesh-mutilators. They boast in the flesh, but speak against the grace of Christ. Much of the book of Galatians deals with exactly this subject. The warning there is so strong that he sums up the process of physical circumcision with these words –

"Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage. <sup>2</sup>Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing. <sup>3</sup>And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law. <sup>4</sup>You have become estranged from Christ, you who *attempt to* be justified by law; you have fallen from grace." Galatians 5:1-4

Life application: If you wonder why Judaizers and Hebrew Roots movement people speak so vehemently against Paul, it is because they are heretics who are set on a course to hell. They willingly cut off their flesh in order to cut themselves off from Christ.

They are the epitome of wickedness because they see the truth of Christ's grace, and yet they work against it. Such will find no peace, nor will any who follow in their deeds. Stand fast on the grace of Jesus Christ alone.

*Lord God, Your word has the strongest and most condemning words of all for those who would set aside the grace found in the work of Jesus Christ. Instead of trusting once and for all in His cross and His resurrection, they reinsert the law, they mandate external rights, and they hold to certain observances, as if that is what makes them holy. But You have shown that we can only be holy through the work of Christ. Help us to trust in this, and in this alone. May we never set aside His grace by attempting to merit Your favor in any other way. Jesus! Only Jesus. Amen.*

**For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh, Philippians 3:3**

Paul now clearly explains the “mutilation” of the last verse by stating a contrast. He says, “For we are the circumcision.”

He uses the abstract term “the circumcision” to speak of those who are the truly circumcised. This was written to a Gentile church who had never been circumcised, and yet he boldly states this. If Paul was circumcised, and they were not, and yet he says “we,” then he must be referring to something not of the flesh. And this is exactly so. In Romans 2, he says –

“For circumcision is indeed profitable if you keep the law; but if you are a breaker of the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision. <sup>26</sup> Therefore, if an uncircumcised man keeps the righteous requirements of the law, will not his uncircumcision be counted as circumcision? <sup>27</sup> And will not the physically uncircumcised, if he fulfills the law, judge you who, *even with your written code and circumcision, are* a transgressor of the law? <sup>28</sup> For he is not a Jew who *is one* outwardly, nor *is* circumcision that which *is* outward in the flesh; <sup>29</sup> but *he is* a Jew who *is one* inwardly; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise *is* not from men but from God.” Romans 2:25-29

His words show that circumcision of the flesh means nothing unless it is accompanied by a change in the heart. And his words are not without prior confirmation. In fact, the thought goes all the way back to Moses himself. In Deuteronomy 10:16 and 30:6, he mentions circumcision of the heart. This is then repeated by Jeremiah hundreds of years later –

“Circumcise yourselves to the Lord,  
And take away the foreskins of your hearts,  
You men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem,  
Lest My fury come forth like fire,  
And burn so that no one can quench *it*,  
Because of the evil of your doings.” Jeremiah 4:4

Israel had made the immense mistake of assuming that they were righteous before God because of who they were and because of what they had done. This was the farthest thing from the truth. They relied on that which was fleshly and did not “worship God in the Spirit.” These words go back to what Jesus said in John 4 –

“But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. <sup>24</sup> God *is* Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” John 4:23, 24

Jesus’ words imply that not all supposed worship is truly worship. A Jew could claim he was worshipping God by being circumcised, wearing certain clothes, and observing certain rituals. However, such is not the case. True worship comes from the heart and is directed to God in a spiritual manner, not in an external, earthly manner. To worship God in the Spirit is to “rejoice in Christ Jesus.”

He has accomplished all of that which is necessary to reconcile us to God. Therefore, we are to rejoice in Him and in what He has done, “and have no confidence in the flesh.”

What this means is that for those in Christ circumcision of the flesh means nothing – absolutely nothing. It cannot bring a person any nearer to God. In fact, if a person who receives Christ later opts to be circumcised in order to obtain God’s favor, he has set aside the grace of God in Christ and has become obligated to the entire law. Paul explains this in Galatians. No person should boast in anything but Jesus Christ and what He has done.

Life application: It has become very popular today to observe certain feasts from the Law of Moses, to give up eating certain foods prohibited there, and to be circumcised in order to make God “happy.”

Paul says otherwise. Circumcision schmircumcision. It is contrary to a right relationship with God, and it shows that the person does not trust that what Jesus did is sufficient for his salvation. It is stamping on His work and saying, “Nice try, but I can do better.” Reject such people as warped and foolish.

*Lord God, I absolutely refuse to set aside the grace of Jesus Christ. May each of us stand on His finished work alone and put no confidence in any external ritual. Praise God for the work of Christ my Lord. Praise God for Jesus. Amen.*

**...though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: Philippians 3:4**

The Greek literally reads, “...even though myself having confidence.”

The English translation gives the correct sense based on his later words, but at the moment, he is placing himself on the same level with the Jews and comparing himself against them. In essence, “You Jews have confidence in the flesh, well so do I!” Again, he really does not, but for the intent of what he will say to them, he is calling to mind that he is not less than them in what could be boasted on.

If he were to boast like others, it would be of his human nature of which he will give a detailed description in the coming verses. And so, to bolster his certain ability to boast, he continues with, “If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so...”

He is setting up the “mutilation” of verse 2 (meaning those Jews who circumcise the flesh, but not the heart) for a fall. He would not begin an argument unless he was certain he could prevail in it.

Paul’s “more so” will be an astonishing resume of lineage and learning which will place him at the very top of Hebrew society. Yay for Paul! But is this what life is about? Instead, he will eventually come around to showing just what those things mean in comparison to having Christ.

Life application: What thing in your life do you think you have a right to boast in? Do you have a nice house? Do you have a lot of money? Are you handsome or beautiful? Do you have a remarkable genealogy that includes kings and zillionaires? What is it that you feel is the most valuable part of who you are? If you say anything other than “Jesus Christ,” you have your priorities completely out of whack.

*Lord God, help us to consider what is of value in our lives? Our money? A big house? Fame, beauty, or color of skin? Are we proud of our genealogy? Are we confident in the position we have in our job? All of these things are temporary and pointless, aren't they? Unless we say, "Jesus Christ is the most important part of my life!", we have priorities that are futile, and which will die with us. But in Christ, there is the greatest of honor and blessing. Help us to think rightly, and to live our lives in accord with our relationship to Jesus. Amen.*

**...circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; Philippians 3:5**

Paul now begins his list of things that could give him “confidence in the flesh.” First on his list is that he was “circumcised the eighth day.” It is the badge of the Jew, and the rite

goes all the way back to Genesis 17 at the time of Abraham. There the Lord said to Abraham –

“Every male child among you shall be circumcised; <sup>11</sup> and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you. <sup>12</sup> He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised, every male child in your generations, he who is born in your house or bought with money from any foreigner who is not your descendant. <sup>13</sup> He who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money must be circumcised, and My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant.” Genesis 17:10-13

Being circumcised on the eighth day meant that he was not only in the covenant people, but that he was received into the covenant people, having been circumcised according to this ancient rite on his eighth day of life. No mere proselyte was he, but one with the lineage of Abraham himself.

Next, he says that he is “of the stock of Israel.” This is an emphasis concerning what he just noted. Another person could have been born of another nation and circumcised on the eighth day, but he was of the true line of Abraham, through Isaac, and through Jacob who is Israel. He bore in his blood the royalty of the patriarchs.

Thirdly, he says that he was of “the tribe of Benjamin.” He has identified his status within the circumcision, then his status within the national lineage of Israel. Now he further defines the national identity by showing what portion of that group he belongs to, which is “the tribe of Benjamin.”

This was a high honor indeed. Israel's first king, Saul, was of the tribe of Benjamin. Further, the tribe was almost annihilated due to a case of disobedience leading to war against them by the other tribes. They were reduced to a mere 600 men (see judges 20). Members of this tribe also sided with David during his pre-ruling years.

They actually supported him in opposition to the king who belonged to their own tribe (see 1 Chronicles 12). These, along with other noted accounts, could be considered a point of boasting. Fourth, he says that he is “a Hebrew of Hebrews.”

The term “Hebrew” was first used of Abraham in Genesis 14:13. It signifies one who has “crossed over.” The name is derived from Abraham’s ancestor Eber who was probably the eldest generation of those who “crossed over” the river in a move away from the area of Babel. From there, a spiritual connection was made to the physical move. They

eventually “crossed over” from idolatry to worshipping the true God. Thus, they were set apart from the other nations.

The term “Hebrew” is used in the Bible to show a distinction between the people groups. There are the Hebrew people, and this group is contrasted to all foreigners. Even though Paul was born in Tarsus in Cilicia, he had, like his fathers, retained this identity. They remained apart from those around them in cultural and national identity. Finally in this verse, he notes, “concerning the law, a Pharisee.”

Not only was he a Jew who lived under the Law of Moses, he was the epitome of those who held to the law. The Pharisees were known to be the strictest adherents to the faith, and they meticulously lived out every precept as perfectly as they could.

They went through intense studies of the law, even from youth, and they had built up a system of life that necessitated their absolute adherence to every fine point of the law and even beyond. Theirs was the leading group of “holy men” to whom everyone else looked to for their certainly notable lives. In Acts 23:6, he notes that he was not only a Pharisee, but he was “the son of a Pharisee.”

He was of this tradition, and it went back even before himself.

Life application: Paul could surely boast in these things if they were worth boasting in. He possessed the highest connections to the social and religious life of the people from whom Christ came. Surely if anyone could merit God’s favor apart from the work of Jesus, it would be this guy. But to Paul, only Christ mattered. Where is your boast? In what are you placing your hopes?

*Lord God, if I possess the greatest intellect; if I have a voice even of the finest singers on the planet; if I were an actor who played his parts better than any other ever could; if I had both fame and fortune; if I owned the largest tract of land; or if I ran the largest company on the planet... how nifty; how great. But without Christ, not one of these things means diddly. All will return to the earth, and everything we revel in will pass on to another. Help us to think clearly. As believers in Christ, we have the greatest riches of all. Hallelujah for eternal riches which are found in Him alone! Amen.*

**...concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. Philippians 3:6**

Paul gives a completion to the list of his points of earthly boasting in this verse. It is not that he is actually boasting in them, but that if he were to boast, it would be in these things. He notes, "...concerning zeal, persecuting the church." There is an irony in this thought. As it says in Galatians 1:23 –

"He who formerly persecuted us now preaches the faith which he once *tried to* destroy."

Paul was definitely zealous towards those things he was passionate about. Before coming to Christ, he lived as a Pharisee. In this position, he felt that the church was the aberrant sect, and that he must do everything possible in order to stamp it out.

In Romans 10:2, he shows how Israel which had not called on Jesus was in the same position –

"For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge."

Without understanding the Person and work of Christ, there remained a zeal within the Jewish community for the Law of Moses which established them as a people. It is natural for one to be zealous about such things.

However, Christ is the end of the law for all who believe. Therefore, the zeal is misdirected. In this misdirected condition, he was zealous for persecuting the church. He notes this specifically numerous times in his other letters. For example, he says this in 1 Corinthians 15:9 –

"For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God."

He also notes this in Galatians 1:13 & 1:23, and he hints at it in 1 Timothy 1:13. Even more, the book of Acts describes his efforts in detail concerning his persecution of the church. If he were still one who held to the law as necessary, he would be able to boast more than anyone about this matter. But he goes on. He next says, "...concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless."

This was the righteousness of which Jesus spoke of in Matthew 5:17-20 –



“For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds *the righteousness* of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.”

The scribes and the Pharisees were meticulous in how they observed the law, carefully following every precept. They held so fast to the law that they felt they had merited God’s favor because of it, considering themselves blameless. However, this showed that they didn’t really understand the law as well as they may have taught.

Within the law was the mandatory Day of Atonement which they were required to observe. The fact that this was required should have shown them that they still needed mercy. As this is so, their righteousness was still lacking. This is why Jesus said that a person’s righteousness needed to exceed that of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Paul was only righteous before the law insofar as he held to every precept externally, but he needed an internal change to grant him true righteousness. This will be realized in his coming words.

Life application: When someone does something truly harmful in the name of their religion, it is because they really believe it is the right thing to do. What they need is to be shown the truth of Jesus Christ. This is why missionaries go even into Islamic nations. They are willing to put their own lives at risk in order to show these wayward souls that the path they believe is incorrect.

When we can empathize with the viewpoint of others, we can then work to correct their faulty views of what God expects of each of us.

*Lord God, it is truly sad that we as a species believe that we can merit Your favor and stand righteous before You by working out deeds of the law. Even in the law itself, there was a mandatory Day of Atonement. This implied that those participants needed atonement. Therefore, there is none righteous before You. Thank God for Jesus Christ who IS our atonement. In Him, there is complete and perfect reconciliation. Thank God for Jesus Christ. Amen.*

**But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ.** Philippians 3:7

Paul now sums up all of the confidence in the flesh of the previous two verses in one thought, beginning with “But...” The word is given to contrast those things of supposed high accolade and honor. Instead he says, “...what things were gain to me.”

The word *kerdos*, or “gain,” in Greek is plural. Thus, it says, “gains.” He lumps all of these worldly badges of honor and distinction into one, using a word which indicates profit which is “acquired through ‘faith-trading’” (HELPS Word Studies).

In other words, he had put his faith in these things as that which assured him his high status in this world, and his right-standing before God in the next. Instead though, he continues with the words, “these things I have counted loss for Christ.”

He contrasts the “gains” of the first clause with *zémia*, or “loss.” The word signifies “damage (detriment); a mercantile term for “loss”; a “bad deal” (unsuccessful business transaction) which results in a *fine* (penalty, forfeiture)” (HELPS Word Studies). In other words, it is as if he first gambled on those things to secure his status, and then found that the bet was a loser. They weren’t a sure bet, or even a break-even one. Instead, they were a losing bet, and a source of loss.

The contrast of using a plural word for the supposed gains, and a singular for the actual loss is striking. All his supposed gains were realized in one great loss which was “for Christ.” He had to walk away from it all in order to come to Christ. And so come he did, with empty hands concerning each and every one of them.

And not only that, but the perfect tense of the word “counted” signifies that they were loss, and they continued to be loss. There would NEVER be a time when he could use those things as a benefit. They were cast to the rubbish bin of the history of his life. All was Christ, and Christ was his All-in-all.

Life application: Think hard on the words of this verse. The highest honors and achievements that the greatest in Hebrew society could obtain were utterly useless in establishing a right relationship with God. If this is so, and it is, what more could you add to what Christ has done? Nothing. Diddly-doo. Trust in Christ, rest in Christ, and be content that His work alone is sufficient for your passage into the heavenly realms.

*Lord God, the greatest honors and accolades of the greatest achiever in Hebrew society were set aside and counted as loss in order to obtain Christ. Lineage, education, circumcision, family affiliation, and all the rest, was lumped into one mass, and then it was cast into the rubbish bin of his life... all in order to exalt Jesus Christ. If this is so with him, then what could any of us Christians hope in that would merit Your favor for our lives? Zippo. Not a single thing. Like Saul of Tarsus, we come to You with empty hands and grateful hearts for the marvelous work of Jesus Christ. Hail that name which is above every name! Amen.*

**Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ... Philippians 3:8**

Paul's amazing statement here is an explanation and expansion of the previous verse. Taken together they read –

“But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. <sup>8</sup>Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ...”

The words “what things” of the previous verse were speaking of his great personal qualities of lineage and heritage, along with his special status within Israelite society. However, setting those things aside was not all that Paul considered “loss for Christ.” Rather, he continues on with “Yet indeed I also count all things loss.”

There was nothing that he had worked for or accomplished in his life that was of any value to him in relation to true satisfaction or boasting he now made in his Lord. When he met Christ, the most precious memory, and the most hoped-for goal, were alike considered as loss.

His very being was converted from that which is earthly and carnal to that which is heavenly and spiritual. Nothing of this world mattered and was “loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.”

The word for “excellence” here is actually a verb. It indicates “the excelling knowledge.” In other words, whatever is of note is vastly outshined by knowing Christ. If one carries a dab of perfume into a perfume factory, what was considered a sweet and powerful smell will be lost in the overwhelming amount of fragrance which fills the building. If one were to have a flashlight on a path while walking in full sunshine, the light of the flashlight would not even be noticeable.

If one were to be in a dry desert with but a drop of water left in the canteen, it would be forgotten if that person were to come upon a large flowing river of the purest water.

Paul is trying to describe that which cannot be fully described. The superlative nature of Christ and what He offers simply overwhelms anything that we could hold up as of value.

In comparison to Him, it is nothing. For this reason, he continues with words of strength by saying, “for whom I have suffered the loss of all things.”

One would think of loss as a weakness, but when that loss is compared to what has been obtained in its place, it is the greatest Source of strength of all. No thing, and no accumulation of things – even to an exceedingly enormous amount of stuff – could ever compare to the infinite gain which is experienced in knowing Christ.

Understanding this, he then describes what all of his “gain” actually means in relation to knowing Christ Jesus his Lord. He says he counts “them as rubbish.”

The word is *skýbalon*. It is only found here in the Bible, and it is believed to be a combination of the word “dog” and the word “throw.” In other words, all of his gain is that which is only worth throwing to the dogs, such as filthy refuse, table scraps, and the like. It is good for nothing, and it is simply discarded.

Considering that he has called the Judaizers of verse 2 “dogs,” he is indicating that their teachings and the things they boast in are just that, refuse. Instead of being pleased with these things and trusting in them, he has cast them away so that he “may gain Christ.”

The play on words seems evident. He says the loss that he suffered from his supposed “gains” is a gain in and of itself. The treasure and honor of knowing Christ is of infinite value because it stems from the infinite Creator. Nothing else could compare to this, and so any loss is – by default – gain.

Life application: We live in this world, and we can and should enjoy what this world provides, but we should never allow those things to have us. Rather, we are to have them, but only with a loose grasp of them. When the time is right, Christ will come and those things which we now possess will seem as the most useless and unimportant things imaginable. Let us not hold fast to this world as we pass through it.

*Lord God, we are surrounded by our possessions which we have accumulated throughout our lives. But in the end, they are just temporary things which will all be gone at some point. And not the finest thing we possess is even a close comparison to our having and knowing Christ Jesus. If everything we had was represented by a single drop of perfume, what good would it be in the largest, most magnificent perfume factory? We would not even notice what we had thought was so wonderful. Help us to delight in the surpassing greatness of Christ, and not be consumed by the transitory world in which we live. Amen.*

**...and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which *is* from the law, but that which *is* through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith;**  
Philippians 3:9

Following up on his words of the previous verse where he said, “that I may gain Christ,” Paul now shows what that means. It is to “be found in Him.”

In dying to the world, we live to Christ. We positionally move from Adam to Jesus. Whereas we once were fallen and destined to eternal separation from God because of both inherited and committed sin, we become alive in Christ, having both cancelled. Our sin debt dies with Him on the cross and we are granted His righteousness. Paul explains this by saying, “not having my own righteousness.”

This should be worded, “not having a righteousness of my own.” It then eliminates any other type of righteousness than the one he will identify; something which could be implied in this translation. Paul is stating clearly and unambiguously that he possesses no such righteousness “which is from the law.”

This idea is explained by Paul elsewhere. In Galatians 2, he says –

“We *who are* Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, <sup>16</sup> knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.”

-Galatians 2:15, 16

The law could not justify, or make righteous, anyone. Rather, it stood opposed to that. Only a person with inherent righteousness could satisfy the law, but other than Jesus, there is none righteous. Instead of being justified by the law, Paul states that he is found in Christ Jesus by possessing a righteousness “which *is* through faith in Christ.”

Faith in the work of Christ is what grants someone righteousness. This is explained in Ephesians 2:8, 9. However, Paul is showing the contrast of this to that of those who apply adherence to the law into their life and conduct. In Romans 10:3, he explains it this way –

“For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. <sup>4</sup> For Christ *is* the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.”

Christ bears inherent righteousness, and He also fulfilled the law. Through faith in Him, righteousness is imputed to us. If we reinsert the law, we seek to establish our own righteousness apart from Christ. In this, there can be no hope. Only by faith in Christ can we possess His righteousness, “the righteousness which is from God by faith.”

Charles Ellicott states this concerning the final two clauses of this verse –

“This verse is notable, as describing the true righteousness; first imperfectly, as coming ‘through faith of Jesus Christ,’ a description which discloses to us only its means, and not its origin; next, completely, as ‘a righteousness coming from God on the sole condition of faith’—faith being here viewed not as the means, but as the condition, of receiving the divine gift.”

Life application: What do you suppose you could add to the work of Jesus to satisfy God’s righteous demands? Let’s see – He was born without sin. Were you? He lived under the Law of Moses perfectly. Have you? He died in fulfillment of the law. Did you? He annulled the law through its fulfillment. Did you know? He offers us salvation by grace, imputing to us His righteousness, if we simply believe. Do you? Ok then, what more can you add to these things in order to be “more righteous” before God? Think it through, and then put away your childish attempts to be “super holy” by reinserting a law which can only condemn you.

*Lord God, Your word shows us that Christ was born without sin. He lived under the Law of Moses perfectly. He died in fulfillment of the law. The law was annulled when it was fulfilled, and a New Covenant was established in His shed blood, one based on faith in what He has done. How can we be so utterly foolish as to think that adhering to precepts of an annulled law could ever make us more righteous? Do we presume to know better than You? Do we presume that we can be “more righteous” than Christ the Lord? Help us to think clearly and to rest in Your grace, offered through the work of Jesus. Amen.*

**...that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, Philippians 3:10**

These words now continue to explain the words of “that I may gain Christ” from verse 8, that in turn, was tied to the “knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord” of the same verse. By gaining Christ, he (and thus we!) can then “know Him and the power of His resurrection.”

This is an immediate act of knowledge. In other words, by putting all other things behind, we come to know Christ. However, this knowledge will be something that we can and should build upon for all of our lives. Despite this, it is the immediate act which is being referred to.

There is a time in a person's life when they come to "know" that they are separate from God, and that Christ is the answer to that separation. It is He who can and does fill the need which cannot otherwise be met. And further, knowing Christ includes, and indeed hinges upon, knowing the power of His resurrection.

If Christ was not raised from the dead, then as Paul says –

“Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? <sup>13</sup> But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. <sup>14</sup> And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching *is* empty and your faith *is* also empty. <sup>15</sup> Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up—if in fact the dead do not rise. <sup>16</sup> For if *the* dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. <sup>17</sup> And if Christ is not risen, your faith *is* futile; you are still in your sins! <sup>18</sup> Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. <sup>19</sup> If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.”

-1 Corinthians 15:12-18

Without the resurrection, everything else falls apart. There is no atonement for sin, for example. If that is true, then the death of Christ was pointless. He died as any other criminal died, and He did so bearing sin, because death is the wages of sin. Unless He came out of the grave, proving that He had no sin, then sin He had.

And so, knowing the power of His resurrection allows us the desire, and even the confidence, to know Him in a fully assured and wonderful way. From this point, we simply grow in our knowledge of Him. This knowledge includes “the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death.”

Once it is accepted and believed that Christ is resurrected, it then should lead us to wonder why He was resurrected. Someone who is resurrected is someone who was dead. If a person is dead and then resurrects, we have full confidence in what that resurrection implies, but we should then look back on what caused the death in the first place. What is the significance of what occurred?

In Christ's death comes atonement for sin. Thus, we can see that He died for us. We stand justified before God because of His death, of which the resurrection is the proof. As noted above, if Jesus died in a state of sin, then He was no Christ, but rather a false Christ. But if He died without sin (proven by the resurrection), then He is the Christ and His work is sufficient for the work God promised in Him, even from the foundation of the world.

From this understanding, we then should desire to know the fellowship of His sufferings. He died for sin for us, and so we should also die to sin through Him. This isn't simply the state of justification which we are granted by faith in Him; this is the process of sanctification where we grow to become more like Him. In this, we conform to His death – dying *to* sin because He died *for* sin.

But there is more to consider. Christ's death wasn't just an atonement for sin, but it was an act of selfless love. It was an act of devotion to His Father, and it was a pattern to follow. In all ways (of which we could ponder so many more), we are to join to Christ and become Christ-like. This theme literally permeates the New Testament. Of numerous passages and verses, we can go to Romans 8:17, 2 Corinthians 1:5, Colossians 1:24, and 2 Timothy 2:11. Even Peter wrote of this in 1 Peter 4:13.

Life application: When we give the gospel to someone and he accepts it – that he has sin, that he deserves death because of sin, that Jesus took his place in the payment of that sin-debt, and that He rose again to prove this – we merely start that person on a journey which should then be pursued with every fiber of his being.

We should not be content to say, “You are now on the highway to heaven” (which is certainly true), but we should say, “You have just started on the assured highway to heaven. Use your time until you get there wisely, and get to know Christ in every detail and every way imaginable. In doing so, you will live a life far more satisfying than any other way you could live it.”

*Lord God Almighty, is it enough to simply be saved and guaranteed a place in heaven because of what Jesus did? Surely what He did is enough for that guarantee, but it should never be “enough” for us while we remain here. Instead, give us the desire to know Him fully. To know the power of His resurrection, to know the fellowship of His sufferings, and to be conformed to His death. Help us to live our lives in Christ, for Christ, and with Christ in view at all times, never being merely satisfied with the final reward of heaven, but pursuing the immediate and beautiful reward of knowing Christ intimately, even as we await our promised inheritance. Amen.*



**...if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.** Philippians 3:11

Paul had just said “being conformed to His death” while speaking of Christ. Christ died in sinless perfection, and Paul desired to follow Him, as closely as he could, in this sinless state. Rather than living for the world and in the flesh, his desire was to be molded to be like Christ in all ways. To show his great desire in this, he now states, “...if, by any means.”

This is not a statement of doubt, but rather a statement of humility. He was willing to put aside all things in this world in order to humbly and obediently follow Christ in all ways. From there he says, “I may.”

Again, this is not a statement of doubt. It is a statement of surety in what lies ahead. The word *katantaó* means “to arrive at,” such as at a goal. The English gives an ambiguity which does not exist in the Greek. What he is looking to arrive at is to “attain to the resurrection from the dead.”

Paul uses a word for “resurrection” not found elsewhere, *eksanástasis*. It means “rising up to experience *the full-impact* of resurrection, i.e. *thoroughly removed from the realm of death (the grave)*” (HELPS Word Studies).

The goal of Paul was one which he had dedicated his life to. He was assured of its coming, and therefore, he desired to be responsible with the time he had now as he awaited that glorious moment. He knew he would die and lay among the dead, but he also knew that he would rise from among those dead, out of the grave and out of the dead.

For him, and for those who are in Christ, there would be a departure, leaving behind those dead who are not in Him. The particular term “from the dead” is found only here and in 1 Peter 1:3 as it applies to Christ Jesus.

This is the resurrection unto life for those who are in Christ Jesus. His resurrection is as a pledge that we too will follow Him. The sealing of the Holy Spirit is the mark of that pledge, placing us in Christ and thus guaranteeing what has been promised.

Life application: Paul was assured of his position in Christ, and he desired to live for Christ because of what that meant. How troubling it is that we often are confused as to whether our salvation is really true or not. Let God be true, but every man a liar. He has

promised; He will perform. And how sad it is that even if we believe His promise, we don't live as if the promise is really ahead of us.

Instead, we live for now. If the promise is ahead of us, then we really will meet up with it some wonderful day. Should we not be striving to emulate the Lord while we await its arrival?

*Lord God, Your word promises resurrection from the dead for those who are in Christ. He rose, and that resurrection is now what we are guaranteed because of it. If we are in Him, and He is risen, then we too have the same true and promised-for hope. Let us not waiver in our convictions, but stand fast on Your word. And in this, we should then strive to emulate Him as we walk in this world. Help us to do so, and to be pleasing in Your sight now, just as we will be throughout the ages of ages. Amen.*

**Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Philippians 3:12**

The tenses of the verbs within the verse intentionally change with the progression of Paul's thought. Scholars struggle over and argue over the exact reading of what he is conveying, but despite the nuances, the overall picture here, and for the next couple verses, are those of the Greek races.

There is a prize at the end of the finish line, and Paul describes the process from beginning to end concerning that goal. If that is kept in mind, then an overall understanding of his words is more easily grasped. He has just spoken of the "resurrection from the dead," and now he introduces the thought of being "perfected."

He has drawn the two together, as if they have the same overall meaning. This is seen also in Jesus' words of Luke 13 –

*"And He said to them, 'Go, tell that fox, "Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third *day* I shall be perfected. <sup>33</sup> Nevertheless I must journey today, tomorrow, and the *day* following; for it cannot be that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem."'" Luke 13:32, 33*

Jesus ties His death in with being perfected. How can this be when He is the sinless Son of God? It is because He assumed the likeness of man. He came and dwelt in the mortal flesh of humanity. Until He died and was resurrected, He bore this form.

However, in His resurrection the corruption of the earthly body was cast off and He was adorned in a heavenly body. He saw no corruption in His earthly body (Acts 2:27), but the body itself could have corrupted if it was found with sin. It was not, and He never saw the corruption of the pit.

The author of Hebrews alludes to the idea of death and perfection several times, such as in Hebrews 2:10, 5:9, 11:40, and 12:23. Some of these are speaking of Jesus, and others are speaking of what lies ahead for us. This is what Paul now refers to. He has said that he has not “already attained” this state, meaning being “already perfected.”

It may seem unusual that he would state this, but the erroneous claim was already circulating that the resurrection was already past (2 Timothy 2:18), and that the Day of the Lord had passed as well (2 Thessalonians 2:2). These claims were intended to then show that some had been perfected. They could then lead their followers down wayward paths of belief concerning the super-spiritual state they possessed.

This heretical doctrine still exists. David Koresh claimed that he was the Lamb of God of Revelation. Others have made claims that they are the embodiment of Christ, or that they have been perfected. These claims always lead people down the heresy highway.

Paul is warning against such things, stating that he remained in his earthly body and the final goal lay still ahead. Because of this, he contrasts the notion by saying, “...but I press on.”

No one presses on towards that which they have already attained. Instead, they look ahead to a prize which is still out of reach. Paul is not speaking of salvation, but of the state which is promised because of salvation. This is important to understand as well. If misinterpreted, one could come to the conclusion that he is still unsure of his own salvation, and was still working to ensure he would – in fact – be saved.

Rather, he is speaking of what salvation promises. Until he was “perfected” through death and the new body which lies ahead, he was striving to be as Christ-like as possible while still in his earthly body. This is exactly what he has been talking about prior to this verse. For him, this was all so “that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.”

He was striving to be perfected because the perfected Christ had granted him the surety of future perfection. Christ was the initiator and grantor of that promise, and so Paul,

admitting that he was still imperfect, perpetually strived for perfection in order to be pleasing to the Perfected One.

His words are certainly given for a warning to all that perfection is not attainable in this life, but that it is rather an ideal that we can and should strive for while we live. Claiming sinless perfection while still in this corruptible body, or claiming that this corruptible body has been cast off prior to the resurrection from the dead, are both voluntary paths down Apostasy Avenue, and which lead directly to Heresy Highway.

Life application: We can and should strive for perfection, and we can and should strive to emulate Christ in all ways, but we should never claim that we have arrived, or follow anyone who makes such a claim. This will only happen when Christ comes and perfects us all together. Until then, let us be wise and sober about our fallen nature lest we get caught up in serious error.

*Heavenly Father, what a great and blessed hope lies ahead of us. We have the promise of perfection because of the resurrection of Christ who stands in perfection, having gone before us in death, and unto life-everlasting. Because we have such a great hope, help us to emulate Him in all ways, striving to be more and more like Him until that glorious day when He calls us to Himself. May we be pleasing and faithful followers of our Lord from day to day until that Day! Amen.*

**Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, Philippians 3:13**

The words here restate what he just said in the previous verse. It is an emphasis that his audience is to pay heed to –

“Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. <sup>13</sup> Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead...”

He begins with “brethren” here to ensure that they know they are all on the same level. He is not elevated above them in this most important matter. If this is so, then what he will say pertains to them, and it pertains to any other “brother”

in Christ as well. And so, with that understood, he begins. In addition to the emphasis provided by the restated repetition, the words “I” and “myself” are emphatic in the Greek. He is ensuring that he is not counted among any heretic who would claim they have been perfected. He has not “apprehended” this state, and who would be more likely to have done so? Rather, as an equal with them in this life in Christ, he says, “...but one thing *I do*.”

The words “I do” are inserted for clarity, and they do give a good sense of what will be said. There is an activity to his coming words which “doing” fits well. This activity is summed up with the words, “...forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead.”

The things which are behind are the achievements of verses 4-6 which he once could have boasted in. They have been forgotten in order to obtain a far greater prize. They have been disregarded for a more perfect goal which lies ahead. For those things, he is “reaching forward.”

The words “reaching forward” are in the emphatic position. In essence, “...to those things which are ahead, reaching forward.” His eye is on the prize, and in that state, he lunges as a racer would when approaching the finishing line. All of his efforts are being impelled forward for this one thing.

The scholar Bengel says, “...with hand and foot, like a runner in a race, and the body bent forward. The Christian is always humbled by the contrast between what he is and what he desires to be. The eye reaches before and draws on the hand, the hand reaches before and draws on the foot.”

Life application: How serious are you about what lies ahead? Are your efforts directed to it, or are you stopping along the way to revel in the here and now. It is true that we live in this world and must be a part of it, but the efforts we put forth now should be in line with the glory which lies ahead. How effective the church would be if all of us had such a determined attitude towards the perfection which is awaiting us.

*Lord God, how much of our effort is actually directed towards the prize which lies ahead of us, and which is promised by You? Do we spend all of our time and effort working towards this goal? Do we spend most of it? Maybe just a bit of it? And it may be that we don't give 10 minutes a day in striving forward to those things which are ahead. Wow! Is our hope of glory that unimportant to us? Does the work of Christ mean that little to us? Priorities Lord. Help us to get our priorities straightened out. Amen.*

## **I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.**

Philippians 3:14

Paul now explains “reaching forward to those things which are ahead” which he referred to in the previous verse. The sum of them is “the prize” he will now mention. In order to get to this prize, he says that “I press toward the goal.”

The word for “press” indicates “to pursue with all haste.” For example, it is used when a hunter is chasing a catch. Every fiber of Paul’s being was directed toward “the goal.” This word for “goal” is *skopós*. It is used only this once in the New Testament. It is where the English word “scope” comes from, such as a scope on a rifle which is used for target shooting.

Paul was wholly directed toward this goal, which is the ultimate objective of the life of faith that a believer possesses. It is the state of glorification which will be granted when Christ returns for His people.

To Paul, this was what his earthly life was directed toward. It is “the prize” which he now refers to. It is the word *brabeíon*, which is the reward granted to a victor, and specifically the noted recognition which is a result of that triumph. The only other time the word is used is by Paul in 1 Corinthians 9 –

“Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain *it*.<sup>25</sup> And everyone who competes *for the prize* is temperate in all things. Now they *do it* to obtain a perishable crown, but we *for an imperishable crown*.” 1 Corinthians 9:24, 25

This prize then is the result of pursuing “the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”

This phrase is rich in theological significance. The term for “call” is *klé̄sis*. It indicates a “*calling*; used of *God inviting all people* to receive His gift of salvation – with all His blessings that go with it” (HELPS Word Studies).

In other words, the word “call” itself signifies that a voluntary act of the will is made based on what God has done in Christ Jesus. It negates the idea of being predestined as taught by Calvinists which says that one is “regenerated in order to believe.” Such an act would not require a calling. But God has done something in Christ Jesus which calls out for men to respond.

This is the “upward call.” Other versions say, “the high calling,” “the heavenly calling,” etc. The word indicates “above.” In this case, it implies “heaven.” It is the shout of “Come unto Me” which draws our souls to Christ who is in the heavenlies awaiting our response.

This was Paul’s greatest desire, and it is what wholly consumed him. It did not mean that he didn’t stay active here on earth. In fact, just the opposite is true. It means that he did all he could as an apostle, a teacher, an evangelist, and a Christian brother to accomplish the work set before him.

His earthly life and walk were the set-out course for this high calling. It is what would bring him to the prize resulting from his triumphant work. The crown of life is guaranteed, but that crown of life carries with it other rewards which are a result of what we do now.

Life application: We have a high calling by God in Christ Jesus. We are to respond to that call by receiving Him and His work. When that is done, we still have a course set before us in order to receive the final reward of that high calling. Too often, we want the reward without living out the race which is taking us to that reward. But the race is what gets us to our end goal.

Let us keep our eyes on the prize, but not forget that rewards accompany the prize which are based on the race we run.

*Lord God, there are certain truths which Your word teaches. We must receive Jesus in order to be saved. When we receive Jesus, we are saved. Nothing will ever change that. The high calling has been answered, and the crown of life awaits. But, we still have this life to live out. How we live it out will determine our rewards which accompany that crown of life. Too often, we forget that our calling asks us to perform now during the race which is set before us. Grant us the wisdom to not waste this earthly life in vain pursuit, but to set our eyes on the prize and to accomplish all we can for the day when we stand before You. Amen.*

**Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you. Philippians 3:15**

“Therefore” is given based on what Paul has said in verses 12 through 14. He said he was not perfected, nor had he already attained the end goal. Instead, he was still in the race with all of his efforts directed toward “those things which are ahead.”

He sums that up by saying, "...let us, as many as are mature, have this mind." He is saying that those who are mature in their thoughts should conduct themselves in exactly this same manner.

Concerning the word "mature," he uses the adjective form of the same word he used in verse 12 which was used as a verb. There, the NKJV translated it as "perfected," but it is the same word. Because of this, there is certainly irony involved in the thought. He is contrasting himself to those who may claim that they are already perfected, which obviously they are not. Translating the words the same way will show his hint of irony –

12. Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected...

15. Therefore let us, as many as are perfect...

Obviously, his intent is that being perfected is not the same as being perfect. Rather, the choice of "mature" gives the correct sense, but it loses the irony. The same word is used in 1 Corinthians 14:20; Ephesians 4:13; Hebrews 5:14, etc., where it indicates a state of maturity. He is saying, in essence, "Those who are mature are not already perfected, but are striving forward towards that goal."

For the others then, they fall short because they are, in fact, not perfected. Instead, they are not striving forward toward perfection, and thus they are immature. He then notes this directly by saying, "...and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you."

For those who are not striving forward in the way noted in verses 12-14, they have a surprise coming. God will reveal to them their folly in pursuing the temporary instead of pursuing the eternal. They should have fixed their eyes on Christ, and instead they have fixed their eyes on the flesh.

While they should have been concerned about circumcision of the heart, they are having parts of their body removed; a body which would corrupt and return to the earth. Whatever was not being done with the ultimate goal of Christ in mind was useless, and that would be revealed to them by God.

Note that he does not say "by Christ Jesus." They have not kept their eyes on Him as they should have. He should be the chief desire of their heart, and so God – Father, Son, and/or Holy Spirit – would reveal to them the error of their ways. God's intent is for the Son to be exalted.



Life application: Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, striving towards Him as our goal. We are to emulate Him now, endeavoring to be more and more like Him until we are perfected in Him.

*Heavenly Father, Your word instructs us to fix our eyes on Jesus, to strive to be like Him, to pursue Him and His righteousness always, and to never divert our attention from this goal. Help us in this Lord, the world has many temptations, and we face many trials. But despite these things, our hearts and attention need to be directed to the eternal, not these temporary things. Be with us in this, as we conduct ourselves in accord with Your desires for us. Amen.*

**Nevertheless, to *the degree* that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind.** Philippians 3:16

The word “Nevertheless” is given to show that there are different degrees of maturity within the body. In other words, Paul said “as many as are mature” in the previous verse. But there really are none who are on exactly the same level of maturity.

Some had heard Paul speak many times and were well-grounded in their understanding of the work of Christ. Some may have missed those meetings, or had come more recently to the faith. And some of them simply may have been incapable of understanding the more difficult issues which were presented to them. Whatever the state of the individual was, and for whatever reasons, to that degree to which they were mature, he instructs, “...let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind.”

In other words, arguments and divisions serve no valid purpose if they do not involve heresy or major doctrinal differences. When the end of life comes for an individual, it won't be the lesser points of doctrine that people speak about at their funeral.

Instead, it will be that they loved Christ Jesus, spoke out boldly for Him, and were willing to walk in harmony with others who may have disagreed, even over things that ultimately make little difference in the overall scheme of things.

When Markus Polonius is laying in his coffin, nobody with a modicum of decency would come up and say, “He believed that the church replaced Israel, and so he was a really crummy Christian.” Instead, they will speak about what united them, not about the things he was wrong on, and which will be revealed to him by Christ. If this is how we speak about one another at death, is it really necessary to tear them apart in their life?

Life application: Doctrine matters. It is right for teachers to hold the line on what is proper doctrine. But when two teachers with opposing views speak to one another, it shouldn't be for tearing one another down. Minds are not changed that way, and it is only harmful to the fellowship. Let us learn to hold our tongues at times when our lofty opinions are unwanted, or when they will only cause division.

*Lord God, it is good and right to stand firm on doctrine, but it isn't right to stand and tear others apart over minor issues. Help us to use wisdom when defending a point of doctrine and not to cause unnecessary division within the body. Unless someone is truly mishandling Your word, it is probably better that we keep our mouths shut until our opinion is asked for. You will correct faulty doctrine that we stubbornly hold on to. Until then, just give us the wisdom to understand that it is we who could be wrong and to pursue the truth of Your word always. Amen.*

**Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern.** Philippians 3:17

Paul, having addressed the doctrinal error of the Judaizers, will now set out on another course of correction concerning doctrine. He will address those who use their freedom in Christ as license to sin. This is known as the Antinomian heresy. For now, he begins with "Brethren."

He is addressing saved believers in Christ, and he is identifying himself with them. With this understanding, he says, "...join in following my example." The phrase is unique in the New Testament, and it indicates being joint imitators. He is saying that he is an imitator of Christ, and he desires them to jointly follow in this imitation of the Lord.

The Pulpit Commentary notes that, "He changes the singular number to the plural, modestly shrinking from proposing himself alone as their example." From this point, and understanding that all are to be united in imitating Christ, he next says, "and note those who so walk."

The metaphor of the race which was used in the previous verses is now changed to a walk, thus a walk of life. The conduct in this life (even if it is a race with our eyes on the goal), is to be one which is in imitation of the life of Christ. In this walk there is an example laid out for them. This is seen in the words, "...as you have us for a pattern."

In a broad perspective, he shows that there are two types of people who are to be found in a church. Those who imitate Christ and have their minds, hearts, and affections on heavenly things, and those who are earthly and carnal.

The apostles and their designated representatives had set the first example, and he desires that they follow in that. Those he will describe in the coming verses will be given as examples of what not to emulate.

Life application: In the quickly apostatizing church of today, the carnal is growing almost exponentially. It is incumbent on us to go to the word itself, and to follow it as closely as possible. This will keep us from going astray. This is what the word is for. Let us not deviate from it.

*Lord God, the church today is quickly turning from the soundness of Your word, and towards ever-increasing licentiousness. Sexual sin of the most perverse kind is hailed as acceptable, and those who follow Your word are being called haters and bigoted. But Your word stands. There is one Lord and one path of truth which is found in the pages of Scripture. May we be called a thousand disparaging names by the world if it means that we are obedient to Your word. Be with us as we face this onslaught of wickedness. Amen.*

**For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, *that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ:* Philippians 3:18**

As noted in the previous verse, the words of Paul seem especially directed to those who lived out their supposed Christian experience in licentiousness and in the pursuit of worldly things. This is in contrast to the Judaizers in the sense that they discounted the work of Christ and exalted the Law of Moses.

They looked to a reward, but they looked to it as an earned badge of merit, not as a gift received because of the work of Another. The people Paul speaks of here simply treat the world as the great reward, and they revel in what it offers. And yet, they claim that they are followers of Christ. This is why he now notes their “walk.”

In the previous verse, he asked that those who walked in accord with his walk, meaning in a life lived to Christ, were to be emulated as a pattern. Now he says, “For many walk,” as a contrast to that. He then notes, “...of whom I have told you often.”

This is not something that suddenly appeared while he was away from them. Instead, it is something that he had been warning about all along. For this reason, it is an incipient

infection. It is one that constantly needs to be warned against, and so he says, "...and now tell you even weeping."

It was such a damaging heresy that it literally brought him to tears. How could someone hear the message of Christ, claim that they had received it and been converted, and yet continue to live in the world as if "for the world." And in fact, they had taken the grace of Christ, and turned it into a badge of greater sin than they previously engaged in. It is a concept that he addresses in Romans 6 which begins with –

"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? <sup>2</sup>  
Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?" Romans 6:1, 2

He warns that being in Christ means living in holiness, not in even greater sin. For those that would presume to teach this, or to follow such teachers, he says "*that they are* the enemies of the cross of Christ."

Such people are not just unknowing and uncaring about Christianity, they are actively enemies of it. Christ counts them as such. They are destined for a very bad end unless they repent, come to their senses, and call on Christ in truth. Thus, we have a distinction between the Judaizers of the earlier verses of chapter 3 and those of the Antinomian heresy here.

The Judaizers were heretical because they rejected the full atonement and justification which is found in Christ alone, and they set out to establish their own righteousness. These people, on the other hand, now work against the other side of the cross. They claim that they are so fully justified in Christ that they have absolute freedom to work out, and engage in, any type of moral impurity they wish.

What is astonishing is that both of these groups have almost exponentially grown in size in the recent church. The modern Hebrew Roots movement has exploded in recent years, claiming that the Law of Moses must be adhered to in part or in full.

At the same time, the once strong and faithful churches and denominations of even the recent past, have openly endorsed homosexuality, lesbianism, and every other type of moral perversion that they can think up. Pulpits have become the proclaimers of pervert parties. And yet, all of this could be avoided if one simply picked up the Bible and read the warnings of Paul.

Life application: There is peace to be found in Christ, but let us never use this grace to assume that we can then live in an unholy manner. We are to emulate our Lord who would never condone such worldly perversion.

*Lord God, there are enemies on both sides of Christ's cross. There are those who deny the all-sufficiency of His work, claiming they must continue to adhere to the Law of Moses in order to please You. And then there are those who say that the grace which stems from the cross is a license to sin and commit any and every moral twisting they wish. There are perverts in the pulpit who are leading their sheep down a one-way path to destruction. Help us to adhere to Your word alone, and not to get caught in either of these damnable heresies. Amen.*

**...whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things.** Philippians 3:19

Concerning “the enemies of the cross of Christ” of the previous verse, Paul now says that their “end is destruction.” This is set in contrast to the “resurrection from the dead” in verse 11, and of the right of entry into the New Jerusalem for the believer which will be noted in verse 20.

Instead of an anticipation of life, these enemies of the cross will be cast into the burning pit of the Lake of Fire. Their reward is one of perdition, as the Greek reads, not salvation. In order to explain why this is so, he next gives three descriptions of them which reflect their very character and nature. First he says, “whose god is their belly.”

This is a further explanation of his words of Romans 16 –

“For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple.”

-Romans 16:18

This same idea concerning the appetites of the belly is given in 2 Peter 2 and in Jude. These people live for the temporary, feasting themselves now on that which can never fully satisfy while forsaking the true heavenly meal which will satisfy for eternity. Paul will give a contrast of this description to that of the believer in verse 21.

He next says of them that their “glory is in their shame.”

In Ephesians 5, Paul notes that there are things which are shameful even to speak of even in secret. However, these perverse people actually glory in such things. Perfectly representing this are modern homosexual pastors and preachers.

They revel in their perversion, and they openly avow that they engage in such abominable practices. They glory in defying the Lord who would save them if they would simply turn and be saved. But instead of this, Paul gives the final description of them by saying that they “set their mind on earthly things.”

This state is in contrast to the thoughts of verses 13 and 21. We are to set our mind on that which is heavenly and eternal, not on that which is worldly and temporary. This contrast between the two is well described by Paul in Romans 8 –

“For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those *who live* according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.”

-Romans 8:5

Life application: If this life is where our hopes lie, then our hopes will die with us in this life. But if the promise of God which is found in the resurrection of Jesus Christ is where our hopes lie, then there is a great and eternal reward which awaits us. May we think reasonably and rationally concerning our eternal destiny. This life is but a temporary breath. Is it worth sacrificing eternity for such a passing moment?

*Lord God, when we are young, it seems as if life will go on and on, but as we grow older we realize how temporary our life really is. In this, we have but two choices. We can set our hopes and affections on You, and on the eternal ages which stand before us, or we can greedily live for all that we can grasp now, forsaking true life and filling this temporary, vain existence with earthly things. Give us wisdom to use our time rightly, and to live for the greater hope which is found in the finished work of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

**For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, Philippians 3:20**

This is a verse very rich in its content and meaning. First, there is an emphasis in the original of the first clause on “our” and on “is.” Secondly, the word “citizenship” is found only here in the New Testament. It is the word *politeuma*, and it is a noun indicating a state or a commonwealth. Rather than “citizenship,” the word appears to be speaking of an actual city which awaits us. Thus, it is probably referring to the New Jerusalem.

The emphasis in this first verse, and the reference to the state which awaits, is literally translated then as “Of us, indeed, the state of heaven exists...” The word “exists,” according to Vincent’s Word Studies, “signifies ‘actually exists;’ and the reference to the appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ is obviously suggested by the thought that with it will also come the manifestation of the ‘Jerusalem which is above...’”

It is a delightful set of words, given to us to revel in as we await the glory which is ahead, and which already exists. We can now anticipate it in the fullest sense because of the work of Christ which assures us of our entry into that wonderful city.

This then is in contrast to the previous verse which spoke of those whose minds are set on “earthly things.” Let them have their party now. In the end, it will all be swept away and forgotten, but our walk will be an eternal one in a land of delight and abundance. Next, he says, “from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.”

The words are intended to fill us with an actual longing and a great anticipation for that which lies ahead. What does this world hold that is a jillionth as wonderful as the glory which is promised to us? Instead, we should continuously fix our eyes on Jesus, and the savor in our mouths should be that of anticipation in what He has prepared for us.

Of note in the Greek is that there is no article in front of the word “Savior.” Again, Vincent’s Word Studies looks into the thoughts of Paul which are being relayed. He says “its emphatic position in the sentence indicates that it is to be taken predicatively with Jesus Christ, and not as the direct object of the verb. Hence render: we await as Savior the Lord...”

Therefore, we have a dual thought to be pieced together. Our city awaits us as a city which is prepared for us, but access to that city is dependent upon the return of Jesus as Savior. He is our Savior, and yet we await Him as Savior with all that the title implies and with all that will accompany His final salvation.

Life application: Reading verses like this one should remind us not to get too entangled in the things of the world. Instead, we should direct our thoughts, hopes, and devotions to the Lord who has promised us so much more than what we now experience.

*Heavenly Father, You have promised us great things in Christ Jesus. Our citizenship is assured, our city awaits, and our Savior is coming. Help us to not get so fixated on this world that we lose sight of the great and glorious things which lie ahead. In anticipating*

*those things, our hearts and praises will be more appropriately directed to You. May this be our daily custom and devotion, to Your glory and praise. Amen.*

**...who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.**

Philippians 3:21

Speaking of “the Lord Jesus Christ” of the previous verse, it is He “who will transform our lowly body.” The term in Greek is “the body of our humiliation.”

We have a form which at this time is weak, corruptible, and corrupt. However, this body of humiliation will be transformed into another form. Paul notes that it is the Son who will accomplish this transformation into the marvelous image which He now bears. This is referred to elsewhere, such as in 1 Corinthians 15:38 where the term “God” is used –

“But God gives it a body as He pleases, and to each seed its own body.”

Therefore, this is another (of the countless such in Scripture) references to the deity of Christ Jesus. If God gives the body as He pleases, and yet it is the Lord Jesus Christ who will transform our lowly body, then He is God. This transformation is so “that it may be conformed to His glorious body.”

The term in Greek is “the body of His glory.” It then is set in contrast to “the body of our humiliation” which we now bear. The form itself will be changed, and we shall be like Him. John tells us this also –

“Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.” 1 John 3:2

The marvelous transformation will be from a state of humility to one of glory which is “according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.”

What is now frail, easily harmed or destroyed, and which is corrupt and in a state of humiliation, will be according to the same power by which Christ will subject all things, bringing them into the order and harmony which they were originally intended to be in.

Vincent’s word studies notes that, “It is more than merely subdue. It is to bring all things within His divine economy; to marshal them all under Himself in the new heaven and



the new earth in which shall dwell righteousness. Hence the perfected heavenly state as depicted by John is thrown into the figure of a city, an organized commonwealth. The verb is thus in harmony with Philippians 3:20. The work of God in Christ is therefore not only to transform, but to subject, and that not only the body, but all things.”

Life application: Chapter 3 of Philippians closes out with these marvelous words of assurance, and even of great expectation of the glory which lies ahead. Joy for the believer is not merely the absence of pain and sorrow. Rather, it is the ever-present hope which we possess because of the work of Christ, and of the glory which lies ahead.

Our current body may be broken, filled with pains, or incapable of standing up to the surrounding pressures we face, but what lies ahead will be whole, filled with glory, and capable of lasting throughout eternal ages. Let us not weary in anticipating the great glory which lies ahead. It is our blessed hope.

*Lord God, the body we now possess is one which is fraught with pains, pressures, times of sadness, and eventually a state of death and corruption. But for the believer in Christ who has gone before us in the resurrection, we have the promise of a new and glorious body which will be ever-whole, free of stress and burdens, filled with the ability to experience eternal joy, and one which will never grow weak or weary. Let the world come against us now if that is our lot, but we shall triumph over this fallen existence and be transformed into a body of glory. Even so, come Lord Jesus. Amen.*

## CHAPTER 4

**Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved.** Philippians 4:1

Paul has just been speaking of the resurrection of our earthly bodies and their being conformed to Christ's glorious body. With that thought still in mind, Chapter 4 begins with "Therefore."

As always, when encountering a "therefore," one must go back and see what it is there for. In this case, as noted, he is summing up the thought of the resurrection. From that, he now provides practical advice concerning this issue.

In this, he is amazingly consistent. He followed the same pattern in both Romans and 1 Corinthians. Immediately after speaking of the resurrection in these books, he penned for us the following –

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is* your reasonable service.  
<sup>2</sup>And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." Romans 12:1, 2

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

-1 Corinthians 15:18

In this beginning of his practical application, he states, "...my beloved and longed for brethren."

It is a touching note of endearment which is all the more necessary based on what he will instruct for them in the coming two verses. They are in his heart, and they are brethren in the Lord. For this reason, it is for his comfort, and for their favor to accept his words as they will be given.

The words "longed for" certainly are based on his current status as a man in chains. His inability to come to them personally has only pulled his heart strings even more. The word for "longed for" is *epipothétos*. It is found only here in Scripture, and it signifies "to long for with great affection."

He next calls them “my joy and my crown.” Again, he uses words and ideas which he uses elsewhere. Two examples of such honorific words are found in 1 Corinthians and 1 Thessalonians –

“If I am not an apostle to others, yet doubtless I am to you. For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.” 1 Corinthians 9:2

“For what *is* our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? *Is it* not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? <sup>20</sup> For you are our glory and joy.”  
-1 Thessalonians 2:19, 20

For the Philippians, they are his joy even in suffering, and his crown which awaits in glory. The work that he has done, and the fruit which has been realized through his labors make both of these things true. Because of this, and because of his hopes for this to continue in them, he next says, “...so stand fast in the Lord.”

These words certainly are given because of the hope of the resurrection (see the note on “Therefore” above), but they are exhortations based on the content of all of chapter 3. He wants them to stand in Christ and not get drawn into legalism through an insertion of the law, nor get drawn into license by assuming grace allows and promotes sin. With this in mind, he again calls them “beloved” to close out the verse.

The scholar Bengel notes that, “This word is twice used with great sweetness; first as at the beginning of the period; and then, for strengthening the exhortation.”

Life application: Because of our hope in the resurrection, we should be all the more willing to stand fast in the Lord. How often this is turned completely around! We tend to think, “I am on the heavenly highway, and so I don’t need to worry about my actions as much.” This is a 180 degree turn from what is actually appropriate.

*Lord God, how often do we who trust in Christ get our bearings out of whack. We assume that because we have a sure hope in the resurrection, we don’t have to be as determined in pursuing the goal as those who have no hope. But it is just the opposite. Exactly because we have this hope, we should stand even more determined to live for Christ, to emulate Christ, and to strive to finish the race as He has called us to do. Help us not to head in the wrong direction, but to demonstrate our hope in eternal life by living that hope out now. Amen.*

## **I implore Euodia and I implore Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord.**

Philippians 4:2

There was obviously a dissension in the church between these two women, Euodia and Syntyche. Nothing more is known about these ladies than that they were known by Paul personally, that they labored with him in the gospel, and that they were not in agreement over some particular issue. Speculation as to their position, if any, in the church is without merit. Paul implores each of them individually – “I implore Euodia,” and “I implore Syntyche.”

This is especially stated so that neither is elevated above the other as if one was in the wrong and Paul was siding with the other. It could be that either one, or both, were in the wrong. No matter what, Paul was not taking sides, but was simply asking them to drop their feud and “to be of the same mind.”

These words mean that they should be united in the cause and reconciled over what has divided them. And to solidify this, he adds “in the Lord.”

They should not only be united, but united in Christ Jesus. If they both had their eyes, hearts, and affections on Him, then their petty differences would fade into the background. It is of note that the verb which is translated as “to be of mind” is found 10 times in Philippians, more than any other book. Paul uses it only 23 times in all, and so almost one half of its uses are in this little epistle. There is a high stress on unity here.

As a note: The name here is Euodia, not Euodias as some versions incorrectly state. This is clearly a female as will be seen from verse 2. If your Bible says Euodias, you can pen in the correction.

Life application: Are you a divider or one who unites? And even if you are not a divider, are you caught up in a division? It is time to put the petty aside and strive forward with Christ as your only true passion. In so doing, all other things will find their proper place.

*Lord God, help each of us to evaluate ourselves and to see if we are the cause of division or unity within Your church. And even if we are not the cause of division, maybe we are still caught up in something which has divided the body. Help us to be of one mind in the Lord, and to put away the petty differences which tear apart harmony and right order. May we fix our eyes on Jesus and determine in our heart to be a uniting part of His body. Amen.*

**And I urge you also, true companion, help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names *are* in the Book of Life.** Philippians 4:3

Speaking of Euodia and Syntyche of the previous verse, Paul now implores some unidentified person, here translated as “true companion,” to intercede.

The word is *suzugos*, and it is only found here in the Bible. It indicates a “yoke-fellow,” or a “colleague.” It is wholly unknown who it is. There are several interesting speculations. One is that it is Epaphroditus who is being sent back with the letter. It could also be Luke who was closely associated with the church at Philippi. Other names have been suggested as well.

However, the word could be used as a proper name. If the name means “Yoke Fellow,” then his name could form the same type of play on words that Onesimus does in the book of Philemon. If a proper name, it could be his given name, or a nickname which was bestowed upon him by Paul and by which he had become known. In the end, it is all speculation, and the truth is lost to history. Whoever this yoke-fellow is, he is now asked to “help these women.”

Again, it is speaking of Euodia and Syntyche. In the past, Paul notes that they “labored with me in the gospel.” They may have helped him financially as the women did who were with Jesus as is seen in Luke 8:3.

The word used to describe their labors is found only here and in Philippians 1:27. It means “to strive together.” Whatever their labors were, it was of great help to Paul, so great that he put their efforts on an equal standing with his. He then notes, “with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers.”

He has placed these two women in a high position of note along with all of the others who labored with him. Clement is speculated by some to be Clement, bishop of Rome. This goes all the way back to the time of Origen. Others dismiss this as unlikely. However, he is singled out by name here as being a great help to Paul, and acknowledged as such.

He finishes with noting that these women, along with the others he refers to, have their names “in the Book of Life.” This is not to be taken as a literal book which is in heaven, and which pen and ink are applied to. Rather it is a state in which these people stood, metaphorically identified as a book of remembrance before the Lord.

This Book of Life would compare to the saying of Philippians 3:20 which notes those whose citizenship is in heaven. They have come under the blood of Christ, and they are sealed with the Spirit of God. Thus, they are in the Book of Life before the Lord. In Revelation 3:5, Jesus says the following about such people –

“He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.”

To “overcome” is to be saved by the blood of Christ. Such salvation is therefore a complete guarantee of entry into heaven for the redeemed.

Life application: Paul’s interest in the affairs of these women indicates his strong desire for there to be harmony and peace between believers. Although this is at times very, very difficult, it is what is asked of us. When strife arises, those around who are aware of it should do their best to assist in the process of reconciliation.

*Heavenly Father, it sure can be difficult to get along with other faithful believers. There are varying viewpoints on many fine points of doctrine which often result in more than a little bitterness. We are quick to divide the fellowship over these things, but Your word puts a stress on loving the brotherhood. And so help us to do our very best at this. And give us grace to overlook those things which we are able to overlook. With this, You are surely pleased. Amen.*

**Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!** Philippians 4:4

Paul now returns to the words of verse 3:1 –

“Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord.”

The theme of joy which flows from Paul’s pen is an exhortation for all to not merely rejoice, but to “Rejoice in the Lord.” He has just given stern warnings concerning the “mutilators of the flesh,” and living in the flesh for this world as opposed to living in the Spirit in anticipation of the next.

After that, he noted the division between Euodia and Syntyche. Certainly, each of these points would lead to, or be the cause of, a lack of joy. However, Paul would have it otherwise for them. And not only were they to “Rejoice in the Lord,” but they were to do it “always.”

The only way this would be possible would be to fall back on his warnings from the previous chapter and to “press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.” With this as their constant goal, they would truly be able to “Rejoice in the Lord always.”

And then to go beyond the words of exhortation, grounding them solidly in the minds of those at Philippi (and thus to us!), he says, “Again I will say, rejoice!”

It is more than a mere exhortation, but it comes out as a full-fledged command. It is our very duty as Christians. We are instructed to rejoice. It is to be our determined and set purpose at all times. Commanding joy may seem impossible, but by adhering to his exhortations, it is not only possible, it is to be fully realized in each of us.

What can the world do to us if we have our hope in something beyond this world? That is the intent and purpose of Paul’s words to us.

Life application: Rejoice in the Lord always!

*Lord God, Your word gives us the strongest exhortation to rejoice in You always. In fact, it is as if a command has been given. How can we rejoice when our eyes are set on earthly things which break, soil, die, are stolen, and the like? It’s not possible. But when our eyes are set on You, and we have as our goal the prize of Your upward call in Christ Jesus, it is not only possible, it is expected! We have a hope which transcends this fallen, corruptible world. We have Jesus. Hallelujah! We have Jesus. And so, we shall rejoice in You always. Amen.*

**Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. Philippians 4:5**

The word Paul uses for “gentleness” is an adjective which gives the idea of being fair and reasonable. We should relax our overly strict standards in order to keep a spirit of fellowship between one another. Instead of just demanding the letter of the law, we should apply the spirit and intent of it when dealing with others. The noun form of the word is used when speaking of Jesus in 2 Corinthians 10:1 –

“Now I, Paul, myself *am* pleading with *you* by the meekness and gentleness of Christ...”

By Paul’s direction, this gentle spirit should “be known to all men.”

What this means is that our outward conduct is to apply equally to both the saved and the unsaved. If we have an overbearing attitude towards the lost, they will certainly remain lost. If we cannot be fair and reasonable, why would anyone want to then join together with us? And if we treat the unsaved with such care, how much more should we act in this manner towards believers.

How often it is that Christians tear one another apart instead of seeking harmony! And such an attitude towards one another does not go unnoticed by the unsaved. To finish the verse, he says, "The Lord is at hand."

He uses a Greek translation of the Aramaic term Maranatha which means, "Lord come!" In this, he is probably referring to the imminent return of the Lord, meaning that there is no time when we should not expect Him.

At the same time, he very well could be indicating that the Lord is near, being present at all times for those in His church. In either sense, the thought that our conduct is being monitored and will be judged, is clearly evident.

Life application: Our conduct towards others, both the saved and the unsaved, needs to be carefully considered. How we act can lead to eternity-changing decisions for those who see our behavior. Let each of us remember this, considering that we too were once lost, but have been given the blessing of coming to know Jesus. Let us not be the cause of any to not have this same opportunity.

*Lord God, help us to conduct ourselves in such a faithful and gentle manner that others will be drawn to You, not driven from You. The message of Christ is one which means salvation and restoration. But if all others see is a bitter attitude in us, why would they want to come to know You? Rather, may they see the joy we possess because of the hope which is in us, and desire it as well. Amen.*

**Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; Philippians 4:6**

This is one of the more difficult exhortations Paul passes on to us. We are tied to this world and we are continuously moving forward in the stream of time, not knowing what lies even one second ahead. Trials, troubles, and tribulations enter into our lives, and we have no way of knowing how they will turn out. And yet, Paul asks us to "Be anxious for nothing."



Surely this takes great effort, and yet it is possible. Anxiety is the state of fear of the unknown and how that unknown will affect us personally. But the Bible reveals that nothing is truly unknown. God has laid out time before us, but He is outside of time. He knows what is coming, and He has already given us the final words of Scripture to prove it. Because of this, and if we can truly hold on to this, we can act in accord with Paul's words now.

Instead of being anxious, we are to come to God "in everything by prayer and supplication." In the Greek, both words "prayer" and "supplication," have an article in front of them. Thus, both are distinct things, and yet they are inseparable. Prayer is a word more general in meaning. On the other hand, supplication is a specific petition.

The two together should form the basis of all of our communication with the Lord. We are to pray our general thoughts, and we are to note specific items which are upon our heart through supplication. And in addition to this, we are to do it "with thanksgiving."

Whereas the "prayer" and the "supplication" are in the singular, the word "thanksgiving" is in the plural. We are to open our mouths with "thanksgivings" to God, both for those things we have been given, and also for the opportunity to lay before Him those things which we hope for. It is in this way that we are to let our "requests be made known to God."

We are to lay our hearts out to Him and hold nothing back as if it is too small and trivial to pester Him with, or too great to weary Him with. In all things, we are to so come before God.

Life application: If you struggle with anxiety, what should you do about that? Do exactly the same thing that you are instructed to do with all other things – bring it before God. Even the issue by which we are directed to make our prayers is something that we can pray about.

*Heavenly Father, Your word asks us to be anxious for nothing, but we are often unable to comply with that. And so in our times of anxiety, please provide us with the moral support we need, and help us to remember that even our anxieties are something we can pray to You about. When we face such times of stress about the unknown, give us reminders, showing us that You are here with us. You already know what lies ahead, and so help us to place our unknowns in Your capable hands. Amen.*

**...and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:7**

Paul's words now are written as a prescription containing the medicine for the anxious soul of the previous verse. With the knowledge of what Christ has done, and of what He promises for us because of what He has done, instead of being anxious we have the ability to receive "the peace of God."

It is true that we cannot see the future as it unfolds before us, but we can see the ultimate end which is promised to us. Because of this, if we can just keep our eyes on what we know lies ahead because of Christ, we should be able to obtain and live in this peace. It is a peace which was promised in the Old Testament countless times. Isaiah records that it was available in the Lord –

*"You will keep *him* in perfect peace,  
Whose mind is stayed on You,  
Because he trusts in You."* Isaiah 26:3

When Christ came, the promise was repeated for those who looked for the coming Messiah. Upon His birth, the peace long-promised had taken human form –

*"Glory to God in the highest,  
And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!"* Luke 2:14

And after His work was almost complete, Christ Jesus promised this same peace to those who followed Him –

*"Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."* John 14:27

It is a peace, as Paul notes, "...which surpasses all understanding."

It could never have been conceived of by man that complete and total restoration with God would come. Man could never have believed that what Christ did would absolutely assure us of a state where anxiety and conflict with God would be eradicated. But in Christ it has come. Even now for the believer, if we try to get our minds around what the work of Christ has accomplished and what it promises, we simply cannot.

Why would God have done what He did in Christ? It is mind boggling. And how could such marvelous assurances be granted to us when we continue to stray from His word, even after having received Jesus as Lord? It is astonishing. Truly such peace surpasses all understanding! And yet, because it is true, it is able “to guard your hearts and minds.”

A guard is a sentinel. It is one who watches out for dangers, sounds the alarm, and defends against the onslaught of the enemy. This is what the peace of God can do for us if we simply trust in Him. We can look beyond the trials which afflict us, and we can have the assurance that whatever they may be, they are temporary and futile in stealing us away from the sure promises which are ours to claim, “through Christ Jesus.”

This final term is the key to the entire thought. It is only through Christ Jesus that this peace is attainable. It is He who died for the atonement of our sins. It is He who was resurrected unto eternal life, being found without sin. And it is He who guarantees these things to us when we are found in Him.

We can have the absolute confidence that God’s word is true, and that His promises are sure because Christ Jesus has gone before us.

Life application: If you really believe the message of Christ, then you can cast all your cares upon Him, because He cares for you. The peace of God can, in fact, fill you completely and absolutely if you simply meditate on what His work means for you. Allow yourself to be filled with this peace. Christ has prevailed. What can the world do to us?

*Lord God, Your word promises us Your peace, a peace which surpasses all understanding. And how could we not have this! Christ died for our sins, He was resurrected for our justification, and He promises this to any and all who will simply believe. We have the absolute assurance of full and complete restoration with You because of Him. And so, what should we fear? Your peace is there if we simply receive it. Thank God for Jesus Christ who has done so very much for us! Amen.*

**Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things. Philippians 4:8**

Once again, as in verse 3:1, Paul uses the word “finally.”

Unlike there though, he is truly concluding his epistle, giving the final closing thoughts to his beloved church in Philippi. Again, as in 3:1, he calls them “brethren.”

He is showing his fraternal love for them in this manner. It is, therefore, a call that his coming words are to be taken in that light. He wants them to understand that just as he would pursue certain things with his walk, this is what he wants them to do also. They are united in Christ and should all conduct their affairs in that manner. With this in mind, he next says, “whatever things *are* true.”

In the world there is truth, and then there is falsehood. Quite often that which is false seems easier to comply with, or maybe easier to digest. But such an expediency is never the appropriate path to follow. The Greek word is an adjective which gives the sense of “*attested* because *tested* – literally, ‘what can't be hidden’” (HELPS Word Studies).

It is found in the book of John more than any other book. Jesus used the word many times, highlighting that truth is a most important aspect of our understanding of that which is correct to follow. Following this he says, “whatever things *are* just.”

The word in Greek gives the sense of that which is honorable. It is used four times in the New Testament, only by Paul, and this is its only use outside of the pastoral epistles. HELPS Word Studies defines it as, “...what is august (dignified, has ‘gravitas’); weighty, deeply respected because viewed as majestic (having ‘gravity’); grave.” Such things are in contrast to that which is lowly and indecent, even depraved. He next says, “whatever things *are* pure.”

Again, HELPS Word Studies provides us with the intent behind the word. It means “*pure* (to the *core*); *virginal* (chaste, unadulterated); pure *inside and out*; *holy* because *uncontaminated* (undefiled from sin), i.e. without spoilation even within (even down to the center of one's being); not *mixed* with guilt or anything condemnable.”

Following this, he says, “whatever things *are* lovely.” This word is found only here in the Bible. Vincent’s Word Studies defines it as, “Adapted to excite love, and to endear him who does such things.”

He then goes on to, “whatever things *are* of good report.” This also is a word found only here in the New Testament, and it means something which is spoken in a charitable spirit, worthy of praise, and of good reputation. From there he goes on to note, “if *there* is any virtue and if *there* is anything praiseworthy.”

The first word, translated as “virtue,” is used only here by Paul, but Peter uses it in both of his epistles. It speaks of that which is of moral virtue and even excellence, meaning perfection. The second thought, which is translated as “worthy of praise,” is well-translated. It indicates something truly laudable. In all of the things he has stated, he sums up with the words, “meditate on these things.”

It is to be the Christian's duty to carefully think on, and pay attention to, each of these things. We are to direct our minds on such things and not to anything which opposes them. If we do this, then our hearts and minds will be properly influenced, and our lives will be led in a manner which is acceptable to the Lord.

Life application: Go back and read the words of this verse. Think on them today. As you do, take time to consider what they are saying. Should negative thoughts come your way, redirect your mind based on what Paul exhorts here. In the future, continue to follow this pattern. You will grow in holiness and in a life which is glorifying of the Lord.

*Heavenly Father, help us to consider things that are good and noble, and to think on that which is morally right and decent. When we come across something that would direct our attention away from You, grant us that we would redirect our thoughts to that which is lovely and decent. In all things, may our minds be filled with the beauty which You have granted to us, and not the base and lowly things which so easily distract us from a right walk with You. Help us in this, O Lord. Amen.*

**The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you. Philippians 4:9**

Paul again calls attention to the need for following the example he has set down. He did this in verse 3:17, and now he continues to exhort this to his readers at Philippi (and thus us!) by saying, “The things which you learned and received.”

These are the things he would have directly instructed them through this and any other epistle, and also anything they would have heard from him as personal instruction while he was with them.

They are the things he received by revelation, and which he would then have instructed them, explaining that they are the words of the Lord. They learned from him, and they received it as under the authority he claimed. He then says, “and heard and saw in me.”

These are the things they would have noted about him personally. He gave instruction, but did he live in accord with the words he spoke? When a pastor instructs someone to avoid sexual sin, does he then go out and engage in sexual sin?

Paul conformed his life to what he received from the Lord. Therefore, his words were conformed to what he instructed, and his actions conformed to that as well. Because of this, he exhorts them by saying, “these do.”

In essence, “As you have learned from me, as you have received from me by what I taught, as you have heard my words, and as you have watched my actions... all of these you are to likewise follow.” In doing this, there will be a reward. Compliance does not lead to a dull existence, but it generates a glorious relationship in that “the God of peace will be with you.”

There is an inversion here from the words of verse 4:7. There it said, “the peace of God.” Here it says, “the God of peace.” God left us His peace through Christ Jesus, but He did not leave us in the process. We have more than a simple token left behind; we have the Giver of the token dwelling among us and in us when we conduct our lives in accord with what He has revealed.

The opposite will then be true. If we fail to follow in these things, we will have neither the peace of God to guide us, nor will we have the God of peace with us. Instead, we will have nothing but trials, anxieties, and frustrations on the one hand, and no fellowship to comfort us on the other. What a price to pay for being disobedient children!

Life application: If you want the peace of God, and the God of peace to guide you and be with you, then pay heed to His word in your life, apply His word to your life, and set your eyes on what lies ahead of this life. By living out the faith that you profess, the peace you seek from the God you seek will be yours.

*Heavenly Father, You have promised that those who are in Christ, and who pay heed to Your word, will have a special blessing. You have said that You will not only grant Your peace to them, but You, the God of peace, will be with them. Help us then to hold fast to Your word, applying it to our lives, and living out the faith that we profess. This we pray to Your glory. Amen.*

**But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your care for me has flourished again; though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity. Philippians 4:10**

Paul now refers to the giving by the saints in Philippi for his needs. However, despite it having come from them and their labors, he ascribes it to having come from the Lord. He says, “But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly.”

He moves the gratitude up to the place from which it originally stems. It is not in any way a lessening of his thanks to them, but rather a highlighting of it. If someone compliments a preacher on a great sermon, he does well to say, “Then give the glory to the Lord.”

He is acknowledging the Source of the goodness which they received. The same is true with Paul’s words now. Understanding this, he then says, “that now at last your care for me has flourished again.”

The word he uses is found only here in the New Testament, and it signifies “to revive.” It is what happens with the trees in spring as they sprout new leaves and revive in the warm sun and refreshing showers. It would be what a pot of flowers would do which was deprived of water, but which revived as it received water once again. Paul is saying that the care of him by the Philippians was received by him; their care has revived him in this manner because of it.

He then acknowledges that the deprivation of their care was not of their making, or because of a lack of attention to him. Rather, he says, “though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity.”

The distance to reach him, the sickness of Epaphroditus, possibly because of his incarceration making it impossible, and so forth, all led to this inability of them to tend to him. However, that was now past.

Life application: Sometimes we may take things in the wrong way when we do not hear from another person for some amount of time, or because they have not attended to us in the way that was normal in the past. In such instances, the reason may be something wholly unexpected, and so it is best to not let such lapses cause an unnecessary division.

Instead, we need to handle them with care and hopefully find out the reason for them in a godly and patient manner.

*Lord God, give us wisdom in dealing with others so that we don’t rush into unnecessary or unsound judgments concerning the things they do. Obviously, we don’t have all of the information concerning why others do certain things, and so grant us the ability to first*

*find out what may be misunderstood by us before we fly off the handle and cause harm to the relationship. Surely peace and harmony are preferable to strife any day. Help us in this, O Lord. Amen.*

**Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content:** Philippians 4:11

Paul, having noted that the care of him by the Philippians had “flourished again,” now notes that what was given to him was a blessing beyond basic needs. He states this by saying, “Not that I speak in regard to need.”

The “I” here is emphatic. It is his way of saying that his needs were always met, and that what they gave to care for him brought him above that basic state. If he did not receive their care, he would still make do. He conveys this in the words, “for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content.”

The word for “content” here is *autárkēs*. It is an adjective found only here in the Bible and which means, “self-sufficient, content in the sense of being satisfied because living in God’s content (fulness). This inward sufficiency is as valid in ‘low times’ (suffering) as in ‘high times’ (temporal prosperity)” (HELPS Word Studies).

The word was used by the stoics to show that they were capable of handling all situations that they were in. Paul uses it, not as a source of pride, but rather as his way of showing that in Christ, he was made capable of meeting all necessities without burdening others. This can be inferred from countless other passages where he demonstrates his total reliance on the Lord in all ways and at all times.

His life experiences had brought him to this state, and he was able to put his trust in the Lord no matter what situation he found himself in. This is seen elsewhere, such as in Acts 20 –

“I have coveted no one’s silver or gold or apparel. <sup>34</sup>Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me.”

-Acts 20:33, 34

Life application: The Bible conveys to us the importance of not relying on others, but self-sufficiency. It even goes on to show that we are to care for others who cannot care for themselves. However, it never teaches that loafers should be cared for so that they can continue to loaf.



*Lord God, Your word is clear that we are to tend to our own needs. We are to be self-sufficient, productive, and not to rely on others when we are capable of taking care of ourselves. It goes on to show that we are to care for others who cannot care for themselves. This excludes loafers, slackers, slouches, the lazy, and the indolent. For them, Your word says that if they do not work, they do not eat. How could we have fallen so far from these precepts in today's world? Help us to convey the message that hard work and industry is a part of Your desire for us. Keep us from being leeches on society, and give us hearts to care for the truly needy. Amen.*

**I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.**

Philippians 4:12

The words of this verse explain what he just said. Taken together, they read –

“Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: <sup>12</sup>I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.”

Saying, “I know how to be abased,” indicates that in a state of deprivation, he could still properly function. The word used indicates “being brought low,” or “being humbled.”

Next, he says, “and I know how to abound.” This is in contrast to being abased. It indicates “to exceed the ordinary,” and thus a state of surplus. When things were going exceptionally well, he took it in stride.

Such times of abundance did not change him into a prideful soul, nor did he learn to rely on that abundance. Instead, when things abounded for him, he understood that it was simply a gift from the Lord. Following this, he says, “Everywhere and in all things.”

It is an absolute statement concerning every facet of his life. Wherever he walked, and whatever came his way, it was included in the attitude he now possessed. And this attitude was that, “I have learned.”

The word used more fully means, “I have learned the secret.” It is a metaphor which comes from the rites of initiation in pagan mysteries, and so it signifies something like, “I have been initiated.” From his past life, he had been initiated into this attitude which he

now possessed. The secret of contentment was learned. This contentment was “both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.”

His contrasting words show the totality of his life experiences. To him, he could get along with any extreme without demonstrating the negative qualities which normally surround someone when faced with the same. In times of being full, there was no need to boast; in times of famine, there was no need to worry.

To Paul, life was lived for Christ. This carnal, temporary world was not the only hope he possessed, and so whatever the state, it was nothing more than another step on the way to final glory.

Life application: Paul’s attitude in this verse is one which we should strive to emulate. If we can truly acknowledge that whatever we are facing now is the Lord’s will, then we can trust that it is the proper place to be, even if it is a place of deprivation or total loss. Glory lies ahead. This temporary life is not the totality of our existence.

*Lord God, help each of us to focus on the eternal. Whether we face lack or abundance, or whether we face joy or pain. Each thing that we experience was ordained for us by You, and it is temporary. There is a great glory which lies ahead for those in Christ, and so help us to keep our eyes, hearts, and thoughts directed to that glory. Help us to not be anxious or frustrated, or overly confident. Instead help us to trust in Your provision as being perfect for each moment. Amen.*

**I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. Philippians 4:13**

This verse is not merely a stand-alone thought, but is given as a result of the previous verse. Taken together, they read –

“I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. <sup>13</sup> I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”

This is important to consider, because we cannot really “do all things” through Christ. We can only do those things which Christ allows us to do, and which He provides for us to do. Paul did not heal Trophimus when he was sick (2 Timothy 4:20). There are many things which Paul “could not do” which are recorded in the Bible. And so, to use this verse as a means of claiming stuff in Jesus’ name is wholly inappropriate.

Rather, his thought is that he can endure all things; he can suffer through all things; and he has been given strength in all things concerning his situation – whatever that may be. It is Christ who gives him the ability to do this.

Understanding this, we can apply his words to our own walk, knowing that he is setting the example for us. We can endure through any and all trials that come our way. We can be strengthened through times of temptation, thus not yielding to its pressure. We can stand calmly as the world spins out of control around us, not fearing what others will fear. We can do these things because our hope is an eternal one. Yes, we may suffer, and suffer greatly. However, we have a hope which transcends the suffering because Christ has gone before us.

As a side note, the word “Christ” is not in many manuscripts. It may have been a later addition. Those other sources state something like, “I can do all things through Him...” The intent is not changed, but if your version says this, that is the reason why.

Life application: Context matters. To take a verse out of context will inevitably result in the formation of a pretext. Keep things in context, and know that verses like this one are intended to strengthen us for our walk filled with trials, not pave the way for a walk without them.

*Lord God, because of Christ who has gone before us, we can have the strength and the resolve to endure through any trial we may face. He has already faced much worse, and He has prevailed over them – raised to eternal life. There is no thing that this world can bring against us which can separate us from Him, and so there is nothing for us to fear in the meantime. We have an eternal hope – guaranteed through the work of Christ. Thank You for this marvelous surety that we possess because of Him! Amen.*

**Nevertheless you have done well that you shared in my distress. Philippians 4:14**

The words of the previous verses spoke of Paul’s ability to be content in any and every situation without the need of external help. His reliance was on the Lord, and he therefore was satisfied in whatever state he was in. However, this was not intended to mean that he was not grateful for the gift which was sent to him. It is for this reason that he states what he does now.

“Nevertheless” is given to show that despite his ability to handle any situation, no matter how negative, it didn’t mean that he wanted to have such situations. Nor did it

mean that a helping hand in one of them was unappreciated. Because of their help, he says, “you have done well.”

It was no small thing to him that they had tended to his needs. Rather, it was of great blessing to him. This then goes back to his words of verse 1:7 –

“...just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers with me of grace.” Philippians 1:7

Their gift made them partakers with him in the grace of defending and confirming the gospel. Though he was the one in chains, they “shared in” his distress. Together, they were workers for Christ. Each had their assigned role, and their help was a part of the process. As he noted, he could have done without the gift, but because of it they were a help to him, and it was also a proof of their love for him.

In Acts 20, he had told the Ephesian church the words of the Lord, that “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (20:35). Without saying that to the church at Philippi directly, he still conveys the thought. They are the more blessed because they have given. He is the recipient of their gift, and he is also blessed because of it.

Life application: Do you help support any missionaries? They may have struggles that we don’t even know about, and yet they continue to do their jobs. Most are entirely dependent on funding from others.

In sending something to them, you will certainly be blessed. And they will be blessed as well. Be sure to remember to send something along to them so that they know they are not out in the world all alone.

*Lord God, Your word tells us that it is more blessed to give than to receive. There are many needs out there that we can help with and thus obtain such a blessing. Help us to remember our missionaries, the ministries which tend to others, and friends who are in need. And then prompt us on to giving for those needs. Help us to not withhold a blessing from them and thus deprive ourselves of an even greater blessing. Amen.*

**Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only.** Philippians 4:15

Up to now, Paul has spoken of the church at Philippi as having shared in his time of distress, meaning the time he was writing. In this verse, he looks back over the past years and commends them for having done so previously as well. What is believed to be a full twelve years earlier, he says, “Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel...”

The proper name “Philippians” is in the emphatic position here. He is highlighting what they have done. The term Paul uses indicates the beginning of their hearing and receiving the gospel. When Paul came to preach it among them, and when they received his words, it was the “beginning of the gospel” for them. It was during this period, and as he notes, “when I departed from Macedonia.” This is recorded in Acts 17.

When first in Philippi (Acts 16) he moved on to Thessalonica (Acts 17:1). From there he moved on again to Berea (Acts 17:10). Due to trouble there, he decided to leave Macedonia and head into Greece (Acts 17:14). It was probably at this time that he received assistance from them. Or it could be shortly after in Acts 18:5 when Silas and Timothy met up with him in Corinth that they brought a gift from Philippi. As he notes, “no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only.”

Those in Philippi heard of his fleeing from Macedonia, and they determined to not only pray for him, but to send along a gift to help with the expenses of his travels. This was obviously unsolicited, and he is reminding them of their generosity these many years later.

The idea of “giving and receiving” that he speaks of is a metaphor connected to a commercial transaction where one pays for something and there is then an exchange with the goods which were paid for.

Charles Ellicott notes that they “‘...opened (so to speak) an account with me,’ not of debit and credit, but ‘of free giving and receiving.’” Paul was the recipient of their gracious giving. It would be like having a monthly charge taken out of one’s credit card to pay the expenses of a missionary.

Some even think of it as an allusion to 1 Corinthians 9:11 where the sowing of spiritual things by Paul would, in return, find them giving of their earthly wealth to support him. However, Paul never asked for this, and so it is an unlikely stretch of his words.

He is simply grateful that someone saw fit to send him a gift as he continued to minister to others. They, a young and poor church, saw the need for Paul's mission not only among them, but also among any to whom he would be led to.

Life application: How willing are we to give of our worldly possessions in order to ensure that the message of Christ Jesus will continue to be proclaimed. This includes both missionary work being funded in order for the word to go out for the first time, and also for the maintenance of the church where the word is explained and fellowship is found.

The amount you give may be directly connected to the value your heart places on the message which is being conveyed.

*Heavenly Father, how grateful we are for those who are in the ministry and tending to the needs of others. Missionaries go out to proclaim Your word, there are churches which faithfully explain Your word, and there are scholars and translators who carefully maintain Your word. Each has his place, and each is a necessary part of Your body. Help us to be faithful in tending to the needs of those who do these things – to Your glory. Amen.*

**For even in Thessalonica you sent *aid* once and again for my necessities.**

Philippians 4:16

Philippi was an extremely poor church as far as worldly wealth is concerned. On the other hand, Thessalonica was much richer. And yet, it was the Philippians who supported Paul while he was in Thessalonica. The Greek reads, "both once and twice" they sent aid to him. It is a way of saying that they helped him, and then sent more again later.

Paul even notes in both 1 & 2 Thessalonians that he worked with his own hands in order to support himself. This is something he could not have written to them unless it was true. Along with his own work, he received from Philippi, but not from the Thessalonians–

"For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil; for laboring night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, we preached to you the gospel of God."

-1 Thessalonians 2:9

“...nor did we eat anyone’s bread free of charge, but worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you,” 2 Thessalonians 3:8

What this verse then shows us is that those in Philippi helped him not only when he departed Macedonia (verse 15), but even while still in Macedonia and attending to a sister church. It may seem curious that he would accept help from one church that was so poor, and not from other churches which were wealthy, but Paul was teaching each a lesson.

The poor were exalted through their giving, while the rich were humbled through his example of working with his own hands. Neither was inappropriate, but perfect for the circumstances of the church. He wisely instructed others about how to conduct themselves in both spiritual matters, and in life’s daily matters which were connected to the spiritual.

Life application: Let us remember those who are in the field and in need, helping them with their necessities. Let us also tend to them with an additional blessing so that they can be filled.

*Heavenly Father, thank You for the care You have for each of us. We may have abundant life, good things, blue skies, and the ability to work with our hands – each a blessing from You. Or, we may have trials and troubles and gray skies. And yet, these also are blessings from You. They show us that we are ultimately dependent on You for true fulfillment. Help us to realize that the low spots are just as important as the high mountain peaks. And give us the wisdom to thank You for both. Amen.*

**Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account.**

Philippians 4:17

Paul now speaks of “the gift” from the Philippians to him. He is being delicate in order to make it clear that he is not seeking anything more from them. There is no insinuation that he would do so. Rather, he says, “but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account.”

Fruit in the Bible is that which results from something else. If something positive is done, then good fruit is the result. If something evil is done, then the result will be bad fruit. Therefore, he is saying that he looks for them to have a positive result added to their account. If it be because of a gift to him, then that is a blessing indeed.

He will expand on this in verse 19. His words show that it is as if there is an account set up from which the church draws blessings for their efforts. In the case of the gift to him, their account was growing. This is similar to the thought of Proverbs 19:17 –

“He who has pity on the poor lends to the Lord,  
And He will pay back what he has given.”

Though a poor person cannot pay back a debt, it is considered as a payment to the Lord who can repay it, and He can do so with abundance added in. Such is the general idea of the words of Paul to the Philippians.

Life application: Jesus told Israel to “Give to everyone who asks of you.” The idea is that when someone is in need, we should not withhold our hand from helping him. He also tells us elsewhere to be wise and discerning. Therefore, His words are to be taken in the sense of true needs. Let us be willing to help those who are truly in need, not withholding what will help them out.

*Lord God, help us to be faithful in taking care of the needs of others who are truly in need. And yet, help us to be wise and discerning in what is asked of us. There are many who would take advantage of our generosity, even though they are fully capable of taking care of their own needs. Often, it is hard for us to know the truth, so lead us to use what You have given us wisely, and in a way which will always glorify You. Amen.*

**Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God.**  
Philippians 4:18

This abounding which Paul speaks of concerns the gift which he has received from them. He was in distress as is noted in verse 14. They understood this and sent along the gift to help him in his plight. From that gift, he was not only brought out of distress, but he was full, even to over-flowing, as is seen in the words, “I have all and abound.” And then again he says, “I am full.”

There was no lack, but instead he was fully satisfied, as he says, “having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you.”

As a congregation, they came together and decided upon a gift for him. After that, they chose Epaphroditus to be the one to carry the gift to him. When he came to Paul, the



gift was received by him as a gift not to himself, but as an offering to God of which he was the benefactor.

In Israel, certain offerings were taken to the temple. These were received by the priests and then offered to God. However, in many of the offerings, only a portion was presented on the altar, and the rest became the priest's portion. However, the entire offering was one which was truly considered as given to the Lord.

Paul had received this gift in this manner, noting that it was "a sweet-smelling aroma." This is Old Testament terminology for a sacrifice which was acceptable to God. It is not that God has a nose, but that what was offered was considered as if He did.

In fact, certain offerings came with a measure of frankincense added to them. This was taken, along with the portion of meat to be burned, and both were then burned on the altar. The word used to describe this burning (Heb: *qatar*) specifically meant "incense," and it indicated "to make sacrifices smoke."

This is what Paul is referring to here. It was thus "an acceptable sacrifice." God was pleased with their offering which was given to Paul as if it was made directly to Him, and it was deemed as such. Therefore, it was "well pleasing to God."

It was as if the smoke of the sacrifice offered by them burned as incense and rose into the heavens to Him as a pleasing aroma.

Life application: When we make an offering with a true heart, and in a manner which is Christian and Christ-like, that offering is considered by God as an acceptable offering to Him. Because of this, let our hearts and intents be pure in our giving. Just because an offering is made, it does not automatically follow through that it is pleasing to God. Only when such an offering is done in faith is it truly considered as well pleasing to Him.

*Lord God, help us to make offerings which are acceptable to You. Help us to give in faith, and faithfully, without attaching strings to what we offer. Your word shows us that offerings which are not in faith are actually displeasing to You. And so Lord, remind us of when we give that we are to do so with the right heart and attitude towards You. May our offerings, given in the name of Christ Jesus our Lord, be acceptable to You as if they actually rose to Your throne as a sweet fragrance. Amen.*

**And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.**  
Philippians 4:19

The words “my God” here are emphatic. He is making a stress based on what he just said concerning “God.” If read together, the stress becomes more evident –

“Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things *sent* from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing **to God**. 19 And **my God** shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”

The offering they made was acceptable to God, who is Paul’s God. He will then draw the two thoughts together in the next verse. For now, he says, “And my God shall supply all your need.”

In the Greek, it reads “And my God will fill up all the needs of you.” It is not just a single need that they will have filled, but all needs, both physical and spiritual. Whatever is lacking will be made full. However, this is not a promise for prosperity. Needs do not equate to desires. God gives us everything we need, but it is not always what we want.

The Christian who stands ready to be executed for his faith in Christ does not stand and say, “I claim that BMW at the car-lot.” The prosperity gospel is no gospel. The needs of that person are met in his life, or in his death, by God who has promised us so much more than this temporary, woe-filled life. All that He gives for our needs are “according to His riches.”

There is no limit of God’s ability to give. He can and He will provide abundance to each according to the need, but He will also provide so much more at times as well. In our eternal state, we shall never lack or have want.

The riches of God will flow like a never-ending river to satisfy His people. Again however, we need to be careful to make a distinction between what is a need and what is a desire lest we fall into the false teaching of the prosperity gospel.

Paul continues by saying that each need is given according to His riches “in glory.” What is on Paul’s mind with the words “in glory” is debated. Some scholars tie this to the word “riches.” Others will connect it with the word “supply.” And then even that can be subdivided between “supply your need with glory” meaning “with glory to you,” or “with His glory.”

It is hard to be dogmatic, but Vincent’s Word Studies gives a good, well-rounded thought with, “The need shall be supplied in glory and by glory; by placing you in glory where

you shall be partakers of glory.” No matter which is correct, Paul finishes with “in glory by Christ Jesus.”

The word “by” in Greek means “in.” Therefore, it is provided to God’s people by their union with Christ. And so, he is not making a statement to anyone except those who are of the faith. God does not meet the needs of people “by” Christ Jesus for those who are not “in” Christ Jesus.

Life application: It is important to make the distinction between what is a need and what is a want. When we confuse the two, our hope and trust in the Lord may be weakened when we don’t get what we want. Let us understand that God meets all of our needs according to His wisdom. We will never have a time when our needs are not met. But our needs are what He determines, not what we feel is correct.

*Glorious Heavenly Father, You have promised to meet all the needs of Your people. Help us to be wise enough to know the difference between needs and wants. If we believe that we will get everything we want, but then that doesn’t happen, our trust in You may falter. But when we realize that our needs are always met, then our hope and trust in You will remain strong at all times. Grant us this wisdom and help us to have a correct knowledge of these things. To Your glory we pray. Amen.*

**Now to our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.** Philippians 4:20

Paul now issues forth a doxology similar to others elsewhere in his letters. Taken with the previous two verses, we see that he is tying “God” here to “God” in the previous verses, but referring to Him in a new way. Here are the three verses together -

“Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, **well pleasing to God.** <sup>19</sup> **And my God** shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. <sup>20</sup> **Now to our God** and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.”

He has gone from a general reference, to a specific but singular reference, to a specific and plural reference. In this verse, “our God” is the object of praise from the church as a whole. All share in His goodness, and He in turn is worthy of the worship of all. It is to “our God and Father” then that this is due. Because of Christ, we are brought into the son-ship of God, and we are reckoned as children of God. He has become our heavenly Father because of Jesus.

It is to Him that shall “be glory forever and ever.” However, there is an article which is missing in this translation. In Greek, it says, “the glory.” Paul shows by his use of “glory” in the previous verse, and the use of “the glory” in this verse, that there is a glory which we can participate in, but there is a specific glory which belongs to God alone.

It is a part of His nature which is incommunicable. This particular glory belongs to Him, and it does so “forever and ever;” or as the Greek reads “for the ages of ages.” It is a term which indicates in the strongest sense that it will never, never end. He finishes with “Amen.”

So be it, and thus it is so. Using “Amen” here shows the absolute and pivotal importance of the truth of the statement he has made.

Life application: Paul is known to break into sudden doxologies at various times in his letters. Sometimes they happen only at the end, but not always. He let his sense of awe at what God has done guide him in his praise of God – at any and every moment that was appropriate. We should likewise follow this habit.

If we are overflowing with awe, then let it out. Whether walking alone on a path of beauty in the deep woods, or posting on FB after contemplating His splendor, let our voices and words reflect His surpassing glory with praise to Him. Don’t hold it back!

*Lord God, You are surpassingly glorious in all ways! To You alone belongs the glory, and to You alone are praises due. May we never withhold our tongues in praise when we are filled to overflowing with the wonder of Your works. How can we withhold from You the praise of our lips when we contemplate Your majesty? May it never be so! Glory to You in the highest, O God. And again, glory to You in the highest! Amen.*

**Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren who are with me greet you.**

Philippians 4:21

In many letters, Paul personally addresses individuals. Here he makes a more general statement without specifically noting anyone. It is unsure why this is the case, but it may be because he has already mentioned several people in the epistle, and he does not want to make specific greetings which might then give the impression that his attitude was less favorable to those he earlier mentioned (such as Euodia and Syntyche) than he led on. For whatever reason, he simply says, “Greet every saint in Christ Jesus.”

All who are in Christ Jesus are, by default, saints. The idea of sainthood found in the Roman Catholic Church is wholly unbiblical and without any merit at all. Rather, any and all who have received Christ Jesus are “in” Christ Jesus and they are saints. He would have all greeted in accord with this distinction. He then notes that “The brethren who are with me greet you.”

Why the term “brethren” is used here instead of “saints” is of great talk among scholars. Many say that he is speaking of the Jewish believers that were with him. It is true that there were Jewish believers with him, but this would then leave obvious omissions, and it would also illogically divide the body.

First, it would omit any Gentiles with him. We know from 1:1 and 2:19 that Timothy is there with him. It is not to be expected that he would so faithfully mention him twice and then ignore him in his final words. Secondly, to say that the Jews only were brethren would leave out the Gentiles, but he uses the term of Gentiles elsewhere many times. Suffice it to say that Paul is simply using the term “brethren” as an indication of the believers there with him, each a saint as well.

And as an important note, Peter is never mentioned here, in Philemon, in Romans, etc. when addressing or referring to those in Rome. It shows us without any doubt at all that Peter was not the first “Pope.”

If he were, it would be the highest dishonor to overlook such a lofty thing as that. The Roman Catholic claim that Peter was the first Pope does not bear up at all when the words of the Bible are considered. The claim is false.

Life application: When reading commentaries, be careful to not just assume that the commentator is correct, thus making a new squiggle in your brain which is incorrect. Instead, read commentaries, and then evaluate what has been written against what you already know about Scripture. Oh but wait! How can you do that unless you ALREADY KNOW SCRIPTURE? Read your Bible!

*Lord God Almighty... We are often provided with commentaries on Your word. We must then decide if what those commentaries say is in line with the rest of Your word. If they are not, and we accept them as correct, our theology will be faulty. But how are we to know UNLESS WE ALREADY KNOW OUR BIBLE? What a shame it is that we would ask questions of others concerning Your word without first having at least a basic idea of what it says. If we do not, we are only setting ourselves up for disaster. And so, give us*

*the wisdom to get up each day and read this precious, marvelous gift which You have given to us. May we stand approved before You in our life and doctrine. Amen.*

**All the saints greet you, but especially those who are of Caesar's household.**

Philippians 4:22

“All the saints” seems to show that “brethren” of the previous verse are those who were with Paul more directly. The others, being referred to as “all the saints,” are those who were found throughout Rome. They, either personally, or by representative coming to visit Paul, had asked to be remembered to the Philippians when he hailed them in this letter. He goes on to say though, “but especially those who are of Caesar's household.”

This is a term which included all levels within Nero's scope of influence, from the lowest slave or freedman even to the highest official. The term “Caesar” is an appellation applied to the office, just as Pharaoh was ascribed to the ruler of Egypt. Thus, it speaks of whoever is in the office at the time, which during the time of Paul's letter was Nero.

It is debated why Paul would single these people out, but it may be that it is showing those in Philippi that even the very halls of power were being converted to Christ. If those in such a high place had bowed the knee to Christ, then it was a warm assurance that this life truly means far less than what lies ahead.

The place of wealth, power, and pomp was considered as of less importance than that house which is being prepared for those who wait patiently on the Lord. It can even be deduced that Paul's chains, as are noted in verse 1:13, were to be preferred above anything that this world could offer, even in the highest place of the Roman Empire.

Life application: There have been many powerful people in church history who have willingly bowed the knee to Christ Jesus. As Isaiah prophesied so long ago, “Kings shall shut their mouths at Him.”

It is the highest honor of all to be called a Christian, and therefore, we should never feel that our personal state – whether rich or poor, popular or not, or any other worldly distinction – is a reason to be exalted or humiliated. When we have Christ, we are the most blessed of all.

*Lord God, there is no greater honor to be found than to bear the title of a follower of Christ. Whether a president, a movie star, or a janitor, all are on an equal level before the matchless King. Whether we have much or little, we who are in Christ are the fullest of*

*all, even to overflowing, because of the abundance He provides. Let us never be ashamed of our worldly position, but let us glory in our state which is derived from being called a Christian. Thank God for Jesus Christ who exalts the lowly and who brings us into favor with the Father. Amen.*

**The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.** Philippians 4:23

This final greeting is similar to that of many of his other closing statements. “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ” is one of the greatest concepts found in the Bible. Man is fallen and man needs grace for his salvation and for his continued walk with the Lord. Paul asks for this stupendous blessing to be bestowed upon those in Philippi (and thus us!).

In this petition, it is understood that they are undeserving of it. One cannot merit grace. Therefore, the petition is one of hope that this unmerited favor “of our Lord Jesus Christ” will continue to be lavished upon them – sinners already saved by that same grace.

This grace, being unmerited, is especially highlighted here for them to consider their position before God. As with other churches addressed in his epistles, they have been tempted by those who reject Christ; they have been led astray to deeds of the flesh; etc.

Paul is reminding them that they stand by grace and that this grace should be with them all. Some Greek manuscripts instead say “...with your spirit.” Which is correct is debated. Either way, the spirit is the highest part of man. It is the aspect of us which is reconnected to God because of grace, not works.

Man spiritually died when Adam disobeyed God; Jesus Christ regenerates our spirit through His work. Faith in that deed, and faith alone, is what brings this about. Paul asks them to consider this and let this grace continue to be that which guides their spirit. And with that, he closes with “Amen.” So be it!

Life application: If you have come to the book of Philippians, read it, contemplated it, and still think that you should be pursuing works of the law in order to make God happy (or happier) with you; or if you believe that you can live a life of licentiousness because you are “already saved” and so it doesn’t matter, you have a serious issue with understanding grace. You may not be saved at all.

One cannot earn grace, and considering grace as a license to sin is perverse. Put away such things, and stop sneering at God's offer of peace. Be reconciled to God through the cross of Jesus Christ.

*Lord God, we are all on different levels of spiritual understanding, but there is one point which even the youngest child can grasp – we cannot earn grace. You have offered it to us, and all we need to do is to reach out our hand and receive it. Help us to never add to what You have done through the grace found in the cross of Jesus. May we boast in what He has done, and put away our deeds of the flesh in our pitiful attempt to please You. And also, O God, may we never use the grace You have granted us as license to sin. Instead, may we live holy lives, dedicated to You. We praise You for Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.*