

Philippians

The opening remarks of this epistle contain what is normally found in Paul's greetings: identification of the writer (and an associate if present), the readers, a blessing, and a prayer of thanksgiving.

Greeting

1:1 Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons: 2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Apostle **Paul** wrote this epistle to his close friends, the Christians in Philippi, most likely from his Roman house arrest described at the end of Acts (Acts 28:30-31) as he waited for his court appearance before Caesar (probably around the year AD 61).

Timothy was an associate of Paul's and may have served as his secretary as Paul wrote this letter (2 Thess. 3:17), but Timothy was not the coauthor of it (1:3; 2:19-23). The Philippians knew him since he had been with Paul when Paul had founded the church in Philippi (Acts 16:1-12) and on other occasions (Acts 19:22; 20:3-6). Paul adds Timothy here as a second witness, which makes this letter more sure.

slaves of Christ Jesus – Paul characterized himself and Timothy as slaves (bond-servants) of Christ, a favorite title of early Christian leaders (James 1:1; 2 Peter 1:1; Jude 1:1; Rev. 1:1). This word probably carries a double connotation. Gentile hearers would have instinctively understood the word to refer to those owned by, and subservient to, the master of a household.

At the same time, however, in the Greek translation of the Old Testament (the LXX), this word was also used to translate the term “servant of Yahweh [the LORD].” “The slave of the Lord” thus carried a sense of distance from and dependence on God, while at the same time being a kind of honorific title for those in special service to God (Moses, 2 Kings 18:12; Joshua, Josh 24:29).

This double connotation is probably at work in Paul's present usage. He and Timothy are “**slaves**” of **Christ Jesus**, bound to him as slaves to a master, and also servants of the Lord (now Christ Jesus!) whose bond is expressed in loving service on behalf of Christ for the Philippians. Elsewhere Paul uses this terminology to designate any and all who serve God as free bond-slaves—that is, as those who are free in Christ Jesus but have used that freedom to perform the duties of a slave (Gal 5:13) in the service of God and of his people.

Interestingly, Paul's lack of reference to his apostleship is in harmony with the overall emphasis of this epistle (1 and 2 Thess. and Phile.). This was a personal letter rather than one giving correction or teaching that needed apostolic authority behind it so the recipients would accept it and act on its instructions or teachings.

To all the saints in Christ Jesus -- **Saints** is one of several Old Testament terms used to designate Israel that was taken by New Testament writers for the people of God newly constituted by Christ and the Spirit. Its origins can be traced to the covenantal setting of Exodus 19:6, where God addresses Israel as his people, “a holy nation”—a people consecrated and subject to Yahweh and His service. Its New Testament usage most likely originates from Daniel 7:18, where God's end-time people, who receive the kingdom as an eternal

inheritance, are called **“the saints of the Most High.”** Concern that the believers be God’s holy people in Philippi will be picked up throughout this letter.

Their becoming “God’s holy people” is the direct result of their relationship to Christ Jesus. They are the **saints in Christ Jesus**. Christ Jesus is responsible for their becoming the people of God. As the crucified and risen One, He also constitutes the present sphere of their new existence.

To all the saints ... who are at Philippi – Interestingly, Paul can say that a believer is both spiritually in Christ and at the same time physically in the world. In this case, the believers are in Christ and at the same time they live physically in Philippi.

with the overseers – The Greek word for overseers can also mean bishop. Paul seems to have used the title here in the technical sense used to describe the leaders of the early church. The other two titles used are elder and shepherd or pastor. These appear to be used interchangeably of the same group as is demonstrated in the following passage. Paul **“sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him. And when they came to him, he said to them ... Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood”** (Acts 20:17, 28; cf. 1 Pet. 5:1-2).

Although the three terms are interchangeable, each word has its own special emphasis. A **pastor** must shepherd and feed his flock. Most importantly, a pastor must be a teacher (Eph. 4:11; 1 Tim. 3:2). Jesus gave the three goals of a pastor: 1) to teach the immature or new believers (John 21:15), 2) to teach adult and mature believers (John 21:17), 3) to guide the flock (John 21:16). A **bishop** is to oversee the local church to see that the work is done correctly. Due to the time involvement, the bishops were to be paid by their local church (1 Tim. 5:17-18). There is no biblical indication that a bishop had oversight over a group of churches. An **elder** is a mature believer who is respected by the others in the church and helps in leadership (1 Tim. 3:7).

and deacons – The deacons are to be selected by the local church to assist the leaders (1 Tim. 3:8-13; Acts 6:1-3).

Grace to you – God gives blessings to believing sinners apart from any merit of their own. All believers are **“justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus”** (Rom. 3:24). Their right standing before God is also maintained by God’s grace (Eph. 2:8-9).

and peace – **Peace** is not only the absence of conflict and strife, but the presence of the blessings of prosperity of the whole man, especially spiritual prosperity. Biblical prosperity is not financial wealth, but being prosperous in one’s journey through life doing the will of God (Josh. 1:8).

from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ – One preposition ‘from’ links God the Father with the Son as the common source of this blessing. Here we see the title Christ, the Messiah. Also, the title Lord is the Greek rendering of the Hebrew word for Adonai, which was used in the Old Testament to refer to Yahweh. Hence, not only is Jesus the Messiah, but He has the name of Yahweh.

The sum total of God’s activity toward his humanity is found in the word **grace**. God has given Himself to His people mercifully in Christ. Nothing is deserved, and nothing can be earned. The sum of those benefits as they

are experienced by the recipients of God's grace is **peace**, God's shalom, both now and for eternity. Both together flow **from God our Father** and were made effective in our human history through **the Lord Jesus Christ**.

Paul's Prayer (1:3-11)

1:3 I thank my God in all my remembrance of you,

In every truly Christian life the most obvious evidence of the experience of God's grace and peace is gratitude and joy. It had long been Paul's habit to begin his letters with a thanksgiving and prayer report. This anticipates matters taken up in the body of the letter. Here we often find expressed both the immediate problems and the theological basis for the letter. Hence, through prayer and thanksgiving Paul anticipates the various concerns of the letter: their partnership with him in the gospel, his deep concern for them, and the need for love to replace internal strife.

There are four features we can note here:

- 1) It was personal -- **I thank**. Although Timothy was included in the initial greeting, the thanksgiving is from Paul.
- 2) It was constant -- **I thank** denotes continuous action in the present time. The Christians in Philippi always caused Paul to give thanks to God when he prayed for them at his set times of prayer.
- 3) It was addressed to God -- **I thank my God**. The Romans and the Greeks began their letters by thanking their pagan gods. Here, Paul gives thanks to the one and only God. "For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as indeed there are many 'gods' and many 'lords'— yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist" (1 Cor. 8:5-6).
- 4) It was based upon remembrance -- **I thank my God in all my remembrance of you**. When Paul remembered the Philippians, he was extremely thankful to God for them.

1:4 always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy,

Paul's imprisonment limited his ministry to the Philippian church, but he still prayed for them. The words prayer and request refers to an entreaty or request. These requests can go from man to man as well as from man to God. The general word for prayer can only go from man to God.

always – This indicates that Paul made request whenever he remembered the Philippians.

in every prayer of mine – The request was made often and occurred during his daily devotional periods.

for you all – Paul prayed for all of them, not just for their leaders.

making my request – making denotes constant activity and duration.

with joy – the requests were made with joy. Paul’s joy in the midst of his suffering as a prisoner is the main theme of this epistle.

1:5 because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.

because of your partnership – This is the basis for Paul’s request. Partnership also means fellowship. Taken subjectively it can denote holding something in common. Biblical fellowship involves believers with other believers as well as with God (1 John 1:3).

in the gospel – This refers to an objective work in which the Philippian believers had come to have a share or partnership in the spreading of the gospel. The gospel refers to the saving work initiated by God through the atoning death of Jesus Christ. **The gospel** is the singular passion of Paul’s life. In the Roman culture the gospel referred to the good news announced by the emperor. Now the good news is no longer about Caesar as lord, but is now that Jesus the Messiah is Lord over everything and everyone, including Caesar!

from the first day until now – Their fellowship began at the time of their conversion under Paul’s ministry and continued until the present time when they sent Epaphroditus and the gift of money to Paul (4:18).

1: 6 And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

Paul did not place his confidence in people but in God who had saved them and was working out His sovereign purpose in and through them. He is fully confident that what was true from the first day and is still true now will be true at the end as well.

And I am sure of this – Paul’s confidence refers to a settled persuasion of mind and will which was the continuing result of a previous decision.

that he who began a good work in you – Paul now goes on to explain the nature of his confidence by using the word ‘that’.

1) **he who began** refers to God’s personal involvement in the lives of the believers in Philippi.

2) **a good work** refers to the benefits of salvation secured By God’s grace through the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ.

3) The **good work** was begun **in you**, referring to the believers from Philippi. God’s good work of salvation happens in the believer at the time of conversion. The good work that God has begun and will bring to full fruition may very well include their grace of giving, or perhaps their continued participation in the gospel in every way. More likely, however, it refers to God’s good work of salvation itself, of creating a people for His own Name in Philippi.

will bring it to completion – Paul’s certainty in the completion of the work is noted in the verb *epitelesei*, which points to the achievement of a stated goal. In this case, God is the One who will bring the work of salvation to His purposeful end.

he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion – It is rather interesting that the words Paul uses here for began (*enarchesthai*) and will bring to completion (*epitelein*) are technical terms for the beginning and ending of a sacrifice. Paul sees the life of every believer as a sacrifice ready to be offered to Jesus Christ. In Romans he urges believers to present their bodies as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God (Rom. 12:1).

at the day of Jesus Christ – The time of completion of the work of salvation begun in every believer by God is when Christ returns to take His own to Himself. This is similar to the Old Testament use of the day of the Lord, with the emphasis was on the vindication of the righteous and judgment for the unrighteous.

Paul here reminds them that even in the midst of present difficulties, God has in Christ guaranteed their future as well as blessed their present situation in Philippi.

1: 7 It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel.

It is right for me to feel this way about you all – The verb Paul used for ‘to feel’ signifies a combination of intellectual and affective activity which affects both one’s head and heart, leading to a positive action. The verb translated **feel** is especially prominent in Philippians. It has to do with having or developing a certain “mindset,” including attitudes and dispositions. As we change our mindset by renewing our minds with God’s Word, He will change our hearts and fill us with joy.

because I hold you in my heart – Although the Greek construction of this phrase allows for either the idea that Paul had them in his heart or that they had Paul in their hearts, the context argues mainly for the view that Paul had them in his heart.

for you are all partakers with me of grace – Both Paul and the Philippian believers were ‘fellow partakers’ of the grace of God. But how do the Philippians share in this grace with Paul? It is clear that both Paul and the believers in Philippi shared in suffering and conflict, so grace here appears to carry the meaning of God’s strength made available to His own in their times of weakness and need (2 Cor. 12:9).

A clear parallel is found when Paul says, “**I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them [partakers] in its blessings**” (1 Cor. 9:23). Paul, in 1:7, may not be referring to the grace of God in general, but to the specific identification with, and support of, Paul’s gospel ministry by the Philippian believers.

both in my imprisonment – Paul experienced grace from God while under house arrest and chained to soldiers (Acts 28:20, 30).

and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel – As an Apostle, Paul had been called to suffer imprisonment and was constantly called on in defense and confirmation of the gospel. The defense refers to a logical, legal presentation of the gospel (1 Pet. 3:15) against forces outside of oneself. The confirmation of the gospel is the building up of the gospel from within the church among fellow believers.

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

For God is my witness – Paul breaks from the traditions of Judaism by calling upon God as a witness that what he is about to say is true.

how I yearn for you all – Paul regularly uses the verb *epipothein* to denote his intense longing to be reunited with his fellow believers (Rom. 1:11; 2 Tim. 1:4). The same verb is also used of the athlete who strained at the finish line to finish first.

with the affection of Christ Jesus – Paul’s own deep longings for them come with **the affection of Christ Jesus** Himself—almost certainly meaning “the love Christ has for you, which is also at work in me for you.” The word Paul uses here for **affection** refers to the visceral organs of the heart, liver, and intestines, but came to refer to the seat of emotions. When we are truly in Christ, the love of Jesus goes out through us to fellow believers whom He loves and for whom He died.

The prayer report in 1:9-11 is also a single sentence. The connections between the various parts can be easily traced: Paul prays 1) for their love to abound yet more and more; that 2) this be accompanied by full knowledge and moral insight, so that 3) they might approve those things that really matter, so that 4) they might be pure and blameless when Christ returns, as 5) they are now full of the fruit of righteousness, fruit that is 6) effected by Christ Jesus and 7) for the glory and praise of God.

1: 9 And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment,

And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more – This is most likely referring to the believers’ love for one another (1 Thess. 3:12). The imagery of this verse is that of a river overflowing its banks during a flood. Love is the river and the banks are knowledge and judgment. Love must constantly keep on overflowing more and more.

God’s love is demonstrated especially in His forbearance and kindness (1 Cor 13:4), manifested ultimately in the death of Christ for His enemies (Rom 5:6–8). Thus the primary connotation of love is not “affection,” but rather a sober kind of love that places high value on a person and actively seeks that person’s gain.

with knowledge and all discernment – Paul now describes two guidelines for biblical love. The primary sense of the word translated **knowledge** is not so much “knowledge about” something as the kind of “full” or “innate” knowing that comes from experience or personal relationship. The second word, **all discernment**, denotes moral understanding based on experience, hence something close to “moral insight.”

1: 10 so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ,

so that you may approve what is excellent – This has also been translated, **testing the things that differ**. The verb ‘approve’ means ‘to put to the test’ (1 Thess. 5:21), and was used of testing metal to see if it was genuine. The phrase ‘what is excellent’ or ‘the things that differ’ should actually be translated as ‘the things which really matter’. Believers do not discriminate between good and evil because God already has done that for us. Believers must test and approve between primary (eternal) matters and secondary (temporal) ones.

and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ,

Paul gives two characteristics of believers, which might just be the positive and negative sides of the same idea.

Christians are to be **pure**. The word Paul used for pure denotes moral, not ritual, purity. Ancient clay jars and pots were examined for disguised cracks and flaws by holding them up in the light to see if any light came through the vessel through a flaw. In this way, Paul probably meant that the believer's life was to stand the test of any light turned upon it.

The believer is not only to be pure, but must be **blameless**. He is never to cause any other person to stumble.

for the day of Christ -- Believers are to be pure and blameless for their entire lives or until Christ returns.

1: 11 filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

Paul immediately qualifies his aspiration for them in verse 10 in two ways. First, by **pure and blameless until the day of Christ** he means that he wants them to arrive at that day already **filled with the fruit of righteousness**, whose source, as always, is **through Christ Jesus**. Second, the ultimate goal of everything, especially righteousness expressed by their ever-increasing love, is that they might live **to the glory and praise of God**.

filled with the fruit of righteousness – The main question here is whether Paul is referring to righteousness in his usual forensic quality or as an ethical quality. If Paul uses it in the forensic sense, then it means ‘fruit which consists of having right standing before God’. However, most feel that Paul here is using it in the ethical sense. In this case he probably means ‘that believers may be filled with the fruits of righteousness’. These righteous fruits probably include the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22), fruit of soul-winning (Rom. 1:13), fruit unto holiness (Rom. 6:22), and fruit of good works (Col. 1:10).

that comes through Jesus Christ –To be **filled with the fruit of righteousness** for Paul means to go the way of the cross, self-emptying so as to become a servant of all in place of “selfish ambition” and, in that servanthood, humbling oneself to the point of dying for another in place of “vain conceit” (2:3–8). This is what it means for Paul to “know Christ.” This is the righteousness that comes **through Jesus Christ**. All other righteousness, especially religious righteousness, is filth in comparison (3:8).

to the glory and praise of God – The goal of every believer is to live one's life in such a way as that all **glory and praise** go to God. Here is the ultimate goal of all things. Everything is to the single end that God will receive glory through the work He is doing in our lives. Love that reflects God's own love is the only righteousness that counts, the only righteousness that is to God's glory and to His praise.

The Advancement of the Gospel (1:12-18)

1: 12 I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel,

I want you to know, brothers – Paul wanted to draw their attention in order to understand a fundamental premise.

that what has happened to me – This literally means **the according to me things**. This is a close equivalent to ‘my affairs’. The things which happened to Paul are discussed in Acts 20:6-28:31.

has really served to advance the gospel – In spite of adversity, things always work out according to God’s purpose. Believers need to look at the result of the adversity and not the adversity itself. The term rendered to advance is a military term, used of engineers who would prepare a road for the advancing army by removing obstructions such as rocks and trees. Paul’s imprisonment, rather than hindering the spread of the gospel, opened new doors and opportunities for Paul that he would have never had. **“And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose”** (Rom. 8:28). Paul is one who believed not only that the gospel is God’s “message of truth” (Gal 2:5, 14) but that it contains the only good news for a fallen, broken world.

1: 13 so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ.

so that it has become known ... that my imprisonment is for Christ – The fact soon became evident to all involved that Paul was no prisoner, but was imprisoned because of his commitment to Christ. Paul was not a political prisoner or a civil offender. He knew that he was there by the will of God. Paul was aware that he was there not as a prisoner but as a witness for the gospel.

throughout the whole imperial guard – The imperial guard was known as the Praetorian guard, and were originally the emperor’s bodyguard. These were the elite soldiers of Rome. Paul was chained at the wrist constantly to one of these guards during his two years of house arrest. This gave them the opportunity to witness his teachings, conversations, and prayers. This also gave Paul the opportunity to witness to many of them, since they were chained to him for six hour shifts.

and to all the rest – Paul also had the opportunity to witness to other kinds of soldiers, to household servants, and to government officials. Do we know the results of this opportunity Paul had to witness to these people? Paul concludes this epistle with the words, “All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar’s household” (Phil. 4:22).

To the world, and especially to the citizens of a Roman colony, Caesar may be “lord”; but to Paul and to the believers in Philippi, only Jesus is Lord (2:11), and His lordship over Caesar is already making itself felt through the penetration of the gospel into the heart of Roman political life.

1: 14 And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

Paul’s imprisonment in Rome caused a stir in the local church in Philippi. Some became timid in their witness. However, many became bold and intensified their witness. It is of these that Paul now speaks.

And most – They made up the majority within the local church.

of the brothers – Paul is here referring only of believers. Here he calls them his brothers.

having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment – Many were persuaded to take a stand by Paul’s example, regardless of the consequences.

are much more bold to speak the word without fear – Their bold proclamation of the word of God continued throughout Paul’s imprisonment. “**And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell**” (Matt. 10:28). Paul even had to exhort Timothy “**for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control. Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God**” (2 Tim. 1:7-8).

This probably reflects the situation in Rome in the early 60s, when Nero’s madness was peaking and the church there had begun to fall under suspicion, as Nero’s pogrom against them just a couple of years later would testify. For good reason, then, Paul joyfully explains to the Philippian believers that the net effect of his imprisonment has been to give their Roman brothers and sisters extraordinary courage to proclaim Christ, at the heart of the empire itself in the midst of the coming storm of persecution.

1:15a, 17 Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry ... The former proclaim Christ out of rivalry, not sincerely but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment.

There are two groups identified here by Paul. As will become evident, both preached the same message of Christ’s death and resurrection, but each party had different motivations for doing so. We will begin looking at the faulty group.

Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry – The word ‘from’ can be translated ‘because of’ or ‘on account of’. Here the motivating cause of their preaching is at fault, not their content. Envy is a work of the flesh (Gal. 5:16). These men preached Christ because they were jealous of Paul’s successes. The result of envy is rivalry or strife. Strife is the outward expression of the inward emotion, envy, and is also a work of the flesh (Gal. 5:20).

The former proclaim Christ out of rivalry – They preach out of contention or rivalry. Originally it meant someone who worked only for their pay, which is from a low motive. This person is only after personal gain. It came to be associated with politics meaning canvassing for office. It eventually came to describe those who are self-seeking with selfish ambition, regardless of the means employed. For these, Paul’s imprisonment afforded them the opportunity to advance their own influence and prestige as well as to lessen his.

not sincerely – These preached from impure motives. They preached Christ not because they loved Him, but because they loved their own reputations.

but thinking to afflict me in my chains (of imprisonment) – They intended to aggravate Paul while he was in prison. The word ‘to afflict’ means severe friction or pressure, used of a way to execute a man by placing a heavy load on his chest which would crush him.

1:15b, 16 but others [preach Christ] from good will ... the latter do it out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel.

but others [preach Christ] from good will – This group loved to preach Christ, and wanted to encourage Paul.

the latter do it out of love – They loved to preach because they loved and appreciated Paul. Love of fellow believers always reflects love for Christ. They were constrained to preach by the love of Christ (2 Cor. 5:14).

knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel – see 1:7.

1:18 What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice.

What then? – Paul concludes this section by asking for the outcome of all this.

Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed—Whether in pretence (hypocrisy) or in truth, regardless of their motivations, they preached Christ, and the content of their message was sound.

Some have tried to identify these as the Judaizers; however, the Judaizers preached a false gospel (Gal. 1:6-9). Paul would have never rejoiced in their message. However, this group which Paul is here describing, though improperly motivated, had a proper biblical message they were proclaiming. In that Christ was being preached, Paul would rejoice.

But how would they afflict Paul by preaching Christ? Most likely they were using their new-found evangelistic success to subvert Paul's apostolic authority and to establish a form of Gentile Christianity that was friendlier to the Judaizers.

in that I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice – Paul could rejoice over the proclamation of Christ. Paul knew nothing of personal jealousy or resentment. In spite of their motivations, which were to aggravate him, Paul could rejoice that Christ was being proclaimed.

Paul's deliverance (1:19-26)

At this point Paul's thinking turned from what had already occurred because of his imprisonment to what he anticipated happening in the future. Although he appears to have felt that he would soon be released, he wanted the believers in Philippi to understand his point of view in case things turned out differently.

1:19 for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance,

for I know – Here Paul uses the verb 'to know', which is an inner persuasion in this case conveyed to Paul by the Holy Spirit.

this will turn out for my deliverance – Here Paul says he is confident that his imprisonment will not only end in 'his deliverance' or 'his salvation', but that his imprisonment will result in his deliverance. This word has numerous possible meanings.

1) It could mean what believers refer to as salvation. But Paul was already a believer.

2) It could mean health and general wellbeing. Paul could be saying that God allowed him to be imprisoned, and in the end it will turn out for his own good. There is some truth to this idea. However, I don't feel this completely explains his intended meaning.

3) It could mean safety or deliverance – This is the way the word was used both in first-century Judaism and in the Greco-Roman culture. An example of its use is when the Philippians jailer asks Paul, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” Although many sermons have been preached on this passage taking the meaning as “What must I do to have eternal life?” the jailor was simply asking Paul how he could be delivered from the mess he was in. In the same way, Paul is here referring to his deliverance from imprisonment. However, he also says he may be put to death.

4) It could well mean his vindication by God – This is similar to Job's statement that his trust would be validated by God (Job 13:16). In this case, Paul is saying that whether he be acquitted and released or put to death his faithful stand for Christ will be vindicated by God.

through your prayers – Here we see the word *deeseos*, referring to intense intercessory prayers. Paul knew that deliverance from prison could come about through the intercessory prayers of his fellow believers. An example of this is the release of Peter from Herod's prison which was accomplished through the prayers of the local church (Acts 12:12). Also, Paul knew that prayer for him would help strengthen him regardless of the outcome. Paul always remembered that he needed the prayers of fellow believers.

and the help of the Spirit – Paul here uses the word which means ‘to provide or supply generously’. It was used of a benefactor who would pay for the singers and dancers at a festival. In marriage contracts it meant ‘to provide for one's spouse’. For Paul, this idea conveys the inner strengthening of his life so that neither his courage nor his witness would fail regardless of the outcome of the trial. The Spirit's help is nothing short of Christ's power made available to the believer. Paul's witness during the trial would also be a vindication of the gospel by the sustaining work of the Spirit who Jesus promised to the disciples when they stand before their accusers (Mark 13:11).

1:20 as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death.

as it is my eager expectation and hope – Paul's confession is explained as being according to his eager expectation and hope, which are simply two descriptions of the same thing. While hope can be seen as the inward conviction of the heart, expectation is the outward manifestation of hope.

eager expectation – In ancient times it was used of the spectator at an athletic event who stretched his neck to see the outcome. It eventually came to mean the eager, intense look which turns from everything else to fixate on the one object of desire. It is used of the animal creation anticipating a deliverance from the curse placed upon it (Rom. 8:19). Paul is sharing that he eagerly anticipates whatever the future may bring.

hope – This is one of the three Christian virtues (1 Cor. 13:13). This hope is not the same as our usage of the word, but refers to the settled assurance caused by a firm conviction that what is believed will come to pass.

“For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience” (Rom. 8:24-25).

that I will not be at all ashamed – Paul in Rom. 9:33 and 10:11 cites Isa. 28:16 LXX, **“Whoever believes will not be ashamed”**. Also, within the context of the community of believers, ‘being put to shame’ is in effect the fate of the apostate, as seen in 1 John 2:28: **“And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming.”** Regardless of the outcome of the trial, Paul did not want to be ashamed of the gospel.

but that with full courage – Paul wanted to speak out for Christ with full boldness. The idea behind this word is to have total freedom of speech before God, friends, and enemies (Heb. 10:19).

now as always – Paul was consistent in his witness for Christ. He never vacillated. Adversities were not going to diminish Paul’s witness for Christ.

Christ will be honored – Paul here uses the passive tense of the verb ‘to magnify’ showing that he magnified Christ through the empowering of the Holy Spirit.

in my body – People can directly see only what another person does and says not what he thinks or believes. Therefore, there can be no glorification of God inwardly in one’s spirit without the body being involved. Obviously, one’s actions should line up with one’s beliefs. **“You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body”** (1 Cor. 6:20).

whether by life or by death – Although most of us see death with a defeatist outlook, Paul saw death as a victory. For Paul, Christ would be glorified whether through his death or through his life.

It is of note that in this verse Paul’s primary concern is his perseverance in faith. The glorification of Christ, not Paul’s own freedom or even his life, is his salvation. As Paul tells Timothy, **“The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.”** (2 Tim. 4:18)

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

For to me – This is the connective which gives the reason for his strong witness. He also uses the emphatic ‘to me’. Paul is here emphasizing his reasoning.

to live is Christ – Literally this reads, “The act of living – Christ”. For Paul, Christ was both the center of his life and the entire sphere in which he lived. For Paul, Christ was *the beginning* of his new life (Acts 9). Christ *maintained* his life (Acts 18:9-10). Now Christ was *the end* of his life on earth (1:21).

Paul fulfilled Jesus’ challenge to His disciples. **“If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it”** (Matt. 16:24-25).

Paul could say, **“I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me”** (Gal. 2:20).

to die is gain – If the verdict in his trial goes against him, he will certainly be put to death. When a believer dies, he immediately is free from this life of sin and suffering and is instantaneously present with Christ. With the believer, earth’s loss at death is always heaven’s gain. As the Psalmist says, **“Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints”** (Ps. 116:15).

1: 22 If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell.

Paul, of course, could not will his death. Solomon declared: **“There is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither hath he power in the day of death”** (Eccl. 8:8). Only one person, Jesus Christ, had the delegated authority to release his spirit at death and to resurrect himself (John 10:18). The apostle, however, could express his preferences, leaving the actual choice with a sovereign God. He thus stated the ramifications of two distinct possibilities for his immediate future.

Three aspects of this possibility are given. First, Paul knew that he would continue to live. The usage of the conditional particle **“if”** does not mean that his future was uncertain; rather, it introduces a condition of reality upon which he could base a conclusion. He said: **“But if to live in the flesh is my decreed lot, and it is, then....”** The prepositional phrase **“in the flesh”** denotes life on earth in the natural body; it has no connotation of sinful flesh here (John 1:14).

Second, Paul knew that his ministry would be successful. The demonstrative pronoun **“this”** refers to the continuation of his natural life. To Paul, living meant more working, and more working meant more fruit bearing. Although he was old and exhausted after three tiring missionary journeys and several recent imprisonments, he claimed the promise: **“They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing”** (Ps. 92:14).

The **“fruitful labor for me”** specifically applied to the results of his missionary activity. It included the salvation of sinners, the edification of saints, the establishment of churches, the training of new leaders, and the writing of inspired Scripture. He informed the Romans that he wanted to **“have some fruit among [them] also, even as among other Gentiles”** (Rom. 1:13). The apostle expected to share this fruit with others because those who supported him financially had made an investment in his ministry which would bring to them the dividends of fruit (4:17).

Third, he did not disclose his personal preference (**“Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell”**). Death would be a personal gain to him, but an extended ministry also had value, both for him and others. He knew what course he would choose for his life if he would have had that prerogative, but he determined not to reveal his inner feelings to others.

1: 23 I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better.

Most people want life without death rather than life with death. The natural desire of humans is to live, not to die. Those who choose death over life usually want relief from suffering or depression. The case of Paul,

however, was much different. He had to determine where he wanted to live. Paul debated the advantages and disadvantages of living on earth with living in heaven; thus, his approach toward death was unique.

Three reasons are given why he preferred heaven. First, it was an inner compulsion (“**I am hard pressed between the two**”). The verb referred to pressure being imposed upon someone from two different directions, to be hemmed in on both sides. Paul used it in regard to the constraint of the love of Christ which motivated his ministry (2 Cor. 5:14). Christ used the same term to describe the pressure upon Him as He faced the cross: “**But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished.**” (Luke 12:50). The “two” constraints that pushed at Paul were the necessity to abide and the desire to depart. Both compulsions were valid and equally strong.

Second, it was a “**desire.**” This noun, often translated as “lust” (Gal 5:16–17), describes an inner passion or drive. It was a constant part of Paul’s inner feelings at this time in his life. It would be difficult to say whether this desire also possessed him in the younger years of his ministry.

The desire had a single purpose with two aspects. He first wanted “**to depart.**” This unusual verb is used of the unloosing of prisoners, the removal of the yoke from an ox after the day’s work, the breaking up of a tent or an encampment, and the loosing of a ship from its moorings. The human body is often described as a tent or a tabernacle (John 1:14; 2 Cor. 5:1); hence, death would be the breaking down of one tent in order to move on to a new location. Later, when Paul did expect to die during his second Roman imprisonment, he confessed that the time of his “**departure**” was at hand (2 Tim. 4:6). Second, he wanted “**to be with Christ.**” Death was not an escape for Paul, but rather, it meant that he would be with the most important person in his life. The verb indicates eternal fellowship. Death is instantaneous, but life with Christ is forever.

The Bible says nothing about a soul sleep after death or a temporary residency in purgatory. Right now, a believer is on earth; at death, he or she immediately goes into the presence of Jesus Christ.

Third, it was “**far better.**” Actually, there are three comparative adjectives in this phrase. Literally, it reads “much more better.” In quantity, quality, or any other comparative values, heaven is far superior to earth!

1: 24 But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account.

Three aspects of Paul’s concern are enumerated. First, he accepted the fact that he would “**remain in the flesh.**” The verb means “to remain upon”. Thus, he planned to remain upon the earth in his natural body. He gave no indication that he would die then or in the immediate future.

Second, his continued living was “**more necessary**”. A person who makes decisions out of love and humility will always do what is best for others, not what is best for him or herself. In this fashion, Paul could again prove himself to be an example to them.

Third, he wanted to abide for them “**on your account**”. The benefit for them will be explained in the next two verses. Since he had them in his heart (1:7), he had to think of them when he contemplated his own personal future.

There was value to Paul in either his life or death, but the Philippians would only receive benefit if he should live. That factor alone gave him an inner conviction that he would be spared from death at this point.

1: 25 Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith,

Paul knew intuitively by the conviction of the Holy Spirit that he would be set free (“**I know**”). This verb stresses an inherent knowledge in contrast to an experiential, learned wisdom. He viewed the imprisonment and legal appeals from the standpoint of the divine will and human necessity.

His knowledge manifested itself in two predictions. First, he knew that he would remain alive, **I will remain**. Second, he knew that he would return to Philippi, **continue with you**. This verb literally means “to remain with them beside them”. It was one thing to get out of prison; it was another to be able to travel to their city once again.

The word “**for**” introduces the reason behind his release. Two results could be achieved. First, their faith would advance (“**your progress ... in the faith**”). Just as adverse circumstances furthered the outreach of the gospel (1:12), so the good news of his release would increase their faith in God who can redeem men from all difficulty. Second, their faith would be full of “**joy**.” Faith must not only be intellectual but it must also be emotional. Belief must cause tears of happiness.

1: 26 so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus, because of my coming to you again.

Paul saw four possible features of their rejoicing. First, it would be “**ample**”. It would be full and constantly running over. Second, it would rest “**in Christ Jesus**.” He would get the glory and praise for what had been accomplished. Third, it would also reside in Paul (“**for me**”). Literally, it reads “in me”. Fourth, it would be caused by Paul’s personal return (“**because of my coming to you again**”). Both the return of Epaphroditus and the visit of Timothy would not generate the joy that the physical presence of Paul would produce. Only the occasion of Paul’s coming to them again will cause their “glorying/boasting” to overflow, and all of this takes place **in Christ Jesus**.

Paul’s usage of “glorying/boasting” comes directly out of the Septuagint (LXX), especially from Jeremiah 9:23–24, where the truly wise person boasts not in wisdom, might or wealth but in the Lord, which is based on understanding and knowing God’s character. The “boasting/glorying in the Lord,” is the ultimate evidence of genuine conversion. In cases such as this one, where the boast is “in” someone, the boast is still **in Christ**.

Be Good Citizens of Heaven (1:27-30)

1:27 Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel,

Paul expects to be released from his present imprisonment partly for the sake of his Philippian brothers and sisters’ further “progress and joy” regarding “the faith.” But in the meantime, while Paul is still “**absent**” from

them, he wishes to hear the same kind of good report **“of you”** that he would hope to find had he been able to come now with Epaphroditus.

At issue is how the Philippians conduct themselves, their **manner of life**, meaning live out the gospel in Philippi. The people of Philippi took due pride in their having been made a Roman colony by Caesar Augustus, which brought the privileges and prestige of Roman citizenship. Paul now urges the believers to live out their citizenship in a manner **worthy of the gospel of Christ**. What is intended is something like “Live in the Roman colony of Philippi as worthy citizens of your heavenly homeland.” A believer is in the kingdom of God, but he also lives among the kingdoms of the world which is ruled by Satan (Luke 4:5–6).

How are they to do this? By **standing firm in the one Spirit** as they contend **side by side** as one person **for the faith of the gospel**. The image is of people engaged in spiritual warfare standing their ground firmly by the power of the Holy Spirit, who as the one Spirit is also the source of their unity.

1:28 and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God.

Striving ... for the faith of the gospel immediately calls to mind the opposition. So Paul adds, **not frightened in anything by your opponents**. The word translated **frightened**, used sometimes to refer to “spooking” horses, most likely refers to “being intimidated.”

The **opponents** of the Philippians included the Romans who thought that Christians were atheists because they had no images of God, the Judaizers (3:2), the idolaters, the evil world system, and Satan. Such opposition could cause even the strongest believer to tremble, but Jesus said, **“Be not afraid of them that kill the body”** (Luke 12:4). He announced that tribulation would come, but He also declared that He had overcome the world (John 16:33).

Such opposition must be seen for what it really is. It has two sides. First, it is **a clear sign to them of their destruction**. The phrase **clear sign** is an ancient legal term for a demonstrable proof. The hostility of the opponents revealed the fact that they were unsaved and that they would receive the judgment of God because of their unbelief and unrighteous persecution of believers. Their sinful practice manifested their sinful position before God.

Second, deliberate adversity is to believers a proof of **salvation**. The world loves its own, but it hates and persecutes those who have defected to God (John 15:18–19).

1:29 For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake,

A crucified Lord produces disciples who themselves take up a cross as they follow Him. We believers are to live **for the sake of Christ** in the same way Christ himself lived, and died, on behalf of this fallen, broken world. That is why salvation includes suffering on behalf of Christ, since those who oppose the Philippian believers as they proclaim the gospel of Christ are of a kind with those who crucified their Lord in the first place. And for believers, as for our Lord, the path to glorification leads through the suffering of the cross.

1:30 engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.

Paul concludes by reminding them that he and they are in this together. They are going through the same struggle they have seen him go through. Their present suffering on Christ's behalf has been equally brought on by those who oppose the gospel, very likely reflecting a common source as well, the Roman Empire. Through "death on a cross" Christ not only "saved us" but modeled for us God's way of dealing with the opposition—loving them to death.

Unity through Humility (2:1–4)

2:1 So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy,

Paul's sentence begins with **so**, "therefore", "for this reason", which is probably intended to pick up on all of 1:27–30. Hence, although he is primarily resuming the appeal to unity, he does so now in light of the Philippians' suffering, in a struggle they have in common with Paul. "Therefore," he says in light of that, "**if there is any encouragement in Christ, as indeed there is ... then complete my joy.**"

As **encouragement** or comfort, it is both an attribute of God and a gift from Him (2 Cor 1:3–4). As exhortation, it becomes the ground of appeal for Paul. As an apostle, Paul urged them to obey the prayerful injunction of Christ: "**That they all may be one: as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us**" (John 17:21).

The phrase **any comfort from love** most likely it refers to God's love for them, placed as it is between clear references to Christ and the Spirit.

All believers share in the **participation in the Spirit**. The Holy Spirit dwells in each of them, and He joins them all within the one body of Christ. Genuine submission to Him will produce the fruit of the Spirit, which is "**love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance**" (Gal. 5:22–23).

The two sides of brotherly compassion are seen in the compound phrase **any affection and sympathy**, literally "bowels and mercies." The term "bowels" referred to the inner organs of the body, which indicated the seat of human emotions. The concept "mercies" pointed to the outward deeds of mercy caused by the inner concern. Compassion is the opposite of indifference. Where there is no compassion, there can be no love nor joy (1 John 3:16–18).

2:2 complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.

First, they are to **be of the same mind**, which has to do with the setting of one's mind, how one is overall disposed toward something. It literally says "set your minds on the same thing" or "setting your minds on the one thing." This is the word that is picked up again in Philippians 2:5 ("**have this same mindset, as Christ did**") and in 4:2, where he reproduces the identical language of this first phrase in urging Euodia and Syntyche to the same mindset.

Second, Paul is urging them to have the same love for one another that they already have experienced in God's love for them and in theirs and his for each other. They will complete Paul's joy as they return to full and complete love for one another, which by definition means to care for another for her or his own sake.

3 Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.

Believers should not possess a selfish, competitive spirit. The opening words read **do nothing from rivalry or conceit**. **Rivalry** is a work of the flesh (Gal. 5:20). It characterized those who preached out of a faulty motivation (1:15). It incorporates party quarrelling. It marked the disciples as they argued over which of them was the greatest (Luke 22:24).

The concept behind **conceit** is that it is an empty glory. In appearance it may seem to be spiritually impressive, but inside there is no substance. The Pharisees had it when they prayed, gave, and fasted before men to have the glory of men (Matt 6:1–18). Diotrephes had it when he strived to attain preeminence within the church (3 John 9).

Humility is a uniquely Christian virtue, which, like the message of a crucified Messiah, stands in utter opposition to the values of the Greco-Roman world, which generally considered humility not a virtue but a shortcoming. Here Paul's roots are in the Old Testament and in Christ. In the Old Testament the term indicates lowliness in the sense of "creatureliness," the truly humble resting their case with God rather than trusting their own strength. Jesus reveals "humbleness of heart" as something essential about God's character (Matt 11:29). True **humility** is not self-focused but rather **count others more significant than yourselves**.

2:4 Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

First, a believer should **look not only to his own interests**. This phrase is greatly emphasized, occurring first in the sentence. He or she should not have a selfish outlook. The believer should not be looking out only for his or her own interests. Second, a believer should look **also to the interests of others**. Hence, in humility before God, each of us should be putting the interests of others ahead of our own, rather than constantly looking at the other to supply our needs.

The Humiliation and Exaltation of Christ (2:5–11)

The ultimate paradigm or example of a genuinely Christian mindset is Christ Himself, who is the ultimate manifestation of the character of God, which God is trying to reproduce in His people.

2:5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,

Literally it reads, "This mindset have in you which also in Christ Jesus." It primarily means "among you," that is, "in your community relationships." So each is to have this mindset "in you" so that it will be fully manifested "among you." The concept here is that of a mind fixed on a specific purpose and not of a casual thought. Paul wanted this proper attitude, which Christ possesses, to be incorporated into the decisions and actions of the church.

Christ is often seen in the Scriptures as the supreme example. In the approach to suffering, He has left the believers a pattern which they should follow in His steps (1 Peter 2:21). John declared: **“He that says he abides in him ought himself also to walk, even as he walked”** (1 John 2:6). Believers should follow Christian leaders who in turn are following Christ (1 Cor. 11:1; 1 Thess. 1:6). After Jesus washed the feet of the disciples, He explained, **“For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you”** (John 13:15).

2:6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,

In His prior existence as God, Christ demonstrated what equality with God meant, not by taking advantage of it for Himself but by emptying Himself, by taking the role of a slave in becoming one of us.

Since **“form”** or **“shape”** can denote in terms of both the external features by which something is recognized and the characteristics and qualities that are essential to it, it was precisely the right word to characterize both the reality (his being God) and the metaphor (his taking on the role of a slave). On the basis of Christ’s resurrection and ascension, His earliest followers had come to believe that the One whom they had known as truly human had Himself known prior existence in the **“form”** of God, not meaning that He was **“like God but really not”** but that He was characterized by what was essential to being God.

Paul emphasizes two realities. First, that **“being in the form of God”** means being equal with God. Second, that in Christ’s **“being in the form of God/being equal with God”** he displayed a mindset precisely the opposite of **“selfish ambition”** and empty glory (v. 3) The word *harpagmon* has been shown to be best understood as an idiom in the sense of **“taking advantage of”** it. So here, the pre-existent Christ **did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped**, or better, **“a thing to be taken advantage of”** or **“a thing to use for his own advantage.”**

2:7 but made himself nothing, taking the form of a slave, being born in the likeness of men.

Christ’s selflessness for the sake of others expressed itself in his emptying himself, **made himself nothing**, by **taking the form of a slave**. Far too much has been made of the verb **“emptied himself,”** as though in becoming incarnate He literally **“emptied himself”** of something. Christ did not empty himself of anything. He simply **made himself as nothing**, by **taking the form of a slave**. Once again, **form** here refers to the fact that the inward qualities of the object perfectly match the outward form.

Christ came in **the form of a slave**, that is, by **being born in the likeness of men**. Here we have the contrast between the word **form** and now the word **likeness**. While **form** here refers to the fact that the inward qualities of the object perfectly match the outward form; **likeness** refers to the fact that the inner qualities do not perfectly match the outward shape. The word **likeness** is most likely used because of Paul’s belief that in becoming human Christ did not cease to be divine. This word allows for the ambiguity, emphasizing that He is similar to our humanity in some respects and dissimilar in others. The similarity lies with His full humanity; in His incarnation He was **“like”** in the sense of **“the same as.”** The dissimilarity lies with His never ceasing to be **“equal with God”**; while **“like”** us in being fully identified with us, He was not only **“human”**. He was God living out a truly human life, all of which is safeguarded by this expression.

2:8 And being found in human appearance, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

And being found in human appearance – The word “appearance” is yet another of the troubling words in this passage. The word used here denotes that “outward form or structure perceptible to the senses” and therefore generally refers to what is “external and changeable” over against what is “essential and permanent”. While “form” describes a situation in which the inward reality corresponds to the outward appearance of an object, “appearance” describes a situation in which the inward reality does not necessarily correspond to the outward appearance of an object. Once again, taking the example of the wood furniture, if the piece of furniture is made of solid wood (so the inward reality corresponds to the outward appearance) this would be “form”; if the furniture is pressed wood with a veneer of wood (so the inward reality does not correspond to the outward appearance) this would be “appearance”. Thus, having said that Christ came in the “likeness” of human beings, Paul now says that He “appeared” in a way that was clearly recognizable as human.

he humbled himself – As a human being “he humbled himself”; that is in His human existence He chose, in obedience, to “take the lowest place.” This word deliberately echoes “in lowliness of mind” in v 3; and at the same time, anticipates the contrast in His being “highly exalted” in v 9.

by becoming obedient to the point of death – The next phrase functions to narrate how His humbling Himself found expression, in this case, “by becoming obedient unto death.” These words draw attention to the utmost limit of the Son’s obedience. Only God can accept death as obedience; for ordinary human beings it is a necessity, to which we are appointed by our humanity (Heb 9:27).

even death on a cross -- These concluding words of the verse bring us to the climax of the first half of this passage, which deals with Christ’s humiliation, and indicate the special manner of Jesus’ death: it was “death on a cross”, the most loathsomely degrading death of all, that He endured. He who was in the form of God and was equal with God emptied Himself, humbled Himself, and surrendered Himself in obedience to God the Father to a criminal’s death.

A survey of the use of crucifixion, which was borrowed from the Persians and perfected by the Romans, as a penalty in the Greco-Roman world has shown that it was very widespread as a political and military punishment, inflicted by the Romans especially on the lower classes, including slaves and violent criminals in provinces such as Judea. In order to be an efficient deterrent, crucifixion was carried out publicly, usually in some prominent place. It was usually associated with other forms of torture, including at least flogging, so that the criminal could be tortured to death for days in an unspeakable way. By first-century standards no experience was more despicably degrading than this. According to Jewish law anyone who was crucified died under the curse of God (Deut 21:23; Gal 3:13). A crucified Messiah was thus impossible, and the cross did not become a symbol of Jewish suffering. In polite Roman society the word “cross” was an obscenity, not even to be uttered in conversation.

The Exaltation of Christ (2:9-11)

2:9 Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name,

Therefore God has highly exalted him -- God the Father is now presented as decisively intervening and acting on His Son’s behalf. Jesus’ self-humbling reached the absolute depths in His most shameful death, a death on

a cross (v 8). But now, by way of vindication and approval of Jesus' total self-humbling, God the Father has exalted His Son to the highest possible degree.

and bestowed on him the name that is above every name – The ultimate consequence of Christ's "mindset", which led to His humiliation, is that God the Father has "highly exalted" Him, by granting Him "the Name" (*Kyrios*, Lord). God the Father has graciously bestowed on Christ the Name that is above all other names, that is, His own Name, Lord (Yahweh), along with all that gives meaning to the Name. In His exalted state Jesus now exercises universal Lordship.

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

so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow – The result of God the Father's exaltation of Jesus is expressed here and in the following verse in two clauses which are taken directly from the LXX of Isa 45:23, where Yahweh (the Lord) says that "before me (the Lord) every knee shall bow and every tongue will swear (confess, LXX)" that "in the Lord alone are righteousness and strength." The Name, Yahweh, in the Greek form "the Lord," has now been "given" to Jesus. The "bowing of the knee" is an idiomatic expression for doing homage. The whole of creation shall give Christ Jesus obeisance.

in heaven and on earth and under the earth – Paul declares the full scope of the homage that one day will receive: "in heaven and on earth and under the earth." Those "in heaven" refer to all heavenly beings, both angels and demons. Those "on the earth" refer to all those who are alive on the earth at the time of Christ's parousia. Those "under the earth" refer to all the dead who also shall be raised to acknowledge His Lordship over all.

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

and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord -- All of creation, both the living and the dead, will one day stand before Christ Jesus and pay Him homage and obeisance as Lord over all creation. If one does it in this lifetime, it will be for salvation. If one is disobedient and rejects God's saving work in Christ Jesus through the Spirit, it will be in submission to His sovereignty and for condemnation.

to the glory of God the Father – The goal of the confession is the "glory of God the Father." Although Jesus bears the name "Lord," the Name of God Himself, yet paradoxically Jesus does not in any way displace God or even rival God. The authority of Jesus Christ is a derived authority -- God exalted Him; God enthroned Him; God conferred on Him the best title; God purposed that created beings worship and obey Him. Hence, only God the Father has ultimate authority and sovereignty. The whole exaltation of Christ in the present and in the future is directed toward God the Father being glorified.

Lights in the World (2:12-18)

2: 12 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, continue to work out what your own salvation means with fear and trembling,

Therefore, my beloved – The "therefore" indicates that Paul is about to apply the appeal of 1:27-2:5, now by way of 2:6-11, to the believing community in Philippi.

as you have always obeyed – For Paul, faith in Christ is ultimately expressed in obedience to Christ, by coming completely under his Lordship. Paul here reminds the believers in Philippi that they have always given expression to their faith in Christ by obedience to Him.

so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence – Friendship language used the words “presence” and “absence” since letters were a substitute for one’s presence. Paul’s “presence” or “coming to them [in the near future]” is overshadowed, for him, by his absence while he is imprisoned. He is concerned that they continue to mature in his absence. He urges them to get on with their obedience “much more” in his absence.

continue to work out what your own salvation means – The imperative “work out” deals with what believers do as a result of their faith. They are exhorted to “continue to work out your own salvation.” The “your own” is not singular but plural, referring not to the “salvation” of the individual but of the community as a whole. This is not referring to how an individual “gets saved” in the eschatological sense of “going to heaven,” but the consequence of God’s action in Christ. Paul calls the believers in Philippi to continue to obey Christ by “working out what your (plural) salvation means,” in contrast to the “deliverance” offered by Caesar.

with fear and trembling – In the LXX Ps 2:11 says, “Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling.” Isa 19:16 LXX says, “tremble with fear before the hand that the Lord of hosts shakes over them.” The words also had usage in the Greco-Roman world. They described an attitude before an authority, human or divine. In Paul’s mind, reverence and trembling were the proper stance before God. One does not live out the gospel casually or lightly, but as one who truly knows what it is like to stand in awe before the living God.

2:13 for God is he who is at work in and among you, both to will and to work for the sake of his good pleasure.

For coordinates the following phrase as an explanation of v 12.

God is he who is at work in and among you – Paul here states that God is “he who is at work in and among you (plural)”. When Paul uses this phrase in a corporate sense, it must begin with each individual.

both to will and to work for the sake of his good pleasure – God not only empowers the “work”, but also the “will” to do the work in the believer. For Paul, being “in Christ” means to be converted and have the indwelling of the Spirit to not only empower one to do God’s will, but to create a desire to obey God. The ultimate purpose in everything is “for the sake of” God’s “good pleasure”. Some scholars believe the “good pleasure” is not God’s but the “goodwill” of the community. However, since God is completely good and just, His “good pleasure” is good for the community of believers.

2:14 Do all things without grumbling or controversies,

Do all things – Paul now explains what is involved in living out “what your own salvation means.” Paul now exhorts them to “keep on doing all things. The “all things” include everything that Paul has just been speaking about, especially “working out what working out their own salvation means” by standing firm in the faith of the gospel and striving together for the gospel in spite of opposition.

without grumbling – The first of the two qualifying nouns, “grumbling”, is an echo by Paul of the grumbling of Israel in the wilderness. The only other occurrence of this word by Paul is in 1 Cor 10:10 (“nor grumble, as some of them did”), which echoes Num 14.

or controversies – “Controversies” or “arguments” has significant Greco-Roman background.

2:15 that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world,

The connective “**that**” shows the purpose for the fulfillment of the command. There is always a holy reason behind a divine command. There is a difference between being a Christian and living the Christian life. The former refers to position, but the latter to practice. The Philippians, who were saints (1:1), needed to become more saintly in their human relationships.

Their conduct is to **be blameless**, so that they might be recognized for who they are, the children of God. The arena is pagan Philippi, now described in the language of Deuteronomy 32:5 as a **crooked and twisted generation**.

Becoming **blameless** is the exact language used by God to begin the renewal of the covenant with Abraham (Gen 17:1 LXX). The word refers to conduct with which one (probably God in this case) can “find no fault,” while **innocent** is directed more toward the heart, not in the sense of “clean.”

With **children of God without blemish** Paul begins his echo of Deuteronomy 32:5 (LXX). **Children of God** is especially appropriate for those being urged to “obey.” Moses states that Israel “no longer” has the right to this designation. Over against Israel, the Philippian believers are God’s children, and by refraining from internal bickering they will be **without blemish**. By adding the preposition **in the midst**, Paul also transforms the next words of Deuteronomy 32:5 into their opposite. Originally a **crooked and twisted generation** described Israel, but here pagan Philippi receives the description. The term probably points to the opposition mentioned in 1:28, the pagan populace of Philippi, who took their devotion to Caesar as lord seriously and found those who advocated another Lord more than just a little irritating.

To describe the believers’ role in Philippi, Paul uses language from the final vision of Daniel (12:1–4), **among whom you shine as lights in the world**.

2:16 holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain.

The qualifier **holding fast to the word of life** brings us face to face with the inherent ambiguity of the final part of this sentence -- that the people of God are to shine in the world over against its darkness, while simultaneously they are to illumine that darkness. Although the believers’ role in Philippi puts them in strong opposition to the paganism of Philippi, by **holding fast the word of life**, “the message that brings life”, they are to offer the life that Christ provides to those who are dying.

By successfully holding fast the word of life in Philippi, they will be Paul's boast on **the day of Christ**. The final appended phrase **that I did not run in vain or labor in vain** is typical Paul. Life in Christ has the features of a race, with the prize awaiting those who finish (3:14). More often in Paul, ministry involves labor, as one "works hard in the Lord." Paul has invested his whole Christian life in seeing that others also obtain the prize for such running or realize the fruit of such labor, as his prize is already assured.

2:17 Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, then I am glad and rejoice with you all.

The metaphor itself is taken from the Jewish sacrificial system. Pictured is the burnt offering, **sacrificial offering**, the service itself and the **drink offering** poured out at the sanctuary in connection with the sacrifice (Num 28:1–7). Most likely, the whole clause is a metaphor for the present suffering that both he and the Philippians believers are experiencing at the hand of the Roman Empire. He pictures his imprisonment as the **drink offering** that goes along with their **sacrificial offering**, "burnt offering," their present struggle in Philippi.

The "**then**" part of the sentence deliberately recalls 1:18. Even in the midst of what appear to be unpleasant circumstances, one's relationship with God does not change. Remember that "joy" is primarily a verb in Philippians, so is something one does, not how one feels. The verb to **rejoice** is not related to one's circumstances but is "in the Lord." This present text is very much reminiscent of the conclusion of Habakkuk's lament (3:17–18):

**Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines,
though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food,
though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls,
yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior.**

18 Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me.

Paul called upon them to rejoice with him. They were saddened by Paul's imprisonment, but he wanted their despair to be turned into joy by the truth of the gospel and by the personal witness of Timothy and Epaphroditus.

Timothy (2:19-24)

2:19 I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I too may be cheered by news of you.

Paul always made his travel plans in total submission to the will of God. His human desire is seen in the verb "**I hope**". His acknowledgement of the divine will is evident in the prepositional phrase **in the Lord Jesus**. Paul hoped **to send Timothy to you soon**. The fact of sending was sure; only the time of sending was indefinite. He was awaiting the disposition of his appeal and trial before Caesar and the Roman authorities. He fully expected that it would be favorable and that it would be given at any moment.

The conjunction **so that** shows the second purpose, which is that Paul **too may be cheered by news of you**. The time when Paul expected to be cheered would be when he received the report about the spiritual condition of the church.

2:20 For I have no one like him, who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare.

Paul saw in Timothy some special qualities which the Philippians needed to develop. The term, **like him**, “of like soul” or “like-minded”, literally means “of equal soul.” Just as Jesus Christ was equal to the Father in deity (2:6), so Timothy was equal to Paul in the characteristics of unity, humility, and concern for others. Timothy was a caring person, his concern was genuine, and he had concern for the church.

2:21 For they all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.

Paul then pronounced a general indictment upon the motivation of gospel preachers (1:15–16), **for they all seek their own interests**. Selfishness, a trait of sinful humanity, unfortunately permeates the Christian world as well. The exclusion of Timothy from this group shows that he was not selfish. He was not in the ministry for what he could get out of it. He was a giver, not a taker.

Selfish persons do not seek the things which are **of Jesus Christ**. These “things” include the mind of Christ as seen in humility, obedience, and concern for others. Christ emptied Himself, Paul was willing to pour out himself, and Timothy was determined to seek the glorification of the Savior in his ministry to the church.

2:22 But you know Timothy’s proven worth, how as a son with a father he has served with me in the gospel.

Timothy was a proved servant. The Philippians were aware of his humility; **you know**. They had contact with him on at least four occasions. He was with them when the church was started (Acts 16:12–40), when Paul sent him from Athens to Thessalonica (Acts 18:5; 1 Thess 3:1–2), and twice during the third missionary journey (Acts 19:22; 20:3–6). They had “proof” that Timothy was a faithful worker. The word “proof” was used of the testing of precious metals through the heat of the fire (1 Pet 1:7).

Timothy was a cooperative servant. Paul said, “...**he has served with me.**” Timothy, however, served **as a son with a father**. Timothy was Paul’s son in the faith and so inherited the servant nature of Paul. Lastly, Timothy was a gospel servant. He was **in the gospel** ministry in that he determined to further the outreach and the influence of the gospel message in the lives of both sinners and believers.

2:23 I hope therefore to send him just as soon as I see how it will go with me, 24 and I trust in the Lord that shortly I myself will come also.

Epaphroditus (2:25-30)

2:25 I have thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, and your messenger and minister to my need,

The verbs indicate that Paul sent Epaphroditus at the same time he dispatched the letter. He deemed it “necessary” because his epistle was finished, Epaphroditus was well enough to travel, and he was concerned over their apprehension.

Paul first identified Epaphroditus as his **“brother.”** They were both in the family of God through regeneration. They were also joined together with the brethren who resided in Philippi (1:12; 3:1). He is called a **fellow worker**. They were both working out what God was working in.

He is also described as a **“fellow soldier.”** He had put on the armor of God to war against sin and the devil (Eph 6:10–17). He endured hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ (2 Tim 2:3).

He was their **“messenger”**, and as such he was sent by the church to Rome with a commission to carry out. He was also a **minister** to the **needs** of Paul. Epaphroditus came close to death in his service to Paul.

2:26 for he has been longing for you all and has been distressed because you heard that he was ill.

He **“longed for”** his home church, which emphasizes a prolonged duration of intense desire. Also, he was full of **distress**. It stresses mental, emotional, and spiritual anguish. In his labor at Rome, Epaphroditus became deathly ill. Word of this sickness somehow got back to the church at Philippi. Subsequently, he became informed that the church knew about his physical weakness. He then became concerned over their concern for him!

2:27 Indeed he was ill, near to death. But God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.

The church knew that their member had become ill, but they apparently did not know the severity of his illness. Paul now informed them that Epaphroditus **was ill, near to death**. The statement that **God had mercy on him** reveals the fact that God graciously healed him. The healing was done for both of their benefits, but mainly for the emotional relief of Paul, **lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow**. The first sorrow came when Epaphroditus became sick, and the second sorrow would have come if he had died.

2:28 I am the more eager to send him, therefore, that you may rejoice at seeing him again, and that I may be less anxious.

As soon as Epaphroditus was healed, Paul sent him in haste back to the church. His return would accomplish two good results. First, the church would **“rejoice”** at his coming. Second, Paul would be **“less anxious”** in that the concern of all parties would have been turned into joy.

2:29 So receive him in the Lord with all joy, and honor such men,

They first should **receive him in the Lord with all joy**. They should also **“honor such men.”** Humble servants of the Lord, like Epaphroditus, must be appreciated, and such appreciation should be given publicly.

2:30 for he nearly died for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was lacking in your service to me.

Epaphroditus was aware that the gift of the Philippians was not enough to meet the needs of Paul, so he worked to earn money and serve Paul. The more he worked, the weaker he grew. He tried to make up the difference between the actual amount of the gift and the needed total, as well as other services needed by

Paul. The “**lack**” was not created by a deliberate attempt to withhold funds, because the church was later applauded for its generosity (4:10–19).

Righteousness through Faith in Christ (3:1-11)

3:1 Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you.

The phrase **finally** that begins this section means something like “as for the rest [of what needs to be said].” A new section is further indicated by **my brothers my brothers**. We are to **rejoice in the Lord**. The Lord who saves is both the basis and focus of rejoicing. The phrase **in the Lord** refers to the ground, or sphere, of our present existence (Phil 2:19, 24) and points to our basic relationship with Christ.

Since Philippi straddled the Egnatian Way, the east-west turnpike through Macedonia, this church was always in danger of the Judaizers’ showing up with their subversive teaching. So using this letter to warn the Philippians one more time is **no trouble** to Paul, and it is **safe for you**.

3:2 Look out for the dogs, look out for the evildoers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh.

Although we are hardly prepared for this outburst, such people have dogged Paul all the years of his Christian ministry (Gal 2:1–14). So the warning addressed to the Philippians turns out to be full of criticism and sarcasm against Jewish Christians who promote circumcision among Gentile believers.

First, **Look out for the dogs**. Dogs were scavengers that were generally detested by Greco-Roman society and considered unclean by Jews, who sometimes used “dog” to designate Gentiles. Paul here reverses the label -- by trying to make Gentiles “clean” through circumcision, the Judaizers are unclean dogs.

Second, they are **evildoers**. The irony derives from the Psalm’s repeated designation of the wicked as “those who work iniquity.” In trying to make Gentiles submit to Torah observance, Judaizers (and their contemporary counterparts, the legalists) do not work “righteousness” at all but evil, just as those in the Psalms work iniquity because they have rejected God’s righteousness.

Third, Paul warns, **look out for those who mutilate the flesh**, an ironic reference to Gentile circumcision. This descriptive title must be seen in contrast to genuine circumcision. The Judaizers were literally cutting down, whereas circumcision involved a cutting around. Physical mutilations, practiced in pagan idolatry, were prohibited by God through Moses (Lev 21:5; 1 Kings 18:28).

In their zeal to physically circumcise their converts, the Judaizers were spiritually castrating them. They harmed people by their false teaching. They invited people to Christ with a Bible in one hand and a knife in the other. They proclaimed salvation by faith and works, which ultimately is a “works only” human religion.

3:3 For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh—

It is **we**, Gentiles and Jews together, who **are the true circumcision**, which Paul elsewhere calls “circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit” (Rom 2:29, echoing Deut 30:6). Paul knows nothing of a “new” Israel. For him the one people of God are now newly constituted on the basis of Christ and the Spirit.

Paul first describes the true circumcision as we **who worship by the Spirit of God**. Paul’s use is determined by the LXX, where it most often denotes Levitical service or ministry in the sacrificial system. Here it stands in ironic contrast to Philippians 3:2. Where mutilated priests could not serve in the former temple, the true circumcision now serves Christ in the new temple by means of the Spirit. Here Paul is speaking about two ways of existing -- **in the flesh**, meaning life centered in the creature as over against God, and **by the Spirit**, as people of the future for whom all life in the present is now service and devotion to God.

The basis of such life in the Spirit is Christ Himself, expressed in terms of “boasting/**glorying**” in Christ Jesus (1:26). This seems to be a clear echo of Jeremiah 9:23–26, where the Lord says that the truly wise will boast in the Lord, and not put confidence in such “fleshly” matters as wisdom, strength, wealth, in a context where “the whole house of Israel” is judged as being “uncircumcised in heart.” Jeremiah says that true boasting in the Lord means to “understand and know me,” in the sense of knowing God’s true character, which is exactly the point Paul will pick up in Philippians 3:8–11. As in Jeremiah, “boasting” here carries the hint of putting one’s full trust and confidence in Christ, and thus to glory in Him.

Finally, and now in contrast both to boasting in Christ Jesus and to serving by the Spirit of God, Paul adds, who **put no confidence in the flesh**. It reflects the similar argument in Galatians 3:2–3, where “flesh” refers first to the actual flesh cut away in circumcision but at the same time is the primary descriptive word for life before and outside of Christ. One lives either “according to the Spirit” or “according to the flesh.” These are mutually incompatible kinds of existence.

3:4 though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more:

We who serve by the Spirit, Paul says, who boast in Christ Jesus, have abandoned altogether putting **confidence in the flesh**, which by implication is what the Judaizers are bringing Gentiles to by urging circumcision. But, he now adds, if they want to play that game, then he win there as well, since he **has reason for confidence in the flesh**. His credentials with regard to Jewish identity and observances are faultless. What follows is a catalog of seven items that prove his assertion.

3:5 circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee;

First, **circumcised on the eighth day**. As a Jewish boy, born into a Jewish home, he was circumcised on the eighth day.

Second, **of the people of Israel**. What the Judaizers hope to achieve by Gentile circumcision is to bring them into the privileges of belonging to God’s ancient people. Paul had been given this privilege by birth.

Third, **of the tribe of Benjamin**. Gentiles could become members only of Israel. Paul’s membership was of a kind whereby he could trace his family origins. He belonged to the tribe of Benjamin, the favored tribe from

which Saul came, Israel's first king, of whom he is named. They were also notable because they alone had joined Judah in loyalty to the Davidic covenant.

Fourth, **a Hebrew of Hebrews**. Paul was in every way a "Hebrew, born of pure Hebrew stock."

Fifth, **as to the law, a Pharisee**. Paul's own word in Galatians 1:14 are that he had advanced in Judaism far beyond his contemporaries, being "extremely zealous for the traditions of [his] ancestors." It defines his relationship to the law in a very specific way, as belonging to the Jewish sect devoted to its study and codification. Also, any Jewish Christians who came to Philippi to promote circumcision on the part of Gentiles would most likely also belong to this sect.

3:6 as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.

Sixth, **as to zeal, a persecutor of the church**. Imitating prophetic zeal for God, he had demonstrated his own by his untiring dedication to persecuting the Christian movement, probably related to his conviction that God had especially cursed Jesus by having Him hanged (Gal 3:13; Deut 21:23). In their own way, his Judaizing opponents are also persecuting the church, but Paul surpasses them even here.

Seventh, **as to righteousness under the law, blameless**. The key to the use of **blameless** lies with its sacrificial overtones (Phil 2:15). Paul has no "blemishes" on his record as far as lawkeeping is concerned, which means that he meticulously adhered to the Pharisaic interpretation of the law, with its regulations for Sabbath observance, food laws and ritual cleanliness. This means further that righteousness in this context does not refer to right standing with God, but precisely as he qualifies it, that righteousness which is "in the law." What makes this kind of righteousness worthless is that it generates "confidence in the flesh."

3:7 But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ.

The verb "**I counted**" indicates that he made a conscious decision to repudiate his religious and racial inheritance and successes, and that he continued to view his past in an unfavorable light. His former gains are collectively a loss because of his ultimate gain, Christ Himself.

3:8 Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ

At his conversion, Paul not only counted his religious gains to be loss, but he also "**suffered the loss of all things**." Paul has taken up the Old Testament theme of knowing God and applied it to Christ. It means to know Him based on personal experience and intimate relationship, so to know Christ's character intimately.

Paul saying that he **counts them as rubbish**, points to that which must be discarded as useless waste, such as human excrement or that which is only fit for the dogs. The apostle lost in order that he might gain. He lost self and gained Christ. He lost sin and gained righteousness. He lost that which was human and gained that which was divine. He lost temporal things and gained eternal things. The eternal destiny of the believer is to be with Christ, not just to be in heaven (1 Thess 4:17).

3:9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—

To gain Christ is immediately interpreted as being **found in him**, which is further interpreted as **not having a righteousness of my own**. To be found in Him implies God's initiative, to have a God-given righteousness in contrast to the righteousness of verse 6, which served as grounds for self-confidence. The reason that even "faultless" Torah observance is rubbish is that it means **having a righteousness of my own**. Because it comes from the law, it gives me grounds for "boasting in the flesh," in human achievement. One is then righteous neither in the sense of being rightly related to God nor in the sense of living rightly as an expression of that relationship.

True "behavioral righteousness" will issue in a cruciform lifestyle, and to get there one must first receive **the righteousness that comes from God**. Truly Christian life "boasts in Christ Jesus," predicated on a relationship with God that comes **through faith in Christ**—which in Paul is always shorthand for "by grace through faith." Some think this phrase means "through Christ's own faithfulness" in our behalf, that is, through his faithful obedience that led to death (2:8). I believe it refers to both, meaning "by grace through faith in His faithfulness." Before God, a person is either found in Adam (self) or in Christ (Rom 5:12–21). The former brings condemnation, whereas the latter guarantees justification.

3:10 that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,

In keeping with his Old Testament roots, **knowing** Christ is the ultimate goal of being in right relationship with God, and knowing Christ is both "already" and "not yet." Through the righteousness Christ has effected we **know him** now, both **the power of his resurrection** and **sharing in his sufferings**. The ultimate prize, to have present knowledge of him fully realized, awaits the resurrection.

Paul almost certainly does not intend that we know three things: Christ, **the power of his resurrection**, and participation in **his sufferings**. Rather, the second two spell out what knowing Christ entails. To know Christ begins with **the power of his resurrection**, the power that comes to believers on the basis of Christ's resurrection. Without the power, and guarantee, inherent in Christ's resurrection, present suffering can be both harsh and senseless. The suffering was transformed into intimate fellowship with Christ Himself.

Suffering on behalf of Christ is the ordinary lot of believers (1:29). Christ's resurrection and present exaltation is the direct result of His having suffered for us to the point of death on a cross (2:6–11). Hence, the way to resurrection for His followers also leads down the path of suffering. Through our suffering the significance of Christ's death is manifested to the world. Paul is here reflecting the teaching of our Lord, that those who follow Christ will likewise have to "bear the cross" on behalf of others.

Christ's sufferings are not "sufferings in general" but those sufferings that culminated in His death, which was for the sake of others. Therefore, as Christ's life and suffering serve as paradigms, so also does Paul's becoming like Christ in His death. Christian life is cruciform in character. God's people, even as they live presently through the power of Christ's resurrection, are as their Lord forever marked by the cross. The heavenly Lion is a slain Lamb (Rev 5:5–6).

3:11 that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

Paul now moves from knowing Christ in the present to its full realization in the future, **that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead**. The point of this final clause is easy enough -- conformity to Christ's death in the present, made possible because of the power of Christ's resurrection in the present, will be followed by our own resurrection from [among] the dead at the end.

The resurrection of believers is integrally tied to their first "being conformed to his death." Without "death" of this kind, there is no resurrection. This is another way of saying "we must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). The future itself is not in doubt. What is uncertain for him is whether his certain future is to be realized by resurrection or by transformation.

Straining for the Prize (3:12-4:1)

3:12 Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.

Knowing Christ now and attaining the resurrection combine to give purpose to Paul's life—his "running." Despite present realization of the power of His resurrection and sharing in His sufferings, Paul has not yet reached the final goal.

Since Paul has not yet **already obtained**, he does what he wants the Philippians to do, **press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own**. In context the next phrase, that for which **Christ Jesus has made me his own**, points back at least to verses 8–9 (being found in Christ and thus having a righteousness that comes from God). In terms of his own story, he probably intends them to hear echoes of the Damascus Road as well. Christ pursued Paul until He caught him on the road to Damascus (Acts 9), and now Paul was pursuing his Savior.

3:13 Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead,

Pictured first is the runner whose eyes are set on the goal in such a way that he "pays no attention to" or **forgets** what is behind. In context what is behind probably refers to verses 4–6, but it would also include all other matters that might impede his singular pursuit of Christ. No person can erase from his memory what has transpired before, but he can keep the past from controlling the present and the future. When God forgives our sins He still remembers what they were, but He does not hold them against us.

The flip side of the image is the runner's **straining forward to what lies ahead**. The picture is of coming down the home stretch, leaning forward, extending oneself to break the tape. As Paul "runs" toward the Christ who has already taken hold of him, he does so in the same focused, full-tilt way a runner does who is intent on winning.

3:14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

With all of his holy ambition, the apostle wanted to do **“one thing”** (3:13). He earnestly desired to **“press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”** The author of Hebrews has said, **“Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith”** (Heb. 12:1–2). All believers must realize that both God and others are watching them; at the same time they must fix their eyes on Christ. Their goal is to be like Him.

A **“prize”** will be given for success. At the Greek games, the winner of a race was summoned from the stadium floor to the seat of the judge, where a wreath of leaves was placed upon his head. At Athens, the winner was also given five hundred coins, free meals, and a front row seat at the theater. These prizes were temporary, but believers can obtain an eternal and incorruptible prize (1 Cor 9:26). God has chosen men in Christ Jesus to be saved and to be sanctified. The prize itself is a gracious gift, but attainment of the goal requires human effort.

3:15 Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you.

Paul wanted his personal aims to become the goals for the Philippians. First, it included both Paul and his readers. Second, it could only be obeyed by those who were mature and who were maturing. A mature believer knows where he is in the divine order of spiritual progress and perceives that he can still develop further. Mature believers are open to instruction and admonition (1 Cor 2:6; 14:20). They have moral discernment and are able to receive the **“strong meat”** of the Scriptures (Heb 5:14). The believer has positional perfection in Christ, but he or she must strive to attain ethical perfection (Heb 10:14).

The demonstrative pronoun **this way** points back to the apostle’s specified goal of pressing toward the mark, of doing all that God planned for you to do, and of becoming all that God had designed for His children. Some Christians blindly think that they do not need to improve or that they can mature through legalism. The means of revelation are probably the teaching of the Holy Spirit, the observation of the growth of mature believers in grace, and the rod of chastisement.

3:16 Only let us hold true to what we have attained.

Paul admitted that both the church and he had made significant progress in their spiritual life. They had moved into a doctrinal position and a behavioral pattern which were being threatened by the legalists. The Judaizers charged that they had to advance beyond simple faith by means of a complex legalistic system.

God has only one way of salvation, and He likewise has only one means of sanctification. Both Jews and Gentiles alike are saved by faith in Christ alone and they become holy by total submission to the Holy Spirit who produces His fruit through them. Just as the Bible alone is the basis of our faith and practice, so these standards should provide the guidelines for daily living.

3:17 Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us.

With all humility, the apostle could confidently admonish them **“join in imitating me.”** He knew what God had done in his life, that his theology and practice were sound, and that the believers needed an objective, visible, human example. He knew that he was following Christ (1 Cor 11:1).

Paul offered his associates and himself as an **“example”** by which others should be tested. The word “example” is normally transliterated as a “type.” It was the impression or the stamp. It was used of the nail prints in the hands of Christ, left by the hard blows (John 20:25). Paul and his associates became an example to the believers for them to imitate.

3:18 For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ.

Imitation and vigilance were needed because **“many”** false teachers were walking in the midst of the churches. Believers must examine the spirits and perceive the difference between the spirit of truth and the spirit of error (1 John 4:1–6).

The **“enemies of the cross”** manifested their hostility to the redemptive message of Christ’s death and resurrection by insisting that faith alone in Christ is not sufficient to save. They expressed faith in the person of Christ, but not in his finished work. They contended that circumcision and obedience to the Mosaic Law needed to be added to faith in order to receive justification (Acts 15:1). If righteousness, or any part of it, is dependent upon legalism, then the value of Christ’s death is negated (Gal 2:21). The concept of salvation by works is contrary to the principle of divine grace (Gal. 5:10).

3:19 Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things.

These are destructive men destined for destruction. These false preachers were in the ministry for what they could get out of it. Peter warned about elders who would take a pastorate for **“filthy lucre”** (1 Pet 5:2). Paul likewise cautioned his readers about greedy ministers (1 Tim 6:3–10). Their belly became their god in that they served their worldly appetites (Rom 16:18).

They gloried in those things of which they should have been ashamed. They boasted in the flesh, in the physical rite of circumcision, and in the legalistic efforts of self. They bragged about the number of people they were able to get to submit to circumcision. Of them Paul wrote: **“... [they] desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh”** (Gal. 6:13).

Although Christians are supposed to seek those spiritual things which are above (Col 3:1), they are not to ignore their human obligations. The opposite, however, is more usually true. Men are often so earthly-minded that they never think about heavenly matters. The Judaizers attempted to spoil the church **“through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ”** (Col 2:8).

3:20 But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,

The residents of Philippi were actually citizens of Rome. They constituted a Roman colony within the region of Macedonia. Away from Rome they were still Romans (Acts 16:12, 21). Christians likewise constitute a colony of heaven on earth. They have double citizenship. Paul was in the kingdom of God, and yet he claimed and used the rights of his Roman citizenship (Acts 16:37).

In a general sense believers are heavenly citizens, but specifically, our residency is the Holy City (Rev 21:2, 10). The Philippians likewise were members of the empire, but they belonged to the city of Rome. Men of faith, like Abraham, looked for this city “whose builder and maker is God” (Heb 11:10). Christ has prepared rooms for believers within this city which God has constructed for His own (John 14:2–3; Heb. 11:16).

Jesus is the “**Savior**.” The Old Testament openly declared that only Yahweh could be the Savior of His people (Isa. 45:21; 49:26). Since Christ bears the name of Savior, He must also be Yahweh God. His full name is “**Lord Jesus Christ**.” This is the name which every tongue will confess and before whom every knee will bow (2:10–11). He will come from the seat of our citizenship, namely, the Holy City within the heavens.

3:21 who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

First, if a believer is alive at the time of Christ’s return he will be translated into a glorified body. Second, if a believer has died before Christ’s coming his body will be raised from the dead and transformed into an immortal, incorruptible body (1 Cor 15:51–57).

The object of the change is “the **lowly body**.” This does not mean that the body is sinful. The literal translation is “the body of our humiliation.” It refers to the mortal, corruptible body which was caused by the introduction of sin into the human race by Adam. It is thus subject to disease and to death. It is marked by dishonor and weakness (1 Cor 15:43). Christ will “**transform**” this body at His return. Believers are promised that they will have new, immortal, incorruptible bodies, not subject to disease or death.

When the change occurs, believers will “**be like his glorious body**”. Paul wrote: “As as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly” (1 Cor 15:49). John said that “we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is” (1 John 3:2).

This change will be “**by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself**.” The same divine power which enabled Christ to conquer death through His resurrection and which will enable Him to force all of His enemies into total submission is the same power which will change the bodies of believers. God is faithful and will keep His promises!

Final Appeal (4:1-9)

4:1 Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved.

The conjunction “**therefore**” gives the logical result of both the explanation of salvation and the warning about the Judaizers (ch. 3). Paul expressed his affection for the Philippian believers by five forms of address. First, they were his “**brothers**.” They both had been born again into the family of God. Second, they were “**my**

beloved.” Third, they were **“longed for.”** He did not desire their money or support; rather, he wanted them. Fourth, they were his **“joy.”** Paul felt this way about all of his converts. Elsewhere he wrote: **“For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For you are our glory and joy”** (1 Thess 2:19–20). Fifth, they were his **“crown.”** A victorious runner in the Greek games received a festive garland on his head (1 Cor 9:24–25). At the judgment seat of Christ, believers will receive different crowns for distinctive achievements (2 Cor 5:10). To the apostle, the Philippian believers represented the joy of victory because he knew that his race and labor in Philippi had not been in vain (2:16).

Now, the apostle issued an imperative to **“stand firm thus in the Lord.”** Take a stand and to remain firm in that position. He did not want them to yield to the pressures of the Judaizers. The location of their stand was to be **“in the Lord.”** They had to relate everything to His divine-human person and to His redemptive death and resurrection.

4:2 I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord.

Since the apostle constantly encouraged unity (1:27; 2:2; 3:16), these women must have possessed great divisive influence upon others. Quite possibly they may have been deaconesses or women of financial wealth. In any case, the friction between these two women had to be eliminated.

To show no partiality, Paul used the same verb of appeal twice. Both shared equal blame for their disgraceful conduct. The fact that the apostle criticized them in this public epistle shows that the entire church must have known about their personal conflicts. Paul charged them to **“be of the same mind in the Lord.”** Literally, they were to think the same thing

4:3 Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women, who have labored side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

These women needed assistance to resolve their differences. Paul then made a personal request to a close friend to give such help. The identity of the **“true companion”** remains a mystery. The request was direct and simple, **“Help them.”**

In spite of the present disunity of the two women, Paul still appreciated who they were and what they had done for the Lord in the past. First, they had **“labored side by side with [him] in the gospel.”** Second, their names were **“in the book of life.”** They were definitely saved. This book contains the names of those who have received eternal life from God through faith in His gracious provision by Jesus Christ (Luke 10:20; Rev 20:15).

4:4 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice.

Paul admonishes the Philippians to be happy. Nehemiah knew that **“the joy of the Lord”** was the strength of God’s people. (Neh 8:10). Solomon observed that **“a merry heart”** made a cheerful countenance and did **“good like medicine”** (Prov 15:13; 17:22).

Constant rejoicing should be an integral part of the believer’s inner response to life’s pleasant and difficult situations. The sphere of rejoicing must always be **“in the Lord.”**

James commanded, “Count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations” (James 1:2). The fruit of the Spirit-filled life is always joy, regardless of outward influences. A Christian can rejoice in the Lord because he knows that he is saved, that God cares, and that God is working out His sovereign plan for His glory and for the spiritual good of His people (Rom 8:28).

4:5 Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand;

Christ was both meek and gentle in His relationships with men (2 Cor. 10:1). His **reasonableness**, gentleness, however, must not be confused with moral softness or His meekness with authoritative weakness. The same Christ who beckoned the little children also drove the religious swindlers out of the temple with a scourge. Divine wisdom is “first pure, then peaceable, gentle [same word], and easy to be entreated” (James 3:17).

This spirit of nonviolence must be manifested “**to everyone**,” both friends and enemies. Paul cautioned believers “to speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle [same word], showing all meekness unto all men” (Titus 3:2). A believer must suffer wrong, but he should never initiate wrong (1 Cor 6:7). He must bless them which persecute him and must overcome evil with good (Rom 12:14, 21).

The presence or absence of inner peace will be in direct proportion to one’s awareness of the presence of Christ.

4:6 do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

Timothy had a constructive concern for the church (2:20). Paul knew that his associate would pray, witness, teach, and counsel effectively. The apostle himself asserted that the care of all the churches was upon him (2 Cor 11:28). He prayed for them, wrote to them, visited them, and sent his associates to them.

Christ claimed that a person should not worry about the basic necessities of life which the heavenly Father has promised to provide (Matt 6:25), about things that cannot be changed (Matt. 6:27), and about the problems of tomorrow (Matt 6:34).⁹ Such worry is caused by a lack of faith and by a wrong set of values and priorities (Matt 6:30–33). Such cares, like weeds, choke the application of God’s word to one’s life and make one insensitive to the coming of Christ (Matt 13:32).

A worrying Christian will waver, but a trusting believer will be triumphant. Elsewhere Paul charged: “Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you” (1 Thess 5:17–18). A believer must not only endure a trial, he must also thank God for it. When that occurs, he will have a positive approach to his problem, rather than negative worry and futility.

4:7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Three facts are set forth about divine peace. First, it will “**guard**” the believer. It is a military term, used of a garrison of soldiers or sentries on duty. Just as soldiers of the Praetorian Guard were assigned to keep Paul under protective custody, so the peace of God can stand in constant vigilance over the child of God.

Second, **the peace of God** will patrol the “**hearts and minds**” of believers. The believer can enjoy emotional and mental stability if he rests in this divine protection.

Third, it will keep the believer “**in Christ Jesus.**” He must have both his position and practice in Christ. If he is disobedient or carnal, he cannot expect to have inner tranquility.

4:8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

Six objects of right thought are listed. All are introduced by the qualitative adjective “**whatever.**”

First, “**true**” things are the opposite of lies and false witness. A true issue is that which corresponds to the true nature of God (Rom 3:4). A believer must surround his heart and mind with the girdle of truth (Eph 6:14), he must produce the fruit of the Spirit in truth (Eph 5:9), and he must speak the truth in love (Eph 4:15, 25).

Second, **honorable** thoughts are dignified and serious, prompted by holy morals and motives. Believers should desire to “lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty” (same word, 1 Tim 2:2).

Third, those things which are right in relation to God and man are “**just.**”

Fourth, “**pure**” things are those which will not contaminate oneself or others.

Fifth, a pleasing thought is “**lovely.**” It produces concord, peace, and rest.

Sixth, wholesome, constructive thoughts are “**commendable**”. They are the opposite of “filthiness, foolish talking, and jesting” (Eph 5:4).

All of the above six thoughts are characterized by “**excellence**” and “**praise.**” A believer must daily strengthen the moral integrity of his thought life. Solomon observed, “For as he thinks in his heart, so is he” (Prov 23:7).

4:9 What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

Paul wanted the Philippian believers to imitate him. They “**learned**” from his instruction when he was with them. He attempted to disciple them. They “**received**” truth. They “**heard**” how Paul was responding to his Roman imprisonment. He was not anxious before the government authorities. They had “**seen**” Paul in action. They knew that he had prayed and praised God during his Philippian imprisonment.

The believer has the guarantee that “**the God of peace**” will always be with him. He has the peace of God within him and the God of peace around him. He has both the presence and protection of peace.

God’s Provision (4:10-20)

4:10 I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me. You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity.

Three observations are given. First, he “**rejoiced in the Lord greatly**” when he received their gift. He rejoiced because God had met his need and because God had constrained the Philippians to give. Second, he recognized their personal interest in him, **you have revived your concern for me**. Third, he knew that they had wanted to give to him before this time, **You were indeed concerned for me**. They simply **had no opportunity** to do it. The trip of Epaphroditus to Rome gave them the opportunity.

4:11 Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content.

He rejoiced more in their thoughtfulness than in their money. He was more grateful for the givers than for their gifts. Paul **learned** to be self-sufficient regardless of whether he had much or little.

4:12 I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need.

Paul knew “**how to be brought low**” and “**how to abound**.” He knew how to get along with little and also with much. A Christian must learn how to ask God to give him his daily bread (Matt 6:11).

He had **learned the secret** of trusting in God regardless of his financial circumstances. The verb, **learned the secret**, was used of the pagan mystery religions when a person was initiated into a secret society. Paul learned to put his confidence in God.

4:13 I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

Paul knew that divine strength was made perfect through his human weakness (2 Cor 12:9). The more dependent upon God he became, the stronger he developed. His strength came from his union with Christ.

4:14 Yet it was kind of you to share my trouble.

All believers should desire to hear this praise from Jesus Christ: “Well done, good and faithful servant” (Matt 25:23). When a person completes a task and does it well, he can then have a sense of personal satisfaction and internal joy (Gal 6:4).

4:15 And you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving, except you only.

He remembered two things which they had done for him during his second missionary journey (AD 49–52). This occurred about ten years before. Paul had actively proclaimed the gospel for several years before he came to Philippi, but their city became the foundation for his outreach into Europe, especially the provinces of Macedonia and Achaia. The “**beginning**” refers to their active **partnership** in his ministry after they responded in faith. When he departed from Macedonia, he went into Achaia to the cities of Athens and Corinth (Acts 17:14–15). In correspondence with the Corinthians, Paul referred to the financial support of the Philippians (2 Cor 11:8-9).

4:16 Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again.

They sent gifts on two different occasions (“**once and again**”) during the month he ministered in Thessalonica.

4:17 Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit.

Paul was criticized for both his refusal to take money from one group and his willingness to accept it from others. When he labored in Philippi he did not take their money, but when he moved on to Thessalonica and Corinth he gladly received their support (1 Thess 2:3–8). He now denied that he sought their money.

Rather, he sought after “**fruit**.” He often referred to converts and to the righteous change within believing sinners as fruit (Rom 1:13; 7:4; Eph 5:9). Fruit, for the believer, is total submission to the indwelling Christ who will then manifest Himself through the child of God (John 15:1–8). Just as Christ came to seek and to save the lost, so a fruitful believer will seek the salvation of others.

Paul did not want this fruit for himself but for them, **increases to your credit**. The Philippians had made an investment in Paul’s ministry which would bring them heavenly dividends. They were laying up treasure in heaven through him. Paul knew that they would be rewarded at the judgment seat of Christ for their financial support. Paul’s converts were, in effect, their converts. Their gifts enabled him to evangelize more people.

4:18 I have received full payment, and more. I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God.

First, Paul **received full payment** from them for his total investment of time in their lives. Second, he actually received more than he expected or deserved, **and more**. Third, he now was in a financial position without any immediate need, **I am well supplied**.

He then described the gift which was sent by them through Epaphroditus, their messenger. He equated it with the sacrifices given to God by the nation Israel. First, it was “**a fragrant offering**.” Israel presented to God five different offerings: burnt, meal, peace, sin, and trespass (Lev 1:1–5:19). The first three were **fragrant offerings**, whereas the last two were not. The first three were voluntary, given out of love, thanksgiving, and dedication, while the last two were compulsory, offered through confession of sin. The incense of the first three was sweet in the nostrils of God, but the last two were not sweet. So their gift to Paul was voluntary, given out of love and gratitude.

Second, it was a “**sacrifice acceptable**.” Before God will accept and bless the financial gift of a believer, he must first present his body as “a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God” (Rom 12:1).

Third, their financial contribution was “**pleasing to God**.” There is a difference between obeying the commandments of God and doing those things which are pleasing in His sight (1 John 2:22). The former are required, but the latter go beyond the call of duty.

4:19 And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

By making the apostle full, the church had created a financial need for themselves. They had poured out of the container of their lives into the vessel of Paul. He then informed them that God would fill them back up to the brim, **God will supply every need of yours according to his riches.** A person will always receive more than what he gave. God will make up the difference. Men may become impoverished when they give, but God can give out of inexhaustible wealth, **according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.**

4:20 To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Paul gave praise to God for meeting his needs as well as those of the church. God deserved the glory for that which He had done.

Final Greetings (4:21-23)

4:21 Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brothers who are with me greet you.

Each Christian positionally is a saint, set apart from the world unto God by the initial sanctification of the Holy Spirit.

4:22 All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household.

The "saints" in Rome would include the membership of the church in that city (Rom 16:1–15). The Romans also wanted to greet them, "especially those of Caesar's household." Through the imprisonment of Paul, some servants, soldiers, and perhaps relatives out of the household of the emperor had been saved. This is why Paul could confidently assert that "the things which happened to me have fallen out rather to the furtherance of the gospel" (1:12). The church originally was saddened by news of his imprisonment; now he wanted them to rejoice with him over what God had accomplished in the lives of his captors.

4:23 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

He wanted the church to experience the daily sustaining grace which all men need (John 1:16). Remember that grace is God's redemption at Christ's expense. It is free for us, but it cost Christ Jesus everything!

Soli Deo Gloria!