

# **PAUL'S LETTER TO THE PHILIPPIANS**



**HOW TO UNDERSTAND IT**

### **ABOUT THE COVER**

The cover image of this booklet is a stylized artist rendering of Philippians 1:7, 13-14:

"I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers with me of grace... it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ; and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear..."

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Scriptures in the booklet are quoted from the King James Version ("Authorized Version"), unless otherwise noted.

**Author:** Norbert Link

**Editorial Review Team:** Dave Harris, Rene Messier, Brian Gale, Wray Zehrunge, Bill Koeneke, Phyllis Bourque, Margaret Adair, Joan R. Pope and Johanna Link.

**Graphic Design:** Shelly Bruno; Cover Image: [BigStockPhoto.com/Shelly Bruno](http://BigStockPhoto.com/Shelly Bruno)

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# Introduction

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Paul wrote his letter to the Philippians while he was in prison (Philippians 1:13). Most scholars conclude that his imprisonment was in Rome, where he stayed for two years (Acts 28:30), and that the letter was written shortly before his release. In support of this conclusion, we read a reference to the Praetorium, which was in Rome (compare again Philippians 1:13), as well as the Emperor's household (also in Rome, Philippians 4:22), and we also read that Paul was expecting an immediate decision in his case (Philippians 1:19; 2:24), which could only be rendered in Rome.

This means that the letter was written between A.D. 60–64, which was approximately 10 years after Paul founded the Church in Philippi on his second missionary journey (Acts 16:12–40).

Philippi was a Roman colony at that time. It was founded by Philip II of Macedonia in 360 B.C. and it was the first European city that was visited by Paul. He arrived there on Pentecost in 50 A.D., following the direction of a vision he had received in Troas (Acts 16:9–13).

Paul and Silas were beaten, arrested and imprisoned in Philippi for their work in casting out a demon, but God freed them miraculously during an earthquake (Acts 16:16–40).

The beginnings of the Church in Philippi were very small. Lydia was converted there, and the jailer, and a few more, but the Church did grow and the brethren were very kind to Paul.

Before his imprisonment in Rome, Paul had sailed from Philippi while on his third missionary journey, after the Days of Unleavened Bread (Acts 20:6).

Philippi was a medical center. It is quite possible that Philippi was Luke's hometown and that Luke practiced medicine there. When Paul wrote the letter, Luke was apparently not in Rome; however, Timothy was, though not as a prisoner.

*The Jamieson, Fausset and Brown commentary states:*

"As to the state of the Church, we gather from [2 Corinthians 8:1, 2]

that its members were poor, yet most liberal; and from [Philippians 1:28–30], that they were undergoing persecution. The only blemish referred to in their character was, on the part of some members, a tendency to dissension. Hence arise his admonitions against disputings... No doctrinal error, or schism, has as yet sprung up..."

As we will see, **important themes in Paul's letter are joy, fellowship, and the gospel. We note that the letter includes a most remarkable doctrinal explanation of the "self-emptying" of Christ.**

In this commentary style booklet, we will closely examine each chapter of the book of Philippians, verse by verse, cross-referencing various Bible versions, as well as other Bible commentaries, for a well-rounded discussion of what Paul is really conveying in his letter to the Philippians.

# Philippians, Chapter 1

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## Philippians 1:1:

“(Verse 1) Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:”

Paul is the sole author of the letter to the Philippians, though he does mention having Timothy with him in Rome (Philippians 2:19). Timothy had accompanied Paul on his two voyages to Philippi (Acts 16 and 20) and was therefore personally known to the Philippians and respected by them. It was fitting then, that Paul would send Timothy to them again.

Both Paul and Timothy are called bondservants of Christ—a theme which Paul will explore throughout the letter. He greets all of the Church members in Philippi, calling them saints in Jesus Christ. A saint is a person whom God the Father has sanctified in Christ; that is, one who has been set aside by God and Christ for a holy purpose.

Paul then makes specific mention of the “bishops and deacons” in Philippi. The *People’s New Testament* explains:

“We find two classes of officers in this church organized by an apostle. There was a plurality of each class. All commentators agree that the bishops and the elders of the primitive church are the same, only different names of the same office. Paul calls the elders of Ephesus bishops (see Acts 20:17 in the *Revised Version*). Also in Titus 1:5, 7 he calls an elder a bishop... The word overseer, which is a literal translation of the Greek word *episkopos*, suggests the nature of the office. The duties of the deacons are supposed to be explained by the work of the Seven Deacons ordained in the church at Jerusalem. See Acts 6:1, 2.”

*Adam Clarke’s Commentary on the Bible* adds that “bishops and deacons” describe the “overseers of the Church of God, and those who ministered to the poor, and preached occasionally.”

## Philippians 1:2-7:

“(Verse 2) Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. (Verse 3) I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, (verse 4) always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, (verse 5) for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now, (verse 6) being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ; (verse 7) just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers with me of grace.”

In verse 2, Paul wishes the brethren grace (unmerited pardon and favor) and peace from God the Father and Jesus Christ the Son—the two Personages within the Godhead. We note that he does not send wishes *from* the Holy Spirit, simply because the Holy Spirit is not a Person, but is the power and mind of God.

Beginning with verse 3, Paul continues to show his love for the brethren, in that he tells them that he is praying daily for them to God the Father; and he is doing this with a joyful and thankful heart, realizing that the brethren are in the faith, and that they did not forsake the truth of the gospel (unlike some, or many in Galatia and Corinth, who had accepted “another” gospel and “another” Jesus).

What is this gospel Paul speaks of? It is the **gospel OF the Kingdom of God**. We will take some time here to examine this concept before we continue in Philippians, because it is such an important issue to understand.

In the first century, a controversy arose in the early New Testament Church about the question of whether the gospel message was supposed to be the good news **OF** Christ or **ABOUT** Christ. The answer to this question had great consequences. The majority believed that the gospel was strictly a message about Christ—about His person, His Sacrifice, His birth, His life and death as a human being. This is actually the warped “gospel message” that millions upon millions of people have been hearing piecemeal for centuries. It is **NOT** the **TRUE**



gospel message brought to us by Jesus Christ!

The true gospel is not only a [correct] message ABOUT the Messenger, Jesus Christ, but it is the [true] message OF the Messenger. It is the message that Jesus preached. It is the same good news or glad tidings which the Church of God is commissioned to preach today. The message has not changed!

There is only ONE gospel (Galatians 1:6–9)—and it is mostly called the gospel OF the Kingdom of God (Matthew 4:23; 24:14; Mark 1:14–15; Luke 8:1; 9:2). It is also referred to as the gospel OF Christ (Mark 1:1; Romans 1:9, 16; compare 2 Thessalonians 1:6–8)—not just ABOUT Christ. It is also identified as the gospel OF God the Father (Romans 1:1).

God the Father is the Originator and Owner of the Gospel! He entrusted it to Christ to preach it here on earth. It is, therefore, God's and Christ's gospel which the Church is to proclaim today. It is not called the gospel ABOUT Christ, or even ABOUT God the Father; nor is it called the gospel ABOUT the Kingdom of God. Rather, it is aptly described as the gospel OF God; OF Christ; and OF the Kingdom of God.

Why are we emphasizing this so much? Because the differences are wide-ranging!

The gospel message is a message FROM God TO man—it is FOR man. It includes the truth about God, about Christ, and about the Kingdom of God, but it is more encompassing than that. It shows man how he can ENTER the Kingdom of God.

What IS the Kingdom of God? Most people have no idea. The Kingdom of God is the Family of God. God IS a RULING Family!

The God Family—the God Kingdom—consists today, as it always has, of God the Father and Jesus Christ the Son. Both the Father and the Son are GOD. They ARE the Kingdom or Family of God. Converted Christians are NOT YET in the Kingdom or Family of God. They are Spirit-*begotten* children of God, to be BORN into the Kingdom of God at the time of Christ's return to this earth. Then they, too, will be IN the Kingdom of God—the Family of GOD. They will then BE God.

In order to be IN the Kingdom of God, one must BE God. Man is NOT yet in the Kingdom—he is not yet God, because flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God (compare 1 Corinthians 15:50).

But it is man's destiny to enter into eternal life—into the Kingdom of God; to become a member of the Kingdom or RULING Family of God.

When we preach the gospel OF the Kingdom of God, we preach the message which belongs to and originates from the KINGDOM of God—the Family of God. The everlasting or eternal gospel is the message OF God the Father and Jesus Christ the Son; that is, OF the Kingdom of God.

So then, with this perspective firmly in mind, let us resume our study of Paul's letter to the Philippians.

Having seen the dedication and zeal of the Philippians in their fellowship, defense and confirmation of the gospel, Paul expresses his confidence in Philippians 1:6 that God the Father, who began a good work in them by calling them out of this world and into the truth, would continue to work in and through them so that they would inherit their ultimate salvation—entrance into the Kingdom of God—when Christ returns. It is correct that we must be saved through the name of Jesus Christ, but it is God the Father who draws us to Christ. It was therefore God the Father who began His good work in the Philippians when He called them into the Truth.

Even though Paul was in chains when he wrote the letter—a prisoner of the Romans, as he points out in Philippians 1:7—he is not separated from the brethren in spirit. Paul considered them to be partakers with him of God's grace (same verse), which strengthens us during trials and which makes possible our ultimate receipt of eternal life.

The *People's New Testament* writes:

"As a prisoner he preached and defended the gospel. The Philippians sympathized with him, prayed for him, and sustained him by their offerings, thus becoming partakers. They not only did this, but defended and suffered for the gospel. See [Philippians] 1:28–30."

*Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible* says that Paul "rejoiced that he was counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. Now these Philippians were partakers with him of this, both in his 'bonds', by sympathizing with him, praying for him, sending relief unto him, and by suffering such like things themselves; and 'in the defence and confirmation of the Gospel', whether by suffering, preaching, or writing; they stood by him, encouraged and assisted him, when others forsook him, and laid difficulties and discouragements in his way."

*Barnes' Notes on the Bible* adds in respect to the “defense” and the “confirmation” of the gospel”:

“He is probably referring to the time when he made his defense before Nero, and vindicated himself from the charges which had been brought against him... Perhaps he means here, that on that occasion he was abandoned by those who should have stood by him, but that the Philippians showed him all the attention which they could. It is not impossible that they may have sent some of their number to sympathize with him in his trials, and to assure him of the unabated confidence of the church... The allusion is probably to the fact that, in all his efforts to defend the gospel, he had been sure of their sympathy and cooperation. Perhaps he refers to some assistance which he had derived from them in this cause, which is now to us unknown.”

Paul makes an important point in Philippians 1:2–7—which truth he will elaborate on more fully within the remainder of his letter—that our **salvation is not “automatic.”** We must prove to God through our conduct, as the Philippians did and were challenged to continue to do, that we are willing to obey Him and that we are living worthy of the gospel. God is not going to grant us eternal life if we flagrantly disobey Him. In fact, Paul warns us in Hebrews 6:4–8 that such conduct may lead to our eternal death.

God does WANT those whom He calls to salvation to be in His Kingdom—His Family. He is confident that His disciples WILL “make it” into His Kingdom. He knows that all those whom He has called now CAN make it! We even read that God has already “glorified” them (Romans 8:30), even though their glorification is still in the future—to be glorified when they enter the Kingdom or Family of God. But God is so confident they **will be** glorified that He speaks of that future event as something which has already occurred (compare Romans 4:17).

Paul tells us in Colossians 1:12 that “the Father... has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.” The *Authorized Version* states that He has “made us meet,” which means that He has made us “fit” or “sufficient” or “able” or “worthy.”

When God calls us, He **ENABLES us**, and therefore **KNOWS** that we CAN finish our race successfully. Our ability, sufficiency, or qualification come from God: We cannot come to Christ unless *the Father draws us* to Him (John 6:44, 65); we cannot repent unless *the Father grants us*

the gift of repentance (Romans 2:4); we cannot really and truly believe unless *the Father grants us* the gift of faith (1 Corinthians 12:9; Hebrews 12:2); and we cannot live a righteous life unless *the Father grants us* the gift of righteousness (Romans 5:17).

All of this does not mean, however, that we cannot lose out on salvation. The Bible contains many warnings against taking our calling lightly. It is our **responsibility to accept God's gifts and use them**. For instance, we are admonished that we are to hunger and thirst for God's righteousness, and that we are to seek it as a first priority (Matthew 5:6; 6:33). And so, even though the Father has qualified us to inherit salvation, we must continue in that process of qualification. We must make sure that we DON'T DISQUALIFY ourselves.

Although Paul was a "qualified" minister, he knew that it was possible that he might become disqualified, and so he made every effort to prevent this from happening. We read in 1 Corinthians 9:27: "But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become DISQUALIFIED." The *Authorized Version* renders this as "castaway." The phrase means, "not approved," "not standing the test," "rejected" or "reprobate."

Paul encourages and warns the Church in 2 Corinthians 13:5–6: "Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are DISQUALIFIED. But *I trust* that you will know that we are not disqualified."

As Paul was confident that he would "make it" into God's Kingdom, he expresses the same confidence in regard to the Philippians and, as we saw above, to the Corinthians. We must have the same confidence today if God has called us. At the same time, we must **prove to God** that we mean "business," so that our confidence is established on **evidence**—fruits worthy of repentance and the gospel—not only on wishful, unjustified thinking and illusionary hope.

### **Philippians 1:8–11:**

"(Verse 8) For God is my witness, how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ. (Verse 9) And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge

and all discernment, (verse 10) that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, (verse 11) being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.”

In verse 8, Paul makes a powerful statement by emphasizing that God is his witness. Scripture tells us (Matthew 5:34–36; James 5:12) that we must not *swear* at all with any *oath*; and that our “Yes” should be “Yes” and our “No” “No”; and that everything beyond this is from the evil one.

This is not to say, however, that we could not *affirm*—even appealing to God as our witness—that we *will* tell, or *have* told the truth. In a sense, Paul is doing just that in Philippians 1:8, when he states that God is his witness; in other words, that God is witnessing, testifying to, and backing up the accuracy of Paul’s statement.

Paul makes a similar and even stronger statement in Romans 9:1–2, when he says:

“I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart.”

Note also Paul’s statement in 2 Corinthians 1:23: “Moreover I call God as witness against my soul, that to spare you I came no more to Corinth.”

Compare also Galatians 1:20: “Now concerning the things which I write to you, indeed, before God, I do not lie.”

Most commentaries tell us that in these passages, Paul is giving a solemn oath—that he is swearing. But this is not true. He is not giving an oath, but he *is* giving an affirmation and he is making a strong assertion that his statements are true.

Continuing with the remainder of Philippians 1:8, Paul says that he longs for the brethren with the affection of Jesus Christ. He is claiming to have the very same affection which Jesus Christ has. He was undoubtedly correct, as he also claimed that Jesus Christ was living in him, and that Christ was living His life through Paul. In other words, Paul’s affection was, in fact, Christ’s affection within him.

*Gill’s Exposition of the Entire Bible* says that Paul did not love them

“with an human and carnal affection, but with a Christian and spiritual one; with a love which came from Christ.” *Wesley’s Notes* add: “In Paul, not Paul lives, but Jesus Christ. Therefore he longs for them with the bowels, the tenderness, not of Paul, but of Jesus Christ.”

Paul prays that the love of the brethren would grow in knowledge and discernment (verse 9). He was referring to the love of God and of Christ, which is defined as the keeping of the commandments. We must grow in understanding as to how to do that. Peter also says that we must grow in grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18). Christ must show us how to keep the law—how to love God and our neighbor. Love does no harm to our neighbor and therefore fulfills the law, but God must teach us how to practice this.

When we accept His teaching, then we will approve what is good and excellent (Philippians 1:10), and we will reject what is bad. Paul prays that the brethren would continue to live sincerely and without reproach until the time of Jesus Christ’s return. It is another way of saying: Become you perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect (Matthew 5:48). God IS love (1 John 4:8), and we are to become love as well.

Paul wishes that the brethren be filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ (Philippians 1:11). It is Jesus Christ IN us who ENABLES us to fulfill the righteous requirements of the law (Romans 8:4). But we must be willing participants in the process, and we must show God our fruits of repentance and righteous living—we must be living worthy of the gospel. All of God’s commandments are righteousness (Psalm 119:172), but we must have God’s help in order to keep them. And when we do that, we glorify God, and people will glorify and praise Him, realizing that God lives in us and that He is giving us the ability and strength to be obedient to Him and to do good works for others (Matthew 5:16).

### **Philippians 1:12–18:**

“(Verse 12) But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel, (verse 13) so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ; (verse 14) and most of the brethren in

the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. (Verse 15) Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from goodwill: (Verse 16) The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains; (verse 17) but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel. (Verse 18) What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice."

In verse 12, Paul makes the point that events which might be viewed as negative actually helped to further the truth of the gospel. In the *New King James Bible*, verse 12 is rendered as saying that things "happened" to Paul—as if they just occurred because of time and chance. This is, however, not the meaning of the verse. The words, "which happened" are in italics and were added by the translator—they are not in the original Greek.

Notice how other translations render this verse.

The *New American Bible* says: "I want you to know, brothers, that my situation has turned out rather to advance the gospel..."

The *New Jerusalem Bible* says: "Now I want you to realize, brothers, that the circumstances of my present life are helping rather than hindering the advance of the gospel..."

Paul was very much convinced that God was watching him at all times, and that nothing could just "happen" to him without or against God's Will. He knew Christ's words that not a little bird would die without God's Will, and that even the very hairs of our head are numbered by God.

*Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible* states:

"... his sufferings on account of the Gospel, which though said to happen, were not things of chance but of appointment; for as all the sufferings of Christ the head, were by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, so are those of all the members of his [spiritual] body, and of his ministers who are appointed to these things, and they for them; of which Christ has given previous notice, so that they do not come unexpected, but are looked for by them; nor are

they over distressed with them, being supported with the presence, Spirit, grace, and favour of God; hence they can rejoice in them, in hope of the glory of God; and as the afflictions of Gospel ministers, the quality and quantity of them, are fixed and settled by divine appointment, and which accordingly come upon them, so the use of them is also determined, and which have their sure and certain effect as the apostle's had; for the very things by which men designed to have hindered the spread of the Gospel, he says, have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the Gospel."

*Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary* adds:

"The apostle was a prisoner at Rome; and... he shows the wisdom and goodness of God in his sufferings. These things made him known, where he would never have otherwise been known; and led some to inquire after the gospel... Since our troubles may tend to the good of many, we ought to rejoice... Let us leave it to Christ, which way he will make us serviceable to his glory, whether by labour or suffering, by diligence or patience, by living to his honour in working for him, or dying to his honour in suffering for him."

Paul clearly saw God's hand in his circumstances in prison. Even though (or because) he was a prisoner, he was able to help in the furtherance of the truth of the gospel. How? In many different ways:

First, as he explains in Philippians 1:13, the palace guard "and all the rest" had to realize that Paul was imprisoned because he was a follower of Jesus Christ, and that he suffered shame for His name. They began to understand that Paul was innocent and Paul used the opportunity to tell them that, as he was innocent, so—even more so—was Jesus Christ as an innocent Lamb led to His slaughter by the Romans and the Jews alike.

Secondly, as Paul states in verse 14, the brethren saw the boldness in Paul and they, too, grew bolder in their willingness to stand up for Christ. Rather than being ashamed by His words, they showed great conviction and strength in giving a defense for the hope that was within each of them. They truly followed Paul's admonition to follow him as he followed Christ.

But there was still a third way in which his imprisonment furthered the preaching of the gospel. In verses 15 to 18, Paul made some seemingly puzzling statements. He said that he rejoiced when



ministers preached Christ “from envy and strife,” “selfish ambition,” “in pretense” and “not sincerely,” supposing to add affliction to his chains, by preaching the gospel because of insincere motives.

Why did he rejoice?

We see from the context of the entire passage, especially verse 18, that the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ was preached even by those who did so with improper motives (verses 15–16). Paul was not addressing here a situation when a *false Christ* or a *false gospel* was being preached. He pronounced a CURSE on all those who would do so (Galatians 1:6–9; compare 2 Corinthians 11:4). Here, ministers preached the truth—but some preached the truth with improper motives!

WHY, then, did Paul rejoice? He certainly did NOT rejoice over the fact that those ministers had improper motives—but he DID rejoice in that the true gospel was being preached. There is a FUNDAMENTAL DIFFERENCE: The preaching of the gospel helped OTHERS, who heard the truth—but it did NOT help those ministers who preached “from selfish ambition” and “in pretense.”

Some ministers may preach aspects of the true gospel, but they do NOT do so with a true and sincere heart. They might act that way as part of their job description with their human organization—acting within the course and scope of their employment—to secure or maintain a paying job and/or just to gain prestige. But when the time of trial and testing comes, they may fail miserably, leaving the truth behind and adopting error and apostasy (compare 2 Thessalonians 2:3; 2 Timothy 4:3–4), again, sometimes in order to hold on to their job or their “position.” They were not sincere to begin with—they were mere hirelings (compare John 10:11–13).

What we might observe today is not that different from what Paul describes in the first chapter of the letter to the Philippians. Yes, as Paul rejoiced then, so we should rejoice today when the truth is being preached, but this does NOT in any way exculpate or justify those who preach the truth with IMPROPER motives.

The *Life Application Bible* explains Philippians 1 as follows:

“Paul had an amazingly selfless attitude. He knew that some were preaching to build their own reputations, taking advantage of Paul’s imprisonment to try to make a name for themselves. Regardless of the

motives of these preachers, Paul rejoiced that the gospel was being preached. Some Christians serve for the wrong reasons. Paul wouldn't condone, nor does God excuse, their motives, but we should be glad if God uses their message regardless of their motives."

The *Nelson Study Bible* adds:

"Those preaching from envy and strife were not heretics... But apparently they were jealous of the attention Paul received, and they determined to sow seeds of dissension in order to cause him trouble."

Note, too, the following comments from *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*:

"... [These ministers did not act because] of 'envy' to Christ, whom they preached, but of envy to the apostle; they envied his gifts, his usefulness and success in the ministry; and he being now in bonds, they thought it a proper opportunity to exert themselves... hoping they should meet with the same success, and gain great honour and applause in the church..."

*Albert Barnes' Notes on the Bible* elaborates:

"It would seem... there was a party which was jealous of the influence of Paul, and which supposed that this was a good opportunity to diminish his influence, and to strengthen their own cause..."

The commentary of *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown* agrees, stating:

"Some indeed [were] preaching Christ even for envy, that is, to carry out the envy which they felt towards Paul... they wished through envy to transfer the credit of its progress from him to themselves."

Finally, *The Broadman Bible Commentary* gives the following succinct explanation:

"There is no hint that Paul's rivals were considered heretical... in question was not the soundness of their gospel but their motives. These may have been jealous of the attention given Paul, even as a prisoner... Presumably Paul's opponents thought that their success would afflict Paul by making him jealous. To the contrary, Paul could rejoice that they at least proclaimed Christ, even if for unworthy motives. This is not to discount the importance of motive, but it is to recognize that the gospel has its own power even when proclaimed by people lacking in motive and character."

Jesus Christ faced a very similar kind of issue during His ministry. He constantly warned about the approach of the scribes and Pharisees;

however, He also recognized that they were fulfilling a role for which God would hold them accountable:

“Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, saying: “The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat. Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; **FOR THEY SAY, AND DO NOT DO**” (Matthew 23:1–3).

The preaching of those ministers in Paul’s day might, in fact, have helped others, but it did not do **THEM** any good. The same can be said today. True ministers of God must preach the gospel and feed the flock with a pure and clean heart. Their motives must be sincere in furtherance of the Will of God. If and when the truth is preached, we should rejoice, but we should not, even in our minds, justify any wrong motives and carnal **REASONS** for preaching the gospel, including such motives as pride, self-aggrandizement, envy toward others, recognition within the Church or community; or the desire for a position, and a well-paid job.

#### **Philippians 1:19–24:**

“(Verse 19) For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, (verse 20) according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. (Verse 21) For to me, to live *is* Christ, and to die *is* gain. (Verse 22) But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. (Verse 23) For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. (Verse 24) Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you.”

In verses 19 and 20, Paul shares his conviction with the brethren that he will be released from prison, taking it for granted that they would pray for such deliverance, as Church members always ought to pray when their leaders are in need of godly help (compare Acts 12:5, 12).

In addition, Paul also knew that he would be filled with the Holy Spirit to inspire him to say the right words at his defense. It is

interesting how Paul mentions prayer and the supply of the Holy Spirit in the same context in Philippians 1:19.

The *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown* commentary remarks: "The Greek intimately joins the two nouns together, by having but one preposition and one article: 'Through your prayer and (the consequent) supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ (obtained for me through your prayer).'"

Paul uses the expression, "supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ," to show that the Holy Spirit is not static. It is compared with water, which flows from God into a person and then out of that person; and it must therefore be renewed on a daily basis. The converted Christian needs a steady "supply" of the Holy Spirit to be able to cope with life's challenges (compare Galatians 3:5).

Paul was confident that he would not be ashamed to stand up for the truth, but would declare it with all boldness. Even though being sentenced to death or being released from prison would both constitute "deliverance" for Paul, and even though he was willing to magnify Christ either in continued living or in his death, he felt that he would stay alive and become a free man, as this was better for the brethren (Philippians 1:24).

Still, as Paul was facing serious difficulties, he was wondering whether he should wish to die or to continue to live. He had a desire to "depart" or die (verse 23), but realized that for the brethren's sake, he would have to go on living.

As the *Broadman Bible Commentary* explains, "to depart translates a Greek term which was used for the loosing of a ship from its moorings and also for breaking camp or 'striking tent.' The term came to be a metaphor for death [2 Timothy 4:6]."

Paul knows that in the case of his death, he would be "with Christ" (verse 23) in the next second of his consciousness—as a resurrected immortal spirit being in the Family of God, at the time of his resurrection from the dead (1 Thessalonians 4:14–17; 1 Corinthians 15:35, 42, 49–53).

This would have been his "gain" (Philippians 1:21); that is, it would have been "far better" for him (verse 23), as his fate of being changed into a spirit being would have been sealed and unalterable. Of course, this is by no means saying that Paul was thinking of committing suicide. He understood that it would be a sin to take his own

life, as this would constitute murder. He knew that he belonged to God and that only God had the right to determine when he would die (1 Corinthians 6:19–20; 7:23).

At the same time, he realizes that it is “more needful for” the Church members that he “remain in the flesh;” that is, to keep on living (verse 24).

Still, the question remains: Exactly how are we to understand the phrase in verse 21, “to live [is] Christ and to die [is] gain”? First, notice here in quoting verse 21, we emphasized and placed the word “is” in brackets twice, indicating that since there is no equivalent “is” in the Greek, something *was added* in the English translation in order to give the sentence the intended meaning.

Although most translations render the phrase exactly as quoted above, a few translations render it slightly differently, and it is important to take a look at these, along with some interesting Bible commentaries on this verse.

The *Lamsa* translation and the German *Luther Bible*, as well as the German *Menge Bible*, state: “For Christ is my life, and to die is gain.” This rendering is interesting in light of Colossians 3:4, which states: “When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.”

But what does it mean that “Christ is our life”? Here is how the Swiss *Zuercher Bible* renders Philippians 1:21, including the phrase in brackets: “As for me, life is [a service for] Christ, and death is gain.” The commentary of *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown* agrees with such a rendering: “... whatever life, time and strength, I have, is Christ’s; Christ is the sole object for which I live.”

The *Broadman Bible Commentary* adds the following intriguing statements: “The oft-quoted v. 21 shows Paul at his best. He stood before life and death and found both inviting. His mood is the opposite to Hamlet’s ‘To be or not to be, that is the question.’ Hamlet found life such a disillusionment that he considered suicide, yet the unknown realm of death was so foreboding that he drew back. Paul did not desire death as escape from life. He saw death as entrance into the greater fullness of a life that already was full... Whatever life may mean to others, to him it was Christ, i.e., Christ gave life its meaning for him and apart from Christ it had no meaning. Death meant not loss but

gain, for the good life he now knew in Christ would be not only continued but heightened. This verse seems not to imply an ‘intermediate [conscious] state.’ It is precarious to argue the point, for that is not Paul’s subject here; but it is hard to see how death would be gain if it led to an intermediate [conscious] state, especially if disembodied!”

A similar comment can be found in *The New Bible Commentary: Revised*: “[Paul] weighs up in his mind now the two alternatives and can rejoice in both. To go on living in this world is to live in constant enjoyment of Christ Himself, and there will be further fruitful toil in his Master’s service. He knows, on the other hand, that death is sheer gain, because beyond death is immediate presence of Christ.”

As has already been shown, Paul speaks of his resurrection to eternal life, which will occur in the next second of his consciousness, when Jesus Christ returns (2 Timothy 4:6–8). Paul was more than willing to wait in death—along with the rest of the saints—for the time when the righteous will receive eternal life (compare Hebrews 11:13, 39–40).

A similar rendition is given by the *Living Bible*: “For to me, living means opportunities for Christ, and dying—well, that’s better yet.”

These renderings would also make sense in light of Galatians 2:20, where we read: “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith OF [as it should be correctly rendered from the Greek] the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” Paul is saying in this passage in Galatians that Christ, through the Holy Spirit dwelling in Paul, was living His life in Paul. Paul’s “old life” had ended, and a “new life”—that of Christ living in him—had begun.

Paul encourages all of us, in Romans 13:14: “But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.” John revealed the same truth in his second letter when, in verse 7, he warned of deceivers who would deny and not confess “Jesus Christ AS COMING in the flesh.” Christ is coming in the flesh by living His life in His human disciples. Paul did not want to continue to live his old life and to submit to the desires of the flesh. He knew that his deliverance from his “body of death” would be “through Jesus Christ” (Romans 7:24–25).

Paul’s statement “for me, to live is Christ” is subject to several possible explanations: Paul might have wanted to emphasize that

his life was to be a service for Christ. He could have also meant that his sole purpose and motivation in life was focused on Christ. In addition, he might have stressed that Christ was living in him, that he had “put on Jesus Christ,” and that his life was used by Christ to serve others. In living such a life, Paul would become more and more perfect, “possessing more and more of him, becoming more and more like him, until on his death the process is completed in one glorious moment” (compare *Eerdman’s Handbook to the Bible*)—at the time of his resurrection.

As *Unger’s Bible Handbook* puts it: “Outwardly his one goal was Christ, inwardly Christ was living out His life through him. Living, he was blessed... Dying was ‘gain’ because it meant ‘to be with Christ,’ which was ‘far better’... To remain in this life was, however, more needful for the spiritual progress of the Philippians.”

### **Philippians 1:25–30:**

“(Verse 25) And being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith, (verse 26) that your rejoicing for me may be more abundant in Jesus Christ by my coming to you again. (Verse 27) Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel, (verse 28) and not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from God. (Verse 29) For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, (verse 30) having the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear is in me.”

Being confident that he would be released as a free man in order to be able to help the brethren in Philippi to grow in faith and in joy (verses 25–26), he encourages them to stand fast in “one spirit” and to strive “together” with “one mind” for the faith of the gospel (verse 27). He alludes here to the fact, as he will explain more clearly in the next chapter, that there were dissensions and divisions in the Church.

Dissensions among them might lead to an attitude of becoming terrified by their adversaries (verse 28), as dissensions may hinder powerful prayer for one another. Unity in the Church should be a proof that God is among them, and that He is leading them to salvation, while the adversaries recognize the unity, but are unwilling to turn to God themselves (verse 28; compare 2 Thessalonians 1:3–12). Jesus Christ said: “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35).

This unity and love should be proof to others that the Church members fulfill their commission to live as representatives or ambassadors of Christ. As faith in Christ was *granted* or *given* to the Church (verse 29), no one can simply decide that he wants to believe in Christ. God the Father must draw him or her to Christ. Another gift that was granted to the Church is the gift of being *allowed* to suffer for Christ (same verse; compare Acts 5:41). Paul states that as he has been counted *worthy to suffer for Christ*, so they also have too (verse 30), and he emphasizes to them that even in suffering, their conduct must be “worthy of the gospel” (verse 27).

*Clarke’s Commentary on the Bible* states:

“... it is no small privilege that God has so far honored you as to permit you to suffer on Christ’s account. It is only his most faithful servants that he thus honors. Be not therefore terrified by your enemies; they can do nothing to you which God will not turn to your eternal advantage.”

*Vincent’s Word Studies* adds:

“The gift was not suffering as such. Its meaning and value lay in its being for His [Christ’s] sake.”



# Philippians, Chapter 2

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## Philippians 2:1–2:

“(Verse 1) Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, (verse 2) fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.”

Paul continues discussing the need to be unified, but he does not preach unity for unity’s sake; that is, he is not endorsing unification by ignoring or overlooking or even justifying doctrinal error. Some preach unity today without realizing that true unity can only come from God when we follow His doctrines and teachings, and when the love of God is in us, which is defined as the keeping of the commandments. It is the love of God that fulfills His law, and it is the love of God that is shed into our hearts through the Holy Spirit.

And so, Paul is pleading with the brethren to have that same love (verse 2)—that love that leads to having the same mind set. If there is division among God’s people, it is simply because the love of God is not present within the individuals as much as it should be.

## Philippians 2:3–5:

“(Verse 3) Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. (Verse 4) Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. (Verse 5) Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,…”

In order to have and to show the love of God that leads to complete unity with God and our brethren, Paul is pointing out that selfish ambition and conceit are in opposition to love. The *Authorized Version* renders verse 3 as: “strife or vain glory.”

*Barnes Notes on the Bible* states:

“Let nothing be done through strife - With a spirit of contention... The command prohibits all attempts to secure anything over others... as the result of dark schemes and plans formed by rivalry, or by the indulgence of angry passions, or with the spirit of ambition...

“Or vain glory - The word used here... means properly empty pride, or glory, and is descriptive of vain and hollow parade and show... The idea seems to be that of mere self-esteem; a mere desire to honor ourselves, to attract attention, to win praise, to make ourselves uppermost, or foremost, or the main object.”

God’s way of love and life is a way of give, whereas our human carnal way of life is a way of get. Selfish ambition, which is caused by pride, is detrimental to love and unity. Rather, we need to develop an attitude of lowliness of mind, or humility, and this attribute enables us to look at others as being better or more important than ourselves.

*The Jamieson, Fausset and Brown* commentary explains:

“... let each esteem—Translate as Greek, ‘esteeming each other superior to yourselves.’ Instead of fixing your eyes on those points in which you excel, fix them on those in which your neighbor excels you: this is true ‘humility.’”

*The People’s New Testament* adds:

“Instead of exalting himself, each is to exalt others in his esteem. He that is willing to serve is greatest.”

When we do that, then we are not looking at what is seemingly “best” or most advantageous for us, but we also concentrate on what is helpful for others.

This is the kind of mindset that Jesus Christ had, and we as followers of Christ must develop the same attitude and outlook. In that context, we can only have full and complete unity in the Church when all of us develop this kind of attitude. Selfish ambition and the desire to get ahead of others—our own pride and conceit—destroy true love and unity. In fact, they prevent godly unity from developing among us.

*Gill’s Exposition to the Entire Bible* makes the following comments to Philippians 2:5:

“‘Let this mind be in you,’... The Arabic version renders it, ‘let that humility be perceived in you.’ The apostle proposes Christ as the great pattern and exemplar [example] of humility... ‘which also was

in Christ Jesus'; or as the Syriac version, 'think ye the same thing as Jesus Christ'..."

Paul continues in **Philippians 2:6**:

"... (verse 6) who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God..."

In order to develop an attitude of love and humility for others, we must be willing to sacrifice our own preferences. Jesus Christ proved beyond a shadow of any doubt His love for us, in that He was willing to give up His godly attributes, become a man, and live and die in the flesh. This act of love for us was necessary in order for Him to pay the penalty for our sin, so that we, condemned to death, could obtain forgiveness and live, and inherit eternal life in the Family of God, a life of peace, love and complete harmony with God and each other.

Christ was in the form of God before He became a human being. He was **equal** with God the Father, insofar as His nature was concerned. But He did not consider it robbery to be equal with Him; that is, He did not want to selfishly grasp and maintain that status for His own good. He was willing to give it up for the good of others.

*Barnes' Notes on the Bible* explains:

"The 'form' here referred to must have been something before he became a man... It was something from which he humbled himself... Of course, it must have been something which existed when he had not the likeness of people; that is, before he became incarnate. He must therefore have had an existence before he appeared on earth as a man, and in that previous state of existence there must have been something which rendered it proper to say that he was 'in the form of God.'

"...the phrase 'form of God' is one that naturally conveys the idea that he was God... He himself speaks [in] John 17:5 of 'the glory which he had with the Father before the world was'..."

"The word rendered 'robbery'... does not properly mean an act of robbery, but the thing robbed - the plunder - ... and hence something to be eagerly seized and appropriated... the meaning of the word here is, something to be seized and eagerly sought, and the sense is, that his being equal with God was not a thing to be anxiously retained. The

phrase 'thought it not,' means 'did not consider'; it was not judged to be a matter of such importance that it could not be dispensed with. The sense is, 'he did not eagerly seize and tenaciously hold' as one does who seizes prey or spoil."

*The People's New Testament* adds:

"... 'Who, being in the form of God.' He refers to the state of our Savior before he took human form. His form was divine. He had a glory with the [F]ather before the world was..."

*Wesley's Notes* states:

"'To be equal with God' - the word here translated equal ["isos" in Greek; meaning, according to *Young's Analytical Concordance to the Bible*, "the same as"], occurs in the adjective form five or six times in the New Testament, [Matthew] 20:12; [Luke] 6:34 ["as much" in the *New King James Bible*; in Greek: "ta isa"]; [John] 5:18; [Acts] 11:17 ["like" in the *New King James Bible*]; [Revelation] 21:16. In all which places it expresses not a bare resemblance, but a real and proper equality."

In our free booklet, "*God Is A Family*," we explain the following regarding the divinity of Jesus Christ, PRIOR to His birth as a human being:

"The Bible clearly reveals, however, that both the Father and Jesus Christ ARE God, and that they have ALWAYS been God throughout eternity! Reading from John 1:1, 'In the beginning was the Word [the 'Logos' in Greek, meaning 'Spokesman'], and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.' We see that it is Jesus Christ—the 'Word'—the One who 'SPOKE, and it was done' (Psalm 33:9), and the One who later became flesh (John 1:14), who is referred to in John 1:1 as 'God.'"

To interject here, Christ is also identified as the "Word" in 1 John 1:1–3; and Revelation 19:11–13. Also, we read in Psalm 33:6: "By the word [better: "Word"] of the LORD the heavens were made..." Continuing with the quote from our booklet:

"Some say that the phrase in John 1:1 should be translated as, 'The Word was divine,' in the sense that everything that God says is divine. That proposal is wrong. The Greek word for 'divine' is 'theios,' while the term for 'God,' as used in John 1:1, is 'theos.' The term 'theos' can only mean 'God.' The 'Word' was not only 'divine'—the 'Word' was 'God'..."

We see, then, that the "Word" was a Being, called God, who was with another Being, also called God, showing that God consists of two

Beings—God the FATHER and Jesus Christ the SON. It also establishes that the Son—the One who became flesh—was GOD. God the Father created everything through the Word—Jesus Christ. (Compare John 1:3; Colossians 1:15–16; Ephesians 3:8–9; and Hebrews 1:1–2.)

*Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible* states the following:

“What he [John] saith of him [Jesus Christ] [is] enough to prove beyond contradiction that he is God. He asserts... His existence in the beginning: In the beginning was the Word. This bespeaks his existence, not only before his incarnation, but before all time. The beginning of time, in which all creatures were produced and brought into being, found this eternal Word in being. The world was from the beginning, but the Word was in the beginning... the Word was God: a distinct person... for he was with God... He that undertook to bring us to God... was himself from eternity with God; so that this grand affair of man's reconciliation to God was concerted between the Father and Son from eternity, and they understand one another perfectly well in it... He was with God, and therefore is said to come forth from the Father.”

In addition, Philippians 2:5–7 explains that Christ was in the “form of God” and “equal with God” the Father, but that He took the “form of a bondservant,” and came “in the likeness of men.”

We read in John 17:5 that Christ had glory before the world existed, showing that Christ existed as a glorious Being before the world was made. As Philippians 2:6 says, He existed as a divine Being—He was EQUAL with God and therefore God.

As an aside, some commentaries will tell you that the word “form” in Philippians 2:6 (“*morphe*” in Greek) does not mean to convey the idea that God has form or shape, even though the word “form” or “*morphe*” is applied in that passage to the “form” of God (verse 6) and to the “form” of men (verse 7), and nobody disputes that man has form and shape. However, God is ALSO clearly described as a Being with form and shape (compare Numbers 12:8; Exodus 33:18–23), even though He is a Spirit being and therefore, barring supernatural manifestation, invisible to the human eye. Christ said in John 5:37 that no one has ever seen the “form” of God the Father (compare also John 1:18; 1 John 4:12). Since some, including Moses, saw the “form” of the LORD, it is logical and compelling that they must have seen the form of Christ—the second member in the Godhead.

## Philippians 2:7–8:

“... (verse 7) but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. (Verse 8) And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.”

How did Jesus make Himself of no reputation? As we will show, the phrase should be translated, “He emptied Himself.”

Notice the clear revelation of this mystery in John 1:14: “And the Word [the “Word” referring to Jesus Christ, Who in the beginning was God and was with God the Father, John 1:1–2] BECAME flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth...”

God clearly tells us that the Word—Jesus Christ—who was God before His human birth, BECAME flesh. Christ came in the flesh by BECOMING flesh. This means that He became totally and fully flesh and blood, like you and I! This is CRUCIAL for you to understand! When Christ BECAME flesh, He was no longer Spirit. **He was no longer fully God, because He had become fully man!**

The Bible teaches clearly that Jesus Christ—the God of the Old Testament—“emptied” Himself and became a human being. We read in Philippians 2:6–7, in the *Revised Standard Version*:

“[Jesus Christ]... though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped (better: retained), but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men...”

The *New International Version* renders the phrase in verse 7 as follows: “...taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness...”

The *New Jerusalem Bible* leaves no doubt in its translation as to what Jesus became:

“... he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, becoming as human beings are; and being in every way like a human being...”

In spite of these powerful words, most commentaries simply deny what is being said here, and resort to some incredible “explanation” as to what this passage allegedly means. Listen to these astonishing statements by the *Nelson Study Bible*:

“This phrase can be translated ‘He emptied Himself.’ Christ did this by taking on the form of a servant, a mere man. In doing this, He did not empty Himself of any part of His essence as God. Instead He gave up His privileges as God and took upon himself existence as a man. While remaining completely God, He became completely human.”

This is utter nonsense! You cannot be completely something and be completely the exact opposite at the same time!

The Bible is very clear that Christ emptied Himself of existing as a Spirit being, and He emptied Himself of the glory that He had before the world was (compare John 17:5). He BECAME a human being (compare 1 John 4:1–3). He was no longer “completely” or “fully” God—rather, He had become “completely” or “fully” man.

We read, for instance, that man—flesh and blood—cannot inherit the Kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 15:50). We also read that we must be born again in order to enter the Kingdom of God (John 3:5), and that flesh and blood cannot even see the Kingdom of God (John 3:3). In order to be IN the Kingdom of God, one must BE Spirit (John 3:6). Jesus came in the flesh; He WAS flesh when He was here on earth. He became born again at the time of His resurrection as a Spirit Being—no longer flesh and blood—and it was THEN that He entered the Kingdom or Family of God as a glorified Spirit Being. He was NOT (yet) in the Kingdom of God when He was here on earth as a man. It is true that some of His disciples saw Him on the mount of transfiguration as a glorified Being in the Kingdom of God—together with glorified Moses and Elijah—but that was in a *vision*, picturing what would occur in the future.

Christ did have God’s Holy Spirit dwelling within Him. He had God’s Spirit without measure or limit—given at conception—which is how He was able to overcome sin in the flesh. Jesus said that He could do nothing of Himself (John 5:19, 30). When in the Garden of Gethsemane, He prayed to God, the Father, for strength and God sent an angel to strengthen Him (Luke 22:40–46; Matthew 26:39–42). He knew that the Father could do everything and that nothing was impossible for the Father.

It was absolutely NECESSARY for Christ to become FULLY MAN, because only in that way could He become the Savior of man. Notice this in 1 Corinthians 15:21: “For since by man came death, by Man

also came the resurrection of the dead.” We read that Christ was DEAD. HE HIMSELF—the Person that He was, the Son of God Who had become Man—had died. Revelation 1:18 confirms that HE was dead, not just a part of Him.

Philippians 2:8 adds that “He humbled himself and became obedient to the point of DEATH, even the death of the cross.” Romans 14:9 adds: “For to this end Christ DIED and rose and LIVED AGAIN, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living.”

Hebrews 2:9 teaches very powerfully that Christ died just as all humans die. In fact, He HAD to die that way in order to “...taste death for everyone.” We read: “But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone.”

The only way that Christ—who had been GOD since all eternity—could die, was to become flesh; and when He did become flesh, He was totally human, as we are all totally human! When Christ became flesh, He gave up all of His divine attributes and powers. Simply put, He became a man so that He could die! He was no longer a Spirit being. He was no longer God as we think of God, since God, a Spirit being, cannot die (compare Isaiah 57:15; 1 Timothy 6:16; 1 Timothy 1:17).

Christ became flesh so that He could overcome sin in the flesh. He had to prove that it is possible for man, with the help of God’s Holy Spirit within him, to overcome sin!

Christ was tempted in all points, as we are, but He stayed sinless (Hebrews 4:15: “[He] was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.”). He overcame sin in the flesh, resisting temptation (Revelation 3:21). God—a powerful perfect Spirit being—cannot be tempted (compare James 1:13). But we read that Christ WAS tempted. This proves that He was not the all-powerful perfect Spirit being when He was here on this earth that He HAD been prior to His birth as a human being.

Romans 8:3 tells us: “For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh [human beings, without God’s Spirit dwelling in them, are too weak to keep the law all by themselves], God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh.” In other words, He OVERCAME SIN as a human being!

Christ had been an immortal God being. He was changed into a



human being, but He was still the same Personage He had been since all eternity. Christ, who became human, was still the Personage He had always been. He was still the One who had previously met with Abraham, the One who created Adam and Eve, and the One who spoke to Moses face-to-face. He lived as a human being—growing as children do, developing into a young man, and then becoming a rabbi, or teacher, in Judah. But He was still the same individual that He had always been. He had been an immortal God being and He knew that He would become an immortal God being again, subject to qualifying by being and remaining sinless. Christ, when He was here on earth, was, quite literally, Immanuel, or, “God with us” (Matthew 1:23).

**Christ was God Eternal, who BECAME man, so that man COULD ultimately become God!** Christ was tempted, He suffered, and He died as a man (Hebrews 12:1–4), so that human beings could become “gods”—members of the God Family, unable to die (Luke 20:35–36; John 3:36; 10:28; compare also John 10:34–35).

### Philippians 2:9–11:

“(Verse 9) Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, (verse 10) that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, (verse 11) and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Because of what Christ was willing to do for man, God rewarded Him greatly, giving Him a name which is far above other names—names of angels and of our names, including our new names in the world to come.

Paul says that every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth. The *Authorized Version* says here: “That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth.” Note here though that the three-fold addition of the word, “things”, is misleading. Let’s take a closer look at this.

*Barnes’ Notes on the Bible* explains:

“The bowing of the knee properly expresses homage, respect, adoration...

“Of things in heaven... rather of beings in heaven, the word ‘things’ being improperly supplied by our translators... Things do not bow the knee; and the reference here is undoubtedly to angels... If Jesus is worshipped there, he is divine; for there is no idolatry... in heaven... In the great divisions here specified - of those in heaven, on the earth, and under the earth - the apostle intends, doubtless, to denote the universe... This mode of expression is equivalent to saying, ‘all that is above, around, and beneath us,’ and arises from what appears to us. The division is natural and obvious - that which is above us in the heavens, that which is on the earth where we dwell, and all that is beneath us...”

*Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible* adds:

“... of things in heaven: the angels there... and things in earth; both good men, and bad men... and things under the earth; meaning... the dead bodies of men in the grave, which shall come forth and stand before the judgment seat of Christ...”

Then every tongue will confess, as Paul says, that Christ is Lord, to the glory of the Father. All glory belongs to the Father, as Christ taught us to pray. But the marvelous truth is that God the Father is willing to share His glory with us. And so, *Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible* gives the following intriguing explanation:

“And that every tongue should confess... Whether of angels or men, or of men of whatsoever nation. Confession is either true and hearty... or verbal only, or in mere outward form, and by force, as in hypocrites, wicked men, and devils themselves; who all either have confessed, or will confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord: the holy angels confess him to be Lord, and their Lord truly... and true believers heartily... and cheerfully submit to his commands and ordinances; and the foolish virgins, and the goats on Christ's left hand, will, at the last day, call him Lord, Lord; and the worst of men, yea, even devils, will be obliged to own [admit] his lordship and dominion; which will be to the glory of God the Father.

“...The Vulgate Latin version renders the words, ‘because the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father’: being in the form of God, of the same nature and essence with him, and equal to him; as he will appear to be at his second coming, for then he will come in the glory of his Father.”

*Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary* adds:

"It is to the glory of God the Father, to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord; for it is his will, that all men should honour the Son as they honour the Father, [John] 5:23."

**Philippians 2:12–13:**

"(Verse 12) Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; (verse 13) for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure."

Christianity is a way of life, requiring obedience to God and His laws. Paul reminds them of the absolute requirement to obey God, and in doing so, they are to work out their own salvation (compare 2 Peter 1:10–11) with fear and trembling (compare again Philippians 2:12).

*Clarke's Commentary on the Bible* says:

"Work out your own salvation - Go on, walking by the same rule, and minding the same thing, till your salvation be completed: till, filled with love to God and man, ye walk unblamably in all his testimonies, having your fruit unto holiness, and your end everlasting life.

"With fear and trembling - Considering the difficulty of the work, and the danger of miscarriage. If you do not watch, pray and continually depend on God, your enemies will surprise you, and your light and life will become extinct; and then consider what an awful account you must give to Him whose Spirit ye have grieved, and of whose glory ye have come short."

The *People's New Testament* adds:

"Work out your own salvation. While Christ is our Savior, and the author of our salvation, we must accept him and work together with him. Hence the [Bible] says, Save yourselves ([Acts] 2:40) and work out your own salvation. Unless we do our part Christ cannot save us."

Paul says that we must work out our own salvation with fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12)—with the *fear* or concern not to disappoint God and *not to keep on sinning* (compare Hebrews 4:1; Romans 11:19–20; and 2 Corinthians 6:1).

Paul continues in Philippians 2:13 that we can work out our own

salvation with fear and trembling BECAUSE God works in us, both to will and to do. Without God dwelling in us and leading us, we could not work out our salvation. And even with God living in us, we must submit to Him and His Will; when we resist Him, we will not be saved.

*Barnes' Notes on the Bible* states that God “does not compel or force us against our will.”

*Clarke's Commentary on the Bible* adds:

“For it is God which worketh in you - Every holy purpose, pious resolution, good word, and good work, must come from him; ye must be workers together with him, that ye receive not his grace in vain; because he worketh in you, therefore work with him, and work out your own salvation... God gives power to will, man wills through that power; God gives power to act, and man acts through that power. Without the power to will, man can will nothing; without the power to work, man can do nothing...”

### **Philippians 2:14–16:**

“(Verse 14) Do all things without complaining and disputing, (verse 15) that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, (verse 16) holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.”

In verse 14, Paul continues the thought which he introduced in the previous verses: When we work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, knowing that we can do so because God leads and helps us, then we are to do all things (which are good and in accordance with the Will of God) without complaining (or murmuring) and disputing (or hesitation or doubting). To put it in another way, working out our own salvation with fear and trembling includes the need to do all godly required things without complaining and disputing. Still worded differently, we don't work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, if we continue to complain about and dispute or doubt or are hesitant towards the things which God gives us or wants us to do.

*Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible* states the following regarding

prohibited “murmuring” and “disputing”:

“... without murmurings; either against God and Christ, as if anything hard and severe was enjoined, when Christ’s yoke is easy, and his burden light... and none of his commands grievous; and because their presence is not always enjoyed... or against the ministers of the Gospel... the Israelites in the wilderness... murmured against [Moses], and in so doing against God himself... or against one another... but all things, both of a moral, civil, and religious nature, with respect to God, and one another, should be done readily, freely, cheerfully, and heartily; and also without

“disputings... Whatever appears to be agreeable to the will of God, should be done at once without dispute upon it, or hesitation about it, however disagreeable it may be to carnal sense and reason; the will of God is not to be disputed, nor flesh and blood to be consulted, in opposition to it; nor should the saints enter into any carnal reasonings, and contentious disputations, either at their public or private meetings, but do all they do decently, and in order, and in the exercise of brotherly love.”

This is a tall order, but we must try to obey it; after all, it is “God who works in us both to will and to do” (Philippians 2:13). Since this is so, then we ought to do what we must, without complaining about it.

Following this admonition and concentrating on doing everything with a happy heart, we will become blameless and harmless or innocent or pure or sincere (verse 15), and we will then truly be God’s begotten children, without fault (same verse; compare also Matthew 5:44–45; John 1:12; 1 John 3:1).

We are told that once God’s Holy Spirit dwells within us, we are begotten children of God—but not born yet. As God’s begotten children, we must be able to represent God properly as His and Christ’s ambassadors (2 Corinthians 5:20; Ephesians 6:19–20), showing the world that we are different—not part of this world—and that our citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20). As children of God, we are to shine as bright lights (compare Matthew 5:14–16; Luke 8:16) in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation (as Paul says in Philippians 2:15).

This world is in utter darkness, but as Christ came to shine in the darkness (John 8:12), so we, as His brothers and sisters, must likewise become bright and shining lights to this world while we are here (John

12:36). We cannot become lights on our own; but rather, God must give us HIS light, and in so doing it is HIS light that shines to others through us (2 Corinthians 4:6). As the lights of this world, we must not have communion or fellowship with darkness (2 Corinthians 6:14).

Of course, as the world rejected Christ, so most will reject His disciples today, but this must be no excuse for us not to shine as bright lights among evildoers—because ultimately, most will come to the proper understanding, in their due time.

We must walk as children of light (Ephesians 5:8). We cannot do this, if we don't hold fast the word of life, as Paul explains in Philippians 2:16. Paul explains that he is looking forward to "the Day" of Christ's return with great joy, when he will see the brethren in Philippi transformed into immortal spirit beings, as Paul will also be transformed.

When that moment has arrived, Paul will have every reason to rejoice with the acknowledgment and recognition that his labor and his run were not in vain (compare 2 Corinthians 1:12–14). His teaching and his example had been received and retained and put into practice by the Philippian brethren.

*Clarke's Commentary on the Bible* includes some interesting thoughts regarding Philippians 2:16:

"Holding forth the word of life - An allusion, some think, to those towers which were built at the entrance of harbours, on which fires were kept during the night to direct ships into the port. Genuine Christians, by their holy lives and conversation, are the means of directing others, not only how to escape those dangers to which they are exposed on the tempestuous ocean of human life, but also of leading them into the haven of eternal safety and rest.

"That I have not run in vain - This appears to be a part of the same metaphor; and alludes to the case of a weather-beaten mariner who has been long tossed on a tempestuous sea, in hazy weather and dark nights, who has been obliged to run on different tacks, and labor intensely to keep his ship from foundering, but is at last, by the assistance of the luminous fire on the top of the tower, directed safely into port. Live so to glorify God and do good to men, that it shall appear that I have not run and labored in vain for your salvation."

In addition, Paul compares the Christian way of life with the metaphor of running a race (1 Corinthians 9:24–27; 2 Timothy 2:5).

We must make every effort to insure that we do not run the race “in vain”—either in regard to ourselves, or in our relationship with others.

### **Philippians 2:17–18:**

“(Verse 17) Yes, and if I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. (Verse 18) For the same reason you also be glad and rejoice with me.”

We saw earlier that Paul expected to be soon released from prison, which he indeed was. So why is he stating here that he is being poured out as a drink offering? Notice carefully that he is saying, “IF I am poured out...”

Paul is using a metaphor here, comparing himself with “a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of their faith.”

As *Barnes’ Notes on the Bible* states, “He had labored for their salvation. He had exposed himself to peril that they and others might have the gospel. On their account he had suffered much; he had been made a prisoner at Rome; and there was a possibility, if not a probability, that [ultimately] his life might be a forfeit for his labors in their behalf. Yet he says that, even if this should happen, he would not regret it, but it would be a source of joy.”

*Gill’s Exposition of the Entire Bible* adds:

“Yea, and if I be offered... Or ‘poured out’, as the drink offerings of wine or oil were; meaning the... laying down of his life for the sake of Christ, and his Gospel: which he knew not how soon might be, though he was in some hopes of a deliverance for the present, and therefore speaks of it in an hypothetical way: yet he expected it sooner or later.

“...he had been the means of bringing them to the faith of Christ, in which they were an offering acceptable to God, being sanctified by the Holy [Spirit, see Romans 15:15–16]...”

The *Geneva Study Bible* states: “As if he said, I brought you Philippians to Christ, and my desire is that you present yourselves a living sacrifice to him, and then it will not grieve me to be offered up as a drink offering...”

*Wesley’s Notes* agree, stating:

“Upon the sacrifice of your faith - The Philippians, as the other

converted heathens, were a sacrifice to God through...Paul's ministry... And as in sacrificing, wine was poured at the foot of the altar, so he was willing that his blood should be poured out. The expression well agrees with that kind of martyrdom by which he was afterwards offered up to God."

In Philippians 2:18, Paul speaks of mutual joy, even in those dire circumstances and probable future occurrences. As Paul would rejoice in case of his martyrdom—being found worthy to suffer for Christ's name—so should the Philippians rejoice with him.

The *People's New Testament* writes:

"For the same cause also do ye joy, and rejoice with me. Like me, rejoice in the prospect of death, if thereby Christ may be glorified."

As Paul was willing to die for the gospel's sake, so they should also be willing to die for it, thereby glorifying God. They should do so joyfully, as Paul would rejoice in the hour of his death. He knew that he had run his race, and he was ready to die. In fact, he had said earlier that dying would be gain for him, but that for the Church's sake, he knew that God felt it was more expedient for him to live a while longer.

### **Philippians 2:19–24:**

"(Verse 19) But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, that I also may be encouraged when I know your state. (Verse 20) For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state. (Verse 21) For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus. (Verse 22) But you know his proven character, that as a son with his father he served with me in the gospel. (Verse 23) Therefore I hope to send him at once, as soon as I see how it goes with me. (Verse 24) But I trust in the Lord that I myself shall also come shortly."

In verse 24, Paul reconfirms his belief and trust that he would soon be released from prison and that he would then be able to personally visit the Philippian brethren. In the meantime, he wanted to send Timothy to them so that he could find out from him how they were doing, fully expecting to be encouraged by his report (verse 19).

Paul gives a glowing recommendation of Timothy, stating that the Philippians knew his "proven character" (verse 22); that he lived



selflessly and with focus on Christ (verse 21); that he would sincerely care for them (verse 20); and that as a son with his father, he had served with Paul in the gospel (verse 22).

Paul is not saying in verse 21 (“all seek their own”) that there were no other Christians who could compare with Timothy, but rather that he had no one with him who had the same mind as Paul, except for Timothy. He later mentions Epaphroditus—another outstanding servant of God—but Epaphroditus had already left to visit the Philippians.

Still, Paul’s comments about other Christians are very grave and sobering.

*Barnes’ Notes on the Bible* explains:

“For all seek their own - That is, all who are with me. Who Paul had with him at this time is not fully known, but he doubtless means that this remark should apply to the... Christians and Christian ministers then in Rome. Perhaps he had proposed to some of them to go and visit the church at Philippi, and they had declined it because of the distance and the dangers of the way. When the trial of Paul came on before the emperor, all who were with him in Rome fled from him (2 Timothy 4:16) and it is possible that the same disregard of his wishes and his welfare had already begun to manifest itself among the Christians who were at Rome, so that he was constrained to say that, as a general thing, they sought their own ease and comfort, and were unwilling to deny themselves in order to promote the happiness of those who lived in the remote parts of the world...”

*Clarke’s Commentary on the Bible* adds:

“For all seek their own - This must relate to the persons who preached Christ even of envy and strife (Philippians 1:15), these must be very careless whether souls [people] were saved or not by such preaching; and even those who preached the Gospel out of good will might not be fit for such an embassy as this, which required many sacrifices, and consequently much love and zeal to be able to make them.”

In the *New King James Bible* it reads that the Philippians knew Timothy’s “**proven character**” (verse 22). The *Authorized Version* renders this: “ye know the proof of him.” Still, the term “proven character” very accurately reflects the intended meaning.

In Romans 5:3–4, Paul writes that “we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance,

character (the *Authorized Version* says, “experience”); and character, hope.”

Godly character is developed through experience. It is the duty of every converted Christian to develop holy righteous godly character. We are to become perfect, as God is perfect, and God is holy character. As humans, we must prove to God and men that we are indeed advancing in positive character development—that we increase and grow in experience as to what to do and what not to do.

Holy character development has been defined as (1) the understanding as to what is right and what is wrong; (2) the decision and will to accept the right and reject the wrong; and (3) the action of doing the right and rejecting the wrong.

Timothy was known as a Christian who manifested his growth in character development. Notice again how Paul summarizes the proofs of Timothy’s positive character development:

Paul and Timothy were like-minded in sincerely (the *Authorized Version* says, “naturally”) caring for the brethren—they both had the mind of Christ in them; Timothy did not seek his own, but rather the things which are of Christ Jesus; he served with Paul in the gospel of the Kingdom of God—he preached and lived it, and he did so with an attitude of wanting to serve, rather than to rule over others; and finally, he served with Paul in the proclamation of the gospel, but he did so as a son serves his father—with love and respect and a deep feeling of gratitude toward him.

*Matthew Henry’s Whole Bible Commentary* states:

“Seeking our own interest to the neglect of Jesus Christ is a very great sin, and very common among Christians and ministers. Many prefer their own credit, ease, and safety, before truth, holiness, and duty, the things of their own pleasure and reputation before the things of Christ’s kingdom and his [Christ’s] honour and interest in the world: but Timothy was none of these...”

“Timothy was a man who had been tried, and had made full proof of his ministry (2 Timothy 4:5), and was faithful in all that befell him. All the churches with whom he had acquaintance knew the proof of him. He was a man as good as he seemed to be; and served Christ so as to be acceptable to God, and approved of men (Romans 14:18)...

“He was Paul’s assistant in many places where he preached, and

served with him in the gospel with all the dutiful respect which a child pays to a father, and with all the love and cheerfulness with which a child is serviceable to his father. Their ministrations together were with great respect on the one side and great tenderness and kindness on the other—an admirable example to elder and younger ministers united in the same service.”

### **Philippians 2:25–29:**

“(Verse 25) Yet I considered it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier, but your messenger and the one who ministered to my need; (verse 26) since he was longing for you all, and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick. (Verse 27) For indeed he was sick almost unto death; but God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. (Verse 28) Therefore I sent him the more eagerly, that when you see him again you may rejoice, and I may be less sorrowful. (Verse 29) Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness, and hold such men in esteem; (verse 30) because for the work of Christ he came close to death, not regarding his life, to supply what was lacking in your service toward me.”

Who was Epaphroditus?

*Barnes' Notes on the Bible* states:

“Epaphroditus is nowhere else mentioned but in this Epistle; see Philippians 4:18. All that is known of him, therefore, is what is mentioned here. He was from Philippi, and was a member of the church there. He had been employed by the Philippians to carry relief to Paul when he was in Rome... and while in Rome he was taken dangerously sick. News of this had been conveyed to Philippi, and again intelligence had been brought to him that they had heard of his sickness and that they were much affected by it. On his recovery, Paul thought it best that he should return at once to Philippi, and doubtless sent this Epistle by him.”

In verse 25, Paul calls him “your messenger.” In the Greek, this word is the same as the word for “apostle,” and it is therefore very

likely that Epaphroditus was an apostle, but he was still submissive to Paul, as the younger in the faith.

*Clarke's Commentary on the Bible* writes:

"Here is a very high character of this minister of Christ; he was... A brother - one of the Christian family; a thorough convert to God... He was a companion in labor; he labored, and labored in union with the apostle in this great work. He was a fellow soldier; the work was a work of difficulty and danger, they were obliged to maintain a continual warfare, fighting against the world, the devil, and the flesh. He was their apostle... He was an affectionate friend to the apostle [Paul]... acknowledged him in prison, and contributed to his comfort and support."

In referring to Paul's comments that Epaphroditus was a "fellow worker" and a "fellow soldier," *Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible* includes the following statements:

"... [he was] companion in labour; in the laborious work of preaching the Gospel. The ministry of the word is a work; it is called the work of the ministry; and it is a laborious one when diligently and faithfully performed: the apostle [Paul] was a workman that needed not to be ashamed, a labourer in Christ's vineyard, and one that laboured more abundantly than others; and he was not alone, he had companions in his work, and this good man was one of them: he adds,

"and fellow soldier; the life of every believer is a warfare; he is always engaged in a war with sin, and Satan, and the world; and is often called to fight the fight of faith, to contend earnestly against false teachers for the faith once delivered to the saints, to stand up for it, and fast in it; and is provided for with the whole armour of God, with weapons of warfare, which are not carnal, but spiritual and mighty, being enlisted as a volunteer under the great Captain of his salvation, Jesus Christ, under whose banner he fights, and is more than a conqueror through him: but though this is the common case and character of all the saints, it more especially belongs to ministers of the Gospel; who are set for the defence of it, and at the front of the battle, and are called to meet the enemy at the gate, and endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ; and such an one was the apostle [Paul]; and he had other fellow soldiers, and this person among the rest, who were engaged in the same common cause with the same enemies, under the same Captain, and would enjoy the same crown..."

It is especially noteworthy that Paul mentions that Epaphroditus, after he had travelled 700 miles from Philippi to be with Paul in Rome, became sick there, “almost unto death” (verse 27), and Paul adds in verse 30 that “because of the work of Christ he came close to death, not regarding his life.” He admonishes the brethren to keep ministers such as Epaphroditus in high esteem. Even though no one is perfect or faultless or immune to making mistakes, we are to observe their conduct in the Work of God, and respect them for their labor. Even Jesus Christ said that the Jews at His time should believe in Him because of the good works that He was doing (compare John 10:37–38).

Paul assures the Philippians that Epaphroditus had been divinely healed as a consequence of God’s direct merciful intervention (verse 27).

*Matthew Henry’s Concise Commentary* explains that “Epaphroditus was willing to go to the Philippians, that he might be comforted with those who had sorrowed for him when he was sick. It seems that his illness was caused by the work of God.”

This does not mean that Epaphroditus neglected his body, which was a temple of the Holy Spirit, but he did not place his physical health and welfare over his Christian calling. Christ said that we must not love our own physical lives more than Him, and we reflect our love to Christ when we love our brethren who are in need. If we are desperately trying to preserve our physical life in a way that we thereby neglect our Christian duties, then we will lose it.

It is a matter of priorities. For instance, in comparison with our focus on the Kingdom of God and God’s righteousness, physical or bodily exercise profits just a little—it is much less important than godliness which is “profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and that which is to come”—our inheritance of eternal life (compare 1 Timothy 4:7–8).

We read that it was Christ’s primary focus, when here on earth as a human being, to do God’s Will and to carry out and finish the work of God (John 4:34). When He died on the cross, He exclaimed, “It is finished” (John 19:30). Even before His arrest, He was confident that He would finish the work, already praying in the garden that “I have finished the work which you have given Me to do” (John 17:4).

But it was not an easy task, and He was willing to place His physical health in jeopardy to finish it. For instance, he prayed all night,

without sleep, before appointing twelve of His disciples to the rank and office of apostle.

He came to die for us, and to suffer for us. We read that He was willing to be beaten so that we could obtain godly healing. Does this mean that Christ never became sick? The Bible suggests otherwise. We read in Isaiah 53:3–5:

“He is despised and rejected by men, A Man of sorrows [Margin: Lit. pains] and acquainted with grief [Margin: Lit. sickness]. And we hid, as it were our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely He has borne our griefs [Margin: Lit. sicknesses], And carried our sorrows [Margin: Lit. pains]; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded [Margin: or pierced through] for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes [Margin: Blows that cut in] we are healed.”

Notice how the *Tanakh* translation renders this passage:

“He was despised, shunned by men, A man of suffering, familiar with disease. As one who hid his face from us, He was despised, we held him of no account. Yet it was our sickness that he was bearing, Our suffering that he endured. We accounted him plagued, Smitten and afflicted by God; But he was wounded because of our sins, Crushed because of our iniquities. He bore the chastisement that made us whole, And by his bruises we were healed.”

The *Tanakh* translation further states, in verse 10:

“But the LORD chose to crush him by disease, that, if he made himself an offering for guilt, He might see offspring and have long life, And that through him the LORD’s purpose might prosper.”

Jesus Christ was willing to suffer and to die for us so that we could obtain healing from our physical sicknesses and forgiveness for our sins. He did what needed to be done in order to make possible our inheritance of eternal life in the very Family of God. His focus was on preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God, and He expects no less from His true servants today, whatever the cost. No doubt, Paul fulfilled that task (compare 2 Corinthians 11:23–33; 6:4–5; 1 Corinthians 4:11; 15:30), as did Epaphroditus, and as we must do likewise (compare Matthew 28:18–20).

# Philippians, Chapter 3

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## Philippians 3:1–3:

“(Verse 1) Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe. (Verse 2) Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation! (Verse 3) For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh,”

After having pointed out to the Philippians, two glowing examples of Christian godly character, Paul proceeds now to warn the brethren of the opposite influences. Before doing so, he encourages and reminds them to rejoice in God, who has given them understanding as to whom to follow, and as to whom to reject.

In verse 2, Paul lists dogs, evil workers and the mutilation, equating at least the last category with those who demanded physical circumcision as a requirement for salvation, and who gloried in their flesh and outward appearances.

But Paul makes clear that we are not to worship God the Father and Jesus Christ in the flesh, but we must do so in the Spirit, and that our circumcision is not physical, but spiritual (Romans 2:28–29; Colossians 2:11). Paul says in Philippians 3:3 that we who are circumcised in the heart—not necessarily in the flesh—are the *real* circumcision. In fact, Paul states that those who have confidence in the flesh do not worship and serve God in the Spirit.

When Paul speaks of “dogs,” he has in mind the concept of a worthless person. *Barnes’ Notes on the Bible* states:

“Dogs in the east are mostly without masters; they wander at large in the streets and fields, and feed upon offals, and even upon corpses... The term dog... is used to denote a person that is shameless, impudent, malignant, snarling, dissatisfied, and contentious, and is

evidently so employed here... By the use of the term here, there can be no doubt that the apostle meant to express strong disapprobation of the character and course of the persons referred to, and to warn the Philippians in the most solemn manner against them."

*Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible* adds:

"Moreover... they were without, as dogs are (Revelation 22:15), having gone out from the communion of the saints, because they were not of them; or if among them, yet not true members of Christ..."

Paul also warns of evil workers. True Christians are to work for the gospel and the Kingdom, but evil workers, rejecting the truth, work for the evil god of this world. Paul tells us again and again that righteousness must not have communion with lawlessness.

Regarding the "mutilation," *Barnes' Notes on the Bible* points out:

"It is not to be understood that Paul meant to throw contempt on circumcision... but only as it was held by the false Judaizing teachers. As they held it, it was not the true circumcision. They made salvation to depend on it..."

### **Philippians 3:4-7:**

"(Verse 4) though I also might have confidence in the flesh.

If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: (verse 5) circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; (verse 6) concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. (Verse 7) But what things were gain [in Greek: "gains"] to me, these I have counted loss for Christ."

Paul is not saying that they should not have confidence in their flesh, because Paul could not have any confidence in his flesh. In other words, since he could not have such confidence in *his* flesh, so they should not have any confidence in *their* flesh, either. Quite to the contrary, Paul's point is that if anyone could have confidence in the flesh, it would have been him. He explains in verse 5 that he was physically circumcised on the eighth day; that he was a descendant of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin. The tribe of Benjamin had not revolted against the kingdom of David, but stayed with Judah and the Levites,



forming the kingdom or house of Judah. When Jacob thought that his favorite son Joseph (Genesis 37:3), the firstborn son of Rachel, had died, Benjamin became the favorite son of Jacob. Benjamin was the second son of his beloved wife Rachel who died when she gave birth to Benjamin (Genesis 35:16–20). Further, only Benjamin was born in what would become the Promised Land.

Paul was a Hebrew of the Hebrews; that is, no one in his ancestry had been a Gentile proselyte, and there was no “mixed blood.” In regard to the law, he was a Pharisee; that is, he maintained and adhered to the strict interpretation of the Pharisaical school of law, which was many times in contradiction to the spirit of the law, as Jesus pointed out, but which was highly accepted by the Jewish community as a whole (compare Acts 26:5).

He then talked in verse 6 about his zeal, according to the flesh: He persecuted true Christians because his Pharisaical upbringing did not allow him at first to understand the spirit of the law and that Christians were in fact living in the way which was pleasing to God (Acts 22:4; 26:9).

He also said that he was blameless concerning the righteousness which is in the law. Paul came to see later that he was pursuing the law of righteousness, without attaining it, because he did not seek it by faith, but, as it were, by the works of the law (compare Romans 9:31–32). He was ignorant of God’s righteousness and sought to establish his own righteousness, while not submitting to the righteousness of God (Romans 10:3).

Paul was blameless, when it came to carrying out the mandates of the ritual law, including the traditions and regulations enacted by the Pharisees, but he sinned greatly against the Law of God when he persecuted true Christians.

The *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown* commentary explains that in the Greek, it says, “‘having become blameless’ as to ceremonial righteousness: having attained in the eyes of man blameless legal perfection.”

Paul then explains in verse 7 that as a true Christian, he had to give up all of that (*Barnes’ Notes on the Bible* says: “The advantages of birth, of education, and of external conformity to the law”) which appeared to be of prestige or accomplishment or “gains”—both his confidence in the flesh, as well as his conduct which was contrary to the Law of God.

What appeared to be gains to Paul had manifested itself as loss. *Barnes' Notes on the Bible* writes: "They were really a disadvantage - a hindrance - an injury. I look upon them, not as gain or an advantage, but as an obstacle to my salvation. He had relied on them. He had been led by these things to an improper estimate of his own character, and he had been thus hindered from embracing the true religion."

### **Philippians 3:8:**

"(Verse 8) Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ"

Paul was willing to give up everything, if need be, in order to obtain the knowledge OF Christ—that is, HIS superior and most excellent knowledge—as well as having Christ Himself living continuously and consistently in him. We are to grow in the grace and knowledge OF Jesus Christ, and as we do, we will have to place every contrary thought under the obedience toward Christ—and much more so every evil deed.

What were gains to Paul, he considered as loss or rubbish, so he could obtain the real gain, Jesus Christ. The word "rubbish" is a rather tame translation—in the Greek, it means the vilest dross or refuse of a thing; the worst excrement. When it comes to our justification and salvation, our perceived privileges by birth and race and education are to be counted as being utterly worthless.

With this introductory comment, Paul proceeds with most fundamental and important statements.

### **Philippians 3:9:**

"(verse 9) and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith;"

This translation is misleading. The *Authorized Version* states, correctly: "And may be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith..."

*Barnes' Notes on the Bible* comments that "The 'righteousness which is of the law' is that which could be obtained by conformity to the precepts of the Jewish [ritualistic] religion, such as Paul had endeavored to obtain before he became a Christian. He now saw that no one complied perfectly with the holy law of God."

As we explain in great detail in our free booklet, *"Paul's Letter to the Galatians—How to Understand It,"* pages 11–14, we must have the faith OF Christ living in us, in order to be made righteous. Our own human efforts alone can never make us righteous, as we could never keep perfectly the law of God. Not even faith IN Christ can accomplish this. It is only through Christ's faith in us—the faith OF Christ in us—that we can obtain God's righteousness.

While we are to look at our own righteousness—our own physical accomplishments of keeping the law—as filthy rags, we are to seek the Kingdom of God and HIS righteousness, and THAT righteousness of God can only come from God. It is the living Christ in us—through His obedient faith—that we CAN keep the law of God and which makes possible our righteousness.

Paul is intent on having the Philippians understand this process, and so he continues in the next two verses with further explanations.

### **Philippians 3:10–11:**

"(verse 10) that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, (verse 11) if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead."

Paul was willing to give everything up, if need be, in order to understand the POWER of Christ's resurrection (accompanied by suffering and death), so that this knowledge would motivate and help him to do everything that he needed to do to attain the resurrection from the dead.

The *Living Bible* explains that Paul's reference to the "power of His [Christ's] resurrection" refers to Paul's desire to "experience the mighty power that brought him back to life again." Compare also Ephesians 1:19–20.

But in looking at Philippians 3:21, we might also conclude that

Paul could have had something else in mind. In that verse, he says, following the *Revised Standard Version*, that Christ “will change our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power which enables him even to subject all things to himself.”

So, when speaking of his desire to get to know the power of Christ’s resurrection, Paul could have also referred to the power “outflowing” from His resurrection (as the *Amplified Bible* brings it), which He will use to empower us *now*, as well as at His Second Coming, to resurrect us from the dead or to change us, if we are still alive at that time.

Note, Paul does not say in verse 11 that he wanted to experience the resurrection *of* the dead, but rather *from* [or *out of*] the dead, emphasizing that he wanted to be in the *first* resurrection, comprised of only those who died in Christ, as opposed to the second or general resurrection of the Great White Throne Judgment period (compare Revelation 20:4–6, 11–12).

The *Jamieson Fausset and Brown* commentary states:

“The oldest manuscripts read, ‘the resurrection from (out of) the dead,’ namely, the first resurrection; that of believers at Christ’s coming ([1 Corinthians] 15:23; [1 Thessalonians] 4:15; [Revelation] 20:5, 6). The Greek word occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. ‘The power of Christ’s resurrection’ ([Romans] 1:4), ensures the believer’s attainment of the ‘resurrection from the (rest of the) dead’ (compare [Philippians] 3:20, 21).”

In order to be counted worthy to attain the resurrection of the just, Paul knew that he had to increase in the knowledge OF Jesus Christ—the very knowledge that Christ has—as well as the knowledge as to who and what Christ is. Knowing and becoming like Christ includes the willingness to suffer persecution, and even to lay down our life for Christ and the brethren (compare again Philippians 3:10). Paul was willing to do whatever it took to attain or arrive at the resurrection from or *out of* the dead at the time of Christ’s return.

### **Philippians 3:12–16:**

“(Verse 12) Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. (Verse 13) Brethren, I

do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, (verse 14) I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. (Verse 15) Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you. (Verse 16) Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind."

Paul makes clear that he does not believe that he has already reached perfection, and he confirms that there is a need to keep on fighting against the evil influences of sin, Satan and society, and so he is determined to press on—never even entertaining the thought of wanting to give up.

Even though Paul knew that he had not apprehended or "laid hold of" perfection and the goal of his Christian calling, he also knew that he could not look back to the things which he had left behind, but that he had to reach forward to the things which were ahead. He was committed to press toward the goal of his Christian calling—the prize of eternal life as a perfected glorious spirit being in the Kingdom of God (compare 1 Corinthians 9:24–27).

Paul was confident that he would obtain that prize, as he expressed his confidence earlier in his letter that the Philippians—the ones in whom God had begun a good work—would be perfected as well. This confidence—that he could and would make it—motivated and encouraged him to press on to reach perfection and his ultimate goal.

In Philippians 3:15, Paul also encouraged everyone who was mature enough to comprehend this, to have the same mind that he had, which was the mind of Christ (compare Philippians 2:5), adding that God would reveal the truth to some of the brethren who might in any way think differently about Paul's teaching.

He admonished them all in verse 16 to stick to what they had accomplished and not to drift backwards. Christ told us that if we put our hand to the plow and look back, we are not fit for or worthy of the Kingdom of God (Luke 9:62). Rather, Paul said, let us be of the same mind in understanding that we must all walk forward, and we

must do so by the same rule, as revealed by God (compare Galatians 6:16). The entrance into His Kingdom is through a small door and by walking on a narrow and difficult path.

Notice how the *Living Bible* translates Philippians 3:12–13, then followed by the rendition of the *New Jerusalem Bible* in verses 14–16:

“(Verse 12) I don’t mean to say I am perfect. I haven’t learned all I should even yet, but I keep working toward that day when I will finally be all that Christ saved me for and wants me to be. (Verse 13) No, dear brothers, I am still not all I should be but I am bringing all my energies to bear on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead.”

“(Verse 14) I am racing towards the finishing-point to win the prize of God’s heavenly call in Christ Jesus. (Verse 15) So this is the way in which all of us who are mature should be thinking, and if you are still thinking differently in any way, then God has yet to make this matter clear to you. (Verse 16) Meanwhile, let us go forward from the point we have each attained.”

We must, however, state one word of caution and clarification here: In Philippians 3:14, we read that Paul is pressing toward the goal for the prize of the “upward call of God in Christ Jesus.” It would be correct to say that this is a “heavenly calling,” as it originates from God the Father in heaven. The *Authorized Version* says “high calling.”

However, it is blatantly false to translate that “God is calling us up to heaven,” as the *Living Bible* brings it. Equally wrong is the *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown* commentary, stating, that it is “the common calling of all Christians to salvation in Christ, which coming from heaven invites us to heaven.” Nowhere are we told that we will go to heaven. Rather, Paul wanted to attain to the resurrection from the dead. He wasn’t talking about going to heaven.

The *People’s New Testament* explains it correctly when saying that the high prize of Paul’s calling is “the prize offered to those in the high calling of the saints in Christ. A crown was bestowed in an earthly race when the goal was reached. This prize is the resurrection from the dead ([Philippians] 3:11) and an eternal crown.”

Paul concludes the third chapter as follows:

### **Philippians 3:17–21:**

“(Verse 17) Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. (Verse 18) For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: (verse 19) whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things. (Verse 20) For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, (verse 21) who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.”

As Paul had encouraged the brethren to have the same mind as himself, so he is now encouraging them in verse 17 to act in the same way that he does, and to imitate those who imitate Paul. This is a strong and bold statement, but Paul is sure that he has the mind of Christ and that he is acting in the way Christ did and would (Philippians 4:9).

This is not to say that Paul believed that he was faultless—many statements in other biblical passages prove the opposite—but he is telling the Philippian brethren to have the same mind and perform the same actions as Paul, insofar as he was manifesting Christ’s mind and conduct. He was not telling them to follow him in everything—only in those things which are in conformity with God’s Will, purpose and law. After all, he emphasized at another place that brethren ought to follow him, as he was following Christ (compare 1 Corinthians 11:1; see also Ephesians 5:1–2, which tells us that we must be imitators of *God*).

The *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown* commentary, in referring to 1 Corinthians 11:1, states: “Imitate me no farther than as I imitate Christ.”

Also, we need to realize that Paul is making a contrast here in Philippians 3:18. He is comparing himself and those who follow him with those who walk as enemies of the cross of Christ, even though they were apparently “in” the Church. In reality, they were not true Church members at all and Paul did not include them at the beginning of the letter when he stated that he was confident that God who had begun a good work in true Christians, would bring it to completeness.

The fact is, God had never begun a good work in them—they were

never converted (compare 1 John 2:19)—or if they were, they had lost the Holy Spirit, and as such, had rejected that which God had begun in them, so that God could not complete the good work in their lives.

In Philippians 3:19, Paul points out that they do not worship the true God and Jesus Christ but their own belly or their own selfish desires. Rather than concentrating on and setting their minds on the things which are above, they were setting their minds on earthly things. In other words, they did not have the mind of Christ, which was in Paul, but the mind of the god of this world, Satan the devil (compare Jude 16–19; 2 Peter 2:12–22; Hebrews 10:26–31; 6:4–8).

*Barnes' Notes on the Bible* states:

“For many walk - Many live, the Christian life being often in the Scriptures compared with a journey. In order to induce them to imitate those who were the most holy, the apostle says that there were many, even in the church, whom it would not be safe for them to imitate. He evidently here refers mainly to the church at Philippi, though it may be that he meant to make the declaration general, and to say that the same thing existed in other churches. There has not probably been any time yet in the Christian church when the same thing might not be said.

“Of whom I have told you often - When he preached in Philippi. Paul was not afraid to speak of church members when they did wrong, and to warn others not to imitate their example. He did not attempt to cover up or excuse guilt because it was in the church, or to apologize for the defects and errors of those who professed to be Christians. The true way is, to admit that there are those in the church who do not honor their religion, and to warn others against following their example...

“And now tell you even weeping... if there is anything that should make us weep, it is, that there are those in the church who are hypocrites, or who dishonor their profession...

“they are the enemies of the cross of Christ - The ‘cross’ was the instrument of death on which the Redeemer died to make atonement for sin.... An immoral life is enmity to the cross of Christ; for he died to make us holy. A life where there is no evidence that the heart is renewed, is enmity to the cross; for he died that we might be renewed...”

Paul continues to explain in Philippians 3:20 why we who do have the mind of Christ should set our minds on the things which are above. Quite simply, our citizenship is in heaven and we are eagerly



waiting for Jesus Christ to come from heaven to this earth to change our lowly body into His glorious body.

They were “heavenly citizens, or citizens of the heavenly world, in contradistinction from a worldly community... they were governed by the laws of heaven,” as *Barnes’ Notes on the Bible* says. They also looked to their city, the heavenly Jerusalem, which will come down from heaven. They also were reminded that their names were written in heaven—in the Book of Life—and as long as their names were recorded in heaven, they would be changed into glorified beings at the time of Christ’s return.

As *Barnes’ Notes on the Bible* explains, in the Greek it says that our mortal lowly body will be conformed to the “body of His glory.” (Compare 1 Corinthians 15:42–49; John 17:5.) For more information on our potential to become immortal glorified God beings in the very Kingdom of God, please read our free booklet, “*God Is A Family*.”



# Philippians, Chapter 4

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## Philippians 4:1–3:

“(Verse 1) Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved. (Verse 2) I implore Euodia and I implore Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. (Verse 3) And I urge you also, true companion, help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the Book of Life.”

Paul had explained in the previous verses that true Christians are citizens of heaven—that their citizenship is in heaven—and that they are no longer part of this world (compare John 15:19; 17:6, 9, 11, 14–16).

They were his joy or the source of his joy, because, as *Barnes’ Notes of the Bible* puts it, “He rejoiced in the fact that they had been converted under him; and in their holy walk, and their friendship. Our chief joy is in our friends; and the chief happiness of a minister of the gospel is in the pure lives of those to whom he ministers.”

They were not only his joy, but also his crown. *Gill’s Exposition of the Entire Bible* explains:

“...they were his ‘crown’, as they were seals of his ministry... and which he hoped and believed would be his crown of rejoicing another day; when he, with them, should stand at the hand of Christ triumphing, as victors crowned, over sin, Satan, the world [and] death...”

Paul expresses this same thought in other places, such as in 1 Thessalonians 2:19.

Because the Philippians had such assurance of being beloved by God and Paul, he admonished them to continue to stand fast in the Lord—or, as it could also be rendered, “by the Lord.”

This reminds us of Paul’s lengthy comments in Ephesians 6:10–20, where he describes the armor of God. He emphasizes there that we

must take up God's armor to be able to withstand Satan and his demonic forces, and having done all, to stand.

In his letter to the Philippians, when speaking about the necessity to stand, he is also *implicitly* warning the brethren not to fall for Satan's evil devices (as he had warned the Ephesians *expressly*, when emphasizing the need to stand, by taking up God's armor).

In that very context, he admonishes and implores Euodia and Syntyche, two prominent women in the Church, to be of the same mind in the Lord. Most commentaries feel that these two women were probably deaconesses. Paul had encouraged the Philippians earlier, in Philippians 2:2, to fulfill his joy by being like-minded, and now, he is mentioning a concrete example where such like-mindedness was somewhat lacking, leading to dissension.

There were obviously disagreements between these two female members and Paul implored them to be reconciled to each other. Unless we are reconciled with our brethren, we cannot really stand in the Lord and hard feelings will allow Satan to come in and take advantage of us.

Paul goes on to encourage his "companion" in the congregation to help these two women who had worked hard in the gospel and who had supported Paul and Clement and the rest of his fellow workers, "whose names are in the Book of Life."

The word "companion" means literally, "yoke-fellow." *Wesley's Notes* states: "Paul had many fellowlabourers, but not many yokefellows. In this number was Barnabas first, and then Silas, whom he probably addresses here; for Silas had been his yokefellow at the very place, Acts 16:19."

The *People's New Testament* qualifies this last statement, as follows: "Some have thought that Silas, associated with him in suffering at Philippi is meant... and that he was at Philippi when this letter was sent, but this is not certain."

In any event, Paul is encouraging his companion or yoke-fellow to help these two women; that is, to cooperate with them and to help them in their work of reconciliation. *Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible* writes that the two women were to be helped "either by composing their differences, or by assisting them with good counsel and advice; and giving them proper instructions in the doctrines of the Gospel,

that they might be brought to think the same things the church did..."

Paul mentions in Philippians 4:3 that the two women worked or labored together with him in the gospel. No preaching is meant here (1 Timothy 2:12). Rather, as *Wesley's Notes* states:

"The Greek word ["they labored"] doth not imply preaching, or anything of that kind; but danger and toil endured for the sake of the gospel, which was also endured at the same time, probably at Philippi, by Clement and my other fellowlabourers [or fellow workers]. This ["fellowlabourers"] is a different word from the former ["they labored"], and [it, i.e., "fellowlabourers"] does properly imply fellowpreachers."

The two women had performed services, probably as deaconesses, in the Church. Ministers need the help of deacons and deaconesses, especially in physical matters, so that they can concentrate on their spiritual duties (compare again Acts 6:1–7).

Paul specifically refers in Philippians 4:3 to Clement and other fellow workers [or "fellowlabourers"] who also assisted him in the work of the gospel.

*Barnes' Notes on the Bible* says that the women "were associated with Clement, and with the other fellow-laborers of Paul, in aiding him in the gospel. Clement was doubtless someone who was well known among them... Who Clement was, is unknown. Most of the ancients say it was Clement of Rome, one of the primitive fathers. But there is no evidence of this. The name Clement was common, and there is no improbability in supposing that there might have been a preacher of this name in the church at Philippi."

Paul emphasizes that the names of all those mentioned in verses 2 and 3 are in the Book of Life—this would include Clement, Paul's fellow-workers, as well as the two women. This made it even more pressing to help the women to assure that their names would *stay* in the Book of Life (compare Ezekiel 33:12, 18).

We have much to say about the Book of Life in our free booklet, "*Are you Predestined to Be Saved?*" The names of converted Christians are clearly written in the Book of Life, and as long as their names remain in that Book, their inheritance of eternal life is assured. But this does not mean that their names could not be erased or blotted out—they clearly will be, when the unpardonable sin is being committed.

*Wesley's Notes* states:

“Whose names... are in the book of life - As are those of all believers. An allusion to the wrestlers in the Olympic games, whose names were all enrolled in a book. Reader, is thy name there? Then walk circumspectly, lest the Lord blot thee out of his book!”

The *Jamieson Fausset and Brown* commentary adds that the Book of Life is “the register-book of those whose ‘citizenship is in heaven’... Anciently, free cities had a roll book containing the names of all those having the right of citizenship...”

There are many references in the Bible regarding the Book of Life, including Luke 10:20; Revelation 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12, 15; 21:27; 22:19.

### **Philippians 4:4-7:**

“(Verse 4) Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!  
(Verse 5) Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. (Verse 6) Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; (verse 7) and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

Having emphasized in the previous verse that our names are written in the Book of Life, Paul continues to state that we are to rejoice always in the Lord. He had made the same statement in Philippians 3:1.

In Romans 12:12 he states that we are to rejoice in hope; that we are to be patient in tribulation; and that we are to continue steadfastly in prayer. Comparing Romans 12:12 with Philippians 4:4-7, we can easily see how both passages tell us the same thing.

*Barnes’ Notes on the Bible* points out:

“It is the privilege of Christians to do this [i.e., rejoice in the LORD always], not at certain periods and at distant intervals, but at all times they may rejoice that there is a God and Saviour; they may rejoice in the character, law, and government of God - in his promises, and in communion with him. The Christian, therefore, may be, and should be, always a happy man. If everything else changes, yet the Lord does not change; if the sources of all other joy are dried up, yet this is not; and there is not a moment of a Christian’s life in which he may not find joy in the character, law, and promises of God.”

*Clarke's Commentary on the Bible* adds:

"Be continually happy; but this happiness you can find only in the Lord. Genuine happiness is spiritual; as it can only come from God... The apostle repeats the exhortation, to show, not only his earnestness, but also that it was God's will that it should be so, and that it was their duty as well as interest."

Paul continues to state in Philippians 4:5 that our gentleness should be known to all men, and that the Lord is at hand. There is obviously a connection: We should be gentle because we know that Christ's return is near.

*Barnes' Notes on the Bible* explains that the word for gentleness "refers to restraint on the passions, general soberness of living, being free from all excesses. The word properly means that which is fit or suitable, and then propriety, gentleness, mildness - They were to indulge in no excess of passion, or dress, or eating, or drinking. They were to govern their appetites, restrain their temper, and to be examples of what was proper for people in view of the expectation that the Lord would soon appear."

*Clarke's Commentary on the Bible* adds that the word for gentleness ("moderation" in the *Authorized Version*) "means the same as... mildness, patience, yieldingness, gentleness, clemency, moderation, unwillingness to litigate or contend; but moderation is expressive enough as a general term. Moderation... means meekness under provocation, readiness to forgive injuries, equity in the management of business, candour in judging of the characters and actions of others..."

Other commentaries and Bible translations render the word as "forbearance," which would be consistent with the above-quoted explanations.

This moderation, gentleness or forbearance is a further result of our *joy in God*, which Paul addresses in Philippians 4:4. We have to express these character traits to all people—the good and the bad, the kind, and the contentious ones. But we are not to do it because of an outward show, but because our joyful conduct of moderation is manifested as stemming from our joyful heart, and because we realize that Jesus Christ—the Judge of the living and the dead—is at hand, or near, or at the door.

Since we know this, we are admonished in verse 6 not to be anxious

for anything, but to pray to God for His help and intervention, and we must do so in everything and for everything and always and continuously. We are to make our requests known to God by prayer and supplication. Supplication is a stronger word than prayer and describes our continued pleas. When it says that we have to make our requests known to God, then this does not mean that God would not know otherwise—but we are to express our needs to God—thereby showing God that we *understand* that we must look to Him as the only source of our blessings. In addition, we have to *express our thanks to God* for what He has done and will do for us.

When we do this, then the incomprehensible peace of God, which lives in us through Jesus Christ, and which passes all human understanding, will guard our hearts and minds (Philippians 4:7). As our joy must be in God, so must be our peace. Correctly understood, it is God's joy and God's peace that live in us. The masses of unconverted people cannot understand how it is possible that true Christians can be peaceful in times of war and trials and adversity and persecution (compare Isaiah 26:3; John 14:27).

But as Paul explains, we have to do our part.

We have to make an effort to rejoice always; we have to show our gentleness or moderation or forbearance towards all people; we must not allow anxiety to creep into our lives, but we are to pray to God for His help in everything; we must say thanks for the things which He has already done for us and also for the things that we know He will do; and we must allow God's peace in us to calm us down and give us relaxation and hope and confidence and reassurance that everything will work out for good because we love God and keep His commandments and do what is pleasing in His sight (compare 1 John 3:22).

God's peace in us will guard our hearts and minds; that is, it will keep us from anxiety and agitation.

*Barnes' Notes on the Bible* writes:

"The idea is, that by thus making our requests known to God, and going to him in view of all our trials and wants, the mind would be preserved from distressing anxiety. The way to find peace, and to have the heart kept from trouble, is thus to go and spread out all before the Lord... The word rendered here 'shall keep,' [the *New King James Bible* says, "will guard"] is a military term, and means that the mind



would be guarded as a camp or castle is. It would be preserved from the intrusion of anxious fears and alarms.”

We must never forget to give thanks to God for what He has done, and will do for us, because thanksgiving and peace go together (compare also Colossians 3:15). If we refuse to thank God, we cannot really have a peaceful life.

But there is still much more that we need to do in order to experience God’s peace in our lives.

### **Philippians 4:8–9:**

“(Verse 8) Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things. (Verse 9) The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.”

Paul is saying that the God of peace will be with them—His peace will be in their hearts and motivate their thoughts and actions when they followed Paul’s example, when they did what they saw Paul do and say and what they had received from him. He was not speaking of sins he would occasionally commit, but the good things he did. Special emphasis is given to the right kind of meditation. As Paul meditated on godly things, so the brethren were admonished to do likewise. And what were those things on which they should meditate?

Paul lists them in verse 8: Whatever is true, noble (or honest), just, pure, lovely, praiseworthy, and of good report and of virtue.

The *People’s New Testament* states:

“As he concludes his letter, he sums up Christian duties into a single paragraph.

“Whatsoever things are true. Truth in word, in action, and in thought, must be cherished. Christ is THE TRUTH. His followers must be truth itself.

“Honest. The Greek is reverend. Whatever is worthy of reverence.

“Just. Strict justice in all dealings; an upright life.

“Pure. Chaste lives and clean hearts and thoughts.

“Lovely. Such deeds as spring from love and inspire love in others.

“Of good report. A life of which no evil thing can be truthfully said.

“If there be any virtue, and if there be any praise... If there be [anything] else which is virtuous or praiseworthy, let these all be the things to which you give your minds.”

The *Jamieson Fausset and Brown* commentary adds:

“true—sincere, in words.

“honest—Old English for ‘seemly,’ namely, in action; literally, grave, dignified.

“just—towards others.

“pure—‘chaste,’ in relation to ourselves.

“lovely—lovable...

“of good report—referring to the absent...; as ‘lovely’ refers to what is lovable face to face.

“if there be any virtue... Piety and true morality are inseparable. Piety is love with its face towards God; morality is love with its face towards man. Despise not anything that is good in itself...

“praise--whatever is praiseworthy; not that Christians should make man’s praise their aim...; but they should live so as to deserve men’s praise.”

As mentioned, when the brethren meditated on these things, they were to remember that Paul and other Christians lived that way, and Paul is very specific, in verse 9, when he admonishes them to follow his example.

The *People’s New Testament* says:

“He turns from precept to example, the best of all teachers, and enjoins that they observe not only what he had taught, but what they had seen in his life.”

*Barnes’ Notes on the Bible* explains:

“Those things which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do - That is, what you have witnessed in me, and what you have learned of me, and what you have heard about me, practice yourselves. Paul refers them to his uniform conduct - to all that they had seen, and known, and heard of him, as that which it was proper for them to imitate...

“It could have been only the consciousness of a pure and upright life which would make such counsel proper. How few are the people

at this day who can urge others to imitate all that they have seen in them, and learned from them, and heard of them.

“And the God of peace shall be with you - The God who gives peace...The way to obtain the blessing of the God of peace, is to lead a holy life, and to perform with faithfulness all the duties which we owe to God and to our fellow-men.”

Paul’s admonition is simple: Concentrate on good things, think good things and do good things. Seek peace with others, actually pursue it, and the God of peace will give you peace, calmness and tranquility—even in times of trials and trouble. When we know that our names are written in the Book of Life in heaven, and when we continue to seek first—including in heartfelt prayer—the Kingdom of God and God’s righteousness, then we will have peace, knowing that everything physical that we need in this life *WILL BE* added unto us.

#### **Philippians 4:10–13:**

“(Verse 10) But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your care for me has flourished again; though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity. (Verse 11) Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: (Verse 12) I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. (Verse 13) I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. (Verse 14) Nevertheless you have done well that you shared in my distress.”

In verse 10, Paul states that he rejoiced in the Lord greatly because the Philippians’ care for him had been revived or had flourished again.

*Barnes’ Notes on the Bible* has the following comments:

“The favor which Paul had received, and for which he felt so much gratitude, had been received of the Philippians; but he regarded ‘the Lord’ as the source of it...The reason why he had not before received the favor, was not neglect or inattention on their part, but the difficulty of having communication with him.

“Your care of me hath flourished again - In the margin this is rendered ‘is revived,’ and this is the proper meaning of the Greek word.

It is a word properly applicable to plants or flowers, meaning to grow green again; to flourish again; to spring up again. Here the meaning is, that they had been again prospered in their care of him, and to Paul it seemed as if their care had sprung up anew... they were desirous to render him assistance, and to minister to his wants. Paul adds this, lest they should think he was disposed to blame them for inattention.

“But ye lacked opportunity - Because there were no persons going to Rome from Philippi by whom they could send to him. The distance was considerable, and it is not probable that the contact between the two places was very constant.”

Paul continues to say in verse 11 that he has “learned” to be content in whatever state he may be in (compare also Luke 3:14). Paul, through the many trials he had to go through, had acquired the understanding of why murmuring or complaining about our condition is not pleasing in God’s sight, nor is it healthy and profitable for us. The word for “content” can also be rendered as “self-sufficient,” compare 2 Corinthians 9:8 and 1 Timothy 6:6, 8.

Paul recognized that our sufficiency or contentment is from God (2 Corinthians 3:5; compare Hebrews 13:5–6). We cannot just decide to be content. Contentment is a gift from God, but we must of course accept His gift and put it to use.

And so, Paul says in Philippians 4:13 that he can do all things—and by implication, that he can live in whatever state he might find himself—through Jesus Christ who is strengthening him. He had admonished the Philippians earlier, in verse 6, not to be anxious for anything, but to let their requests be made known to God. Paul did no less in his own life. He overcame anxiety by focusing on God and accepting from Him what He designed for him (compare Job 1:21–22; 2:10).

Paul had learned to be happy and content, every day, with his current condition. Therefore, he did not have the mind set of coveting and thereby violating the Tenth Commandment—another “side benefit” of being content in life.

*Barnes’ Notes on the Bible* adds that Paul had learned that:

“... it is wrong to complain at the allotments of Providence; that a spirit of impatience does no good, remedies no evil, and supplies no want; that God could provide for him in a way which he could not

foresee, and that the Saviour was able abundantly to sustain him. A contented mind is an invaluable blessing... It arises from the belief that God is right in all his ways... 'He that is of a merry heart hath a continual feast' [Proverbs 15:15]; and one of the secrets of happiness is to have a mind satisfied with all the allotments of Providence."

On the other hand, being content or self-sufficient does not mean, of course, that we need not strive to better our condition, if we can; nor does it mean that we should not use the blessings of God that He has bestowed on us. We are told that we are to do everything that we can do with all our might. The unprofitable servant hid his talent and was punished by God for his unwillingness to use what he had been given. We are to produce fruit in spiritual as well as physical ways. If we refuse to use what God has given us, then we will lose what we have, or what we *think* we might have (compare Matthew 13:12; 25:29).

In Philippians 4:12, Paul makes the point that he knows now how to be abased or live humbly (without complaints or ingratitude) and how to abound or live in prosperity (without greed or neglect of the needs of others), and that he has "learned" to be full and to be hungry, to abound and to suffer need. In other words, Paul had come to understand how to live righteously and joyfully in a state of prosperity as well as in a state of want.

The choice of these words, "*I have learned* both to be full and to be hungry," etc., is a very interesting one. They are better rendered as, "I have been instructed."

*Barnes' Notes on the Bible* explains:

"The word used here... is one that is commonly used in relation to mysteries... it was only the 'initiated' who were made acquainted with the lessons that were taught... Paul says that he had been initiated into the lessons taught by trials and by prosperity. The secret and important lessons which these schools of adversity are fitted to teach, he had had an ample opportunity of learning; and he had faithfully embraced the doctrines thus taught."

*Wesley's Notes* concur, stating:

"I am instructed - Literally, I am initiated in that mystery, unknown to all but Christians."

Remember that Paul had explained earlier (in chapter 4, verse 7) that only true Christians can really experience and appreciate the peace

of God in their lives—especially in times of trials and adversity—and that this peace surpasses all understanding of the carnal nature. Paul repeats here the very same thought—that only true Christians are instructed how to live abundantly and in want, without sinning against God or their fellow man.

This learning process can only be achieved through the indwelling of Jesus Christ’s Spirit in us, and so Paul states in verse 13 that he can do all things through Christ who strengthens him.

The *People’s New Testament* states that Paul “can rise superior to every condition through the strength that Christ gives,” and *Wesley’s Notes* add that Paul, regardless of his current state of affairs, can “fulfil all the will of God.”

Nevertheless, Paul returns in verse 14 to his theme of complimenting the Philippians for helping him in his distress. Even though he had learned to be content, and even though he knew that Christ would supply all his needs, he did not want to give the impression that he was ungrateful for their kindness, and he most certainly did not want to discourage them from helping him. After all, he knew and communicated this knowledge to them, that God helps us many times through humans, by inspiring them to lend us a helping hand.

Paul specifically stated that they had done well to support him, but his emphasis was not so much on his receiving their gift, but, as he would later say in *verse 17*, he was seeking the fruit that abounded to *their account*. When we help others in need, we are building up treasures in heaven (Matthew 6:19–21; 19:21). Also, we are told that we will receive when we give, even in this life (Luke 6:38).

God looks at our kindness towards others as a “sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God” (verse 18). As living sacrifices (Romans 12:1–2), we are developing godly character which is outgoing concern for the welfare and benefit of others, away from self—it is a way of give, rather than a way of get. This echoes Paul’s earlier remarks, in Philippians 2:4, to look out for the interests (and needs) of others.

So, they did well by fulfilling their Christian duty of helping others, thereby helping themselves (compare also Philippians 4:19, see discussion below), and adding for themselves to the reward which Christ will give them upon His return (Revelation 22:12; 2 John 8).

## Philippians 4:15–17:

“(Verse 15) Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only. (Verse 16) For even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities. (Verse 17) Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account.”

Paul is commending the Philippian brethren for their willingness to help him. The emphasis of his statements *does not have to be* understood as necessarily accusing other churches for not helping him, even though, as we will see, an underlying correction toward those churches *seems to be* included.

The commentary of *Barnes' Notes on the Bible* explains:

“The last place that Paul visited in Macedonia, at that time, was Berea. There a tumult was excited by the Jews, and it was necessary for him to go away. He left Macedonia to go to Athens; and left it in haste, amidst scenes of persecution, and when he needed sympathizing aid. At that time, as well as when he was in Thessalonica... he needed the assistance of others to supply his wants; and he says that aid was not withheld. The meaning here is, that this aid was sent to him ‘as he was departing from Macedonia’...

“[Paul is saying that no other church] so participated with me in my sufferings and necessities, as to send to my relief; compare 2 Corinthians 11:8–9. Why they did not, Paul does not intimate. It is not necessary to suppose that he meant to blame them. They might not have been acquainted with his necessities. All that is implied here is, that he specially commends the Philippians for their attention to him.”

The *Jamieson Fausset and Brown Bible* commentary agrees, stating:

“The Philippians had followed Paul with their bounty when he left Macedonia and came to Corinth. [2 Corinthians] 11:8, 9 thus accords with the passage here, the dates assigned to the donation in both Epistles agreeing; namely, ‘in the beginning of the Gospel’ here, and there, at the time of his first visit to Corinth... However, the supply meant here is not that which he received at Corinth, but the supply sent to him when ‘in Thessalonica, once and again’...”

However, *Clarke's Commentary on the Bible* does include the following, rather critical remarks about the church in Thessalonica:

"For even in Thessalonica - While labouring to plant the Church there, he was supported partly by working with his hands, 1 Thessalonians 2:9; 2 Thessalonians 3:7-9; and partly by the contributions sent him from Philippi. Even the Thessalonians had contributed little to his maintenance: this is not spoken to their credit."

When reading Paul's statement in 2 Corinthians 11:8, one *does* get the distinct impression that the Corinthians were less than zealous to fulfill their responsibility toward the ministry. Paul says there: "I robbed other churches, taking wages from them to minister to you."

The commentary of *Barnes' Notes on the Bible* agrees and states in this context:

"The churches of Macedonia and elsewhere... had ministered to his needs. Probably he refers especially to the church at Philippi (see Philippians 4:15-16), which seems to have done more than almost any other church for his support. By the use of the word 'robbed' here Paul does not mean that he had obtained anything from them in a violent or unlawful manner, or anything which they did not give voluntarily.

"... the idea of Paul here is, that he, as it were, robbed them, because he did not render an equivalent for what they gave him. They supported him when he was laboring for another people. A conqueror who plunders a country gives no equivalent for what he takes. In this sense only could Paul say that he had plundered the church at Philippi. His general principle was, that 'the laborer was worthy of his hire,' and that a man was to receive his support from the people for whom he labored (see 1 Corinthians 9:7-14), but this rule he had not observed in this case...

"To do you service [or, as the *New King James Bible* says, quoted above: "...to minister to you":] - That I might labor among you... and that I might not be compelled to labor with my own hands, and thus to prevent my preaching the gospel as I could otherwise do. The supply from other churches rendered it unnecessary in a great measure that his time should be taken off from the ministry in order to obtain a support."

It is also true, however, that Paul worked at times with his own hands to support himself when planting the church in Thessalonica, without



demanding support from them (compare again 1 Thessalonians 2:9). Some have concluded that this passage means that a minister should not be employed by his Church and draw a salary, and that the law of tithing was no longer in effect. Both assumptions are wrong.

Paul made his statements in connection with the beginning stages of the church in Thessalonica. He did not tell them at the very beginning everything that encompasses the Christian way of life—he felt it better at that moment in time not to give the false impression of trying to be “after their money,” thereby perhaps causing a stumbling block for them and preventing their further growth in the truth.

As we have seen, he received help and support from the brethren in Philippi, but this support might not have been received in time so that he was forced to engage in “outside” work. This was dictated by necessity, because on the other hand, he most certainly taught that a minister is worthy of his wages. There is also no reason to assume that Paul would not have taught the churches in Thessalonica and elsewhere the ongoing validity of God’s tithing law (Compare our free booklet, “*Tithing—Today?*”).

Lest anyone misunderstood, Paul continues to say in Philippians 4:17 that he was not seeking the gift, but the fruit that abounds to their account.

*Barnes’ Notes on the Bible* writes:

“The reason why I rejoice in the reception of what you have sent to me, is not that I am covetous... as grateful as he was for the favor which he had received, his chief interest in it arose from the fact that it would contribute ultimately to their own good...”

“To your account - A phrase taken from commercial dealings. The apostle wished that it might be set down to their credit. He desired that when they came to appear before God, they might reap the benefit of all the acts of kindness which they had shown him.”

The Bible mentions also in other places that an *accounting* will take place when all of us appear before the judgment seat of Christ (compare Matthew 18:23–27; 25:19; Romans 14:12). Even though our salvation is a gift from God, our reward will be based on how well we did in this life. Our conduct will determine the nature of our reward that will be announced when Christ returns. For more information, please read our free booklet, “*The Gospel of the Kingdom of God.*”

## Philippians 4:18–20:

“(Verse 18) Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God. (Verse 19) And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. (Verse 20) Now to our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.”

Paul continues to tell the Philippians that through Epaphroditus, he has received enough from them for his personal needs. At the same time, he makes clear again that their gift was a sweet-smelling aroma to God (compare Ephesians 5:2); that it was a sacrifice that was well pleasing and acceptable to God (compare Hebrews 13:16; 1 Peter 2:5).

*Barnes’ Notes on the Bible* explains:

“He regarded it as an offering which they had made to God himself; and he was persuaded that he would regard it as acceptable to him. They had doubtless made the offering, not merely from personal friendship for Paul, but because he was a minister of Christ... The word ‘odor’ [“aroma” in the *New King James Bible*] refers properly to the pleasant fragrance produced in the temple by the burning of incense... The whole language here is taken from an act of worship; and the apostle regarded what he had received from the Philippians as in fact a thank-offering to God...”

The commentary of *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown* adds:

“The figure is drawn from the sweet-smelling incense which was burnt along with the sacrifices; their gift being in faith was not so much to Paul, as to God [Matthew 25:40], before whom it ‘came up for a memorial’ [Acts 10:4], sweet-smelling in God’s presence [Genesis 8:21; Revelation 8:3–4].”

Paul proceeds to state in Philippians 4:19 that God will supply their need as they have supplied the need of others, in this case, Paul. The *People’s New Testament* puts it quite succinctly: “My God shall supply all your need. Since you do not forget the needs of his servants, he will not forget yours.”

But Paul says even more than this. He emphasizes that God will do so “according to His riches in glory” (compare Ephesians 3:16). God

will supply all their needs in a most glorious manner, according to His unlimited riches, or with abundant fullness. As He owns everything, He can give to all whatever He deems necessary.

God will do so “by Christ Jesus,” or, as the *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown* commentary clarifies, He will do so “by virtue of your being ‘IN’ (so Greek, not ‘by’) Christ Jesus.”

Another meaning is that God will give us our needs by placing us in glory—showing and proving that God will never leave us or forsake us. This further understanding makes sense in light of Paul’s statements in the following verse (Philippians 4:20), that all glory belongs to God the Father forever and ever.

God is in the process of glorifying true Christians. It is their potential to inherit God’s glory. We must always remember that it is *God* who does this, because of grace, which is a free gift. Paul ends his letter to the Romans in a similar way when he says in Romans 16:27: “... to God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen.”

And so, in reminding us where glory comes from, we are to recognize in thankful prayer that “Yours is the glory” and appreciate the fact that God is our loving Father who wants to share His glorious gifts with us.

The *Matthew Henry’s Whole Bible Commentary* states:

“We must ascribe glory to God as [our] Father, the glory of his own excellence and of all his mercy unto us. We must thankfully own the receipt of all from him, and give the praise of all to him. And our praise must be constant and perpetual; it must be glory for ever and ever.”

### **Philippians 4:21–23:**

“(Verse 21) Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren who are with me greet you. (Verse 22) All the saints greet you, but especially those who are of Caesar’s household. (Verse 23) The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.”

Paul concludes his letter by emphasizing that every converted Christian—every person “in Christ”—is a saint. A saint means one who is sanctified or set aside for a holy purpose. Throughout his letter to the Philippians, Paul explains what that purpose is and how we are to behave in this life in order to be worthy of it.

He also mentions that the brethren who were with him greet the

Philippians as well. The brethren seem to describe in this case, those fellow laborers who were in Rome.

*Gill's Exposition of the Bible* says that the brethren were "Timothy... and Epaphras, Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, and Lucas... he makes no mention of Peter anywhere, when he writes from Rome or to it, which shows he was not there then, or a bishop of that place."

Paul continues in verse 22 that all the saints greet the Philippians, referring to all the saints in Rome, and he sends special greetings from the saints who are of Caesar's household.

*Clarke's Commentary on the Bible* states:

"Nero was at this time emperor of Rome... yet in his family there were Christians: but whether this relates to the members of the imperial family, or to guards, or courtiers, or to servants, we cannot tell. If even some of his slaves were converted to Christianity, it would be sufficiently marvelous... That the Empress Poppaea may have been favourably inclined to Christianity is possible; for Josephus relates of her [that she] was a worshipper of the true God; it is not likely, therefore, that she threw any hinderances in the way of her servants who might wish to embrace the Christian faith..."

Paul concludes in verse 23 with these powerful words: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen." Paul uses almost the same words in Romans 16:20, 24, and in 2 Thessalonians 3:18, and he also uses a very similar expression in Galatians 6:18.

Paul leaves us with a very useful and important reminder that it is only because of God the Father's and Jesus Christ's grace—special favor or unmerited pardon—that we have been called out of this world to inherit eternal life and to become born again members in the very Family of God.

In all his trials, Paul knew that Jesus Christ was both with him and in him, and that Christ helped him to continue his fight. He encouraged the Philippians to believe and to do likewise, and God, through the timeless pages of His Word, tells those of us today that He will complete the good work which He had begun in us—IF we allow Him to do so (Philippians 1:6).

# Conclusion

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Paul's letter to the Philippians is an intense doctrinal work on the nature and love of God the Father and Jesus Christ, and our potential to become like them. It is also a moving testimony of friendship, appreciation, helpfulness and thankfulness between church members from diverse backgrounds.

We began our in-depth study of Paul's letter by discussing the background as well as the concepts of "saints," "bishops and deacons," the nature of God, and the gospel of the Kingdom of God. We addressed the reasons for Paul's confidence that the Philippians would "make" it into the kingdom, cautioning at the same time that we must examine ourselves and make certain that we do not become disqualified by our own actions, or lack thereof. We proceeded to explain the difference between swearing and affirming, and the fact that Christ lived in Paul, as He lives in every converted Christian today.

We also showed how Paul's circumstances—being a prisoner in Rome—led to the furtherance of the gospel; why he rejoiced when ministers preached with improper motives; what he meant when he spoke of his "departure" and when he said that for him "to live is Christ, and to die is gain"; and why living worthy of and suffering for the gospel is a proof of perdition to our adversaries.

We discussed how we can obtain unity in God's Church, which is only possible when we follow Christ's example of humility and love, who was in the form of and equal with God, but who emptied Himself and became a man to suffer and die for us so that we could become born-again members of the very Family of God.

We explained how to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling; how to become blameless and harmless children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation; and how to shine as lights in the world.

We discussed in great detail the need for us to develop righteous character, which is an extremely important godly mandate, and we

showed that Timothy and Epaphroditus are glowing examples in that regard.

We also showed that Paul warned true church members not to follow those of ungodly character, those who had confidence in the flesh and who worshipped their own belly. Paul called them dogs, evil workers and the mutilation. By contrast, even though Paul might have had every reason—strictly from a carnal standpoint—to be proud of his heritage, ethnic background, upbringing and education, he considered all of it worthless, so that he would attain the resurrection from the dead.

We explained that Christians are to be content with the things they have, but since many confuse contentment with complacency, we emphasized that we must not neglect to use the blessings that we have been given, because if we do, we will lose them.

We addressed the need for Christian giving and the accompanying blessing in this life and in the life to come; and we concluded with a reminder that God will always be with us, as long as we are willing to let Him rule our lives.

There is so much more that Paul addresses in his letter to the Philippians, and truly, his timeless writing is an inspired work of godly wisdom and instruction in doctrine and Christian living, worthy to be studied over and over again.

As you do, with the help of this booklet, remember to thank God for His unspeakable gifts of knowledge and understanding; His priceless gifts of repentance, faith, forgiveness, justification and righteousness; His marvelous gift of His Holy Spirit and its fruit of love, peace, contentment and other godly character traits; and His undeserved and treasurable gift of your future salvation and eternal life in the Kingdom of God, to be revealed within a very short time.







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**United States**

Church of the Eternal God  
PO Box 270519  
San Diego, CA 92198  
[www.eternalgod.org](http://www.eternalgod.org)

**Canada**

Church of God, ACF  
Box 1480  
Summerland B.C. V0H 1Z0  
[www.churchofgodacf.ca](http://www.churchofgodacf.ca)

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