

# The Books of Philippians

An Outlined Study

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## The Book of Philippians

### Philippians 1

Paul, during his imprisonment in Rome, wrote four letters or epistles. They are Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon. Those four books, in that order, will serve as the continuation of the study of the Book of Acts.

This congregation at Philippi was founded by Paul and his traveling companions (Luke, Timothy and Silas) as they answered the “Macedonian call” (Acts 16:9, 10). Through the providence of God, Paul was the ideal apostle to cross over the Aegean Sea and preach the gospel on European soil for the first time. The evangelism started with Lydia and her household, quickly spreading to the Philippian jailer and his family.

This is a letter of rejoicing. Paul uses joy or rejoice some 16 times in 104 verses. Some have referred to Philippians as Paul’s love letter. It is full of joy. That fact is magnified when we remember he wrote this letter while incarcerated in Rome for nothing more than preaching the gospel.

The city of Philippi was a city of “firsts.” As was mentioned, it was the first recorded time the gospel was presented on European soil; the first time the words, “what must I do to be saved” were expressed; the first time conflict occurred between Christians and heathens; the first time preachers were jailed outside of Jewish jurisdiction and, in addition to these firsts, the first fruits in Europe were women in Philippi.

From the account in Acts we know Paul went to the riverside outside the city, which was used as a place of prayer on the Sabbath by some Jewish women, and taught them the New Testament will of God. These women displayed an abundant desire to please Jehovah by worshipping the best they could despite not having men to take the lead. As long as Paul could do so, in keeping with the Lord’s will, he always went to the Jews first, before teaching the Gentiles (Acts 13:44-47). Lydia and her household were immediately baptized for the remission of their sins (Acts 16:12-15).

The congregation at Philippi was very close to and often supported the apostle’s efforts. Near the end of this letter Paul mentions their continuing desire to subsidize him, “Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity” (Phil 4:15, 16).

#### I. Paul’s greeting (1, 2).

- A. Paul sends greetings from himself and Timotheus (Timothy, NKJ) who would have been with Paul on both of his visits to this city (cf Acts 16:1-4; 20:4-6).<sup>1</sup> Note: This is one of the few times Paul does not begin a letter by establishing or defending his apostleship (in 9 of 13 letters he does).
1. Paul describes them as “servants,” which means *a slave, either literally or figuratively*.<sup>2</sup> Both of these great men had put themselves into voluntary subjection or subservience to Christ’s wishes.
  2. The letter is addressed, first of all, “to all the saints,” *or the separation of the believer from evil things and ways*.<sup>3</sup>
  3. In addition to all the saints, the bishops and deacons are addressed.
    - a. The bishops (overseers) comes from the Greek work for superintendent. It is a word that is used in the plural, as God intended.  
Note: “An overseer, a man charged with the duty of seeing that things to be done by others are done rightly, a curator, guardian or superintendent”.<sup>4</sup>
    - b. Deacons served under the bishops, the word means servant, and is most often translated as “minister” (cf Col 1:7, 23, 25; 4:7).
- B. Grace (vs 2) is asked by Paul for them. Grace is simply favor not deserved (cf Titus 2:11, 12).
1. Grace alone will not save us anymore than faith alone will (cf James 2:17, 24).
  2. Scriptural peace only comes through obedience to Jesus Christ (cf 2 Thess 3:16).  
Note: Grace and peace often occur together in the New Testament. In every passage (except Rom 16:20, where they occur in two different sentences) grace always precedes peace, e.g., Rom 1:7; 1 Cor 1:3; Gal 1:3, etc.
- II. Paul’s thankfulness and friendship of the Philippians (3-8).
- A. Proper thanks for our brethren is offered to God (cf Rom 1:8, 9; 1 Cor 1:4).
1. We thank God for those who mean so much to us. Those who edify and make us better Christians and better people (cf 1 Thess 1:2; 2 Thess 1:3).
  2. The word “remembrance” is often translated as *mention* (Rom 1:9; Eph 1:16, etc.), but here it means his recollection of them <sup>5</sup> (cf 2 Tim 1:3).
    - a. As humans were are continually erecting monuments so we will remember, e.g., Washington Memorial, Lincoln Memorial, Vietnam Veterans Wall.
    - b. God, in His infinite wisdom, gave us a weekly reminder of His Son’s sacrifice, lest we forget the cost of our redemption (cf Rom 8:32).

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<sup>1</sup> David Boren references four salient points in the 1<sup>st</sup> 2 verses: The Slaves, Paul and Silas; The Saints, those in Philippi; The Shepherds and Special Servants, Elders and deacons; The Salutation. A Study in Philippians, page 1.

<sup>2</sup> Strong’s

<sup>3</sup> Vine’s

<sup>4</sup> Thayer

<sup>5</sup> It has been said that, “God has given us memory so that we might have roses in December.” Paul’s fond memory.

3. In a setting that would be far less than joyous (confinement in Rome) Paul's prayers and supplications for the brethren at Philippi caused him joy (cf Phil 2:2; 4:1).
  4. The word "fellowship" (vs 5) has a stronger meaning than what we use in our modern world. We often think of fellowship as a meal or maybe visiting for a few minutes.
    - a. Strong's definition of the word means partnership with a secondary definition of participation (same word used in Acts 2:42).
    - b. It has also been defined as, "A relationship between individuals which involves a common interest and a mutual, active participation in that interest and in each other."<sup>6</sup>
    - c. It is the same word translated "contribution" in Rom 15:26 and "distribution" (sharing, NKJ) in 2 Cor 9:13.
    - d. The context probably refers to the efforts the Philippians were making in spreading the gospel (see vs 7).
  5. The confidence that Paul had in the Philippians was based on what "he" had begun in them. The "he" is probably a reference to God, working through Christ by the words Paul shared with them (cf 2 Thess 2:13, 14).
    - a. This, by necessity, requires that those in fellowship are one in Christ (cf 1 Cor 1:9; 1 Jn 1:3, 6, 7).  
 Note: A person cannot believe a lie, obey a lie, practice a lie and then expect to be right in God's sight or in fellowship with those who believe, obey and practice the truth.
    - b. Paul fully expected the Philippians to continue spreading the gospel "until the day of Jesus Christ," until the Second Coming (cf 2 Pet 3:10).
    - c. The words "will perform" (will complete, NKJ) are from a single Greek word which means *to finish*<sup>7</sup> (cf 2 Cor 8:6).
    - d. Nothing in this life (short of death or His return) should keep the faithful Christian from accomplishing God's will (cf Matt 28:19, 20; Mark 16:15).
- B. Paul's great affection for these brethren is seen in verses 7 and 8.
1. This is the second time he has used "you all" in the opening sentences (vs 5). Not just a closeness to the congregation in general, but an affection for the people individually.
  2. The apostle was thankful upon any remembrance of the Philippians for their being "partakers," a word that means *participants* or *sharers*, in his bonds and in the defense of the gospel (cf Eph 6:20; Col 4:18).
    - a. Some have said that the gospel does not need to be defended. This inspired apostle did not know that, the Holy Ghost did not know that (cf Jude 3).
    - b. The gospel will always need to be defended against false teaching and false teachers (cf 2 Tim 1:13; see page 6, this outline, D, 2).

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<sup>6</sup> Vincent

<sup>7</sup> Strong's

- c. Paul's mention of "confirmation" may be a reference to the miracles they witnessed in the city on his first visit, i.e., the spirit possessed woman and the miraculous earthquake that freed them from prison (cf Acts 16:16-18, 26). These are things they had seen and would share.
  - d. God is called to be Paul's "record" (witness, NKJ) of the tender affection (bowels) he had toward the Philippians.
- III. Paul's desire for the future of the Philippians (9-11).
- A. Paul was thankful for their past and prayed that their future would abound "yet more and more" (cf 1 Thess 4:9, 10).
    - 1. The church, in any age, needs to abound more in love (cf 2 Cor 8:7; 1 Pet 1:22).
    - 2. Two areas the apostle mentions for growth are:
      - a. Knowledge (cf Hos 4:6; 2 Pet 3:18).
      - b. In all judgment (cf Rom 1:32).
      - c. In them, as in us, there is always room for improvement.
  - B. Increased knowledge and judgment would allow them to "approve," which means *to test*<sup>8</sup> or *an approval that comes from examination*<sup>9</sup> "that are excellent."
 

Note: Augmenting our knowledge and judgment will help us to see clearly the difference between right and wrong, which is what the Greek word translated "that are excellent" means.

    - 1. A testing, an examining, an approving is necessary in everything we are taught in religious matters, and doubly important in everything we accept to follow in faith (cf 1 Thess 5:21).
    - 2. The modern day church has failed in this warning, we have far too little testing and examining of the doctrines we practice or the messages we hear (cf 1 Jn 4:1; Rev 2:2).
      - a. In light of proper testing and full examination of teachings they would find themselves "sincere," which has a literal meaning of holding up to the light of the sun to examine for flaws.<sup>10</sup>

Note: In ancient times wax would be used to cover flaws or cracks in marble. The word "sincere" literally means *without wax*.
      - b. This examination was not a temporary or part-time testing. It was to be continued until "the day of Christ" (cf 2 Pet 3:10).
    - 3. If we use our enhanced understanding it will lead to "being filled with the fruits of righteousness" (vs 11).
      - a. Similar to the "fruit of the Spirit" (cf Gal 5:22, 23).
      - b. Righteousness is right living. Paul has mentioned several characteristics in this section which would lead them/us to be more righteous (cf James 3:17, 18).

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<sup>8</sup> Strong's

<sup>9</sup> Harrell

<sup>10</sup> Matthew Poole's Commentary

- c. Paul ends this section with the words, “unto the glory and praise of God.” We are to glorify God through the church Christ died to establish (cf Eph 3:21).
  - d. The church is a divine institution established to glorify God. Membership in that blood-bought organization is one of the greatest blessings on earth (cf Acts 20:28).
  - e. To fail to glorify God in the church would be a detriment to our own souls.
- IV. The furtherance of the gospel (12-18).
- A. Paul’s misfortune (his confinement in Rome) was not unfortuitous (12, 13).
- 1. In an effort to remove any anxiety that might be in the minds of the brethren at Philippi, Paul assures them that the events of his detainment in Rome had, by divine providence, worked to the furthering of the gospel (cf 2 Tim 2:9).
  - 2. The Bible reveals a myriad of mighty examples of divine providence, e.g., Joseph being sold into slavery, yet it was the Lord paving the way for Jacob’s family to prosper in Egypt (Gen 50:19-21); Peter and John being thrown into prison, but emerging from that incarceration to be even bolder (Acts 4:3, 13, 19, 20); even the severe persecution of Saul on the early church caused the greater advancement of the gospel (Acts 8:1, 4).
- Note: This would also be true of his time in Caesarea before Felix and Festus.
- a. The brethren may have feared the worst concerning Paul’s living condition in Rome. He was trying to alleviate their concerns (cf Eph 3:13; 6:21).
  - b. He tells them that because of his arrest the gospel had gone into all the palace (palace guard, NKJ).
- Note: The word “palace” (praetorium)<sup>11</sup> is used seven other times in the New Testament, and always refers to a place, not to people (Matt 27:27; Mk 15:16; Jn 18:28 [twice], 33; 19:9; Acts 23:35). This probably denotes the gospel going throughout Caesar’s household (cf Phil 4:22).
- c. If “palace” means Caesar’s household (including the whole edifice and camp)<sup>12</sup> then “all other *places*” would greatly expand the happy influence of the gospel in Rome.
  - d. In other words, as Paul wrote to Philippi he was saying, “don’t worry about me or the gospel.”
- B. Paul’s bravery, courage and success was contagious (14).
- 1. The people at Philippi had witnessed Paul’s boldness firsthand (cf 1 Thess 1:5; 2:2).
  - 2. This positive influence was so great that “many” (most, NKJ) were much more bold to speak the truth of the gospel without fear (cf Eph 6:19, 20).
    - a. “Much more” is to a greater degree.
    - b. “Without fear” is to be at ease with speaking the truth.

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<sup>11</sup> Vine’s, Vol 3, page 155

<sup>12</sup> Strong’s

3. The stronger we become individually in the proclamation of the truth the stronger we become as a church.
  4. We need an epidemic of boldness in the modern church (cf Acts 4:29; 13:46; 2 Cor 7:4)!
- C. Some brethren had improper motives for preaching (15, 16).
1. These brethren were not preaching “another gospel” (Gal 1:6), neither were they trying to lead brethren back into the Old Testament law (Acts 15:1, 5).
  2. There was nothing wrong with the doctrine they taught, otherwise Paul would not have said, “I therein do rejoice” (vs 18).
    - a. It appears that their problem was with Paul, for some unspecified reason.
    - b. He does mention “envy and strife” as their motivation.
      - 1). “Envy” means *jealousy* or *spite* (cf Matt 27:18; James 4:5, 6).
      - 2). “Strife” means *selfish rivalry* or *quarreling* (same word used in 2 Cor 12:20 translated “debates” and in Titus 3:9 translated “contentions”).
    - c. “Contention” (selfish ambition, NKJ) is a factor added in Verse 16.  
Note: Some translations reverse the order of verses 16 and 17.
    - d. This was done “to add affliction to my bonds.”  
Note: Whatever the motives behind the envy, strife and contention Paul was not the last gospel preacher to suffer hardship and ill will from brethren. He did not allow the ill will of some people to deter him from his divinely appointed task (cf Acts 9:15).
      - 1). How they intended “to add affliction to my bonds” is unknown, but it is general thought that they would strive to make his incarceration more difficult.
      - 2). According to Vincent’s Word Studies it means *to waken or stir up affliction. The phrase is striking in the light of the original meaning, namely; pressure. They would make his bonds more heavily and gall him.*
  3. It is possible, even today, for some to preach with improper motives. If souls are being saved then the power of God’s word is working (cf 2 Tim 1:8).
  4. Thankfully, the power of the gospel does not depend primarily on the character of the proclaimer (cf Isa 55:11).
  5. Jonah would be a good example of a misguided and unmotivated preacher presenting a saving message to sinners (cf Jonah 3:10; 4:1).
- D. Paul rejoices in the preaching of the gospel (17, 18).
1. He begins Verse 17 with the converse, some were preaching out of love. Possibly a love for Paul as well as a love for Christ.
  2. Paul then declares, “I am set (appointed, NKJ) for the defence of the gospel.”  
Note: Anytime a person tries to alter, eliminate or circumvent the gospel it needs champions to defend it. Wherever liberalism or antism exists there is a need to defend the gospel (cf Gal 1:8; see page 3, this outline, B, 2).



3. “The only antidote for evil is good, and the only antidote for error is truth... Bearing witness to the truth in this error-ridden world is a business of strenuous belligerency: not of ‘dignified silence’ or ‘masterly inactivity’.”<sup>13</sup>
    - a. Most of the brethren knew that Paul was not sent to Rome because he was evil, but rather because he was “set for the defence of the gospel” (cf Acts 22:1; 26:1, 2).
    - b. The knowledge of the gospel being spread, no matter the motivation, caused Paul to rejoice.
    - c. Let every faithful servant of the risen Christ prepare themselves to be set for the defense of the gospel (cf 1 Pet 3:15).
- V. “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (19-26).
- A. Paul rejoiced at the preaching of the gospel because it added to his feeling of safety. The Jews had portrayed him as an enemy of Rome, but now they knew this was not the case.
1. The word “salvation” (deliverance, NKJ) does not refer to his eternal salvation, Paul was already saved (Acts 22:16). It is the same word used in Acts 27:34, where it is translated “health” (survival, NKJ).
  2. This deliverance would be accomplished through the prayers of the saints and the help of the Spirit.
    - a. Paul coveted and depended on the prayers of the brethren (cf 2 Cor 1:11).
    - b. It appears he expected the Spirit to help him in all the trials he faced (cf Gal 4:6).  
 Note: It is possible that the “supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ” is not a reference to the Holy Spirit, but rather to the kind of spirit Jesus had that allowed Him to endure the trials and problems while on earth. Paul was baptized with the Holy Ghost well before his imprisonment (cf Acts 19:6; 2 Tim 1:6). What additional gift could he expect?
    - c. “Shall turn to my salvation” (vs 19) solidifies the fact that Christians are saved in Christ, but must maintain their position before God so we “shall be saved” (Matt 10:22).
  3. The determination of this incarcerated saint is expressed in his magnification of Christ, through his body, even in that situation (cf Rom 6:13; 1 Cor 6:20).
    - a. “Earnest expectation” comes from a single word which means *intense anticipation*, which when coupled with hope would be enough to keep him from being ashamed in Rome (cf 1 Tim 6:6).
    - b. He was resolved to magnify Christ in his body, which probably means by his actions and conduct in a detrimental environment (cf 1 Pet 4:16).
    - c. “Whether it be by life, or by death” shows his undaunted persistence in boldness without regard for consequences (cf 2 Cor 2:14-16).
  4. No matter what the future would bring to Paul, life or death, it was going to be “gain” (cf Rev 14:13).

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<sup>13</sup> B.J. Radford’s introduction to [Jesus As A Controversialist](#) by Nathaniel S. Haynes.

- a. “To die is gain” is not the act of dying, but rather the state after death. The reaping of the reward for a faithful life (cf Rom 8:35, 36).
    - b. The calm tranquility that Paul faced death with should give us the mettle to face our own earthly demise with the hope of better things to come (cf Ecc 7:1; 2 Cor 5:1).
  - 5. Paul states he is “in a strait betwixt two” (hard-pressed, NKJ) indicating the intense struggle in his mind, i.e., which is better, life or death?
    - a. Getting out of this world and all the problems associated with it is “far better” (cf Ps 73: 24-26).
    - b. Being a teacher, helper, defender and example to the Philippians was needful for them. Hence, his hard-pressed position.
    - c. His statement to the Ephesian elders applies here; “...after my departure grievous wolves shall enter in among you...” (Acts 20:29).
  - B. His own desire notwithstanding, Paul felt confident he would remain in the flesh (cf Phil 2:24).
    - 1. There was a double benefit for Paul remaining in the flesh; their “furtherance” (advancement or progress) and their “joy of faith” (vs 25).
    - 2. His abiding and continuing (living in the flesh) would further their faith.
    - 3. Verse 26 ends with Paul making plans to see them again. Whether this is a personal desire or prophetic utterance, this statement was sure to boost the Philippians’ morale (cf Rom 1:11, 12).
- VI. Living a life worthy of the gospel (27-30).
  - A. Paul stresses that the manner of their Christian lives be expressed in three areas:
    - 1. That their Christian life be observable.
      - a. That they live in such a manner that others will be talking about them (cf Eph 1:15; Col 1:4).
      - b. People are going to talk about us. Let’s give them something good to talk about (cf 1 Thess 3:6; 3 Jn 3).
    - 2. That it is lived in unity.
      - a. The spirit of contention and disunity is not the mind of Christ.
      - b. Compromising the truth is never grounds for unity. Paul requires them to have unity in standing fast (cf 1 Cor 15:58; 16:13).
      - c. Union is not unity (cf Eph 4:3).
    - 3. That it be done in the faith of the gospel.
      - a. Christians must walk in faith.
        - Note: We have one book in the New Testament on conversion (Acts) and twenty-one books on how the Christian needs to live (Romans-Jude). This is not by accident!
      - b. This effort of living in an acceptable fashion is made easier when we strive to do it together (cf Col 2:19; 1 Thess 5:11).
  - B. The Christians at Philippi were not to be terrified by their adversaries (vs 28). The word “terrified” refers to a frightened horse who runs off wildly.

1. We are not told, specifically, whom the adversaries were, but it is possible they may have been of the same Gentile heathens that had Paul and Silas beaten and imprisoned while at Philippi (cf Acts 16:19-24).
2. Verse 30 reveals that they were familiar with his suffering, and had heard of his suffering in Rome (Cf 1 Thess 2:2).
  - a. The word “conflict” means *struggle, fight, and opposition*.
  - b. “There is a great fellowship of suffering, which reaches vertically to share in Christ’s agony, and horizontally to include all believers.”<sup>14</sup>
3. Paul has already said, “...there are many adversaries” (1 Cor 16:9). Satan is certainly our main adversary, but he cannot work on us directly, i.e., supernaturally.
  - a. But, he can and does use such means as:
    1. False teachers (cf 2 Peter 2:1).
    2. False philosophies (cf Col 2:8).
    3. Worldly friends (cf Prov 13:20).
    4. Various physical and /or mental illnesses.
    5. Even members of our own homes (cf Matt 10:36).
  - b. “Those who envision a following of Christ that has no hardship, creates no enemies and brings no pain, are thinking of something other than the life the gospel demands.”<sup>15</sup>
  - c. Satan strives to place fear in the hearts of faithful Christians (cf Matt 10:28; Rev 21:8).
  - d. While in confinement in Rome, Paul is offering encouragement to the Philippians to faithfully endure conflict and opposition.

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<sup>14</sup> Harrell, page 82

<sup>15</sup> Bill Jackson, The Book of Philippians, page 117

## Philippians 2

### Work out your own salvation

- I. Christlikeness demonstrated through unity and humility in the Philippians (1-4).
- A. The word “if” occurs four times in the first verse of this chapter. It is not an expression of doubt, but an appeal to the very things Paul considered most certain in the Christian’s life.
- Note: The same use of the word “if” is found in Matt 4:3. The devil knew exactly who Jesus of Nazareth was. The meaning is not, “If thou be the Son of God...” but rather, ‘Since thou art the Son of God...’ The four “ifs” in Verse 1 are not an impugnation, but an expression of acquired characteristics.
1. “If there be therefore any consolation in Christ,”
    - a. “Consolation” is translated as exhortation in some places (1 Thess 2:3; 1 Tim 4:13, etc.), and some translations use the word encouragement.
    - b. “I am now persecuted and afflicted. In my trials it will give me the highest joy to learn that you act as become Christians.”<sup>16</sup>
    - c. This consolation was the prophetic promise of the coming Messiah (cf Lk 2:25, which fulfills Isa 25:9).
    - d. Since there is no doubt of the encouragement we get from the risen Christ, it should motivate all Christians to greater service (cf 2 Cor 1:5, 6).
  2. “If any comfort of love,”
    - a. The definition of the Greek word translated “comfort” (vs 1) is closely related to the word *consolation*. It means the instrument as used by the agent <sup>17</sup> (cf Col 2:2; 1 Thess 4:18).
    - b. The example of Jesus’ love for His disciples and His willingness to give His life to purchase the church should prompt the church to emulate His love (cf Jn 15:10-12).
  3. “If any fellowship of the Spirit,”
    - a. “Fellowship” means “*that which is partaken of together*” (cf 2 Cor 13:14, same word).
    - b. This was a call for unity in the congregation (cf Eph 4:4).
    - c. No doubt, the Philippians were blessed with many gifts of the Spirit. Those differing gifts were all from the same Spirit (cf 1 Cor 12:4).
    - d. We, today, live in an age when those spiritual gifts are no longer available (1 Cor 13:10), but we can seek “the tie that binds” through the Spirit given word.
  4. “If any bowels and mercies,” (affection and mercy, NKJ)
    - a. “Brethren who share genuine affection and are able to fully sympathize with one another will inevitably find a way to be together, work together, build together and pull together.”<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Albert Barnes’ NT Commentary, page 1028.

<sup>17</sup> Vine’s, page 207, Vol 1

<sup>18</sup> Grady Miller, The Book of Philippians, page 138.

- b. The term “bowels” literally means the *inward parts* or *entrails* (cf Acts 1:18). It is used figuratively to mean the inner most affection between brethren (cf Phil 1:8; Phile 20).
- B. The Philippians were in a position to replete Paul’s joy by being “likeminded” (cf Jn 3:29; 1 Cor 1:10).
  - 1. Four innate attributes requested by Paul were like-mindedness, having the same love, being of one accord and having one mind.
  - 2. There is a possibility that the seeds of discord were sprouting in the congregation at Philippi (cf Phil 4:2).
  - 3. This seems to be a plea for unity within the body rather than a gathering of forces against a common enemy, as the last chapter ended.  
Note: Possibly similar to Romans 12:10. The word “preferring” means “to try and outdo one another in showing respect.”<sup>19</sup>
  - 4. A great deal of ethnicity existed in the church at Philippi, i.e.;
    - a. Lydia and her companions were Jews (Acts 16:13-15).
    - b. A slave girl (Acts 16:16).
    - c. A heathen jailer and his household (Acts 16:32, 33).
  - 5. The Philippians could not be motivated by “strife or vainglory” (selfish ambition and conceit, NKJ) if unity were to exist in that congregation (cf Rom 13:13; 1 Cor 3:3).
    - a. The spirit of contradiction and contention will not help the church of Christ (cf James 3:16).
    - b. Wishing for admiration for one’s self takes away the concept of giving all praise to God (cf Prov 13:10).
    - c. “...let each esteem other better than themselves” is not conceding moral or intellectual superiority to the other, it is the higher consideration of temporal dignity to enhance unity (cf Lk 18:14).
    - d. The mentality of “me and mine” is replaced by the far better “ours.” The meaning is for Christians not to look on their own things only.  
Note: The “agree to disagree” mentality of some in the brotherhood is destroyed in the next section Paul writes. Fellowship is based on followers having the same “mind” or mentality as Jesus of Nazareth. No one can have the mindset of Christ Jesus and ignore the teachings of scripture.

II. The mind of Christ in us (5-8).

- A. The word “mind” in Verse 5 is not referring to intellectual ability. It is a compound word that means we are to apply a Christ-like character, especially when dealing with our brethren (the context).

Note: Verse 5 should be thought of as a transitional verse between the four verses before it and the three verses that follow it. A “transition from exhortation to illustration.”<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Arndt-Gingrich Lexicon.

<sup>20</sup> Hawthorne, page 80

1. Paul uses the same Greek word (mind) twice in Rom 12:3 then, again, two more times in Rom 12:16 (the first four words of Col 3:2 are translated from this same compound word).
  2. Paul is stressing the example of Christ here, but what example are we to see from the context?
    - a. It is the example of self-denial and humility.  
 Note: This passage is often taken out of context to teach obedience. Obedience is essential, and certainly Jesus was obedient in all things as a human, but the text is not dealing with obedience. The Philippians were already Christians (cf Phil 1:3-5).
    - b. These Christ-like attributes (self-denial and humility) would strengthen the Philippians unity.
- B. Verses 6 through 8 may be the greatest passage in the New Testament for our understanding of the incarnation of Christ (also see Jn 1:1, 14; Heb 1:1-4).
1. Paul, through inspiration, is establishing the deity of Jesus of Nazareth (cf Isa 9:6; Jer 23:6; Matt 1:23).
  2. “Who, being in the form of God...” (vs 6) means that before His embodiment He was of the nature of God.
    - a. After His incarnation He was still God, but added to that nature the physical appearance of man (cf Jn 8:58; 10:30, 38).
    - b. He did not stop being God, He has always been God, but He did give up (temporarily) His previous glory (Jn 17:5).
    - c. William Barkley said, “He emptied Himself of His deity to take upon Himself His humanity.” That is wrong, and is false doctrine (cf Col 1:15).
  3. “...thought it not robbery to be equal with God.” means that He understood (for our sakes) that His deity (in the purely spiritual form) was not something He needed to hold on to.
    - a. Again, emphasizing His humility in being willing to give of Himself to help mankind.
    - b. He did not so highly regard His position as equals with the Father that He would rather hold on to that situation than to rescue us (cf 2 Cor 8:9).  
 Note: The Father was not the Father until there was a Son. God, as the Father, is not referred to as the Father in the Old Testament.
    - c. Some translations use the word “grasp” or “to grasp at,” which conveys the wrong thought. You do not grasp at something you already possess.  
 Note: The Jehovah’s Witnesses use this verse to teach that Jesus did not consider it proper to reach for, or grasp for, the nature of deity.
  4. Jesus, as God incarnate, now took three steps for all mankind:
    - a. He made Himself of no reputation.
      - 1). The words, “made...of no reputation” come from a single Greek word which means *to make empty*<sup>21</sup> and is used in Rom 4:14; 1 Cor 1:17, etc.

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<sup>21</sup> Strong’s

- 2). According to Barnes it is used when someone lays aside their rank and dignity in order to assume a more humble station in life (cf Matt 8:20; 17:25-27).
- b. He took upon Himself the form of a servant.
- 1). He took on the nature of a slave and served mankind as well as serving His purpose to the Father (cf Matt 12:18; 20:28)
  - 2). This is the significance of “mind” in Verse 5. The attitude of service and humility (cf Jn 13:5-9, 12-16).
  - 3). “In the form of God” in Verse 6 is exactly the same Greek word used in Verse 7 “the form of a servant.”
- c. He was made in the likeness of men.
- 1). He appeared on earth as a human child, conceived by the Holy Ghost, according to prophecy (cf Rom 1:2, 3; Gal 4:4).
  - 2). God created man, and now God walked among men as a man (cf Jn 1:3; Eph 3:9).
- Note: He became like us to help us, think like us and to be able to sympathize (have compassion) with us.
5. The word “fashion” (vs 8; appearance, NKJ) is a different word than “form” and means there was a contrast between what He was and what He appeared to be (cf Lk 9:29).
- a. He appeared to be totally human. He became hungry, thirsty and sleepy, just like we all do.
  - b. Many of the Renaissance paintings depict Him as having a halo. This entire concept is total fallacy.
6. His humbleness caused Him to be obedient unto death by the excruciating and accursed cross (cf Gal 3:13).
- a. He “made (Himself) of no reputation” to show us what God is like, and to show what men ought to be, servants of God and others.
  - b. There was no sacrifice too great for Him to make, no humility too painful for Him to endure, in order to secure for us the chance to escape the fires of hell.
- Note: Some might be willing to humble themselves even to the point of death, if the death would be glorious or honorable. But, the death of Jesus of Nazareth was shameful, painful and humiliating. The worst possible death imaginable, yet His humble persona prevailed.
- c. From the throne of God He descended all the way to the lowest rung of the ladder, the cross (cf Heb 12:2).
- Note: The form or type of death Jesus endured was a death the Romans reserved for slaves and thieves, and was considered a curse under Old Testament Law (cf Deut 21:22, 23; Gal 3:13).
- d. Jesus’ death was God’s ultimatum to mankind. We shall not escape punishment if we dismiss what God, in the form of Jesus of Nazareth, has done in His humiliation (cf Heb 5:9).

### III. The exalted Christ (9-11).

#### A. In His humility He was exalted (cf Acts 5:31; Heb 12:2).

1. He was given “a name” (the name, NKJ) which is “above every name.” What name? Which name? There are dozens of names and/or titles given to Jesus in scriptures. God, Lord, Word, Firstborn from the dead, Alpha and Omega, Savior, Redeemer, Lamb of God, Mediator, Prophet, King, etc.
2. The context may reveal the name referred to here is “Jesus” (vs 10).  
Note: I would urge caution in being too dogmatic about Jesus being the one and only name. In Verse 11 Paul uses both “Jesus Christ” and “Lord.”
  - a. His humiliation lifted Him to the highest, loftiest position in God’s mind (cf Heb 1:4).
  - b. Not only is Jesus the peacemaker between God and man, He is the only way that men can travel on the way back to God (cf Jn 14:6; 2 Cor 5:18, 19).
  - c. The principle of receiving a reward is exemplified in Jesus’ exaltation (cf Matt 10:41, 42; 16:27).
  - d. In His humiliation Jesus became victorious. He was/is a winner for Himself and for us (cf 2 Cor 2:14).

#### B. “Every knee should bow”, “every tongue should confess” the exalted name of Jesus “to the glory of God.”

1. We “should” do it now and honor Him, but if we chose not to do it now we will be compelled to do it at some future point (cf Rom 14:11).
2. The word “bow” (vs 10) means *to bend*,<sup>22</sup> as in worship (cf Eph 3:14).  
Note: The bowing of the knee is not literal. It illustrates the synecdoche of an appreciative attitude for His sacrifice.
3. “Things” (those, NKJ) in heaven, earth and under the earth possibly refer to the realms of celestial, terrestrial and hadean. All beings, whether human or spirit, should honor and revere Jesus for His humble commitment.  
Note: On Judgment Day there will be no atheists, agnostics or infidels, only those filled with the joy of His return and those filled with the horrid reality of chances squandered.

### IV. Shine as lights in the world (12-18).

Note: The word “wherefore” is used to draw a conclusion from the previous information given in the text.

#### A. These saints at Philippi had no real problems to mention: no divisions, no schisms, nothing to correct doctrinally. They had obeyed God’s will and were continuing to obey it as His servants.

1. To “work out your own salvation” means “to carry out to completion what is begun”<sup>23</sup> (cf 2 Pet 1:5-10).
  - a. The word translated “work out” is a compound word which means to *do work fully, or to finish*.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Strong’s

<sup>23</sup> Ellicott’s

<sup>24</sup> Strong’s



- b. Christians have work (toil) to do (cf Matt 11:28; Heb 6:10, 11).
  - c. By God's grace we have been saved, but not by grace alone (cf Rom 2:7; 1 Cor 15:58).
2. Paul modifies the working out of our own salvation with the words, "with fear and trembling" (cf Heb 12:28, 29).
    - a. Our souls are our most important possession.
    - b. We should demand the very best of ourselves for our own soul's sake.
    - c. Why fear and trembling? Because we are going to be dead a lot longer than we will be alive. (cf Ps 2:11; 119:120).
    - d. Paul used these two words together in two other places (2 Cor 7:15, Eph 6:5) and in all three places he is stressing the relationship Christians have with reference to continued obedience (cf 1 Cor 10:12).
  3. When decisions are made with our soul's eternal good as our focus it is God working in you (cf 2 Cor 3:5).
  4. Salvation is dependent on both the divine side and the human side fulfilling their respective responsibilities (cf Heb 13:21).
    - a. Noah (Gen 6:5ff).
    - b. Naaman (2 Kings 5:9ff).
    - c. The blind man at the pool of Siloam (Jn 9:7).
    - d. A sinner's salvation (Acts 22:16).
    - e. Faithful living (Col 1:29).
    - f. God works in us through His word. When we work the plan of God out in our lives we simply produce the works of the Spirit by our obedience (cf 2 Thess 1:11).
- B. Without murmurings and disputings (grumbling and doubting).
1. There is a right way and a wrong way to carry out God's will.
    - a. Complaining about fulfilling our duties will never please God. He will not accept coerced service. We are not conscripted into Christ's army, we volunteered to serve.
    - b. Murmurings is "an expression of dissatisfaction, grumbling, muttering in a low voice...it is the kind of grumbling action that promotes ill will instead of harmony and good will."<sup>25</sup>
    - c. Not only would the murmurings and disputings mar their own service to God, but it would influence, in a negative way, any who were observing them (cf Acts 6:1).
    - d. We have some in the brotherhood that seem to like to keep things stirred up. Arguing for the sake of arguing. God does not want that.  
Note: Efforts to keep the church pure and doctrinally sound would fall into another category. We need to always be ready to contend for purity.
    - e. According to the text this would include "all things" to be done without murmurings and disputings. According to Strong's the word "all" means *any, every, the whole* (cf 2 Tim 2:24).

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<sup>25</sup> Rogers and Rogers, page 452

2. The necessity to put off these harmful attributes is stated in Verse 15.
  - a. “That you may be blameless and harmless” (that you may become, NKJ) may be in counter distinction to “murmurings and disputings.”
  - b. “Blameless” means free from fault or from reason to accusation.
  - c. “Harmless” means unmixed or pure.  
 Note: The Greek words associated with these two words are basically synonymous, the distinction here may be between external and internal qualities.<sup>26</sup>
3. The qualities of “blameless and harmless” can and must be done in adverse conditions, i.e., “in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation” (generation, NKJ) (cf Acts 17:17; 1 Pet 2:12).
  - a. The darkness of our world makes the light of Christianity that much brighter (cf Matt 5:14-16).
  - b. “It is of very great importance always and everywhere to be without blemish; but when surrounded by people whose views of truth, whose ideas of life, and whose general course of conduct are always wrong, it is of importance beyond estimate to be rightminded and straightforward and clean.”<sup>27</sup>
  - c. Paul inserts, “the sons of God” to remind the readers that a child who loves their father will honor and obey that father. They will allow him to direct them (cf Eph 5:1).
  - d. “Crooked and perverse” are words, respectively, that mean to turn away from truth and to reach moral depravity (cf Deut 32:5).
  - e. We live in a nation that is becoming increasingly more crooked and perverse.
- C. This is a possibility, even in our sinful world, if we will hold forth (fast, NKJ) the word of life.
  1. It is true that God lights up the wicked world with the message of salvation.
  2. It is not enough for us to save ourselves, we must extend the effort to others.
  3. The church of Christ has a world-wide obligation to send and defend the message of salvation (cf Mk 16:15).
  4. However, the context seems to demand the use of holding fast rather than holding forth.  
 Note: Strong’s gives a definition of the Greek word translated “holding forth” as *to retain; to detain; to pay attention to*.
    - a. Paul is admonishing the Philippians to continue their Christ-like conduct in the difficult setting of 1<sup>st</sup> century Macedonia.
    - b. The obvious application is if they were expected to maintain, we are also expected to maintain (cf Phil 1:27).
    - c. Their continued faithfulness would cause joy in the apostle (cf 2 Cor 1:24; 1 Thess 2:19).

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<sup>26</sup> Harrell page 98

<sup>27</sup> J.W. Shepherd, David Lipscomb, Commentary on Philippians, page 188

5. We hold on by means of “the word of life” (cf Heb 4:12).
  - a. Paul compares preaching to running (vs 16; cf Gal 2:2).
  - b. There is and should be great effort in spreading the gospel (cf Gal 4:11).
- D. Paul then mentions himself as a sacrifice upon an altar (vs 17).
  1. If the sacrifice of his earthly life was necessary to make their faith and continued service acceptable to God, he would do just that.
  2. It is unclear if Paul is making reference to a pagan sacrifice (which most of the members in Philippi could related to) or a Jewish sacrifice (which he was very familiar with).
    - a. The KJV has “offering,” while the NKJ inserts the italicized words *as a drink offering*.
    - b. The Greek word means *to pour out as a libation*.<sup>28</sup> The only other time this word is used in the NT is in 2 Tim 4:6.
    - c. According to Ex 29:40, 41 a drink offering was ¼ part of a hin. A hin was approximately five quarts. That would make a drink offering about 40 ounces.<sup>29</sup>
    - d. It was an important part of Jewish worship, but was also used in heathen worship (cf Deut 32:38), so either could apply.
    - e. Regardless of which reference was in the mind of Paul, he was not afraid to go to the altar of sacrifice if it would mean their continued faithfulness (cf Phil 1:20).
  3. Paul urged the Philippians to rejoice with him (vs 18). We (Christians) know the remedy for sin, the blood of Jesus the Christ. A forgiven people should be a happy people. God’s people have reason to rejoice (cf Phil 3:1; 4:4).
- V. Timotheus (19-24).
  - A. Paul’s tender affection for Timothy is revealed on numerous occasions, e.g., “my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord” (1 Cor 4:17); “my own son in the faith” (1 Tim 1:2) and “my dearly beloved son” (2 Tim 1:2).
 

Note: Timothy was likely converted on Paul’s 1<sup>st</sup> evangelistic tour (cf Acts 14:20, 21), or possibly shortly thereafter. By the time Paul came back through the region on his 2<sup>nd</sup> tour (maybe three to six years later) Timothy was mature enough to get involved in spreading the gospel at Paul and Silas’ side. The saints at Philippi knew Timothy well. (cf Acts 16:1, 9-12).

    1. Since Paul was prevented from going to the brethren at Philippi first hand, he did the next best thing; he sent someone who had the same interest and concern for the people.
 

Note: This is not the only time this trusted associate was used in this fashion: Timothy was sent from Athens to Thessalonica (1 Thess 3:1, 2) and possibly from Ephesus to Macedonia, and then on to Corinth (1 Cor 16:5, 10).

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<sup>28</sup> Strong’s

<sup>29</sup> This measurement varies widely, depending on the source.

- a. Paul wanted to know their “state,” which comes from two Greek words that mean *the circumstance*. A literal translation would be *the things concerning you*.<sup>30</sup> (Same Greek word is used in Phil 1:27)
  - b. How best to find out? Send someone who was likeminded and cared for them as he did. Timothy’s motives would be genuine and pure (cf 1 Thess 2:8).
  - c. Paul could have sent anyone, but he wanted an intimate knowledge of their condition, so he sent someone who would know them on site, and they would know him.
  - d. The statement in Verse 21 makes me ponder just who is in Paul’s proximity as he writes this letter.<sup>31</sup> Maybe those who had no connection to the brethren at Philippi, or possibly those who attempted to serve God with a perfunctory attitude toward spiritual responsibilities.
2. The “proof of him” (proven character, NKJ) or, the evidence of his conduct.
    - a. “Proof” originally was associated with the idea of testing, and when the testing proved positive it was connected with character (cf Rom 5:3, 4). Note: The word comes from the idea of testing gold or silver coins to insure they are genuine.<sup>32</sup>
    - b. Like a son who has the same interests as his father (see this outline, V. A., page 17).
    - c. Paul is a wonderful example of an older preacher adding in the training of a younger preacher for more effective service.
    - d. Timothy is also a wonderful example of a younger preacher knowing his place and submitting to the leadership of Paul.
    - e. The child is not greater than the parent, the student is not greater than the teacher and one sent is not greater than the sender (cf Jn 13:16). Note: Timothy is the only person addressed as a “man of God” in the entire New Testament (cf 1 Tim 6:11). I believe it is an injustice to tell our young members that they are “the future” of the church. If old enough to be a Christian then they are the church. We should encourage activity.
  3. “How it will go with me” (vs 23) appears that something was still hanging in the balance concerning his Roman incarceration.
    - a. It is unclear what he was expecting, but possibly some news which would be pertinent to the brethren at Philippi.
    - b. The only two things which come to mind are either his release from confinement or condemnation by Caesar and death. The next verse (24) reveals his inner most desire.
- B. Paul has used the words “I hope” and “I trust,” possibly delineating his desires and the providence of God in his present situation.

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<sup>30</sup> Kenyon, Philippians, page 33

<sup>31</sup> Albert Barnes speculates that possibly Paul had asked others to go to Philippi and they had declined.

<sup>32</sup> Knight, page 329

1. We simply cannot know what he meant by using the word “shortly.” It is the same word that was used in Verse 19 concerning the dispatching of Timothy (also used in Lk 16:6, Gal 1:6, 1 Tim 5:22, etc.).
  2. The word “trust,” (vs 24) is often translated by various forms of the word *confidence* in the book of Philippians (cf Phil 1:6, 14, 25).
- VI. Epaphroditus (25-30).
- A. Paul now turns his attention to another co-laborer.
    1. Epaphroditus is not mentioned in any other book of the New Testament (he is mentioned twice in this book; here and 4:18).
    2. Epaphroditus was a Christian sent from Philippi to Rome.
      - a. He brought unknown gifts to Rome from the church of Christ in Philippi.
      - b. He was allowed to stay with Paul and assist the aging apostle during his confinement.
    3. For only being mentioned in two passages we know so much about this man. Paul gives a pentagon of attributes with respect to this man:
      - a. “My brother.”
        - 1) The common term used by inspiration to indicate the close relationship within the body (cf 1 Cor 7:15; James 2:15).
        - 2) The term “brother” implies having the same parents. All who are brethren are born of the same “spirit” (cf Jn 3:5; 1 Cor 6:11).
        - 3) We only have Jesus as our brother and God as our Father if we have been obedient to the New Testament instructions for salvation (cf Eph 3:14, 15).
      - b. “Companion in labor.”
        - 1) The meaning here is one who labors with another for a common cause. In this case, fellow workers in the truth (cf Col 1:7; 4:11).
        - 2) When we work together to expand the borders of the Son’s kingdom this phrase could apply to us (cf 1 Thess 3:2; Phile 24).
      - c. “Fellowsoldier.”
        - 1) This word means *co-campaigner*.<sup>33</sup>
        - 2) God wants faithful soldiers, willing to go to battle side by side.
        - 3) Our enemy has not changed; our armor has not changed; our manual has not changed; our Commander in Chief has not changed.
        - 4) Epaphroditus should be an example.
      - d. “Your messenger.”
        - 1) Trusted enough by the brethren at Philippi to take gifts to Paul in Rome; a journey of approximately 800 miles over land and sea.
        - 2) The word for “messenger” is the same word used in 2 Cor 8:23.
      - e. “Ministered to my wants.”
        - 1) Epaphroditus cared for Paul’s wants (needs, NKJ) at Rome (cf 2 Cor 11:8, 9).

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<sup>33</sup> Strong’s

- 2) It appears that the generosity of the church at Philippi kept Paul's situation in Rome from being a burden to other congregations.
  - 3) While Jesus walked among men He taught, "...whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister" (Matt 20:26).
- B. Epaphroditus had been sick and the brethren back home were concerned about his health.
1. He was troubled and felt sorrow because they would now be worried about his physical condition.
    - a. He was "full of heaviness" (distressed, NKJ). We can know the extent of his distress when we learn that the only other times this word is used is in connection to Jesus' suffering in the garden (cf Matt 26:37; Mk 14:33).
    - b. How sick was he? Verse 27 says, "...nigh unto death." We are given no information about his illness or how long it lasted.
  2. Two important side notes can be drawn from this passage:
    - a. Paul did not use his super-natural healing abilities to heal his dear friend because the power of the Holy Ghost was not for personal use (cf 1 Tim 5:23; 2 Tim 4:20).  
Note: Those super-natural powers had a two-fold purpose: to reveal God's will for mankind, and to confirm the message and/or the messenger.
    - b. The second insight is Paul could not have written this letter early in his confinement. Enough time had to pass that the church in Philippi learned of his needs, collected the "gift" and then dispatched Epaphroditus with it to Rome. The news of Epaphroditus' illness had time to travel back to Philippi and then the news traveled back to Rome that they were concerned.
    - c. "God had mercy on him..." and he recovered. His restored health avoided "sorrow upon sorrow."
  3. Paul sent Epaphroditus back to Philippi so the brethren would see their friend and be reassured.
    - a. "Easing the mind of the Philippians and imparting gladness of heart to them meant more to Paul than any personal service he might have been able derive by the continued attendance upon him of Epaphroditus."<sup>34</sup>
    - b. The words translated "the more carefully" (the more eagerly, NKJ) comes from a single Greek word that means *sooner than otherwise*.<sup>35</sup>
    - c. Joy was Paul's wish for the Philippians at the return of Epaphroditus.
  4. The Philippians had sent Epaphroditus to Rome to do a work. His return should be a moment of great gladness.
    - a. They were to hold him in esteem or honor (vs 29). The same word is translated as "precious" in 1 Pet 2:4, 6.
    - b. Epaphroditus had done for him what the people in Philippi could not do.

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<sup>34</sup> Hendriksen, page 143

<sup>35</sup> Strong's

- c. They could not physically assist him because of geography.
- d. They had done more for him than any other congregation (cf Phil 4:14-18).
- e. “Epaphroditus was their envoy to him, their way of telling him that they cared enough to send their very best.”<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Hawthorne, page 120

## Philippians 3

Press toward the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus

- I. Warnings about Judaizing teachers (1, 2).
  - A. Half way through this letter Paul uses the word “finally.” He will use it again in 4:8. It is simply used here to change from one subject to another (cf 1 Cor 7:29; 1 Thess 4:1).<sup>37</sup>
    1. “Rejoice” is the theme of the letter.
      - a. The right relationship with God will bring rejoicing.
      - b. It matters not our station in life or what privileges might be ours, if we are not right with God we will never have true rejoicing.  
Note: “To write the same thing to you” may indicate an unknown letter to these brethren. Or, it may be the reiteration of things taught while he was with them.
    2. He did not apologize for covering the same ground (cf Heb 5:12).
      - a. Truth always needs to be taught enough to be understood. This was the “safe” way to insure clear understanding.  
Note: Repetition is the time honored tool of educators.
      - b. Biblical examples about stating and then restating basic information are replete, e.g., 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles; Matt, Mark, Luke; Timothy and Titus... \* [see Appendix A, pages A and B].
  - B. A series of warnings were issued.
    1. Paul takes level aim at the false teachers of his day.
    2. In writing these things Paul says it “is not grievous” (is not tedious, NKJ) or, it is not tiresome, to repeat what will keep you safe (cf 2 Pet 1:12; 3:1).
    3. He then uses three descriptive terms; all pertaining to the same group of people:
      - a. “Beware of dogs”
        - 1) Not four legged dogs, but people who were behaving like dogs (cf Gal 5:15).<sup>38</sup>
        - 2) Dogs were generally thought of as unclean animals. They were scavengers in the cities and villages, often eating garbage and corpses (cf 1 Kgs 14:11; 21:19).
        - 3) This was a severe term of reproach, whether used figuratively or literally (cf Deut 23:18; Isa 56:10, 11). Jesus used it as a generalized reference to a woman from Canaan (cf Matt 15:24-27).
      - b. “Beware of evil workers” (evildoers or mischief-makers)
        - 1) Zeal (zealous workers) is important, but zeal must be properly controlled (cf Matt 23:15; Rom 10:2).

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<sup>37</sup> Some unknown person said that Paul was the first preacher to use the words “finally” to begin another 30 minutes of preaching.

<sup>38</sup> I once read that Paul used the term “dog” because: they were barking out false doctrine, hounding Paul from city to city, biting and devouring all they could, and like rabid dogs, their bite was poisonous and spiritually fatal.



- 2) To pretend that these energetic people were not destructive to the church, or to individuals, would not make them any less destructive.
- 3) No matter how likeable, jovial or well-known a false teacher is, they are still dangerous. Paul says they are “evil workers” (cf 2 Cor 11:13).
- c. “Beware of the concision” (mutilation, NKJ).
  - 1) The word “concision” literally means *to cut up*.<sup>39</sup>
  - 2) The word for circumcision is a different word in the original (vs 3). Paul substitutes that word for one that means mutilation.
  - 3) This is the reason it is generally thought that Paul is making reference to warnings about Judaizing teachers. Requiring the Gentile Christians to observe at least part of the Law of Moses (cf Gal 5:2, 3).
  - 4) These Judaizing teachers had serious problems with Paul’s apostleship and God-given authority (cf Acts 9:15; 22:21).
  - 5) Adding to the gospel (or taking away from it) will make the gospel null and void (cf Rev 22:18, 19).
- d. The same types of warnings Paul gave to the Philippian church should be given to churches today (cf Col 2:8; 2 Pet 3:17).
  - 1) Warnings can prevent problems (cf Titus 1:10).
  - 2) They need to be presented in simple enough language to be easily understood and applied.
  - 3) Let us always be alert to spiritual dangers and well-versed enough to recognize those dangers.

## II. The ineffectiveness of earthly privileges (3-6).

A. Paul says that true Christians are “the circumcision.” Not fleshly circumcision, but inwardly, spiritually circumcised (cf Col 2:11).

1. This is not a reference to national Israel, *per se*<sup>40</sup>, but an indicator of separation and dedication to God.
  - a. Abraham was separated from the people around him by circumcision hundreds of years before Israel became a nation (cf Gen 17:9-11).<sup>41</sup>
  - b. Paul uses “Jews” in several passages as a way of teaching Jewish Christians and those influenced by Judaizing teachers (cf Rom 2:28, 29).
  - c. Physical, literal Israel has been replaced (superseded) by spiritual Israel, i.e., Christians (cf Gal 6:15).
  - d. Those misguided people who believe in the false doctrine of premillennialism have a problem with the plain language that makes literal, national Israel inconsequential to His final plans.  
Note: Consider Israel’s role in God’s plans for our redemption from its conception:
    - 1) The nation of Israel formed an instrument to bring the Messiah into the

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<sup>39</sup> Thayer’s Lexicon

<sup>40</sup> Latin for *by itself*.

<sup>41</sup> According to Ussher’s biblically time line there were approximately 506 years between the promise to Abraham and the law given at Mt. Sinai. Dickson’s New Analytical Bible, pages 1452, 1453.

world. That has already happened.

- 2) Israel's position with God was conditional (Deut 28:1).
  - 3) There is no New Testament passage which speaks of the restoration of Israel as a nation.
  - 4) Many passages reveal a gloomy future of physical Israel: The nation would be cut down at the root (Matt 3:10); be left barren (Matt 21:19); be left desolate (Matt 23:38); be trodden down (Luke 21:24).
2. Having "no confidence in the flesh" is a direct reference to the Jews thinking that the act of circumcision gave them advantages and privileges with God (cf Matt 3:9).
- a. The mighty apostle will use himself as an example of spurious privileges in the flesh, as a Jew, over the next several verses.
  - b. The word translated "confidence" in verse 3 is the same word used in Heb 2:13 translated "*put my trust in.*"
  - c. Any law that man has devised, or any law the God has superseded, is not worthy of our trust (cf Eph 2:15; Col 2:14).
- B. Paul's personal pedigree (4-6).
1. The point he is making is that if anyone had a right to boast, based on human position, it would have been him.  
Note: In this abbreviated, personal autobiography, Paul uses the pronoun "I" fifteen times in verses 4-14.
  2. Circumcision held a tremendously important place in the minds of the Hebrews.  
Note: The rite of circumcision was first given to Abram (his name was changed to Abraham as a result of this covenant) as a visible sign of the covenant God made with him in Gen 17.
    - a. Having been circumcised on the 8<sup>th</sup> day would fortify his nationality. He was no proselyte Jew, he was born a Jew (cf Acts 22:3).
    - b. Even before his ability to follow the Law of Moses, he was in exact compliance with its teachings.
  3. "Of the stock of Israel" refers to Abraham's grandson and not the nation.
    - a. Jacob's name was changed to Israel after he wrestled with God/angel/man before his reunion with his brother (cf Gen 32:28).
    - b. This is why the nation that would spring forth from his descendants would be known as Israelites.
  4. Specifically, from "the tribe of Benjamin."
    - a. Jacob had twelve sons by two wives and two concubines.
    - b. His favorite wife was Rachel, who bore him Joseph and Benjamin (cf Gen 29:30; 30:24; 35:18).
    - c. Being from the tribe of Benjamin not only put Paul in the lineage of Israel's most honored wife, but the tribe of Benjamin was one of only two faithful tribes after the national division.

Note: Jeroboam took control of the ten northern tribes and established a reprobate nation. Only the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, under the leadership of Rehoboam remained faithful (cf 1 Kgs 12:21).

Note: This means that the tribe of Simeon probably had to relocate to the north after the nation was divided.

Note: The Jews considered Jerusalem to be the “holy city” (Neh 11:1; Matt 4:5; 27:53).

- d. It appears that Paul is claiming to be the best Jew from the best tribe Israel had to offer.

Note: The city of Jerusalem was inside the ancient tribal borders of Benjamin.

5. A “Hebrew of Hebrews” would emphasize his heritage. We might call this our family tree.
  - a. Abraham was the first person in the Bible to be called a “Hebrew” (Gen 14:13) and this passage in Philippians is the last passage that specifically mentions the Hebrews, as a nation.
  - b. This heritage would normally be a great source of pride.
6. In addition to all that lineage, he was also a Pharisee.
  - a. The Pharisees were an interesting sect. They came into existence between the books of Malachi and Matthew.
  - b. There is no biblical evidence of the origin or establishment of the Pharisees.

Note: The first mention of the sect is in Matt 3:7 as John was baptizing.
  - c. Historians say that the sect was born to resist the Jews accepting and adopting the Greek (or Roman) culture into their lives, possibly during the Babylonian captivity.
  - d. The strictest of the strict, but they went beyond that. They added traditions to the law (cf Mark 7:3, 5, 8, 9, 13; Acts 26:5).
7. He then illustrates his commitment to this sect by relating his zeal in persecuting any who might violate the Law of Moses (vs 6).
  - a. His zeal stemmed from his belief that he was right (cf Acts 26:9).
  - b. He considered Christianity false and evil. He was defending his Jewish heritage (cf Acts 22:4).
  - c. Paul lacked knowledge. Many who oppose pure, unadulterated Christianity today simply lack knowledge (cf Rom 10:2).

Note: Merely thinking something to be true, is dangerous. Many thought the Titanic unsinkable. Thinking you are right does not make you right.
8. He also uses the word “blameless,” which means *faultless* (the word does not mean sinless). He was so determined to follow the law that he became the envy of his peers.

III. All these advantages and privileges of his former life Paul now counted as loss<sup>42</sup> for Christ (7-11).

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<sup>42</sup> Things which he formally valued, Vine’s

- A. His heritage, education and strict conformity to the law had become a deterrent in accepting Jesus as Christ.
  - 1. Paul's actions had turned into crimes against the people. Sins he deeply regretted (cf Acts 22:4; 26:11).
  - 2. He considered himself to be the "chief" (1 Tim 1:15) of sinners because of his actions against Christ and His body.
    - a. In Christianity all Christians are equal:
      - 1). The same door of admittance, baptism; Mk 16:15.
      - 2). The same requirements for life, faithful living all our days; Matt 10:22.
      - 3). The same reward promised, heaven; Col 1:5.
    - b. Philemon and Onesimus are a wonderful New Testament example of this mind-set (cf Philemon 16, 17).
  - 3. This is made personal to Paul when he writes, "I have suffered the loss of all things" (vs 8).
    - a. When he left Judaism and becoming a Christian he may have become a disgrace to his family.
    - b. To the sect of the Pharisees he became a deserter.
    - c. To the Jews, in general, he became a traitor (cf Acts 9:22-24).
- B. Paul gave up something to obtain something greater, as is true in the life of every Christian (divinely illustrated in Matt 13:44-46).
  - 1. Those things in his life he once cherished are now considered as dung (rubbish, NKJ).  
 Note: Lightfoot says that the word "dung" refers to scraps of food or garbage thrown to the dogs, and may have a connection to verse 2.
  - 2. He learned not to trust in his own righteousness, or even the righteousness of the old, defunct law (cf Matt 16:24, 25).
  - 3. What any of us have given up to become Christians more than pales in comparison to what we have gained in Christ (cf Matt 16:26).
- C. The words "That I may know him" (vs 10) refer to the idea of full acquaintance with the nature, character, work, etc. of the Messiah (cf 2 Tim 1:12).
  - 1. We, today, cannot know Christ through our empirical senses. We have never seen Him, heard Him, touched Him, yet that does not take away from the fact that He is real.
    - a. You may have never been to Hawaii. How do you know it is real?
    - b. You may have trusted friends that have gone there and they bear witness to its existence. We might turn to authoritative information published about the island's existence.
  - 2. We can know, through the evidence of trusted source, all we need to know about Jesus as our Christ and God the Father (cf 1 Chron 28:9; Job 19:25).
  - 3. The end of Verse 10 leads us into Verse 11. "Conformable unto his death" means to be like Him, in agreement with Him (cf 2 Cor 4:10, 11).

- a. We even go so far as to reenact His death, burial and resurrection in baptism. We came up out of the watery grave in the likeness of His resurrection (cf Rom 6:3-5).
  - b. His agony in Gethsemane and His subsequent agony at Calvary were not an accident.
  - c. It lead the way to His glorious resurrection, just like our enduring the suffering of this world will open the door of the like resurrection for us some great day (cf 1 Pet 1:3).
- D. The “resurrection of the dead” (vs 11) substantiates Paul’s hope of being resurrected in the fashion Jesus was resurrected (cf Lk 20:36).
- 1. “If by any means” does not imply doubt. It is a strong statement of longing for and a great determination to obtain the same type of resurrection as Jesus.
  - 2. The empty tomb had to occur in one of three ways:
    - a. The body was removed by His enemies.
    - b. The body was moved by His disciples.
    - c. The body was raised by the power of God.
  - 3. The enemies of Jesus had the body right where they wanted it.
    - a. They had no intention in moving it or letting anyone else move it (cf Matt 27:62-66).
    - b. If they did move it they would have known where it was moved to and would have produced it.
  - 4. The disciples may have wanted to take possession of the body, but that was rendered impossible by the guards.
    - a. Guards are changed at regular intervals. Eliminating the possibility of the guards sleeping.
    - b. Falling asleep on guard duty is a serious offense. These guards were never charged or tried for an offense <sup>43</sup> (cf Matt 28:11-15).
    - c. At this point there was no desire or any reason for the disciples to take the body. They were still expecting an earthly ruler (cf Acts 1:6).
  - 5. The only possibility is the bodily resurrection, witnessed by hundreds of people (at least 516) (cf Mk 16:9-14; 1 Cor 15: 5-7).
  - 6. That resurrection was Paul’s hope. It is our hope, if we have been added to the Lord’s church through baptism (cf Eph 2:12, 13).
- IV. We must press on toward the mark of the high calling of God (12-16).
- A. Paul fully understood that as long as he was in the flesh there was a possibility that could fall short of his goal.
- 1. The mighty apostle is stating that he knows full well he has not yet won the prize (cf 1 Cor 9:24).
    - a. The word “perfect” (already completed, NKJ) means complete (cf Heb 5:9) and is translated as “are of full age” in Heb 5:14.

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<sup>43</sup> UCMJ Article 113, “Should a service member of the United States Armed forces misbehave while performing the duties of a lookout or sentinel-- whether due to drunkenness, sleeping upon his or her post, or leaving before properly relieved... you may be executed for failing to uphold your duties...”

- b. He had not yet “attained,” but was following after (press on, NKJ) toward his eternal reward in the next life. He had won the prize, but had not received it yet. Like winning a race or gaining a major promotion and then having to wait for the awards ceremony.
  - c. The risen Christ laid hold of Paul on the road to Damascus (Acts 9). Christ took hold of Paul (apprehended) and Paul took hold of (apprehended) the promises Christ offered.
  - d. The race had to be finished in order to get the prize. His conversion, like ours, was the beginning of the race, not the end.
2. “...but this one thing I do...” (vs 13) indicates his whole life was concentrated in a single purpose.
- a. He did not seek to obtain earthly honor and wealth while simultaneously endeavoring for a heavenly crown and glory (cf Matt 6:33).
  - b. Distraction from our main purpose (heaven) will often cause us to miss out on heaven completely (cf Jn 6:27).
  - c. Holy Writ is replete with warnings of starting our Christian journey, but not following through to the prize (cf Heb 6:4-8).
  - d. Peter graphically writes about the same sore subject (cf 2 Pet 2:20-22).
  - e. When Paul records “this one thing” it is an accurate indication of what our singleness of purpose should be (cf Matt 6:22).  
Note: What does it take to be a good educator, doctor, cook, engineer, golfer, piano player, ad inf.? Dedication and hard work. How can we expect to be good Christians without the same effort?
  - f. Most people have plans for school, higher education, family, business and even retirement, but what then? Have we put first things first (cf Matt 22:37)?
  - g. “The main thing is to make the main thing the main thing.”
3. “Reaching forth” means *to stretch oneself forward*.<sup>44</sup>
- a. Possibly Paul had in mind the finish pole used in the Grecian games. We might imagine stretching for the “brass rings” of a century ago.
  - b. Great power in focusing our attention and intention (cf Rev 3:21).
  - c. Looking back might hinder us from reaching the prize out in front of us.
  - d. Looking back in a race may cause us to fall.
  - e. Think of the things that were in Paul’s past; things he no longer looked at: a noble ancestry, a once respectable religion, personal accomplishments, physical injuries, miserable mistakes, etc. (cf 1 Cor 9:24-26).
  - f. God arranged our human anatomy with the eyes in front. We move forward. If God would have wanted us to look back He would have moved the eyes (cf Ex 14:15).
4. The eagerness and determination (vs 14) of each contestant (Christian) to win the prize is the focus of the verse (cf Heb 12:1).
- B. The word “perfect” in Verse 15 is used in a different sense than in Verse 12.

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<sup>44</sup> Strong’s

1. We all have room to improve and develop, but if we are “in Christ” we are classified, by scripture, as being perfect (cf Matt 5:48; 2 Cor 13:11).
2. Paul is admonishing the Philippians not to be satisfied with their level of spiritual maturity, but to progress in their walk.

Note: The last six words of Verse 16 appear to be added by the translators.

V. Our citizenship is in heaven (17-21).

A. In Verse 17 Paul encouraged the Philippians to use him as an example and to also “mark” (note, NKJ) others who were walking correctly as those they could emulate (cf 1 Cor 11:1; Phil 4:9).

1. Paul uses the same word (with a completely different context) in Rom 16:17 concerning those to be marked and avoided for “divisions and offences.”

Note: There is far too little marking that occurs in the modern church.

2. “Together” (join in, NKJ) is significant. We can always do more together than we can separately; stronger as a unit (cf 1 Cor 1:10).

B. The Philippians knew how he had lived, his conduct and teachings (cf 1 Thess 2:10-12).

1. People should be able to use us (followers of Christ) as examples.
2. Can they? Should they? How would they turn out?

C. The KJV (and a few other versions) has verses 18 and 19 as a parenthetical insert. Assumedly, to accentuate Verse 17 and the significance of noting good examples of Christian conduct.

1. There were many people that chose to walk improperly (cf Gal 2:14; Eph 4:17).
2. Paul had often warned them, even with tears, not to follow the enemies of the cross (cf Gal 5:21; 1 Thess 4:6).
  - a. The most serious enemies of Christianity often come from within the body (cf Acts 20:30, 31; 1 Tim 5:1).
  - b. The damage that can be done by a member who is involved in scandal or hypocrisy can harm the church far greater than those on the outside scoffing and ridiculing.
3. In our modern world there are “enemies of the cross” who are offering false teachings on such topics as: authority; the authority of God, the Bible, the eldership, etc.; false teaching on worship (all that we do is worship); fellowship; marriage, divorce and remarriage; theistic evolution, etc.
  - a. The “end” (the issue or fate<sup>45</sup>) of people like this is eternal destruction (cf 2 Pet 2:1).
  - b. These people can be denoted by their self-pleasing appetites. “Whose God is their belly” comes from a word that metaphorically means *the inner most part of a man*<sup>46</sup> (cf Jn 7:38).
  - c. It is the same category of people Paul makes reference to as he ends the book of Romans (cf Rom 16:17, 18).

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<sup>45</sup> Vine’s, page 26, Vol 2

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, page 118, Vol 1

- d. Unbridled lust, which is a shame, was something they were glorying in (cf 1 Cor 5:2; Gal 6:13).
  - e. “Who mind earthly things” is an admonition to keep us from being centered in and for this present world (cf Mk 4:18, 19).
- D. Verses 20 and 21 express the converse of the previous people.
- 1. Our “conversation” (citizenship, NKJ) affirms that this world is not our home. We are destined to live in a different, much better world.
    - a. Like any citizen, we must meet the requirements of citizenship in that world. Our new world requires complete and total obedience. (cf Matt 28:19, 20; Rom 6:16).
    - b. Without faithful living we can lose our citizenship. The biblical examples of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5), Hymenaeus and Alexander (1 Tim 1) and Demas (2 Tim 4) should be sufficient.
  - 2. These “vile” bodies (lowly, NKJ) are subject to sickness, pain and death. As citizens of heaven our corruptible bodies will put on incorruption (cf 1 Cor 15:53).
  - 3. Oh, what a day that change will be!



## Philippians 4

### Salutations and praise

- I. Paul begins to draw this great book to a close (1-3).

Note: A casual reading of this text would indicate that Verse 1 should have probably been connected to the end of Chapter 3 rather than the beginning of Chapter 4. It is of no consequence, but serves as a reminder that man divided the text, not inspiration.
- A. In spite of the threat of false teachers and his deep concern that some might fall away, especially in the face of persecution, he exhorts them to “stand fast in the Lord.”
  1. He refers to them as his “dearly beloved and longed for” (NKJ omits dearly).
    - a. Having been established under Paul’s own ministry (Acts 16) he had a particular affection for these brethren (cf Phil 1:3).
    - b. When Paul expresses a longing for them it may indicate his personal suffering because of the forced separation (cf Phil 1:8).
  2. “My joy and crown” refers to his delight with this congregation.
    - a. They brought joy to him via continued obedience and much needed help (cf Phil 4:15).
    - b. The word “crown” is not the kingly crown, but rather a crown of victory (Gr. *stephanos*) (cf 2 Tim 4:8; 1 Pet 5:4).

Note: The word *diadem* (kingly crown) is never used in the New Testament with reference to Christians.
  3. They were to “stand fast” in what they had been made through the Lord Jesus Christ (cf Eph 6:13, 14).
    - a. Standing firm on the foundation of the Lord is the only chance we have (cf Matt 16:18; 1 Cor 3:10, 11).
    - b. The straight and narrow road is not always easy, but it is always required (cf Matt 7:13, 14).
- B. Paul then turns his attention to two women at Philippi. We would have to assume that Epaphroditus brought this information to him at Rome (cf Phil 2:25).
  1. He uses the word “beseech” (implore, NKJ) before each name. This indicates they were both required to set forth the necessary effort to fix the unknown problem and be in unity (cf Phil 2:2).
    - a. Whatever the issue was, they were both to be involved in mending the situation (cf 1 Pet 3:8, 9).
    - b. The common idiom is that ‘it takes two to tango.’ The same is true of a quarrel. If one person is antagonistic and the other is not, there is no dispute.
    - c. Paul’s way of dealing with this situation indicates it was not a doctrinal problem, but if left unchecked it could disrupt the unity of the church.
    - d. Reconciliation is necessary between brethren, so this is a call for unity (cf Eph 4:3).

2. Paul beseeched (urge, NKJ) for an unknown “yokefellow” to get involved and help settle this matter (cf Philemon 9).

Note: This is the only time that “yokefellow” is used in the scriptures.

Whomever it was, they had a special place in the apostle’s mind.<sup>47</sup>

3. Clement was a common name in the 1<sup>st</sup> century. No additional information is available about this man. The name is not used in any other passage.

- a. He, and many others at Philippi, were labeled as “fellowlabourers” in the gospel.

- b. God knows the faithful workers in the church, their names are recorded in “the book of life” (cf Rev 13:8; 21:27).

Note: We can be thankful the true record is kept in heaven. There will be no mistakes in that divinely authored book (cf Lk 10:20).

- c. The true laborers in every faithful congregation are the servants of God who fill the pews.<sup>48</sup> Those true laborers, often unnamed, but always known (cf Dan 12:1).

- d. Having ones name written in “the book of life” in no way validates the false doctrine of unconditional salvation (cf Rev 3:5).

Note: Division is wrong (cf Rom 16:17; 1 Cor 1:10; etc.), but not all division is wrong (cf Acts 15:1, 2; 18:27, 28; Gal 2:5; etc.). Christians must be governed by Romans 14:1, but when God draws a line in the sand we must be on the right side of that line, doctrinally. The ‘unity’ movements, the new hermeneutic movement or any other movement that has, as its intent, to make the church of Christ more like the denominational world, are attempts to strip the Lord’s church of its distinctiveness. We are to be a peculiar (special people, NKJ) people (cf Titus 2:14; 1 Pet 2:9).

## II. Rejoice in the Lord (4-7).

Note: Phil 4:4-7 has been called “the antidote to anxiety.”

### A. The Philippians were given a command to “rejoice in the Lord.”

1. This does not mean the faithful Christian will never feel sorrow, but because of their relationship with God through Christ they can rejoice in any situation.

- a. We find the apostles leaving the Jewish council after a beating and then rejoicing (cf Acts 5:41).

- b. Jesus warned those who might become His disciples that they would experience hardships (cf Matt 5:11, 12; Lk 6:22).

- c. Ironically, Paul, from his confinement, was encouraging (commanding) free Christians to rejoice in their situation.

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<sup>47</sup> It is possible, and even probable, that the word translated “yokefellow” is a proper name. A man named Synzygus, or Suzuge (the Greek word in the text). Otherwise, how would the brethren in Philippi know of whom Paul was speaking? This is emphasized by the fact that Paul used proper names both before and after “yokefellow.”

<sup>48</sup> “Christian service may pass unnoticed on earth, but the important thing is that God takes note, and will praise at the last.” R.P. Martin, NT Commentary, Philippians, page 167.

2. Rejoicing is modified by “in the Lord.”
    - a. Rejoice in being part of His body (cf 1 Cor 12:13).
    - b. Rejoice in the salvation He provides (cf 2 Tim 2:10).
    - c. Rejoice in His service (cf Eph 6:7).
    - d. The context would require our rejoicing because our names are written in the book of life.
  3. The command is emphasized by “always, and again I say, rejoice.”
    - a. The word “always” means *at all times*<sup>49</sup> which would apply to afflictions and distresses encountered in any age (cf James 1:2-4; 1 Pet 4:13).
    - b. The command was repeated for one of two reasons. Either it was important enough to repeat, or Christians are slow to heed it.
    - c. Eliminating worry in our lives will go a long way in our disposition and personal health.  
 Note: We need to be reminded that no matter what may change in our lives, God’s promises are always there for us to rejoice in.
  4. “Moderation” (vs 5) which means *reasonableness or gentleness*.<sup>50</sup>
    - a. An even and mild temperament is essential to continued rejoicing.
    - b. The reason for this command is that “The Lord is at hand.”
    - c. Probably not a reference to His second coming, although that is always a day nearer than yesterday.
    - d. The context lends itself to a closeness of the Lord, to be able to call upon Him for help and comfort (cf Ps 119:151; 145:18; Acts 17:27). This thought is supported by Verse 6.
    - e. Some have abused this passage. “All things in moderation” is not a license to sin a little. Sin is sin. All are grievous in God’s eyes.
- B. Verse 6 begins with the admonition “Be careful (anxious, NKJ) for nothing.”
1. In reading the New Testament we often find that we are told to not do something, or to leave something out, so that we can do everything else (cf Rom 12:1, 2; Tit 2:11, 12; Heb 13:5, 6).
    - a. This passage does not mean we are to exercise no care about worldly matters (cf 1 Tim 5:8). It does mean we are to have such confidence in God as to free our minds of anxiety as we depend on Him (cf Lk 8:14).
    - b. Anxiety, or worry, should not control our minds. As His children we should cultivate a calm mind (cf Lk 10:41; 1 Pet 5:7).
    - c. This is not always easy, and often has to be learned, but Paul did insert the words “nothing” and “every thing.” Both Greek words have basically the same definition: *all, every, any, the whole*.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Vines, Vol 2, page 46.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, Vol2, page 117

<sup>51</sup> Strong’s #3367 and 3956

2. Our God is omniscient (all knowing), omnipotent (all powerful) and omnipresent (all present). That should be enough for us to place our trust in His jurisdiction.<sup>52</sup>
  - a. Prayer: The original term indicated more of the mood of the petitioner than the petition. The inherent confidence in the mind of the petitioner.
  - b. Supplication: In the context this word would indicate the expression of those cares into words.
  - c. Thanksgiving: This would be thanksgiving connected to our prayers. One of the primary elements of our prayers should always be the expression of our thankfulness to God.
3. Then Verse 6 ends with, “Let your requests be known unto God.” But, does not God already know everything? He is omniscient.
  - a. This section is still dealing with the ‘antidote for anxiety.’
  - b. God always knows our needs, but nothing can be a “request” until it is requested (cf Rom 1:10).
4. Verse 7 can be seen as the result of the proper execution of Verse 6.
  - a. Peace, as used here, is the state of the tranquil soul that arises from the favor of God through obedience (cf Jn 14:27; 16:33).
  - b. This affords His children a peace “that passeth all understanding” (cf Ps 119:165; Rom 5:1).
  - c. 1<sup>st</sup> century persecution was often beyond our scope of imagination. Christians calmly prayed as they were bound to a cross for crucifixion or sang as wild animals were released to maul and murder them in the arenas.
  - d. The only reasonable explanation for this phenomenon was a deep comprehension of the peace that “passeth all understanding” (cf Ps 55:22).
  - e. “Shall keep (guard, NKJ) your hearts and minds” means *the thoughts and feelings* (hearts) along with *the intellect* (minds).<sup>53</sup>

### III. Things that should fill our minds (8, 9).

- A. Our ability to think makes us superior to all other creatures. We are not animals, but were placed over the animals from the beginning (cf Gen 1:26; Heb 2:6-8).
  1. You have the ability to control your thoughts. You can control what stays on your mind (cf Prov 23:7).
    - a. You can think on things high and holy, or you can allow thoughts to drop to the low and vile.
    - b. The fact that you can exercise control over thoughts makes you accountable for them. Paul is referring to what a Christian might dwell on, what they might ponder or fill their minds with.
    - c. Someone might argue that the thoughts just “pop into my mind.” Then pop them out! You are in control.
  2. The word “finally” (vs 8) probably means *it follows then*.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> The last book of the Bible is replete with such references, e.g., Rev 1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 19:6, 15; etc.

<sup>53</sup> Strong's #2588 and 3540

<sup>54</sup> Kenyon, Philippians, page 57

- B. Paul sums up rejoicing in a single sentence:
1. “Whatsoever things are true”: true in action, true in thought, true in word. Christ is truth (cf Jn 14:6).
    - a. As Christians everything stands on truth (cf 1 Jn 3:18).
    - b. If we are false in our lives we disgrace Christ.
    - c. If we are false in our doctrine we are not of Christ.
    - d. It is not insignificant that “true” is first on the list.
  2. “Whatsoever things are honest”: (noble, NKJ) revered, to worship or to be respectable.
    - a. Same word that is translated as *grave* (reverent, NKJ) in 1 Tim 3:8, 11; Tit 2:2).
    - b. “Whatsoever things are dignified, reputable, by all who esteem high standards of action, who scrupulously conform their lives to an exalted rectitude.”<sup>55</sup>
  3. “Whatsoever things are just”: fair, honest and innocent (cf Acts 10:22).
    - a. Just in our dealings with others (cf Lk 23:50).
    - b. We can do much harm to the cause of Christ when we are not just in our dealing because we are always on trial by those observing us.
  4. “Whatsoever things are pure”: a moral purity that would include the idea of chaste (cf 1 Tim 5:22; Tit 2:5).
    - a. Pure in thought and in deed (cf James 3:17).
    - b. To lift ourselves out of the defilement of the world.
  5. “Whatsoever things are lovely”: pleasing or attractive to good people. The Greek word occurs nowhere else in the New Testament.
    - a. Not pretty to behold, but an inner beauty (cf 1 Pet 3:4).
    - b. To show forth a lovely disposition.
  6. “Whatsoever things are of good report”: uttering words of good omen. This Greek word also occurs nowhere else in the New Testament.
    - a. That which is fit to hear (cf Acts 22:12).
    - b. Probably has to do with verbal purity (cf Matt 15:11).
  7. “If there be any virtue”: any form of moral excellence.
    - a. According to Strong’s definition the thought of manliness or valor is connected to this word.
    - b. The same word is translated by *praises* in 1 Pet 2:9 and by *virtue* in 2 Pet 1:3, 5.
  8. “If there be any praise”: (anything praise-worthy, NKJ) the mind should be filled with praise-worthy thoughts (cf Rom 13:3; 2 Cor 8:18).
    - a. Being praised for doing praiseworthy deeds.
    - b. Anything worthy of praise that is associated with us.
  9. “Think on these things.”
  10. We can only be as good as our thoughts are (cf 1 Thess 5:21).

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<sup>55</sup> J.W. Shepherd, Lipscomb Commentary on Philippians, page 224

Note: Someone unknown has said, “You sow a thought and you reap a deed; you sow a deed and you reap a habit; you sow a habit and reap a character; you sow a character and reap a destiny.”

11. When we control our thoughts we control everything else.
    - a. We cannot entertain impure thoughts without becoming corrupt.
    - b. Conversely, we cannot think good thoughts without becoming purer.
    - c. Remember, you are not what others think you are. You are not what you think you are. But, what you think, you are!
  - C. Paul used the example of his own life among them (vs 9).
    1. The things learned, received, heard and seen in him.
    2. How many of us could measure up to this standard?
    3. If the members at Philippi would think on these things, how could they possibly miss the mark?
- IV. How to live a happy, successful life (10-13).
- A. Paul begins to specifically express his thanks to the Philippians for all they had done for him.
    1. Every good thing comes from God, either by way of His grace or through His providence. Hence, Paul “rejoiced in the Lord greatly” for the Philippians care (cf 2 Cor 7:6).
      - a. “At the last” (now at last, NKJ) probably has some type of hindrance attached to its meaning. Maybe something had kept them from their ability to aid the apostle for a period of time.
      - b. The three English words “at the last” come from a single Greek word which is often translated as *in time(s) past* (cf Eph 2:2, 3, 11).
    2. Their “care of me hath flourished again.”
      - a. A word that is often applied to plants and flowers that are growing green again, or to revive, like spring time in the north.
      - b. The word “careful” indicates an earnest desire to help, literally *to be mentally disposed to assist*, but had lacked opportunity.
      - c. It is possible that the absence of opportunity was a direct result of their “deep poverty” (cf 2 Cor 8:1, 2).
      - d. Maybe the problem was the unavailability of a trustworthy messenger, like Epaphroditus, to take the gift to Rome.
      - e. The fact is, when the opportunity presented itself, they blossomed into action.
  - B. He reveals the source of his contentment in adverse circumstances.
    1. Paul is stating that he had been so disciplined by his experiences that no matter what might befall him he could be content therein (cf Heb 13:5).
      - a. It was something he had learned (cf Phil 3:8).
      - b. Paul had acquired this knowledge through use and practice (cf 2 Cor 11:9).
      - c. Immediately after his conversion in Acts 9 it is recorded that the Jews in Damascus wanted to kill him. He had to escape their evil desires via a large basket at night (cf Acts 9:23-25).

- d. Most of the remaining chapters in Acts reveal some hardship or other he suffered.
- e. Therefore, we see Paul cultivating a contented mind. Content, here means *self-sufficient* or *to be independent of circumstances*.  
Note: This is a reference to having a contented mind with things that are beyond our control (cf 1 Tim 6:6).
- f. Contentment in this world stems from three basic thoughts:
  - 1) The realization that nothing of an earthly nature lasts or permanently satisfies.
  - 2) Confidence in the wise and loving providence of God. God has a plan for every life. He knows what is best, even if we cannot see it.
  - 3) Nothing finite is needed to supplement our hold upon the infinite.
- 2. Paul knew “how to be abased” or, to be brought low. He also knew “how to abound” or overflow.
  - a. The word “content” in Verse 11 should modify this verse.
  - b. It requires as much self-control to keep the heart right in being abased or in abounding (cf 2 Cor 12:7-10).
  - c. How did the mighty apostle find contentment in his life? He learned to accept, with gratitude, those things that became his lot in life.
- 3. “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” is a declaration that Paul truly believed that it was impossible that life, people or even the devil himself could confront him with anything that he and the Lord together could not handle (cf 2 Cor 3:4, 5)!
  - a. “All things” would include, but not be limited to: endure any trial, perform any duty, meet all temptations, subdue any evil, etc. How? Through Christ.
  - b. The word, “strengtheneth” is a present tense word (as indicated by the “eth” ending. He keeps on strengthening.
  - c. We will never be given more than we can handle (cf 1 Cor 10:13; 2 Pet 2:9).

V. Paul praises the Philippians for their work (14-20).

Note: The closing paragraph of a letter often contains the deepest feelings and greatest emotions of the writer. That is the case with this remarkable letter of joy.

A. Paul expresses his appreciation with the words, “Ye have done well.”

- 1. The word “communicate” (shared, NKJ) means to participate with someone (cf 1 Tim 6:18).
  - a. This same word is translated “fellowship” in Eph 5:11.
  - b. It is rendered “partakers of” in Rev 18:4.
  - c. A form of the word is translated as “contribution” in Rom 15:26 and is what Paul means here. They had been partners in the gospel (cf Phil 1:7).
- 2. In Verse 15, when Paul says “in the beginning” he is probably referring to that portion of scripture we read in Acts 17 and 18. Paul had left Macedonia to go to Athens and then on to Corinth.

- a. The churches of Christ in Macedonia consisted of congregations in Philippi, Thessalonica and Berea (cf Acts 20:4). Possibly others we know nothing about.
  - b. But, the only congregation which had sent support to Paul was the congregation at Philippi.  
 Note: The diligent Bible student will immediately grasp the need for rationalization between this passage (no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only) and the information inspiration records in 2 Cor 11:8, “I robbed other churches (plural), taking wages of them...”
    - 1) Paul is clearly referencing these very churches in Macedonia in 2 Cor 11 and the finances they supplied as indicated in Verse 9.
    - 2) This does not change the inspired fact that only the church in Philippi had sent gifts to him.
    - 3) The only way this scenario can be rectified is if the congregations of Macedonia sent money to Philippi, who alone (only) kept the funds and distributed those funds to Paul, i.e., a sponsoring congregation.
    - 4) Notice the words, “giving and receiving” (vs 15). Brother Wayne Jackson said that these words mean “debit and credit.” The Philippian church kept track of what came in for Paul’s use and what went out for his use.
    - 5) Therefore, the “anti-cooperation” doctrine is not only wrong, but according to the principle of binding where God has not bound, it is sinful.
3. Thessalonica was the next stop in his travels (vs 16) and corresponds with the information Luke records in Acts 16:40-17:1.
- a. “Once and again” or at least twice at Thessalonica. Again later while at Corinth, as previously mentioned in 2 Cor 11:9.  
 Note: Scriptures do not tell us how long Paul worked at Thessalonica, but it was long enough for him to be helped “once and again.”
  - b. While in Thessalonica Paul labored of his own accord (cf 1 Thess 2:9; 2 Thess 3:8) as a tentmaker (cf Acts 18:3).
  - c. What Paul did not do or could not do for himself the brethren at Philippi provided. They have been a wonderful example for 20 centuries.
- B. The motive for praising the Philippians was not to get more of their kindness and generosity.
- 1. When Paul writes, “I desire fruit (the fruit, NKJ) that may abound” it may be a word play that indicates the interest on the money they had given.<sup>56</sup> Hence, the sentence ending with the words, “to your account.”
    - a. Fruit is often used to refer to growth or abundance in scriptures (cf Rom 1:13; James 3:18).
    - b. It is used both positively and negatively (cf Matt 7:17; 12:33).

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<sup>56</sup> Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges, *the interest that is accruing to your credit.*



2. Paul is saying that he wants this put down on their account when they come before God in judgement.
  - a. Let that sink in. When we give help to someone in need they will benefit, but so will we. When we give, we get (cf Lk 14:12-14).
  - b. This applies to every aspect of Christian living, but the context has reference to helping in spreading of the gospel.
  - c. When brethren give as they should they are doing more than supporting the cause, they are bearing fruit to their own account.
  - d. Everyone benefits and God is glorified (cf Heb 6:10).
- C. Paul used three expressions to indicate that they had cared for all of his needs:
  1. "I have all."
    - a. I have all I need or want.
    - b. His physical desires have all been fulfilled.
    - c. This word is used by Jesus in a negative way in Matt 6:2, 5, 16 ("they have," meaning this is their only reward).
  2. "Abound."
    - a. He was in abundance.
    - b. They had exceeded all needs.
  3. "I am full."
    - a. A strong expression denoting that nothing was lacking.
    - b. The gift that Epaphroditus brought to him satisfied his every need.  
Note: These three similar expressions are giving the brethren at Philippi a hearty "well done."
- D. Then Paul's writing switches to the figure of an Old Testament sacrifice.
  1. He viewed their gift to him the way God would view an acceptable sacrifice under the old law (cf 2 Cor 2:15, 16).
  2. In the Old Testament both the animal sacrifice and the sacrifice of incense were considered a "sweet smell" to our Father (cf Gen 8:21; Ex 30:7).
    - a. It was the act that was done in accordance with His will that made it sweet.
    - b. Under the old law it was the priests, the sons of Aaron, who were responsible for offering sacrifices for the people (cf Lev 6:14).
    - c. Under the new law every Christian is a priest (cf Rev 1:5, 6).  
Note: For our sacrifices to have that "sweet smell" they have to be something we sacrifice. Do we offer God our best, or do we give whatever is left over? Time, money, effort; our "firstfruits" (cf 2 Cor 8:1-3).
  3. We know that after the return from exile the people reached a point where they stopped offering the best (cf Mal 1:8, 13).
    - a. The people simply grew away from keeping the law due to their own desires.
    - b. It is easy to see a similar attitude in our modern time:
      - 1) Some among us would offer gimmicks instead of gospel.
      - 2) Emotionalism instead of evangelism.
      - 3) New forms instead of the "old paths."

- 4) It was a total reversal of God's desire; "Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the Lord" (Mal 2:17).
- 5) In the 21<sup>st</sup> century we call adultery and fornication "love." We are told that chastity and fidelity are unhealthy and outdated.
- 6) Many have stopped being the "sweet smell" God requires.
4. Just as the Philippians had supplied Paul's every need, God would supply their needs (cf Mal 3:10).
  - a. What we sow is what we reap (cf 2 Cor 9:6).
  - b. The giver is always the one who is blessed (cf Prov 3:9, 10; 11:25; 22:9).
  - c. We will never be able to out-give God!
5. Let us freely and gladly give God the glory for all things we have and that we enjoy on His earth (cf 1 Tim 1:17; Rev 14:7).

VI. Paul ends this letter with a salutation (21-23).

A. Verse 21 starts with the word "salute" (greet, NKJ).

Note: The origin of the hand salute is uncertain. Some historians believe it began in late Roman times when assassinations were common. A citizen who wanted to see a public official had to approach with his right hand raised to show that he did not hold a weapon. Knights in armor raised visors with the right hand when meeting a comrade. This practice gradually became a way of showing respect and, in early American history, sometimes involved removing the hat. By 1820, the motion was modified to touching the hat, and since then it has become the hand salute used today.

1. Salute, or greet, every saint is Paul's way of encouraging love and respect for the brotherhood.
 

Note: In Rom 16:3-16 Paul uses the two words (salute and greet) interchangeably 17 times. All translated from the same Greek word.

  - a. Christianity is a religion of good will.
  - b. When the Savior was born an angel announced "peace on earth, good will toward men" (cf Lk 2:14).
2. "The brethren which are with me salute you." He does not mention who these brethren are.
  - a. Since Colossians and Philemon are also "prison epistles," we could conclude that the men mentioned at the end of those books are the same brethren he is referring to here, i.e., Col 4:10-15; Philemon 23, 24.
  - b. There is no way to determine, specifically, which of these saints were with him at the time of his writing.
3. It appears that Verse 22 adds two additional sub-sections of brethren sending salutations to Philippi.
  - a. "All the saints" could be the church of Christ in Rome. That congregation had been established long enough for Paul to write a letter to them possibly 6 or 7 years before this letter was written.
  - b. And, those "of Caesar's household." The infamous Nero was the ruling Caesar at this time in history (54-68 AD).

- c. I see this as a statement of encouragement to the brethren at Philippi, hence the word “chiefly” (especially, NKJ). Letting those saints know how well the gospel message had been taught and received, it had even entered the household of Caesar (Phil 1:12, 13). This term would mean the residence rather than the family of Caesar (cf Acts 18:7).
- d. Even in unfavorable conditions Paul, and those with him, did the best they could for the Lord. We have the Old Testament examples of Joseph in Egypt, Daniel in Nebuchadnezzar’s court, Vashti and Esther before Ahasuerus, etc. Tough times are no excuse for us to be less of a servant of our Savior.

Note: The world at its worst needs Christians at their best.

- B. Paul begins and ends this letter in the same fashion; the grace that is from above (cf Phil 1:2).
  - 1. Grace, often misused in our modern world, is simply unmerited favor. Through God’s grace we are given the capacity to believe; we are shown what to believe and presented with ample testimony to produce faith.
  - 2. “Amen” or so be it.

## Appendix A

Repetition abounds in the pages of the Old Testament. Some limited examples are:

2 Kings 19 and Isaiah 37 are virtually identical, with the exception of a few insignificant words. The only real difference in our English Bibles is that Verse 15 in 2 Kings is divided into two verses while in Isaiah 37 it is one verse. The Old Testament was divided into verses by a man named R. Nathan in 1448. Or, to say the same thing differently, God's word is the same in this passage, but some man split it up into two verses approximately 2,200 or 2,300 years later.

Ps 14 and Ps 53 have whole sections that are identical. The same with Ps 57(7-11) and Ps 108 (1-5).

Most have experienced reading through 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Kings and then being plunged right back into the same information in 1 and 2 Chronicles? Why do we even have Chronicles? Are the books superfluous? The answer is no!

The title "Chronicles" comes from the Greek Septuagint which means, *things omitted*. That gives us a hint of what awaits us in these books. The books of Samuel, Kings and Chronicles cover a similar period of time. Much of the narrative of each set of books covers the same basic period between King Saul and the exile. They provide the history of the kings of Judah, describing their reigns and encouraging the people to remain faithful to God. The books emphasize David as being a special ruler and the benchmark by which later kings were judged.

When we read Samuel, Kings and Chronicles, there is an obvious difference in historical information. The earlier books deal with both kingdoms, Israel and Judah, while Chronicles is only interested in Judah. The northern nation of Israel is only brought up when it has an immediate impact on the events in Judah.

A little more subtle difference is seen in Chronicles, where it cleans up the reputation of the kings. For example, if you go to 1 Chronicles 20, you can see where the story of Bathsheba fits, but it is not there. It appears that most of the negative information is removed from Chronicles. The same is true regarding Solomon. In 1 Kings, we see that Solomon really lost his way in the final years of his reign. But, if you only read Chronicles, you would think his reign was a complete success.

Why do these differences exist? The answer probably comes down to the historical intent. The books of Samuel and Kings were written at the beginning of the exile. It was a time of repentance and reflection. Chronicles was written after the exile was over and the Jews were trying to re-establish themselves. It would do no good to go over their sinful past. Chronicles was written for a Jewish people who needed encouragement and strengthening.

That is exactly what Chronicles does. Therefore, the content is not exactly the same for a reason.

The New Testament also has abundant repetition.

Matthew, Mark and Luke record the work of John the baptizer (Matt 3; Mk 1; Lk 3).

All four biographers record Jesus beginning His ministry (Matt 4; Mk1; Lk 4; Jn 4). All four accounts have the same basic teachings on the triumphant entrance into the city of Jerusalem.

The list could go on with hundreds of examples, especially when observing the many parables Jesus taught and miracles He performed, but one interesting side-note is that the only miracle recorded by all four biographers was the feeding of the five thousand (Matt 14; Mk 6; Lk 9; Jn 6).

Repetition is a wonderful tool.