

A SURVEY STUDY OF PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS

INTRODUCTORY MATTERS

SCRIPTURES

PHIL. 1:3-7: A LOVING NOTE

³ I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, ⁴ Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, ⁵ For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now; ⁶ Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform *it* until the day of Jesus Christ: ⁷ Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace.

PHIL. 1:12: A CORRECTIVE NOTE

¹² But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things *which happened* unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel...

PHIL. 1:19-21: AN INTERCESSORY NOTE

¹⁹ For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, ²⁰ According to my earnest expectation and *my* hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but *that* with all boldness, as always, *so* now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether *it be* by life, or by death. ²¹ For to me to live *is* Christ, and to die *is* gain.

PHIL. 2:5: AN ILLUSTRATIVE NOTE

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus...

PHIL. 2:14-18: A PRACTICAL NOTE

¹⁴ Do all things without murmurings and disputings: ¹⁵ That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; ¹⁶ Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain. ¹⁷ Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all. ¹⁸ For the same cause also do ye joy, and rejoice with me.

PHIL. 3:10-14: AN INTENSELY PERSONAL NOTE

¹⁰ That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; ¹¹ If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. ¹² Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. ¹³ Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but *this* one thing *I do*, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, ¹⁴ I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

PHIL. 4:12-13: AN EXPERIENTIAL NOTE

¹² I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. ¹³ I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

A PRISON EPISTLE

Several Pauline epistles are known as the “Prison Epistles,” i.e. those written during Paul’s imprisonment at Rome. In general chronological order, they were Philippians, Philemon, Colossians and Ephesians. If Paul was the author of Hebrews, this epistle was probably written during this time, or at least before 70 AD (?).

THE DESTINATION AND READERS

Paul sent this letter to the Church at Philippi, the first church established in Europe, planted during his second missionary journey. Philippi was a Roman *Colonia*,¹ and the congregation was greatly loved by Paul. The record of its establishment is given in Acts 16–17. They had shown more of an interest in his labors than any other church.

THE OCCASION

THE MAJOR REASONS

Epaphroditus had come to Rome with a gift from the Philippian Church. He had remained to help Paul and had fallen grievously ill. The Philippians had heard of this, and were anxious about his health and very life. Paul wrote to allay their fears concerning his own state, that of the gospel and to explain the delay of Epaphroditus in returning. Epaphroditus himself would bear the letter back to Philippi.

THE SECONDARY REASONS

The secondary reasons include his prayer request for boldness during his trial (1:19), various exhortations, including an exhortation to unity (2:1–16; 4:2), to help various women of the church (4:3), and to prepare them for the visit from Timothy (2:19–23).

THE THEME

The recurring theme in this epistle is “Joy.” The terms “joy” and “rejoice” occur 17 times in these 104 verses. (Cf. 1:4, 18, 25, 26; 2:2, 16, 17(2), 18(2), 28; 3:1, 3; 4:1, 4(2), 10). Note that the epistle itself may be summarized by this theme:

Chapter One—*Joy in Living* despite prison and party spirit.

Chapter Two—*Joy in Serving* despite very few likeminded.

Chapter Three—*Joy in Fellowshiping* despite those in great error.

Chapter Four—*Joy in Persevering* despite personal and spiritual issues.

Note that Christian joy is to remain a constant. This is highly instructive for modern believers. There will always be someone or something that will seek to rob us of our joy.

THE CONTENT AND CHARACTER

Philippians is at once both intensely practical and deeply theological. E.g., Paul uses one of the great Christological passages, 2:5–11 to illustrate and teach Christian humility.

¹ The status of *Colonia* gave Philippi a special standing. It was largely self-governing, and its government was a miniature reflection of Rome itself.

THE OUTLINE

The Salutation	(1:1–2)
I. Paul’s Relation to the Philippians	(1:3–11)
His Thanksgiving for Them	(V. 3–5)
His Confidence in Them	(V. 6–7)
His Longing for Them	(V. 8)
His Prayer for Them	(V. 9–11)
II. Paul’s Present Circumstances	(1:12–26)
His Attitude Toward the Furtherance of the Gospel	(V. 12–20)
His Attitude Toward Life and Death	(V. 21–26)
III. Paul’s First Practical Exhortations to the Philippians	(1:27–2:18)
An Appeal for Steadfastness in the Face of Opposition	(1:27–30)
An Appeal for Spiritual Unity in the Congregation	(2:1–4)
An Appeal for Humility in the Congregation	(2:5–11)
An Appeal to Realize Christ–Likeness in the Life	(2:12–18)
IV. Paul’s Plans for his Co–workers	(2:19–30)
Concerning Timothy	(v. 19–24)
Concerning Epaphroditus	(v. 25–30)
V. Paul’s Warnings against two Errors	(3:1–4:1)
A Warning against Legalism	(3:1–16)
A Warning against Antinomianism	(3:17–4:1)
VI. Paul’s Second Practical Exhortations to the Philippians	(4:2–9)
An Appeal for Unity	(V. 2–3)
An Appeal for Consistent and Holy Living	(V. 4–5)
An Appeal for Prayer as the Cure of Anxiety	(V. 6–7)
An Appeal for Holy Thinking and Doing	(V. 8–9)
VII. Paul’s Rejoicing for the Philippians	(4:10–21)
He Rejoices for Their Care and Gift	(V. 10)
He Explains His Independence from Circumstances	(V. 11–13)
He Thanks Them for Their Gift	(V. 14–18)
He Reveals the Abundance of God to Them	(V. 19)
The Closing Doxology	(v. 20)
The Conclusion	(4:21–23)

OBSERVATIONS

1. Paul’s experience at Philippi and the founding of the church there—being in the will of God does not preclude great opposition.
2. The will of God is neither necessarily ideal, nor will be fulfilled in an idealistic way. God has ordained suffering and opposition to test our faith and cause us to ever rely on his grace.
3. Although Paul might remain bound in prison, the Word of God was not bound.

4. The secret of a consistent and full Christian life is found in 1:21.
5. Theology is meant to be practical by application. E.g., the Great Christological passage in 2:5–11. This passage was given to teach Christian humility.

A SALUTATION TO AND PRAYER FOR BELOVED BRETHREN

TEXT: PHILIPPIANS 1:1–11

INTRODUCTION

THE OUTLINE

The Salutation	(1:1–2)
The Author and his Companion	(1:1)
The Readers and their Officers	(1:1)
The Greeting	(1:2)
I. Paul's Relation to the Philippians	(1:3–11)
His Thanksgiving for Them	(v. 3–5)
His Confidence in Them	(v. 6–7)
His Longing for Them	(v. 8)
His Prayer for Them	(v. 9–11)

THE SALUTATION

The author is Paul. He mentions Timothy because of the close relation Timothy had had with the Philippian Church in the past and also his plans to send Timothy unto them again. This is the only epistle in which he mentions the officers [σὺν ἐπισκόποις καὶ διακόνοις] separately.

PAUL'S MANNER OF ADDRESS (V. 1)

Παῦλος καὶ Τιμόθεος δοῦλοι Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ... He does not mention or use his apostolic authority, as this was a letter of personal love and concern to a dearly beloved congregation. The term δοῦλος referred to a bondsman. It is not a dishonor to be a slave if one has a great and beloved Master.

πᾶσιν τοῖς ἀγίοις ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ τοῖς οὖσιν ἐν Φιλίπποις. He writes to the church congregation as those who are separated unto Christ Jesus—the true designation of Christians.

σὺν ἐπισκόποις καὶ διακόνοις, Note that the church at Philippi had a number of overseers or elders. These and the deacons are probably mentioned because they had taken charge of gathering the gift for Paul.

PAUL'S USE OF WORDS IN HIS SALUTATION (V. 2)

χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. He desires for them grace and peace. The former is a modification of the Greek form, and the latter, of the Hebrew. Paul combines them as Christian. We need both.

I PAUL'S RELATION TO THE PHILIPPIANS (1:3–11)

HIS THANKSGIVING FOR THEM (V. 3–5)

Εὐχαριστῶ τῷ θεῷ μου ἐπὶ πάσῃ τῇ μνείᾳ ὑμῶν. What a testimony! Of how few can this be said. Yet it was true of this congregation. Many professing believers are a constant source of pain to their pastors.

πάντοτε ἐν πάσῃ δεήσει μου ὑπὲρ πάντων ὑμῶν, μετὰ χαρᾶς τὴν δέησιν ποιούμενος, Paul was a man of prayer. It had characterized his life from the moment of his conversion. Intercessory prayer was his daily concern. And he prayed specifically.²

ἐπὶ τῇ κοινωνίᾳ ὑμῶν εἰς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον ἀπὸ τῆς πρώτης ἡμέρας ἄχρι τοῦ νῦν... “Fellowship” means “to have in common”. It is an inclusive term. Note the subtle reference to their gift with the def. art. (τοῦ νῦν), “the now,” i.e., this gift which you have now sent. He will further write of this more directly in 4:10–19.

HIS CONFIDENCE IN THEM (V. 6–7)

πεποιθῶς αὐτὸ τοῦτο, ὅτι ὁ ἐναρξάμενος ἐν ὑμῖν ἔργον ἀγαθὸν ἐπιτελέσει ἄχρι ἡμέρας Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ Καθὼς ἐστὶν δίκαιον ἔμοι τοῦτο φρονεῖν ὑπὲρ πάντων ὑμῶν διὰ τὸ ἔχειν με ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ ὑμᾶς, ἔν τε τοῖς δεσμοῖς μου καὶ ἐν τῇ ἀπολογίᾳ καὶ βεβαιώσει τοῦ εὐαγγελίου συγκοινωνοῦς μου τῆς χάριτος πάντας ὑμᾶς ὄντας.

Confident (πεποιθῶς, perf.). He does not congratulate the Philippians, but God. God's work in our present experience is a good work. Paul does not talk of death but of our Lord's return. “I have you in my heart.” An inclusive reference to the inner being. Note the pres. διὰ τὸ ἔχειν...

Paul's adverse circumstances did not deter their love, affection and support for him (Cf. 4:10–18). They were partakers of his ministry in the defense (καὶ ἐν τῇ ἀπολογίᾳ) and confirmation (καὶ βεβαιώσει τοῦ εὐαγγελίου) of the gospel. Both aspects are necessary, Cf. 2 Cor. 10:3–5; 1 Pet. 3:15.

HIS LONGING FOR THEM (V. 8)

μάρτυς γάρ μου ὁ θεός ὡς ἐπιποθῶ πάντας ὑμᾶς ἐν σπλάγχνοις Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ. He calls God to witness, as God alone knows the heart (μάρτυς γάρ μου ὁ θεός, emph. const.). Yearn over you. σπλάγχνοις refers to the “nobler viscera,” i.e., the seat of the mind and will, inclusive for the whole inner being. The Lord Jesus Christ brings believers together. How blessed (and, sadly, how rare) is the church in which our Lord Jesus Christ is the center!

HIS PRAYER FOR THEM (V. 9–11)

Each of Paul's major “Prison Epistles” has at least one outstanding and penetrating prayer. These ought to be carefully studied as to their intent and content! (Cf. Col. 1:9ff; Eph. 1:15–23; Eph. 3:14–19).

² The common and general term for prayer is προσεύχη; that of specific request or petition, δεήσις.

Καὶ τοῦτο προσεύχομαι, ἵνα ἡ ἀγάπη ὑμῶν ἔτι μᾶλλον καὶ μᾶλλον περισσεύῃ ἐν ἐπιγνώσει καὶ πάσῃ αἰσθήσει. This is a prayer for discerning love. Cf. full knowledge (ἐπιγνώσει) and deep spiritual insight.

εἰς τὸ δοκιμάζειν ὑμᾶς τὰ διαφέροντα, ἵνα ᾗτε εἰλικρινεῖς καὶ ἀπρόσκοποι εἰς ἡμέραν Χριστοῦ, Purp. cls. Discern things that differ. Tested by sunlight³ and clear in conscience.

πεπληρωμένοι καρπὸν δικαιοσύνης τὸν διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ εἰς δόξαν καὶ ἔπαινον θεοῦ. continuing to be full (πεπληρωμένοι, perf.). The fruit of righteousness are good works. Our lives as such are to glorify God. This is the high and holy calling of every true believer—to seek to glorify God in all things as the constant, practical motivation and manifestation of a true Christian world—and–life–view. Cf. 1 Cor. 10:31.

II

PAUL'S SITUATION AND PERCEPTION (1:12–26)

II. Paul's Present Circumstances	(1:12–26)
His Attitude Toward the Furtherance of the Gospel	(V. 12–20)
His Attitude Toward Life and Death	(V. 21–26)

Or,

The Unexpected Development	(v. 12–18)
The Anticipated Deliverance	(v. 19–20)
The Divided Desire	(v. 21–26)

PAUL'S SITUATION (V. 12–20)

Paul's situation was not as it seemed to the Philippian church. In v. 12–20, Paul details his situation at Rome.

A "PIONEER" MISSIONARY WORK IN ROME (V. 12–14)

(v. 12) Γινώσκειν δὲ ὑμᾶς βούλομαι, ἀδελφοί, ὅτι τὰ κατ' ἐμὲ μᾶλλον εἰς προκοπὴν τοῦ εὐαγγελίου ἐλήλυθεν. The Philippian believers must have supposed that the work and influence of the Apostle had been stifled or stopped because of his imprisonment. The opposite was true. τὰ κατ' ἐμε, my affairs. μᾶλλον, rather, and so contrary to their expectation. εἰς προκοπὴν τοῦ εὐαγγελίου ἐλήλυθεν. (προκοπὴν) to cut before, a term used for the engineers of the Roman Armies who "pioneered" the path.

Obs 1: Paul wanted them to be informed (Γινώσκειν) so they would cease to worry about him, and so they would pray aright for his present circumstances. It is not less than spiritual to tell what others need to know to pray aright. Paul was often asking other believers, and often his own converts, to pray for him.

³ εἰλικρινεῖς, tested by sunlight. Lat: "sincere," or "without wax". An object made of marble and for sale in the agora [marketplace] would be held up to the light by the prospective buyer to see if any flaws had been sealed over with powdered marble mixed with bee's wax to hide them. Transparent.

Obs 2: Things may not be as they seem. When we act according to appearances, we often act improperly or in unbelief. An empirical approach is not necessarily or always the approach of faith. Our prayers may be amiss when we pray according to perceived circumstances.

Obs 3: Although Paul was bound and circumstances might seem foreboding, the Word of God was not bound—it never is.

(v. 13) ὥστε τοὺς δεσμούς μου φανεροὺς ἐν Χριστῷ γενέσθαι ἐν ὅλῳ τῷ πραιτωρίῳ καὶ τοῖς λοιποῖς πάσιν. He was bound for the sake of Christ, and this had become evident. Persons not places, i.e., to the Praetorian Guard and Court [the latter composed of Caesar, the Head of the Praetorian Guard, and 22 Roman Senators].

Obs 1: Being a prisoner in itself is neither necessarily just nor embarrassing. Paul and subsequently others have been incarcerated for the sake of the truth.

Obs 2: One of Paul's greatest hearings was before the supreme court of the Roman world.⁴

(v. 14) καὶ τοὺς πλείονας τῶν ἀδελφῶν ἐν κυρίῳ πεποιθότας τοῖς δεσμοῖς μου περισσοτέρως τολμᾶν ἀφόβως τὸν λόγον λαλεῖν. Many Christians became bold in the Lord (ἐν κυρίῳ πεποιθότας). Paul's chains [imprisonment] emboldened them.

Obs 1: Our boldness is in the Lord, not in ourselves. It is not personality dynamics, but the conviction of truth and the leading of the Spirit that gives us an influence and boldness to serve.

Obs 2: If one believer takes a stand or suffers persecution, are not others (τοὺς πλείονας τῶν ἀδελφῶν, the greater number, majority) made bold, stirred by the Spirit of God, to take a stand?

Obs 3: To take a proper, non-contradictory stand for God in any situation means that it must be backed up and supported by a consistent life. Paul's personal life did not prove an embarrassment to his spoken testimony!

Obs 4: Who will take a stand if we don't? It may be up to you—as an individual—to take that stand at home, at work, in the neighborhood—and possibly even in the church!

A MATTER OF MOTIVE, NOT MESSAGE (V. 15–18)

Some who had evidently been in Rome for quite some time, and had remained silent until now, began to openly preach. Some did so to further the gospel; others did so out of envy, jealousy and strife to add to Paul's suffering. Paul rose above the confusion to rejoice that Christ was preached.

Obs 1: It must be noted very carefully that this was a matter of motive, not message. He would not and could not rejoice in false teaching or a false gospel! These were

⁴ The other was doubtless before the Athenian philosophers, an exchange which, upon close examination, becomes the inspired model for presuppositional apologetics.

not Judaizers who corrupted the gospel, but those who preached the truth, albeit from wrong motives.

Obs 2: There is sadly much jealousy and strife among preachers, who seem to care more for themselves, their reputation and their “cause” than the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Obs 3: We must rise above lesser motives to seek the glory of God in the preaching of truth.

Obs 4: The true Christian must reflect Christ’s love (Jn. 13:34–35), not a contentious spirit! Our Lord raised up the standard higher than even the Law in loving one’s neighbor as himself. He raised to his own level and impressed it upon us. Do we truly love our brothers and sisters in Christ as he loved us? If not, then we must doubt our very state of grace (1 Jn. 3:10–19)! Can we truly rejoice that Christ is preached?

THE CHRISTIAN’S GREAT CONCERN (V. 19–20)

οἶδα γὰρ ὅτι τοῦτό μοι ἀποβήσεται εἰς σωτηρίαν διὰ τῆς ὑμῶν δεήσεως καὶ ἐπιχορηγίας τοῦ πνεύματος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ κατὰ τὴν ἀποκαραδοκίαν καὶ ἐλπίδα μου, ὅτι ἐν οὐδενὶ αἰσχυνθήσομαι ἀλλ’ ἐν πάσῃ παρρησίᾳ ὡς πάντοτε καὶ νῦν μεγαλυνθήσεται Χριστὸς ἐν τῷ σώματί μου, εἴτε διὰ ζωῆς εἴτε διὰ θανάτου.

Paul perceived (οἶδα) that through the intercessory prayers (διὰ τῆς ὑμῶν δεήσεως) of the Philippian church, he would actually be supplied with that fullness and boldness of the Spirit (διὰ τῆς ὑμῶν δεήσεως καὶ ἐπιχορηγίας τοῦ πνεύματος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ)⁵ necessary for him to be bold in his defense and proclamation of the gospel. Life or death were secondary matters for him.

Obs 1: Do we truly believe in the effectiveness of intercessory prayer? Paul did. He greatly depended upon such (κατὰ τὴν ἀποκαραδοκίαν καὶ ἐλπίδα μου), and he was not ashamed to covet the prayers of God’s people—and often even his own converts! It is often a false humility or unbelief which hesitates to ask for intercessory prayer (Eph. 6:18–20).

Obs 2: What are our great concerns? Is the glory of God our prime concern? Is the spiritual placed before the physical? The things of God before our own things? Do we have a passion for the glory of God?!

PAUL’S PERCEPTION (V. 21–26)

From his situation, Paul moves to his own perception of his present circumstances. He lifts us up to the very highest of Christian thoughts—the meaning and significance, the sum and substance of life for the true believer—at least as far as Paul himself, personally, is concerned. He then reveals his manifest longing for heaven and glory, but also the present need to remain and be dutiful in the work which God had ordained for him. Personal faithfulness to the work of God runs throughout this section.

⁵ “Granville Sharps” const., i.e., the first subst. arth.; the second anarth.

THE RELATION OF LIFE TO DEATH (V. 21)

Ἐμοὶ γὰρ τὸ ζῆν Χριστὸς καὶ τὸ ἀποθανεῖν κέρδος. The verbs are equitive, and can be omitted for dramatic effect, or replaced by an = sign. Note that Ἐμοὶ γὰρ is intensely personal and emphatic. Paul speaks for himself and from his own personal perspective. κέρδος is profit from work or investment. It is the end of the life of a δοῦλος of Jesus Christ.

Obs 1: Paul was not morbid, but had lived with the reality of suffering and death on a daily basis for years. The Christian doctrine of immortality is not something theoretical or abstract, but must become a living reality in the life and experience. Cf. Rom. 8:28–39; 1 Cor. 15:50–58.

Obs 2: Paul's perception stands diametrically opposed to that of Satan in the book of Job:

⁴ And Satan answered the LORD, and said, Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life. ⁵ But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face. ⁶ And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thine hand; but save his life. ⁷ So went Satan forth from the presence of the LORD, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown. ⁸ And he took him a potsherd to scrape himself withal; and he sat down among the ashes. ⁹ Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die. ¹⁰ But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips. (Job. 2:4–10).

Obs 3: Death can only be considered a profit if to live equals Christ. If we do not invest in heaven now, what shall we gain at death? Although we can take nothing, we can invest heavily in heavenly things by our service here!

Obs 4: Why would we want our lives to be prolonged? How would we use our time? What would be the purpose? If we were but taken up with the truth of God, our entire time and energy would be much more wisely spent.

Obs 5: The believer may die, but he will never truly experience “death.” Cf. 1 Tim. 1:16–10, which, in its ultimate reality, is eternal separation from God.

⁶ Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee [σε ἀναζωπυρεῖν τὸ χάρισμα τοῦ θεοῦ, ὃ ἐστὶν ἐν σοὶ] by the putting on of my hands. ⁷ For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. ⁸ Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God; ⁹ Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, ¹⁰ But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

THAT WHICH IS “MUCH MORE BETTER” (V. 22–23)

εἰ δὲ τὸ ζῆν ἐν σαρκί, τοῦτό μοι καρπὸς ἔργου, καὶ τί αἰρήσομαι οὐ γνωρίζω. συνέχομαι δὲ ἐκ τῶν δύο, τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν ἔχων εἰς τὸ ἀναλῦσαι καὶ σὺν Χριστῷ εἶναι, πολλῶ [γὰρ] μᾶλλον κρεῖσσον·

Paul was ultimately undecided which would be best. If he continued to live, he would continue to live profitably and usefully for the cause of Christ. If he died, it would be

far better. συνέχομαι δὲ ἐκ τῶν δύο “Pressed in on both sides.” The all-encompassing, strong longing constantly having (τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν ἔχων) “to pull up stakes” (εἰς τὸ ἀναλῦσαι) and be with Christ, which is ‘much more better’” (πολλῶ [γὰρ] μᾶλλον κρείσσον).

Obs 1: Being spiritual does not necessarily meaning having all the answers! Paul was careful never to presume and go beyond himself, what God had revealed to him, or what he perceived through the prompting of the Spirit. We must take care not to give a false spiritual impression through presumption.

Obs 2: For Paul to continue living meant the continuation of the ministry. He did not think of retirement, or that the gospel ministry was limited to a time-frame. All Paul’s thinking and desire was directed toward faithfulness in the ministry until God called him to himself in death.

Obs 3: The inspired apostles used various terms for death. Peter used the term ἐξοδος (2 Pet. 1:15), echoing our Lord (Lk. 9:31); Paul used ἀναλῦσαι (here and in 2 Tim. 4:6). How do we think of death and dying?

Obs 4: Paul describes heaven in these words (σὺν Χριστῷ εἶναι). Heaven means to be with Christ. If we but thought on this, how our lives would be utterly transformed.

PRESENT USEFULNESS (V. 24–26)

τὸ δὲ ἐπιμένειν [ἐν] τῇ σαρκὶ ἀναγκαιότερον δι’ ὑμᾶς. καὶ τοῦτο πεποιθῶς οἶδα ὅτι μενῶ καὶ παραμενῶ πᾶσιν ὑμῖν εἰς τὴν ὑμῶν προκοπὴν καὶ χαρὰν τῆς πίστεως, ἵνα τὸ καύχημα ὑμῶν περισσεύῃ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ ἐν ἐμοὶ διὰ τῆς ἐμῆς παρουσίας πάλιν πρὸς ὑμᾶς.

Paul’s trial before the Praetorian Court was drawing to a close, and he perceived that he would probably be released, and so anticipated coming to them again upon his release and they would rejoice together.

Obs 1: The Christian life is one of purpose and determination. It is manifestly false and sinful for a true Christian to be “bored”! Should we live ten lifetimes, there would be too much to accomplish should our minds and hearts rightly perceive Divine truth and all the glorious possibilities of Christian service!

Obs 2: Paul had an intensely personal and spiritual relation with other believers. He was not an isolationist except by contrary circumstances. Cf. Rom. 1:8–12:

⁸ First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world. ⁹ For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers; ¹⁰ Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you. ¹¹ For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established; ¹² That is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.

Obs 3: The confidence of faith (καὶ τοῦτο πεποιθῶς οἶδα ὅτι μενῶ καὶ παραμενῶ πᾶσιν ὑμῖν). This is the perception of faith. It was not infallible; it was based on circumstances and spiritual necessity, but Paul was bold to assert by faith what he

anticipated. What of our faith? Can we assert from faith? Do we possess true spiritual perception?

III THE FIRST PRACTICAL EXHORTATIONS (1:27–2:18)

The Apostle, after informing them of his situation and his personal perception of it, proceeds to exhort them to spiritual perception and unity among themselves. These exhortations are mingled with statements concerning the sustaining grace of God for their comfort and encouragement. The outline is as follows:

Paul’s First Practical Exhortations to the Philippians	(1:27–2:18)
An Appeal for Steadfastness in the Face of Opposition	(1:27–30)
An Appeal for Spiritual Unity in the Congregation	(2:1–4)
An Appeal for Humility in the Congregation	(2:5–11)
An Appeal to Realize Christ–Likeness in the Life	(2:12–18)

AN APPEAL FOR STEADFASTNESS IN THE FACE OF OPPOSITION (1:27–30)

Paul’s call for steadfastness is four–fold:

- Christian Citizenship–A Look Above (v. 27a)
- Christian Character–A Look Within (v. 27b)
- Christian Courage– A Look Without (v. 28–29)
- Christian Conflict– A Look Around (v. 30).

CHRISTIAN CITIZENSHIP (v. 27a)

The word “only” [Μόνον] refers to the preceding (cf. v. 22–26). Only if their behavior reflects the truth of the gospel will Paul’s ministry bear the good fruit he anticipates, thus his great concern. ἀξίως τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τοῦ Χριστοῦ πολιτεύεσθε. The term “conversation” [πολιτεύεσθε] refers to the behavior of citizenship.⁶ Cf. that Philippi was a Roman *Colonia*. It refers to citizenship (from πόλις, city) and thus to a community spirit or behavior and relationship, as is evident from the remainder of v. 27. The believer is not and can never be considered as an isolated entity, but always in the context of other believers—in the context of a Christian assembly.

Obs 1: The modern concern with “numbers” and “decisions” has drawn away attention from the words of our Lord who said that we should bear fruit and that this fruit [converts] would remain. There will probably always be false professors, and care ought to be taken to warn professing believers of their profession and to edify and strengthen true believers through consistent preaching and teaching.

Obs 2: We are to behave as citizens of a heavenly kingdom! Cf. 3:20. The modern concern for professions or decisions should include a great concern for the lifestyle of God’s professed people!

⁶ There are a variety of terms translated as “conversation” which variously denote either conversion or lifestyle: στρέφω, ἐπιστρέφω, ἀναστρέφω, τρόπος, περιπατέω and πολιτεύμα.

Obs 3: The context of the local assembly [gathered church] is presupposed in the New Testament. There is a special sense in which God is among his people and his blessing is pronounced when the assembly is gathered (1 Tim. 3:14–15; Heb. 10:25).

CHRISTIAN CHARACTER (V. 27b)

Note the three interrelated characteristics: (1) ὅτι στήκετε ἐν ἐνὶ πνεύματι. The Holy Spirit brings a spirit of true spiritual unity to the congregation. (2) μιᾷ ψυχῇ. Soul, life–principle, the heart and mind together, the complete inner person. The church (as a body of believers) is to act as though it had only one soul, is animated by one life–principle. (3) συναθροῦντες τῇ πίστει τοῦ εὐαγγελίου. Contending in a unified manner (συναθροῦντες) as in an atheletic contest or contending in battle—God’s atheletes. God’s gladiators. What God wants is courageous, outstanding Christians who will stand unashamedly and contend for the truth. τῇ πίστει τοῦ εὐαγγελίου. (Articular).⁷ The doctrinal content of Christianity as it centers in the gospel message. Doctrine must ever under gird action.

Obs 1: There is no substitute for true, God–engendered spiritual unity.⁸ No church can afford to be without this necessary distinctive! Any hope of true blessing exists within the context of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.

Obs 2: Paul stresses unity throughout this epistle. Contention, division, envy, gossip, strife, etc., destroys any possibility of unity and grieves the Spirit of God, and hence removes the possibility of his blessing.

Obs 3: The church is not a hospital or sick bay designed by God to nurse injured personalities or a counseling center for the distraught. It is an armory to train and equip God’s soldiers! Much thought ought to be given to Paul’s “military metaphors” which, through Divine inspiration, he uses to describe the people, work and design of God.

Obs 4: The modern idea that doctrine is restrictive or needless is absolutely wrong! All spiritual activity, all service for Christ must be undergirded by solid, consistent doctrine! It is doctrine which is foundational to all Christianity. A doctrinless Christianity is a weak, inconsistent and unstable Christianity. When objective doctrinal [biblical] truth is omitted, an existential subjectivism rushes to fill the void.

CHRISTIAN COURAGE (V. 28–29)

καὶ μὴ πτυρόμενοι ἐν μηδενὶ ὑπὸ τῶν ἀντικειμένων, ἧτις ἐστὶν αὐτοῖς ἔνδειξις ἀπωλείας, ὑμῶν δὲ σωτηρίας, καὶ τοῦτο ἀπὸ θεοῦ. The term πτύρω is used of startled horses who become frightened and uncontrollable. ἐν μηδενι In not [even] one thing! Not startled in anything by our adversaries who are lined up against us [τῶν ἀντικειμένων, those set against us, lined up against us]. We do have and will have opposition. The idea is that of an opposing army lined up in battle array. When believers stand courageously and unified

⁷ The word “gospel,” when articular, usually points to the doctrinal content of the gospel message.

⁸ Paul uses another military metaphor for unity in 3:16, “let us walk...” στοιχεῖν, walk in step, march as a soldier. The congregation ought to keep in step as God’s soldiers!

against all opposition, it is a token of the truth of God and thus of the certain judgment upon unbelievers, and also a witness to their own salvation. ἔνδειξις a law-term from the Attic dialect for proof from evidence or appeal to the facts.

ὅτι ὑμῖν ἐχαρίσθη τὸ ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ, οὐ μόνον τὸ εἰς αὐτὸν πιστεύειν ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ πάσχειν. We stand, not in our own strength, but by the ministry of the enabling grace of God through Jesus Christ. It is by grace that we continue to believe and continue to suffer. Suffering as a Christian is a high and holy privilege and honor.

Obs 1: We should not be startled or frightened by spiritual opposition, although it may be surprising from whence it may come. It may not be “the world, the flesh and the devil,” as much as from other well-meaning, but graceless or misguided religious people.

Obs 2: It is the truth—Divine truth—that illicit the hatred and opposition of the world. The world will tolerate religious tradition and irrationalism, but it has an inherent and often intense hatred of the truth.

Obs 3: The world’s opposition to the truth reveals its graceless state and ultimately seals its destiny.

CHRISTIAN CONFLICT (V. 30).

τὸν αὐτὸν ἀγῶνα ἔχοντες, οἷον εἶδετε ἐν ἐμοὶ καὶ νῦν ἀκούετε ἐν ἐμοί. The Philippians had seen Paul shamefully treated and imprisoned at Philippi, and now heard of the same about him at Rome. This was also their conflict or battle to be waged. No believer can remain a mere spectator in spiritual conflict.

Obs: Our enemies are the world, the flesh and the devil, not other believers. But, sadly Christians are ever prone to fight among themselves, and the graceless among religious professors are a constant source of sorrow and grief.

AN APPEAL FOR SPIRITUAL UNITY IN THE CONGREGATION (2:1–4)

Review of the structure:

Paul’s First Practical Exhortations to the Philippians	(1:27–2:18)
An Appeal for Steadfastness in the Face of Opposition	(1:27–30)
An Appeal for Spiritual Unity in the Congregation	(2:1–4)
An Appeal for Humility in the Congregation	(2:5–11)
An Appeal to Realize Christ–Likeness in the Life	(2:12–18)

This appeal for spiritual unity in the congregation (2:1–4) follows closely the necessity of unity in 1:27–30 and also prepares for the lengthy section on humility in 2:5–18. The idea of the community spirit that ought to and must necessarily exist among the people of God in the local assembly was first mentioned in 1:27 under the figure of citizenship, then assumed in 1:27–30. It is necessary for God’s blessing, for strength in the face of the opposition, is possible through the enabling grace of God, is founded in our union with Christ, must characterize true fellowship, is the great preventative from doing things the wrong way, and finds expression in humility and a true, godly interest in and concern for others.

The structure of 1:27–2:4 under the general heading of Spiritual Unity:

- *The Nature of Spiritual Unity* (1:27a). It is inherent in the very nature of the local assembly of God’s people as members of Christ’s body and the kingdom of God.
- *The Demonstration of Spiritual Unity* (1:27b). The church demonstrates such spiritual unity when it acts as though it possesses only one life–principle.
- *The Necessity for Spiritual Unity* (1:28). Our spiritual adversaries are lined up or arrayed against us. Mutual concerns, prayers and encouragement means greater strength.
- *The Dynamic of Spiritual Unity* (1:29–30). We stand by the grace of God, not in our own strength.
- *The Presupposition of Spiritual Unity* (2:1). These realities are inherent in and made possible by the believer’s union with Christ.
- *The Exhortation to Spiritual Unity* (2:2). The Apostle Paul lists the essence of spiritual unity—oneness of heart and mind.
- *The Expression of Spiritual Unity* (2:2–4). This is considered both negatively (v. 3) and then positively (v. 4).

The outline for 2:1–4 is four–fold:

- The Spiritual Basis for Spiritual Unity (2:1)
- The Personal Admonition to Spiritual Unity (2:2)
- The Negative Expression of Spiritual Unity (2:3a)
- The Positive Expression of Spiritual Unity (2:3b–4)

THE BASIS FOR SPIRITUAL UNITY (2:1)

If *there be* therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies...

Εἴ τις οὖν παράκλησις ἐν Χριστῷ, εἴ τι παραμύθιον ἀγάπης, εἴ τις κοινωνία πνεύματος, εἴ τις σπλάγχνα καὶ οἰκτιρμοί,

Verse 1 is comprised of several *protases* [“if” clauses] of the first cl. cond., implying that the conditions are real or true, and usually to be translated as “since.” The issue is that these are to be assumed as true.

There are two possible translations: (1) The *apodoses* are included by *illipsis*, e.g., “If any consolation [let it be] in Christ, if any comfort [let it be] in love, if any fellowship [let it be that] of the Spirit, if any [“fellowship” implied, let it be] tenderness and compassion.” (2) The *protases* all find their *apodoses* or conclusion in v.2, e.g., “[Assuming the consolation in Christ, [assuming] the comfort of [his] love, [assuming] the fellowship in the Spirit, [assuming] tenderness and compassion, Fulfill ye my joy.”

The only remaining issue is whether *παράκλησις* is to be translated as “consolation” or “exhortation.” Both ideas may be included, but the context seems to point to exhortation, as this is an *appeal* for Spiritual Unity.

Because of these glorious spiritual realities, which believers are to experience and enjoy, they must seek a greater degree of spiritual unity. Spiritual realities do not guarantee realization—there is a great degree of human responsibility to apprehend and bring these to realization in our experience.

THE ADMONITION TO SPIRITUAL UNITY (2:2)

πληρώσατέ μου τὴν χαρὰν (aor. imp.). Then he states how his joy is to be fulfilled... The same thing think. (τὸ αὐτὸ φρονήτε). The same love [the love that Christ has for us], keep on having (τὴν αὐτὴν ἀγάπην ἔχοντες). [Be] one-souled (σύμφυχοι). Continue to be one-minded (τὸ ἐν φρονοῦντες). What a church would be like if these were true. What could be accomplished if these were abiding realities.

THE NEGATIVE WAY OF SPIRITUAL UNITY (2:3a)

Paul first states the expression of such Spiritual Unity in a negative sense. “Nothing” (μηδέν), it: not [even] one thing—yet much of what is attempted or performed in Christian service is done through strife (κατ’ ἐριθείαν, selfish rivalry or ambition) or empty boasting (κατὰ κευδοξίαν, conceit, desire to boast). Personal agenda, pride, selfishness, competition, worldly measures all taint the work of God, give occasion against the cause of Christ and grieve the Holy Spirit. Paul was seeing the very same thing at Rome (Cf. 1:15–18).

THE POSITIVE WAY OF SPIRITUAL UNITY (2:3b–4)

ἀλλήλους ἑαυτῶν, ⁴ μὴ τὰ ἑαυτῶν ἕκαστος ἀλλὰ [καὶ] τὰ ἐτέρων ἕκαστοι.

Paul now demonstrates the exact opposite. “But” (ἀλλὰ) carries the idea of “opposite to this.” There are two considerations:

1. In “lowliness of mind” (τῇ ταπεινοφροσύνῃ). The def. art. points to the unique Christian virtue of humility. The term was always used by profane Greek as a term of being despicable, groveling, shabby, worthless. Christianity uplifted and sanctified it as a Christian virtue or grace. Everyone must esteem others as continuing to be more worthy (ἡγούμενοι ὑπερέχοντες) than him or herself.

How can this be true and not a false humility if another is lazy, spiritually dull or immature? We must be aware of several realities:

- We deserve nothing but Divine wrath. Our standing is by free and sovereign grace alone. There is absolutely no room whatsoever for spiritual pride or despising others.
 - Every believer has an equal standing before God.
 - Those who are gifted have no reason to boast in their abilities, for they are gracious and God-given.
 - Every believer has some ability or trait which is unique and necessary to the congregation in the providence of God.
2. We are not to be concerned only about ourselves and our things, but we are to also be concerned about the things pertaining to others. “Look” (σκοποῦντες, an imperatival ptc.) means to take a personal, careful continual interest in... We are to be concerned about others, not simply to criticize or provoke, but to minister! These “things” are inclusive. Consider the various issues which may cause division, discouragement or disappointment in the lives of individual believers or affect the congregation as a whole.

AN APPEAL FOR HUMILITY IN THE CONGREGATION (2:5–11)

Review of the structure:

Paul's First Practical Exhortations to the Philippians	(1:27–2:18)
An Appeal for Steadfastness in the Face of Opposition	(1:27–30)
An Appeal for Spiritual Unity in the Congregation	(2:1–4)
An Appeal for Humility in the Congregation	(2:5–11)
An Appeal to Realize Christ–Likeness in the Life	(2:12–18)

The general, inclusive outline for this appeal for Spiritual Humility is as follows:

The Practical Exhortation to Humility	(2:5)
The Infinite Example of Humility	(2:6–11)
The Immediate Experience of Humility	(2:12–18)

The analysis of this immediate section of 2:5–11:

The Exhortation to Humility in Having the Mind of Christ	(2:5a)
The Disposition of Christ as Our Great Example	(2:5b)
The Exemplification of Humility in the Self–Renunciation of Christ	(2:6–8)
The Exaltation of Christ as the Result of His Self–Renunciation	(2:9–11).

THE EXHORTATION TO HUMILITY IN HAVING THE MIND OF CHRIST (2:5a)

Τοῦτο φρονεῖτε ἐν ὑμῖν ὃ καὶ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ... “This keep on thinking in your situation as in the case of Christ Jesus...” The exhortation is to humility, as the context reveals. Paul takes up the thought from the previous passage and amplifies it. Such exhortation is necessary, considering fallen human nature and the nature of the local church as an assembly of believers. The tendency is toward pride, self–exaltation and personal agenda, and this must never be forgotten. It was so even among the beloved Philippians.

THE DISPOSITION OF CHRIST OUR GREAT EXAMPLE (2:5b)

Τοῦτο φρονεῖτε ἐν ὑμῖν ὃ καὶ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ... The Lord Jesus Christ is our great Example. He had every reason to be who and what he was as very God, but he relinquished it all to become a servant and become obedient even unto such a death as a cross—for our redemption. The Christlikeness of 2:1 and the true humility of 2:3–4 are now honed by a great and infinite illustration.

Obs: The Lord Jesus Christ is ever our great Example. Not only are we emulate him in all things, but God himself is in the very process of conforming us to the image of his Son (Rom. 8:29).

THE EXEMPLIFICATION OF HUMILITY IN THE SELF–RENUNCIATION OF CHRIST (2:6–8)

This may have been a primitive hymn, as in the original, it possesses a hymn–like structure and rhyme. If so, it should cause us to consider if we take seriously and seek to implement the truth we sing. The issue is the humiliation and exaltation of our Lord. Because this is a vital Christological passage, it ought to be studied closely.

ὃς ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων... “Form” (ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ, emph. pos.) refers to the appearance which is true of the inner being or nature. ὑπάρχων (pres. ptc.), “[eternally] subsisting” stands in contrast to the following aor. vbs., and so emphasizes that the Deity of our Lord was a constant reality, even in his state of humiliation.

οὐχ ἄρπαγμὸν ἠγήσατο τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ... Did not selfishly cling⁹ to his right and prerogative, equality with God in all its outward splendor and majesty.

ἀλλὰ ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν... “but emptied himself.” Not of his Deity, which was and is immutable. He voluntarily set aside his external glory and majesty, his favorable relation to his own law to become a criminal with the imputation of our sins, his own prerogative as the “Servant of יהוה” [YHWH], and even finally as the Lord of life, he gave his own life for our redemption. And what is it that we cannot give up?

μορφὴν δούλου λαβών... He was in reality a servant—a slave—in his condescension.¹⁰ He came to do the Father’s will without hesitation or objection—the subordination of Christ.¹¹

ἐν ὁμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος... “likeness” implies other than a strict and full identity. He possessed a true human body and nature, yet without sin. γενόμενος “became.” He entered into a new state. He was more than a man, he was the God–Man. He emptied himself by taking to himself a human nature, body and soul.

καὶ σχήματι εὔρεθεις ὡς ἄνθρωπος ἔταπείνωσεν ἑαυτὸν γενόμενος ὑπήκοος μέχρι θανάτου, θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ. The words σχήματι εὔρεθεις ὡς ἄνθρωπος refer to the outward appearance. He appeared to be no more than a man outwardly. The repetition of γενόμενος emph. the progressive humiliation of our Lord. ὑπήκοος “obedient” to the will of God—an obedience without bounds. And we tend to complain and excuse ourselves? μέχρι θανάτου, θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ. Anarth. to emph. extent. The Lord of Glory condescended to become man, suffered torture at the hands of his own creatures, and was put to death as a criminal.

Obs 1: The great and glorious Christological passage ought to be the sovereign plaster and cure for all spiritual pride and the salve of all true spiritual humility! How can Christians be prideful and self-centered in light of their own Lord and Savior and his voluntary humiliation?!

Obs 2: The way to greatness and glory is through suffering and adversity. This is a universal principle which applied even to the very Son of God! Do any of us dare to think that we, barely saved from the reigning power of sin, will be the sole exception?!

THE EXALTATION OF CHRIST AS THE RESULT OF HIS SELF-RENUNCIATION (2:9–11)

The exaltation of our Lord is not inconsistent with his Deity, which remained immutable. The exaltation of Christ concerns his human nature as the God–Man. It is as the

⁹ ἄρπαγμὸν, the basic idea is that of seizing, and so clutching, then retaining something.

¹⁰ Almost every apostolic writer in the N.T. introduces himself as a δούλος, or willing bondsman of Jesus Christ. Now our Lord was himself a slave, one entirely given up to the Father’s will in his state of humiliation! How filled with pride and graceless are those professing Christians who are too good in their own eyes to condescend to be humble and serving!

¹¹ The subordination of the Son to the Father in his state of humiliation is *not* to be equated with the false theory of “subordinationism” which holds that our Lord was inherently inferior to the Father.

God–Man, with a glorified human nature, that our Lord was exalted. This exaltation derived from the nature, obedience and work of his humiliation (διὸ καὶ ὁ θεὸς αὐτὸν ὑπερύψωσεν), super–exalted, to the highest. As the God–Man our Lord was given “The Name” (ἔχαρίσατο αὐτῷ τὸ ὄνομα τὸ ὑπὲρ πᾶν ὄνομα). The title “Lord” and the declaration of “The Name” is equivalent to stating that “Jesus” [including his glorified human nature] is now יהוה. Adam desired to be a “god,” or like God himself (פּאָטֵהוּ). What he failed to do in disobedience, our Lord did in and through his obedience. Note the emph. const. (ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ πᾶν γόνυ κάμψη... καὶ πᾶσα γλῶσσα ἑξομολογήσεται ὅτι κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς).

The believer, then, must humble himself under the mighty hand of God, and God will exalt him in due time (1 Pet. 5:6–7):

Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.

The goal of the believer’s life is Christlikeness, as the following application makes clear:

AN APPEAL TO REALIZE CHRIST–LIKENESS IN THE LIFE (2:12–18)

Review of the structure:

Paul’s First Practical Exhortations to the Philippians	(1:27–2:18)
An Appeal for Steadfastness in the Face of Opposition	(1:27–30)
An Appeal for Spiritual Unity in the Congregation	(2:1–4)
An Appeal for Humility in the Congregation	(2:5–11)
An Appeal to Realize Christ–Likeness in the Life	(2:12–18)

The structure of v. 12–18 generally follows an alternating pattern:

A) The Entreaty for Christlikeness	(v. 12)
B) The Gracious Enablement	(v. 13)
A) The Entreaty for Willingness and Unity	(v. 14)
B) The Godly Result	(v. 15)
A) The Entreaty for Gospel Preeminence	(v. 16a)
B) The Good Reason	(v. 16b–17)
A) The Entreaty to Rejoice	(v. 18)

THE ENTREATY FOR CHRISTLIKENESS (V. 12)

The Apostle is tender, but very pointed in his appeal (“Ὡστε, ἀγαπητοί μου). What follows is the logical conclusion of the exhortations which began in 1:27. They are to obey whether he is present or not. No Christian “clock watchers” or “people pleasers.” The central thought is found in the words “work out” (κατεργάζεσθε), which mean “bring something to its logical conclusion.” In this context, it is Christlikeness in the life (Cf. Rom. 8:29). This is paramount in personal responsibility (μετὰ φόβου καὶ τρόμου τὴν ἑαυτῶν σωτηρίαν κατεργάζεσθε). A culm. emph.? What stronger terms could be used? The imp. is pres. (“keep on bringing [persevere in] your salvation to its logical conclusion”). There is always much room for improvement and progress.

Obs: Christ–likeness is our one and only goal. How simple is the biblical imperative, but how complex is religious tradition, which would side–track the child of God and divert his energies, hopes and concentration in other directions.

THE GRACIOUS ENABLEMENT (V. 13)

Christ-likeness is not by natural gifts or mere human effort, but rather by the free and sovereign grace of God (θεός γάρ ἐστὶν ὁ ἐνεργῶν ἐν ὑμῖν), and this grace is effectual (ἐνεργῶν). What a glorious thing is God’s grace. He not only enables, he even effects the willingness. (καὶ τὸ θέλει καὶ τὸ ἐνεργεῖν ὑπὲρ τῆς εὐδοκίας).

THE ENTREATY FOR WILLINGNESS AND UNITY (V. 14)

There is absolutely no room for grumbling or complaint. (Πάντα ποιεῖτε χωρὶς γογγυσμῶν καὶ διαλογισμῶν). Yet this sadly characterizes much of modern, professing Christianity—what we have lost, what we need, what we want, etc., etc. Paul would have none of this. What complaints there are among professing Christians who are taken up with their individual problems and situations, feeling sorry for themselves! How foreign to the Apostle’s appeal and the great need to present ourselves before the world as those who live in reality unafraid, unashamed and unified in the truth of the gospel! Do we pray even to be made willing?

Obs: How sad that we hear so much complaint among the professed people of God! Are we being harried for our lives? Persecuted and killed for the name of Christ? We live in relatively security and luxury, and it bodes us ill, for we have become worldly and passive, rather than spiritual and active for the glory of God and the cause of Christ.

THE GODLY RESULT (V. 15)

There is great room for growth (ἵνα γένησθε [might become] ἄμεμπτοι καὶ ἀκέραιοι). Inclusive, pres. imp. Free of censure and unmixed [with evil or wrong, that which is bad]. We must become in life what we are in reality, the children of God (τέκνα θεοῦ, “born ones,” those who bear the family characteristics) without rebuke in an age dark and perverted (ἄμωμα μέσον γενεᾶς σκολιᾶς καὶ διεστραμμένης) in which we are to shine as luminaries in the world (ἐν οἷς φαίνεσθε ὡς φωστῆρες ἐν κόσμῳ). φωστῆρες, those who give light.¹² Are we giving light to this world?

Obs: Believers are to be the light of the world and the salt of the earth. Light and salt—does this characterize our Christianity? What does?

THE ENTREATY FOR GOSPEL PREEMINENCE (V. 16a)

The Word of life continuing to hold up (λόγον ζωῆς ἐπέχοντες) for all to see. An imp. ptc.? Is this what we are and what we do?. Light is the one thing needful in the darkness—and this world is steeped in spiritual and moral darkness. Again, the Apostle draws a much different picture than we see today. What a contrast... Look at modern, evangelical Christianity—weak, self-absorbed, characterized by counseling, troubles, various addictions, soft living and little effort in the service of Christ.

THE GOOD REASON (V. 16b–17)

Their faithfulness in living lives which illuminate the world with the gospel would cause him to rejoice both in view of the day of Christ or on that final day (εἰς καύχημα ἔμοι

¹² As contrasted with λάμπας, merely reflecting the light from another source.

εἰς ἡμέραν Χριστου). It would mean that he had not labored to no purpose in his ministry among them (ὅτι οὐκ εἰς κενὸν ἔδραμον οὐδὲ εἰς κενὸν ἔκοπίασα). Every preacher greatly desires to be used of God and see true fruitfulness in the lives of his people. To Paul, this was more important than life itself. Although not a pastor, yet he characterizes in all his letters a pastor’s heart. He was more than willing to be poured out as a libation [σπένδομαι, as a drink offering, ref. to his life–blood] should it mean their spiritual advancement and victory (Ἀλλὰ εἰ καὶ σπένδομαι ἐπὶ τῇ θυσίᾳ καὶ λειτουργίᾳ τῆς πίστεως ὑμῶν). His joy stood in their faithfulness (χαίρω καὶ συγχαίρω πᾶσιν ὑμῖν). Where is our joy? Where is your joy?

Obs: Modern Christianity has substituted “happiness” for joy, as part of its seduction by the world and the guise of worldly success. Human “happiness” is frail, fleeting and dependent upon circumstances; God–given joy survives to thrill the soul, even in and through the severest trials.

THE ENTREATY TO REJOICE (V. 18)

The Apostle Paul calls upon them to rejoice with him in his circumstances (τὸ δὲ αὐτὸ καὶ ὑμεῖς χαίρετε καὶ συγχαίρετέ μοι), in the grace of God which would enable them all—Paul and the Philippians—to win the victory.

A NOTE ON THESE APPEALS OF 1:27–2:18

Considering the series of appeals in 1:27–2:18 necessitates asking and answering several questions. These questions derive from the practical exhortations of this section and the nature of Christian experience.

- What are the various aspects of the believer’s life and why do we need to consider each?
 1. *The Eternal Aspect.* We are the eternal objects of the redemptive grace of the Triune God. God has revealed his eternal redemptive purpose in his Word for our comfort, encouragement and assurance. If left with only our subjective Christian experience, we would at times fall into despair and uncertainty. Consider the comfort of Divine election, predestination, covenant atonement, effectual calling, regeneration and the relation of sanctification to justification.
 2. *The Doctrinal Aspect.* We are effectually called, regenerated, converted, justified, adopted and sanctified. We anticipate our certain glorification. Should we as Christians think in doctrinal terms, our thinking would be much more scriptural and logical.
 3. *The Experiential Aspect.* We are to strive for Christlikeness by the enabling grace of God. The picture Paul draws of believers in this section is not that of weak, vacillating believers who constantly need to be propped up by counseling, or further spiritual or subjective experiences, but citizens of a heavenly kingdom; athletes, warriors or gladiators; those who understand the grace of God in suffering; those who know the glory and reality of their union with Christ; those who are empty of self and personal agenda and striving by the grace of God for Christlikeness in

their lives; those who are holding up the gospel in a darkened and perverted age; those who love God and truth more than life itself.

4. *The Ecclesiastical Aspect.* We are members of the same assembly, the same body. The New Testament never overlooks this most important aspect. The implications are found in a unified stand before the world and age in which we live—not as cringing, weak, sorry individuals, but as unified spiritual warriors, motivated by one spiritual life—principle.
 5. *The Public Aspect.* We are to present ourselves and the validity of our Christianity to the community and the world at large. The world sees the falseness or validity of Christianity as it looks at us in our practical Christianity.
- What tends to occur when the admonition of 2:1–3 is not taken seriously? A mock humility results, which is sinful because it is deceptive and unchristlike. Mock humility tends to give way to perceived weaknesses and self-righteousness.
 - What tends to occur when the admonition of 2:4 is not taken seriously? One’s affairs and troubles usually become totally engrossing. Forgetting others, one becomes preoccupied with his or her own alleged troubles and any positive influence on the church or the community is stifled. We simply become a burden to ourselves and others, and any true influence for Christ, his kingdom and the gospel is lost.
 - What tends to occur when the admonition of 2:12 is not taken seriously? Believers usually either draw back into a cold, dead, critical orthodoxy (contra v. 14–16) or begin to rely on themselves and perceived abilities rather than the enabling grace of God.

IV. PAUL’S PLANS FOR HIS CO-WORKERS (2:19–30)

The passage is situated in the epistle in the following manner:

I. Paul’s Relation to the Philippians	(1:3–11)
II. Paul’s Present Circumstances	(1:12–26)
III. Paul’s First Practical Exhortations to the Philippians	(1:27–2:18)
An Appeal for Steadfastness in the Face of Opposition	(1:27–30)
An Appeal for Spiritual Unity in the Congregation	(2:1–4)
An Appeal for Humility in the Congregation	(2:5–11)
An Appeal to Realize Christ-Likeness in the Life	(2:12–18)
IV. Paul’s Plans for his Co-workers	(2:19–30)

The immediate passage itself is simply two-fold as it deals first, with Timothy, and, second, with Epaphroditus:

- A. Concerning Timothy (v. 19–24)
- B. Concerning Epaphroditus (v. 25–30)

The Apostle Paul is nearing the end of his trial before the Roman Supreme [Praetorian] Court. He believes that he may be acquitted and able then to return to his missionary journeys. He intends to immediately send Epaphroditus back to Philippi with this epistle, then shortly thereafter Timothy, and then he himself, if it is the will of God.

Paul now reveals his intention and these plans to the Philippian Church and then commends these two men in the highest terms, as exemplifying what he had previously

exhorted the Philippians to be in 1:27–2:18. He leaves no room for doubt as to his situation in sending someone else and in their receiving Epaphroditus with honor.

CONCERNING TIMOTHY (V. 19–24)

The Acknowledgment of the Supreme Will of God	(V. 19a)
The Mutual Concern of the Apostle	(V. 19b)
The Anticipated Mission of Timothy	(V. 19c)
The Sad Admission of the Apostle	(V. 20–21)
The Faithfulness and Suitableness of Timothy	(V. 22)
The Proper Time to Send Timothy	(V. 23)
The Anticipation of the Apostle in the Will of God	(V. 24)

This section begins with the particle δὲ, [but], marking the transition from the admonitions to sending his co-workers.

THE ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THE SUPREME WILL OF GOD (V. 19a)

Ἐλπίζω δὲ ἐν κυρίῳ Ἰησοῦ... Paul’s will was always subject to the overriding will, purpose and providence of God. And these were not mere words—he was serious. He viewed the entirety of his life under the sovereign disposal and lordship of Jesus Christ. He uses this terminology twice in this passage (cf. v. 24). Note that Paul was always planning ahead. Nothing was “left to chance,” as our common saying has it. He was constantly fervent and gospel-minded in the context of God’s will. What are we doing right now for the future should God give us life and freedom?

Obs: The Christian life is one of purpose and determination. Without these, our usefulness in God’s kingdom will remain incidental, and never profitable. As well have a ship without a rudder or a vehicle without a steering wheel as a Christian without purpose.

THE ANTICIPATED MISSION OF TIMOTHY (V. 19b)

Τιμόθεον ταχέως πέμψαι ὑμῖν... emph. pos. of “Timothy.” Timothy was the one man who could fulfill this mission. How blessed it is to be truly useful to God in the work of his Kingdom. Loving obedience to the revealed will of God is ever the path to and of blessing.

THE MUTUAL CONCERN OF THE APOSTLE (V. 19c)

ἵνα καὶ γὰρ εὐψυχῶ γινῶσθε τὰ περὶ ὑμῶν. As the Philippians were anxious concerning Paul, he was greatly desirous to know of their spiritual state. It would greatly cheer him. εὐψυχῶ, good cheer, lit: “good-souled.” What a blessing and encouragement when others do our souls good. What blessing when we are able to lift up the souls of others!

THE SAD ADMISSION OF THE APOSTLE (V. 20–21)

οὐδένα γὰρ ἔχω ἰσόψυχον, ὅστις γινησίως τὰ περὶ ὑμῶν μεριμνήσει· οἱ πάντες γὰρ τὰ ἑαυτῶν ζητοῦσιν, οὐ τὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. This does not describe those closest to him, such as Luke or Titus, as they were doubtless gone elsewhere, but others who ought to be concerned about the work of God in other places.

2 Tim. 4:9–12. Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me: ¹⁰ For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world [ἀγαπήσας τὸν νῦν αἰῶνα], and is

departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia. ¹¹ Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry. ¹² And Tychicus have I sent to Ephesus.

Only Timothy was like-minded [ἰσόψυχον, sharing the same feelings as Timothy] to genuinely care for them. οἱ πάντες, “the whole of them, i.e., the lot of them.” “Naturally” [γνησίως, genuinely].

Obs 1: By nature, we care mostly for ourselves, not others, and the gospel often, sadly does little to change this, hence the admonition of 2:4. This is not the fault of the gospel, but its imperfect reception and understanding in our own experience and lives. There is also a sad artificiality in much of religion which talks but does not act. E.g., “We will pray for you,” or “You are in our prayers.”

Obs 2: It was true in Paul’s day; it is true in ours—most lack a true vision of the essence and purpose of the Christian life and of individual responsibility.

THE FAITHFULNESS AND SUITABLENESS OF TIMOTHY (V. 22)

τὴν δὲ δοκιμὴν αὐτοῦ γινώσκετε, ὅτι ὡς πατρὶ τέκνον σὺν ἐμοὶ ἐδούλευσεν εἰς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον. But proof of him ye know [are acquainted with]...what a blessed reputation to be tried and proven [τὴν δὲ δοκιμὴν, proof by testing]. Timothy was the “spit n’ image”¹³ of Paul in the work of the gospel. σὺν together with, a partner. ἐδούλευσεν Both Paul and his spiritual son, Timothy, were “willing bondslaves” in the work of the gospel. It is always a matter of grace and a matter of the will....

THE PROPER TIME TO SEND TIMOTHY (V. 23)

τοῦτον μὲν οὖν ἐλπίζω πέμψαι ὡς ἂν ἀφίδω τὰ περὶ ἐμὲ ἔξουτῆς. The outcome of the trial is still in doubt (μὲν...ἂν), although Paul believes that he will be acquitted. Epaphroditus will bear this epistle, Timothy will come as soon as possible with further news.

THE ANTICIPATION OF THE APOSTLE IN THE WILL OF GOD (V. 24)

πέποιθα δὲ ἐν κυρίῳ ὅτι καὶ αὐτὸς ταχέως ἐλεύσομαι. He had come to a tentative conclusion concerning his trial (πέποιθα δὲ ἐν κυρίῳ) either through Divine revelation or premonition. So he himself would shortly come to them. Paul was cautious concerning spiritual premonition. We must never set aside the truth of spiritual premonition in the work of the Holy Spirit, who convicts, enables, gives spiritual intuition and direction.

CONCERNING EPAPHRODITUS (V. 25–30)

The Immediate Sending of Epaphroditus	(V. 25a)
The Character of Epaphroditus Emphasized	(V. 25b)
The Circumstances of the Mission and Ministry of Epaphroditus	(V. 26–28)
The Honorable Reception to be Given to Epaphroditus	(V. 29)

¹³ “Spit n’ image” is an abbreviation of “spirit and image” of someone.

THE IMMEDIATE SENDING OF EPAPHRODITUS (V. 25a)

Who was Epaphroditus? His name means “lovely” [from Aphrodite, the goddess of love). Names are somewhat arbitrary, given for various reasons. Here is a Christian man who lives up to his name. He was evidently an elder or at the very least, a godly leader in the Philippian Church, sent to give Paul a gift and remain with him as a helper in the work (ὁμῶν δὲ ἀπόστολον καὶ λειτουργὸν τῆς χρείας μου, v. 25b). The authority rested with the church, and it had acted officially in sending Epaphroditus as a messenger or delegate, representative to help Paul (cf. v. 30). He had become sick either on his way to or after his arrival at Rome and had almost died. He was now recovered, and his ministry was concluded. It was better, due to circumstances, for him to return to Philippi. He would bear this letter and inform the church of Paul’s circumstances.

THE CHARACTER OF EPAPHRODITUS EMPHASIZED (V. 25b)

Paul calls Epaphroditus his “Brother,” [τὸν ἀδελφόν], companion in labor [καὶ συνεργόν], fellow–soldier [καὶ συστρατιώτην μου]. Note that Paul grammatically gathers these all together into one. [τὸν...καὶ...καὶ...μου]. He was going to give Epaphroditus the highest honor and wants the Philippians to entertain no thought whatsoever that Epaphroditus for one reason or another failed in his mission as Paul’s helper. Note how Paul describes the Christian life, the Christian ministry. Paul was ever careful to explain situations to allay misunderstanding when such might be necessary. We may and should honor Christian men in connection with the gospel—men who are great examples of self–sacrifice and service—but not apart from it.

THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE MISSION AND MINISTRY OF EPAPHRODITUS (V. 26–28)

The word and idea of sorrow is used repeatedly in this passage. Epaphroditus was concerned about his own congregation at home. He did not want them to worry or sorrow at his sickness—or misunderstand it. Up to this point, there had been knowledge of his sickness but not of its severity or duration. Some might possibly have reason to suspect a slackness of his part.

THE HONORABLE RECEPTION TO BE GIVEN TO EPAPHRODITUS (V. 29–30)

Paul gives Epaphroditus the highest honor. With all eagerness, welcome him (προσδέχεσθε). Hold such in the highest regard (καὶ τοὺς τοιούτους ἐντίμους ἔχετε, lit: such ones with honor continue to hold). Why? Because for the sake of the gospel he almost died. He risked (παραβολευσάμενος, aor. ptc., a gambler’s term). He literally risked his life for the work of Christ. [He “put all his cards on the table,” he “gambled it all,” held nothing back, had no reservations whatsoever]. They had officially sent him as a church to serve Paul and help (λειτουργίας). That he did.

What are we to say? Do we regard our lives? Are we interested in the work of God or our own comfort? Are only a few chosen by God to give themselves to such work? Or is this what it means to be a minister? A Christian? What true honor is there apart from Christ and the work of the gospel? Human laud and honor is fleeting, passing, and ultimately of no consequence. Great men and unknown men shall all bow down together to be judged by our Lord on the final Day.

Obs: How we ought to honor true men of God who hazard their lives for the sake of the gospel! We are engaged in a greater battle than called forth worldly honors

and medals for bravery above and beyond the call of duty! Yet, most of our best and godliest ministers we disdain and our missionaries we simply think of occasionally. We see the congregation, a group of people, sinful, imperfect, often in disarray, and we forget that this is the work of God, It is his church; it is the pillar and ground of the truth. We see men, and often only men, with all their physical or human infirmities, and we forget that these are the instruments of God in his great purpose of redemption. These are the servants of Christ and of the most high God!

V. Paul's Warnings against Two Errors (3:1–4:1)

A Warning against Legalism (3:1–16)

A Warning against Antinomianism (3:17–4:1)

The passage is situated in the epistle in the following manner:

I. Paul's Relation to the Philippians	(1:3–11)
II. Paul's Present Circumstances	(1:12–26)
III. Paul's First Practical Exhortations to the Philippians	(1:27–2:18)
IV. Paul's Plans for his Co-workers	(2:19–30)
V. Paul's Warnings Against Two Errors	(3:1–4:1)
A Warning Against Legalism and its Teachers	(3:1–16)
A Warning Against Antinomianism and its Teachers	(3:17–4:1)

A PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS AND OUTLINE OF 3:1–4:1

An analysis of this passage (3:1–4:1) is as follows: Paul warns the Philippians about two errors and those who promote them—the legalism of the Judaizers and the antinomianism of false brethren.

NOTE: The first section of practical admonitions, 1:27–2:18, reveals a stark contrast between biblical and modern Christianity. Christians are seen as having spiritual unity among themselves, as warriors, soldiers, gladiators or athletes, striving for the faith of the gospel. The picture is one of spiritual and evangelistic progression, a positive influence, and a gracious aggressiveness in the face of the world. What a contrast with modern evangelical Christianity, which sees believers caught up in various addictions, needing various types of counseling, fragmented in personalities and unity, and essentially incapacitated before the world. The church is seen, not as an armory for the outfitting of God's warriors, but as a spiritual hospital for the weak and sickly.

This section concerning the two errors of legalism and antinomianism reveals much the same contrast. Paul describes these false teachers and false brethren and actually calls them names. He would be politically incorrect by modern religious standards. Why did he become so indignant and sarcastic? Because the truth of grace was threatened. Because the souls of men were at stake and because the welfare of God's churches was threatened. We should not take such things lightly, either.

A. A Warning Against Legalism and its Teachers (3:1–16)

Legalism takes various forms. (1) Full legalism is salvation by works, and therefore by self-effort—salvation merited by self-righteousness. (2) A modified and much more subtle and dangerous form of legalism is a mixture of grace and works. (3) One may also take a legalistic approach to various issues. It is, in *any* of its forms, an inherent denial of grace.

This warning is against the “Judaizers,” those alleged Jewish converts who adhered to the Jewish trappings of the Old Covenant, especially circumcision, thus negating the grace of God. Note their rallying cry in Acts 15:1—

And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, *and said*,
Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved [οὐ
δύνασθε σωθῆναι].

Salvation was made wholly dependent on the rite of circumcision, thus logically destroying the grace of God and making salvation dependent on the work of man. These “Judaizers” dogged the steps of the Apostle Paul throughout his ministry and sought to seduce the churches which he had established.

1. Joy in the Lord as an Antidote against Error (3:1–3)

This seems strange unless we understand that joy in the Lord is grounded in Divine truth and expressed in doctrinal obedience. Joy in the Lord is a spiritual attitude which is grounded in doctrine and expressed through a discerning mind and doctrinally–sound heart. It is not merely emotional or sentimental. Any alleged spiritual, emotional or traditional religious joy which is not grounded in the truth is false and deceiving because it is not a preventive of error, but rather a vehicle of and purveyor for error.

There are two issues which must always be remembered:

- *Doctrine is essential.* It is not exclusive, as it must be translated into action. But, without a doctrinal foundation, all religious action is prone to error. We must always come back to our doctrine and be absolutely certain it is aligned to the Word of God.
- *Every spiritual battle is at least partly within the church.* This means that everyone in the church must strive to become doctrinally orthodox and astute and seek a unified stand against error, sin and the onslaught of the world (1:27–2:4).

Paul gives a three–fold description of these legalistic teachers [dogs, evil workers, mutilators] and a contrasting three–fold description of true believers [the truly circumcised, worshippers of God in the Spirit, have no confidence in the flesh].

2. The Testimony of His own Experience (3:4–11)

- What Paul could Claim in Superiority (v. 4)
- What Paul had by Inheritance (v. 5a)
- What Paul had by Self–achievement (v. 5b–6)
- What Paul had in Christ by Grace Alone (v. 7–11)

Paul reverts to his own testimony in his pilgrimage of self–righteousness. Personal experience is a strong argument if one can prove the futility of the opposition in a reasoned manner aligned to the Scriptures. Mere emotion or human logic will never win the day or persuade minds. We are *not* misologists [those who hate logic]. (Logic derives from God and man is capable of consistent reasoning because he has been made in the image and likeness of God). “Divine” or scriptural logic is that consistent reasoning which derives from the Scriptures as our point–of–reference.

Paul’s alleged advantages were two–fold: (1) those by inheritance, and (2) those of self–attainment.

Paul scored 100% as a legalist—no mean accomplishment. In his unregenerate state, he had been the leading Jew and Pharisee of his day. He could have been the leading Judaizer as a professing Christian. But everything without exception—every possible advantage—was counted loss for Christ and the imputation of his righteousness.

3. The Christian Life and Experience viewed as Progression (3:12–16)

No one has “arrived” in his or her Christian experience. There is room for infinite progression in our conformity to the Lord Jesus Christ in doctrine, knowledge, submission and experience (Cf. 2:5–11).

B. A Warning Against Antinomianism and its Teachers (3:17–4:1)

Antinomianism [ἀντί, “against,” and νόμος, “law] is a type and varying degree of lawlessness [ἀνομία]. Antinomianism may be doctrinal or practical, but the one ultimately leads to the other. There are two issues which must never be forgotten:

- Antinomianism leads to legalism. When men set aside or deny God’s Law, they invariably set up a law of their own, usually a man–made system of “do’s and don’ts”—which is usually graceless.
- There is no antinomian grace. The grace of God by its very nature teaches holiness, and leads to holiness (Cf. Rom. 6:1–23; Titus 2:11–15).

1. The Power of a Godly Example (3:17)

Paul lives such a life in the context of God’s truth and grace that he can command the Philippians to become mimics together of him (Συμμιμηταί μου γίνεσθε, ἀδελφοί, pres. imp., emph.), lit: “mimics together of me become ye, brethren!” He invites the closest scrutiny of his life. “Mark” (σκοπεῖτε, pres. imp. “Constantly ‘scope it out!’”) Keep on concentrating on the goal.

2. The Number and Description of False Brethren (3:18–19)

They are many (πολλοί) in number and lawless in lifestyle. Their lives are characterized by self–indulgence and self–absorption. Their world–and–life view is limited to the here and now.

3. The Motive for Godly Living (3:20–21)

The true believer constantly lives with a different world–and–life view which has a drastically different self–consciousness and anticipates the future (ἡμῶν γὰρ τὸ πολίτευμα ἐν οὐρανοῖς ὑπάρχει, ἐξ οὗ καὶ σωτῆρα ἀπεκδεχόμεθα κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν).

4. The Loving Admonition to Steadfastness (4:1)

Chapter and verse divisions are artificial. “Therefore” (“Ὡστε”) marks the concluding exhortation, which is tender and affectionate in the Lord, not a beginning.

V. Paul’s Warnings against two Errors (3:1–4:1)

A Warning against Legalism (3:1–16)

A Warning against Antinomianism (3:17–4:1)

A WARNING AGAINST LEGALISM AND ITS TEACHERS (3:1–16)

JOY IN THE LORD AS AN ANTIDOTE AGAINST ERROR (3:1–3)

“Finally” (Τὸ λοιπόν). It has been suggested that Paul tried several times to conclude this letter, but that further thoughts kept coming into his mind (cf. 4:8, Τὸ λοιπόν). The words mean “as to [concerning] the rest,” and do not necessarily denote a final conclusion, but here a transition to concluding remarks. This has great implications for the reality of Divine inspiration.¹⁴ χαίρετε ἐν κυρίῳ. Such rejoicing presupposes a doctrinal ground and expression. τὰ αὐτὰ γράφειν ὑμῖν ἐμοὶ μὲν οὐκ ὀκνηρόν, ὑμῖν δὲ ἀσφαλές. τὰ αὐτὰ emph. pos. ἐμοὶ emph. pers. pron. μὲν... δὲ, “on the one hand...but on the other...” οὐκ ὀκνηρόν, not troublesome, irksome. ὑμῖν δὲ ἀσφαλές. “but for you a safeguard.” What? Not the “Rejoicing,” but what he is about to reiterate, as he did repeatedly in most of his epistles—warnings against legalism [the Judaizers] and antinomianism. These two extremes have always tended to corrupt the gospel and deceive believers. Paul was not afraid of repetition, neither was Peter (2 Pet. 3:1ff).

Obs 1: The doctrinal truth of Divine inspiration, which is necessarily both verbal and plenary, is necessarily foundational to all truth. The Scriptures are our one objective source of Divine truth; all else is subjective and liable to great error.

Obs 2: We can always rejoice in the Lord, and if this is true, then we can rejoice despite contrary circumstances, the promulgation of error, or the opposition of the world.

Obs 3: We should not be afraid to repeat those aspects of Divine truth which need to be inculcated repeatedly into the very hearts and minds of other believers. Some truths bear constant repetition, especially in a time of trial or error.

V. 2, note the three-fold βλέπετε...βλέπετε...βλέπετε... “Look out for, Beware of, Keep on watching out for...” (pres imp.). Note that each designation is articular.¹⁵

- First, the Judaizers are described as “the dogs” (τοὺς κύνας). This does not figuratively refer to pets, puppies, working or hunting dogs, but to the feral [domestic-turned-wild] dogs of the East, scavengers which ran in packs, were not afraid of humans, and carried various diseases. They were an ever-present danger. This was the derogatory term used by the Jews for Gentiles. Paul turns this term back to them in sarcasm. They were the spiritual “dogs” or the “uncircumcised” [ἀκροβυστία].¹⁶
- βλέπετε τοὺς κακοὺς ἐργάτας. Second, they are described as “the evil workers”. Doctrinal differences may not be mundane or without great evil. The Apostle did not live in an age of doctrinal indifference or heretical acceptance. These Judaizers

¹⁴ It would be difficult to attribute Divine inspiration and the leadership of the Spirit with a human author given to indecision and lapses of memory!

¹⁵ βλέπετε τοὺς κύνας, βλέπετε τοὺς κακοὺς ἐργάτας, βλέπετε τὴν κατατομήν.

¹⁶ ἀκροβυστία, lit: “foreskin,” a derogatory, sexual term. Paul turns these against the Jews also, called them spiritual “foreskins.”

were energetic in promulgating error and devastating churches and the lives of believers with their heresies.

- βλέπετε τὴν κατατομήν. Third, as “the mutilation,” or “the castration” [cutting off].¹⁷ Physical circumcision *as a religious rite with covenant connotations* is absolutely irrelevant to the grace of God.¹⁸

Obs 1: Any religious rite or ceremony that stands as substitute for regenerating grace and faith stands as circumcision did in Paul’s day, and ought to be opposed with as much vehemence. This includes baptismal regeneration, the necessity of baptism for salvation, church membership as synonymous with becoming a Christian, and “decisional regeneration.”

Gal. 6:15, “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.” Substitute any of the above for the terms “circumcision” or “uncircumcision”...

Obs 2: There is a place for righteous or sanctified sarcasm. Paul often resorted to such for emphasis.

V. 3 Paul moves from the three-fold description of the Judaizers to a contrasting three-fold description of true believers:

- ἡμεῖς γὰρ ἐσμὲν ἡ περιτομή. Emph. pers. pron. First, believers are the truly circumcised, i.e., circumcised in heart, and so the true children of Abraham,¹⁹ true heirs of the promise, and truly united to Jesus Christ by faith (Jer. 31:31–34; Ezk. 36:25–27; Rom. 2:25–29; Rom. 6:1–6; Col. 2:8–15). Physical circumcision pointed ahead to spiritual circumcision, or regeneration under the New or Gospel Covenant. As circumcision was the covenant-sign under the Old Covenant, so regeneration is the covenant-sign under the New or Gospel Covenant.
- Second, Believers are described as those who worship God in the Spirit. Two emph. const.(οἱ πνεύματι θεοῦ λατρεύοντες)...true spiritual worship through correct Medium and the right Object. What is our worship? And make their boast [or glory] in Jesus Christ [alone] (καὶ καυχώμενοι ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ) and not in self-attainment or religious rites and ceremonies. All and everything we have is “in Christ”.
- Third, believers are described as “...in the flesh (emph.) have no confidence.” καὶ οὐκ ἐν σαρκὶ πεποιθότες (perf.) “not now, not ever”. Where is our confidence? Our assurance? Our ground of rejoicing and certainty of reconciliation with God? In what we have done or in what God has done in Christ?

Obs: What a blessed and yet controversial description of true Christians. Such would omit many present-day professing believers!

¹⁷ Cf. Gal. 5:12, “I would they were even cut off [ἀποκόψονται, castrated] which trouble you.”

¹⁸ Gal. 5:6, “For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.”

¹⁹ The New Testament is careful to make the necessary distinction between the σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ and the τέκνα Ἀβραάμ, i.e., between Abraham’s [physical] seed and spiritual children.

THE TESTIMONY OF HIS OWN EXPERIENCE (3:4–11)

What Paul could Claim in Superiority (V. 4)

What Paul Had by Inheritance (V. 5a)

What Paul Had by Self–Achievement (V. 5b–6)

What Paul Had in Christ by Grace Alone (V. 7–11)

- *What Paul could claim in superiority* (v. 4). καίπερ ἐγὼ ἔχων πεποιθήσιν καὶ ἐν σαρκί. Εἴ τις δοκεῖ ἄλλος πεποιθέναι ἐν σαρκί, ἐγὼ μᾶλλον. A personal pilgrimage in self–righteousness examined as to its futility. He could continue to have (ἐγὼ ἔχων, in sharp, personal contrast to others who boasted) confidence in “the flesh,” i.e., in the attainment of those religious achievements that are done in human strength and apart from Divine grace. His personal claim will be proven that he could excel even the greatest Judaizer (ἐγὼ μᾶλλον). Whatever their claim, he could always claim, “I more...”.
- *What Paul had by inheritance* (v. 4–5a). περιτομῇ ὀκταήμερος, “...circumcised, an eighth–day one.” ἐκ γένους Ἰσραήλ, “of the nation of Israel.” φυλῆς Βενιαμίν, “of the tribe of Benjamin,” which, together with Judah, maintained the southern Kingdom and a higher orthodoxy than the Ten Northern Tribes. Ἑβραῖος ἐξ Ἑβραίων, “An Hebrew of the Hebrews,” i.e., undiluted Hebrew blood from both mother and father, and no influence of Hellenization. This last was astounding, given that Paul was born and reared in Tarsus of Cilicia.
- *What Paul had by self–achievement* (v. 5b–6). κατὰ νόμον Φαρισαῖος, “according to [the] law (anarth. law in all its nature and ramifications), a Pharisee.” i.e., the most orthodox and closest to the traditions of fathers and the Jewish religion. κατὰ ζῆλος διώκων τὴν ἐκκλησίαν, as pertaining to zeal, persecuting (διώκων, pres. ptc.) the church. No one excelled him in this. He persecuted the Jerusalem Church and was on his way to Damascus for further persecution of believers there when our Lord apprehended [“arrested”] him. Have we been apprehended by Christ? κατὰ δικαιοσύνην τὴν ἐν νόμῳ γενόμενος ἄμemptος. By Jewish standards, Paul became (γενόμενος) blameless or faultless before the law, either referring to his progression in Judaism or to offering the proper sacrifices and carefully observing the highest traditions.

NOTE: In what three passages do we find Paul's defense of his alleged advantages and his subsequent service for Christ? Once in Acts 21:40–22:24, before the unconverted Jews in Jerusalem, and twice with reference to the Judaizers: 2 Cor. 11:13–33 and Phil. 3:4–11.

- *What Paul had in Christ by grace alone* (v. 7–11). [Ἀλλὰ] ἄτινα ἦν μοι κέρδη, ταῦτα ἤγημαι διὰ τὸν Χριστὸν ζημίαν. Culm. emph.?

Obs 2: All self–attainment is futile in the face of Divine grace. Saving grace by its very nature must be both free and sovereign, i.e., it is not nor can it be based on any human merit whatsoever, and, God dispenses this grace as he sees fit.

Obs 2: Whatever our parents have done for us, or p[rovidence has settled for us is not necessarily of grace, especially saving grace. Cf. Jn. 1:13, οὐκ ἐξ αἱμάτων, “not of bloods,” i.e., not of genealogical descent. Grace does not necessary follow the blood–lines.

Obs 3: There are only two forms of righteousness: self-righteousness and imputed righteousness. Self-righteousness is a great offence to God. The imputed righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ is the only righteousness which will avail before a thrice holy God whose moral self-consistency [absolute righteousness] is perfect!

(v. 7). [Ἀλλὰ] ἄτινα ἦν μοι κέρδη, ταῦτα ἤγημαι διὰ [because of] τὸν Χριστὸν ζημίαν.²⁰ A Culm. emph.?

(v. 8). ἀλλὰ μενοῦνγε καὶ. Five parts. to emph, “Yea, doubtless.” ἠγοῦμαι (pres., I still count [cf. v. 4] all but loss and dung.) πάντα ζημίαν εἶναι διὰ τὸ ὑπερέχον τῆς γνώσεως Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ τοῦ κυρίου μου, δι’ ὃν [because of whom] τὰ πάντα ἐζημιώθην, καὶ ἠγοῦμαι σκύβαλα, ἵνα Χριστὸν κερδήσω. Paul had been “arrested” (καταλαμβάνω, cf. v. 12–13) by the Lord Jesus Christ—Christ was in absolute control of his life—held him fast. Have you and I been “arrested” by the Lord?

“Dung,” σκύβαλα, either from σκῶρ, dung, or from a contraction of ἐς κύνας βάλλον, “cast to the dogs,” i.e., refuse. Either way, it is something utterly worthless, and unfit for human consumption... what a judgment upon self-righteousness. Cf. the condemnation of all self-righteousness and self-effort by the prophet Isaiah in Isa. 64:6.²¹

NOTE: τὸ ὑπερέχον τῆς γνώσεως Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ τοῦ κυρίου μου... Not some deep religious experience, but doctrine. This knowledge is first doctrinal, and *then* practical or experimental. Truth must be first comprehended, and then wrought out in our subjective experience. Religious experience without doctrinal basis is merely feeling and exceedingly dangerous. Biblical—doctrinal—truth wrought out in the life and experience is valid and blessed.

(v. 9). καὶ εὐρεθῶ ἐν αὐτῷ, μὴ ἔχων ἐμὴν δικαιοσύνην τὴν ἐκ νόμου ἀλλὰ τὴν διὰ πίστεως Χριστοῦ, τὴν ἐκ θεοῦ δικαιοσύνην ἐπὶ τῇ πίστει. He emph. legal or law-righteousness as self-righteousness (μὴ ἔχων ἐμὴν δικαιοσύνην τὴν ἐκ νόμου) Pres. ptc., emph. pers. pron. We have here righteousness by faith, faith *in* Christ (τὴν διὰ πίστεως Χριστοῦ, obj. gen.), a God-given [out of, from God] righteousness by faith.

(v. 10). τοῦ γινῶναι αὐτὸν “Oh, that I may really get to know him.” (ingress. aor.?) Paul moves from justification to sanctification. He desired to really become thoroughly personally acquainted with Christ as never before. He wanted his experiences to mirror those of our Lord.

What we really want or long for is an indication of our inner being and true nature. What do we want more than anything else?

²⁰ “Because of Christ.” Paul’s entire existence hangs on the “Divine interference” of the Son of God who arrested him, took him, became his Lord and used him mightily.

²¹ KJV, “filthy rags” Heb: כְּלָנוּ וְכִבְבֵּד עֲדִים כְּלִצְדָקָתֵינוּ (*kullanu ukbaged idiym kal-tsidqōteynu*), “but totally menstuous rags all our righteousness” (*Rheims–Douay* [Roman Catholic] *Version* reads: “the rags of a menstuous woman”). The LXX reads ῥάκος ἀποκαθημένης, graphically denoting the same. This describes what God thinks of the very best that sinful human beings can offer to him in the context of their own self-righteousness. This would have been especially odious to the Jew, in terms of both physical repulsiveness and ceremonial uncleanness.

It is said that St. Augustine wished to have seen three things before he died; Rome in its glory, Christ in the flesh, and Paul in his preaching. But many have seen the first without being holier, the second without being happier, and heard the third and yet went to perdition. But Paul in this and the previous chapters, expresses seven wishes which center in Christ—that he might know Christ, win Christ, magnify Christ, be conformed to Christ, be found in Christ, rejoice in the day of Christ, and be forever with Christ.²²

καὶ τὴν δύναμιν τῆς ἀναστάσεως αὐτοῦ The power of Christ's resurrection is to be experienced by believers in their own experience. This means the following:

- A greater degree of doctrinal and experiential knowledge, e.g., the doctrine of justification as the basis for a godly life, etc. Cf. Rom. 4:25; 5:1–2.
- Jn. 14:16–17. Upon our Lord's resurrection and ascension into heaven, he sent the Holy Spirit to indwell and empower believers.

¹⁶ And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; ¹⁷ *Even* the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.
- Rom. 5:3–8. The actual power of God in our lives through the grace ministered by the Holy Spirit, whose love is “constantly being poured without reserve in our lives” (ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ ἐκκέχυται ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ἡμῶν διὰ πνεύματος ἁγίου τοῦ δοθέντος ἡμῖν.).
- Rom. 1:3–4; 6:1–6. (τοῦ ὀρισθέντος υἱοῦ θεοῦ ἐν δυνάμει κατὰ πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης ἐξ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν). Union with Christ in both his death and resurrection–life. Union in his death means that the reigning power of sin has been broken. Union in his resurrection–life means that the same power that raised Christ from the dead now effectually works in our lives
- Eph. 1:15–20. The realization of this resurrection–power, or ministry of the enabling grace of the Holy Spirit in our experience. (καὶ τί τὸ ὑπερβάλλον μέγεθος τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ εἰς ἡμᾶς τοὺς πιστεύοντας κατὰ τὴν ἐνέργειαν [effectual working] τοῦ κράτους τῆς ἰσχύος αὐτοῦ).
- Phil. 2:12–13. The power of God through the grace of the Holy Spirit in daily living. (θεὸς γὰρ ἐστὶν ὁ ἐνεργῶν ἐν ὑμῖν καὶ τὸ θέλει καὶ τὸ ἐνεργεῖν ὑπὲρ τῆς εὐδοκίας.).
- Rom. 8:26–27. The power of God in prayer through the gracious [enabling] ministry of the Spirit. (Ὡσαύτως δὲ καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα συναντιλαμβάνεται τῇ ἀσθενείᾳ ἡμῶν).
- Phil. 1:29. (ὑμῖν ἐχαρίσθη τὸ ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ, οὐ μόνον τὸ εἰς αὐτὸν πιστεύειν ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ πάσχειν). Grace to continue to suffer for the cause of Christ.

²² J. Sherman, *Biblical Illustrator, Phil–Col.*, p. 202.

- 1 Cor. 15:10. (χάριτι δὲ θεοῦ εἰμι ὃ εἰμι...οὐκ ἐγὼ δὲ ἀλλὰ ἡ χάρις τοῦ θεοῦ [ἢ] σὺν ἐμοί).
- Col. 1:27–29. The power of God in the gospel ministry. (εἰς ὃ καὶ κοπιῶ ἀγωνιζόμενος κατὰ τὴν ἐνέργειαν αὐτοῦ τὴν ἐνεργουμένην ἐν ἐμοὶ ἐν δυνάμει).
- Acts 3:19. The power of God in times of revival and spiritual awakening. These “times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord” seem to be the great outpourings of his Spirit in times of revival and spiritual awakening.

καὶ [τὴν] κοινωνίαν [τῶν] παθημάτων αὐτοῦ. The sufferings of the believer mirror those of our Lord to a certain degree (Phil. 1:29; Col. 1:24). Not vicarious or redemptive, but those deriving from persecution and experienced in the cause of Christ.

συμμορφιζόμενος τῷ θανάτῳ αὐτοῦ. Note that Μορφή is the expression of the inner reality and true being, as contrasted with συσχηματίζομαι, which means the mere outward appearance [“Schematic”]. The death of our Lord, aside from its redemptive reality, was completely willing, suffered with complete submission to the Father, and was the full and final submission of the Son to the Father. It was also a glorious victory, and suffered in anticipation of the resurrection. (Τετέλεσται, Jn. 19:30; Heb. 12:).²³ Paul wanted to share the same in every way. He wanted to be faithful unto death and fearless in death, anticipating the glory of the resurrection.

(v. 11). εἶ πως καταστήσω εἰς τὴν ἐξανάστασιν τὴν ἐκ νεκρῶν. This is the resurrection of the just, i.e., the resurrection which is out from among [the] dead. This is not written in doubt, but in the greatest humility and without any presumption whatsoever as contrasted with the Judaizers who boasted in their circumcision and doubtless had “eternal security” through a religious rite.

Obs 1: The Christian life possesses an infinite potential of advancement. Even the great Apostle, with all his varied experience and extended pilgrimage into doctrinal and heavenly realities was quick to say that he had not “arrived” as yet!

Obs 2: Conformity to Christ is not theoretical, but actual. It is to be experienced in adversity, suffering, and identification with him and his cause.

Obs 3: The resurrection–power of the Lord Jesus Christ is to be a reality in the lives of all believers! The Scriptures do not paint a picture of weak, inconsistent, crippled Christians, but of those who are mighty in faith, strong in grace, and Spirit–led and filled.

²³ Heb. 12:1–2. Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking [ἀφορῶντες] unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE AND EXPERIENCE
VIEWED AS PROGRESSION (3:12–16)

It is Paul’s personal testimony that he had not “arrived” as a believer. He had not yet plumbed the depths or scaled the heights of Christian experience.. He had not become perfectly or absolutely “Christ–like” in heart, mind and life.

(v. 12) Οὐχ ὅτι ἤδη ἔλαβον ἢ ἤδη τετελείωμαι, διώκω δὲ εἰ καὶ καταλάβω, ἐφ’ ᾧ καὶ κατελήμφθην ὑπὸ Χριστοῦ [Ἰησοῦ]. Paul, with his breadth and depth of Christian experience states that he had not “arrived,” i.e., he had not come to the absolute fullness of Christian experience. τετελείωμαι, perf. (used of either perfection or culmination, or of adulthood and maturity). διώκω δέ, but I keep on pursuing... What? To lay hold of, grasp [καταλάβω] the what and why he himself had been “arrested” [κατελήμφθην, arrested, seized, fully realized] by the Lord Jesus Christ. He wanted to intelligently and knowingly fulfill his destiny in the purpose of God.

NOTE: There is here a “play on words,” an interchange concerning the term τελειόω “make perfect, perfect, make complete; complete, finish, accomplish, end, reach one’s goal or finish one’s work); Make mature... Cf. τέλειος: (1) Brought to its end, finished (2) wanting nothing necessary to completeness. (3) Perfect. (4) Full grown, adult, of full age, mature.

Paul uses this term in at least two ways, and possibly three: of complete fulfillment or reaching the goal (v. 12) and of maturity (v. 15), and possibly, of absolute perfection (?) in v. 12??? The failure to realize the meaning of this term and its doctrinal context, Paul’s play on words, and the assumption that we can be sinlessly perfect in this life, have caused great trouble in the history of Christianity—the doctrine of “sinless perfection” or “Perfectionism.”

What can be said of “Christian Perfectionism?” It is based on an inadequate view of sin and a faulty concept of human nature, which is true of all Pelagianism and Arminianism. Historically, there have been several types. It is best to note them historically:

- Early Pelagianism (5th century AD), which taught the perfectability of human nature through the self–effort of the human will and religious devotion.
- Arminian or Wesleyan perfectionism (18th century–), which teaches a life of selfless love.
- The Modern Pelagian perfectionism of Charles G. Finney and Asa Mahan, which ultimately became the “simplicity of moral action,” i.e., one is either completely sanctified or wholly lost from one moment to the next. The Moral Law subjected a “sliding scale” fitted to the individual ability to keep it, counting this as sinless perfectionism.
- Modern Pentecostalism with its “speaking in tongues” to mark those who are “saved and sanctified.”
- The “Higher Life” or “Life on the Higher Plane” teaching which made a distinction between “carnal” and “spiritual” Christians. The Keswick teaching (non–Pentecostal second work of grace), which teaches that at some subsequent point in our Christian experience we can enter into the “Spirit–filled” life by a definite experience of being consciously and completely in union with Christ.

(v. 13–14). He had not yet realized his destiny (ἀδελφοί, ἐγὼ ἑμαυτὸν οὐ λογίζομαι κατεληφέναι). Thus, he does but one thing (ἐν δέ). Paul here uses the metaphor of a

runner, an athlete who clears his mind of all things and fixes his eyes and mind on the goal, and never looks back (note the μὲν...δε). He leans or stretches forward with all his might toward the goal (τοῖς δὲ ἔμπροσθεν ἐπεκτεινόμενος), he presses forward (κατὰ σκοπὸν διώκω εἰς τὸ βραβεῖον τῆς ἄνω κλήσεως τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ). This goal or “goal marker” is the Lord Jesus Christ, complete conformity to him, and all that this entails, including the glory of the resurrection, which he has been anticipating in v. 10–11.

(v. 15–16). Though not absolutely perfect, Paul identifies himself with mature [adult, fully grown up] believers. “Ὅσοι οὖν τέλειοι These are to be thus minded, i.e., have the same zeal toward the goal that he had, not begin to think that they have “arrived.” τοῦτο φρονῶμεν. If these have any diverse thoughts (ἑτέρως φρονεῖτε, different kind of thoughts), God will reveal such to them and correct them. καὶ εἴ τι ἑτέρως φρονεῖτε καὶ τοῦτο ὁ θεὸς ὑμῖν ἀποκαλύψει. Paul then finishes with an admonition to walk consistently with their attainment, i.e., a disciplined, godly life (τῷ αὐτῷ στοιχεῖν κανόνι), i.e., “walk” (στοιχεῖν) march in a disciplined line [column] like soldiers.

A WARNING AGAINST ANTINOMIANISM AND ITS TEACHERS (3:17–4:1)

The Power of a Godly Example	(3:17)
The Number and Description of False Brethren	(3:18–19)
The Motive for Godly Living	(3:20–21)
The Loving Admonition to Steadfastness	(4:1)

Commentators disagree as to who these individuals are. Is Paul still writing against the Judaizers and their legalism, or does he at this point make reference to another group who are antinomian in lifestyle? It would be strange if his reference to their “god” being their belly referred to the Jewish demand for a restricted [Kosher] diet or “belly” a very general reference or even a euphemism to their lowers parts or genitals [circumcision], and their legalistic approach to and alleged reverence for the Law as self-indulgence. Paul certainly wrote in very specific and even sarcastic terms in v. 2. We believe it better to infer a different group and extreme. Further, these two extremes were the greatest menaces to primitive Christianity. It is quite possible that an early form of antinomian Gnosticism was developing out of Judaism, paganism and apostate Christianity. Cf. Colossians, 2 Peter Chapter 2, Jude, and later, the epistles of John.

THE POWER OF A GODLY EXAMPLE (3:17)

Συμμιμηταί μου γίνεσθε, ἀδελφοί, καὶ σκοπεῖτε τοὺς οὕτω περιπατοῦντας καθὼς ἔχετε τύπον ἡμᾶς. How does this statement relate to Paul’s continued admonition for humility? Is he not egotistic here? No, for the following reasons:

- He urges them to become joint mimics (Συμμιμηταί μου γίνεσθε) of him—as he (1) rests in the Lord Jesus Christ alone for his righteousness and complete selflessness, and (2) seeks to find his complete identification with Christ Jesus in the power of his resurrection, sufferings and even his death, i.e., that his union with Christ might find its full expression in his experience. He greatly desires for them to join in his own pressing toward the goal—line—utter conformity to the Lord Jesus Christ.

- He does not set himself up alone, but implies others who are godly and mature (...σκοπεῖτε τοὺς...ἔχετε τύπον ἡμᾶς...).

We must never underestimate the power and influence of a godly example.

- Many times believers need but one example to take a stand and live consistently. Cf. 1:12ff. It is incumbent upon us to take a stand, especially if not one else does or will—we may be the very ones God will use.
- We must not be content to simply maintain, but to progress so as to become an example.²⁴ “...mark (“Constantly look carefully” [σκοπεῖτε] them which walk...” Do our lives bear such scrutiny? “Walk” (τοὺς οὕτω περιπατοῦντας) rel. ptc., denoting characteristic behavior.
- Cf. the various terms: ἀναστροφή, “conversation” [behavior], πολίτευμα “conversation” [citizenship, the conduct or behavior of a citizen], περιπατέω, to walk about, live. All refer to lifestyle. We may “talk the talk,” but do we “walk the walk”?
- What kind of lifestyle do you emulate? Could you recommend your own personal lifestyle as does the Apostle here? Illust: the way tourists stand out by the way they dress, what they eat or drink, what they look at, the way they speak, etc.... Are we that distinct?

THE NUMBER AND DESCRIPTION OF FALSE BRETHREN (3:18–19)

Their Number and Designation (v. 18)

Their Nature and Description (v. 19)

THEIR NUMBER AND DESIGNATION (V. 18)

“For many walk...” πολλοὶ [not a few] γὰρ περιπατοῦσιν [have their lifestyle] οὐκ πολλάκις ἔλεγον ὑμῖν [imperf. kept on telling you], νῦν δὲ καὶ κλαίων λέγω [and now even with tears I’m still telling you]. τοὺς ἐχθροὺς τοῦ σταυροῦ τοῦ Χριστοῦ... stative vb. implied, i.e., they continue to be.

- There are “many” (πολλοί) who are enemies of the cross of Christ. Those who stand opposed to the cross are many in number. There have always been and there will always be numerous enemies of the cross of Christ. We must not be surprised.
- Who are these many enemies? (1) The openly ungodly who stand opposed to any idea of salvation or redemption. (2) The religious traditionalists, who believe that religion has its place—as long as it is not in first place. (3) Those who look to some other source of acceptance with God, even within professing Christianity, e.g., legalists, who look to their own works achievements, who look to man-made standards, who deny the necessity of a holy, godly life.
- Exactly what is the issue here? The issue is that their profession and their lifestyle are contradictory. They would say that sanctification has no relation to justification. That the redemptive work of Christ either does not or cannot deliver

²⁴ “Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example [τύπος γίνου τῶν πιστῶν] of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.”

believers from sin. That one may live in sin and yet be “saved,” i.e., salvation is from hell, not sin. These strike at the very heart of the gospel and the work of the cross. Their “salvation” is actually slavery to sin, and their Christianity is a lie.

- Paul was not afraid to constantly repeat himself if the danger were great enough.
- Paul was deeply moved because of such danger. What does it take to deeply move us? Would we warn against those whose doctrine leads to a dissolute lifestyle?

THEIR NATURE AND DESCRIPTION (V. 19)

ὧν τὸ τέλος ἀπώλεια, ὧν ὁ θεὸς ἡ κοιλία καὶ ἡ δόξα ἐν τῇ αἰσχύνῃ αὐτῶν, οἱ τὰ ἐπίγεια φρονοῦντες. These are described as to their destiny, their religious center, and their emphasis.

- Their destiny is not heaven, but hell. Note that Paul considers neither these Judaizers nor these Antinomians as true believers.
- Is this too narrow? How are we to consider other professing believers? What is to be our criteria? The Scriptures as expressed in the life (not mere doctrinal knowledge, religious tradition or morality). Do the profession and lifestyle agree? In the godly agreement of faith [doctrine] and lifestyle is joy and blessing.
- They worship their own appetites and addictions. Note the implications of the First Commandment of the Moral Law. Whatever is first, primary, or the point-of-reference in our life is our “god.” We seem to live in an age of addiction—and professing Christians are no different. What of our union with Christ? What of the implications of this union? (Rom. 6; Eph. 4:22–24; Col. 3:9–10).
- Their mind-set is upon “the here and now”. Their thoughts “grovel on the earth.” “This world is the limit of their horizon.” (οἱ τὰ ἐπίγεια φρονοῦντες). What does this include? It includes everything that would come before the truth of God, his Word and his redemptive purpose—not only sinful, self-indulgent things, but sports, hobbies, pleasure, leisure and political activism, etc. We must fight every seductive tendency toward such thinking.

Obs: How this description condemns multitudes today who consider themselves as Christians, but prove graceless when aligned to the Word of God.

THE MOTIVE FOR GODLY LIVING (3:20–21)

Paul’s answer to these antinomians is not a legalistic lifestyle comprised of man-made rules and regulations, but rather living in heart and mind in anticipation of the return of the Lord Jesus Christ and future glory.

ἡμῶν γὰρ τὸ πολίτευμα ἐν οὐρανοῖς ὑπάρχει [Our citizenship is in heaven. It unchangeably subsists in heaven. Cf. emph. pos.], ἐξ οὗ καὶ σωτῆρα ἀπεκδεχόμεθα κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν... We are constantly and eagerly awaiting to welcome our Lord from heaven; we live looking upward and forward (cf. v. 13–14), not downward and inward. What a contrast with the world. What a contrast with the false Christianity. What a contrast with the present trend of contemporary, self-indulgent, worldly Christianity.

- Paul emphasizes the eschatological aspect of our salvation. Do we live looking upward and forward, or are we so involved in this life that we have forgotten who we are and what we are destined for? Cf. 2 Pet. 3:10–18...

¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

¹¹ Seeing then *that* all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in *all* holy conversation and godliness, ¹² Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? ¹³ Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. ¹⁴ Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless. ¹⁵ And account *that* the longsuffering of our Lord *is* salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; ¹⁶ As also in all *his* epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as *they do* also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction. ¹⁷ Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know *these things* before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness. ¹⁸ But grow in grace, and *in* the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him *be* glory both now and for ever. Amen.

The Apostle John likewise writes the same:

Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. ² Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. ³ And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure (καὶ πᾶς ὁ ἔχων τὴν ἐλπίδα ταύτην ἐπ' αὐτῷ ἀγνίζει ἑαυτόν, καθὼς ἐκεῖνος ἀγνός ἐστιν).

- Is not such “living solely for the here and now,” this worldly type of thinking the cause of so much dissension, trial and tragedy within our modern churches? Is this not why there seems to be the need for so much counseling for problems and various addictions?
- What is the world–and–life view of the age? (Hedonism, Irrationalism, Existentialism, Nihilism). What is to be the world–and–life view of the Christian?

The Lord Jesus Christ shall transform our lowly present bodies with their frailties and limitations, and fashion them so they will reflect our true inner nature and being. ὅς μετασχηματίσει τὸ σῶμα τῆς ταπεινώσεως ἡμῶν σύμμορφον τῷ σώματι τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ... Cf. Rom. 8:18–23; 1 Cor. 15, 1 Jn. 3:1–3.

- The body is created for eternity. We are not yet completely or entirely “saved”. Our bodies are yet to be redeemed—and we completely misunderstand the grace of God if we live to pamper the flesh or fulfill its desires and cannot see beyond the here and now.
- Loose living is a denial of grace—it is a denial of Christianity. Holy, godly living, expressed in self–control, is alone consonant with the truth. Cf. the example of the Apostle Paul in v. 10–16.

- The Lord Jesus Christ is able to accomplish this, which stands as a witness against those who are slaves to their appetites and lusts. κατὰ τὴν ἐνέργειαν τοῦ δύνασθαι αὐτὸν καὶ ὑποτάξαι αὐτῷ τὰ πάντα. Note the *effectual* working of his power—the reality and necessity of Divine grace.
 - Note that the Lord Jesus Christ is not only able to transform us at the resurrection, but he begins by transforming us in this present life...by freeing us from the reigning power of sin and sanctifying us through his Word, grace and Spirit.
- Obs: Believers, converted, justified, and sanctified, are the firstfruits of the Divine redemptive purpose, which will ultimately conclude with “new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.”

A THOUGHT FOR CONSIDERATION

It has been over two thousand years since our Lord’s earthly life, death, resurrection and ascension into heaven. Is each generation supposed to live in expectancy of the Lord’s return? Yes. This is the teaching of Scripture. Cf. 1 Thess. 4:13–18. But does not the preceding interval of two thousand years dull this sense of expectancy? It should not be, for two reasons:

- Each generation is to live with this expectancy as a matter of attitude and practice, for the Lord *will* certainly return.
- We must learn to think in terms of one—each generation—and not in terms of thousands of years. We will only live for one generation. What has past and what will come to pass does not directly concern us in this context—only living for God now and living in the expectancy of our Lord’s return.

THE ADMONITION TO STEADFASTNESS (4:1)

This statement looks back to the preceding and anticipates the future. “Ὅστε, ἀδελφοί μου ἀγαπητοὶ καὶ ἐπιπόθητοι...ἀγαπητοί. Paul deeply loved these Philippian Christians and urges them to be consistent in the most endearing terms. He longed for them, for their presence, for their fellowship in the truth, for their comfort in his own life. What do we expect in true fellowship? What do we want? What can we give? “My joy and crown” (χαρὰ καὶ στέφανός μου). Their conversion, lives and witness was to him the victor’s wreath of his ministry. What a testimony to the grace of God and the love of the brethren. οὕτως στήκετε ἐν κυρίῳ... (pres. imp.) Continue to stand fast, continue to take a stand. Christians must always take a stand when the occasion calls for it. Are we such that we will take a stand?

VI. Paul’s Second Practical Exhortations to the Philippians (4:2–9)

- An Appeal for Unity in the Congregation (V. 2–3)
- An Appeal for Consistent and Holy Living (V. 4–5)
- An Appeal for Prayer as the Cure for Anxiety (V. 6–7)
- An Appeal for Holy Thinking and Doing (V. 8–9)

AN APPEAL FOR UNITY IN THE CONGREGATION (V. 2–3)

Paul, having received word about the disagreement between these two godly, helpful women, and its effects in the church, exhorts them to be of the same mind (τὸ αὐτὸ φρονεῖν,

to think the same thing, i.e. be like-minded, have the same mind-set) in the Lord. He has been stressing unity and humility throughout this epistle (Cf. 1:27–2:18; 2:20–21). Now he brings these down to a personal level and applies them to a concrete issue at hand. Such disunity in the church, although through godly, well-meaning Christians (cf. v. 3), who have previously been greatly helpful in the work of the gospel (αἴτινες [qual. pers. pron.] ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ συνήθλησάν μοι μετὰ καὶ Κλήμεντος καὶ τῶν λοιπῶν συνεργῶν μου), might become devastating and grieve the Spirit of God and his work within the assembly. Paul knew well from his own personal experience how this could both hinder the work and hurt the church's reputation. Cf. Acts 15:35–40:

³⁵ Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also. ³⁶ And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do. ³⁷ And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark. ³⁸ But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work. ³⁹ And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus; ⁴⁰ And Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God.

Paul mentions each by name (Εὐδοίαν παρακαλῶ καὶ Συντύχην παρακαλῶ). He equally and emphatically exhorts them both (note rep. of παρακαλῶ, and the emph. pos. of each). Euodias lit. means “prosperous journey.” Syntyche means “fortunate,” or “pleasant acquaintance.” Both are feminine names. Women have a vital role in the local assembly, especially in the more practical matters of the church's life. These women were evidently very godly, and had served with Paul in the gospel. They evidently had a good testimony throughout that city—all the more reason for their reconciliation in the work. Women tend to be more sensitive and competitive in a church or social context, re the work, their homes, marriages, families, social status, and personal relationships, etc. They are also more sensitive and often more zealous and aggressive than men in their attitude toward church situations. Pastoral situations much more often involve women than men.

Paul personally calls upon *Suzugos*, evidently either an elder or a very influential leader and tactful man in the assembly to help settle the matter between these two ladies (καὶ ἐρωτῶ καὶ σέ, γνήσιε σύζυγε, συλλαμβάνου αὐταῖς). “Yea. I ask you personally (σέ)...to help these.” The nature of the help (συλλαμβάνου) implies taking hold of together, i.e., a practical solution, not something arbitrary. Note ἐρωτῶ, to ask as an equal or through familiarity as opposed to αἰτέω, to ask as one who is less in position. Christianity is to flow through personal, loving, channels of close spiritual relationships. Paul makes a sanctified pun—a play on the man's name (γνήσιε σύζυγε), “true, genuine, sincere yoke fellow,” in asking this. Cf. the same sanctified pun on the name of Onesimus in Phlm. 10–11:

I beseech thee for my son Onesimus [Ὀνήσιμον, profitable or useful], whom I have begotten in my bonds: ¹¹ Which in time past was to thee unprofitable [ἄχρηστος, useless, unprofitable], but now profitable [εὐχρηστον, profitable useful] to thee and to me:

OBS 1: Even godly, capable Christians may have great disagreements over various issues in the Lord's work. Differences in other areas ought to be understood and allowed.

Obs 2: Such differences may prove to be an obstacle to fellowship and cooperation in the work of God.

Obs 3: Paul demonstrates an equity in dealing with this situation. We should beware of bias in dealing with interpersonal issues in the church.

Obs 4: Sadly, the true reasons for such differences usually derive from pride, jealousy, stubbornness or self-righteousness. We are still human, still sinners and still have areas of much needed sanctification.

Obs 5: Disagreements may prove to be trials of faith, self-denial and submission to the Word of God in attitude and demeanor.

Obs 6: There should not be any difficulty or difference that true believers cannot resolve. This is a vital issue and an important area of relationships which must be discussed. DV, this subject will be dealt with in more detail when we comment on v. 21.

AN APPEAL FOR CONSISTENT AND HOLY LIVING (V. 4–5)

This section is two-fold:

The Command to Rejoice at All Times (V. 4)

The Character of True Christianity (v. 5)

THE COMMAND TO REJOICE AT ALL TIMES (V. 4)

“Rejoice in the Lord alway: *and* again I say, Rejoice.” (Χαίρετε ἐν κυρίῳ πάντοτε· πάλιν ἔρω, χαίρετε). Pres.imps. πάντοτε, at all times and in all circumstances—and the Holy Spirit through the Apostle Paul makes this a command for the Christian. Note again the theme of this epistle:

Chapter One—Joy in Living despite Prison and a Party Spirit among Christians.

Chapter Two—Joy in Serving despite very few Likeminded for the work.

Chapter Three—Joy in Fellowshiping despite False Christians.

Chapter Four—Joy in Persevering despite Church, Personal and Spiritual issues.

Note also those statements in Scripture which are easily understood but often difficult in their truth: e.g., Phil. 4:6–7; Rom. 5:1–5; Jas. 1:2–4. Behind the force of this command of 4:4–5 are not only the dire circumstances, troublesome times, persecutions, church problems, etc., but the overruling providence of God—the outworking of his eternal purpose. The Christian’s attitude of mind and fullness of heart are to remain constant as these rise above the varied circumstances of life and settle themselves in the purpose and sovereign rule of God. Cf. 3:19–21. Our attitude and state of mind are ultimately unsettled by two things: unbelief and self-concern, which are both contrary to true Christianity. We are rather to live, think and act in faith and self-denial. It is either disbelief in God’s sovereign government or self-interest that usually disturbs our hearts and minds. Christians ought to be the most joyful persons in the world—even though called upon to serve, to suffer and to die, if need be in the service of Christ to the glory of God. God does not call upon us to be more than human, but to be consistent with his enabling grace and a transcendent world-and-life view. Cf. 2 Cor. 4...

⁷ But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. ⁸ We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are

perplexed, but not in despair; ⁹ Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; ¹⁰ Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. ¹¹ For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. ¹² So then death worketh in us, but life in you. ¹³ We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak; ¹⁴ Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you. ¹⁵ For all things *are* for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God. ¹⁶ For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward *man* is renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory; ¹⁸ While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen *are* temporal; but the things which are not seen *are* eternal.

THE CHARACTER OF TRUE CHRISTIANITY

“Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord *is* at hand.” (τὸ ἐπιεικὲς ὑμῶν γνωσθήτω πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις. ὁ κύριος ἐγγύς). τὸ ἐπιεικὲς ὑμῶν. No one word equates what is translated as “moderation” (fr. ἐπί, intens., and εἶκος, reasonable, forbearing): “Considerate,” “Sweet reasonableness, Gentleness, Selflessness, Big-heartedness.” This ought to be especially considered in the context of v. 2–3. γνωσθήτω πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις. Ingress. aor. “Let it get to be known...” This is to be the first and general, enduring impression that those in and outside the church are to have of us. ὁ κύριος ἐγγύς. The believer, again, is to live with a constant, present God-consciousness [He is ever-present] and also the anticipation and in the context of our Lord’s imminent return (Cf. the context in 3:20–21). He will either come to us or we will go to him—all in a few short years at most.

Obs: What a contrast between the converted and unconverted. We are to rejoice in all things and be joyful in every circumstance; they cannot. We live in the context of God and anticipate his imminent return, they live without God and if they think on him, they must think of meeting God in fear—on his terms, not theirs.

AN APPEAL FOR PRAYER AS THE CURE FOR ANXIETY (V. 6–7)

THE PRACTICAL TEACHING OF THIS PASSAGE

μηδὲν μεριμνᾶτε. “About even one thing stop being anxious.” pres. imp. of prohib. Paul puts forth constant, believing, general and specific prayer as the cure for anxiety. ἀλλ’ ἐν παντὶ τῇ προσευχῇ καὶ τῇ δεήσει μετὰ εὐχαριστίας... “But (ἀλλ’),” to the contrary. “in all kinds of circumstances, with all issues and concerns, in all troubles and problems (ἐν παντι). Both general prayer and specific petition (τῇ προσευχῇ καὶ τῇ δεήσει). Prayer can never be too specific. The more specific the prayer, the greater the faith. Paul emph. attitude in prayer (μετὰ εὐχαριστίας), “with thanksgiving.” The thought might possibly be “mingled with, permeated with” (μετὰ, “with, among,” e.g., the Old Testament meal offerings permeated or mixed with oil). How important is the Christian’s attitude in everything. What is our attitude in prayer? Strong? weak? fearful, believing? Filled with thanksgiving or filled with self and disappointment? We are called upon to be thankful and to rejoice in every and all circumstances. Cf. v. 4–5; Jas. 1:2–4:

² My brethren, count it all joy [Πᾶσαν χαρὰν ἡγήσασθε, ἀδελφοί μου] when ye fall into divers temptations [ὅταν πειρασμοῖς περιπέσητε ποικίλοις]; ³ Knowing *this*, that the trying of your faith worketh patience [γινώσκοντες ὅτι τὸ δοκίμιον ὑμῶν τῆς πίστεως κατεργάζεται ὑπομονήν]. ⁴ But let patience have *her* perfect work [ἡ δὲ ὑπομονὴ ἔργον τέλειον ἐχέτω], that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing [ἵνα ᾗτε τέλειοι καὶ ὁλόκληροι ἐν μηδενὶ λειπόμενοι].

Cf. Acts 5:40–42, after the discourse of Gamaliel and being beaten and warned not to preach any longer...

⁴⁰ And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten *them*, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.

⁴¹ And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. ⁴² And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.

τὰ αἰτήματα ὑμῶν γνωρίζεσθω πρὸς τὸν θεόν. “Let your requests be made known to God.” Tell God all about it. He loves us. He is interested in us. He will listen—even if and when others do not.

καὶ ἡ εἰρήνη τοῦ θεοῦ ἡ ὑπερέχουσα πάντα νοῦν φρουρήσει τὰς καρδίας ὑμῶν καὶ τὰ νοήματα ὑμῶν ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ. “And,” showing the result of prayer. Prayer settles the heart and sanctifies all activities. We cannot have true, God-given peace without fervent prayer. “The peace which comes from God—I mean that which far surpasses all comprehension—shall garrison about (φρουρήσει, guard, lock up as a prisoner) your hearts and the very direction of your thinking [mind-set] in Christ Jesus.” This peace is not irrational, but transcends all comprehension (ἡ εἰρήνη τοῦ θεοῦ ἡ ὑπερέχουσα πάντα νοῦν φρουρήσει), i.e., God graciously works to give his peace through the grace of his Spirit (Gal. 5:22–23).

Note the great contrast. The world’s peace as a pacifier for troubles, is irrational, because it omits God, his righteous character, his government and his purpose. It takes its comfort from statistics, luck, chance or fate; and cannot rest in a personal, purposeful, holy, righteous, gracious and loving God. We need a Divinely-given peace. Do you have peace or are you pursuing happiness? Do you have any peace? What peace do you have? Is it irrational? Is it true and consistent because it derives from God?

Obs: Prayer is the great tool or weapon of the people of God, but where are the great men and women of prayer in our day? As the churches have gotten more and more worldly, sought after the world’s standard for success and to be accepted by the world, there has been a great sacrifice of spiritual power. God is not pleased to answer the prayers of a people whose purpose, direction and goal is in reality to deny him!

A PROBLEM WITH PREDESTINATION

Some at times become worried or perplexed about our circumstances and God’s eternal purpose—Divine predestination—especially in relation to prayer. This usually becomes an issue for at least one of three reasons:

(1) Down deep inside, we hate to be under the control of or at the complete disposal of another. We do not even want *God* to be in complete control of our lives and destiny—even if he is our loving, heavenly Father, even if he knows better than we do, even if he is absolutely sovereign over all things, and even if he has ordained all things

for our ultimate good. This feeling or attitude does not derive from the Scriptures. It derives from the sinfulness of fallen human nature—as do all objections based on the idea of man’s alleged “free will.” Adam and Eve wanted autonomy (Gen. 3:1–7), and fallen, sinful humanity persists with its inherent “god-complex.” This is the one ultimate reason why human beings recoil at the very thought of Divine predestination. Only an ignorantly sinful attitude protests against the biblical truth of Divine predestination. No person ever yet approached the Scriptures with an open mind, discovered the doctrine of “free will” and then from the Scriptures and the revealed nature of God, opposed Divine predestination. Men approach the Scriptures with presuppositions and a bias or prejudice deriving from their fallen, sinful nature and defective ideas about God, and then oppose Divine predestination. E.g., John Wesley, whose negative views on and animosity toward Divine predestination were settled long before his conversion—and never changed..

- (2) We know only our circumstances; we do not know how such circumstances fit into the overall purpose of God—and we want to know. This is either a fearful or unsanctified curiosity. It is extremely difficult to walk by faith rather than by sight—and so the truth of Divine predestination begins to disturb us—and we want to ask, “Why?” Such questions always call the moral character of God into question.

Cf. Rom. 9:16–21: So then *it is* not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. ¹⁷ For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. ¹⁸ Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will *have mercy*, and whom he will he hardeneth. ¹⁹ Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? ²⁰ Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed *it*, Why hast thou made me thus? ²¹ Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? NOTE: Men would rather call God’s moral character into question than admit they are creatures of a sovereign God and do not have the right to ask “Why?”

Faith does not question, it trusts and submits, reaching into the very moral self-consistency of God for comfort. Cf. Rom. 8:28–30.

- (3) Divine predestination is played against prayer in order to discredit predestination, i.e., put into the form of a question, “If all is predestined, why pray?” Such an objection is based upon the unscriptural idea that “prayer changes things,” i.e., that God himself and therefore his purpose can be altered by prayer, and thus predestination is mutable. Further, that either predestination would make God the author of sin or that predestination itself is based on mere foresight or foreknowledge. Consider the implications: does this imply that God has no ultimate or infallible purpose? Are we seeking to change the mind or purpose of God in prayer? Does God suffer from imperfections, so that we may change his purpose or plan for the better? Can prayer give direction or information to God? Scripture itself answers these questions, and gives five reasons why we are to pray:

- God both commands and encourages us to pray. Prayer is thus an act of obedience.

And he spake a parable unto them *to this end*, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint. (Luke 18:1)

Praying always [Διὰ πάσης] with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints. (Ephesians 6:18)

Pray without ceasing [ἀδιαλείπτως προσεύχεσθε]. (1 Thessalonians 5:17)

- Prayer is a call to faith in the sovereign government of God. To set ourselves against the will or purpose of God in our prayers is to rebel against him.

After this manner therefore pray ye: our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as *it is* in heaven. (Matthew 6:9–10)²⁵

- Prayer is a call to submit and seek to conform to the sovereign will of God. Prayer is primarily an act of worship in the context of loving, trusting submission to the sovereign will of God.

Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done. (Luke 22:42)

Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what *is* the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to *the will of God*. And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose. (Romans 8:26–28)

And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will [ἐάν τι αἰτώμεθα κατὰ τὸ θέλημα αὐτοῦ], he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him. (1 John 5:14–15)

- Prayer is one of the God–ordained means of accomplishing his will and bringing glory to himself. Thus, rather than discourage or render prayer unnecessary, predestination actually encourages prayer and gives to the believer the glorious anticipation of an answer.

Consider the prayer of Eliezer of Damascus and predestination (Genesis 24:10–21)—a perfect blend of Divine predestination and human responsibility.

¹⁰ And the servant took ten camels of the camels of his master, and departed; for all the goods of his master *were* in his hand: and he arose, and went to Mesopotamia, unto the city of Nahor. ¹¹ And he made his camels to kneel down without the city by a well of water at the time of the evening, *even* the time that women go out to draw *water*. ¹² And he said, O LORD God of my master Abraham, I pray thee, send me good speed this day, and shew kindness unto my master Abraham. ¹³ Behold, I stand *here* by the well of water; and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water: ¹⁴ And let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: *let the same be she that* thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac; and thereby shall I know that thou hast shewed kindness unto my master. ¹⁵ And it came to pass, before he had done speaking, that, behold,

²⁵ One cannot even approach the so–called “Lord’s Prayer” [Model Prayer] without presupposing Divine predestination and humbly and lovingly submitting to it!

Rebekah came out, who was born to Bethuel, son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, with her pitcher upon her shoulder. ¹⁶ And the damsel was very fair to look upon, a virgin, neither had any man known her: and she went down to the well, and filled her pitcher, and came up. ¹⁷ And the servant ran to meet her, and said, Let me, I pray thee, drink a little water of thy pitcher. ¹⁸ And she said, Drink, my lord: and she hasted, and let down her pitcher upon her hand, and gave him drink. ¹⁹ And when she had done giving him drink, she said, I will draw *water* for thy camels also, until they have done drinking. ²⁰ And she hasted, and emptied her pitcher into the trough, and ran again unto the well to draw *water*, and drew for all his camels. ²¹ And the man wondering at her held his peace, to wit whether the LORD had made his journey prosperous or not.

Note the this prayer was grounded in Divine predestination, and yet it was intensely practical. Camels normally drink up to 30 gallons of water at a time—and Rebecca freely volunteered to draw for all of them, till they had satiated themselves. The prayer presupposed not only a beautiful, but an indutrious young woman, a woman prepared by God!

Consider the intercessory prayers of Daniel based on the prophecies of Jeremiah (Jeremiah 25:11; Daniel 9:1–4)

Confess *your* faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit. (James 5:16–18)

Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do [including prayer], do all to the glory of God. (1 Corinthians 10:31)

- Prayer is an acknowledgment of our finiteness and God's infiniteness; of our dependence upon him and his care and concern for us.

Give us this day our daily bread. (Matthew 6:11)

Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you [αὐτῷ μέλει περὶ ὑμῶν] (1 Pet. 5:7)

A CONCLUDING THOUGHT ON PREDESTINATION

Can it be said that Divine predestination not only does not stifle human effort, it actually provides the basis for right direction and godly living? How so? If all were by chance, then we could do what we would, serve God according to our own feelings or innovations, be pragmatic, leaving God to work things out in a utilitarian fashion as best he could. But, if Divine, absolute predestination is true, and, according to the Scriptures (E.g., Eph. 1:3–11; Dan. 4:35; Rom. 9:11–20f) it is, then what is our human responsibility? It is to live according to the revealed will of God in humble obedience, and thus expect his blessing.

AN APPEAL FOR HOLY THINKING AND DOING (V. 8–9)

Paul progresses toward the end of his list of concerns (Τὸ λοιπόν), “as for the remainder [of these concerns], and follows with an appeal to the Christian's thought–life. He gives a list of six Christian ideals or qualities which ought to guide our thinking, and thus, our living and practice: We are to set our minds on these things. (ταῦτα λογίζεσθε, emph.),

think about, reason, meditate, consider, reckon [in the sense of adding things up]. Biblical Christianity reaches even to the deepest recesses of the mind. Is our mind—set or thought—life praiseworthy? Is our thought—life virtuous? What do our minds naturally incline to?

Are we disciplined to a godly thought—life? Cf. Prov. 4:23. The outer, observable life is but a manifestation of the inner or humanly unobservable life. The true Christian has undergone a Divine transformation—the re—creation of the personality in the image of God, renewed in righteousness, holiness of the truth and knowledge (Cf. Eph. 4:22–24; Col. 3:9–10).

- ὅσα ἐστὶν ἀληθῆ. “Whatsoever is true.” This command is capable of several interpretations and applications—and all are legitimate: (1) True as opposed to untrue, true or real as opposed to fantasy. What we want is often in the realm of fantasy, and we seek to irrationally implement these things in the real world to our frustration and disappointment—and embitterment and harm. Fantasy tends to break down the barriers of reality (Cf. Jas. 1:13–16).²⁶ Truth as opposed to falsehood. (2) Right doctrine and things pertaining to the truth are necessarily included. Cf. Eph. 6:14, “Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth...” Truth is the most essential part of the Christian’s armor. We are of the truth, and live in a world characterized by “the lie.”²⁷ (3) Truthfulness, i.e., those things that are morally upright and consistent.
- ὅσα σεμνα. “Whatsoever things are honest, honorable, reverent.” Such thoughts will never lead us to sin or dishonor. These will form a barrier against evil thoughts.
- ὅσα δίκαια. “Whatsoever things are righteous.” Are we at all concerned about righteousness? We ought to be. Imputed and imparted righteousness comprehensive of our salvation and experience as believers. Do we think righteous thoughts? Or are they unrighteous, selfish, sinful, spiteful, immoral?
- ὅσα ἄγνα. “Whatsoever things are pure, holy.” Do we have holy thoughts? Or are our thoughts unholy, unpurified, unsanctified—filled with immorality and the impurities and filth of our age?
- ὅσα προσφιλή. “Whatsoever things are pleasing, lovely,” i.e., which call forth love. Do we harbor animosity, are we self—centered and conniving? Are our thoughts unlovely, twisted, perverted, immoral, sinful?
- ὅσα εὐφημα. “Whatsoever things are of good report,” i.e., worthy of praise. Are our thoughts worthy of praise if they should be made known? God knows. Do we have the smile of his countenance?

²⁶ Jas. 1:13–16, ¹³ Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: ¹⁴ But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed [ὑπὸ τῆς ἰδίας ἐπιθυμίας ἐξεκκόμενος καὶ δελεαζόμενος]. ¹⁵ Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished [δὲ ἁμαρτία ἀποτελεσθεῖσα ἀποκύει θάνατον], bringeth forth death. ¹⁶ Do not err, my beloved brethren.

²⁷ Cf. Rom. 1: “Such ones as who [οἵτινες] changed the truth of God into the lie [τῷ ψεύδει], and worshipped and served the creature more than [side—stepping, παρὰ] the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.”

How is your thought–life? God knows all about it. Nothing is hidden from him. From righteous thoughts come righteous actions. From holy thoughts come holy actions, from loving thoughts come loving actions. How can we experience the peace of God in our hearts if our minds are filled with self and sin?!

(v. 9) Paul then puts himself up as an example to be emulated (ἃ καὶ ἐμάθετε καὶ παρελάβετε καὶ ἠκούσατε καὶ εἶδετε ἐν ἐμοί, ταῦτα πράσσετε). What they had witnessed in his life, they were to put into practice. Paul evidently practiced what he preached—the great test of any teacher. He issues a command (ταῦτα πράσσετε). Could we command such?! What have others learned, received, heard and seen in and from us?

καὶ ὁ θεὸς τῆς εἰρήνης ἔσται μεθ’ ὑμῶν. This is the price of peace. True peace, that peace of God which is transcendent rests with those who abide in what Paul has written, thought and lived.

As Paul begins to conclude his letter, he once again remembers the gift sent to him from the Philippian church. Cf. the subtle mention of this in 1:5 (ἐπὶ τῇ κοινωνίᾳ ὑμῶν εἰς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον ἀπὸ πρώτης ἡμέρας ἄχρι τοῦ νῦν). This section may be analyzed as follows:

VII. Paul’s Rejoicing for the Philippians	(4:10–19)
He Rejoices for Their Care and Gift	(v. 10)
He Explains his Independence from Circumstances	(v. 11–14)
He Thanks them for their Gift	(v. 15–18)
He Reveals the Abundance of God to Them	(v. 19)

In v. 10 he mentions the gift in an understanding way, then, in v. 11–13, he notes that it is not because he really needed it, but rather because it was a token of their love. He then teaches them about living consistently and independently of one’s circumstances. Paul is the incurable teacher. Then in v. 14 he again states that it was the right thing to do. In v. 15–17, he reiterates their mutual history and his desire. In v. 18–19, he reiterates his and their spiritual fullness. We note here a personality trait of the inspired Apostle—his sensitive nature, which is manifested repeatedly in his carefulness not to be misunderstood, and so to explain some things ever more carefully than usual (E.g., 1 Cor. 9; Acts 20:33–35 and taking financial support for the ministry. He wanted everyone to know that what he did, he did most freely, even to the point of becoming self-supporting, although he had a right to be supported.).

HE REJOICES FOR THEIR CARE AND GIFT (V. 10)

δὲ is transitory, and begins a new subject—his rejoicing at their gift which had been sent with Epaphroditus some months before. (Ἐχάρην δὲ ἐν κυρίῳ μεγάλως). Paul rejoiced in the Lord because it was the Lord who put this into the hearts of these Philippian believers to send this gift to Paul. They always had him in their minds and hearts, but they lacked either the means or the opportunity to help him. But when the opportunity arose, their love and concern for him sprang up, budded and blossomed (ὅτι ἦδη ποτὲ ἀνεθάλετε). A metaphor “to revive,” to flourish anew, to bud and blossom.

- The Apostle was openly emotional, yet his emotions were sanctified and wholly within the realm of truth and the cause of Christ. This is a perfect example of Christian, sanctified emotions. He was never irrational. We must ever remember that our emotions are to remain sanctified—“emotional, but never irrational.”

- Do we think about other believers? Ministers? Missionaries? Do we have them in our minds and hearts? Cf. 1:7, διὰ τὸ ἔχειν με ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ ὑμᾶς. Note pres. and emph. pos. What a rebuke in this self-centered, self-serving, self-absorbed age.
- He discerned the grace of God in the act of these believers, and rejoiced in it. Are we ever prompted to act in a loving, godly way toward others? Do we know and have we experienced the leading of the Spirit? How does the Spirit lead? Objectively and subjectively, but the two are never separated. The one is causative to the other.
- This was a true “love offering,” and Paul notes the love and concern behind the gift. This was a love offering because it was spontaneous on their behalf. Is there any spontaneity in our love to other believers?

HE EXPLAINS HIS INDEPENDENCE FROM CIRCUMSTANCES (V. 11–14)

Paul was always careful to avoid misunderstanding, when possible. Here, he does not want the Philippian brethren to think that he rejoiced simply because his need was met by their gift. His rejoicing was rather because this gift was from their heart, given freely as a manifestation of their enduring love for the Apostle. He further takes this occasion as an opportunity to teach on Christian self-reliance and to put their gift in its true and proper context.

(v. 11). οὐχ ὅτι καθ’ ὑστέρησιν λέγω, ἐγὼ γὰρ ἔμαθον ἐν οἷς εἰμι αὐτάρκης εἶναι. Note emph. pos. ὑστέρησιν λέγω. For I learned (ἐγὼ γὰρ ἔμαθον, aor.). Paul summarizes his long, trying and varied experience into one impressive thought. Cf. this use of the aor. in οἰκοδομήθη (Jn. 2:20).²⁸

- He is not stressing the varied experience as much as he impresses with the fact that he *learned* this. Some things must be learned, they do not come merely by Divine revelation or by grace, although they are *learned* by grace.

What we learn by the discipline of grace is usually more impressed upon our minds and hearts than that which is seen in Divine revelation [the Scriptures].

We always want grace, as though all grace is most free from trial, experience and effort, but do we want to *learn* by grace—by grace that sustains us *through* trial?

- Grace teaches (Cf. Titus 2:11–15, Ἐπεφάνη γὰρ ἡ χάρις τοῦ θεοῦ... παιδεύουσα [pres. act. ptc., lit: to train up a child, hence, to instruct, discipline, chastise] ἡμᾶς, ἵνα ἀρνησάμενοι τὴν ἀσέβειαν καὶ τὰς κοσμικὰς ἐπιθυμίας σωφρόνως καὶ δικαίως καὶ εὐσεβῶς ζήσωμεν ἐν τῷ νῦν αἰῶνι).

¹¹ For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, ¹² Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; ¹³ Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; ¹⁴ Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. ¹⁵

²⁸ In the words “Forty and six years was this temple in building.” one would expect the imperf., emph. the duration, but the aor οἰκοδομήθη is used, lumping all this time into one impressive, ponderous, single fact that they pushed into the face of our Lord.

These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee.

Are we being constantly taught, disciplined and chastised by the grace of God? What does grace teach? Are we living against the current [direction] of Divine grace? The teaching of grace reveals to us our true spiritual state.

- οἷς εἶμι αὐτάρκης εἶναι. This αὐτάρκης was a key Stoic term (resourceful, self-sufficient, satisfied, from αὐτός and ἀρκέω, to be sufficient, have sufficient strength), but Paul “Christianizes” it by putting it into the context of Divine grace. Paul was not pluralistic. He was not a Stoic, nor did he buttress his Christianity by an infusion of Stoicism. Note that this is both intensely personal (εἶμι) and emphatic. Each has to learn this on his own and for himself or herself. God is a personal God, and he deals with us personally. This is a vital experience if we are to be useful in the work of God’s kingdom. It is a necessary requirement for preachers, missionaries, etc. A sinful lack of contentment is a major characteristic of our age.
- (v. 12). οἶδα καὶ ταπεινοῦσθαι [ashamed, humiliated] (Cf. Paul’s God and Paul’s circumstances—a contradiction to others?), οἶδα καὶ περισσεύειν [have more than enough] ἐν παντὶ καὶ ἐν πᾶσιν μεμύημαι [perf. I have learned the secret of] καὶ χορτάζεσθαι [being satisfied] καὶ πεινᾶν [going hungry] καὶ περισσεύειν [abound, overflow] καὶ ὑστερεῖσθαι [lack, be in want, be inferior]. Paul had experienced much by way of privation and also of fullness, and had learned from both. His perception derived from experience (οἶδα grew out of γινωσκέιν). Paul did not complain—he was not a “complainer”. How different from most of us, who may tend to overindulge in times of fullness and bitterly complain in times of privation or want...and consequently learn nothing. Our very testimony and service for Christ may depend on how others perceive our circumstances and our reaction to them.
- (v. 13). πάντα ἰσχύω [I am able to do] ἐν τῷ ἐνδυναμοῦντί με Χριστῷ. Lit: “All things I can do in the one constantly infusing me with strength—Christ.” a culm. emph. Is this a *carte blanc* for the Christian? Care must be taken that we do not abuse the text by making it mean too much. This statement has been greatly misused because it has been taken out of its proper context and made to mean what it does not mean—and many have been disappointed. This is not an unended, open, universal claim or promise. *It is stated in the context of the circumstances of life and being enabled to rise above them and live independently of them.* The idea is that we can *endure* all things in or through Christ who is constantly enabling us to do so. To stray too far from the context may be to court danger and disappointment. Even the intended “good” misuse of Scripture is still a misuse.
- But we must also consider the truth of this statement. Paul was clearly and wonderfully aware of the reality of Divine grace in his life, experience and labors. Cf. 1 Cor. 15:8–10; 2 Cor. 12:1–10.
- (v. 14) πλὴν καλῶς ἐποιήσατε συγκοινωνήσαντές μου τῇ θλίψει. Paul does not belittle their gift, he rather puts it in the proper context and gives it its true significance. “good ye have done” (καλῶς ἐποιήσατε) emph. Good that is truly and unquestionably good and wholesome. Their contribution to Paul’s ministry was an actual participation in his

troubles or sufferings (συγκοινωνήσαντές μου τῇ θλίψει). μου emph. pos. τῇ θλίψει, a crushing trial. συγκοινωνήσαντές, to have in common with in the fullest or deepest sense. The gift was from the heart, and so a spiritual work. How much blessing we lose because our works are outward and the heart remains unaffected.

Observations on v. 10–14: We have good reason to thank God for putting this into the heart and mind of Paul. Carefully mark the following:

Obs 1: Paul practiced what he preached. In this epistle, he constantly returned to his theme of “Rejoice in the Lord” despite a variety of restraining or opposing issues, and he does so when he considers their gift, which was from their heart.

Obs 2: He had learned to rise above and live independently of his outward circumstances. But this was not Stoic self-reliance or self-sufficiency. It was rather a self-sufficiency engendered by the enabling grace of God, ministered in and through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Obs 3: Divine grace forever not only separates Christianity from Stoicism, but, indeed, from all other religions. Stoicism taught a self-reliance and self-sufficiency grounded in mere human resolve. Every religion teaches some form of either self-denial or self-sufficiency in mere human strength or endurance. Only Christianity is a religion of grace. And Paul remains a monument to the glorious grace of God.

Cf. 1 Tim. 1:14–17— (Grace in Salvation)

¹² And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; ¹³ Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did *it* ignorantly in unbelief. ¹⁴ And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ This *is* a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. ¹⁶ Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.

Cf. 1 Cor. 15:8–10— (Grace in Service)

⁸ And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. ⁹ For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. ¹⁰ But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which *was bestowed* upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

Cf. 2 Cor. 12:7–10— (Grace in Suffering)

Paul was the living example, the epitome of Phil. 1:29:

For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ [ὑμῖν ἐχαρίσθη τὸ ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ], not only to believe on him [οὐ μόνον τὸ εἰς αὐτὸν πιστεῦειν], but also to suffer for his sake [ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ πάσχειν]...

⁷ And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me [ἵνα με κολαφίζῃ], lest I should be exalted above measure. ⁸ For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. ⁹ And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is

made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.¹⁰ Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

Obs 4: This is a clear condemnation of a legalistic approach to Christianity, which seeks to achieve righteousness in any area of the life by self-effort rather than by the enabling grace of God. Note the teaching of some who believe and teach that spirituality comes through discipline rather than grace, as though we could develop a spirituality on our own—such would be a self-righteousness. There are only two kinds of righteousness: The imputed righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ and self-righteousness.

Obs 5: Teaching on rising above and living independently of one's circumstances is sorely needed in our day. Not only for teaching godly self-reliance, but also teaching that believers must learn to live independently of their circumstances rather than living *beyond* their circumstances. Purposely becoming part of a debt-ridden society so the individual or family can live a life of more self-indulgence is a sinful lifestyle.²⁹ Continually getting into and remaining in debt as a way of life in order to accumulate non-essentials is sinful. The Christian life is a disciplined life, and thus a life of freedom under God. The debtor is a slave; he is not free to serve God.

Obs 6: It is a glorious privilege to have part of a godly, obedient, sacrificial ministry. These Philippian believers “fellowshipped” in Paul's trials. Giving in time, prayer energy and financially, is fellowship. Giving is worship.

Obs 7: When discussing the grace of God in the life and experience of the believer, we must also consider by contrast the lack of grace in the life and experience of the unbeliever. He is left to his own strength, his own self-righteousness, his own perverted view of religion, his own condemnation. As salvation is all of grace, so condemnation is all of works. Only by saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ can we lay hold of the realities of the grace of God. Not to do so means that we are heaping up judgment to ourselves.

Rom. 2:1–5. Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things.² But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things.³ And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? ⁴ Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? ⁵ But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God;

²⁹ Cf. Rom. 13:8, “Owe no man anything...”, Μηδενὶ μηδεν ὀφείλετε, “Stop getting into debt with anyone.” or “Do not be constantly getting into debt.” (pres., imp. of prohib.). The prohibition of an indebted lifestyle.

HE THANKS THEM FOR THEIR GIFT (V. 15–18)

οἴδατε δὲ καὶ ὑμεῖς, Φιλιππηῖοι. δὲ [Now] is transitory. The Philippians were the only ones who voluntarily and willingly gave to help in Paul's ministry. Thus, their gift was an expression of their love and concern. At Thessalonica, Paul had great needs. The Philippians knew of the general economic situation and immediately thought of the Apostle.

Paul always made it a very clear point that he labored to support himself so that he would not be chargeable to anyone, i.e., he earned his own living so as not to take money from anyone when he preached as an evangelist. Cf. 1 Cor. 9; 1 Thess. 2:5–10; Phil. 4:10–16. Why did the Philippians send money to Paul at least twice when he was at Thessalonica? It may be that his finances were exhausted because of his travels from Troas to Philippi and from Philippi to Thessalonica—the cost of shipfare for everyone from Troas to Samothracia, and perhaps for animals on the 100 mile trek from Philippi to Thessalonica, if he and Silas could not walk because of their injuries. The ultimate answer is found in Roman records. There was a famine at that very time in Macedonia and the price of wheat rose six-fold. The Philippians knew this and sent relief to him to add to his own income as he labored day and night both in making tents and in preaching the Gospel.³⁰

It had been about ten years, but they had done what they could to maintain contact with him, pray for him and do what they could to support his ministry—the only ones to do so.

(v. 15–18) Paul looked behind the gift to the givers,³¹ and evaluated it as the love expressed. Note the language of an accountant: v. 15, δόσεως καὶ λήψεως (“giving and receiving,” i.e., the common terms for debits and receipts); v. 17, τὸν καρπὸν τὸν πλεονάζοντα (common terms for profit and accumulation of interest); v. 18, ἀπέχω δὲ πάντα καὶ περισσεύω· (ἀπέχω, to receive in full, i.e., to receive a full payment).³²

Obs 1: Christian service must never be considered in terms of feeling or irrationalism. We must keep careful books and do the work of God intelligently.

Obs 2: Paul considers their giving an act of worship. What is worship? It is any act done for the glory of God and with loving, heart-concern for his work and glory. Cf. Illust: Dr. Gordon Clark, “Philosophizing is an act of worship.”³³ Cf. the pervasive principle of 1 Cor. 10:31. Cf. Rom. 12:1, and the determined act of offering up our bodies as a living sacrifice unto God.

Obs 3: Have you ever considered giving as an act of worship? Thus, it cannot be done merely outwardly, casually, but always sincerely with the right motive and for the right purpose.

³⁰ Cf. F. W. Farrar, *The Life and Work of St. Paul*, p. 287.

³¹ Is this not what a woman does who receives a gift from her suitor, husband or children? She evaluates the gift in terms of the love expressed.

³² Paul's metaphors are a rich study in themselves. Nautical, military, and now, financial. H. A. A. Kennedy wrote an article “The Financial Colouring of Phil. 4:15–18” in the *Expository Times*, 1900.

³³ Gordon H. Clark, *God, Men and Things*, p. 19.

HE REVEALS THE ABUNDANCE OF GOD TO THEM (V. 19)

ὁ δὲ θεός μου...What a powerful, significant expression. Paul's God. The God of Paul, who learned to rise above all adversity and live independently of his circumstances, Paul the sufferer, Paul the intense Christian and tireless servant. Could we say that "My God shall supply all your need...?" when we complain, falter in faith, or hide our Christianity?.

πληρώσει πᾶσαν [sing., every] χρείαν ὑμῶν κατὰ τὸ πλοῦτος αὐτοῦ ἐν δόξῃ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ. Note that Paul did not say out of or from his riches (ἐκ), but according to (κατα). A rich expression, indeed. God recompenses those who give. Even if we give to the work of God out of our want (which the Philippians evidently did), we cannot out-give God, and he loves a cheerful giver.³⁴ We are to give without second thoughts (Rom. 12:8).³⁵

THE CLOSING DOXOLOGY (V. 20)

τῷ δὲ θεῷ καὶ πατρὶ ἡμῶν ἡ δόξα εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων, ἀμήν. Paul, as his usual practice, offers this doxology to God. He is taken up with a sense of the Divine presence and work—despite all that might seem to the contrary, and his heart and mind are filled with praise to God. Unthankfulness is one of the primary sins. Cf. Rom. 1:21–22. He is anything but despondent. What a testimony throughout the ages for us!

THE CONCLUSION OF THE EPISTLE (V. 21–23)

²¹ Salute every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren which are with me greet you. ²² All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar's household. ²³ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen. *To the Philippians* written from Rome, by Epaphroditus.

Even here in v. 21, there is instruction, especially when considered in the context of the two women who were at odds, (Ἀσπάσασθε πάντα ἅγιον ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ.) aor. imp. "Salute every saint..." sing.³⁶ We are all "in Christ Jesus," washed by his blood, interceded for by his priestly work, bound up in spiritual union with him, destined to spend eternity together. How sad it is when believers cannot get along together. What are the causes and what is the cure? The causes may be manifold (but usually tainted with various sins—self-righteousness, stubbornness, jealousy, envy, personal agenda, etc.), but the cure is always the same. We are to forgive one another as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven us. Cf. Eph. 4:17–32; Col. 3:1–23. Possessing an unforgiving spirit is a sinful state which may reveal an unregenerate heart, and at the least, a dire spiritual condition, Matt. 6:12–15; 18:21–35. Repentance is to be taken as a matter of grace and the given situation concluded without reserve, Lk. 17:3–5. If there is a complete lack of repentance and restoration, then the matter is to be taken before the church and lack of reconciliation is to be concluded with church

³⁴ ἰλαρὸν γὰρ δότην ἀγαπᾷ ὁ θεός. It is impossible to transfer this emphatic const. into English. The subj. occurs last, and both verb and direct obj. are in the emph. pos.

³⁵ Rom. 12:8, "...he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity..." μεταδιδοὺς ἐν ἀπλότητι. "liberally, with single-heartedness, without duplicity, or "without second thoughts."

³⁶ "Salute every saint..." sing. This is the only time in any of Paul's epistles where he commands salutation to every saint. Elsewhere the singular is reserved for specific individuals who salute his readers, or the plural is used of salutations from or to others.

discipline, Matt. 18:15–18. Only true believers can put an end to an interpersonal issue, resolve it, forgive one another, and never bring it up again.

According to the postscript in some mss., this epistle was written in Rome by Epaphroditus, who bore the epistle to Philippi himself. Paul was probably suffering even at that time from an onset of his disease of the eyes and so unable to pen the letter himself—yet he is filled with rejoicing!