

## Paul's Letter to the Philippians



Events Leading to the Writing of Paul's Letter to the Philippians, Written From Rome  
During Paul's First Imprisonment, c. A.D. 63

### *The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the PHILIPPIANS*

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#### **INTRODUCTION**

**1. Title.** This letter draws its title from the fact that it is addressed to the Christians of Philippi, a city of Macedonia. For a history of the city see on Acts 16:12. The earliest manuscripts, going back to the 3d century, bear the simple title *Pros Philippēsiōus* ("To [the] Philippians").

**2. Authorship.** Within the letter itself the apostle Paul is designated as the author (ch. 1:1). He represents Timothy as one of his associates (chs. 1:1; 2:19), and refers to his own imprisonment (ch. 1:7) and to his former preaching in Macedonia (ch. 4:15), in a manner that is entirely natural and in harmony with what is known of Paul's life. The early church unanimously recognized this letter as being from Paul. The first non-Biblical testimony to its Pauline authorship comes from the Christian leader and martyr Polycarp, about the middle of the 2d century (see Vol. V, p. 125). Evidence for Pauline authorship

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<sup>1</sup>Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (Php 1:1). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

is so strong that there is little room for doubt. Concerning the date of writing see Vol. VI, pp. 105, 106.

**3. Historical Setting.** The epistle to the Philippians was written from Rome during Paul's first imprisonment there (see Vol. VI, pp. 105, 106). More than ten years had passed since Paul had first preached the gospel at Philippi. Luke describes the circumstances of the apostle's first visit there (Acts 16). While at Troas, on the northwest coast of Asia Minor about A.D. 50, the apostle had received a vision in which he beheld "a man of Macedonia" pleading with him, "Come over into Macedonia, and help us" (Acts 16:8, 9). Paul and his companions, Silas, Timothy, and Luke, responded immediately, and went by way of Neapolis to Philippi, the first place in Europe where the gospel was preached (see on Acts 16:11, 12). There the missionaries joined a little group of worshipers by the river outside the city (see on Acts 16:13). Outstanding among those present was Lydia, "a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira." Lydia and her household readily received the apostles' message, were converted and baptized. Afterward, as Paul and Silas went about their work of teaching, they met a slave girl possessed of a spirit of divination; she repeatedly proclaimed them as "servants of the most high God." When Paul cast out the spirit, her former masters stirred up a mob against the apostles, with the result that Paul and Silas were beaten and cast into prison. Then came an earthquake at midnight, followed by the conversion of the jailer and his family. Thus the Philippian church was formed, with its charter members the purple-seller from Thyatira and her household, the jailer, who was probably a Roman (see on Acts 16:23), and his household, and others.

Several years later, on his way back to Jerusalem, as he completed his Third Missionary Tour, Paul stopped again at Philippi. It was the time of the Passover, and the apostle kept the feast with the believers. He must have enjoyed the period of peaceful and happy communion thus afforded him with those who were among the most loving and truehearted of all his converts (Acts 20:6; cf. AA 390, 391).

Soon after his return to Jerusalem, Paul was arrested and imprisoned at Caesarea for at least two years (Acts 24:27). Then came the trip to Rome, where he spent "two whole years in his own hired house" (Acts 28:30). Doubtless it was during this period of imprisonment that Paul wrote his epistle to the Philippian church, as well as the letters to the Colossians, the Ephesians, and to Philemon. Rome is not mentioned in the Epistle to the Philippians, but Paul's reference to Caesar's household (ch. 4:22) and his expectation of a speedy release (ch. 2:24) suggest Rome as the place of writing.

From the letter one gains considerable insight into the situation at Philippi, the condition of Paul, and the relation between the apostle and the Philippian believers. The church at Philippi was led by bishops and deacons (ch. 1:1). Its members were suffering persecution (v. 29). Apparently there had been some tendency to discord, especially between two of the women members (ch. 4:2), but there is no hint of moral corruption or erroneous doctrine. There is little to disturb the joy and thankfulness with which the apostle contemplates the Philippians' growth in grace. Their love for him is unchanged. They had sent Epaphroditus, one of their leaders, to convey their gifts and to minister to Paul in his affliction (ch. 2:25). Paul thought that he might be released soon, and expressed a hope of shortly seeing them again (chs. 1:26; 2:24). Later, he was freed and for a time worked among the churches he had helped to establish, possibly including the church at Philippi (see AA 487).

The immediate occasion for the writing of the letter was that Epaphroditus, who had been seriously ill during part of his stay with Paul in Rome, was now well enough to return home to Philippi (ch. 2:25–30). The church was eager to have Epaphroditus come to them, and Paul wished to take advantage of the opportunity to send a message thanking his friends for sending him gifts, telling them of his condition, and reminding them of his prayerful interest in them.

**4. Theme.** The Epistle to the Philippians is a letter from a friend to friends, a letter of spiritual counsel, written in acknowledgement of loving help. Paul tells the Philippian believers of his bonds, of the progress of the gospel at Rome, of the endeavors of certain adversaries to distress him by factious opposition, preaching Christ, as they did, out of envy and party spirit (ch. 1:12–17). He tells them of the inward peace and joy that bore him up in all his afflictions. He feels sure of their sympathy; he writes in the fullest confidence of Christian friendship. His joy is their joy. He tells them of the uncertainty of his future; he does not know how his trial will end, in death or in life. He is prepared for either event—a holy life is blessed, a holy death also blessed (vs. 19–24). He tells them of his thankful acceptance of their gifts. He had been unwilling to receive aid from other churches, but with them he was on terms of the very closest intimacy, and that affectionate and trusting friendship made him ready to accept their help (ch. 4:14–17). He valued it, not so much as an alleviation of his own hardships, but rather as an additional evidence of their love to him and of their growth in that charity which is the first of Christian graces. For himself, he was content. He had learned to be self-sufficient in the Christian sense: none felt his own weakness more than he, but he could do all things through the strength of Christ (vs. 10–13).

Thus the theme of the epistle is joy in Christ. Though it was written in prison, with Paul unaware of what lay ahead, the words “joy” and “rejoice” are used again and again. The phrase “in Christ” is used repeatedly, and when joined with the thought of joy, well expresses the theme of the epistle.

#### **5. Outline.**

- I. Introduction, 1:1–11.
  - A. Salutation to the Philippians, 1:1, 2.
  - B. Thanksgiving for his converts, 1:3–8.
  - C. Prayer for their continued growth, 1:9–11.
- II. Review of Paul’s Circumstances and Feelings, 1:12–26.
  - A. His imprisonment and its effect on the progress of the gospel, 1:12–17.
    1. Added publicity, 1:12, 13.
    2. Increased witness by church members, 1:14.
    3. Contentious preaching, 1:15–17.
  - B. His attitude toward his imprisonment, 1:18–26.
    1. Rejoicing that Christ is more widely preached, 1:18.
    2. Conviction concerning its spiritual benefit, 1:19.
    3. Determination to exalt Christ in life or in death, 1:20–26.
- III. Exhortation to Unity and Self-denial, 1:27 to 2:16.
  - A. Need for steadfast fearlessness, 1:27, 1:28.
  - B. Endurance of suffering, 1:29, 30.
  - C. Appeal for Christian unity and humility, 2:1–4.
  - D. Christ, the supreme pattern of humility, 2:5–11.

- E. Practical application of the pattern, 2:12–16.
- IV. Explanation of Paul’s Plans for the Future, 2:17–30.
  - A. His plan to send Timothy to them, 2:17–23.
  - B. His hope of being soon released, 2:24.
  - C. His immediate plan to send Epaphroditus to them, 2:25–30.
    - 1. The illness and recovery of Epaphroditus, 2:25–27.
    - 2. A recommendation for Epaphroditus, 2:28–30.
  - V. Further Exhortation, With Doctrinal Parenthesis, 3:1 to 4:9.
    - A. Rejoicing in the Lord, 3:1.
    - B. Warning against two errors, 3:2–21.
      - 1. Judaism—works versus grace, 3:2–16.
        - a. The true circumcision, 3:2, 3.
        - b. Paul’s distrust of his Hebrew background, 3:4–7.
        - c. Paul’s distrust of his present experience, 3:8–11.
        - d. Necessity of continual, unified progress, 3:12–16.
      - 2. Materialism—the sensual versus the spiritual mind, 3:17–21.
        - a. Exhortation to imitate Paul, 3:17.
        - b. Warning against sensualists, 3:18, 19.
        - c. The blessed hope, 3:20, 21.
    - C. Renewed appeal for steadfastness and unity, 4:1–3.
    - D. Exhortation to joyfulness, freedom from anxiety, the pursuit of all good aims, 4:4–9.
- VI. Conclusion, 4:10–23.
  - A. Acknowledgment of their gift, 4:10–19.
  - B. Salutations from all to all, benediction, 4:20–23.

## CHAPTER 1

3 *He testifieth his thankfulness to God, and his love toward them, for the fruits of their faith, and fellowship in his sufferings, 9 daily praying to him for their increase in grace: 12 he sheweth what good the faith of Christ had received by his troubles at Rome, 21 and how ready he is to glorify Christ either by his life or death, 27 exhorting them to unity, 28 and to fortitude in persecution.*

**1. Paul.** Note the simple identification. When writing to some other churches, the apostle felt it necessary to state his authority (cf. 1 Cor. 1:1; 2 Cor. 1:1; Gal. 1:1; Eph. 1:1), but here there is no need, for the Philippian church accepted his credentials. This is a letter of love, of gratitude, and of commendation, and while it contains words of warning and exhortation, it is not intended to solve such problems as arose in the churches of some other cities.

**Timotheus.** See on Acts 16:1. The young evangelist had been with Paul at Philippi (Acts 16:11, 12), so would be personally known to the early converts. A later visit (Acts 20:1–5) made him acquainted with members who had subsequently joined the church. Apart from this salutation there is no indication that Timothy was coauthor of the epistle. The fact that Paul speaks in the first person, from Phil. 1:3 and on, suggests that he is sole author.

**Servants.** Gr. *douloi* (see on Rom. 1:1). Some suggest that in applying this term to himself Paul may have had in mind the frequent Greek practice of freeing a slave by having him purchased by one of the gods. A fictitious business transaction was arranged whereby the slave was to pay into the temple treasury his purchase price, money which

he had saved. The owner and the slave then went to the temple: the owner received the purchase price, and the slave was supposedly sold to the god. Thus the slave became the property of the particular god, but, for practical purposes, he was now free. Paul considered himself the purchase of Jesus Christ, “bought with a price” (1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23), “made free” (Rom. 6:18), but despite this freedom he knew that he was not his own (1 Cor. 6:20), but was the purchased possession of Christ, who loved him and gave Himself for him (Gal. 2:20). This purchase was no delusive fiction but a living reality: the body and mind of the apostle had been redeemed from slavery to sin and Satan, from subjection to pride and prejudice, from bondage to the works of the law and the flesh, and brought under the full control of the Master of men (see on Rom. 7:14–25).

**Saints.** Gr. *hagioi* (see on Rom. 1:7). Note that the letter is addressed to *all* the church members at Philippi. Paul does not want any to feel unremembered.

**In Christ Jesus.** See on Rom. 8:1; 1 Cor. 1:2; Eph. 1:1.

**Bishops.** Gr. *episkopoi* (see on Acts 20:28).

**Deacons.** Gr. *diakonoi* (see on Mark 9:35), a word that signifies servants, not as to standing in society, but as to activity. This word is at times used specifically for a minister of the gospel (1 Cor. 3:5; 2 Cor. 3:6; Eph. 3:7). Paul’s special recognition of these local church workers would no doubt add to their prestige in the eyes of the congregation. There is no indication here that one bishop exercised authority over several congregations as was true in the later history of the church. On the contrary there were several within the local group at Philippi. See Vol. VI, pp. 25, 26.

**2. Grace.** For comment on the greeting here employed see on Rom. 1:7. In the pastoral epistles (1 and 2 Tim., Titus) “mercy” is added.

**God our Father.** See on Matt. 6:9.

**3. I thank my God.** See on Rom. 1:8.

**Every remembrance.** That is, every time Paul remembered the Philippian believers, the renewed realization of their excellent qualities led him to thank God for the existence of such exemplary Christians. This remembrance was continuous and resulted in constant thanksgiving.

**4. Always.** Paul’s joy over his converts’ excellences was continuous.

**Prayer.** Gr. *deēsis*, “a seeking,” “an entreaty,” “a supplication,” from *deomai*, “to ask,” “to beg.” The same word (*deēsis*) is translated “request” later in this verse.

**Joy.** What a tribute to the Christian character of the Philippians that a knowledge of their experience brought joy, not agony of soul, to the apostle! This was not always the case with other churches (see 1 Cor. 3:1–3; Gal. 4:19).

**5. Fellowship.** Gr. *koinōnia* (see on Acts 2:42; Rom. 15:26). Though *koinōnia* is used in the larger sense of sympathetic cooperation, it also carries the meaning of “almsgiving,” and so possibly here in view of the Philippians’ generous contributions to Paul’s welfare (see Phil. 4:10, 15, 16). By now this is a well-trying fellowship of mutual love existing from the first day of his preaching the gospel among them, until the time of his writing. The thought of this holy friendship is a wellspring of unending joy to the apostle, particularly since he is in prison.

**In the gospel.** The gospel of Christ was responsible for the personal fellowship, but, more than that, their fellowship was in the furtherance of the gospel. Nothing else binds

hearts so firmly together as does the common belief in the gospel and the sharing of the joys and sorrows of Christian life. This fellowship should result in united efforts to include others within its circle. Such efforts draw believers still more closely to one another.

**6. Being confident.** See on Heb. 3:6.

**He which hath begun.** That is, God. The apostle wants his converts to remember that God is the author of their salvation (cf. Phil. 2:13; Heb. 12:2; 13:20, 21).

**A good work.** That is, the work of salvation.

**Perform.** Gr. *epiteleō*, “to bring to an end,” “to perfect.” The Lord is a perfect workman. He completes every work to which He sets His hand, if only the human material permits Him to do so. Furthermore, the product of such workmanship will be perfect. And He does not weary in well-doing. He has brought the Philippians into the fellowship of the gospel, but that is a work which is not finished with a single act. It is completed gradually, but none the less surely. Confidence in God’s constant interest and guidance is a keynote of Paul’s writings. He wishes to impart that same certainty to the Philippians.

**Day of Jesus Christ.** Synonymous with the expression “day of the Lord” (see on Acts 2:20; cf. Phil. 1:10; 2:16). The work of perfecting will continue until Christ comes to receive His own. Nothing short of a continuous, spiritual growth can prepare one to welcome Christ when He comes the second time.

**7. It is meet.** Rather, “it is right,” that is, morally right, on the basis of God’s procedures (v. 6) and the Philippians’ own qualities.

**To think.** Rather, “to be minded,” “to feel” (RSV), suggesting the state of Paul’s mind rather than an actual thought.

**This.** That is, the assurance of the Philippians’ complete salvation.

**Of you all.** Rather, “on behalf of you all.” Paul rarely thought detachedly: he was so vitally interested in his converts’ welfare that he thought in terms of their actual situations.

**In my heart.** Paul cites his love, his holding the believers in his heart, as justification of his high hopes on their behalf. He held these beloved converts in his heart because he could not be personally with them. He who enshrines his benefactors and his co-workers in his heart safeguards against selfishness. He who carries his brethren elsewhere than in his heart will soon wish to cast them out of his thinking.

**In my bonds.** A reference to his imprisonment in Rome (see p. 138).

**Defence.** Gr. *apologia*, “verbal defense,” “speech in defense.”

**Confirmation.** Gr. *bebaiōsis*, “an establishing,” “a confirmation,” from *bebaiōō*, “to make firm,” “to establish,” “to confirm.”

**Partakers of my grace.** Literally, “partakers [or, “sharers”] with me of the grace.” If this phrase is introduced earlier in the verse and the phrase “inasmuch as” is omitted, Paul’s meaning becomes clearer. The Philippians were sharers with the apostle in the grace of God. This grace had made them partakers, as it were, of his imprisonment by their sympathizing assistance and by their enduring persecution similar to what he endured. All this was for the sake of the gospel, for its defense against opponents, and for its confirmation among believers.



**8. God is my record.** Rather, “God is my witness.” Paul appeals to God in confirmation of his deep love for, and desire to see, the Philippians. Since his longing is hidden in his heart, only God can know and testify to its reality.

**Bowels.** See on Jer. 4:19. In olden times the bowels were regarded as the seat of affection, sympathy, and compassion, as is the heart with us.

**Of Jesus Christ.** The allusion here is to the sympathy, tenderness, and love of the Redeemer. Paul regarded the Philippian believers with affection akin to that which the Lord Jesus had for them. This was the tenderest and strongest expression that he could find to denote the ardor of his attachment. Here is a hint of the inner unity that is to exist in the church: the members cherish one another in their hearts; they love one another with the strong affection and tender sympathy of Christ Himself; they are conscious of an all-inclusive fellowship; they have a common duty; they pray and give thanks for one another; they find in their own mutual love a witness and pledge of God’s love and purpose.

**9. This I pray.** Verses 9–11 contain the substance of Paul’s prayers for the continued spiritual growth of his Philippian friends.

**Love.** Gr. *agapē* (see on Matt. 5:43, 44; 1 Cor. 13:1).

**May abound yet more.** Their love was already of a high quality, yet Paul wished them to attain even loftier heights. He desired that their love both to God and to man might, as a stream rising from its springing fountain, flow out ever further, and more abundantly communicate itself in all channels of Christian service (cf. 1 Thess. 3:12).

**Knowledge.** Gr. *epignōsis*, “full knowledge” (see on Rom. 3:20). Paul here refers to experimental knowledge, a personal understanding of the saving truths of Christianity, exhibited in a godly life (see on John 17:3; Eph. 1:17; 4:13).

**Judgment.** Gr. *aisthēsis*, “perception,” “discernment,” “experience.” The word properly applies to the senses, and here, with moral overtones, signifies the insight that recognizes a truth as the eye recognizes an object (cf. Heb. 5:14). *Aisthēsis* here differs from *epignōsis* in dealing, not with general, impersonal principles, but with the choice of right principles.

**10. Approve.** Gr. *dokimazō* (see on Rom. 2:18). The word implies approval after examination and trial. Paul here reveals the purpose that he hopes will be achieved by their increase in love (Phil. 1:9)—that they may test and retain excellent things.

**Things that are excellent.** Gr. *ta diapheronta*, “the things that differ,” that is, things that are superior. In all the choices of life Paul desires that the Philippian Christians shall choose only the best.

**Sincere.** Gr. *eilikrinēs*, possibly derived from *heilē* or *helē*, “sun,” and *krinō*, “to judge,” hence, that which, being viewed in the sun’s light, is found clear and pure, hence, “pure,” “unsullied,” “sincere.”

**Without offence.** Gr. *aproskopi*, literally, “not striking against,” hence, “undamaged,” “blameless.” Inward purity results in outward blamelessness and prepares one for the day of the coming of Christ. All of Paul’s counsel was intended to guide his friends in preparation for the day when all character will be revealed. To remind them of

that purpose he repeats the expression used in v. 6, omitting the word “Jesus” (cf. on 1 Thess. 5:23).

**11. Fruits of righteousness.** Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the reading “fruit of righteousness.” Jesus’ standard for testing the character is, “By their fruits ye shall know them” (see on Matt. 7:15–20). God expects more than mere blamelessness; He looks for positive fruitfulness. Righteousness is not simply the absence of sin, but the presence of the righteous character of Christ in the life of the believer (see on Matt. 5:6, 20). All the preceding steps in their experience, for which Paul was praying, would lead the Philippian believers to a demonstration of the actions of the true Christian. They were to be filled with these fruits. Not a branch here and there, but all our branches are to be loaded with good fruit.

**By Jesus Christ.** Paul hastens to remind the Philippians that any righteousness they might possess and any good works they might do, could be theirs only through Jesus Christ (cf. on John 15:1–5; Rom. 4:5). Christian fruit bearing depends on the believer’s connection with Christ. The fruit of the life that abides in Jesus is the same as the fruit of Christ’s own life.

**Unto the glory.** God’s honor is best promoted by the holy lives of His children (see on John 15:8; cf. 1 Cor. 10:31; Eph. 1:12; 1 Peter 2:12).

**12. Ye should understand.** The clause, common in Greek letters, may be literally translated, “I wish you to know.” Paul here introduces a different topic—his own imprisonment and its relation to the preaching of the gospel.

**Which happened unto me.** Rather, “pertaining to me.” Paul is referring to his affairs. His statement suggests that the Philippians had expressed anxiety regarding the outcome of a change in Paul’s circumstances, both as to his person and as to the progress of the gospel.

**Have fallen out.** Paul hastens to assure the Philippians that good rather than harm has resulted from his confinement. He wanted them to understand that in the providence of God his trials were being used to advance the preaching of the gospel. As so often happens, the wrath of men brought glory to God (see on Ps. 76:10).

**Rather.** This word implies that the Philippians had feared the worst.

**13. My bonds in Christ.** Rather, “my bonds have become known [to be] in connection with Christ,” that is, it is now apparent that he has been imprisoned, not because of any misdeeds, but because of his witness concerning Christ.

**In all the palace.** Gr. *en holō tō praitōriō*, literally, “in the whole praetorium.” There is a wide variety of opinion concerning the meaning of this phrase. Four interpretations have been advanced: (1) that “praetorium” refers to the barracks in which the Praetorian soldiers were housed; (2) that “praetorium” refers to the ruler’s residence (see on Matt. 27:27); (3) that *en holō tō praitōriō* should be translated “among all the praetorii,” and that “praetorii” refers to the judicial authorities responsible for Paul’s trial; (4) that *en holō tō praitōriō* should be translated “among all the Praetorian [Guard],” referring to the soldiers who were guarding Paul (see on Acts 28:16). The last appears the most reasonable view, and accords well with the context. The Praetorian soldiers, in the course of their duties of guarding Paul, would come to see the true state of affairs, and realize that he was imprisoned only because of his faith and evangelistic zeal. Since these



soldiers were frequently changed, it might be said that the whole guard had come to know the truth concerning Paul.

***In all other places.*** Rather, “among all the rest,” that is, not only among the Praetorian Guard but among the other people who came into contact with the captive apostle. Thus, although Paul was confined, the witness of his ardent Christian life spread far beyond the place where he was imprisoned.

***14. Many of the brethren.*** Literally, “the greater part of the brethren,” that is, the majority of the Christians in Rome.

***In the Lord.*** These words may be connected with “brethren,” as in the KJV, or with “waxing confident.”

***Waxing confident.*** Or, “having confidence.” Here is an additional fact that was favorable to the gospel. A greater part of the brethren were much more bold as a result of Paul’s confinement. That so distinguished a champion of the truth had been imprisoned may have stirred them to do all they could in the same cause for which he suffered. Or perhaps they were aroused as some current of popular feeling toward Christianity arose after the cause of Paul’s imprisonment had become generally understood. Others may have been encouraged by their intercourse with Paul to exert great efforts in the Christian cause. Thus, by one way or another, Paul’s imprisonment had led to a more fearless proclamation of the Word by other believers. See on Acts 25:12.

***15. Some.*** This introduces another line of thought: the “some” are not to be included among the “many” of v. 14.

***Preach Christ.*** Paul here refers to two classes who proclaim the name of the Saviour: (1) those who do so because of their jealousy of Paul; (2) those who do so from right motives. In both cases Christ is preached. It is therefore unlikely that the first class were Judaizers, who are never so described by Paul (see Vol. VI, pp. 33, 52–54).

***Envy and strife.*** Or, “envy and rivalry.” The apostle does not mention the cause of this rivalry. It would seem, however, that even in Rome there was a party that was jealous of the influence of Paul, and supposed that this was a good opportunity to diminish his influence and to strengthen their own standing. He was imprisoned, and they had access to the mass of the people.

It was easy, under plausible pretenses, to insinuate that Paul had ambitious aims and exerted an improper influence, or to take strong ground against him in favor of their own views. They may even have agreed with him in doctrine, but have sought to damage him from personal enmity.

Since these men professed to preach Christ, it is difficult to analyze their motives. If there were a company of Jews who held the essential doctrines of the gospel, but were combative on matters of little importance, and at the same time were bitter against Paul because of his Gentile interests, then such a party might try to preach Christ and yet cherish toward Paul those evil feelings he ascribes to them.

***Good will.*** Some increased their evangelistic activity out of good will for the apostle. These brethren had a special regard for Paul because of his important place in the evangelization of the world. They probably increased their activity because Paul’s had decreased. Such good will is the spirit that should be common to the brotherhood of the Christian ministry. When one laborer is laid aside, others should step forward to take his place and carry forward his work.

**16. The one.** Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the transposition of vs. 16, 17 so that Paul continues the thought of the second half of v. 15 by speaking of those who preach Christ “of good will.”

**Contention.** Rather, “factiousness,” or “partisanship,” “disputes.”

**Not sincerely.** Or, “not purely,” not with pure motives or intentions. They did indeed preach Christ, but for the purpose of harming Paul.

**Supposing to add affliction.** Rather, “thinking [or, “purposing”] to bring affliction to bear.” Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the reading “thinking [or, “purposing”] to raise up affliction.” They hoped their contentious preaching would increase the trials arising from Paul’s imprisonment.

**17. The other.** In accord with the preferable order whereby v. 17 precedes v. 16 (see on v. 16), and maintaining the close connection with v. 15, “the other” may be read “the latter,” referring to those “of good will.”

**I am set.** Or, “I am destined,” “I am appointed.”

**Defence.** Gr. *apologia* (see on v. 7). Paul saw himself as an advocate, appointed to defend the gospel of Christ from the virulent attacks of its enemies. When his activities were restricted, loyal assistants endeavored to continue his work so that the gospel was not left undefended.

**18. What then?** Paul faces the situation raised by the two types of preaching, and boldly asks: “What does it all mean?”

**Notwithstanding.** Or, “only that” (RSV). The apostle proceeds to state the sole significant result of the two ways of proclaiming Christ.

**Pretence.** Gr. *prophasis*, “falsely alleged motive,” “pretext,” from *prophainō*, “to show forth,” or from *prophēmi*, “to speak forth,” both derivations giving the sense of an external rectitude that cancels an ulterior motive, in this case a zealous preaching of Christ performed with the intention of hurting Paul.

**Christ is preached.** Paul was an optimist. He looked for the good in any set of circumstances. He would have preferred to have men who loved Christ, preach Christ. However, rather than that Christ should not be preached, he was willing that those who did not truly love Him should proclaim His name. Even an imperfectly preached Christianity was a great improvement over gross heathenism. And what is the result of this preaching? Christ is announced, the story of Christ is told. Though the motives of the preachers may be questionable, the result may be a victory for Christ.

**I therein do rejoice.** In this the second reference to joy in this epistle (cf. v. 4) Paul’s joy shows a large and forgiving nature. He would not allow himself to be upset by the bitterness of his opponents. He could rejoice in the good that God was bringing out of evil, even though the good was produced by his adversaries. To him the preaching of Christ was the most important thing in the world.

**And will rejoice.** Paul’s rejoicing was not for the moment only. He would continue to rejoice in the success of the preachers who were opposed to him as well as in that of those who were preaching of good will.

**19. This.** That is, Paul’s present circumstances and the attitudes of the believers.

**To my salvation.** Opinion is divided as to whether this refers to Paul’s hoped-for deliverance from prison or to his final redemption. The apostle may have had both experiences in mind, but v. 20 suggests that his deepest concern is with spiritual salvation

rather than with release from prison. He realized that all God's dealings with His people are intended as a discipline to ripen holy character in preparation for eternal life (AA 524). The opposition of his enemies would stir Paul to greater activity and earnestness, and so foster his spiritual well-being.

Affliction, in itself, has no sanctifying power. It may embitter, harden, deaden the soul. On the other hand, it may become an instrument to chasten, deepen, and purify the Christian's spiritual experience (see Heb. 12:7–11). Our salvation will be affected by the way in which we avail ourselves of the potential benefits of affliction. If we resist and fight against the method of education and the teacher, the affliction will need to be prolonged or another sent to take its place. We should earnestly pray to learn spiritual lessons quickly, that we may move on from one phase of spiritual development to the next.

**Your prayer.** The first of two agencies which, cooperating with Paul's immediate circumstances, aid his salvation. The Spirit of Jesus Christ is the second agency. The apostle attached great value to the intercessory prayers of his friends (see Rom. 15:30, 31; 2 Cor. 1:11; Philemon 22). Here he is not asking that the Philippians pray for him: he assumes that they are already praying for him, even as he prayed for them (Phil. 1:4). Would that all pastors could assume as much! There are certain responsibilities of which we may sometimes be relieved, but not so with prayers of intercession. The leaders of God's people, Christian workers throughout the world, and individual church members need the prayers of one another, especially in the difficult times that lie ahead.

**Supply.** Gr. *epichorēgia*, "support," "help." Paul thought of the Spirit of Jesus, together with the prayers of friends, as working with local conditions for his ultimate salvation.

**Spirit of Jesus Christ.** This particular expression does not occur elsewhere in the NT, although the form "Spirit of Christ" is found in Rom. 8:9; 1 Peter 1:11, and "Spirit of his Son" in Gal. 4:6. The words may be interpreted as referring to the disposition that actuated Jesus, which, operating in Paul, would contribute to his salvation. The more generally accepted interpretation sees a direct reference to the Holy Spirit (cf. on Rom. 8:9). Neither Paul's trials nor the prayers of his fellow believers could serve any useful purpose except as the Spirit of Christ filled his life to overflowing.

**20. Earnest expectation.** Gr. *apokaradokia* (see on Rom. 8:19). Paul's great desire was that no happening should cause him to fail to magnify Christ.

**Hope.** An inward attitude, supplementing the "earnest expectation," which may be considered as more externally revealed.

**I shall be ashamed.** Or, "shall I be put to shame," that is, by failures in his own life or by his being rejected by Christ (cf. Luke 9:26). He is not anticipating such disasters, but is rather, in confidence of success, expressing the wish that they may not occur.

**Boldness.** Gr. *parrēsia*, "boldness of speech," "courage," "confidence," "fearlessness." Prison was no deterrent to the zeal of the apostle. He planned to continue boldly to represent Christ and His salvation. He had never been hesitant to proclaim his message (cf. Acts 4:20), and he wanted no fear or discouragement now to interfere with his testimony.

**As always.** Paul's conscience was clear. He could look back on a consistent career of fearless witness and look forward to maintaining the same in the future.

**Magnified.** To magnify is to make great, or to celebrate already existing greatness. The Christian cannot make Christ great when all greatness is already His, but he can make the Lord great in the eyes of others (see on Luke 1:46).

**In my body.** The usual form would be “in me,” but since Paul is in danger of death, he sees his body as the instrument through which Christ will be glorified.

**Life, or by death.** If he should live, Christ would be glorified by his witness and activity. If he should die, the magnification would come through his joyful death for the Master. In life Christians magnify Christ through their conversion, their sanctification, their devoted labors in His cause, their cheerful endurance of trials, and the abiding results that their services secure. In death the true child of God magnifies the Son by rising above the dread with which most men face death, by trusting in the Lord to care for his future, and by continuing to witness through the influence that his godly life and fearless death exert on those who survive.

**21. To me.** Paul emphasizes his own outlook, which differs from that of most men, who selfishly cling to life and dread death.

**To live.** The Greek verb is a present infinitive and refers to the continuous, daily act of living.

**Christ.** That is, Paul’s existence was comprehended in, and bounded by, Jesus. His thinking was completely wrapped up in his Saviour. His plans, his hopes, his every aspiration, centered in Christ. Every thought was brought into subjection to Him (2 Cor. 10:5). Therefore, his thoughts were not selfish, or earthly; they were under the control of his Master (see on Rom. 6:11; 14:7, 8; 2 Cor. 5:15; Gal. 2:20; Phil. 3:7–11; Col. 3:3).

**To die.** The Greek tenses used in this verse contrast the continuous act of living with the instantaneous termination of life that comes at the moment of death.

**Gain.** This assertion is not reconcilable with mere human feeling. Death always involves loss of some sort. To the saint it involves the loss of many pure enjoyments of life, of happy domestic ties, of means and opportunities of working for Christ. But Paul’s assertion is not that of a pessimist who says, “Life is not worth living.” It is not that of one who is worn out, who has outlived the very sensation of enjoyment. Nor is it that of a holy man wearied with exhausting labors and anxious to be finished with trials and persecutions. Paul was not sour, morose, or cynical. He possessed hearty human sympathies and entered with spirit into the balanced activities of a true Christian life. But his present declaration deals with a higher topic than his own prospects. He is concerned with magnifying Christ. If his Lord saw best for him to bear testimony through living and ministering, he would rightly represent Him. But the death of a righteous man can also be a powerful affirmation of the efficacy of the gospel of grace. The contrast between his death and the death of one who dies without hope would be so marked that its influence would bring gain for the kingdom of Christ. Hearts are touched and softened by the calm assurance and confidence of the one whose trust is completely in his God, even in the hour of death.

A further interpretation is also worthy of consideration. The Christian has nothing worth while to lose by death, but he has much to gain. He loses temptation, trial, toil, sorrow. He gains, at the resurrection, glorious immortality.

**22. If I live.** The construction of this verse has perplexed commentators. Three possible interpretations, depending on varying shades of translation, merit consideration: (1) The second section of the verse is an explanation of the first, whereas the third serves

as a conclusion, as if Paul said: “But if to live in the flesh—if this be fruitful to me through hard toil—then I cannot say which state I shall choose, life or death.” (2) The second section is part of the conclusion: “But if to live in the flesh be my present destiny, then my toil will be fruitful, and so what I shall choose I cannot say.” (3) The “if” is interrogative, and poses a question: “But what if my continuing to live in the flesh shall prove fruitful? then what I shall choose I cannot say.”

The verse must be considered in its context, and this concerns Christ’s being magnified. Paul is puzzled, for he cannot decide whether he will better glorify Christ by life or by death. As he ponders the problem he sees that a continuation of life has every prospect of being fruitful, and this makes a strong appeal to him. But death also has its compensations. But whether the future held for him life or death troubled him not so long as he could be of help to the Philippians.

***In the flesh.*** Literally, “in flesh.” Paul is referring to his continued physical existence.

***Fruit of my labour.*** That is, fruit resulting from my life of hardship.

***What I shall choose.*** Are not Christians often in this state, that if it were left to themselves they would not know which to choose, life or death? But God, who knows the end from the beginning, leads as we would choose to be led if we could see as He sees.

***I wot not.*** That is, I know not. The Greek may also be translated, “I declare not,” in the sense of being unable to say.

**23. For.** Rather, “but.” Paul now explains the dilemma in which he finds himself.

***I am in a strait.*** Gr. *sunechō* (see on 2 Cor. 5:14), literally, “I am held together,” or “I am hemmed in.” Paul’s condition may be compared to that of a traveler who can turn neither to the right nor left because of restraining walls.

***Betwixt two.*** Paul’s dilemma arises from the two possibilities that comfort him—continuing to live or laying down his life.

***Having a desire.*** Literally, “having the desire,” that is, my desire is.

***To depart.*** Gr. *analuō*, “to unloose,” “to undo,” used of unmooring a ship, breaking up a camp, hence, “to depart.” We may think of Paul’s cutting the ropes that bind him to this world, or his striking the camp of this life prior to departing for the life to come. He employs similar language in 2 Tim. 4:6, where the word for “departure” is *analuō*, “a loosing,” “an undoing.”

***To be with Christ.*** Paul is not here giving a doctrinal exposition of what happens at death. He is explaining his “desire,” which is to leave his present troubled existence and to be with Christ without reference to a lapse of time that may occur between these two events. With the whole strength of his ardent nature he longed to live with the One whom he had so faithfully served. His hope centered on personal companionship with Jesus throughout the future life. Earnest Christians of all ages have had this same longing, without necessarily expecting to be immediately ushered into the Saviour’s presence when their eyes have closed in death. Paul’s words here have to be considered in conjunction with his other related statements where he clearly refers to death as a sleep (see on 1 Cor. 15:51; 1 Thess 4:13–15; see also on Mark 5:39; John 11:11). Since there is no consciousness in death, and hence no awareness of the lapse of time, the resurrection morning will appear to the departed one as occurring the moment after his death.

***Which is far better.*** Literally, “for it is very far better.” In Greek there is a multiplication of comparative terms, quite in accord with Paul’s mode of expression (cf.

Rom. 8:37; 2 Cor. 7:13; Eph. 3:20). If death should overtake him, he expected to rest in the grave until the second coming of his Lord, and then be resurrected to receive immortality that he might be ever with Christ (1 Cor. 15:51–55; 1 Thess. 4:13–18).

**24. *In the flesh.*** That is, tied to earthly, fleshly life.

***More needful for you.*** The antithesis of “far better” (v. 23). Paul allows the Philippians’ need to outweigh his own desire. The church needed his personal guidance and the inspiration of his dedicated life. This need was the decisive factor in the apostle’s thinking.

**25. *Having this confidence.*** That is, being convinced of the need for his continued presence.

***I know.*** In the light of the context this should not be interpreted in any prophetic sense, as if Paul were foreseeing an extension of his own life, but simply as an expression of his own conviction.

***I shall abide.*** Convinced of their need of him, Paul expresses his confidence that the Lord will permit him to live and continue to do his appointed work. This expectation was fulfilled. When he appeared before Nero he was declared guiltless and was released (see Vol. VI, p. 101; AA 486, 487). He again labored among the churches for a brief period, possibly visiting Philippi, only to be once more imprisoned and later executed.

***Furtherance.*** That is, progress. This word may be linked with the faith that is later mentioned, so that the phrase reads, “progress of your faith.”

***Joy of faith.*** Progressive faith brings joy into life.

**26. *Rejoicing.*** Gr. *kauchēma*, “a boast,” “object of boasting.” The word denotes that of which one glories, the *ground* for glorying, not the *act* of glorying.

***In Jesus Christ.*** This clause defines the reason for the increase in their joy—it derives from their connection with Christ, and not merely their association with Paul.

***For me.*** Rather, “in me,” that is, in connection with Paul, who, as the leading representative of the church, was the *ground*, or cause, of their rejoicing.

***Coming.*** Gr. *parousia* (see on Matt. 24:3). The apostle confidently anticipated that his release and subsequent visit to the Philippians would bring genuine joy to his friends.

**27. *Only.*** Here begins a subsection of the epistle. Paul has looked forward to being reunited with the Philippians, at which time he will be able to exhort them by word of mouth. In the meantime he gives them written counsel.

***Let ... conversation be.*** Gr. *politeuō*, “to be a citizen,” or “to behave as a citizen,” from *politēs*, “a citizen” (cf. on ch. 3:20). The same word (*politeuo*) occurs in Acts 23:1. A free translation of the whole phrase would be: “Conduct yourselves as citizens of the gospel kingdom of Christ.” Such language was very appropriate. Paul was himself a Roman citizen. He wrote from Rome. His presence there was the result of his having exercised his rights of citizenship in appealing to Caesar (Acts 25:11, 12). He was writing to a place largely inhabited by Roman citizens, for the metropolis of Philippi was a Roman colony (see on Acts 16:12). It was a place in which he had declared himself to be a Roman (Acts 16:37). Thus the figure of speech was natural. As citizens of the heavenly country, the Philippians were to deport themselves worthily.

The Christian’s practice is to accord with his profession. Under the influence of the gospel of Christ he must be true and faithful, peaceful and loving, gracious and humble. His way of life must be consistent, whether his human guide is present or absent.

**Whether.** The apostle is not dogmatic in his plans. Although he has expressed his desires and intentions in vs. 22, 26, he still leaves the way open for his presence in or absence from Philippi, as God may direct.

**I may hear.** Wherever Paul found himself, he endeavored to receive news of the many churches he had established. His love for his converts was no passing emotion.

**Stand fast.** Gr. *stēkō*, “to stand,” “to stand firm,” “to be steadfast.” Compare the use of *stēkō* in 1 Cor. 16:13; Gal. 5:1; Phil. 4:1; 1 Thess. 3:8; 2 Thess. 2:15. The metaphor was probably military, and may be regarded as following naturally from the thought of citizenship, for Philippi was a military colony. As an army, the church is to present an unwavering front against the assaults of all enemies. It must be prepared for any kind of attack, from any side. It must beware of deceptive movements or false instructions. There must be no division or dissension within the ranks of the defenders, or their position will be weakened (see Eph. 6:13; AA 11).

**In one spirit.** That is, with one disposition (cf. on Matt. 26:41; Luke 1:80; 2:40), consequently with unity of purpose. It is presupposed that this harmony, which is to be so earnestly sought, is a gift of the Holy Spirit (cf. on Eph. 4:3, 4), but the Holy Spirit is not directly referred to here. Nevertheless, nothing so clearly indicates the presence of the Spirit among God’s people as a oneness of spirit, a oneness of thinking, and of action. Especially in these last days there must be a drawing together for the strength that comes from unity.

**Mind.** Gr. *psuchē* (see on Matt. 10:28), here referring to the human intellect. The phrase “with one mind” should be connected with “striving,” and not with “stand fast.”

**Striving together.** Gr. *sunatheleō*, from *sun*, “with,” and *athleō*, “to contend [in public games],” whence our word “athlete.” Here Paul is urging the believers to contend or strive together for the advance of the faith that is produced by the preaching of the gospel. Such united service would promote still deeper unity in the Christian community. Paul’s admonitions suggest that the Philippian church was in danger of being divided, though no serious divisions had yet occurred.

**28. Terrified.** Gr. *pturō*, “to startle,” “to affright,” “to intimidate.” The Christian, knowing that his times are in God’s hands, and that all things work together for good to them that love God (see on Rom. 8:28), should not be intimidated.

**Adversaries.** The enemies of the good are the enemies of God. The good man, with God on his side, need not fear either their numbers or their ferocity.

**Which.** That is, the Christian’s unflinching boldness.

**To them.** That is, to the adversaries.

**Evident token.** Gr. *endeixes*, “manifestation,” “proof.”

**Perdition.** Gr. *apōleia*, “destruction,” here contrasted with “salvation” in the next clause. Even though their adversaries do not perceive or acknowledge it, the fact that the church is unterrified is an evidence of the future destruction of their enemies. It shows that the Christians are supported by supernatural power, and implies that opponents will eventually be called into judgment on account of their persecuting activities. Punishment for the wicked and consolation for the righteous are both prefigured in the relation of the Christian to his adversaries.



**Salvation.** The calm strength and assurance of the true Christian in the face of the severest opposition or persecution is one of God's ways of revealing Himself to us. It serves as a pledge of the full salvation that He has provided.

**That of God.** That is, the "evident token," or proof, of the destruction of the adversaries and the salvation of the faithful comes from God.

**29. Given.** Gr. *charizomai*, "to give graciously," "to grant a privilege" (see on Luke 7:21). The Christian religion has sanctified suffering that is endured for righteousness' sake (see on Matt. 5:10–12). Here, the undergoing of suffering for Christ is presented as a gracious gift, which gift the Christian may be proud to receive (cf. on Phil. 3:10; 2 Tim. 2:11, 12; DA 225). The suffering that so frequently seems the lot of the Christian is used by God to perfect character and to prepare its recipient for future glory (see on Rom. 8:17).

**In the behalf of Christ.** This phrase should be linked directly with "to suffer." The Christian does not suffer on his own account, but as a representative of his Master. The opprobrium formerly cast on Jesus now falls on him; but, just as surely, the glory that is Christ's will one day be shared by him (Rom. 8:17).

**Believe.** Or, "have faith." For the importance of faith to Christian experience see on Rom. 4:3; cf. John 3:16.

**Suffer.** Faithful Christians, from apostolic times onward, have been glad to suffer for the Master's sake (Acts 5:41; 1 Peter 3:14; 4:12–14). Those who face the trials of the last days must possess that same true sense of values. Severe as were the tests of Peter and his associates, they were little compared with those of the last great times of trouble. Only one thoroughly persuaded that it is the highest of honors and the greatest of blessings to be permitted to suffer for Christ's sake will persevere through times when the unrestrained fury of Satan is unleashed.

**30. Having.** This should be connected with "unto you it is given ... to suffer" (v. 29). The Philippians are already sharing in the gift of suffering.

**Conflict.** Gr. *agōn*, "a contest," often used of athletic or gladiatorial contests (see 1 Tim. 6:12; 2 Tim. 4:7; Heb. 12:1), here of conflicts with the enemy. The Philippians were enduring persecutions similar to those that had come upon Paul.

At the time of his first visit to Philippi the apostle had been beaten and imprisoned (see Acts 16:22, 23). So deeply was the incident impressed on his mind that he even mentioned it when he wrote to the Thessalonians (1 Thess. 2:2). His Philippian friends would doubtless also have vivid memories of the ways in which Paul had suffered in their city. And in addition, they knew much of Paul's present suffering in Rome, and Epaphroditus would soon be telling them more. The apostle shows them that their struggle was very similar to the one he had borne, and borne successfully. What he had endured, they, in Christ's strength, could also endure.

## ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1 MH 167

2–14AA 480

3–5AA 219

3–7MH 167

6 EW 26; SC 64

9–115T 104; 8T 43

10, 11 5T 264  
11 ML 153  
12 AA 463; GC 219  
13, 14 AA 464  
5, 16 MB 34  
18 MB 34, 35  
20, 21DA 549  
21 AA 128  
27–29EW 26; 8T 43; 9T 274  
29 DA 225; MH 478  
29, 30 AA 219

## CHAPTER 2

1 *He exhorted them to unity, and to all humbleness of mind, by the example of Christ's humility and exaltation: 12 to a careful proceeding in the way of salvation, that they be as lights to the wicked world, 16 and comforts to him their apostle, who is now ready to be offered up to God. 19 He hopeth to send Timothy to them, whom he greatly commendeth, 25 as Epaphroditus also, whom he presently sendeth to them.*

**1. If there be.** There is no chapter division in Paul's thought. He is continuing the theme begun in ch. 1, particularly in v. 27, where he appeals to his converts' sense of Christian citizenship. He now enlarges on that topic, and concentrates on the development of Christian unity and humility. In so doing, the apostle bares his own soul, revealing the passionate intensity of his concern for the Philippians, the height and depth of his understanding of Christ's nature and sacrifice, the lofty standards he cherishes for his own spiritual children, his generous opinions of faithful fellow laborers, and his own complete submersion in the interests of the gospel. This chapter deserves careful study as a unit, with the above analysis as a guide.

Although the Philippian church brought such joy to the apostle's heart (see on ch. 1:3, 4), it seems that their unity was in danger, that dissension had crept into their ranks, and that Paul was enough concerned about their peril to spend a great part of his letter in exhorting them to strive for complete unity (cf. chs. 1:15–18, 27; 2:2–4, 14; 3:2; 4:2). The measure of their spiritual caliber may be gauged from the fact that he does not base his appeal on personal loyalty to himself as their spiritual father, but on their love for Christ as their Redeemer.

The fourfold use of the word "if" in this verse does not imply doubt as to the truth of Paul's propositions. The Greek construction shows that he assumes his suppositions to be true.

**Consolation.** Gr. *paraklēsis*, "exhortation," "encouragement," "comfort" (see on Acts 9:31; Rom. 12:8; 15:4). The translation "encouragement" seems to suit the context best.

**In Christ.** The ground of the apostle's appeal was the Philippians' experience in Christ, the stimulus that comes from a study and emulation of His model life (cf. 1 Cor. 12:12, 27; Eph. 4:15, 16).

**Comfort.** Gr. *paramuthion*, a synonym of *paraklesis* (see above under "consolation").

**Of love.** Paul perhaps means, if your love for Christ possesses any encouraging power over your minds.

**Fellowship.** Gr. *koinōnia* (see on ch. 1:5), here, “partnership.”

**Of the Spirit.** This phrase is parallel to “consolation in Christ,” and appeals to the Philippians’ customary submission to the Holy Spirit’s control.

**Bowels.** Gr. *splagchna* (see on ch. 1:8).

**Mercies.** Gr. *oiktirmoi*, “compassions.” By using the plural Paul may be calling attention to the individual acts of compassion that prove the presence of genuine affection.

**2. Fulfil ye my joy.** That is, make full or complete my joy. The apostle already has joy (ch. 1:4), and it remains only that this should be full and complete (cf. John 3:29; 15:11; 17:13). The Philippians are to make it so by allowing his appeal to prevail with them and by maintaining and exhibiting the virtues to which he exhorts them.

**Be likeminded.** Or, “be of the same mind” (cf. on ch. 1:7). The kind of concord he is enjoining is defined in the two following clauses.

**Same love.** Mutual love produces mutual processes of thought and results in united action (cf. John 13:35; Col. 1:4; 1 Thess. 3:12; 2 Thess. 1:3).

**Of one accord.** Gr. *sumpsuchoi*, “harmonious,” “peaceable,” “united,” derived from *sun*, “with,” “together with,” and *psuchē*, “soul.”

**Of one mind.** Literally, “thinking the one thing.” Paul recognizes the necessity for the children of God to demonstrate that those who are in harmony with God can live in full harmony with one another. Few things belie the Christian profession more than inability to live and work harmoniously with other Christians. When we accept Christ we become members of His body. To accomplish the greatest amount of good, the body must function as a unit (cf. on 1 Cor. 12:12–27). The work of God will prosper if the people of God draw together and work in unity (see TM 489; 1T 113, 114; 8T 183, 239–243).

**3. Strife.** Gr. *eritheia*, “selfishness,” “selfish ambition,” “partisanship,” “factiousness.”

**Vainglory.** Gr. *kenodoxia*, “empty pride,” “groundless self-esteem,” “conceit,” from *kenos*, “empty,” and *doxa*, “opinion.” Nothing of permanent good will be accomplished through work done in such a spirit as Paul here describes. We are to form no plan and aim at no goal that is prompted by selfish ambition or a desire to outdo others. Nothing, not even for an end that is good in itself, is pleasing to God if prompted by these motives.

**Lowliness of mind.** Gr. *tapeinophrosunē*, “humility,” “modesty,” from *tapeinos*, “humble,” “lowly,” and *phroneō*, “to think,” hence, to have a humble opinion of oneself. *Tapeinophrosunē* is used in a derogatory sense by secular writers, and Paul, in Col. 2:18, 23, employs it for humility wrongly directed. But in Acts 20:19; Eph. 4:2; Col. 3:12, the word bears its special Christian meaning of “humility of mind.” Christianity has raised lowliness to a new position, as one of the most attractive features of the character. The one who is truly humble is not aware of his humility. He simply estimates himself rightly in his relation to God and the plan of salvation.

**Esteem.** Gr. *hēgeomai*, “to consider,” “to deem,” implying a weighing of the facts.

**Other.** Rather, “others.”

**Better.** Literally, “being above,” “excelling.” Compare on Rom. 12:10. Humility fixes its eye upon another’s excellences and judges him from this point of view. The truly humble man is sensible of his own defects, but realizes that he does not have the same clear view of the defects of others. It is natural for those who have any just sense of the defects of their own souls to hope that it is not so with others and to believe that they have purer hearts. This leads them to feel that others are deserving of greater respect than themselves. A truly pious man will always be a humble man and will wish that others should be preferred in office and honor. This will not make him blind to other’s defects when they are manifested, but he will personally be modest and unobtrusive. This Christian standard rebukes inordinate love of office and helps to produce contentment wherever the providence of God may have cast our lot (cf. on Phil. 4:11, 12).

**4. Look.** Gr. *skopeō*, “to look attentively” (see on Rom. 16:17).

**His own things.** Paul is urging Christians not to be selfish, not to let their attention be wholly absorbed by their own concerns of their own families. He bids them show a tender care for the happiness of the whole group and a self-forgetful solicitude for the welfare of others. No one is at liberty to try to live solely for himself or to disregard the needs of others.

**Also.** Paul’s inclusion of this word shows that he expects Christians to pay proper attention to their own affairs, and *also* to the needs of others.

**Things of others.** This does not commend improper interference in others’ affairs in the manner of busybodies (see 2 Thess. 3:11; 1 Tim. 5:13; 1 Peter 4:15), but the welfare of others should not be ignored. Paul’s counsel is designed to remove the narrow spirit of selfishness and to produce a benevolent regard for the happiness of our fellows.

Christians have a particular responsibility for the spiritual welfare of others. If a man is spiritually blind and will not come to the Master, it is no more meddling to attempt to lead him to the Saviour than it is to warn a man on a dark night of a dangerous precipice ahead or to arouse one from sleep to tell him his house is on fire. If he is unaware of the approaching return of the Saviour, it is no improper interference to tell him of that soon-coming event. It is no more being a busybody to tell him of a glorious heaven that may be his than it is to tell him of a gold mine on his farm. It is for the man’s own interest, and it is the office of a friend to teach him or to remind him of these things. The world is dependent on the church for information about the life to come, and everyone who loves Christ will love his neighbors enough to seek to enlighten them, to lead them to the Saviour, and to aid their preparation for His soon return.

**5. Let this mind be.** Literally, “let this be thought,” but meaning, “have this mind.” In vs. 1–4 the apostle has presented the need for unity and unselfish humility; he now points to the complete provision for that need.

**In you.** Or, “among yourselves.”

**Christ Jesus.** For the significance of this title see on Matt. 1:1. The more usual order of the names is “Jesus Christ,” but Paul often uses the order as here, especially in this epistle (chs. 3:3, 8, 12, 14; 4:7, 19, 21). In so doing he is possibly emphasizing the divine element (Christ) before the human element (Jesus) in the Saviour’s divine-human nature. For Paul, all spiritual life centers in Christ, and when he wishes to inculcate lessons of unity and humility, he can find no better method than to present, in outline form, the story of his Master’s career, as the supreme exemplification of the virtues he desires the Philippians to possess. In the sublime account that follows (ch. 2:6–8) he is not

consciously dealing with theology in its academic sense; he is using his inspired and intimate understanding of Christ's redemptive work to illustrate his own teaching and to stimulate his converts to emulate the Saviour. Christ left a state of inexpressible glory, took upon Himself the most humble form of humanity, and performed the most lowly of offices, that men might be saved. Christians are to frame their lives according to this great example.

**6. Being.** Gr. *huparchō*, which often bears the simple meaning of "to be" (Luke 9:48; 16:14; Rom. 4:19; 1 Cor. 7:26; etc.). Originally, *huparchō* meant "to begin," "to make a beginning," but later took on the special significance of "to be in existence" without necessarily implying a beginning (cf. Acts 16:20; 17:28; Gal. 2:14). See Vol. V, pp. 896, 897, 917.

**Form.** Gr. *morphē*, here denoting all the essential characteristics and attributes of God. In this sense *morphē* represents the manner in which God's eternal qualities and characteristics have manifested themselves. Whatever form that manifestation has taken, it was possessed by Christ, who thereby existed as one with God. This places Christ on an equality with the Father, and sets Him far above every other power. Paul stresses this in order to portray more vividly the depths of Christ's voluntary humiliation.

**Thought.** Gr. *hēgeomai* (see on v. 3). The apostle has dealt with Christ's state—equality with God—now he turns to Christ's thoughts, in order to give an insight into His mind, and thus enable the Philippians to strive to emulate that mind. Paul's reasoning is close knit. In a sentence He shows that Christ's mind, while conscious of His equality with God, decided to forgo the glory associated with that exalted state in order to accomplish His compassionate purpose of saving lost mankind.

**Robbery.** Gr. *harpagmos*, "a seizing," "robbery," "a thing seized," "something to be grasped," "a prize." *Harpagmos* comes from *harpazō*, "to seize," "to claim for oneself eagerly," "to snatch away." The context favors the reading "something to be grasped."

**To be equal.** That is, to continue to exist on an equality with God. The phrase definitely establishes Christ's position in relation to God. The Son is placed side by side with the Father, on an equal footing, in no way inferior (see Vol. V, pp. 896–898, 917; see on Col. 2:9). But Paul states this position only to show Christ's willingness to relinquish it in the interests of man's salvation.

**7. Made himself of no reputation.** Literally, "emptied Himself." This emptying was voluntary (see on John 10:17, 18). It was not possible for Christ to retain all the tokens of divinity and still accomplish the incarnation. The outworking of this emptying is detailed in the remainder of Phil. 2:7 and in v. 8. See Vol. V, p. 918.

**Took upon him.** Literally, "taking," or "having taken." The Greek construction shows that the succeeding phrases are a definition of "emptied Himself."

**Form of a servant.** Paul is contrasting "the form of God" with "the form of a servant" and emphasizing the vast difference between the two estates. The same word (*morphē*) is used for "form" here as in "form of God" (v. 6). The word for "servant" (*doulos*) is that commonly used for "slave" (see on Rom. 1:1); so the apostle is saying that Christ emptied Himself and took on the essential attributes of a slave. As a slave's outstanding characteristic is that of rendering unquestioning obedience, so as a man the Son

undertook to render obedience to the Father (cf. on Heb. 5:8). He grasped not at divine sovereignty, but at service, which became the ruling passion of His life (Matt. 20:28). His whole life was subordinated to the will of the Father, as our lives should be. The life of Christ thus became the simple outworking of the will of God (MB 14, 15; DA 208). How all this could be accomplished is beyond human comprehension; it is a part of the great “mystery of godliness” (see 1 Tim. 3:16). But we may clearly see how small is any sacrifice on our part by way of comparison with the sacrifice of Him whom we profess to follow. Shall we who are so far inferior to Christ stand so much on our frail reputations that we find it difficult or impossible to yield our wills to the will of God? When we share in the true spirit of Christ, when He dwells within us and we live the life of the Son of God, the objective of Paul’s admonition in the early verses of this chapter will have been fulfilled in us. We will then be like Christ.

**And was made.** Rather, “having become,” in contrast with “being,” or existing, in the form of God (v. 6).

**Likeness.** That is, resemblance. “In all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren” (Heb. 2:17). He was a complete man, yet He was also divine. When men looked upon the incarnate Son, they saw One like unto themselves (see Vol. V, pp. 901, 902, 917, 918).

Our belief in the deity of Christ must not weaken in any way our belief in His complete manhood. If Christ was not absolutely a man, if His divinity in the least degree qualified His humanity, then He practically ceases to be an example, and, indeed, a substitute.

**Men.** The plural form is used, perhaps to emphasize that Jesus was to represent the whole human race, and not just an individual man.

**8. Being found.** That is, men discovered Him in human fashion.

**Fashion.** Gr. *schēma*, which emphasizes the outward mode or form. To all outward appearances Christ was a man, and was so accounted by those with whom He lived on earth (cf. Isa. 53:2, 3; Matt. 13:55).

**As a man.** Another careful phrase to indicate that Jesus of Nazareth was more than what He appeared to be. He resembled a man, He had man’s outward form, but He was more than that: He was God as well as man.

**Humbled.** Gr. *tapeinoō*, “to abase,” “to humble,” related to *tapeinophrosunē* (see on v. 3). This is not the same as “emptied Himself” (v. 7), but is part of that emptying, and shows one of the ways in which the self-emptying manifested itself. The ultimate form of this voluntary humiliation is disclosed in the remainder of the verse.

**And became.** Rather, “having become,” showing that the supreme act of self-humiliation consisted in Christ’s voluntary submission to death.

**Obedient.** That is, to God. See on Rom. 5:18, 19; Heb. 5:8.

**Unto death.** Jesus’ obedience was rendered to the extent of laying down His life. It was humiliation indeed for God to become man; and then, being man, to die a shameful; death on the cross. As Isaac had been willingly subject to his father when told that he was the victim to be placed on the altar, so Christ, who might have turned back from the cross, submitted, willingly, to die for sinful men.

Christ’s obedience was of the same nature as ours must be. It was “in the flesh” (Rom. 8:3) that Christ rendered this obedience. He was man, subject to the same desires to preserve His life as we are. He was tempted by Satan, but overcame the devil by the

power of the Holy Spirit, even as we may do. He exercised no power in His own behalf that we may not employ. See on Heb. 4:15; see DA 119, 729, 734.

**Death of the cross.** The emphasis is not only on the fact that Christ died but on the kind of death. It was a death that involved intense shame as well as intense suffering. Crucifixion was reserved for slaves, non-Romans, and the lowest criminals. It was a death upon which the law of Moses had pronounced a curse (Deut. 21:23; Gal. 3:13), and even the Gentiles considered it the most foul and cruel of all punishments. The message of a crucified Christ was a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Greeks (1 Cor. 1:23).

Paul's mind may have been drawn to the contrast of his own position with that of Jesus. The apostle was in prison, but he could not legally suffer the degradation of dying on a cross, because a Roman citizen was not to be tortured (see Cicero *Against Verres* i. 5. 13); neither could the Philippians, as citizens of a Roman colony. The cross, the lowest point in Christ's self-humiliation, would thus produce a profound effect upon Paul's readers, and impress them with the force of the example their Saviour had left them. Paul well knew that if those to whom he wrote could come to grasp the astounding sacrifice made for them, there would be no place for selfishness in their lives (cf. AA 332, 333).

**9. Wherefore.** Or, "on which account," "in consequence of." Not that Christ received a reward because of His humiliation, but that, in the divine economy, exaltation naturally follows humiliation (Matt. 23:12; Luke 14:11; 18:14). Christ's experience demonstrates the truth of His words.

**God also.** To provoke his readers to humility, Paul has concentrated on Christ's role in redemption. The apostle now introduces the Father into the picture.

**Highly exalted.** Gr. *huperupsoō* "to exalt to the highest rank and power," "to raise to supreme majesty," from *huper*, "over," "above," or "beyond," and *hupsoō*, "to lift up on high," "to exalt." Because of Christ's self-emptying (v. 7) God has been able to raise Him to an even more glorious position than He enjoyed before His incarnation. The Son was all-glorious before, but His voluntary humiliation has added to the glory which He had with the Father before the world was (John 17:5). As God-man He lived a perfect earthly life, overcame the adversary, and won salvation for mankind. Such triumphs surely added an inestimable weight of eternal glory to God's Son! Paul uses a past tense of the verb to indicate that this exaltation has already taken place. In the fullest sense this occurred at the ascension when the Saviour returned to the heavenly courts and received the adoration that was His due (cf. DA 834). See Vol. V, p. 919.

**Given.** Gr. *charizomai* (see on ch. 1:29). The Father, as the Supreme Ruler, has the right to bestow honor on the Son who so faithfully fulfilled their united plans.

**A name.** Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the reading "the name." Opinion is divided as to the identity of this "name." Some hold that it refers to "dignity" or "glory" rather than to a specific title, supporting their opinion from OT references to praising the name of God (Ps. 29:2; 34:3; 54:6; etc.). Others believe that Paul uses "the name" in its Hebrew sense as referring to the ineffable name that reverent Jews would not pronounce, *Yahweh* (see Vol. I, pp. 170–173), known in the LXX and NT as *Kurios*, "Lord," and introduced by Paul in Phil. 2:11. Others take the name to be "Jesus" on the basis of v. 10, believing that this beloved human name (see on Matt. 1:1) gained an honor and significance unthought of before the ascension. Still another interpretation sees in "the



name” a reference to a human-divine combination conveyed by “Jesus Christ” and used by the apostle in Phil. 2:11 (see on Matt. 1:1). Dogmatic certainty as to the identity of the name is impossible.

**Above every name.** See on Acts 4:12; Eph. 1:21; Heb. 1:3, 4. Christ can be given no higher title, no higher position. He is acknowledged as Lord of all (cf. Rev. 17:14; 19:16).

**10. At the name.** Or, “in the name” (cf. on Acts 3:16).

**Of Jesus.** Perhaps referring to the name introduced in v. 9.

**Every knee.** Paul is here using thoughts from Isa. 45:23 and applying them to the ultimate universal adoration of the Saviour (cf. on Rom. 14:11). These words have not yet been fulfilled, but they are an assurance that the time will come when every creature will acknowledge Christ’s overlordship (cf. Rev. 5:11–14). This can only be when the great controversy is ended, when all, including Satan and his followers, will bow down at the feet of Jesus and own that the ways of God have been just and righteous (GC 666–670).

**Of things in heaven.** Or, “of heavenly persons” (see below).

**Things in earth.** Or, “earthly persons.” This phrase and the preceding “things in heaven” may refer either to all created things or to all intelligent beings in the spheres mentioned. In favor of the first view Paul’s treatment of the creation in Rom. 8:19–22 has been set forth. Also OT passages in which all nature is represented as praising God (Ps. 65:13; 148) are referred to. In favor of the second view is Paul’s use of the words “knee” and “tongue” (Phil. 2:10, (11), which, unless taken figuratively, refer to animate beings. Compare on Rev. 5:13.

**Under the earth.** The series, “in heaven,” “in earth,” and “under the earth,” is based on a Hebrew idiom denoting the entire creation (see on Ex. 20:4). “Under the earth” may refer to the figurative realm of the dead (see on Isa. 14:9, 10, 15, 16).

**11. Confess.** Gr. *exomologeō*, “to profess openly” (Rev. 3:5), “confess from the heart” (Matt. 3:6), or “to thank” (Matt. 11:25). The first meaning seems most applicable here, but the others are also involved in the final confession of Christ’s sovereignty.

**Jesus Christ is Lord.** The apostle again uses the twofold name that covers the human and divine natures of the Redeemer and declares that He who left heaven to take upon Him the form of a servant will finally be declared Lord. For other NT declarations concerning Jesus Christ as Lord see on Acts 2:36; Rom. 10:9; 1 Cor. 8:6; 12:3. A clear understanding of Christ’s lordship can bring increased confidence into the Christian’s life.

**To the glory of God.** Grammatically speaking, this clause is connected with “every tongue should confess” (v. 11), that is, the universal confession that Jesus Christ is Lord brings glory to God. But we may see in the words a reference to the consuming passion of the Saviour’s whole life. He lived for the glory of God, that all creation might give the Father the honor due unto His name (see on John 12:28; 13:31; 17:1; 1 Cor. 15:24, 28). His followers should live for the same end. This verse brings us to the climax of Paul’s brief presentation of the principles concerning humility and exaltation. First (vs. 1–4), he admonishes that there must be no self-exaltation or strife among the Philippians. Then (vs. 5–8), he sets forth Christ as the pattern of humility. Last (vs. 9–11), he shows that the Humble One has been exalted to greater glory than He had laid aside for the incarnation. The apostle intends that his readers shall learn that God can exalt only those who have

humbly served Him here below. Since the servant is not greater than his Lord (John 13:16), our service must be undertaken in a spirit similar to Christ's.

**12. Wherefore.** Or, "so that," "so then." Verses 12–16 are closely connected with vs. 5–11. The apostle draws other lessons, besides that of humility, from Christ's example.

**My beloved.** The use of this affectionate address is no affectation on Paul's part. His genuine love for his converts shines through all his epistles (cf. Rom. 12:19; 1 Cor. 4:14; etc.).

**Obedied.** This provides the point of connection with vs. 5–11. One of the manifestations of Christ's humility was His obedience (v. 8). The Philippians have been obedient in the past, but Paul wishes them to imbibe even more of the spirit of their Master, and he trusts that Christ's example will encourage them to more faithful obedience.

**Not as in my presence.** According to the Greek this clause refers not to "obeyed" but to "work out." The apostle wants the believers to be spiritually diligent not only when his personal presence inspires them but when he is absent, and then with an even greater diligence.

**Work out.** Gr. *katargazomai* (see on Rom. 5:3), used here in the sense of "to carry out to completion." This does not endorse the idea of salvation by works. We are saved by grace, through faith (see on Rom. 3:20–22, 24, 28; Eph. 2:8). But this grace leads us to good works (see on Rom. 6:11–16). Thus, such works are the outworking of the grace that has effected our salvation (Rom. 6:18; cf. 2 Cor. 6:1). Many are attracted to the Christian way, but are unwilling to meet the conditions by which the reward of the Christian may be theirs. If they could gain salvation without effort on their part, they would be more than happy to receive all that the Lord might give them. But the Scriptures teach that each individual must cooperate with the will and power of God. One must "strive to enter in" (Luke 13:24), "put off the old man" (Col. 3:9), "lay aside every weight," "run with patience" (Heb. 12:1), "resist the devil" (James 4:7), and "endure unto the end" (Matt. 24:13). Salvation is not of works, but it must be worked out. It springs from the mediation of Christ alone, but it is lived out by personal cooperation. While we cannot be too deeply conscious of our entire dependence on the merits, the work, and the power of Christ, we must also be aware of our personal obligation to live daily, by God's grace, a life consistent with the principles of Heaven (see AA 482). See on Rom. 3:31.

**Your own salvation.** Paul was not present to help the Philippian believers personally; they had to care for their own spiritual needs. Salvation is an individual matter. No human friend, no pastor, not even an apostle, can work it out for another. "Though Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it [the land], ... they shall deliver neither son nor daughter; they shall but deliver their own souls by their righteousness" (Eze. 14:20).

**Fear and trembling.** Compare 1 Cor. 2:3; 2 Cor. 7:15; Eph. 6:5. Paul is not advocating a slavish terror, but a wholesome self-distrust. The Christian should fear lest his will not be continually surrendered to Christ, or lest the carnal traits of character should control the life. He must fear to trust his own strength, to withdraw his hand from the hand of Christ, or to attempt to walk the Christian pathway alone (COL 161). Such fear leads to vigilance against temptation (1 Peter 1:17; 5:8), to humility of mind (Rom. 11:20), to taking heed lest we fall (1 Cor. 10:12).

**13. For.** The apostle now protects himself against being misunderstood, by explaining that God is paramount in the salvation of man.

**God which.** The entire phrase literally reads, “God it is who is working,” or “energizing,” with the emphasis clearly placed on “God.”

**Worketh.** Gr. *energeō*, “to put forth power,” usually implying that the operation is effective. It is not the same word as that used for “work out” (*katergazomai*) in v. 12 (see comment there). Our English word “energize” comes from *energeō*. The word is frequently applied to the working of God in the Christian’s life (1 Cor. 12:6, 11; Gal. 2:8; Eph. 1:11, 20). Here the apostle is stressing the fact that power for salvation comes from God, and that this power operates in us to achieve its benevolent purpose.

**Both to will and to do.** The use of the word “both” shows that God provides the stimulus for our initial determination to accept salvation and our power to make that decision effective. This does not mean that we are completely passive entities, subject only to God’s disposal, but that God provides the stimulus that awakens our desire to be saved, that He enables us to make the decision to attain salvation, and that He supplies us with the energy to make the decision effective so that salvation is accomplished in our lives. Redemption is thus figured as a cooperative work between God and man, with God furnishing all the needful powers for man’s use.

**Good pleasure.** Gr. *eudokia* (see on Rom. 10:1). God wills man’s salvation, He has done all that divine power can do to make it possible, it is His “good pleasure” that men should be saved. No one desires our redemption more ardently than the Father.

**14. All things.** Paul now applies his teaching to the practical aspects of life. In view of God’s desire for their salvation the Philippians can afford to approach the working out of their salvation in a cheerful, confident spirit, knowing that God will provide the needed strength.

**Murmurings.** Gr. *goggusmoi*, an imitative word suggesting the rumblings that a grumbler produces (see on Acts 6:1). It is used in the LXX of Israel’s complaints in the wilderness. The apostle seems to have had the Israelites in mind, for in Phil. 2:15 he quotes from Moses (see on Deut. 32:5). The verb *gogguzō*, “to murmur,” is frequently used in the NT (Matt. 20:11; Luke 5:30; John 6:41, 43, 61).

**Disputings.** Gr. *dialogismoi* (see on Rom. 1:21). Grumbling leads to disputing. The Philippians are urged not to complain at the way God leads them, nor to question His methods, since He purposes to redeem them. Obedience must be cheerful and willing or it is of little use. The patient, uncomplaining spirit of the Christian under persecution or in response to a superior’s command, indicates his willingness to submit to the higher chastening that comes from the Lord.

**15. That ye may be.** Or, “that ye may become,” that is, in the process of working out their own salvation without murmurings and disputings, they will become blameless.

**Blameless.** That is, free from censure, certainly by God, and possibly by men.

**Harmless.** Gr. *akerairoi* (see on Rom. 16:19). The word describes the inward condition of the Christian’s heart, supplementing “blameless,” which refers to others’ judgment of the Christian.

**Sons.** Gr. *tekna*, “children,” in contrast with *huioi*, the usual word for “sons” (see on Rom. 8:14). There is an allusion here to Deut. 32:5, where Moses refers to the children of Israel as being “a perverse and crooked generation.”

**Without rebuke.** Gr. *amemtoi*, “blameless.” Paul wishes his converts to possess an unblemished reputation, knowing that the reputation of God in the world depends partly on that of His children.

**Crooked and perverse.** See on Matt. 17:17; Acts 2:40.

**Nation.** Gr. *genea*, “generation,” in the sense of the sum total of men living at the same time (cf. on Matt. 23:36).

**Lights.** Gr. *phōstēres*, “luminaries,” used in the LXX for the heavenly bodies (Gen. 1:14, 16). Even though the Christian growth of the Philippians was not complete, their lives were to illumine the dark world in which they lived (see on Matt. 5:14). Paul’s words are appropriate for the last generation, who will live at a time when darkness will be greater than ever before (COL 414). With special brilliance God’s children are then to “arise, shine” (see on Isa. 60:1, 2).

**16. Holding forth.** Two interpretations of this verb are possible. The first takes “holding forth” as an extension of the previous verse and sees the figure of the church holding out the word of life as one holds a torch to illumine darkness. As Christians demonstrate what the word has accomplished in their own lives and speak the word clearly and simply, they exhibit it to others as the way of life and light.

Life is light. Christ is the life (see John 1:4; 6:48; 14:6) and the light (see John 8:12; 9:5; 12:46), and is the source of both. His followers also are light, but it is derived light (see on Matt. 5:14). The essence of the gospel is light (Eph. 5:8). As thought is expressed in word, so the light of truth is expressed in the life.

The Christian can hold out the word of life to the non-Christian, but he cannot make him accept it. Each must willingly accept for himself. One cannot partake of the word for another any more than he can eat food and have the strength of another sustained. Through the aid of the Holy Spirit the word can be understood and received into the life. No matter who presents the word of life, it is the power of God, ministered through the word that brings about the transformation.

But the Greek word translated “holding forth” may also bear the sense of “holding fast,” which meaning seems preferable here. The church will shine only as it holds fast to the life-giving word.

**Word of life.** This phrase does not occur elsewhere in Paul’s writings, but see on John 6:68; Acts 5:20; cf. 1 John 1:1. The word of life is the gospel message. To know the Father and the Son is life eternal (John 17:3). We first come to know them through the speaking of the word (Rom. 10:13–17; John 6:63), and thus have access to the life that comes only from them. Spiritual life is brought into being and is sustained by the power of the word. Men are to live “by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matt. 4:4; DA 390, 391).

**That I may rejoice.** Gr. *eis kauchēma emoi*, literally, “for a cause of glorying to me.”

For *kauchēma* see on ch. 1:26. Paul wanted to have grounds for rejoicing in the consistent lives of his Philippian friends (cf. on 1 Thess. 2:19, 20).

**Day of Christ.** The phrase is peculiar to this epistle. The usual expression is “day of the Lord” (see on ch. 1:6). Paul was continually aware that the great objective of life would be reached at the day of the return of Christ to this world. He knew that any rejoicing or glorying that might be done now could, through human frailty, fail of being

true rejoicing in that day. If he could glory in the results of his labors in the day of Christ, he knew that his glorying would be permanent. Paul recognized that day as the day when every man's work would be tested (see 1 Cor. 3:12, 13; 4:3–5; 2 Cor. 1:14).

**Run in vain.** The expression recalls the stadium contests and illustrates the strenuous efforts Paul expended in his evangelistic activities (cf. 1 Cor. 9:24; Heb. 12:1). "In vain" means "to no purpose," "without result" (cf. 2 Cor. 6:1; Gal. 2:2; 1 Thess. 3:5). The apostle's sense of responsibility for his converts was strong. His great longing was that they should remain faithful (AA 206, 207). He was not content with having worked, but wanted to see eternal fruitage for his sacrificial labor.

**Laboured.** Gr. *kopiaō*, "to labor with wearisome effort," from the noun *kopos*, "exhausting toil." Paul accurately describes his arduous evangelistic toil (cf. 1 Cor. 15:10; Col. 1:29; 1 Thess. 2:19).

**17. Offered.** Gr. *spendō*, "to make a libation," "to pour out a drink offering" (see on Num. 15:4–9; 2 Tim. 4:6; see Num. 28:7). Paul sees the Philippians as offering their faith to God, and his own life as the libation, or drink offering, poured upon the sacrifice. He was willing to give his blood to accompany the faithful Philippian witness, if it would contribute to the furtherance of the gospel. The apostle to the Gentiles possessed the love than which there is no greater (John 15:13), but he did not believe there was any particular virtue in the giving of his life except as it should encourage the Philippians to further self-sacrifice, or as it might cause some to investigate the faith to which he held so tenaciously.

**Sacrifice.** Gr. *thusia*, the "sacrifice" itself, not the act of sacrificing. In this instance the reference is to the Christian faith of the Philippians that they, as Christian priests (see 1 Peter. 2:9), present to the Lord.

**Service.** Gr. *leitourgia*, in the NT a "public religious service" (see on Luke 1:23).

**I joy, and rejoice.** Paul would join them in their joy even if his labor for others should cause him to lose his life. Compare on Rom. 8:18.

**18. For the same cause.** That is, in the same way, or likewise, the Philippians should be glad and rejoice with Paul. Instead of being grieved at the prospect of his giving his life, the apostle would have his friends share his joy in being permitted to yield his life with benefit to them and the gospel. The epistle lays great stress on joy, not only as a privilege, but as a duty, following from Christian faith and demonstrating its reality.

**19. But.** A new line of thought begins (vs. 19–24). Paul announces his intention of sending Timothy to the Philippians as his representative and as their example.

**I trust.** Rather, "I hope."

**In the Lord Jesus.** The Christian's mind is controlled by the Lord: his love, hope, work, all center in the Lord (cf. on Rom. 9:1; Phil. 1:8; 2:24, 29; 3:1).

**Timotheus.** See on Acts 16:1–3; Phil. 2:20. Paul has urged the Philippian believers, "Work out your own salvation" (v. 12) instead of depending too much on human teachers. On the other hand, he intends to give them all the help he can—he hopes to send Timothy.

**Of good comfort.** Or, "of good heart," "of good courage." Paul has already expressed some concern over the condition of the Philippians (ch. 1:27–30), but he has no real doubt as to their standing. He seems confident of the good report that Timothy will bring

on his return. Compare his loving anxiety for the Corinthian and the Thessalonian Christians (2 Cor. 2:13; 7:6, 7; 1 Thess. 3:1–9).

**When I know.** Or, “when I discover.” The apostle cannot feel completely satisfied until he has received Timothy’s personal report. Until Timothy’s departure and return he will be somewhat anxious about the Philippian church.

**Your state.** Literally, “the things concerning you.”

**20. Likeminded.** Literally, “of equal soul” (cf. Deut. 13:6). Paul means either that he has no one like himself or that he has no one the equal of Timothy. Timothy was a second Paul. Since Paul could not investigate the condition of the church personally, the best substitute would be a report of conditions at Philippi given by Timothy.

Timothy was Paul’s son in the faith (1 Tim. 1:2). Timothy recognized his spiritual relationship and conducted himself accordingly (1 Cor. 16:10; Phil. 2:22). From his spiritual father the younger man inherited his interests and affections. Thus no one could have been better qualified for the task at hand than the young man who would naturally take a genuine interest in the welfare of those who were Paul’s spiritual children and therefore Timothy’s brothers and sisters in the faith. There is a scarcity of men like-minded with the apostle—men of earnest, spontaneous, self-denying zeal—but it is such men whom the Lord Jesus needs. Timothy was like-minded with Paul because each had the mind of Christ. Only possession of the mind of Jesus will enable men successfully to guide the church of God in the last days. The church is the supreme object of God’s love and care, and those who are like-minded with the Lord, whether they be laymen or leaders, will have the same attitude and will assume the same jealous watchcare over all its members and activities. They cannot do otherwise.

**Naturally.** Rather, “genuinely,” “sincerely.”

**Care for.** Gr. *merimnaō*, “to be anxious” (see on Matt. 6:25). It is no casual care that Paul has in mind.

**21. All.** Literally, “the all,” that is, the group of Christians around Paul.

**Seek their own.** In view of his high praise of the Philippians (ch. 1:3–5), of Timothy (ch. 2:19–22), and Epaphroditus (vs. 25–30), it is surprising to read such an indictment from Paul’s pen. Those who were with him he calls brethren (ch. 4:21), but it seems that they did not share his self-sacrificing spirit. It has been suggested that they shrank from the dangerous journey to Philippi, and that Paul had to call on Timothy, whom he could ill afford to lose. Epaphroditus (ch. 2:25–30) and Luke were possibly absent, for neither of them appears to have been other than faithfully unselfish.

**Jesus Christ’s.** By “the things which are Jesus Christ’s” Paul refers to matters that concern Christ’s kingdom, His glory, and our salvation. Paul draws a contrast between those who were devoted to the interests of the church and those who cared primarily for their own interests. Paul and Timothy were dedicated to a common cause—the salvation of God’s erring children; but Paul regretfully records the fact that all his company were not so minded.

**22. Ye know.** There seems to have been frequent intercourse between the Philippian church and the young evangelist, Timothy. He had been with Paul at the founding of the church (see on Acts 16:1, 13; 17:14). It seems possible that he had visited Philippi at least twice during the Third Missionary Journey (see Acts 19:22; 20:3–6). Now Paul had chosen him for another visit.

**Proof.** That is, the Philippians knew how Timothy's character had been tried and approved, and were aware of his attachment to Paul and his faithfulness in gospel service.

**As a son with the father.** Rather, "as a son to a father." It appears that Paul was about to speak of Timothy's faithful ministrations to him, personally. But in characteristic humility he speaks of Timothy and himself as fellow workers in gospel service. If we may judge Timothy's character from the directions given him by Paul in 1 and 2 Timothy (see on 1 Tim. 4:12), it would seem that Timothy was gentle and warmhearted rather than commanding. Paul may have sensed the need for this emphatic commendation of his friend (cf. on 1 Cor. 16:10).

**23. Therefore.** Paul returns to his earlier thought, that of sending Timothy as his messenger to the Philippians (v. 19).

**Presently.** Gr. *exautēs*, "instantly," "forthwith."

**How it will go.** Since Paul planned to delay Timothy's departure until he should see how things would turn, it seems likely that some crisis was at hand so far as his imprisonment was concerned. Since the next verse expresses his hope shortly to visit Philippi, there may have been some thought of release, in which case Timothy would take the glad tidings to the Macedonian believers.

**24. Trust.** Gr. *peithō*, "to be confident," "to have confidence," "to trust," a different word from that translated "trust" in v. 19. There Paul hoped, here he has confidence, though both states of mind are centered "in the Lord" (see on v. 19). Apparently the apostle considered it distinctly possible that the Lord would soon overrule for his release from prison.

**25. Yet.** Verses 25–30 deal with Epaphroditus, another friend of Paul's and one well known to the Philippian congregation. Epaphroditus had brought a gift from the church to Paul, and had served Paul well during his stay with the apostle. His return had been delayed by illness.

**Supposed.** Rather, "deemed," "counted," in view of possible delay in sending Timothy. From the use of the past tense it would at first appear that Paul had already sent Epaphroditus on his way to Philippi, and that this letter followed his departure. But the verbs "supposed" (v. 25) and "sent" (v. 28) doubtless represent the Greek epistolary aorist, which is used when the writer places himself in the readers' position and times his statements from their point of view. When the letter reached its destination the action represented by the verbs would be past. Hence Paul is using the past tense, although the event is actually future to him at the time of writing. From this it may be taken that Epaphroditus had not yet left for Philippi, and that he was the bearer of this epistle to the believers (see AA 479).

**Epaphroditus.** A common Greek and Latin name meaning "lovely," "fascinating," "charming," from the name of the Greek goddess *Aphroditē*. The name appears only in this epistle in the NT. Some have identified the man here mentioned with the Epaphras of Col. 1:7; 4:12; Philemon 23. But although Epaphras is only a contracted form of the longer name, it appears unlikely that it refers to the same person. Epaphroditus came from Philippi in Macedonia, whereas Epaphras was a minister in Colossae in Asia Minor, and probably a native of that region.

**My brother.** The adjective "my" belongs to all three nouns, "brother," "companion," and "fellow soldier." The first designates him as the partner of Paul's faith, the second as



his partner in office or labor, the third as sharer of his conflicts and dangers—a climax proceeding from a general to a more definite relationship. From Paul’s glowing description it is clear that Epaphroditus had joined in missionary work such as the apostle had been doing. Since he was free, he would be active in ways that were not possible to Paul. He may have thus incurred danger, and so have merited the description of “soldier” (cf. 1 Tim. 1:18; 2 Tim. 2:3, 4).

**Your.** This adjective stands in contrast with the previous “my,” and stresses the twofold relationship of Epaphroditus—to Paul and to the Philippians.

**Messenger.** Gr. *apostolos* (see on Rom. 1:1). Here the word simply means “messenger,” or “delegate.” Epaphroditus had originally been sent from Philippi with a special commission—that of carrying gifts to Paul (see on Phil. 4:18).

**He that ministered.** Gr. *leitourgos* (see on Rom. 13:6).

**26. For.** This verse gives the reason for Paul’s decision to send Epaphroditus to Philippi—the faithful brother was longing to return home so as to dispel anxiety concerning his health.

**He longed.** Rather, “he was longing.” Paul skillfully commends his messenger to the Philippians by stressing the affection of Epaphroditus for them all.

**Full of heaviness.** Gr. *adēmoneō*. Two derivations of the word have been suggested: (1) *a*, “away from,” and *dēmos*, “people,” or “home,” hence, “away from home,” whence a free translation of the verb would be “to be homesick”; (2) from *adēmōn*, “sore troubled,” hence, “to be distressed.” In the second sense *adēmoneō* is used in Matt. 26:37 and Mark 14:33 to describe the Saviour’s state of mind in Gethsemane, and is translated “to be very heavy.” In the case of Epaphroditus the anxiety was not about himself, but about the grief of his friends at Philippi. He knew that they had heard of his illness, and possibly believed that he had already died.

**27. For indeed.** The last phrase of v. 26 has understated the case, and Paul now tells his readers how serious his friend’s illness had been.

**Nigh unto death.** There is no indication of the cause or the nature of the sickness.

**God had mercy.** There is no suggestion of instantaneous, miraculous healing even though Paul had performed many healings in past years (see on Acts 19:11, 12; 28:8, 9). The gift of divine healing was not exercised in every instance, even on those on whom the healer would most naturally have desired to use the gift. The gift, which came from God, was under the control and direction of God (cf. on 1 Cor. 12:9).

**Sorrow upon sorrow.** Perhaps Paul thinks of his imprisonment as one sorrow. If Epaphroditus, who had come to minister to him in his bonds, should die, Paul’s “sorrow” would be infinitely increased.

**28. I sent.** See on v. 25.

**The more carefully.** Rather, “with the greater haste.”

**Again.** The Greek construction favors connecting the adverb with “rejoice,” later in the sentence, rather than with “see.”

**Ye may rejoice.** The Philippian’s customary joy had been dimmed by news of their representative’s dangerous illness, but they could now regain their happiness. Their joy would lessen Paul’s sorrow, for while he still remained a captive, he would be relieved of anxiety over Epaphroditus and the Philippian church.

**Less sorrowful.** In the joy of the Philippian believers in seeing Epaphroditus again, Paul himself would find solace and joy.

**29. Receive him therefore.** Paul was sending Epaphroditus that the believers might again be glad (v. 28), so he admonishes them to ensure the fulfillment of his purpose.

**In the Lord.** Compare on Phil. 2:19; cf. Rom. 16:2. Paul bids the Philippians look upon Epaphroditus as a gift from God, as the servant of the Lord, and now as restored to them through the mercy of God.

**Reputation.** Rather, “honor.” This high commendation of Epaphroditus enjoins an important duty regarding the proper treatment of those who possess noble characters. It is a Christian duty to respect the virtuous and pious, and especially to honor those who have been faithful in the work of the Lord. Some have seen in v. 29 a hint of previous disharmony between the Philippians and Epaphroditus. If such had been the case, Paul now wishes all misunderstandings to be removed.

**30. Work of Christ.** The reception and honor required for Epaphroditus are based upon his work, for this was what brought on him his severe illness. This work consisted of his personal ministry to Paul’s needs rather than of direct evangelism. In God’s eyes the spirit in which the service is performed means more than the kind of service (6T 439).

**Not regarding.** Or, “having no concern.” Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the reading “having risked.” The expression gives an idea of the dangers to which Epaphroditus had exposed himself by helping the apostle.

**To supply your lack.** The phrase implies no criticism of the Philippians, but rather praise. Paul recognizes that distance prevented the believers from rendering all the help their kindness would suggest, and he accepts the ministry of Epaphroditus as their own. There may be a suggestion that Epaphroditus’ illness was the consequence of overexertion rather than of persecution. Perhaps he suffered illness as a result of his long and hazardous journey.

**Service.** Gr. *leitourgia* (see on v. 17). Again it is implied that the gift of the Philippians, through Epaphroditus, had a religious significance, since what they gave to Paul was accepted as if it were offered to Christ (cf. Matt. 25:35–40).

### ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1–5COL 248; 3T 360; 4T 20; 6T 399

1–139T 274

1–30TM 221

2 1T 324

3 CSW 155; EW 119; FE 121; LS 303; 2T 162, 301, 419; 3T 445, 528; 4T 126, 522, 608; 5T 108, 291, 418, 488; 9T 188

3, 4 5T 174

3–9TM 221

4 PP 133; 8T 137

4, 5 2T 622

4–8MH 501; 4T 457

5 CSW 113; MYP 141; TM 189, 225, 377; 3T 538; 5T 17, 343; 7T 240

5–7FE 444; 2T 426

5–8MH 501

5–116T 59

6, 7 DA 22; Ev 132; MB 14; 4T 121

6–8AA 481; MH 424; 2T 200; 8T 287  
6–11CT 263  
7 CT 277; DA 387; FE 142; GW 190; PK 701; 2T 151; 3T 54, 229, 566; WM 24  
7, 8 DA 436  
8 AA 333; CM 76; CS 302; DA 25; Ed 132; FE 417; ML 244; MM 189; MYP 16; 2T 467;  
5T 17; 9T 54  
12 CD 35; CT 399, 419; Ev 287, 596; FE 525; MH 492; ML 176; MYP 72; PP 208; SC 80;  
TM 454; 2T 167, 317, 397, 506; 4T 610; 5T 512, 569, 607; 8T 84, 124; 9T 155  
12, 13 AA 482; AH 207; ChS 247; COL 161; CW 81; Ev 290; FE 134, 217, 297; GC 469;  
MB 142; MH 452; MM 51; MYP 147; PK 486; TM 386; 5T 635; 8T 64, 312; 9T 152  
12–15SL 87; 1T 339  
12–16AA 481; TM 221  
13 AA 158; DA 672; GW 285; MH 176; ML 7, 318; SC 47, 62, 75; Te 113; TM 240; 5T  
514, 635; 6T 371, 399; WM 316  
13–15EW 26  
14, 15 5T 174  
14–179T 273  
15 AH 279; PK 189; 1T 159; 2T 122, 657, 673; 4T 124; 5T 366; 6T 166; 9T 22, 81  
15, 16 AA 207; 6T 310  
16 AA 206; 1T 99; 7T 252  
21 CS 54; 2T 623; 5T 205  
25–30AA 479  
2

### CHAPTER 3

1 *He warneth them to beware of the false teachers of the circumcision, 4 shewing that himself hath greater cause than they to trust in the righteousness of the law: 7 which notwithstanding he counteth as dung and loss, to gain Christ and his righteousness, 12 therein acknowledging his own imperfection. 15 He exhorteth them to be thus minded, 17 and to imitate him, 18 and to decline the ways of carnal Christians.*

**1. Finally.** Gr. *to loipon*, literally, “what remains.” The expression may mean either “finally” or “furthermore” (see 2 Cor. 13:11; Eph. 6:10; 1 Thess. 4:1; 2 Thess. 3:1, where the same or a similar phrase occurs). Some suggest that Paul was about to close his letter when his mind was directed into another channel and he introduced the thoughts beginning with Phil. 3:2. Others think the apostle is closing one topic and opening another, and that the real end of the epistle comes naturally in ch. 4:20–23.

**Rejoice in the Lord.** Joy in the Lord is the overtone of the whole epistle (see pp. 138, 139). The Philippians are bidden to rejoice with that joy which has its source in the Lord and which is had only in fellowship with Him (cf. ch. 4:4).

**The same things.** Some commentators see in these words a reference to previous letters written by Paul to Philippi. Others prefer to limit the reference to topics already raised in this epistle, such as the incipient dissensions hinted at in ch. 1:27–30, and to which he now refers more specifically (ch. 3:2, 18, 19).

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<sup>2</sup>Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (Php 1:1). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

**Grievous.** Gr. *oknēros*, “irksome,” “sluggish,” “slothful,” used here in the sense of not causing reluctance. Nothing that was for the good of his friends was a burden to Paul. It might seem that the multitude of his cares and trials in Rome would hold his attention, but his personal problems could not divert his mind from the needs of others.

**Safe.** Paul’s admonitions were intended for their safety. They were exposed to dangers that made the warnings necessary.

**2. Beware of dogs.** Literally, “look out for the dogs.” The definite article points to a definite group of people. The repetition of “beware” is for emphasis. It appears that Paul refers to the same people in each case. His threefold description covers different aspects of the same opponents’ activities. In the East dogs were mostly without masters, and wandered in the streets and fields. They were accounted unclean in Levitical law (cf. on Lev. 11:2–7), and to call one a dog was a strong expression of contempt (1 Sam. 17:43; 2 Kings 8:13). To the Jew the heathen were as dogs (see on Matt. 7:6; 15:26), and Gentiles were not slow in returning the epithet. The term succinctly describes those who are shameless, impudent, malignant, snarling, dissatisfied, and contentious. Paul is probably referring to a well-known party of professed Christians, the Judaizers (see Vol. VI, pp. 30–33; cf. on Phil. 1:16), whose worrying tactics cause them to merit the description, “dogs.” Although he does not describe the troublemakers in great detail, many of their characteristics may be inferred from ch. 3:3–11, where he depicts the opposite positive qualities.

**Evil workers.** That is, the Judaizers, the “deceitful workers” of 2 Cor. 11:13.

**Concision.** Gr. *katatomē*, “mutilation.” A derogatory term for the Judaizers, who sought to require Gentiles to be circumcised and become Jews in order to be Christians. This Jewish circumcision would be either harmful, as committing them to the whole obsolete system of Judaism (Gal. 5:3), or meaningless, hence a mutilation. The warning is addressed to Gentiles, since Jews would not need such counsel.

**3. We.** Emphatic in the Greek. The apostle contrasts himself and the Philippians with the Judaizers.

**Circumcision.** That is, circumcised ones. The sentence may be summarized as follows: “We are the circumcised ones who are Christians.” Is Paul saying, “We [not other Jews] are the *Christian* circumcised ones”? No; he is addressing Gentiles (see on v. 2). Then he must mean: “Beware of those who would circumcise you. For *we* are [constitute] the circumcised ones—we who are Christians, who worship God in the Spirit, and have no confidence in the flesh.” This agrees with Paul’s other statements that true circumcision is spiritual, not of the flesh but of the heart, by the putting off of sin, and is available to Gentiles in Christ (Rom. 2:25–29; Col. 2:11, 13). The Gentiles saved by grace, though called uncircumcised, are no longer “aliens from the commonwealth of Israel,” but citizens (Eph. 2:8–13, 19). For the relation of Gentile Christians to the Israel of the covenants, promises, and prophecies see Vol. IV, pp. 35, 36.

**Worship.** Gr. *latreuō*, “to serve,” used especially of service rendered to God (see Matt. 4:10; see on Rom. 1:25).

**God.** Important textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10) for the following reading of the clause, “who worship by the Spirit of God.”

***In the spirit.*** See in John 4:23, 24. Those of the true circumcision offer spiritual worship to God and are not satisfied with the ordinances and traditions of men. We Christians, Paul says, have not only the true circumcision but also the only true worship.

***Rejoice.*** Gr. *kauchaomai*, “to boast,” “to glory” (see on Rom. 5:2).

***Have no confidence.*** That is, have not trusted.

***In the flesh.*** The Judaizers, against whom Paul warns, had great confidence in their lineage and in the things they did in an effort to gain salvation. For Paul’s interpretation of the phrase “in the flesh” see Phil. 3:4–6; see on 2 Cor. 11:18; Gal. 6:13, 14. To his mind the flesh was in conflict with all that was spiritual.

**4. *I might also have.*** Rather, “I have also,” that is, in addition to his trust in Christ, he possessed advantages desired by Judaizers. He now saw that his fleshly advantages were of no value in respect to salvation. When God chose His special witness against trusting inherited privileges for salvation, He chose one who not only possessed all that an Israelite could possibly boast in, but one who had been exceedingly conscious and proud of his heritage. It is in this setting that Paul’s testimony takes on its true force. He confessed that no advantage of birth or education could bring peace or secure the favor of God.

**5. *Circumcised the eighth day.*** Paul was not a proselyte, circumcised as an adult, but was a Jew by birth, and underwent the covenant rite at the prescribed age (see on Gen. 17:11, 12; Lev. 12:3; Luke 2:21).

***Of the stock of Israel.*** Literally, “out of the race of Israel,” a descendant of Jacob.

***Tribe of Benjamin.*** Paul came from the tribe that gave Israel its first king (1 Sam. 9:1, 2), that alone had been faithful to Judah at the division of the kingdom (1 Kings 12:21), and that had held the post of honor in the army (Judges 5:14; Hosea 5:8). Paul’s name, Saul, was probably from King Saul, a Benjamite.

***Hebrew of the Hebrews.*** That is, a Hebrew spring from Hebrews. Perhaps he means to imply that there was no foreign mixture in his ancestors, perhaps that he was a Hebrew-speaking Jew. For the term “Hebrew” see on Acts 6:1, and for Paul’s ancestry see Vol. VI, pp. 208–210.

***As touching.*** This phrase and the words “concerning” and “touching” (v. 6) are variant translations of the same Greek word *kata*, “as concerning,” “in reference to.”

***The law.*** There is no article in the Greek, but Paul doubtless has the Mosaic law in mind (see on Rom. 2:12). Strict adherence to the entire code was a distinguishing mark of the faithful Pharisee (Vol. V, pp. 51, 52).

***Pharisee.*** Paul had no control over the fact that he was born of the tribe of Benjamin, that his parents were Hebrews, and that he had been given a Hebrew education. But he now enumerates his personal decisions. He chose to be a Pharisee (see on Acts 22:3; 23:6). Surely none of the Judaizers could be more ardent in their legalism than the apostle had been before Christ met him on the road to Damascus (see on 2 Cor. 11:22; Gal. 1:14).

**6. *Zeal.*** Gr. *zēlos* (see on John 2:17; Rom. 10:2). Not only had Paul been a Pharisee, he was an energetic, enthusiastic Pharisee. He vigorously carried out the principles of his sect, thinking that he did God service by persecuting those whom he counted as heretics (see on Acts 8:1, 3; 9:1; 22:4; 26:10, 11).

***Righteousness.*** See on Matt. 5:6, 20; Luke 1:6; cf. on Phil. 3:9.

**In the law.** This phrase defines the “righteousness” to which Paul is referring (see on Rom. 10:3, 4). In Phil. 3:9 the apostle calls the “righteousness, which is of the law” one’s “own righteousness,” and contrasts it with “the righteousness which is of God by faith.” See on Gal. 2:21; 3:21.

**Blameless.** That is, in the eyes of his coreligionists, as a result of rigid observance of the law. Paul neglected no duty that he believed the law enjoined. He led a strictly upright life, and no one had occasion to accuse him of being a violator of the law. It appears that before his conversion Paul was a young man of exemplary deportment, free from the vicious indulgences into which young men often fall. True, he mentions himself as “chief” of sinners (1 Tim. 1:15), and as being unworthy “to be called an apostle” (1 Cor. 15:9), but he never gives the least intimation that his early life was stained with gross sins. Then he met Christ, and learned the futility of his own efforts to earn salvation.

**7. But.** Paul wishes to emphasize the contrast between his previous standing and the position he accepted on becoming a Christian.

**What things were gain.** That is, such things (the natural and acquired advantages listed in vs. 5, 6) as were gain. Paul never minimized the value of his past, but rather gloried in it, and counted it as gain, or profit, from a merely human point of view. The Greek for “gain” (*kerdē*) is plural, and may be translated “gains.”

**Counted.** Gr. *hēgeomai* (see on ch. 2:3), here used in the sense of “to reckon.” There is a parallel between Christ’s renunciation (ch. 2:7) and Paul’s.

**Loss.** Gr. *zēmia*, “damage,” “loss,” that which is reckoned on the “debit side of the ledger” (Robertson). The word for “loss” is in the singular, whereas the word for “gain” is in the plural. The various gains are all counted as one loss on account of Christ.

**For Christ.** Rather, “on account of Christ.” So far as Christ and His religion were concerned Paul reckoned all his natural “gains” as worthless. In some degree all Christians are called upon to make similar renunciations. Happy are they who can do so as cheerfully and wholeheartedly as did Paul!

**8. Yea doubtless.** Literally, “Nay, indeed, therefore.” Paul can hardly find words sufficiently emphatic to express the intensity of his convictions. Verse 8 is an expansion of v. 7.

**Count.** From the same Greek word used in v. 7, but in the present tense to show that Paul is continuing to reckon his previous “gains” as “loss.”

**All things.** In v. 7 Paul says that he counted the things previously mentioned as loss. In this verse he goes further and declares that *all* things are counted loss. He is ready to renounce not only the things he had specified but everything that could be imagined. If all the wealth and honor conceivable were his, he would cheerfully repudiate them that he might know Christ.

**For.** Rather, “for the sake of,” “by reason of,” “because of,” that is, all else appeared insignificant because of the surpassing value of personally knowing Christ.

**Excellency.** Literally, “surpassingness.” Paul realized that a personal knowledge of Christ surpassed in value all other attainments (see on John 17:3).

**My Lord.** There is a warmth of affection in the expression “Christ Jesus *my* Lord.” It shows something of the close personal communion between the apostle and the Saviour. Other titles given to Jesus in this epistle occur with the following frequency: Christ (18

times); Jesus Christ (9); Christ Jesus (8); Lord Jesus Christ (3); Lord Jesus (1); Jesus (1); Saviour (1); besides a number of references to “Lord.”

**Suffered the loss.** Gr. *zēmioō*, “to do damage to,” “to fine,” here used in the sense of “to forfeit,” “to give up.” The Greek tense points to the past, which would be to the time of Paul’s conversion, when, by following Christ, he lost all his inherited advantages.

**Do count.** That is, I am continuing to count, although the loss occurred in the past.

**Dung.** Gr. *skubala*, “refuse.” The word is used both of the waste products of the bodies of human beings and animals, and of the food thrown away from the table. The latter sense is especially appropriate here. The Judaizers thought of themselves as banqueters seated at the Father’s table. They pictured the Gentile Christians as dogs greedily snatching up the waste food which fell from the table. But here Paul has reversed the image. The true Christians are enjoying the banquet, and Judaizers are the dogs (v. 2), swallowing the privileges of Hebrew birth and upbringing, which Paul has voluntarily relinquished.

**Win.** Gr. *kerdainō*, “to gain,” related to the noun *kerdos*, “gain,” which occurs in the plural form in v. 7. Paul ardently longed to possess Christ for himself, that Christ in turn might completely possess him. The intensity of his desire is reflected in his threefold repetition of the word “loss” in vs. 7, 8. His winning of Christ represents the greatest “gain.”

**9. Be found.** Or, “be discovered to be.” Some see in the phrase a reference to the last day, but the context (v. 10) favors the present life.

**In him.** That is, in union with Christ (see on John 15:4–9; 2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 2:20).

**Mine own righteousness.** See on v. 6. Strictly speaking, there is no personal righteousness (see on Rom. 3:12; 10:3), but Paul uses the phrase to describe his morality.

**Which is of the law.** That is, which stems from the law, which is based on a fulfillment of the law. Paul sets forth the uselessness of such a “righteousness.” No observance of law can cleanse one’s heart of the defilement of sin or give power to withstand sin. True observance of the law can result only from the transformation of the mind by divine grace (see on Rom. 3:31).

**Through the faith of Christ.** See on Rom. 3:22. For the dependence of righteousness upon faith in Jesus Christ see on Rom. 3:21–26.

**Of God.** Literally, “out of God,” “from God.” This explains the source of righteousness, which is shown to come from God. Compare on Rom. 1:17.

**By faith.** Literally, “upon the faith,” that is, resting upon the faith. Man can receive the righteousness that comes from God only by exercising faith in Jesus, through whom God has displayed His righteousness.

**10. Know.** Rather, “come to know.” This clause is closely connected with v. 8, where the highest gain is shown to be a personal knowledge of Christ Jesus. To possess this knowledge Paul abandoned all things. He knew that the only way to gain this intimate knowledge of the Son of God was through union with Him (v. 9).

**Power of his resurrection.** Paul was not merely wanting to get acquainted with the power that effected Christ’s resurrection; he longed for that power to operate in him also. For this wish to be fulfilled Paul would have to live a life like Christ’s. Hence he is virtually expressing the desire to have the same sin-conquering power in his life that Christ had in His. The decisive display of that power will be in Paul’s own resurrection



from the dead. See on Rom. 4:25; 6:4–11. The same power that raised Jesus from the dead is needed to resurrect a sinner dead in his sins, and to re-create him in the divine image.

**Fellowship.** Gr. *koinōnia* (see on Acts 2:42; Rom. 15:26; Phil. 1:5), here used in the sense of “partnership.”

**Sufferings.** He who is united with Christ (v. 9), and personally experiences the operation of the power of His resurrection, will inevitably come to share in Christ’s sufferings (see on Matt. 10:17–24; 20:22, 23; 2 Cor. 1:5; Col. 1:24; 1 Peter 4:13). This sharing is not in a merely theoretical or ethical sense, although this is doubtless involved; it is actual (cf. 2 Tim. 3:12). He who lives Christ’s life will encounter some of the opprobrium Christ met (John 15:18–21; 17:14). Paul was fully aware of this (see on Acts 9:16), and did not shrink from the prospect. Rather he welcomed it as bringing him into still more intimate union with his Saviour. A partial record of the apostle’s sufferings (2 Cor. 11:23–27) reveals the impressive extent to which he did share in his Master’s pains and sorrows.

**Being made conformable.** Or, “being conformed.” The apostle desired to be like his Master in everything, even to being like Him in His death. This conformation was fulfilled in two ways: (1) By Paul’s daily life. He shared in Christ’s meekness and submissiveness, His unselfish love and devotion, and His anguish over human sin. In conforming to Christ’s spirit Paul could truly say: “I die daily” (1 Cor. 15:31); “I am crucified with Christ” (Gal. 2:20). Paul’s self-abnegation and his self-sacrificing life served as a powerful witness to the effectiveness of the Saviour’s death (see on 2 Cor. 4:10). (2) By Paul’s willingness to die if death should be necessary, and ultimately by his death. Martyrdom was no remote possibility for Paul. For many years he had faced death, and did not now shrink from it (see Acts 20:22–24).

**11. If by any means.** These words hold an element of doubt to the degree that Paul had always recognized the possibility of a Christian’s defection from the faith (1 Cor. 10:12; Gal. 3:3; 5:4). He now, in humility, acknowledges that he is exposed to the same danger (cf. on 1 Cor. 9:27).

**Attain.** Gr. *katantaō*, “to come to,” “to arrive at” (Acts 16:1; 27:12), but metaphorically, “to attain” (Eph. 4:13).

**Resurrection of the dead.** Paul anticipates sharing in the resurrection of the just (see 1 Thess. 4:13–18; 1 Cor. 15:51–57; see on Rev. 20:5, 6), but does not minimize the effort required, on the Lord’s part and on his own, to make such attainment possible.

**12. Not as though.** Literally, “not that,” that is, by this I do not mean to say that (cf. ch. 4:11, 17).

**Attained.** Gr. *lambanō*, “to receive,” “to obtain” (cf. 1 Cor. 9:24, where *lambanō* is used of gaining a prize). Paul is referring to all of his Christian experience, up to that moment of time, and acknowledging that he had not yet completely fulfilled the holy desires expressed in Phil. 3:9, 10. He may thus hope to correct the spiritual pride which seems to have disturbed the unity of the Philippians (ch. 2:2–4).

**Were already perfect.** Or, “have already been perfected.” By his use of “attained” Paul has covered his past experience; he now refers to his present condition and disclaims having reached that stage of perfection that God designed him to attain and which he

himself desires. He is still in the process of working out his own salvation (see on ch. 2:12).

**Follow after.** Or, “am pursuing,” “am pressing on.” Perhaps Paul refers to the race that is clearly introduced in v. 14.

**If that I may.** This phrase expresses purpose or aim rather than doubt.

**Apprehend.** Gr. *katalambanō*, “to lay hold of,” “to obtain” (see on John 1:5; Rom. 9:30). In the Greek *katalambanō* is preceded by *kai*, “also,” which implies that Paul intended not only to pursue but *also* to obtain.

**That for which.** A reference to the purpose Christ had in mind when He accomplished Paul’s conversion (Acts 9:15, 16; 26:16–18).

**Am apprehended.** Or, “was laid hold of,” that is, at the time of his conversion. Paul knew that Christ had laid hold on him for a purpose, and the apostle was determined to fulfill that design by grasping that for which Christ had laid hold on him. It is the Christian’s duty to press on always in the Christian race, because that is the purpose for which Christ called him. God laid hold, for example, on Saul the son of Kish, and on the rich young ruler, but they did not press on to achieve the objective for which they had been called.

**13. Brethren.** Paul uses this form of address to arrest his readers’ attention. He reviews the ground already covered in the preceding verses.

**Count.** Gr. *logizomai*, “to think,” “to reckon” (see on Rom. 3:28), generally used in connection with reasoning. Paul is emphasizing his estimate of his own spiritual state in relationship to the divine standard held before him.

**To have apprehended.** See on v. 12.

**This one thing I do.** Literally, “one thing,” which is defined in the following clauses. Paul’s one purpose was to fulfill the Lord’s purpose in calling him. He suffered from no divided aim. He did not seek both for wealth and honor here and for salvation and a crown hereafter. From his singleness of purpose there came his deep spirituality and success in his ministry.

**Forgetting.** That is, disregarding or intentionally putting out of mind, rather than being forgetful.

**Those things.** Rather, “the things,” Paul knows that past victories, no matter how glorious, are not enough to ensure present or future safety.

**Reaching forth.** Gr. *epekteinō*, “to stretch out toward,” a figure drawn from the races in which the runner strains toward the goal with body bent forward and hand and foot outstretched. The figure vividly portrays Paul’s single-minded dedication to the course laid out for him by Christ. Such dedication leaves no time for curious, regretful backward looks.

**Things which are before.** Paul does not enumerate the things he has in mind, but they are implied in his reasoning, and are covered by v. 14. To the runner in a race the only object worthy of attention is the winning post, and so it was with Paul in his spiritual course. He fixed his eyes on the goal of eternal life and an inheritance in the world beyond. A clear vision of this goal will stimulate the Christian faithfully and cheerfully to run the race that is set before him (Heb. 12:1, 2).

**14. Press.** Gr. *diōkō*, “pursue,” translated “follow after” in v. 12, which sense is also appropriate here, since Paul, keeping his eyes fixed on the goal, sees little else but his objective. He knows that he who would win must keep the goal and the prize clearly in mind. The contestant must not be turned aside by applause or insult, he must not relax, he must not stumble, he must not stop; he must continually press forward until the goal is gained.

**Mark.** Gr. *skopos*, “a mark [on which the eye fixes],” “a goal”; related to the verb *skopeō*, “to spy,” “to peer,” “to look into the distance” (see on ch. 2:4). *Skopos* is used only here in the NT. In the LXX it is used of an archer’s mark (Job 16:12; Lam. 3:12).

**Prize.** Gr. *brabeion*, “a reward to victors in public games,” hence, “a prize.” In earthly races there could be only one winner (1 Cor. 9:24), but in the Christian race each has the opportunity to be a victor and receive the prize.

**High calling.** Literally, “upward calling,” that is, a calling to heaven which comes from heaven. This call not only came to Paul at his conversion but was constantly sounding in his ears. God never ceases to call the Christian heavenward.

**In Christ Jesus.** The call is made by God in the life and person of His Son. The example of Jesus constitutes a continual stimulus to the believer (Heb. 12:1, 2).

**15. Let us.** The apostle now turns from an exclusive consideration of his own Christian career to apply the lessons to the lives of his Philippian friends, and tactfully includes himself in the exhortation.

**Perfect.** Gr. *teleioi*, “mature,” “full grown” (see on Matt. 5:48), in contrast with *nēpioi*, “children” (see 1 Cor. 13:11; Eph. 4:13, 14; Heb. 5:13, 14), referring to maturity in Christian thinking. The concept here expressed does not conflict with the statement of Phil. 3:12, where Paul denies that he has reached the ultimate in perfection. Here he is employing “perfect” in a relative sense. See on Matt. 5:48.

**Be thus minded.** Literally, “think this,” or “have this mind.” The apostle calls on all mature Christians to take the same attitude toward Christian growth as he does. He admonishes them to continue to put themselves to the stretch for the purpose of gaining the prize.

**Otherwise minded.** That is, if their point of view, especially concerning the matter of perfection, did not coincide with Paul’s. The apostle was not demanding complete conformity to his particular mode of thought; he allowed for differing views, believing that the Lord would instruct sincere believers.

**Reveal.** Gr. *apokaluptō*, “to uncover,” “to lay open what has been veiled.” If any mature Christian did not see the necessity for disregarding the past and hastening on unto perfection, Paul was sure that God would reveal the need to him. When we earnestly press onward in the Christian race, God will point out to us errors of doctrine or practice (John 16:13; cf. Eph. 1:17).

**16. Attained.** Paul is saying in effect: Discover what has contributed to Christian development in the past and follow the same plan in the future. The method of Christian attainment does not change. Unfortunately there are many who, with rapid strides, begin the Christian way, then grow weary, and do not continue with the same grace that started them on their way. They become dependent on past experience instead of enjoying new victories and making fresh progress. Satisfaction with past attainments leads to

carelessness. Yesterday's conquests will not suffice for today. The Christian must continually advance.

**By the same rule.** Important textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10) for the omission of the words "rule, let us mind the same thing." The shorter reading may be translated as: "let us walk the same path," that is, let us continue in the upward way. This is part of the loving warning and admonition, which, if accepted, would prevent the entrance of errors that would otherwise disrupt the Philippian church.

**17. Be followers.** The clause may be literally translated, "be ye unitedly imitators of me." Paul has been counselling his converts about their mental counseling his converts about their mental attitudes, and now presents his own life as an example that they may well emulate. He knew that he had followed God's will in turning away from the past and reaching out for the things that were yet before him. He knew that it was right to continue to press on with zeal and not abandon the means of growth that had contributed so much to his Christian life. Therefore, he felt perfectly free to encourage his Philippian friends to follow his example. He was in no wise trying to take their attention from Christ and turn it to himself, but rather to lead them to Christ through his own Christ-like life (cf. 1 Cor. 4:16; 1 Thess. 1:6).

**Mark.** Gr. *skopeō* (see on ch. 2:4).

**Them which walk so.** While it is true that Christ is the only One whose example can be followed in all things, the experiences of others can serve as an encouragement or as a deterrent to us. There were those in the church who were endeavoring to live in the way Paul had described, renouncing all confidence in the flesh and aiming to win the prize. The exhortation here is to observe with a view to imitating those who so lived. Such imitation brings inspiration and involves no adoration (cf. John 8:39). The examples of godly men and women can inspire us to a closer walk with God (cf. 1 Cor. 4:16; Ed 146).

**Us.** That is, Paul, Timothy, Epaphroditus, and other Christian workers known to the Philippians.

**Ensamble.** Gr. *tupos* (see on Rom. 5:14), from which we get our word "type."

**18. Many walk.** "Walk" is used here and in v. 17 in a figurative sense, referring to conduct. The "many" whose conduct is described here and in v. 19 have been variously identified as (1) the Judaizers (see on v. 2); (2) professing, but backslidden, Christians (cf. Rom. 16:17, 18); (3) apostates, to whose influence the believers were dangerously exposed.

**Told you often.** During the time of Paul's first visit to Philippi (Acts 16:12), or possible later visits, or by letters he had written.

**Weeping.** This expression of deep emotion implies that Paul's concern was over apostate Christians rather than heathen reprobates. His love for such backsliders moved him to tears (cf. Luke 19:41).

**Enemies of the cross.** If these persons had been open and avowed enemies of the cross, or had they denied that Christ had died to make an atonement for sin, they would not be so dangerous to the church. But it appears that they professed to be followers of the Saviour, while their lives showed that they were strangers to the power of the gospel. Their minds were on earthly things (v. 19), and "the friendship of the world is enmity with God" (James 4:4). An immoral life cannot be other than enmity to the cross, for Christ died to make us holy.

**19. Whose end.** That is, the whole trend of such “enemies of the cross” was toward their own final destruction.

**Destruction.** Gr. *apōleia* (see on John 17:12), often used for loss of eternal life.

**Whose God is their belly.** That is, their sensual appetites dominate their lives. Such people boast of their liberty and pervert it into license (cf. Rom. 16:18; 2 Peter 2:12, 13, 19). They live, not to the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31), but for self-indulgence and sensual gratification.

**Shame.** Their boasted liberty turns out to be the source of disgraceful shame.

**Who mind earthly things.** They take thought of, or consider, earthly things rather than spiritual things. This is one of the characteristics of enmity to the cross. Pleasure, gain, honor, have captured the attention of many, preventing spiritual growth and causing them to be enemies of the cross of Christ.

**20. For.** Paul now contrasts the true Christian’s mind with that of the worldlings mentioned in vs. 18, 19.

**Conversation.** Gr. *politeuma*, “commonwealth,” or “citizenship” (cf. on ch. 1:27). The KJV translation is based on the old meaning of the word “conversation”—one’s course of conduct, or behavior.

**Is.** Paul stresses the fact that the Christian’s citizenship is already in heaven, even though he must presently live on earth (cf. Eph. 2:19; Col. 3:3; 1 John 3:2).

**Heaven.** The Christian needs a constant awareness of the fact that he is a citizen of heaven. Attachment to one’s country leads him to be loyal to it. Wherever he may be living he will conduct himself in a way that will honor the good name of his country. Keeping in mind the kind of life we expect to live in heaven, serves to guide us in our life on earth. The purity, humility, gentleness, and love we anticipate experiencing in the life to come may be demonstrated here below. Our actions should disclose that we are citizens of heaven. Our association with others should make heaven attractive to them.

**From whence.** That is, from heaven.

**Look for.** Gr. *apekdechomai* (see on Rom. 8:19), which expresses eager expectation on the part of those who wait. *Apekdechomai* is often used in connection with the blessed hope of Christ’s return (cf. Rom. 8:19, 23, 25; Gal. 5:5; Heb. 9:28). Those who eagerly await His coming will desire to prepare for that event (cf. on 1 John 1:3). They will feel that earthly affairs are of little importance, since the scenes of this earth will soon close. They will live above the world, constantly desiring the Lord’s appearing.

**The Saviour.** Literally, “a savior.”

**Lord Jesus Christ.** See on ch. 2:5.

**21. Change.** Gr. *metaschēmatizō*, “to change the form of,” “to transform” (see on 1 Cor. 4:6; cf. 2 Cor. 11:13–15), from *meta*, “after,” and *schēma*, “form” (see on Phil. 2:8). *Metaschēmatizō* implies that there will be a radical change in the bodies of those who are redeemed, though the original identity will be preserved (see on 1 Cor. 15:35–50).

**Our vile body.** Literally, “the body of our humiliation,” thus described in contrast with the glorious body the saints will possess in the world to come.

**May be fashioned.** Or, “may come to have the same form as another,” “become conformed to.” In v. 10 Paul shows that the life of the Christian must be made

conformable to that of Christ. He now indicates that the body also is ultimately to be conformed to that of Christ.

***His glorious body.*** Literally, “the body of His glory,” that is, the body in which Christ dwells, now that He is glorified, which may be compared with the “spiritual body” of resurrected saints (see on Luke 24:39; 1 Cor. 15:42–49; see John 20:17, 25, 27; DA 829). The redeemed are not only to possess Christ’s character but also to be clothed in an immortal body similar to that possessed by Jesus since His resurrection (see on 1 Cor. 15:51–53). This transformation completes the redemptive work on which Paul’s heart is set. The Christian is completely conformed to the likeness of his Master.

***Working.*** Gr. *energeia*, “energy,” here, supernatural power (cf. on ch. 2:13).

***He is able.*** The guarantee of Christ’s ability to transform our lowly bodies into the likeness of His glorified body resides in His power over all creation.

***Subdue.*** Gr. *hupotassō* (see on 1 Cor. 15:27).

***All things.*** See on 1 Cor. 15:27, 28. The transformation of human bodies and characters is only one manifestation of the sovereign power of Christ. His total work embraces the subjection of all phases of creation to the divine rulership.

#### ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1–21 CH 592; TM 221

4–6 SR 311

5, 6 AA 112

6 AA 190; SC 29

7, 8 COL 121, 395; Ed 68; SL 86

8 DA 273; MB 91; 1T 496; 2T 49; 3T 413; 5T 307; 9T 44

8–10 AA 128; Ed 192

8–14 SR 311

9 AA 314; TM 160

10 DA 209; 3T 27

10–14 SL 86

12 AA 562; GW 143; 1T 340; 5T 223

12–14 LS 303; 8T 18

13 SR 311

13, 14 AA 483; GC 470; GW 58; MB 91; MH 516; ML 369; 8T 64

14 FE 235; GW 463; ML 313; 2T 235, 483; 5T 486, 488, 548; 9T 287

19 CH 39

20 EW 30, 108; FE 478, 481; ML 277; MYP 84; PP 87; 2T 145, 317, 338; 5T 111, 367

20, 21 EW 111

21 DA 23; EW 31; GC 399; 1T 36; 2T 411

#### CHAPTER 4

1 *From particular admonitions 4 he proceedeth to general exhortations, 10 shewing how he rejoiced at their liberality towards him lying in prison, not so much for the supply of his own wants, as for the grace of God in them. 19 And so he concludeth with prayer and salutations.*

**1. *Therefore.*** Chapter divisions did not appear in Paul’s original writing, and there is no separation between ch. 3:21 and this verse. The apostle draws an exhortatory conclusion from ch. 3:20, 21, and admonishes firmness in the faith.

**Brethren dearly beloved.** The apostle seems scarcely able to find words adequate to express his love for the Philippians. He heaps together terms of affection, dwelling especially on the word “beloved.” He tells them of his longing to see them, repeating the sentiments of ch. 1:8.

**Joy.** The Philippian believers were the objects or the causes of the apostle’s joy. Paul uses the same words in speaking of the Thessalonians (1 Thess. 2:19).

**Crown.** Gr. *stephanos*, “a victor’s chaplet,” not a royal diadem (see on Matt. 27:29; Rev. 12:13). The Philippians were Paul’s crown of victory, showing that the apostle had not run in vain (Phil. 2:16).

**Stand fast.** Gr. *stēkō* (see on ch. 1:27). In view of the glorious prospect painted in ch. 3:20, 21, Paul encourages the Philippians to be steadfast. He bids them to be worthy of their heavenly citizenship.

**In the Lord.** A favorite expression of Paul, who uses it approximately 40 times (Rom. 16:2, 8, 11–13, 22; etc.). See on Rom. 8:1 for the equivalent phrase “in Christ Jesus.”

**2. Beseech.** Gr. *parakaleō*, “to exhort” (see on Matt. 5:4). The word is repeated to show that Paul exhorts each of the two church members separately, and may imply that both were at fault. But he makes no distinction as to who is right or who is wrong in this case. Today, in cases where church members are at variance, each should seek reconciliation with the other, without waiting for the other to take the initiative (see on Matt. 18:15).

**Euodias.** Rather, “Euodia,” meaning “prosperous journey.” Both Euodia and Syntyche are feminine Greek names. For the prominence of women in the Macedonian church see on Acts 16:13; 17:4, 12.

**Syntyche.** Gr. *Suntuchē*, from *suntungchanō*, “to meet with,” hence meaning, perhaps, “pleasant acquaintance.”

**Of the same mind.** It appears that there was a difference of opinion between Euodia and Syntyche, but we are not informed as to the cause of the contention. It may not have been an important matter so far as the church as a whole was concerned, but even a small problem in a peaceful and orderly community becomes disturbing to the group. So Paul applies the admonition given earlier in the letter (see on ch. 2:2). Again the idea of “in the Lord” is introduced. If each were like-minded with Christ, each would be in harmony with the other. Spiritual union with Christ is the remedy for the church’s ills.

**3. And.** Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the reading “yea.”

**I intreat.** Gr. *erōtaō*, “to ask,” “to enquire of,” but often used in the NT with the meaning “to beseech” (cf. Matt. 15:23; Mark 7:26; Luke 7:3; etc.).

**True yokefellow.** Gr. *gnēsios suzugos*, literally, “genuine yoked-together [one].” Some commentators take this to be an anonymous reference to one of Paul’s helpers, and have attempted various identifications of this helper. Others see *suzugos* as a proper masculine name, which they transliterate Syzygus. They believe that Paul is making a play on the meaning of the name, and is saying, “Syzygus, rightly named [*gnēsios*] yokefellow.” This interpretation receives support from Scripture and classical literature, where play upon proper names is fairly common (cf. Onesiphorus, 2 Tim. 1:16; Onesimus, Philemon 10).

**Help.** Literally, “take hold together with,” that is, assist. Paul desired him to help the women to be reconciled.

**Laboured.** Gr. *sunathleō* (see on ch. 1:27). The word paints a graphic picture of the vigorous help given to Paul by these faithful women who were now disagreeing. Few things do so much harm to the Christian cause as bickerings among its members.

**Clement.** Gr. *Klēmēs*, said to mean “mild.” There is no reasonable support for identifying this person with the famous Clement, bishop of Rome (c. A.D. 90–99). He appears rather to have been an active though humble member of the Philippian church. The Greek construction favors connecting him with “those women” who helped Paul, rather than making him a partner with the “yokefellow” in the work of peacemaking.

**Fellowlabourers.** Or, “companions in labor” (cf. ch. 2:25). The Philippians were good missionary workers, and provided Paul with many colleagues in his evangelistic work.

**Book of life.** Anciently, free cities had a roll book containing the names of all those having the right of citizenship (cf. on Isa. 4:3; Eze. 13:9). Here the apostle is referring to a heavenly register in which are written the names of those whose citizenship is in heaven (see on Ex. 32:32; Dan. 7:10; 12:1; Luke 10:20; Rev. 3:5). In this book will be found the names of Paul’s other fellow laborers who are not individually mentioned in the epistle.

**4. Rejoice.** See on ch. 3:1. Paul never tires of repeating that holy joy is one of the chief duties and privileges of the Christian.

**Always.** The Lord is always the same (see on Mal. 3:6; Heb. 13:8; James 1:17). His love, His consideration, His power, are the same in times of affliction as in times of prosperity. Christ’s ability to give peace to the heart does not depend on external circumstances; so the heart that is centered on Him may constantly rejoice.

**Again I say.** Rather, “Again I will say.” The apostle repeats his exhortation, as if to forestall all objections about the impracticability of rejoicing amid unfavorable circumstances.

**5. Moderation.** Gr. *epieikēs*, “yielding,” “gentle,” “kind,” here used as a noun meaning “the spirit of yielding,” “gentleness,” “kindness,” hence, “forbearance,” the opposite of a spirit of contention and self-seeking. The related word, *epieikeia*, is translated “gentleness” in 2 Cor. 10:1.

**Unto all men.** The Christian’s forbearance is to be shown not only to fellow members but also to nonbelievers.

**The Lord is at hand.** Or, “The Lord is near.” The expression may be compared with *Maran-atha* (see on 1 Cor. 16:22). The thought of the Lord’s nearness seems to have been a Christian watchword, and probably included the realization of His constant presence in daily life as well as the prospect of the second advent. See Additional Note on Rom. 13.

**6. Be careful.** Gr. *merimnaō*, “to be anxious” (see on Matt. 6:25). “Careful” formerly meant “full of care.” Paul’s admonition prohibits the painful anxiety that is inevitable in those who are dependent on themselves in the midst of life’s difficulties. It is possible to sink below this anxiety in mere levity and thoughtlessness or to rise above it by “casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you” (1 Peter 5:7). The thought of the nearness



of the coming of the Lord should help us to keep free from worldly anxieties, and to be forbearing in our relations with others. See on Matt. 6:33, 34; 1 Peter 5:7.

**Nothing.** This removes all excuse for unbelieving anxiety. There is nothing that in any way concerns the peace of the Christian that is too small for God to notice, just as there is nothing too great for Him to care for. He knows what we need. He wants us to have everything that is for our good. Then why should we be burdened with cares which may be laid on Him?

**But.** The apostle now shows *why* the Christian need not be worried over the affairs of this life: through prayer, he may discuss all his needs with God.

**Every thing.** This is in positive contrast to the “nothing” in the previous phrase.

**Prayer and supplication.** The two words “prayer” and “supplication” also occur together in Eph. 6:18; 1 Tim. 2:1; 5:5. It appears that “prayer” is used as a general word, covering the idea of prayer in its widest meaning. “Supplication” seems to refer to prayer for some particular object or need (see on Phil. 1:4).

**Thanksgiving.** “Thanksgiving” is a necessary accompaniment of prayer, and ought never to be absent from our devotions. It helps to remind us of past mercies and prepares us to receive further blessings. Paul himself sets an example of constant thankfulness (see on ch. 1:3).

**Requests.** We do not bring our requests to God simply to inform Him concerning our needs. He knows our necessities before we ask (see on Matt. 6:8; see GC 525).

**7. Peace of God.** Doubtless meaning the peace that comes from God, or the peace that God bestows. This is not the same as having peace *with* God (Rom. 5:1), but results from enjoying that experience. Paul makes clear that such peace will be given him who lives a prayer-filled life (Phil. 4:6). It may not be possible for the Christian always to be at peace with all men (Heb. 12:14; see on Rom. 12:18), but failure to achieve that condition need not interfere with his receiving the peace of God in his heart. Such peace is grounded on faith in God and a personal knowledge of His power and care. It flows from a sense of His abiding presence, and produces childlike confidence and trustful love. See on John 14:27; Rom. 1:7; 5:1; Col. 3:15; 2 Thess. 3:16.

**Passeth.** Gr. *huperechō*, “to excel,” “to be superior,” “to surpass.”

**Understanding.** Gr. *nous*, capable of several shades of meaning: (1) “comprehensive faculty,” “understanding,” “mind”; (2) “reason”; (3) “power of judgment”; (4) “mode of thinking,” hence, “thoughts,” “feelings.” In the NT *nous* occurs 24 times, and is translated “mind” 17 times, and “understanding” 7 times. Here, Paul’s meaning may be either (1) the peace of God surpasses every human reason in its ability to overcome anxiety; or (2) God’s peace surpasses our highest possible imaginations. The second meaning seems the more likely, since it accords with Paul’s habit of being caught up with the glory of his topic and of using superlatives in an attempt to express what is beyond human expression (cf. Eph. 3:20). None but those who know this peace by experience can have satisfactory insight into its meaning.

**Shall keep.** Rather, “shall guard.” God’s peace, like a sentinel, patrols before the heart and mind to guard the affections and thoughts from anxiety.

**Hearts.** The NT uses the word “heart” to describe the center of thought, desire, feeling, and passion (see on Matt. 5:8, 28; 12:34; Rom. 1:21).

**Minds.** Gr. *noēmata*, “thoughts,” “purposes,” such as proceed from the heart.

**Through Christ Jesus.** Rather, “in Christ Jesus,” meaning either, the peace of God keeps the believer in union with Christ; or, those who are “in Christ Jesus” will be guarded by the peace of God. For Paul’s usage of the expression “in Christ” compare Phil. 1:1; 2:1; see on Rom. 8:1.

**8. Finally.** See on ch. 3:1. Here Paul sums up, as it were, his counsel to the Philippian church.

**True.** This should not be limited to mere veracity. The scriptural concept of truth is derived from an understanding of the nature of God and Christ, who are the authors of all that is true. In this light, “whatsoever things are true” refers to all that is morally and spiritually sound, all that is compatible with allegiance to Him who is “the truth” (John 14:6).

**Honest.** Gr. *semna*, “reverend,” “venerable,” that is, worthy of veneration or respect.

**Just.** Gr. *dikaia*, singular *dikaios* (see on Matt. 1:19), often translated “righteous,” in which sense it would refer to things that are chaste, modest, innocent, blameless, above reproach.

**Pure.** Although sexual purity is included under this term, the reference should not be limited to that sphere, for other forms of purity should also be found in the Christian’s mind. For example, he should cherish purity of ambition, desire, and motive (see on Matt. 5:8).

**Lovely.** That is, friendly, pleasing, lovable.

**Of good report.** Gr. *euphēma*, literally, “well sounding,” that is, reputable, commendable, those things that harmonize with Christian ideals.

**If there be any.** Compare on ch. 2:1. Paul now covers all possible desirable qualities, so that no virtue is omitted.

**Virtue.** Gr. *aretē*, used with a wide variety of meanings, but here referring partly to “moral excellence.”

**Praise.** Gr. *epainos*, “approbation,” “praise.”

**Think on.** Gr. *logizomai* (see on ch. 3:13), that is, take account of all these virtues, let them play an active part in your lives. If we will live right, we must think right. The development of Christian character requires right thinking. Therefore Paul outlines a constructive program of mental activity. Instead of thinking about differences with others, or being anxious about daily needs, we should exercise our minds on positive virtues.

**9. Those things.** Paul turns from contemplation to practice, and refers the Philippians to his own life, where the virtues of v. 8 were exemplified while he lived among them.

**Learned.** This, with “received,” may refer to what the believers gained from Paul’s formal instruction.

**Heard, and seen.** Just as important as formal teaching is the life of the teacher. Paul realized this, and, by God’s grace, was able so to live that he could confidently refer his readers to his own example.

**Do.** Gr. *prassō*, “to practice,” “to exercise.” The apostle wanted to stimulate his converts into actual exercise of the virtues he himself had demonstrated to them.

**God of peace.** That is, the God who is the author and bestower of peace. God dwells with those who think holy thoughts and live holy lives, and with Him comes the peace which is His (see on Phil. 4:7; Rom. 15:33).

**10. I rejoiced.** Or, “I rejoice,” if Paul is here using the epistolary aorist (see on ch. 2:25). Paul practices the precepts he urges on the church (ch. 4:4); he rejoices, as he commands them to do.

**Your care of me.** Paul visualized the thoughtful planning by which the Philippians had sought to lighten his trials, first when he was at Corinth (v. 15) and more recently at Rome (chs. 2:25; 4:18).

**Flourished.** Gr. *anathallō*, “to shoot up,” “grow green again,” used of a tree putting forth fresh shoots after its winter sleep. The idea is that of renewed activity after inactivity. Paul is in no way accusing his friends of neglect, for he recognizes that it had not been possible for them to help him earlier.

**Careful.** Or, “were being thoughtful.” Paul realizes that although circumstances had prevented the church from rendering practical help, its members had continually desired to ameliorate his condition.

**Lacked opportunity.** The hindrances are not specified, but it appears to have been temporarily impossible for the Philippians to send their gifts to the apostle.

**11. Want.** Gr. *husterēsis* (see on Mark 12:44). The first clause of this verse throws an interesting light on Paul’s mentality. Even though he was suffering imprisonment, he would not employ his privations to arouse sympathy for his situation.

**I have learned.** Or, “I learned.” Paul had accepted the lesson at some time in the past and had continuously been putting it into practice since that time. The instruction may have come with his conversion, for his subsequent reactions under varied circumstances indicate that he believed that all that came to him was by the permission of God (see on Rom. 8:28; 1 Cor. 10:13; 2 Cor. 12:7–9).

**In whatsoever state.** Or, “in what things [circumstances].” Paul places no limit to the conditions under which he can be content. There is no contradiction between this thought and that of pressing on to higher spiritual experience (ch. 3:12–14). If we could see into the future as God does, we would see the necessity of our being led in certain ways (DA 224, 225).

**Content.** Gr. *autarkēs*, “sufficient for oneself,” “independent of external circumstances.” Paul is self-sufficient through the power of the new life given him by Christ, for it is not Paul who deals with circumstances, but Christ who lives in him (see on Gal. 2:20; Phil. 4:13; 2 Tim. 1:12).

**12. Abased.** Or, “brought low,” “humbled.” Paul is speaking of physical needs, not spiritual deficiencies.

**How to abound.** Paul’s disposition was so stabilized that he was unaffected by the ebb and flow of circumstances.

**Every where.** Literally, “in everything,” that is, under all possible circumstances.

**Instructed.** Gr. *mueō*, “to initiate into the mysteries,” that is, to instruct a person in the secret rites of the so-called mystery religions (see Vol. VI, p. 91). The word may be translated “to learn the secret of” (RSV).

**To be full.** Gr. *chortazō*, “to feed,” used of fattening animals, but also used of satisfying man’s hunger.

**Hungry.** See on 2 Cor. 11:27.

**To suffer need.** Gr. *hustereō*, “to lack” (see on Rom. 3:23).

**13. I can do.** Gr. *ischuō*, “to have power,” “to be able.”

**Through Christ.** Rather, “in Christ.” Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the omission of the name “Christ,” but “Christ” is implied in Paul’s language (see following comment).

**Which strengtheneth.** Paul recognized Christ as the source of all his own power, hence there is no element of boasting here. All that needed to be done could be done by Christ-given strength. When the divine commands are faithfully followed, the Lord makes Himself responsible for the success of the work undertaken by the Christian (COL 333, 363; 8T 16). In Christ there is strength to fulfill duty, power to resist temptation, vigor to endure affliction, patience to suffer without complaint. In Him there is grace for daily growth, courage for multiplied battles, energy for devoted service.

**14. Ye have well done.** Even though Paul would in no case complain of his lot, and though he could have done without the gifts of the Philippians, he commends them for their generous interest in him. The apostle is not ungrateful. He recognizes that their contributions are a blessing both to him and to them.

**Communicate.** Gr. *sugkoinōneō*, “to share with,” “to have fellowship with,” from *sun*, “with,” *koinōneō*, “to become a sharer” (see on Rom. 12:13). Paul valued the sympathy, the fellow feeling, of his friends at Philippi even more than the gifts they had sent. To him the gifts were precious as proof of their love.

**15. In the beginning.** This is doubtless a reference to the time when Paul first ministered in Philippi (Acts 16:12–40).

**When I departed.** That is, when Paul was hurriedly sent away from Berea (see on Acts 17:13, 14).

**No church communicated.** For comment on “communicated” see on v. 14. Paul normally eschewed charity, preferring to earn his own livelihood (see on Acts 18:3; 20:34; 1 Cor. 4:12). But at Corinth he consented to receive gifts from Macedonian brethren (2 Cor. 11:9). His language to the Thessalonian church (1 Thess. 2:9; 2 Thess. 3:8) precludes any idea that part of this contribution might have been from Thessalonica. In this epistle we learn that the gifts came from no other church than Philippi. It seems certain, therefore, that the apostle held his Philippian friends in special esteem.

**Giving and receiving.** The Philippians did the giving, and Paul, the receiving.

**16. Even in Thessalonica.** Paul now recalls that the Philippians had helped him even before he was forced to flee from Macedonia. Their help began to flow shortly after he left Philippi, while he was still in the next city of Thessalonica.

**Once and again.** Literally, “both once and twice.” Their generosity was not fleeting, for they continued to send help to their beloved apostle.

**Unto my necessity.** Or, “with reference to my need.”

**17. I desire.** Literally, “I am seeking for.” Paul was not soliciting further gifts, neither was he scorning the previous kindness of the Philippians. He was concerned with higher, spiritual issues.

**Fruit.** Literally, “the fruit.” Paul eagerly desired to see the Philippians growing in Christian grace and bearing still more fruits of the Spirit.

**May abound.** Rather, “increaseth,” or “aboundeth.”

**Account.** Paul sees the Christians’ good deeds as mounting up to enrich their lives in this present life, and to stand out brightly in the record when the judgment reveals the caliber of the lives they have led.

**18. I have.** The Greek verb may be rendered, “I have to the full” (see on Matt. 6:2).

**Abound.** See on v. 12.

**I am full.** Rather, “I am filled,” with Paul’s thought turned toward those whose kindness made this statement true.

**Epaphroditus.** See on ch. 2:25.

**Odour of a sweet smell.** Similar expressions in the OT were used to describe the acceptable sacrifices that were offered to the Lord (see Gen. 8:21; Lev. 1:9, 13, 17). Here Paul is applying the metaphor to the gifts received from Philippi. Compare on Eph. 5:2.

**Sacrifice.** See on ch. 2:17. Here “sacrifice” further describes the gifts given through Epaphroditus. These presents were a free-will offering, in grateful love to God and man (cf. Heb. 13:16). To do good to others out of a heart of love is to bring to God an acceptable sacrifice.

**Wellpleasing.** Gr. *euarestos*, the word translated “acceptable” in Rom. 12:1.

**19. My God.** Paul had accepted the offering as made, not to himself, but to the God whose minister he was. Now he says in effect, “God will accept your offerings as made to Him. You have supplied my need; He will supply every need of yours.” Whether the need be spiritual or temporal, God will withhold no good thing from the righteous (see Ps. 84:11). For Noah and his family a way of escape from the Flood was provided (Gen. 7:1). Israel was preserved during forty years of desert wandering (Deut. 29:5).

**Supply.** Literally, “fulfill,” that is, God will supply to the full any needs the Christian might have. Elijah in exile was sustained by ravens (1 Kings 17:6). The lives of the three young men were preserved in the fiery furnace (Dan. 3:27). God’s angels serve as ministering spirits to supply the needs of those who shall be heirs of salvation (Heb. 1:14). In the last days, immediately prior to the coming of Christ, when conditions are severe, the bread and water of God’s people will be sure (see on Isa. 33:16). None who serve the Lord need fear that He will leave them uncared for. Those who seek first the kingdom of God will have all things needful added to them (see on Matt. 6:33).

**His riches.** These riches are limitless (Ps. 24:1; 50:10–12; Haggai 2:8), and out of this abundance God is well able bountifully to compensate the Philippians for what they have given to Paul.

**In glory.** Some refer this phrase to the “riches,” as riches that are stored “in glory,” that is, in heaven. Others connect “shall supply” and “in glory,” and imply that the reward will be given in the hereafter. This second view tends to restrict God’s working, whereas the Lord is well able to supply the Christian’s need in this life as well as in that which is to come.

**By Christ Jesus.** Rather, “in Christ Jesus,” or “in personal connection with Christ Jesus.” All God’s kindnesses are given to men through Christ, and can be enjoyed by those who are connected with the Saviour. See on 2 Cor. 1:20; Eph. 2:4–7.

**20. God and our Father.** Or, “God even our Father.” In v. 19 Paul spoke of “my God,” but he now includes the Philippians in the great family, and encourages them to share in the doxology.

**Glory.** For the significance of “glory” see on Rom. 3:23. For comment on the doxology see on Rom. 3:23; Gal. 1:5.

**For ever and ever.** Literally, “unto the ages of the ages” (see on Rev. 14:11).

**21. Salute.** Gr. *aspazomai* (see on Rom. 16:3; 1 Thess. 5:26).

**Every saint.** That is, each saint individually, for Paul wished to greet all of the Philippian Christians. For comment on “saint” see on Rom. 1:6.

**In Christ Jesus.** This phrase may be understood to modify “salute” (cf. Rom. 16:22; 1 Cor. 16:19), or “saint,” as in Phil. 1:1.

**Brethren ... greet you.** Paul calls those who were with him “brethren,” although he had none like-minded with him, except Timothy (ch. 2:20, 21). The names of some of those who were with him at one time or another during his imprisonment may be gathered from the letters to the Colossians (ch. 4:10–15) and Philemon (vs. 23, 1:24). How many of them were with him at this particular time we cannot tell.

**22. All the saints.** This is a reference to the general membership of the church in Rome, as distinct from “the brethren” (v. 21).

**Chiefly.** Rather, “especially.”

**Caesar’s household.** The word “household” (*oikia*) here signifies the domestic staff of the emperor’s retinue (cf. on ch. 1:13). In the time of Nero, during whose rule Paul was imprisoned (see Vol. VI, pp. 83, 84), the number of household servants was doubtless very great. This verse proves that some of the servants, slaves or freedmen, were Christians (AA 463), and were particularly anxious to send greetings to the Philippians. That some of Nero’s servants had become Christians shows that fruitage may be reaped by the gospel workers even in the most unlikely places and under the most discouraging circumstances (AA 465, 466).

**23. The grace of our Lord Jesus.** See on Gal. 6:18.

**With you all.** Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the reading “with your spirit” (cf. Gal. 6:18).

**Amen.** Gr. *amēn* (see on Matt. 5:18). Textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10) for the omission of this word.

The postscript following v. 23 was not a part of the original manuscript.

### ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1 MH 167; ML 177

3 GC 481

4 AA 484; CT 233; GC 477; MB 35; ML 251, 334; MM 213; 2T 593; 8T 130; WM 91

5 CD 206; ML 146

6 SC 97

6, 7 MH 199

6–8 AA 484; CH 630

7 FE 208; MB 15; MYP 73; 1T 32, 159; 2T 263; 3T 371; 6T 320; 7T 44; 8T 34

8 CH 630; Ed 235; ML 5; MM 127; PP 460; TM 503, 505; 1T 574, 711; 2T 311, 317, 437; 4T 135; 5T 55

- 13 COL 82; Ed 69, 256; Ev 98; GW 128; MH 516; 3T 45, 84; 4T 259, 320; 5T 484; 7T 39,  
298; 9T 152
- 15–18 AA 479
- 16 AA 348
- 19 AA 484; CH 17; COL 149; MB 24; MH 48, 200; ML 14; SR 50; 2T 72; 6T 257
- 22 AA 463, 464; MB 34; 5T 182
- 23 AA 484

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<sup>3</sup>Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (Php 3:1). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.