

Philippians

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Author: Paul the Apostle · Written: c. AD 61-62 · Category: Pauline Epistles

Introduction

Philippians is Paul's **letter of joy from prison**, radiating contentment and gladness despite chains, opposition, and uncertainty about the future. Written to his beloved church in Philippi—the first European congregation and a model of partnership in the gospel—the letter overflows with affection, encouragement, and the repeated refrain 'rejoice in the Lord.' Paul transforms his Roman imprisonment into a platform for gospel advance, his potential execution into gain, his circumstances into opportunities for joy. The secret is simple yet profound: **to live is Christ, and to die is gain**.

At the heart of Philippians stands the magnificent **Christ-hymn** (2:5-11), one of Scripture's highest Christological passages. Descending from equality with God to the form of a servant, humbling Himself to death on a cross, then exalted to the highest place with the name above all names—this is the pattern for Christian living. Paul calls believers to have this same mind of Christ, exchanging self-assertion for self-emptying, grasping for giving, privilege for service. The gospel does not merely provide forgiveness; it transforms character, producing the humility that makes genuine community possible.

Philippians contrasts sharply with Galatians and Colossians, where Paul confronts serious error with fierce urgency. Here, false teachers appear (3:2, 18-19), but Paul's primary purpose is not polemical but pastoral—to thank the Philippians for their gift, to update them on his circumstances, and to encourage their continued faithfulness. The letter's tone is warm, personal, conversational. Paul shares his heart—his circumstances, his coworkers, his struggles, his aspirations. He writes as a friend to friends, a spiritual father to beloved children, a fellow soldier to comrades in the gospel fight.

The letter moves through four chapters but resists rigid structure. Chapter 1 focuses on Paul's circumstances and joy that Christ is preached. Chapter 2 presents Christ's humility as the model for believers and introduces Timothy and Epaphroditus. Chapter 3 warns against false teachers and presents Paul's testimony—counting everything as loss for the surpassing worth of knowing Christ. Chapter 4 exhorts to joy, prayer, and contentment, closing with thanks for the Philippians' generous gift. Yet joy, humility, and knowing Christ weave throughout, unifying the letter's diverse contents. Philippians remains the great epistle of **joy in all circumstances**, the manifesto of **contentment through Christ**, and the call to **press on toward the goal** of knowing Him more fully.

Book Outline

- **Greeting and Thanksgiving** (1:1-11) — Paul and Timothy to the Philippian saints, overseers, and deacons. Thanksgiving for their partnership in the gospel from the first day, confidence that God will complete His work in them, prayer that their love may abound with knowledge and discernment.
- **Paul's Circumstances—Chains Advance the Gospel** (1:12-26) — Paul's imprisonment has advanced the gospel—the whole palace guard knows he is in chains for Christ, and most believers are emboldened to preach. Some preach from envy and rivalry, others from goodwill, but Christ is proclaimed and Paul rejoices. He is torn between living (fruitful labor) and dying (gain, being with Christ). He expects to remain for their progress and joy in the faith.
- **Exhortation to Unity and Humility** (1:27-2:4) — Live worthy of the gospel, standing firm in one spirit, striving side by side for the faith, not frightened by opponents. Complete Paul's joy by being of the same mind, same love, full accord. Do nothing from selfish ambition but in humility count others more significant. Look not only to your own interests but to the interests of others.
- **The Christ-Hymn—Mind of Christ** (2:5-11) — Have this mind among yourselves which is in Christ Jesus. Though in the form of God, He did not count equality with God something to grasp but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, born in human likeness. He humbled Himself to death on a cross. Therefore God highly exalted Him, giving Him the name above every name, that at Jesus' name every knee should bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.
- **Work Out Your Salvation** (2:12-18) — As you have always obeyed, work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for God is at work in you to will and to work for His good pleasure. Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God shining as lights in a crooked generation. Paul will rejoice even if poured out as a drink offering.
- **Timothy and Epaphroditus Commended** (2:19-30) — Paul hopes to send Timothy soon—he has no one like him who genuinely cares for the Philippians' welfare. Timothy has served with Paul in the gospel like a son with a father. Paul sends Epaphroditus, his brother, fellow worker, fellow soldier, and your messenger and minister to my need. He nearly died for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete your service to me. Receive him with all joy and honor such men.
- **Warning Against False Teachers** (3:1-3) — Rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things is no trouble and is safe for you. Look out for the dogs, the evildoers, the mutilators of the flesh. We are the circumcision who worship by the Spirit of God, glory in Christ Jesus, and put no confidence in the flesh.

- **Paul's Testimony—All Loss for Christ** (3:4-11) — If anyone has reason for confidence in the flesh, Paul has more—circumcised on the eighth day, of Israel, tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews, a Pharisee, zealous persecutor of the church, blameless under the law. But whatever gain Paul had, he counted as loss for Christ. Indeed, he counts everything as loss for the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus his Lord. For His sake Paul has suffered the loss of all things and counts them as rubbish, in order to gain Christ and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of his own from the law but that which comes through faith in Christ. Paul's goal is to know Christ and the power of His resurrection, the fellowship of His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death, that he may attain the resurrection from the dead.
- **Pressing Toward the Goal** (3:12-16) — Paul has not already obtained this or is already perfect, but he presses on to make it his own because Christ made him His own. Forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, he presses toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let those who are mature think this way. Let us hold true to what we have attained.
- **Citizens of Heaven** (3:17-4:1) — Join in imitating Paul and observe those who walk according to the example you have in us. Many walk as enemies of the cross of Christ—their end is destruction, their god is their belly, they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven, from which we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like His glorious body by the power that enables Him to subject all things to Himself. Therefore stand firm in the Lord.
- **Exhortations to Joy, Prayer, and Right Thinking** (4:2-9) — Euodia and Syntyche —be of the same mind in the Lord. Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Whatever is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, excellent, praiseworthy—think about these things. Practice what you have learned from Paul, and the God of peace will be with you.
- **Contentment and Gratitude for Partnership** (4:10-20) — Paul rejoices greatly that the Philippians' concern for him has blossomed again. Not that he was in need, for he has learned in whatever situation to be content. He knows how to be brought low and abound; in any and every circumstance he has learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. He can do all things through Christ who strengthens him. Yet it was kind of them to share his trouble. No church entered into partnership with Paul in giving and receiving except the Philippians—they sent

him aid in Thessalonica once and again. Not that he seeks the gift, but he seeks the fruit that increases to their credit. He has received full payment and more; he is well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts they sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God. And God will supply every need according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. To our God and Father be glory forever and ever.

- **Final Greetings and Benediction** (4:21-23) — Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brothers with Paul greet you. All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

Key Themes

- **Joy in All Circumstances:** Despite imprisonment, opposition, and potential execution, Paul rejoices and commands 'rejoice in the Lord always' (4:4). This joy is not circumstantial happiness but deep spiritual gladness rooted in Christ. It persists through suffering because it depends not on external conditions but on union with Christ who is our life. Joy appears sixteen times in this brief letter—it is Philippians' signature note.
- **The Mind of Christ—Humility and Self-Emptying:** The Christ-hymn (2:5-11) presents Jesus' descent from divine glory to human humiliation and cross-death, followed by exaltation to universal lordship. This pattern defines Christian character—not grasping equality but giving ourselves in service, not seeking honor but embracing humiliation, not asserting rights but emptying ourselves in love. The mind of Christ transforms relationships from competition to humble service.
- **Partnership in the Gospel:** The Philippians partnered with Paul in the gospel from the first day, supporting him financially when no other church did (4:15-16), sending Epaphroditus to serve him in prison (2:25), and sharing in his sufferings (1:29-30). Gospel partnership is both theological (joint participation in God's saving work) and practical (financial support, prayer, sending workers). It binds believers in common cause regardless of distance.
- **To Live is Christ, To Die is Gain:** Paul's famous motto (1:21) captures total Christ-centeredness. Living means Christ living through Paul, displaying His character, extending His mission, manifesting His presence. Dying means unhindered communion with Christ—gain, not loss. This perspective liberates from fear of death and transforms life's purpose—Christ is both the content and goal of existence.
- **Pressing Toward the Goal:** Paul has not arrived; he presses on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call in Christ (3:13-14). He forgets what lies behind—whether achievements that might foster pride or failures that might produce despair—and strains toward what lies ahead. Christian life is not static but dynamic, not coasting but pursuing, not resting on past experience but pressing toward fuller knowledge of Christ and final resurrection.
- **Knowing Christ and the Power of His Resurrection:** Paul's supreme value is knowing Christ Jesus his Lord (3:8). This knowledge is not merely intellectual but experiential, relational, transformative. It involves knowing the power of Christ's resurrection (experiencing resurrection life now), the fellowship of His sufferings (sharing His cross), and being conformed to His death (dying to self). Everything else is rubbish compared to this surpassing worth.

- **Contentment Learned Through Christ:** Paul has learned the secret of contentment in all circumstances—plenty or hunger, abundance or need (4:11-12). This is not Stoic self-sufficiency but Christ-sufficiency—'I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me' (4:13). Contentment is learned, not natural, cultivated through depending on Christ rather than circumstances. It frees us from anxiety and complaint.
- **Citizens of Heaven Living on Earth:** Believers' citizenship is in heaven, from which we await a Savior who will transform our lowly bodies to be like His glorious body (3:20-21). This heavenly citizenship shapes earthly conduct—we live as aliens and exiles, no longer conformed to this world's values. Our true home, identity, hope, and destiny lie beyond this present age in the consummated kingdom.

Key Verses

Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.

— Philippians 1:6 (The assurance of perseverance. God who began the work of salvation will complete it. Our final salvation depends not on our faithfulness but on His. This grounds confidence—not in ourselves but in the God who finishes what He starts. The 'day of Jesus Christ' is both motivation and certainty—Christ will complete His work in us.)

For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

— Philippians 1:21 (Paul's life motto and the key to his joy. Living is not about self-fulfillment, success, or comfort—it is Christ living through us, Christ displayed in us. Dying is not tragedy but gain—immediate, unhindered fellowship with Christ. This perspective liberates from both fear of death and idolatry of life. Christ is both the content of life and the hope beyond death.)

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

— Philippians 2:5-8 (The Christ-hymn—perhaps the highest Christology and deepest ethics in Scripture. Jesus possessed divine form and equality with God but did not exploit this for His own advantage. Instead He emptied Himself, taking servant form, entering human likeness, humbling Himself to the ultimate humiliation—cross-death. This pattern defines Christian character: not self-promotion but self-giving, not grasping but releasing, not exalting ourselves but humbling ourselves in service.)

Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

— Philippians 2:12-13 (The dynamic of sanctification. We work out our salvation (not work for it—salvation is God's gift) with seriousness and diligence. Yet this is possible only because God is working in us, producing both the desire and the ability to do His will. Human responsibility and divine sovereignty are held together—we work because God works, not instead of God working. Salvation is God's work; sanctification involves our active cooperation with His working.)

Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.

— Philippians 3:8-10 (Paul's testimony of knowing Christ as supreme treasure. Everything he once valued—ancestry, training, zeal, legal righteousness—he counts as garbage compared to knowing Christ. True righteousness comes not from law-keeping but through faith in Christ. Knowing Christ involves experiencing resurrection power, sharing His sufferings, and being conformed to His death. This is not merely forensic but relational and transformative—knowing Christ progressively, deeply, personally.)

Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

— Philippians 3:13-14 (The Christian life as forward motion. Paul has not arrived; he presses on. He forgets what is behind—past achievements might breed pride, past failures might produce despair. He strains toward what is ahead—fuller knowledge of Christ, final resurrection, the prize of God's upward call. This single-minded pursuit defines spiritual maturity. We are not static but dynamic, not coasting but pursuing.)

Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice.

— Philippians 4:4 (The command that epitomizes Philippians—joy is both privilege and duty. The double command emphasizes its importance. This is not circumstantial happiness but joy 'in the Lord'—rooted in union with Christ, not dependent on external conditions. Paul can command it from prison because it flows from relationship with Christ, not from favorable circumstances. The 'always' means in all situations, at all times.)

Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

— Philippians 4:6-7 (The antidote to anxiety. We are anxious for nothing because we pray about everything—specific requests offered with thanksgiving. The result is not always circumstances changing but hearts guarded—the peace of God stands sentry over our hearts and minds. This peace surpasses understanding—it is illogical given Paul's circumstances, unexplainable by human reason, available through Christ alone.)

I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

— Philippians 4:13 (Often quoted, sometimes misapplied. Paul does not promise we can achieve any goal if we try hard enough or have enough faith. The context is contentment in all circumstances (4:11-12)—whether in need or plenty. Christ gives strength not necessarily to change circumstances but to endure them with contentment, not to gain everything but to be satisfied with anything. True strength is Christ-dependence, not self-sufficiency.)

Historical Context

Philippi was a Roman colony in Macedonia, the leading city of the district. Augustus settled veteran soldiers there after the battle of Philippi (42 BC), granting it Roman status and privileges. As a colony, Philippi was a miniature Rome with Latin language, Roman law, and civic pride in Roman citizenship—making Paul's reminder of heavenly citizenship (3:20) particularly pointed.

Paul founded the church on his second missionary journey around AD 49-50 (Acts 16:11-40). Lydia, a dealer in purple goods, was the first convert. Paul cast a demon out of a slave girl, prompting her owners to drag him to the magistrates. Paul and Silas were beaten, imprisoned, and miraculously freed by an earthquake. The jailer and his household believed and were baptized. The church was predominantly Gentile but likely included the Jewish women who met for prayer by the riverside (Acts 16:13).

The Philippian church had a special relationship with Paul. They alone supported him financially during his initial work in Macedonia (4:15-16) and sent gifts multiple times to Thessalonica and Corinth (2 Corinthians 11:9). They sent Epaphroditus to Paul in Rome with a gift and to serve him (2:25; 4:18). When Epaphroditus became seriously ill, the Philippians heard of it and were distressed (2:26-27). This mutual concern reflects deep bonds of affection.

Paul wrote from imprisonment, most likely in Rome around AD 61-62 during the house arrest described in Acts 28. Some scholars suggest Caesarea or Ephesus, but Rome best fits the references to the 'palace guard' (1:13) and 'Caesar's household' (4:22). Paul had been imprisoned for about two years, uncertain whether he would be released or executed. His tone suggests he expected deliverance (1:25-26; 2:24), though he was prepared for martyrdom (1:20-23).

The letter was occasioned by the Philippians' gift delivered by Epaphroditus, Paul's desire to update them on his circumstances, and his need to return Epaphroditus (who had recovered from near-fatal illness) and prepare them for Timothy's visit. False teachers threatened the church (3:2, 18-19), and internal disunity required address (2:1-4; 4:2-3). But primarily, Paul writes to express gratitude, encourage perseverance, and deepen the Philippians' joy in Christ despite suffering.

Literary Style

Philippians is Paul's most personal and warmest letter, lacking the theological intensity of Romans or the polemical edge of Galatians. The tone is conversational, affectionate, even intimate. Paul shares his heart—his circumstances, his feelings, his coworkers, his values. Terms of endearment abound—'my beloved,' 'my joy and crown,' 'my true companion.' This is a friend writing to friends, a spiritual father to beloved children.

The structure is loose and informal. Paul moves between topics without rigid transitions—circumstances, coworkers, false teachers, contentment, gratitude for their gift. Some scholars see two or three letters combined, but the unified themes of joy, humility, and knowing Christ suggest single authorship with spontaneous rather than systematic development.

Joy vocabulary dominates—'joy,' 'rejoice,' 'glad' appear sixteen times in four chapters. Paul rejoices that Christ is preached (1:18), will rejoice even if poured out as a drink offering (2:17), commands 'rejoice in the Lord always' (4:4), and rejoices at the Philippians' renewed concern (4:10). This joy-theme unifies diverse material—joy is possible in all circumstances when Christ is central.

The **Christ-hymn** (2:5-11) is Philippians' theological and literary zenith. Its poetic structure, elevated language, and creedal content suggest it may be an early Christian hymn Paul quotes and applies. The pattern of humiliation-exaltation parallels other Christological passages (Colossians 1:15-20; 1 Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 1:1-4). Whether Paul authored or adapted it, he uses it ethically—'have this mind among yourselves.'

Autobiography features prominently. Paul describes his circumstances (1:12-26), his credentials (3:4-6), his conversion and values (3:7-11), his pursuit of knowing Christ (3:12-14), his contentment (4:11-13). These are not self-focused but pastoral—Paul models the attitudes and values he commends. His life illustrates his teaching.

Imperative verbs structure the ethical sections—rejoice, stand firm, work out your salvation, do all things without grumbling, hold fast, press on, think about these things. Commands are not harsh but pastoral, flowing from indicatives of gospel truth. Paul commands what grace enables.

The letter exhibits rhetorical **repetition and emphasis**. 'Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, rejoice' (4:4). 'Finally, my brethren' appears at 3:1 and 4:8, structuring the closing sections. Paul 'counts' things as loss/rubbish multiple times (3:7-8). This repetition hammers home priorities and values.

Transition formulas mark major sections—'Only let your manner of life be worthy' (1:27), 'Therefore' (2:12), 'Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord' (3:1), 'Therefore, my

brothers, whom I love and long for' (4:1). These provide structure while maintaining conversational flow.

Theological Significance

Philippians presents the **highest Christology** in perhaps the most compact space. The Christ-hymn (2:5-11) affirms Christ's pre-existence in the form of God, equality with God, incarnation (taking human form), humiliation (servant-form, cross-death), exaltation (highest place, name above all names), and universal lordship (every knee bows, every tongue confesses). This is no adoptionist low Christology but full affirmation of Christ's deity and humanity, His voluntary descent and consequent exaltation.

The pattern of **humiliation-exaltation** is not merely Christological but paradigmatic for Christian living. 'Have this mind among yourselves' (2:5) makes Christ's self-emptying the model for believers. We are to have the same attitude—not grasping privilege but releasing it, not asserting rights but serving others, not seeking honor but embracing humiliation. The gospel transforms character, producing humility modeled on Christ's own pattern.

Knowing Christ is Paul's supreme value and life goal (3:8-11). This knowledge is not intellectual mastery of Christological dogma but experiential, relational intimacy. It involves knowing the power of His resurrection (experiencing resurrection life), the fellowship of His sufferings (sharing His cross), and being conformed to His death (dying to self). Justification is forensic (righteousness from God by faith, 3:9), but knowing Christ is relational and progressive—Paul has not attained but presses on (3:12-14).

The doctrine of **perseverance** appears in God's commitment to complete what He begins (1:6). Final salvation is certain not because of believers' faithfulness but because of God's faithfulness. He who began the good work will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. This grounds assurance—not in our holding to Christ but in His holding us.

Sanctification involves both divine sovereignty and human responsibility held in tension: 'Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you both to will and to work for his good pleasure' (2:12-13). We work because God works, not instead of God working. The imperative rests on the indicative. Human effort is real but derivative, flowing from and enabled by God's prior and ongoing work.

Justification by faith appears in Paul's testimony—not having a righteousness of his own from the law but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith (3:9). This echoes Romans and Galatians—righteousness is not achieved through law-keeping but received through faith. Paul counted all his legal righteousness as loss/rubbish compared to knowing Christ.

The letter teaches **heavenly citizenship** (3:20)—our commonwealth is in heaven, from which we await a Savior who will transform our lowly bodies to be like His glorious body. This shapes earthly conduct. We are aliens and exiles, not fully at home in this world, not conforming to its values, awaiting transformation and consummation. Present suffering is relativized by future glory.

Eschatology appears in the 'day of Christ Jesus' (1:6, 10; 2:16)—the day of His return, final judgment, resurrection, and glorification. This 'day' motivates present godliness (1:10), grounds assurance of perseverance (1:6), and provides hope beyond suffering. Christ will transform our lowly bodies to be like His glorious body (3:21)—bodily resurrection, not disembodied eternity.

The letter presents **practical theology**—doctrine applied to daily life. The Christ-hymn leads to 'Do all things without grumbling' (2:5-14). Knowing Christ as supreme treasure means counting worldly values as rubbish (3:7-9). Heavenly citizenship transforms how we handle earthly relationships (3:20-4:1). Theology is never abstract but always aims at transformed living.

Christ in Philippians

Christ is **central to every aspect** of Philippians. Paul's living is Christ living through him; his dying is gain because it means unhindered fellowship with Christ (1:21). To depart and be with Christ is far better than remaining in the flesh (1:23). Whether by life or death, Paul aims that Christ will be magnified in his body (1:20). The gospel is the gospel **of Christ** (1:27). Believers strive side by side for **the faith of the gospel** centered in Christ.

The **Christ-hymn** (2:5-11) presents the pattern of Christ's humiliation and exaltation. Though in the form of God and equal with God, He emptied Himself, took the form of a servant, was born in human likeness. He humbled Himself to death on a cross. Therefore God highly exalted Him, giving Him the name above every name. At Jesus' name every knee will bow and every tongue confess that **Jesus Christ is Lord** to the glory of God the Father. This is the gospel's heart—incarnation, humiliation, crucifixion, exaltation, universal lordship.

Believers work out their salvation **in Christ Jesus** (2:12-13), for God works in them. They shine as lights in a crooked generation, holding fast the word of life, so Paul's labor will not be in vain **in the day of Christ** (2:16). Timothy is Paul's son in service **of the gospel of Christ** (2:22). Epaphroditus risked his life **for the work of Christ** (2:30).

True circumcision is spiritual—those who worship by the Spirit of God and **glory in Christ Jesus** (3:3). Paul counts everything as loss for the surpassing worth of **knowing Christ Jesus his Lord** (3:8). He has suffered the loss of all things, counting them as rubbish, that he may **gain Christ and be found in him** (3:8-9). His righteousness is not from law but through **faith in Christ**—the righteousness from God that depends on faith (3:9).

Paul's goal is to **know Christ** and the power of His resurrection, the fellowship of His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death, that he may attain the resurrection from the dead (3:10-11). He presses toward the goal for the prize of the upward call **of God in Christ Jesus** (3:14). Believers await a Savior from heaven, **the Lord Jesus Christ**, who will transform our lowly bodies to be like His glorious body (3:20-21).

Believers are to rejoice **in the Lord** always (4:4). The peace of God guards hearts and minds **in Christ Jesus** (4:7). Believers can do all things **through Christ who strengthens** them (4:13). God supplies every need according to His riches in glory **in Christ Jesus** (4:19). Grace comes from **the Lord Jesus Christ** (4:23). Every blessing, every command, every hope, every resource centers in Christ. He is the content of

Paul's life, the goal of his pursuit, the source of his joy, the ground of his hope, the pattern for his character, the object of his devotion.

Relationship to the New Testament

Philippians shares closest affinities with the other **Prison Epistles**—Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon—written during the same Roman imprisonment and carried by the same messengers. Like Ephesians, Philippians emphasizes joy (Ephesians 5:18-20; Philippians 4:4), humility (Ephesians 4:2; Philippians 2:3), and putting others' interests first (Ephesians 5:21; Philippians 2:3-4). The Christ-hymns (Ephesians 4:8-10; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 1:15-20) share similar structure and theology.

Colossians parallels Philippians' high Christology, though Colossians emphasizes Christ's supremacy over cosmic powers while Philippians focuses on Christ's humiliation-exaltation pattern. Both warn against false teaching (Colossians 2:8-23; Philippians 3:2-3) and present Christ as all-sufficient. Both use 'form of God' language (Colossians 1:15; Philippians 2:6) and describe putting off the old self and putting on the new (Colossians 3:5-14; Philippians 3:7-11).

Romans and **Galatians** share Philippians' emphasis on righteousness through faith, not law-keeping (Romans 3:21-28; Galatians 2:16; Philippians 3:9). Paul's testimony in Philippians 3:4-6 parallels his credentials in Romans 11:1 and Galatians 1:13-14. The counting of all as loss for Christ (Philippians 3:7-8) echoes the 'boast only in the cross' of Galatians 6:14. All three letters present justification by faith alone.

The **Corinthian correspondence** parallels Philippians' teaching on financial partnership (2 Corinthians 8-9; Philippians 4:10-20), suffering for the gospel (2 Corinthians 4:7-12; Philippians 1:29-30), and resurrection hope (1 Corinthians 15; Philippians 3:20-21). Paul's statement 'to die is gain' (Philippians 1:21) aligns with 'to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord' (2 Corinthians 5:8).

First Thessalonians shares Philippians' theme of the day of the Lord (1 Thessalonians 5:1-11; Philippians 1:6, 10; 2:16), standing firm (1 Thessalonians 3:8; Philippians 1:27; 4:1), and rejoicing always (1 Thessalonians 5:16; Philippians 4:4). Both emphasize blamelessness at Christ's coming (1 Thessalonians 5:23; Philippians 1:10; 2:15).

The **Pastoral Epistles** share Philippians' concern for godly leaders. Timothy is commended in both Philippians 2:19-24 and 1-2 Timothy. The pattern of humility-exaltation (Philippians 2:5-11) parallels 1 Timothy 3:16's creedal statement about Christ. Both emphasize guarding the deposit of faith (2 Timothy 1:12-14; Philippians 1:27-28).

Hebrews shares Philippians' emphasis on Christ's exaltation and the name above all names (Hebrews 1:3-4; Philippians 2:9-11). Both present Christ's humiliation as the path to glory (Hebrews 12:2; Philippians 2:8-9) and call believers to press on toward

maturity (Hebrews 6:1; Philippians 3:12-14). Both emphasize heavenly citizenship (Hebrews 11:13-16; 13:14; Philippians 3:20).

First Peter echoes Philippians' joy in suffering (1 Peter 4:13; Philippians 1:29; 2:17), Christ as example (1 Peter 2:21-24; Philippians 2:5-11), and humility (1 Peter 5:5-6; Philippians 2:3). Both present suffering as privilege and means of knowing Christ more fully.

James shares Philippians' emphasis on faith producing works (James 2:14-26; Philippians 2:12-13) and right speech—not grumbling (James 5:9; Philippians 2:14). Both emphasize the tongue's power and call for speech that builds up rather than tears down.

Revelation consummates Philippians' vision of every knee bowing and every tongue confessing Jesus as Lord (Revelation 5:13-14; Philippians 2:10-11). The transformation of lowly bodies to glorious bodies (Philippians 3:21) finds fulfillment in the resurrection and new creation (Revelation 21:1-5). Heavenly citizenship (Philippians 3:20) culminates in the new Jerusalem descending from heaven (Revelation 21:2).

Practical Application

Philippians teaches that **joy is possible in any circumstance** when Christ is central. Paul rejoices from prison, facing possible execution, experiencing opposition. This joy is not denial of hardship or superficial optimism but deep gladness rooted in Christ. Joy is commanded ('rejoice in the Lord always'), not merely hoped for—it is both privilege and duty. When circumstances steal our joy, we have forgotten that our life, hope, and treasure are Christ, not comfort or success.

The **mind of Christ** must shape our relationships. Selfish ambition and vain conceit destroy community; humility that counts others more significant builds it (2:3-4). We are not to look only to our own interests but to the interests of others. This is countercultural and counter-intuitive—the world teaches 'look out for number one.' Christ teaches 'empty yourself, serve others, embrace humiliation if necessary.' Gospel community becomes possible only when believers have Christ's self-giving mindset.

Working out salvation (2:12-13) means actively cooperating with God's transforming work. We are not passive in sanctification. Yet we work not to earn salvation but because God is working in us, producing both desire and ability. This kills both laziness ('God will do it all') and self-reliance ('I must do it myself'). We work diligently precisely because God works powerfully. The imperative rests on the indicative.

Knowing Christ must be our supreme value. Everything else—religious credentials, moral achievements, social status, material possessions—is garbage compared to knowing Him (3:7-8). This is not anti-intellectual—Paul was highly educated. But intellectual knowledge about Christ is worthless compared to relational knowledge of Christ. Do we know doctrines or do we know Him? Is our goal theological mastery or intimacy with the living Christ?

Believers must **press on toward the goal** (3:13-14). We have not arrived; we are not yet perfect. The Christian life is not static but dynamic—not coasting but pursuing, not resting on past experience but pressing toward fuller knowledge of Christ. We forget what lies behind—past achievements might breed pride, past failures might produce despair. We strain forward to what lies ahead. Spiritual maturity means recognizing we have not yet attained and pursuing hard after Christ.

Our **citizenship is in heaven** (3:20-21), which transforms how we live on earth. We are aliens and exiles, not fully at home here. This does not mean irresponsibility or escapism but proper priorities—we are not conformed to this world's values because we belong to another kingdom. We await Christ's return, when He will transform our lowly bodies to be like His glorious body. This hope makes present suffering bearable and future glory certain.

Anxiety and prayer are inversely related (4:6-7). We are anxious for nothing because we pray about everything. Specific requests, offered with thanksgiving, replace worry. The result is not necessarily changed circumstances but guarded hearts—the peace of God stands sentry over our hearts and minds. This peace is illogical, unexplainable by human reason, available through Christ alone. When anxiety dominates, we have stopped praying.

Contentment is learned (4:11-12), not natural. Paul learned the secret of being content in plenty or need, abundance or hunger. This contentment is not Stoic self-sufficiency ('I need nothing') but Christ-sufficiency ('I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me,' 4:13). The verse is often misapplied to promise success in any endeavor. The context is contentment in all circumstances—Christ gives strength not necessarily to change situations but to endure them with contentment.

Right thinking shapes right living (4:8). What we dwell on determines who we become. Fill your mind with what is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, excellent, praiseworthy. This is not positive thinking divorced from reality but choosing to focus on what is genuinely good. Our thought-life requires active cultivation—mental laziness allows garbage in; mental discipline focuses on what is worthy.

Gospel partnership involves both theology and practice (1:5; 4:10-20). The Philippians shared in Paul's ministry through financial support, prayer, and sending workers. Partnership is not merely emotional solidarity but practical assistance. Those who benefit from gospel ministry should support those who labor in it. Giving is not one-way charity but participation in the gospel's advance—it produces fruit that increases to the giver's credit (4:17).

Finally, Paul's life motto—'**to live is Christ, to die is gain**' (1:21)—should be ours. Living is not about self-fulfillment, career success, or comfortable retirement. It is Christ living through us, displaying His character, extending His mission. Dying is not tragedy but gain—immediate, unhindered fellowship with Christ. This perspective liberates from fear of death and transforms life's purpose. Can we say with Paul, 'For to me to live is Christ'? If not, what needs to change?

Chapter 1

Greeting

- 1 Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:
 - 2 Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.
-

Thanksgiving and Prayer

- 3 I thank my God upon every remembrance of you,
 - 4 Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy,
 - 5 For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now;
 - 6 Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:
 - 7 Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace.
 - 8 For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ.
 - 9 And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment;
 - 10 That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ;
 - 11 Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.
-

Paul's Chains Advance the Gospel

- 12 But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel;
- 13 So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places;
- 14 And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.
- 15 Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will:

- 16 The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds:
- 17 But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel.
- 18 What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.
- 19 For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,
- 20 According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death.
- 21 For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.
- 22 But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not.
- 23 For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better:
- 24 Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.
- 25 And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith;
- 26 That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again.
-

Standing Firm in the Gospel

- 27 Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;
- 28 And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God.
- 29 For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;
- 30 Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me.
-

Chapter 2

Imitating Christ's Humility

- 1 If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies,
 - 2 Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.
 - 3 Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.
 - 4 Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.
 - 5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:
 - 6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:
 - 7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:
 - 8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.
-

- 9 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:
 - 10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;
 - 11 And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.
-

Working Out Salvation

- 12 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.
- 13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.
- 14 Do all things without murmurings and disputings:
- 15 That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world;
- 16 Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.

17 Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all.

18 For the same cause also do ye joy, and rejoice with me.

Timothy and Epaphroditus

19 But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state.

20 For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state.

21 For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's.

22 But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel.

23 Him therefore I hope to send presently, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me.

24 But I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly.

25 Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labour, and fellowsoldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants.

26 For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick.

27 For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.

28 I sent him therefore the more carefully, that, when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful.

29 Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation:

30 Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me.

Chapter 3

Warning Against False Teachers

- 1 Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe.
 - 2 Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision.
 - 3 For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.
-

Righteousness Through Faith in Christ

- 4 Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more:
 - 5 Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee;
 - 6 Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.
 - 7 But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.
 - 8 Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ,
 - 9 And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:
 - 10 That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;
 - 11 If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.
-

Pressing Toward the Goal

- 12 Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.
- 13 Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,
- 14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

- 15 Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.
- 16 Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.
- 17 Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.
- 18 (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ:
- 19 Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.)
- 20 For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:
- 21 Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.
-

Chapter 4

Exhortations to Stand Firm

- 1 Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved.
 - 2 I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord.
 - 3 And I intreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellowlabourers, whose names are in the book of life.
-

Rejoice in the Lord Always

- 4 Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice.
 - 5 Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.
 - 6 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.
 - 7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.
 - 8 Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.
 - 9 Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.
-

God's Provision

- 10 But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity.
- 11 Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.
- 12 I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.
- 13 I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.
- 14 Notwithstanding ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction.

- 15 Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only.
- 16 For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity.
- 17 Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account.
- 18 But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God.
- 19 But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.
- 20 Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.
-

Final Greetings

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

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