



“Joyfully pressing toward the mark” is one of many titles that could be ascribed to this epistle. Paul clearly had a deep affection for the believers there and his gratitude is stressed throughout. He wrote to encourage and thank them and in this he stresses various concepts of “joy” when looking to keep them motivated rightly. Philippi was a Roman colony established about 100 years before the writing of this letter. Through various circumstances, those that lived in this city were given special privileges, including Roman citizenship, because of those that were “forced” to live there when the area was being established. So, citizenship is also referenced in the letter, only stressing the focus that should be on their Heavenly citizenship (Php. 1:27; 3:20) over and above Roman citizenship.

We find the founding of the church in Philippi mentioned in Acts 16. The two converts that are mentioned are Lydia and the unnamed Philippian jailor. It’s interesting to consider that Paul wrote this epistle while imprisoned in Rome realizing he had spent time in prison while in Philippi. Paul will stress the “benefits” that came with his imprisonment (1:13). His gratefulness and faith-based optimism are throughout these chapters (even though in prison). The latter part deals a great deal with on what they should be thinking and how they should be thinking. A Christ-centered focus will be essential in maintaining a proper perspective throughout life

I. Gratefulness For Growth - 1:1-11

A. Having been used of God to start the church, Paul’s focus is important to watch

1. What was his idea of success? What thrilled his soul to hear of them? - these answers will provide an excellent standard for us to follow as to where our hopes should be in any “ministry”

It is easy to miss these points but what an Apostle would praise and be thankful for should be a primary focus for us - what do we hope for (expect) and what thrills us most?

- He is encouraged with their “participation in the Gospel” and their consistency - much “modern ministry” finds its praise directed in all sorts of “secular” (strictly humanitarian) activities
- He finds joy in their faithfulness, and challenges them to continue in it - much of modern “Christian service” finds its standards/expectations lowered, anticipating inconsistency and a fear to disappoint (so little is expected, so little then is “pushed”)

2. He also introduces his desire for them to grow in “real knowledge and discernment” for the purpose to rightly “approve” (discern by scrutinizing), to conclude on that which is “excellent” (what is best)

B. Greetings and gratefulness - vs. 1-8

1. Salutations from a “slave” - vs. 1

This form of slavery is where all that one is and possesses is actually that which belongs to the one they belong to and is to be seen and utilized as such

Note: these are “in Christ” before they are “in Philippi”

- A slave (in this case, slaves (δοῦλοι)) is one who belongs to another and therefore has “no ownership rights of his/her own” (and is thus given over to the service of another)
- A “slave” finds their purpose in the purposes of another, and exists to know and do the will of that “other” - their success is defined not in their independence, but in their obedience
- As will be stressed and illustrated in chapter 2, Paul and Timothy served one Who Himself became a servant - this double-emphasis demonstrates God’s priority in being such a servant and is more than a hint of where our aspirations should lie

2. “To all the saints in Christ Jesus...” - vs. 1

So the identity is not ourselves or “in” anyone or anything else

Too many Christians are prone to identify themselves by their flaws and weaknesses rather than confidently identifying themselves as being “in Christ” and thus actually “like Christ” before God

- To be a “saint” (ἅγιοις (saints)) is not to be someone whose personal “merit” (righteousness) is so high that others can look to them for spiritual help and promotion - this word describes those different from what is common, because of what they are “set apart” to and from
- These are “holy” because of the ever important words, “in Christ”
- Paul is one who stresses such an identity versus identifying with something sinful, pre-regeneration, secular or even cultural - the important indicator/distinguisher “in Christ” is one of Paul’s favorite (1:26 (“confidence”), 3:3 (“glory in Christ” and “no confidence in the flesh”), 4:7 (“peace of God” as a guard of the mind and heart “in Christ Jesus”)



In I Pet. 2:25 Jesus is called the Shepherd and "Guardian" (ἐπισκόπος) "of your souls" - it is not just an overseer position, it is protective

- d. So these (and we) are not "holy" **TO BE** in Christ, but because we/they **ARE** in Christ
- e. These phrases are not meaningless rhetoric or cliches that are thrown in to introduce a letter - these would have understood their significance, having been taught by Paul and other early Church leaders (including Timothy)
- f. The greeting is also to the "overseers and deacons" - these would be (generally) church offices/positions - though the question arises as to why they are singled out separately - amongst the various theories it seems likely this is done so as to make it clear that all the encouragements and challenges are for them as well, and not just instruction for those they serve and oversee (often, leadership sees themselves above needing challenge/correction)

3. The last part of the greeting, though used often, is to be understood for what it meant - vs. 2

"Grace" indicates favor, giving two ideas - the first being the undeserved favor of God and the second, the desire to be pleasing (favorable) to Him

- a. The "grace and peace" is to essentially be "upon you"
- b. This would be in contrast to our wishing "luck" upon someone - "grace" communicates a person behind it, overseeing all things - this would be the actual source of the "peace"
- c. This "grace" is an enablement to do what needs to be done and face what needs to be faced, and with this comes a calmness of spirit (especially realizing from where the grace and peace comes)

4. Gratefulness for encouraging reminders - vs. 3-5

This is one of the best defenses against discouragement - a good memory filled with good memories (and not just memories of the past, but reminders of those standing with us even though not with us)

It is clear that some of the most significant encouragement comes to us when others actually are thinking of us and looking to stand and support us in any way (and that it is not mere words, but a sincerely desired action on their part)

Bringing them before God not only focuses attention on where they came from, but also to Whom they belong - even unpleasant memories of others should drive us to bring them before God in our prayers rather than meditating on points of irritation and discouragement - much depression comes because God is not considered in the scenario

Sadly, many are content to leave this particular "work" to others

- a. Paul, writing in prison, at the start indicates to the Philippians how grateful he is when he is reminded of them - his thanks is directed at God for them and for being reminded of them (we often think that our remembering is of ourselves or "by chance")
- b. In times of distress and being surrounded by much opposition, God graciously brings to mind our true friends in Christ - compare with Heb. 12:3 and I Pet. 5:6-10
- c. Paul is responding also to their ongoing help and support (morally and practically)
- d. This was clearly an exceptional group - Paul does not state it lightly when he mentions he is grateful "in all my remembrance of you" - some had worked to make the case that this phrase is pointing to Paul being thankful for their remembering him, "I thank God for all your remembrance of me" - this would fit also (without "stretching the intent") since their remembering him (thinking of him) has led to his encouragement
- e. He means it as an encouragement to them also, in that he does think of them, and when he does, it is with "joy" because of their **partnership** - and all this "coming to mind" causes him to pray for them - Paul is an excellent example for us to follow, in not just thinking of others, but when doing so, praying for them
- f. This "participation in the Gospel" is more than financial (as some would narrow it to) - it is clear that they did partner with him in the work of the Gospel (see 4:15) in practical matters, but as indicated in 1:7, it would include **all** aspects of the Gospel ministry
- g. In contrast to the issues Paul had faced at places like Corinth, he could thankfully write of them that they had partnered with him in the Gospel "from the first day until now"
- h. What is the "participation in the Gospel"? The phrase is "τῇ κοινωνίᾳ ὑμῶν εἰς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον" - the "fellowship in", the "having in common" the Gospel (these were those living for the promotion of the Gospel of Christ in all areas, not deviating to other priorities)

5. Confidence in the work/working of God - vs. 6-8

God is 1. **most assuredly** at work in the lives of actual "believers", growing them, separating them for His purposes and "gracing" them with ability and opportunity in His ongoing "Gospel work" and 2. that this work will **most assuredly** be completed - those who will deal with doubts are those not seeing any growth/work

- a. Paul's choice and tense of πεποιθώς is telling - he indicates his absolute certainty (the perfect tense indicating he had reached this conclusion and it remained) that "He who began a good work... will perfect it..."
- b. His confidence in the Gospel work continuing and succeeding as well as their own spiritual growth, was based upon God and His working and not on that of the Philippians and himself
- c. Paul's certainty expressed here is a good demonstration of the assured work being completed (and thus is the process of being brought to "perfection" (full maturity)) in us as well as the ongoing/ progressive "work of sanctification")
- d. This is a profoundly encouraging verse to believers as they recognize it as God's work to "preserve them" and "grow them" in the process, till they are "perfected" (completed) - Paul points out the "foolishness" of those who assume they will "complete" themselves (in their own strength and determination) what was started as a "spiritual" thing - Gal. 3:3

see I Thes. 5:23-24 and I Pet. 5:10, and Eph. 2:8-10



"partakers of the same grace" referencing that of the same salvation as well as the same "work" they are called to do - they were a unit, a team

Many may see themselves doing the same only not realizing they are defending and confirming a "gospel" which is not THE Gospel

When suffering, we desire those we find comfort being with - he has already suffered with these and wished to have them near him again

- e. The work (in and with them) is a "good" one (versus an evil or useless/futile one) and will be completed by God's deadline; the "day of Christ Jesus" - this being the resurrection of those dead in Christ and those "changed" at His coming (I Cor. 15:51-53 and I Thes. 4:16-17)
- f. His "feelings" and thoughts regarding them were "just" (correct and not some sentimental wording to falsely motivate them with flattery) - they were in "his heart" and he in theirs and this was so because they both were "partakers of grace" (the same grace) - it was also "right" to think this of them because it would be God doing the work - this is often a struggle we face when worried others will not "grow in grace"
- g. While he was imprisoned, he knew they would continue on and would stand with him (not being afraid and ashamed) - see 1:28-30 - while he defended and established (τῇ ἀπολογίᾳ καὶ βεβαιώσει) the Gospel, they would be doing the same - this was an encouraging group to him - they were not just a "ministry" to him but were now, more so, fellow-laborers - this is still supposed to be what so strongly unifies us in His work - vs. 7
- h. As one more point of encouragement (in his greeting), he states that God does "witness" that he (Paul) "longs for them" - That he sincerely and deeply desires their well-being (in the faith and in their walk) as well as his strong wish to see and be with them again
- i. "Not Paul, but Jesus Christ lives in Paul; wherefore Paul is not moved in the bowels of Paul, but of Jesus Christ." - Bengel - Paul was revealing that this deep love's source was Christ's love for them (which is where true Godly love (selfless) comes from) - and this fact we need to realize and pray that we become/are such channels ! - vs. 8

C. Focused until the "day of Christ" - vs. 9-11

1. "Abounding love" functioning properly, and rightly informed - vs. 9

- a. There is great deal of misunderstanding (in our day) of what love actually is - the affection Paul just described was not motivated by "mindless sentimentality", but was motivated by the very thing he was praying for them to have
- b. It is a love (focused, relentless adoration for what is truly "right") kept pure
- c. This is the content of his prayer for them - essentially that their love would grow (abound) continually in and for what is true/right/proven
- d. The two areas Paul prays their love would increase (this is to be ongoing, not plateauing) are in "knowledge" and "all discernment"
- e. **There is no "real love" of God and His ways without "real knowledge" of God and His ways** - it is the love of learning to love rightly - learning what the true truth is and loving it (as in a committed/loyal/dedicated sense) - the opposite of this would be when one loves what they think something or someone really is (or want they want them to be) only to discover they were incorrect and don't like/love the "object" (in light of what they know now)
- f. The need for their love/affection to "abound" is also in discernment (of which "real knowledge (Truth)) is necessary) - the prayer is that their perception (seeing clearly what's what and not living in a "haze") would grow
- g. "The apostle's desire was that the love of the Philippians might acquire a profounder knowledge, and not be tempted to misplace itself... If love grew in mere capacity, and without these safeguards, it was in hazard of forming unworthy and profitless attachments. Passion, without such guides or feelers, is but blind predilection." John Eadie
 - Note, predilection is "a preference or special liking for something"
- h. So, two things were needed to qualify what their love should be - it must be properly informed and learned, as well as effective at judging/discerning correctly - one must not just "love" anything and/or everything

This "increase" is to be as "overflowing" because the pursuit to keep increasing never stops - they are not to see this as ever reaching completion (it doesn't have a "full mark")

Many professing believers learn a little of Christ and His Truth and don't desire to know more - this is not love! Some are introduced to more or stumble onto it and become disheartened or upset because they cannot/will not accept it (usually because it contradicts them)

"... be prevented from being squandered on unworthy subjects..." Eadie

So it's what should I love and why should I love it? Is it right and best that I should love it?

2. Abounding in proper love in order to "properly distinguish" what is best ("excellent") - vs. 10

- a. All will ultimately "follow their heart" (their "loves") which, if in error, follows after what is either less than best or absolutely wrong
- b. The Greek phrase is "δοκιμάζειν ὑμᾶς τὰ διαφέροντα" describing a scrutinizing process with a goal to settle on what is "surpassing" (the underlying word picturing a distinguishing of differences (not seeing where they are alike but where they are not alike) and whatever does not lend to the goal (latter part of this verse) is not pursued or thrown away (if found to already be integrated into one's self))

"It is remarkable here how anxious the apostle was not only that they should be Christians, but that they should be intelligent Christians, and should understand the real worth and value of objects." Barnes



An algorithm in software uses calculations to solve problems - but if the data is incorrect, the solutions will be also - thus the need to continue to grow in the knowledge of Christ

The standard of comparison is crucial at this point to avoid that which appears to excel but only has the appearance and not the actual "excellence"

Paul prayed that what they loved (and thus lived for and focused on) was best so as to live in anticipation of their life's review

compare to II Cor. 2:14-17

"...whose love to God, and Christ, and one another, is without dissimulation; whose hope is lively, and of a soul purifying nature, and is built on a good foundation; and whose repentance is attended with genuine effects, and proper fruits; whose principles are unmix'd; who do not corrupt or adulterate the word of God, but desire and retain the sincere milk of it, and hold the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience..." Gill

The goal is a life "filled" (packed full) of good works - not periodic stints of "good doing" but a life characterized by "redeeming the time"

This the "working out your salvation" with reverence, realizing it is "God who is at work in you..." - Php. 2:12-13

compare this to Heb. 12:11, Col. 1:3-12

The glory of God is to be our objective now, not one we anticipate to have when this life is over



- c. This fits with other texts such as I Thes. 5:21-22, Eph. 5:6-20; Rev. 2:2 - this "judging" is to be an ongoing part of our lives as Christians, expecting evil or "less than best" to present itself to us, and we must be **poised to reject** it in pursuit of true Christian excellence
- d. It is a distinguishing what is actually important or most important - it is the development and possession of an effective prioritization process (as in an internal algorithm that helps "weed out" the unnecessary and "**resource** robbers")
- e. Rom. 2:18 is an example of the same concept only with an incorrect "standard" - see also I Tim. 3:10 for an example applied to church ministers/servants
- f. *"It not only includes the function of examination and evaluation but also that of choice. τὰ διαφέροντα means not 'the things that differ', but 'the things which excel', that is, those things that which differ by **surpassing** others."* Peter O'Brien
- h. This is a *thinking* posture throughout life - actually looking into things, comparing them to the revelation given in God's word - all other responses or approaches are reactionary, based in feeling (affecting one's love) or erred conclusions

3. Properly differentiating between what is evil, useless, good and best for when we give account - vs. 10

- a. The purpose statement is "in order that you be sincere and blameless"
- b. So as not to lose track, Paul's prayer was that their love/affection/passion would grow "more and more", properly informed in the truth (knowledge) and discernment, with the purpose to distinguish what is best (and love it more) with the overall purpose to be unadulterated, and not to "stumble" or cause others to do so until we stand before the Lord
- c. The underlying word for "sincere" or "pure" is εἰλικρινεῖς which pictures what is uncontaminated, not infected, so as to not put on a false front (hypocritical) in the attempt to look genuine, real - **many work hard at looking real, avoiding the actual effort to be real**
- d. The normal cause of impurities in the life of a believer is found in **misdirected** love - aspirations and affections drift to other (usually temporal) things and our lives fill with inconsistencies - and when convicted by them, we either repent (change) or cover them with religious facades or philosophical excuses, and diversions to make our stance appear to be good, pure and intact
- e. The underlying word for "blameless" is ἀπόσκοποι and is multifaceted, picturing one who **has not** and **does not** "fall" because they offer no vulnerability to the enemy (nothing of which to "take hold") - it also pictures not being the cause of another falling, being tripped up because of my actions, words, philosophies or excuses - and it has the internal "side" where it describes a **defiled** conscience that is left unaided, unrepaired
- f. This is all essential to Paul (and why he prays for them this way) because we head toward the "day of Christ", His day when all answers to Him directly

4. The "practical" outcome of what Paul prays for them - "filled with the fruit of righteousness" - vs. 11

- a. This ultimately equates to a life full of godly deeds and actions, not for the sake of one's eternal soul's destiny, but for a life well spent in the service of our God
- b. Notice carefully the phrasing, "fruit of righteousness" - fruit is the result of something, and in this case, it is the result of what is "right" because it is in harmony with God's will and **character** (which is what makes "right" right)
- c. It seems few today (in Christianity) are driven with the goal/objective to have lives full of "righteousness" (but more of self-exalting accomplishments/legacies)
- d. The idea being that your life be "full of it", righteousness, which comes "through Jesus Christ" (and not of ourselves, thus not motivated "of self") - it is only in our associations with Him (regularly) that such "good output" (fruit) will be produced - being the evidence of either growing character (more like that of Christ) and/or the evidence of repentance (its genuineness proven in **consistent** action (longevity)) - see also John 15
- e. The point/purpose of it all being "the glory and praise of God" - this is their purpose, life purpose and ultimately the purpose for all of creation - it was Paul's prayer that this be their purpose, to magnify the greatness of God in their obedience/submission realizing it "glorifies" the rightness of God above all else
- f. This is necessary since all else, one way or another, "exalts itself against the knowledge of God" (II Cor. 10:3-6) - and not just against "knowing God" or about Him, but all that competes against His knowledge

II. The Benefit of "Bonds" - 1:12-30

A. God's "method" brought Paul to the **right place** to influence the **right people** at the **right time** - vs. 12-13

1. Paul was also writing to assure the Philippians of his encouragement

Most would not normally think that imprisonment would be a good way to "enhance" one's ministry/calling

- a. He was encouraged because "what has happened", happened in such a way as to promote and spread the Gospel message
- b. His wording is specific - he references that "which concerns him" (his "business" or "affairs" have been profitable) - this is what he knows it to be *This is not mindless positivity, but an assessment based in truth*
- c. It is interesting to recall the wording of Christ's calling of Paul - Acts 9:15-16 - Paul would be sent to Jews, Gentiles and "Kings", and in the process, would suffer much for the cause of Christ (which when coming from "the Master" is not a dread, but an honored anticipation)
- d. So the "Gospel" was progressing BECAUSE of his bonds, and the Gospel (the whole message of Christ) was the point (not his well-being, success, or happiness)
- e. It wasn't as though Paul was saying things just worked out this way, but was more an indication that God was using it just as He had planned to use it - Paul did not have to instigate it (a plan) to succeed (since this would be God's doing)
- f. As with Joseph and his brothers (Gen 50:20), evil was intended but God intended it all for His good - think of the frustration this would have caused Paul's enemies if they found out their doings led to the message of Christ being even more productive!

compare to Acts 8:4; 11:19-21

This frees us from the pressure to measure results or judge "success" based upon circumstances

2. His having to be guarded was used to spread the Gospel to the Praetorium (guard)

see Acts 28:16-30

- a. The "Praetorium" described a location where the elite guard of the emperor were located and could have been connected to Caesar's house (see 4:22)
- b. Because Paul was a prisoner, a guard had to be chained to him at all times - this was used to share the Gospel to many guards, and judging by how Paul phrases it, these apparently spread it to more in this illustrious and influential place
- c. What was being "spread" was not Paul's wisdom or significance (greatness), but that his imprisonment was "for Christ" - this brought special attention to him (since when one would be willing to suffer for their beliefs, it made it a novelty) - thus the phrase, "and to all the rest" (describing a widespread influence, even into Caesars' household)

Sometimes God will place us in a "curious" situation and even make us a spectacle to provide an opportunity to be a witness for the Gospel

B. A greater courage to "preach Christ" as a result - vs. 14-18

1. "Most of the brethren" have more confidence "because of my imprisonment"

The pursuit of the life philosophy that avoids all suffering at all costs leads to inactivity and fruitlessness (as well as discontent)

There are various fears to face - fear of government, fear of society, fear of family and even fear of self - standing firm with Christ, openly, will cause us to face one or all of these

- a. It is common to believe (and even live by) the thought that persecution stifles or, at least, slows the progression of the Truth (the preaching of Christ)
- b. Here, as it ALWAYS has, it increased the courage of the "brethren" in Rome to be more bold in proclaiming and standing with the Gospel message
- c. The wording "τολμᾶν ἀφόβως" pictures the idea of one "daring fearlessly" - this is more than verbal profession of bravery, but acting on it (daring to do it)
- d. It appears (in our day) that the "most" are living in fear and intimidation that they might face opposition, creating its own fear (compounding it)
- e. Here we have courage being grown by the courage of one (acted upon and not compromised) - we need the same now - each expecting/anticipating to be the one or ones living unintimidated by the intimidators of the age (who are in opposition to Christ) - this will include bravery against the pseud-Christianity that has existed since the 1st century

2. Two results of this surge of courage - one good, the other bad, both with benefits - vs. 15-18

As was seen in the early Church, as Christianity became "popular" in some circles and started having an impact, there were those who looked to "cash-in" for various reasons

Pride and envy/jealousy will lead one to seek the glory that belongs to the Gospel message for themselves - the "ministry" becomes more about the minister than it does the message

- a. We still need to be alert to the fact that even in good "movements" amongst Christians, there will always be some ulterior motives
- b. First, Paul reveals that he realizes that some of these "courageous" are "preaching Christ even from envy and strife"
- c. The envy (φθόνον) is ill-will with another motivated by a competitive spirit - it has been noted that much of envy doesn't necessarily desire to have what another has as much as it would just like to see the other have something taken away - these are driven more with the thought that "it's supposed to be about me" rather than "it is about God and His Truth"
- d. There are those who, while accurately "preaching Christ" will do what they do to deliberately bring "strife" on or with others (desiring there to be a conflict) - conflicts will occur, but we are not actively seeking or desiring them



Some may try to use this text as a point that we should never stand against those who say they are proclaiming the Gospel

Enemies of the Gospel will use all sorts of tactics, even using the Gospel - these, though were "brothers" (vs. 14) and, though preaching the right message correctly, developed a competitive drive, hurting themselves

The "team" mentality is often lost in any pursuit - if we become celebrity minded (even if not desiring to be the celebrity), we will end up fighting on the wrong battlefields and misinterpreting who/what the enemy really is. The underlying word for "distress" is *δυσμοις*, meaning to add chains (or here, add to his chains, making harder for him while facing hardship)

This is an excellent example of proper thinking (which Paul will stress in chapter 4) - our tendency is to focus on the negative or to make-up a "false positive", but here Paul realizes the actual good coming from it by looking on it in light of God's controlling hand in His omnipotence

"It is God's prerogative to judge of the principles men act upon; this is out of our line." Henry

- e. It must be understood, these (even the wrongly motivated) were "preaching Christ" - this means they were proclaiming His life, purpose, death and resurrection (and even its purpose in dealing with sin for salvation) - so this is not speaking of those "proclaiming another gospel" (where the message is in competition with the Truth or a replacement for it)
- f. Yet, some of these were doing so, motivated by "good will" (toward God and Paul) - these do so out of love (part of that properly motivating affection dealt with earlier), thus driven to "pick up the mantle" while Paul was imprisoned - these, as far as their relation to Paul, loved to stand with him and were not ashamed nor tempted to discredit him for being "in bonds" - it is theorized by some that the hostile group criticized Paul for appealing to Caesar and thought his mistakes led to his imprisonment
- g. Paul, as his friends knew, was where he was "appointed" for the defense (*ἀπολογία*) of the Gospel (against foes "foreign and domestic") - he was in prison because he would not compromise the message - had he held back a bit or yielded points to the Jews and Judaizers, he most likely would have been treated better and not stirred up such hatred against him - many that are "so cautious" to not make any enemies, compromise God and His Word, becoming enemies of God themselves (so they can be friends with His enemies)
- h. These "motivational opponents" were driven by "selfish ambition" (self-promotion) in the proclamation of Christ rather than "pure motives" - their motives were proving themselves to be infected with impurities by their desire to "cause distress" to Paul
- i. It is key to observe here that Paul deals with motives and not the actual actions - motives are not always seen, but we must realize 1. We will be judged by them and 2. **They will eventually affect our actions** (with or without our realizing it)
- k. Yet, what is the conclusion to be of such a seeming conflict? "I rejoice" - Why? Because, even with wrong motives, "Christ is proclaimed" - God does not need a pure heart and pure motives to do His work (though impure motives will only be to our personal detriment)
- l. Even here, those seeking to utilize the Gospel for their own honor, still are used for God's ends - clearly, better to serve Him **to serve Him**, evaluating why we do what we do so as not to stand before Him later with only wood, hay and stubble to offer (1 Cor. 3)
- m. So, his response is to rejoice and keep on rejoicing, that despite the poor character of some, the message of Christ has not been stopped and, as all of God's Word, is still achieving its God-give purpose! - many believers fall into some type of discouragement unnecessarily because they focus solely upon (or depend upon) the human instrument and not the divine hand

C. Rejoicing with certain anticipation of the future - vs. 18-26

1. Paul would continue to rejoice (end of verse 18) for several reasons - first (vs. 19), he knew all this would "eventuate" (end up at (*ἀποβήσεται*)) his "salvation"

It could also be worded "turn out to me for salvation"

Sometimes we get so focused on the "doctrines of grace" and God's sovereignty, we fail to realize His means to preservation (leading to our perseverance)

- a. Some have taken this phrase to be Paul referencing all these things (growing in recognition and popularity) would lead to his release - this has issues, realizing his readiness to live or die in verses 20-21 (and his contentment with either)
- b. It more likely references the eventuality of his ultimate salvation (not coming to be "in Christ" (saved), but the final "deliverance" from this life as one already saved) - the prayers of fellow believers and the "provision of the Spirit" are the means to "making it through" and seeing the full end our salvation
- c. Paul referenced this as being his "earnest expectation and hope" - "... it implies not mere expectation, but the anxious desire of an anticipated prosperous issue in afflictive circumstances."

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2. "I will not be put to shame in anything" - vs. 20

Many become obsessed with the opinions of others to such a degree that the good opinion of others is what they seek (live for) and measure their success (even in their supposed work for God)

- a. Paul need not be defensive or even argumentative regarding the motives of those seeking to use various aspects of preaching the Gospel in competition with him
- b. The ministry and proclaiming the Gospel is not "about" us at all! - It is "Christ being exalted" in us, in any way (however He chooses to do so) that is key
- c. So, Paul would not need to be shamed or fear it (as a man of integrity) - God is the revealer of truths, not the popular consensus of people
- d. If the favor of man (even that of very seemingly religious people) becomes the standard and guide of our lives, this places them in the position of authority (versus that of God)



The underlying source, then, of such courage/boldness is “freedom” - a freedom that rests in the controlling, purposed providential hand of God in all things - a “hope” (expectation) placed on something else will eventually bring shame of all sorts and lasting disappointment

We normally would think that God is most glorified in keeping someone alive; but to what end? We are not here just to live and stay alive - we’re supposed to be doing something- Paul’s living on would glorify Christ in how his body would be used to keep proclaiming and living for the proclamation of the entire Gospel message

Barnes

How might we fill in the blank of “for me to live is _____”? If the blank is anything/anyone other than “Christ”, we are not truly “living” (not knowing what “living” really is) - see John 17:3

Any that do not look on life as “to live is Christ” are unable to see “to die is gain” - for them, death would be the separation from what they love

It will be an ongoing task to work at more ideas of implementing such a life focus - without such deliberate effort we are likely to become distracted with the “normal” distractions of or age and misplaced priorities - what is actually a priority to us will get the bulk of our attention and affection

“... to cash in both principal and interest and so to have more of Christ than when living. So Paul faces death with independence and calm courage.” RWP

This way not only would we be poised to be submissive to whatever way God leads us, but also that our thinking will become disciplines and focus to look on out present and future with the eyes of faith

- e. Instead, Paul’s eager longing and anticipation (with all assurance of it happening) was not that he might be put to shame (in any way as demonstrating a foolish, uninformed hope), but that he would face all that was coming with “all boldness” - the Greek for this phrase is “ἀλλ’ ἐν πάσῃ παρρησίᾳ ὡς πάντοτε καὶ νῦν μεγαλυνθήσεται Χριστός” literally saying, “But in all [the whole] of freedom as always and even now magnified (shown to be great) Christ [will be]” - he would not need be restrained by the intimidation of the official Roman system he was about to face
- f. The place of Christ’s “exaltation” might seem surprising to some - **Paul’s “body”** as to its living or dying (of which Paul was not sure which would happen) - so if he was to carry on in his body (life) Christ would be magnified by the ongoing work (of living), not as some might be inclined to think, in his necessary release from prison and having his life spared
- g. Christ would then also (**as always!**) be promoted in his death (in this case, the death of his body) - and this is the point; Christ being magnified either way (not me/Paul be “lifted up” in our living or dying - it’s not about us!)
- h. “Christ is magnified in the death of Christians, when his gospel is seen to sustain them; when, supported by its promises, they are enabled to go calmly into the dark valley; and when, in the departing moments, they confidently commit their eternal all into his hands.”
- i. So, “I will not be ashamed” because **Christ** will be what “stands out” - the opposite concept would be, then, I will be ashamed if I stand out

3. A “no-lose” scenario - either outcome is a “win” - vs. 21

- a. “Εμοὶ γὰρ τὸ ζῆν Χριστὸς καὶ τὸ ἀποθανεῖν κέρδος.” - “For me, the life Christ, the death, profit” - no matter how what may come is considered, there is good! - for Paul, for he could only speak for himself in this instance, to stay on living would be a life focus on and for Christ - a life finding its joyful purpose in that of the promotion of all things related to Jesus Christ (His purpose, His objectives, His loves, His hates, His truths) - see Gal. 2:20
- b. Many might be found to say (by their priorities), “For me to be able to live on would mean, more time at my job, more time with family, more time to be entertained, more time to add to my possessions...” (or any other variation of these)
- c. Paul’s perspective of life “in the body” was that of having satisfaction in being used by his Master in ANY capacity - more life here on Earth means more done for Christ! - life is full of the pursuit to “make Christ known” and promoted - its thought/motive is a life companion
- d. How should we at least start to look on what it means “to live is Christ”? - Any/all Christlikeness is included - so, any self-denial for the purpose of being free of distraction (the “sin that so easily entangles us” (Heb. 12:1), discipline to add to our growth in learning “true knowledge” (1:9), seizing opportunities of encouraging/challenging others to obedience to God, submitting to the convicting or motivating work of God in us to obey and take on responsibility rather than excuse ourselves from it (pushing self daily to more and consistent service of our Lord in any way), taking on a work-ethic that demonstrates a pursuit of what is best (serving the Lord and not men) and more
- e. “To die is profit” - not in the idea of it being better (over all), but in the sense that all that has been invested in this life will now “pay off” - **To “live” for Christ is as good as the gain of dying-** Paul goes on to describe the mixed feelings and thoughts he had regarding both options (as being desirable) - to remain had benefits and to “depart” also had its benefits - neither was a negative (as is always to be our perspective of God’s will at work)

4. Paul was “good” with either general option he saw before him - vs. 22-24

- a. It has been suggested in the past that one of the goals we as believers must strive for is a “balanced will” - this was used to describe thinking-through the possible ways God might take us (as best as we could see and anticipate) and then to look on it from an eternal perspective so as to see then positives in any of the possibilities
- b. Paul is a shining example of this in this text - he admits a dilemma in that the two possible outcomes ahead of him are both equally appealing - one is, “better” for him personally and the other, “better” (more necessary) for him as far as his productivity (which was appealing to him as well)
- c. He lays out the first possibility of “to live on in the flesh” which, to him, equates to “καρπὸς ἔργου” which is “fruit from his work”



Death would be "gain" while living would result in "fruit"

Those that want to live on (and pray for such) need to check their motive - is it just to stay alive and "enjoy life" or is it to be more productive for Christ's work and honor? Then, the opposite, when thinking of death is the focus solely on the relief of pain and suffering and the freedom from sin's presence? Our focus, as Paul's, is to be "balanced" upon the omniscient, omnipotent hand of God and find joy in all possible outcomes in light of it

Paul's personal desire was more to be with Christ than any other thing - his unobstructed perspective demonstrates that when we prefer any other above Him, our perspective is obstructed or at least "blurry" It is likely always best for us to assume we will live on in the world so as to keep laboring as though we will be around a while and that there is much to be done

Many see the pursuit of various disciplines of knowledge as harmless failing to consider their potential impact on our overall outlook on life - to be wrongly directed/influenced will rob us of a steady contentment/joy

This encouragement to boasting "in Christ" for not only His goodness but His delivering power is not, in this text, for just anyone; but is specifically for one who encourages and challenges us in "the faith"

Live out your life in a way that "fits" who and what you are - a child of the King of the Universe made so by the work of Christ - live in such a way that represents how one in such a state (citizenship) would actually live (in light of their situation)

It is not "unity for unity's sake" - there is a definitive standard (as a flag would represent) on which to affix the "spirit" and thoughts

- d. This is an interesting way of stating it - if he is to continue on this earth, he knows it will be guaranteed, genuine results (fruit) - yet it will still involve "work/labor"
- e. Anyone who is "driven to produce" in their work, knows what is like to think that if they are given just a bit more time and opportunity their "results" will be that much greater - this type of thinking knows no way of thinking that looks for added time to relax - the thought of "just a little more" in their work for the Lord is very appealing and motivating
- f. "If God wants Paul to go on living in the realm of the flesh it is because the activities of Christian service (Eph. 2:10; Phil. 1:6) assigned to Paul by God are not yet completed (Rev. 3:2; 2 Tim 4:7). If he lives and continues to work for Christ there will be more fruit (καρπος) for the glory of Christ. This is why that Paul adds that if the decision to live or die were left up to him, he did not know what he could say... This is why suicide or even an inordinate desire to die (all other considerations aside) is wrong. When a Christian wills his own death it means that he has decided that his work on earth is done, or at least not worth doing." Randolph O. Yeager (Renaissance New Testament)
- g. Both options are desirable (with a correct focus and priority) so, Paul says he is "...hard-pressed from both directions..." - "The picture is that of a man pressed on both sides. Lit. I am held together, so that I cannot incline either way." Vincent Word Studies
- h. The desire to "depart and be with Christ" was, for Paul, much better personally (but his whole desire was not determined just upon him personally) - the other side (pressing him) was "more necessary for your sake" that he remain (the focus on "the work")
- i. Paul was "convinced" he would remain (at least) a while longer - this cannot be taken as being absolutely sure he would be delivered from prison and execution, realizing in 1:17 he was not sure he would see them again and in 2:17 he mentions the possibility of being a "drink offering upon the sacrifice..." (a vivid picture of an act of worship)
- j. The description of his objective is worded in an interesting way - he expected that if he was able to "continue" with them, it would be that they would **progress** (προκοπήν) in "the faith" (growing in their trusting/confidence and understanding and thus their living-out **the** faith (practice) - this "progress" is not just growth, but continuance (steady and constant)
- k. Unavoidably associated with such progress in "the faith" is "joy" (glad encouragement) - when "the faith" is not progressing (furthering) then joy falters and discouragements and fears of all sorts become the norm

5. That their boasting would be in Christ - vs. 26

- a. This verse is a bit difficult to handle but seems clearest with Paul stressing that, as a result of his coming to them, their "boasting" (proud confidence) would "abound in Christ" - Paul anticipates how his deliverance and the resulting visit on his part would add also to their "glorying" in Christ (in his difficult circumstances, he imagines the possible good)
- b. This is a point we can all identify with when thinking upon anytime God allowed one of "our team" (fellow workers for Christ) to be spared and remain with us in "the race"

D. Live "worthy of the Gospel of Christ" - vs. 27- 30

- 1. The first word "Only" (Μόνον) stresses the singular focus they are to have regardless if he is released and can come to them, or if he is unable to (for whatever reason) - vs. 27
 - a. The verb in this first part of the sentence is typically translated "conduct" or "manner of life" - but the underlying word (πολιτεύεσθε) literally means to "live as a citizen"
 - b. So, when he stresses being "worthy of the Gospel of Christ" he does so with the picture of one proud of their citizenship, thus the "worthiness" - as a colony of Rome, Phillipi was apparently supposed to demonstrate to the surrounding areas, how beneficial it was to live like Romans and to be a part of the empire
 - c. So, no matter what happens, live in a manner worthy of a Citizen of Heaven (made so by the resulting and assured affect of the Gospel of Christ)
 - d. The opposite would be those dishonoring their association to Christ and all He has done by living as one who is more a citizen of "the age"
 - e. Unity around this "true condition" is essential and normal for those who realize they belong together and what is to hold them together
 - f. Unity being "one spirit", "one mind" around the one "faith of the Gospel"



Regardless what happens to Paul, this is what he expects to hear of them - their focus should not shift based on what happens to him

ESV phrases it, "... striving side by side for the faith of the gospel"

We all act (ultimately) upon what we actually believe - our faith is based on something (the faith) and when our trust is in anything else (less solid/firm), our footing gives way when pressured - this is why Paul wanted them to mutually seek to unite around the faith so their faith would stay strong when opposed

Intimidation can affect us even when we are not aware of it - this type of timidity can become a normal way of living, so much so we naturally avoid "the fray"

Pride and security in humanity is repulsed by the Gospel of Christ

Intimidators are intimidated when those they seek to intimidate are not intimidated - "bullies" fear courage/confidence in others

"...the condition of the persecuted is much better and more desirable than the condition of the persecutors; for persecuting is an evident token of perdition. Those who oppose the gospel of Christ, and injure the professors of it, are marked out for ruin." MH

We instinctively long for a purpose that can withstand the hardest of scrutiny and opposition - this is often at the core of why some young people "rebel" (though their cause is typically misdirected and exploited by Godless philosophies "lying in wait")

Realizing our association with God (Lord of Heaven and Earth) makes those antagonistic towards us less an issue

There is often an unspoken agreement to mutually "excuse" each other from disciplines and hardships - goals then become focused upon "escapes" and detours away from challenging responsibilities

- g. "standing firm"- being grounded (heels dug-in) regarding their "spirit" (their underlying drive being the same (motivation for what they do)) - their overriding "fervor" being to ***stand their ground together*** (striving as an athletic team would do) - see Eph. 6:13
- "The word signifies to stand-fast in, and it is proper to wrestlers, that stand fast and do not move their feet back at all." GBN
- h. "With one mind" - their focus and thinking is the same (founded on "the faith") - Paul is not describing a free-for-all (each striving how they see it best), but a focused effort unified around "the faith of the gospel" (which Churches are to be clarifying weekly!)
- i. Also note that Paul's reference to the faith is suffixed with "gospel" (thus a faith founded firmly in "good news" (uplifting information/facts grounded in truth, not speculation/opinion))
- j. "Subjective faith is nothing without the objective faith; "the faith" objective, could not have this name without "faith" subjective. Applied here, this means that as being believers themselves the Philippians defend what they believe. Unless they are able to do that they cannot defend their own action of believing. To this day the battle is always about the *what*; only so is our act attacked even when we stop believing and cease this act only when this *what* is made uncertain for us." Lenski
2. Part of this "living worthy of the Gospel" is courage and resolve - vs. 28-29
- a. In the striving together for the Gospel, Paul tells them not be alarmed/frightened by those opposing - they are not to be startled not only by being opposed, but by ***those*** that oppose, for ἐν μηδενὶ indicates that ***nothing*** and ***no one*** should overwhelm them with shock because it/they are against them (whoever they may be)
- b. Part of the idea in this phrase is to not be caught off-guard by those opposing - some allow themselves to be lulled into a naivety that the Word of God and His Gospel will be appreciated by all that hear it - yet its initial premise (to be actually be good news) reveals our lost, sinful condition and need for saving (a saviour)
- c. The sense that Paul presents it here is not one of fear that these would forsake the faith because of their fear, but more along the line of the reasonableness of such a posture - for such a posture/stance (not driven by fear or controlled by intimidation) is a "sign of destruction for them" (though some may not recognize the "sign") - see II Thes. 1:3-12
- d. Group consistency in "the faith" and in mutual belief is one of the ways God demonstrates the oncoming destruction (and loss) of those whose faith is based elsewhere (unbelievers are not actually characterized as believing in ***nothing***, just believing/trusting the wrong thing (error))
- e. Such suffering acts also as a "sign" of salvation (which is had in the "now" and not just in the future, as illustrated by Paul and Silas singing in prison after having been beaten)
- f. One of the greatest "discouragement causers" (origins of depression) is the lack of a cause worth suffering for (and actually suffering for it) - there is an unexpected contentment that comes when we see a consistency in ourselves that endures pain for a cause (and our cause, the Gospel, being the only one guaranteed to "not make ashamed" (disappointed) in the end (Rom. 5:5))
- g. ***Since our salvation is "from God", the more we know of Him the more we are confident in facing obstacles to following His way and standing firmly with the Gospel of Christ***
- h. How exactly is this a sign/evidence of their salvation? Because they believe (evidence) so much so they suffer (evidence) for Him and this is so because it has been "graciously given" to them by God (the believing and the suffering for it) - "The gift was not suffering as such. Its meaning and value lay in its being for His sake." Vincent Word Studies
- i. Essentially then, they need not fear or be startled with opposition, realizing ***the immense privilege they have been given to believe in Christ and suffer for His sake***
- j. The Paul references that their calling is the same as his - they saw it first hand when he was in Phillipi and now were hearing of what he was facing in Rome
- k. This serves also as a good example of being able to counsel others towards more difficult paths, because of personal consistency being demonstrated - many counsel others to not "push too hard" because they themselves do not desire to do so or hope to avoid the conflict themselves



III. Live Like Christ - The Supreme Example of Selflessness - 2:1-16

A. Continuing with what he started in 1:27, Paul now deals with the possible conflicts that might come from within their group - with the challenges still yet to come for them, Paul challenges them (to “fulfill my joy”) by the pursuit and exercise of genuine unity - vs. 1-2

1. The four conditions Paul begins with are presented more in a rhetorical fashion as in saying “since” instead of “if” - though, at the same time, it is possible that with some in the Philippian church, they did not have these qualities or were not practicing them - vs. 1

As is about to be discussed, unity is not found in mutual agreement to “just get along”, but focused on absolutes/truths/realities that unite

Not comfort found in self-indulgences, modern psychiatry, drugs/medicines, but in the assured reality of Christ and all that is related to Him - all else are, at best, symptom blockers not cures, and if the underlying problem is not addressed, the issues remain and often grow in magnitude - see Heb. 6:18

see also John 14:27

This word picture is that of speaking to someone to comfort and challenge them - “A motive of persuasion or dissuasion.” Vincent Word Studies, to talk someone into something or out of something

Unity for unity’s sake is not unity - that would be escapism (from reality)

Thus the necessity to “try the spirits to see whether they be from God” and to not “believe/trust every spirit” (every seeming sensible or religious “spirit”

The word for “fellowship” is κοινωνία indicating a partnership (commonness with others)

Actually “feeling for/with each other

Lacking oneness of mind (thinking) and oneness of love opens the gates to “popular” thinking (secular) and temporal (of the age) “loves” (affections) - this will most certainly create divisions in the church and will only be resolved when each is confronted and revealed for what it is

Not a “purpose” that varies with popular sentiment in the Church with each generation

a. “Therefore” ties these verses with the ones immediately preceding - realizing that your life’s belief system is focused on Christ and that suffering (in various ways and degrees) is their allotment (graciously given by God), they will need to encourage Paul (as a spiritual father) by maintaining a unified approach to challenges (“striving together” and “standing firm” together (vs. 27)

b. “If there is any encouragement in Christ” - the underlying word “παράκλησις” carries two general ideas; encouragement and exhortation (challenge/entreaty) - it is essential to realize though, this challenging encouragement is “in Christ” - if they have been so challenged and encouraged and it is genuine, then they should be able to serve genuinely united and will not turn on each other - there is a sobering motivation realizing our being “in Christ” (representing Him, His work, values, purposes) - there is an overriding comfort as well realizing who He is - this is a significant part of living “worthy of the Gospel of Christ”

c. If the answer to the condition is “no” then there is no real encouragement or real exhortation (though we may believe we can find both in other sources - see Php. 3:3) - the “encouragement in Christ” is what allows us to see the value/worth in our struggles

d. “If there is any consolation of love” - the underlying word for “consolation” (παραμύθιον) is a very similar word to “encouragement” only this more “close and personal” word is tied to selflessness actively focused on the needs of others (love (ἀγάπης))

e. If there is any drive in them to comfort Paul out of genuine love and the responsibility to do the same with each other, then strive for/focus on **true unity** - disunity always involves a lack of love on someone’s part, though it might not be the one standing firm in the goal of convincing others of what “in Christ” and “of love” **really** are

f. The other idea with this phrase would be in reference to the comfort that one has, knowing for certain they are loved (and then can handle mistreatments or neglect from all others (recognizing the all- sufficiency of God loving “me”)) - see I John 4:7-11

g. “If there is any fellowship of the Spirit” - if our spirits are united by His Spirit (the Holy Spirit of God), then it is reasonable to assume there MUST be unity, **else some are being motivated/driven by some other “spirit”** - see I John 4:1

h. The Spirit of God will not contradict Himself and it is always to be our goal to accurately respond to Him - He is the Inspirer of Scripture and its Illuminator, so **we can expect the Bible to be what unites us** - this also reveals why it is under constant attack and why there is often a dearth of true fellowship in Him

i. “If any affection and compassion” - this describes “deep feelings” (literally “bowels”) and “merciful favor” toward others (in this case, each other and then for Paul)

2. These are all qualities/characteristics Paul identifies as necessary to give him what he desires most to see and hear of them - “same mind, same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose” - vs. 2

a. Literally, “Make my joy full” - the picture being that he had joy already, yet a little was lacking, apparently related to the onset of internal conflict/disagreement

b. This will be done with their “being of the same mind” (the same judgment/discernment, even the same opinion) - what they are to “mind” is about to be illustrated with the example of Christ, and Paul is also about to explain what is to be left out (selfishness)

c. “Maintaining the same love” is a good translation since that is exactly what they are to be doing! For if they do not work at maintaining it, what they love will become diverse and then any unity that would be had will need to become more generic/general

d. “United in spirit, intent on one purpose” - this is necessary exclusivity in Christian ranks for harmony of purpose, focus and action - the last phrase has the definite article indicating the “thought/mind” (purpose is one) and already defined



The same “standard” is absolutely necessary to even begin to imagine and integrate such a quality

e. Essentially they are to be united “in heart” (literally picturing one soul) and one in focus (φρονοῦντες - to judge/discriminate and look on things the same way) - actively work at being convinced versus active indifference

B. Ranking others above yourself - how the previous instruction is to be achieved - vs. 3-4

1. The “motives” to be actively avoided/excluded (not allowed) - vs. 3

a. Nothing is to be done with the purpose or motive of ἐπιθειάν (self-ambition to win-out against someone (driven by competitive strife))

Barnes b. “This command forbids us to do anything, or attempt anything as the mere result of strife.”

Strife of this sort can also be traced back to a perceived “right” being infringed upon or challenged

— c. A good deal of conflict finds its roots in various forms of inappropriate competition (and this “attached to” our pride or protection of our “self-image”)

d. The “nothing” is all-inclusive - there are no exceptions - self-pride MUST be reined-in and **we are not at liberty to play the role of a partisan for ourselves** - we must not be narcissistic (inflating our own value/significance) - narcissists are threatened by other narcissists (and conflict will assuredly arise when one is not subservient to the other)

e. Lenski, in translating this verse and trying to give a better idea of it in its context wrote, “not one (or: none) in according with self-seeking (see 1:17) or in accord with vainglory” - this helps see another way this could be mutually acceptable in a group - to accept the idea of everyone understanding that “self-interests” are to be first priority

see also Gal. 5:26

These deal with self-promotion with a motive to equal or surpass others - this competes with the glory of God which, in all cases, is wrong

f. Then there is “κενοδοξίαν” literally picturing empty/hollow glory - it is a “show” of significance without actual content (artificial) - this is usually practiced by means of empty-bragging (which most bragging about self is, full of embellishments or the exclusion of the innumerable helps we received for any accomplishments)

2. The “motives” to be actively pursued and practiced - vs. 3-4

An acute awareness of ourselves as we naturally are before God is needed to have this quality of proper self-assessment

a. In contrast to self-focused pride, be “humble” (the having a humble opinion of oneself; a deep sense of one’s (moral) littleness...) - this isn’t describing a “being humbled”, but more a way of thinking/considering yourself inwardly

b. This does not describe a “great” person who humbles himself - it describes a proper self-image of who/what we are before God - **it’s an accurate estimation**

We often do reckon ourselves as of more value than others because we compare our “deeds”, social standing, education, wealth, appearance and so on with others and then, typically, skew the “values” in our favor

c. How can one realistically evaluate themselves above others, when we are all what we are totally by the grace of God - seen through the Truth of God’s Word, pride is absurd!

d. Such a one will not find it unreasonable to estimate the value of others as above themselves (for how can we, of our own authority, ascribe value to ourselves - and that as higher than another?)

So many of the hardest times of our lives come when confronted with the reality that our significance is highly overrated - this then should set us up to find significance in Christ

e. Society has long been countering this quality by proclaiming and teaching the importance of a “healthy self image” - this fails to take into account the devastation that comes, either from having the **truth** revealed (through circumstances, or some other means, or other people) - this lends to significant bouts of depression, revealing that contentment was based upon a false premise (“I deserve better” for instance)

The “Lost” are lost in so many ways! Their solutions never lend to a lasting, irrefutable “fix” - this also should provoke compassion in us (seeing their blind condition that they cannot see themselves)

f. It is common to counter depression in another, by offering words or ideas that lend to their inherent value (which inwardly they know they really don’t have, but long to have) - this is not a lasting answer, as the only way to deal with this inward, proper assessment of ourselves is to find value “in Christ” (Who earned it (value) legitimately/legally - and is why we come to love to read/hear its details)

compare this to Eph. 5:6-8 - we are never to be fundamentally motivated by the pursuit of the praise of man

g. “Instead of fixing your eyes on those points in which you excel, fix them on those in which your neighbor excels you: this is true “humility.”” JFB

h. “But what if others let me praise them and I don’t get it reciprocated?” - this fear is also based in pride - if our focus is the glory of God and not our “empty conceit”, we will edify others without thought of “need” to be praised in it

Especially with those that are “offensive” we must look upon their need for “good treatment” as being higher than ours

i. We are to look on others as more important than ourselves - think of what we would “put-up with” in each other if we were so inclined! - try to consider how many offenses we allow in ourselves because we expect we have the right to be dealt with as if having greater value/importance

j. “Humility dispels the self-importance which is continually taking and asserting the measure of its own claims, when it comes into contact with others.” - Eadie

Don't be so focused on looking after your own things and matters, but live also looking after those of others - expect it - don't treat it as exceptional but as normal

k. The ESV captures well the meaning of verse 4, "Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others." - the idea is that no act is devoted solely to self (at all), but that in the taking care of self, we expect to care for others also - we actually are our "brother's keeper"! - compare this to 2:21 and I Cor. 10:23-24

l. This also seems reasonable, seeing we "esteem them" above ourselves - we show our high estimation of others when looking out for their needs (little and great, spiritual and practical)

m. Before we begin to look to reason around any one of these points, we must realize the ultimate example, thus the ultimate motivation, we have in what Christ did Himself - our neglect of the aforementioned qualities demonstrates our lower value of our Lord's authority - how can we estimate that what He did is "beneath us"?

C. Follow the supreme example (in working out what he had just given)- Jesus is the "blueprint" - vs. 5-11

1. MUCH has been written on the following verses, especially trying to work out the wording Paul uses and whether or not it brings into question any aspect of the deity (divine nature) of Christ

In Colossians 2:9 we see Paul making it clear that in Christ, the "fullness of the Deity dwells" (the Godhead) - He essentially added a "form" to His nature but lost nothing of His nature

a. We must keep in mind, Jesus lost NOTHING of His divine nature when he "came in the flesh"

b. We do have a source of information for our "Christology", but the purpose and context were written to support and demonstrate what Paul had been instructing the Philippian to do - this helps us stay "on track" and not to be so distracted that we miss the point

c. "... though he took that which he had not before, he lost nothing of what he had; the glory of his divine nature was covered..." Gill

Such pursuits have opened the door of questioning Jesus Deity which has led to centuries of (some slow some fast) lessening of the significance of who Jesus was and who it was that paid for our sin - this goes to the core of our salvation one way or another!

d. There have been two competing ideologies over the centuries - one holding to concepts that have Christ giving up His divinity in becoming man and the other having His humanity only being a facade (that He was not truly human) - neither is correct or necessary

e. Both willing to compromise this text/context to make other points, or to explain other questions - so much has been lost in the pursuit to answer difficult concepts to *their* personal satisfaction - some of these cannot be answered to our satisfaction (nor should they be) - how He did what He did need not be known

2. The point/instruction is for them to have the same "mind" as Christ did in His incarnation - vs. 5

The same genuine humility that the Lord lived is necessary to have the unity Paul was challenging them to

a. The same "attitude" which Jesus also had (in Him) is to be in all of them - mimic it!

b. In other words, think like He did - be inwardly "driven" to do the same

c. This NEEDS to be a way of thinking, and using the Lord as the example should disarm any of the arguments we may look to get around this humble attitude

d. This "mind" is to be implemented "amongst yourselves" - **all** in the Church are called to humility of heart/mind/action

3. The "humble form" of Christ - vs. 6-7 (versus the elevated "forms" mankind instinctively pursues)

μορφή is used because Paul will make a point regarding His "form" (how he outwardly appeared (humbly))

a. "ὅς ἐν μορφῇ Θεοῦ ὑπάρχων" - "Who, in the form of God existing" - the present tense should not be handled as though it was true at one point and then ceased at His incarnation - it was *He who being (always and forever) the image/form of God*

b. Jesus Christ had infinite credentials - He did not "regard equality with God a thing to be grasped" - men who sought to be great (and gods) were characterized as grasping for "god-ness"

c. Christ did the opposite! He stooped to become man while man strove to become God - and it is this inward pride in us that Paul seeks to effectively counter - our pride becomes such a protected entity that we do not see how it is exercised in our lives/decisions

Pride needs to be revealed for what it is by using the Lord's example - we "write-off" so many needful things because they do not appease our pride

d. And being in such a "state" of glory, He "emptied Himself" - this, as is clarified in the next phrase, does not describe or indicate His loss of divinity - notice carefully the wording;

"ἐαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν μορφὴν δούλου λαβὼν" (Himself emptied, a form of a slave He took)

e. This "form" was only possible by being made in the "likeness of man" - not only did He become a man, but the man He was, was not high and lofty but was a slave (so characterized because He came not to be served but to serve)

So this "form" hid from others view, was His divine glory; and even the human form He took was that of someone low in the status/classes of mankind

f. He did not come to elevate the slave out of slavery, but to exalt the position and posture of a slave (and how they look at life - not for self but for others) - **even in Heaven and the New Earth, glory will not be seen in rank but in service**

g. The Philippian Christians needed to see that this was what the God Who created all things did in His own creation - this was not because the creation was "above" Him in any way in that His love of us elevated us above Him, but that such humility is the ideal "mind"

So, contrary to our natural thinking, there is “glory” in the “form of a servant” - certainly not man’s glory, but God’s (which is why we should be so inclined to do the same)

h. The focus and purpose of this text is not to take away from the divinity of Christ (or even His glory), but to stress/demonstrate the significance of the choice of the “form” He chose to put on - of all “uniforms of service” to “put on”, He chose this one! Therefore, it deserves special attention

i. “His emptying Himself presupposes His previous plenitude of Godhead (Joh_1:14; Col_1:19; Col_2:9). He remained full of this; yet He bore Himself as if He were empty.” JFB

4. “Found in Human form...” - vs. 8

As prophesied in Isa. 53:2, He would not stand out as a particularly attractive/impressive man

He, of course, was outstanding in His character and conduct, but Paul is demonstrating His appearance and humility (neither of which is designed to draw undue attention (for pride) to one’s self)

He humbled himself - this also is an example of how we should approach life; humbling self (rather than exalting self or waiting till God or others humble us - it is to be active on our part)

“obedient unto death” also indicates He was obedient from birth to death

So, any “flirting” with the notion that we need not obey (disobedience (active and passive)) is not excusable - we, as now being “in Christ”, are automatically followers of Him

a. It is interesting to see the usage of the word “εὑρεθεις” (found) - why say it this way?

Even this adds to the points being stressed about Jesus Christ - He was “found” and not showcased in His being in the “form of man” - too many follow their instincts to look for what “stands out” in life (what is naturally popular) in choosing what they will follow and admire - if we realize we serve the Lord, we rest in the fact that He sees and knows all and we need not, nor would we, strive to get the notice (popularity) of those around us

b. So the idea is something like, “And He (the Son of God, God incarnate) was discovered to be (of all places) a man (the “σχήματι” (schema), as a man because he looked, acted and encountered life as other people would) - He came across (without detailed scrutiny) as any other man would come across

c. Then as a man, He further “humbled Himself” by obeying - He came to serve God in serving mankind and by obeying the Law He had established

d. “Should it be said that, if he was God himself, he must have been himself the lawgiver, we may reply that this rendered his obedience all the more wonderful and all the more meritorious. If a monarch should for an important purpose place himself in a position to obey his own laws, nothing could show in a more striking manner their importance in his view. The highest honor that has been shown to the Law of God on earth was, that it was perfectly observed by him who made the Law - the great Mediator.” Barnes

e. More precisely though, He became obedient to the point of death - this is the pinnacle of obedience (one could not go farther in degree) - most stop, fall short of death in their pursuit of obedience (finding it difficult to be inconvenienced or discomfited)

f. “even death on a cross” - from the highest ranks and glories of Heaven, to the lowest position on Earth - a painful, shameful death as a criminal - this demonstrates God’s mighty power at work in the lowest “rankings” that man could imagine - the cross was associated with criminals, societal rejects, conquered foes, enemies of society as well as torment (all points of pain packaged into an instance, a place, a symbol)

5. God honors most what honors Him most - vs. 9-11

We do not expect to be exalted as “high” as Christ, but part of the point of this text is that God will “do well” with and to such character - this is to help us to humble ourselves and obey calculating that it will be “more than worth it” even though the present moment it will not “feel” like it

If not “Yahweh/I AM” then possibly “Lord” - see John 17:11-12 for Jesus’ reference to the “name” He shares with the Father

“Jesus” is not “the name” but “Jesus” is now associated with it (which is why it would be wise not to name our children “Jesus” - we honor it too much)

“Lord” indicating He is over all - do we live as those representing this reality now?

a. If this was said of any creature it would be blasphemous pride - when spoken of God (in all His perfections), it is glorious motivation for us

b. So much significance is packed into this little Greek word διὸ (therefore) - we could say, “because of this” (because of what He did), God elevated Him over and above all else

c. Again, the emphasis and purpose of informing the Philippians of all this was to demonstrate God’s value on such qualities and obedience and how He honors its usage/implementation - God “exalts beyond measure” and “honors” such (αὐτὸν ὑπερύψωσεν, καὶ ἐχαρίσατο - “he raised exceedingly high and blessed” (with a name))

d. This is such an honored quality before God that He bestowed (blessed) Jesus with the “name which is above every name” (that being *Yahweh*) - His own name is now associated with such an attitude, action and qualities - no higher honor could possibly be given!

e. If this is truly believed, what a change it would cause in us! Self-promotion would now be offensive to us and appalling, realizing its blatant contradiction to what we really desire

f. So now, as a result, at the name of “Jesus” every knee will bow (because of what His obedience did to forever exalt the name of Jesus) - all those “in heaven, on earth and those under the earth” (there is no realm where this (He) will not be honored)

g. Every knee will bow and every tongue will agree (admit) that “Jesus Christ is Lord” - this effectively making it clear that there will be universal submission to Him with no physical opposition to it (knees bowed) and no possible argument against such a blatantly obvious truth (tongues confess)

Based on this standard for true glory, those seeking it for themselves can never have it - the "glory" comes not in the getting but in the giving

- h. So, the cycle completes itself - God the Father honors and exalts the Son and in so doing is glorified in the process - glory is uniquely found in the honoring of another (which is at the core of the intent of this section - 2:4, the "interests of others")
- i. The Father is also glorified in that it (the genius plan and flawless work and execution of it) was His will for Jesus came to do the will of the Father - John 5:30 - this should be our life objective also if we desire a life "for glory" (versus the "vain-glory" (empty) of the world)

D. "Prove yourselves" (prove who and what you actually are)- vs. 12-16

1. The idea of "proving" something often includes more than just demonstrating that something is real/genuine - sometimes it carries the idea to put something to the test to demonstrate what is actually there (which is in keeping with the context of this text)

"Working out salvation" in this verse is not working to bring it about - it is working at using it "working it out" what is actually/already there

- a. Often, the so-called attempts at "proving" something are really attempts at bringing something about (or making it appear that something is there that really is not)
- b. This is why, Paul here, addresses **the source** and not just the "proofs"

2. "So then", because of the clear and profound example of Christ, "work out your salvation with fear and trembling" - vs. 12

Obedience demonstrates the presence of submission, gratefulness and priority - we always obey something and often that something is ourselves (our desires, inclinations, purposes based in pride)

- a. This is and will be most clearly evidenced in "obedience" - Paul commends them that they "always obey" when he was with them, but even more so now that he is not with them
- b. This way of stating it not only sheds light on the key work of salvation (the resulting obedience), but also demonstrates the genuineness of it - for many obey when being watched by others (especially leadership), but the reality of it is seen when not being held immediately accountable (when disobedience might seem hidden)
- c. This is one of the highest evidences of spiritual maturity, when there is obedience without having to have someone push us or "guilt" us into obedience
- d. To "work out salvation" has nothing to do with working FOR salvation - the translation "work out" in English provides the correct idea - "work out what is already there" - the underlying word *κατεργάζεσθε* also pictures "doing" (as in using it), producing as a farmer would expect in utilizing the plants/trees he has in order to produce fruit
- e. It also should be stressed that to "work out" one's salvation is to bring it to its rightful end, which is in keeping with the phrase "with fear and trembling" (*φόβου καὶ τρόμου*) - it pictures one under the pressure to live up to something of high/reverent value - we might also phrase it something like "to its fullest potential" for it would be a dreadful thought to waste such a priceless commodity!

This makes sense, realizing the accountability that comes with such a gift and responsibility - we are not to look on salvation and being spared from condemnation (though that is the result), but more along the lines of "why was I spared?"

versus being "slackers"

- f. And, it is **our salvation** that we are "working out" - it is working **from** the beneficial, privileged and secure position we have been given - our strength/endurance, focus and resolve should be constant, realizing what we have and the source

3. Do this BECAUSE (for) God is at work in you - vs. 13

- a. What a motivation! Most would (as evidenced in religious circles today) motivate with offers of personal glory, promotion, future comforts or some other reward
- b. Yet, the motivational reason to be "working out" (exercising what's been given) is the revelation that God is at work "in you" - and that work isn't just empowerment, but the "willingness" also to do what we ought
- c. This working in us is exclusively for bringing about "His good pleasure" - literally, God **works** in us the desire (wish) so that we will **work** out His good will - this describes the reality that the core objective of the believer is to "live-out" who /what they are
- d. Why the exhortation to do anything then? The verse does not say or mean to indicate that God "makes" us do all that we do, just that the source of all working that is genuinely pleasing to God is from the gracing of God in us
- e. When the "fear and trembling" cease in regards to our God-given responsibilities, each of us tends to lose focus, misinterpret God's "good pleasure" or see His work in a self-glorifying way (which is what causes strife and discord with those supposedly in His work)
- f. Acting immediately on any conviction or clear direction from God's Word, should be at the forefront of our thinking - when not prioritizing God's grace at work in us (for the willing and the doing), we will naturally lessen focus on the "working out" of our salvation
- g. The grace of God is definitely working in us, but so are the remnants of the sin nature (as described in Romans 6)

"We will, but God works the will in us. We work, therefore, but God works the working in us" Augustine

If God is providing (working in me) a good desire, should I not be poised to be anticipating it and so poised to act on it before distraction or opportunity intervene?

Read II Tim.1:8-14



4. Prove yourselves above reproach in your generation - vs. 14-16

- a. The word for “prove” (NASB) is γένησθε, which is translated “be” (ESV) elsewhere, though “prove” is a good translation since it is in the middle voice - this is not just a grammatical logistic, but has bearing on our application
- b. One could make a case that we already are “blameless” in Christ before God, so this is already done - but the blamelessness and “innocence” (as children of God) needs to be demonstrated/proven before onlookers
- c. In light, then, of God being at work in us and those He has placed around watching us, we, as these Philippian Christians, should do ALL we do without “grumbling” and “disputing”
- d. “Murmuring” is a “complaining discontent” - we might say it something like “voicing frustrations” or “venting”, which these (and we) are not to do before those to whom we are to “shine as lights” - the Greek word is γογγυσμῶν and is onomatopoeic - this grumbling is a normal *part* of societies, but is not to be a *part* of us - it’s a destructive practice and poor testimony to grumble about God or each other
- e. This is in contrast to the second word διαλογισμῶν (open and “not hidden” quarreling) - this does not mean that there will not be disagreements, just that we are not allowed to come at them secretly, complaining to each other (and the unregenerate), as well as not openly arguing (with willful attitude) before the same
- f. The reason given is not to maintain the peace (though this is a by-product) - this is often put forward as a motive for doing what we do, but this is not the outcome (nor the motivation) we are striving for - peace can be maintained by other means (wrongful/detrimental compromises) and for other purposes (to avoid all conflict)
- g. Instead these Christians were instructed to leave these responses out of all they do to be “blameless and innocent” - in other words, they were to be above reproach (literally “free from fault”) and “sincere” (ἀκέραιοι - “unmixed”, not with sinful or selfish motives) - the first focuses on the external and the second on the internal
- h. The response might be (from us) that appearance is not **that** important and that if we are “read wrongly” by others “it’s their problem!” - but this is not supposed to be the case with us - we are to be attentive to how we come across to others and trying to be cautious and gracious - we will not always be able to “come across” to others in a way that they will not react to, but we (on our part) are working towards a persuasive approach, versus a “say it like it is” approach (without consideration of the person’s insight or maturity)
- i. We (as they) are the “children of God” and are, because of this, to sense the urgency to be “above reproach” (not for the sake of our pride, but for the sake of His name/reputation)
- j. The reason for such conduct is given by a contrast - we are to be “above reproach” in an age which is full of legitimate reproaches (crooked and perverse)! - so we won’t be able to excuse our impulsive responses out of “fairness”
- k. “μέσον γενεᾶς σκολιᾶς καὶ διεστραμμένης” - “in the middle” (surrounded by) a generation (age) crooked (skewed, unfair) and perverted (“twisted” in how they see/conclude things) and as such, are then immoral and are given over to a “reprobate (depraved) mind” (Rom. 1:28)
- l. It is in this setting (portrayed accurately), that they “shine/appear as lights” (points of light surrounded by darkness) - as the stars contrast their “setting” so we are to contrast ours - it might be an allusion also to how the stars were used to navigate by seamen (fixed points of reference when all else around them was fluctuating)
- m. **Secretive “grumbling” and open “quarreling” would detract from this distinction!**
- n. Instead, “hold out” (“put forward”) the “word of life” (the “word” that leads to/brings life to the hearer/believer) - the Gospel (unadulterated) and all that accompanies it, and supports it in the Bible, is to be held in prominence and promoted above all else (especially ourselves and our own ideas of salvation or purpose) - there is the necessity, though, of “holding fast” the Word of Life (as in holding on to it that it might not be lost (to us) or let go) - it is “clung to” while other “thought foundations” (philosophies) are let go or avoided (not handled) - see Rom. 12:9 - cling to what is good, abhor what is “evil”
- o. Paul’s personal reason (in having his “joy fulfilled”) - **a productive life**

We are often so focused on the truth of our position before God, we disregard the significance of our appearance before those around us

This word pictures a quiet (as if trying to hide it) complaining

Spur of the moment reactions are a good description of what is being addressed - well formulated responses (considering others of value) are what we pursue

One of the reasons is to not give others a “wrong” to focus on - not so that we can look “perfect” and promote our righteousness, but so as not to distract from the “word of life” to be mentioned in verse 16

compare this to II Timothy 2:22-26 where Paul gives direction to Timothy in how to be persuasive and not quarrelsome in his approach - again, this is not compromising the truth to avoid conflict, but avoiding pride to sincerely convince

A Godless society will always be looking to excuse their conduct/conscience by pointing to the inconsistencies of Christians

We are to realize we live in an age that we are to contrast and not blend-in or conform to (see Mt. 5:13-16)

We are not to look to hide our light for any reason, for this would be contradictory to our purpose (which is what Paul is pointing the Philippian Christians back to so they don’t lose perspective)

“holding forth” by “holding fast” (securely) the Word for any other means/message has no efficacy to save or enlighten

The reason we do what we do is our “philosophy” - when analyzed these are often proven to be in opposition to “the Word of Life”



This “glorying” is not personal pride on display, but the boasting in the rightness of God in contrast to all the other priorities and ideologies that compete for our focus and the core influence of our values system

There are endless facades produced in religious circles to construct and maintain the appearance of spirituality and morality but they are empty of reality and value - God may graciously allow us to see these for what they are before we waste our resources on them

- p. Paul lived his life with a focus on “the day of Christ” and the accounting of what he did with what he was given before the Lord - he worked hard (“run” and “toil”) with the expectation that he could “glory” in the value of what was actually done - this is a standard that will not be measurable this side of eternity, though there are some signs of its lasting value in the changes the “Word of Life” produces in others
- q. II Cor. 1:14 Paul makes a statement along these same lines and demonstrates that there will be a focus in “the day of Christ” on how we were used by God for the directing of others, they with us, and the result of the effected change - this will be something we “glory” in on that day!
- r. The desire is that there be solid evidence that his “run” and laboring (work) have not been “κενόν” (vain, hallow, empty) - he was not working for the appearance of “eternal success” but the reality of it - but the “real thing” is not ever easy and takes time, patience and will exhaust our energies (and self)
- s. What Paul was stressing and “pushing” was very hard and would never be popular - but **the focus was on the quality and not the “packaging”!**
- t. To see in them an unswerving, obedient selflessness (evidenced with each other placed first) would be deeply encouraging to him, as such evidence of the genuineness of true Christ-likeness in them (which is what he was after in his life work)

IV. Seeking After the Interests of Christ Jesus - 2:17-30

A. In this next section, Paul writes of why he sent them Epaphroditus and would later be sending to them Timothy - he was concerned for their encouragement, not a “general happiness” but an encouragement in staying faithful to who/what they are

- 1. He would be doing this in preparation for either way the Lord would use him (either as a “drink offering” or in freeing him to see them again) - either way, he was working to keep them sustained, encouraged and focused
- 2. Though, there were only these two (of what was his “team” at the time) that he could send to them, because the others were seeking “after their own interests”

B. “If I am being poured out as a drink offering...” - vs. 17-18

- 1. The word “σπένδομαι” is a reference to a smaller sacrifice (a “drink offering”) that often accompanied an animal sacrifice - it was poured on or around the sacrifice as it was being offered
 - a. Paul, dealing with the possibility that he would be put to death before he would see them again, compares his execution to this symbol
 - b. The sacrifice would be “the sacrifice and service of your faith” - this carries a few ideas - first, his death would be further confirmation of “the faith” he had been sharing with them (and teaching), **further proving its validity to them with his own blood**
 - c. Second, that his death would be a “sacrifice” on both their parts (his loss of life, their loss of him (a friend and teacher)), and yet should be looked upon with joy - he would not only “joy” in it (completely trusting the Lord’s sovereignty in the matter), but could anticipate sharing the joy (that they too would be positively motivated) - the loss of a spiritual leader (in death) can be used to motivate to action, to “take up the slack” with zeal and renewed commitment
 - d. The phrase “χαίρω καὶ συνηαίρω πᾶσιν ὑμῖν” (I rejoice and congratulate (rejoice with) all of you) is an interesting way of stating it - the idea of “congratulating” is correct and can easily indicate the joyful handing off the “mantle” (responsibility) to another
 - e. Third, Paul would “get to” be such an honored “drink offering” of the validity of their “sacrifice and service” of their faith (that **he was honored to die in association with their sacrifices and services** to the Lord (and even as they sacrificed and served for him (Paul)))
- 2. So, “you too” he tells them, should “rejoice in the same way” - vs. 18
 - a. That they may get to “be sacrificed” the same way for/with each other
 - b. As Christians, we are together in the highest of callings and responsibilities there are to be had on this Earth! This should (as Paul has been stressing) cause us to evaluate each other of highest worth (at least in light of concepts such as these)
 - c. Keep “the ministry” about the Lord and others and not self - sacrifice is opportunity!

Any who are able to get to share the Gospel/Faith should look to also be used to suffer for it, acting as further validation to those we were blessed to influence

We ought to note that when speaking of this sacrifice he might face, his thoughts were not just on “the cause” but on the people themselves - we are prone to disassociate those we are led to serve with the Truth from the work itself (as though they are not “the work” somehow - it is true, we are not dependent on others, but “others” are the “work” - we cannot “write off” those we are called to influence, but expect to sacrifice for and with them

There are varying degrees of sadness and some worse than the news or realization of death - faithfulness unto death is ultimately stirring! Cowardice compromise is typical

- d. Paul's recommendation that they be "glad" with him also seems too much for some to accept - how could they be glad if he is executed? No doubt, when he was killed there were tears, but along with it an encouraging realization that he did not "recant" or face it with regret - such a posture lends tremendous courage (encouragement) to these even when saddened by the events
- e. Sadness and grief must never be seen as an end to our rejoicing, for "in everything give thanks" and "rejoice evermore" (I Thes. 5:16, 18) - we live with the truth of God's control and purposes being unstoppable

C. Continuing on in spite of challenges - vs. 19-30

1. "Hope in the Lord..." - vs 19 - even though Paul was facing a strong possibility of death (soon), he still planned and labored as though he would/could have more time

Love "hopes all things", anticipates the best in others - many in our day don't do well because very little is expected of them - some are so braced for disappointment that they live for the failures of others before they happen (and partly contribute to them)

Hope in the Lord is the only way to effectively deal with disappointments we will face throughout life

- a. He "hoped" (expected) to be able to send Timothy to them shortly, no doubt as a point of comfort/challenge to them, but most of all (as he directly states) that he could be encouraged of news of how they were doing - he expected, then, that they would be faithful and that the news would be good
- b. With the concept of death "looming", he was not distracted in the use of his time - part of being "faithful unto death" is not only being faithful to the willingness to die, but to be faithful (working) till the day we die
- c. Expectations (hopes) must be couched "in the Lord Jesus" since He knows what really is best - this is the best place for these hopes, because if they do not work out as we "hoped", we know it was genuinely for the best

2. Timothy, as an ideal minister, would genuinely care for them - vs. 20-24

ισόψυχον having the idea of being alike in spirit, thought and passion - likeness because of the work of Christ, not for shallow or temporal reasons

This excludes Luke and Epaphroditus - the "all" (in context) describes those at Paul's disposal

see II Tim. 4:10,16

"Few come to the help of the Lord's cause, where ease, fame, and gain have to be sacrificed. Most help only when Christ's gain is compatible with their own." JFB

This standard of measurement will be seen for what it is at the Judgment Seat of Christ - but the opportunities will have come and gone by then

compare to Pro. 20:6-7

Such encouragement is needed by believers also, so the work Timothy was being sent to do, for believers, was still a part of the Gospel

- a. Paul commends Timothy a few different ways - sometimes we show the value of others in the value of what we share with them (in this case, sharing Timothy)
- b. Paul is sending him primarily, because there is no one else that could care for them to the same degree Paul himself would - He was confident because he and Timothy were "like-minded" - not necessarily that they "think alike", but that they were both motivated the same way, "driven" by the same source
- c. It is telling also that Paul uses the adverb γνησίως (naturally, genuinely, honorably) to describe the quality of care he (Timothy) would have for them - Timothy's concern for them was not contrived/forced/pretended - this illustrates the reality that ministry to others can be done without "heart" and genuineness (a type of hypocrisy)
- d. This was also key realizing that Paul had no other one (with him or near him in Rome) that he could send to check on them and assist - the reason he could not is particularly sad - **"For they all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ"**
- e. It looks fairly clear that Paul was displeased with the Christians in Rome (as referenced in chapter 1, some were competitive, and now it looks like they were characterized as being more taken with their own comforts and interests than those of Christ's)
- f. The phrase ἐαυτῶν ζητοῦσιν (of themselves (theirs) they seek after, desire) shows the problem - they were self-focused - their priorities (thus their decisions) were based off of what fell into their self-determined category of "what's in it for me?" - this small phrase sums up the greatest practical challenge/distraction to true Christian service
- g. This also demonstrates the lack of the "opportunity lost" motivation with those who were with Paul in Rome - any service for the Lord is of eternal value, but quite often the temporal opportunities are more alluring and seen to be of greater value (at least in the moment)
 - This is a result of not valuing others above self - "self" outranks all others!
- h. Timothy is contrasted to those "seeking their own" - he was of "proven worth" - he was δοκιμήν, found to be genuine through "proof" and not just lip-service or hopeful flattery - Timothy had been with Paul in Phillippi (Acts 16:3-13)
- i. Paul compares him to a child serving (as a slave) with his father, and in this case, for the purposes related to the proclamation and teaching of the Gospel - it should be remembered also that the encouragement of the "Gospel" is not just at salvation, but includes the ongoing encouragement throughout life
- j. Timothy was characterized as one ready to do **anything** for the sake of the Gospel



Freedom from prison for Paul did not mean freedom to take it easy, but to be freed to get back to what he was there to do - serve!

- k. Paul's trust was in the Lord as to whether or not he would get to come see them again, but no matter what, Timothy would come bring news of the outcome - his confidence was in the Lord, so his outlook was on what the Lord would have him to do
- l. Timothy would go either way, so Paul was preparing for whatever the Lord would have done to him (free him or have him executed) - this is an excellent example of how we should look on God's work; never dependent on us, always progressing with or without us, but longing it to be WITH us!

3. The "treasure" of Epaphroditus "shared-back" with the Philippian Church - vs. 25-30

We are all family in Christ, but those who serve Him in like-mind and heart and together often become closer than all other relationships

Here is a term that seems lost to modern Christianity - it pictures an aggression "for the cause" and an expectation of the "fight" - it is a term that recognizes one's position while here and that the war is ongoing - so, no one in such a state "entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life" - II Tim. 2:4

Singular focus (by churches) on evangelism leaves the church anemic and malnourished (lack of "food"), discouraged because of a lack of genuine growth (not in numbers but in spirit, maturity and direction)

This should be the core work of the church throughout our existence here

And such is at the heart of true believers - we find ourselves more distressed at the distress of others than for ourselves - he did not want them "anxious" at all because of him

It certainly appears that Paul could not heal him - "miracles" were not for this purpose

Where is such motivation and concern today in our ministries? There seems to be less concern about others spiritual/mental well-being and more on personal comfort and profit - there is more "anxiety" over potential personal loss/discomfort than even of others leaving the faith! This is inexcusable!!

- a. Paul was sending Epaphroditus (right away) back to them, most likely being the bearer of this letter to them - Paul commends him in highest terms
- b. To Paul he was truly a "brother" (not just an affixed term to be used, but genuinely expressed) - because of uses like this, many have the practice to call other believers "brother" (which is not wrong), but often loses its significance
- c. For Paul, he was also a "fellow worker" (συνεργὸν - a sharer in the work/load) - few throughout the ages have truly been co-workers in the work of Christ, seeking rather to be "the ministry" themselves than to minister
- d. One of the highest descriptions Paul could give was "fellow soldier" (one who had been, and still was in the "fight" with him) - this carries the idea of bravery/courage, and one willing to risk what was most valuable on this earth
- e. From the Philippians, Epaphroditus was their "apostle" (messenger - "ἀπόστολον" one they had **sent out** to work with Paul) - such a position/work should still be sought for in churches now - would it work if we recognized each other (in our local church) as ones sent out each week to where we live and work, doing the work of the Lord under the "commission" of the church? - Each week a "missionary journey"?
- f. He was also their "minister" to Paul - the underlying word λειτουργὸν typically had the idea of religious service - he was a minister to ministers - this was actually one of the most common "works" of the early church; many see it as evangelizing the "lost" (which was a part of the work), but the bulk of what we read in the New testament is service and exhortation to churches/believers
- g. As a local group of believers (church) we should strive for each of these terms to "fit" us always - **brothers** (because of Christ) **working together** (lives of responsibility), **standing together** with each other **against the oppositions** that will come from all directions - and as such a group, we **send one another out** as with a commission in the Lord's work, each week with a **focus to** serve those God sends our way
- h. One of the reasons for Paul sending him back to them so soon was motivated by his desire to see them again in order to encourage them (in light of his "distress"), realizing it would cause them to be discouraged - his burden was elevated with the thought that his church family would be disheartened at his severe sickness
- i. Epaphroditus had become ill "near death" - Paul expresses gratefulness for the "mercy of God" in this case (for death is deserved, but he was spared) - Paul saw it as a "mercy" on himself also because his death would have added "sorrow upon sorrow" (most likely adding greater sorrow to his imprisonment and those looking to antagonize him while there)
- j. It is interesting to picture Paul, a Godly man, in the capital of the secular, Godless world desiring such points of encouragement - he was certain of God's sovereignty and was still driven by the concerns for others - belief in God's absolute sovereignty does not produce a stoic fatalism - the heart is still fully engaged!
- k. So, he sent him all the more "eagerly" (hurriedly) for two reasons - that they could have their concerns eased (and be encouraged at his arrival), and second, with their being encouraged, Paul could be at ease, less concerned for them (now that he would be assured they were being cared for) - many, who are focused on their own objectives **become unfaithful**, and that **to the detriment of others**
- l. "Receive him" and "esteem such in high regard" - it is speculated that they might have thought low of him (initially) for returning early and not staying with Paul - but because of his genuine testimony, they were to welcome him and in doing so, take care of him



Many types of people are honored in churches but so many are not honorable in comparison to what Paul puts forward here

Such is in keeping with the selflessness of Christ (which is a theme being stressed) - for the honor associated with the work of Christ, one's life is not held dear because His work far outweighs the value of this life

Such produces a mutual motivation, one "playing off" the other - this seems harder to find in our day as so many "seek after their own interests and not those of Christ

- m. Those that are willing to "risk" all for the cause of Christ, and that act upon it, are those most certainly worthy of "honor" (ἐντίμους - held as of greatest value) - this is essential for replication, for whatever is held up as of the highest value in a group will be imitated
- n. "ὅτι διὰ τὸ ἔργον Χριστοῦ μέχρι θανάτου ἡγγισεν παραβολευσάμενος τῇ ψυχῇ" - "For through/because of the work of Christ, as far as death, he hazarded his life" - it should be noted that the word for "hazarded" carries the idea of disregarding caution, and so exposing himself to danger
- o. In expanding on the phrase "to complete was deficient in your service to me", F.F. Bruce translated it as, "in his eagerness to discharge fully that service which you would have all liked to render, but could not because you were not with me."
- p. The camaraderie between Paul and the Philippians was clear - they liked to be with each other, and Paul loved the thought (as expressed especially in the first chapter) of ministering WITH them - so much of the grace of God is evident and exercised in the encouragement we get by being with others of *like faith, like "drive" and like commitment*

V. "Pressing Onward To The Goal" Staying Focused Beyond This Life - 3:1-21

A. "Rejoice in the Lord" - Paul begins with "Τὸ λοιπὸν" which is often translated "Finally" but also contains the idea "as for the rest" (of what I will write) - the "rest" involves warnings and examples

1. This theme (of joy and rejoicing) is emphasized in this letter often and is a safeguard for them - vs. 1

Proper "joy" is a strong defense because the enemies to the Truth often utilize discontentment - contentment is an *active objective for us to pursue*

In keeping with the context also, don't rejoice in self -- discontent with self is not "fixed" with a more aggressive pursuit of self!

- a. The word for "rejoice" (χαίρετε) not only depicts gladness, but also that which one "leans toward", is "disposed to follow after" (as we would use "enjoy")
- b. *So many errors and missteps and falls begin with dissatisfaction and a pursuit to find enjoyment and contentment elsewhere (out side the Lord and not "in the Lord")*
- c. This joy is "in the Lord" in that whatever is associated with Him, His work for us and our work for Him, will keep us properly focused (ignoring strategically placed distractions)
- d. We may need to be "weaned" off of other areas of enjoyment (joy) - this is partly why Paul is about to firmly put forward three short and direct imperatives

2. Paul points out that he is about to repeat himself (and the benefit of repetition)

Some, (lacking love) grow weary of repeating good truth - but this fails to consider the various states of growth/maturity of those around us

Paul was assuring them that he was sincerely patient, and that his repetition was not out of frustration - his concern (as it so often is with parents) shows itself in repetitious warnings

- a. There is some debate as to what he is repeating (the command to "rejoice" or that the warnings he is about to give he already had given them sometime previously) - either works
- b. For him to repeat truths and instructions was "not trouble" to himself - he was not impatient, not expecting them to have retained everything he had shared with them
- c. Paul would not tire of it also because for them, such instruction would act as a "safeguard" for them - *forgetfulness often proves itself to be a dangerous problem* - each is prone to forget, and we often forget that we forget! (which is why so many don't think they need to keep learning, reading, studying and hearing the Word of God)
- d. The word for "trouble" (ὀκνηρόν) is also translated as "slothful" or "slow" - Vincent in his word studies wrote, "It is the vexation arising from weary waiting..." (impatience)

B. Be on the lookout for dangerous, distracting influences, remembering who you are - vs. 2-3

1. Beware (on the lookout for) "dogs", "evildoers", and "mutilators of the flesh"

We know this because of the reference to circumcision in verse 2 (as a counter to the "mutilators of the flesh")

These Judaizers made themselves authorities and developed a mixture of Law and some of what Christ taught to persuade others away from the Truth

These were also marked by pride, putting-forth an exclusive group, driven partly by partiality

This word for evil/bad carries the core idea of "worthless"

- a. These three words are used to describe, essentially, the same group - the "Judaizers"
- b. This was a group that often followed after the Apostles, looking to bring back Christian converts to various aspects of the Law as a part of their salvation; or the "keeping" of it
- c. The reference to "dogs" was commonly used in Jewish circles to describe Gentiles (or excommunicated Jews) - it was used by them to stress that these were not "part of the chosen" - Paul uses the same term (sternly) that they use to describe others, back on themselves - clearly Paul thought very lowly of this group of deceivers!
- d. These were those that Paul looked upon as vile, and in his present imperative "Βλέπετε" he is instructing them not only to lookout for them, but to "look at them"! (as in looking to make it clear, these are not those you would want to be part of)
- e. These were also, even though seeming "Law uplifters", evildoers, "κακοὺς ἐργάτας" evil workers/laborers - they worked at doing evil and the quality of their works was "inwardly foul, rotten (poisoned)" - it describes that which brings injury/harm (though its intent is often not seen because their "works" are marketed as moral, kind, sympathetic)



It was literally "Jewishness" that was pushed - it would be like someone trying to equate "Americanism" as being a part in one becoming and being "saved"

Circumcision provided for these a tradition, a ritual, to provide a place for their converts to look to for their "salvation" - this was not of grace

The Jews at this point had lost sight of all that the Old Covenant stood for - circumcision had just become a ritual, and exclusive "sign" that no longer pointed to God's covenant with them, but their own righteousness (see Rom. 4:11-12)

This is in line with what the Lord stated in John 4:23-24

Beware of what is motivated by seeking self-recognition (especially in religious circles with religious measures of comparison)

It appears as though many will not "serve" of "sacrifice" without being honored - ministries have caught on to this and cater to it rather than avoid and denounce it

Read Gal. 6:12-13 where Paul warned against those who would motivate you with mutual "boasting in the flesh" - on this text Vincent wrote, "They desire only that you, like them, should make a fair show in the flesh."

And of such priorities even the "Church" has again become enamored and found ways to re-institute them as ministerial and spiritual priorities (comparing themselves among themselves)

So don't be envious of such or be intimidated by it either

- f. As seen in these "Judaizers", evil works can be very religious-looking on the outside, and these could use (and did use) Scripture - these are often very dangerous, not because they use Scripture, but because they use it out of context, in a distorted way, lending supposed authority to error
- g. These descriptions were brought to a peak by use of the phrase "those who mutilate the flesh" (or "false circumcision" (NASB)) - this was stated as such because, without the actual underlying significance, their practice was just a needless cutting
- h. "The natural mind loves outward fetters, and is apt to forge them for itself, to stand in lieu of holiness of heart." JFB - see Gal. 5:1-9, and Gal. 3:1-11, both texts demonstrating Paul's response to the after affects and influence of the Judaizers

2. The reason to be "on the lookout" for such, is because they are the opposite of who/what we really are (and should not be an influence upon us) - v. 3

- a. For "WE are the circumcision" (and they are not) - circumcision was the covenant sign/symbol between God and Israel - it demonstrated they were set apart to God, and was a physical symbol until now (when replaced by the Holy Spirit of God becoming our "covenant sign" (seal) and He being what sets us aside) - see also Col. 2:8-15
- b. This once unique sign of God's people was now "owned" by those who are the people of God in Christ, characterized by "serving in the Spirit of God" - the word λατρεύοντες is a word that describes religious service - our "worship" is not now the formal traditions of rituals, but is one, by God's Spirit Himself, that we do everyday, in all walks of life (not defined by or limited to a place and traditions)
- c. We, then, are to be characterized as **those who live-out our service** and don't (as the Judaizers) limit it to formal religious services - it's in "spirit" and founded on Truth
- d. We are also characterized by boasting in Christ, versus those who would boast in themselves - what we "glory in" (honor the highest) will be what we pursue most in life
- e. The majority of "religious distractions" that will be faced (tempting us to various forms of spiritual pride), can be warded-off with a focus set on the magnificence of the work of Christ (in contrast to **no merit of my own**) - too much of "Christianity" is motivated by self-promotion, and it seems to be harder to find those motivated to worship and serve without needing some form of "moral flattery"
- f. Because "we" are to be so focused on the glory of the work of Christ, we are also to be characterized as those who place no confidence (πεποιθότες - to be persuaded and so led by) in the "flesh" - the "flesh" from a personal perspective, would be in reference to our natural inclinations, comforts and lusts/cravings/desires
- g. The danger of being persuaded by the influences of "the flesh" is that they build in us a "trust" of such influences - once such trust is ingrained, we begin to measure everything by it (including the Scripture) and its relevance and use is seen only in as so far it caters to any of the tenants and purposes of "worldly" priorities
- h. Paul's usage of this concept is seen in his personal example of how he could (more than they all) place his confidence in the flesh - he will go on to list his earthly credentials, all of which, in his "circles" would be enviable and recognized as not only advantages, but clear marks of success

C. Giving-up the fleeting glories (and the pursuit of them) with the purpose to "gain" Christ - vs. 4-11

1. Paul, compared to these Judaizers, could easily outdo them with his credentials

Many would have considered themselves so fortunate (or lucky) to have these, that they would have felt a sense of obligation to utilize them to their fullest extent - yet Paul is about to toss these aside for something infinitely greater

- a. Paul had what would have been considered the best possible credentials in his "circle"
- b. What he could claim as his own was a list many would have envied - the first he lists (his circumcision, his nationality, his tribe in Israel and his pure bloodline) were all characteristics he received without any effort on his part
- c. Paul, having reached this pinnacle of achievement and station in life now acts as a witness that such pursuits and priorities are not worth the effort and investment
- d. Paul's wording of what he has is actually him indicating, "although I have confidence in the flesh", not that he is trusting in it, but that he has all that any of these bad influences could ever desire to have and he disregards it for a better purpose - if any are going to learn, they need to realize/trust he knows firsthand what he is talking about

2. Paul's "fortunate" credentials (those he received by birth) - vs. 5

No one could have taken pride in having had this sign (that was being promoted) more than he

In these "circles" he was born into privilege - he would have been expected to utilize these advantages for his own good

This was obviously more than just knowing about Christ - many know about Him and are not too impressed (as Paul) - those who come to know Him realize why nothing "competes"

He not only came from a pure stock but one that was traditionally recognized as more faithful/loyal

- a. He was "circumcised the eighth day" - this is mentioned first in contrast to one of the tenants the Judaizers were "pushing" - Paul received this covenant sign precisely how and when it was given to Abraham to do (Gen. 17:12)
- b. He was "true Jew" (genuinely of the line of Israel) - he could trace his lineage back to having no taint of Gentile (he was "Hebrew of Hebrew") - those promoting "Jewishness" as necessary in being (now) a true Christian, could not do better than Paul (yet he was now unimpressed and not "looking to it" as an advantage)
- c. Paul does not belittle these qualities/advantages as though they were worthless - he knew full well their worth - he had just been shown something far better! - advantages such as these (in society) are difficult not to focus on (and even live for) unless we realize what Paul came to realize "the surpassing value of knowing Christ"
- d. Understanding that Paul could not take credit for these advantages, they would have been something that could have been advantages showcased/flaunted - we have no reason to believe, though, that he did "flaunt" them, seeing (in the next verse) he was also sincere/zealous in his "religion" - he was "real"! (**and yet such does not redeem, atone and save**)
- e. It may have been comforting to him to come from the tribe of Benjamin realizing it (with Judah) remained more faithful than the other 10 tribes

3. Paul's "earned credentials" - vs. 5-6

Not only would this have been the equivalent to a doctorate in his field, but would have also been comparable to being (practice and discipline-wise) in a military special forces (the best of the best)

Misinformed zeal/sincerity can be one of the greatest deterrents to someone ever coming to the Truth - confidence is often maintained by an internal assessment of personal enthusiasm - the opposite can also be misleading when one determines their "zeal" is too little and therefore their faith must be wrong

This would have been enviable by those measuring their success by this standard - the standards change with the ages, but the wrongness of such a measurement remains

- a. Regarding the Law, Paul had made it to the level of a Pharisee - these were the purists, and the separatists when it came to the Law (knowing it and "keeping" it) - these were noted for being the strictest followers of the Law; so much so they "padded" it for protection against being broken, by adding their own laws and traditions (which became as much (if not more so) stressed) - he honored something good, but to such a degree, he elevated it above its intended "station" (which is at the heart of many out-of-balance religious groupings) - the tendency then is for others to honor these above their station
- b. Regarding sincerity, he was a "persecutor of the Church" - he wasn't just "talk", he acted on his "faith" to the fullest extent - this is another proof that sincerity is not what redeems - Paul characterized many of the Jews this way in Rom. 10:2, indicating they have a true zeal, "...but not according to knowledge" - see also Gal. 1:13-14
- c. Many "good" endeavors and "righteous causes" that have been highly valued by society have/carry no lasting/eternal value (as is about to be mentioned)
- d. As far as the Pharisaic handling of the Law was concerned, Paul could claim "blamelessness" - this does not indicate he thought himself perfect (since he is about to clarify he was and is not) - but being a Pharisee, he had achieved that status of being "blameless" and could not have claimed this if his peers could have countered him - he had reached the "top in his field" - the phrase "γενόμενος ἀμεμπτος" could be translated "I became blameless", the tense picturing an achievement of a level
- e. These were all achievements that could be (and were) used as standards of comparison - it wasn't so much about the authority of the Truth as much as it was the authority of the person standing for their idea of the truth - these were the ideals of his time

4. These "gains" (advantages in his society) are reassessed as one great "loss" - vs. 7-8

This knowledge of Christ that Paul references changes the estimate of the advantages of the age into disadvantages - yet it appears that many Christians still believe Christ work dependent on the advantages of our age

For this, these "hindrances" must not only be devalued in his heart/thinking, they must, as is about to be seen, go away (he will lose his loss)

- a. These are now looked upon as ζημίαν (damages) - not that all were evil of themselves, but that his dependence and over-valuing of them had become what was detrimental
- b. Now, what would have previously been considered a "loss" (Christ) was his gain - the underlying word for "counted" is ἡγημαί (from the root αγω meaning "to lead") is a word picture of one being led along by something - "All things associated with Christ" is what now dictates his thinking/accounting
- c. "He counted them loss; not only insufficient to enrich him, but what would certainly impoverish and ruin him, if he trusted to them, in opposition to Christ." Henry
- d. So, now not only did he reckon them as such, he still does (indeed!) calculate all the previous "gains" as detrimental to gaining the "super excellence of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord" - this knowing is more than just knowing about, it is the continuation of getting to know - this process/relationship he desires to continue and grow



Though certain things were previously goals and aspirations, once they are seen as profitless (actually profit robbers), parting with them is a relief, a saving grace, and nothing to weep over

Seeing them for what they were, he was repulsed by what he used to love and live for

e. And because of Christ, and Paul's focus on Him, he had experienced the loss of these things that he had listed - though, rather than stating this as an emotional loss, a sacrificial loss, he is able to write that **BECAUSE OF CHRIST!**, he lost these life-drainers that would have cost him a truly fulfilling, profitable life

f. It is discouraging to see so many wasting their lives striving for all this world has to offer - **such a life focus is extremely short-sighted!**

g. His focus was so clear now, that he is ἡγουμαι σκύβαλα, his "leading thoughts" conclude that "these things" are "dung", "rubbish" - the underlying word represented what was either thrown out to the dogs (discarded as undesirable) or as "waste"

h. He reiterates that this was all for the purpose of Χριστὸν κερδήσω ("Christ to gain" - the word for "gain" pictures the exchanging of one thing for another, "trading up") - clearly he knew something most don't know today - leaving at just this statement, many would be unimpressed - why would he give up so much to gain such a relationship?

5. What are the "gains" (winnings) with such an association with Christ? - vs. 9

Because of Christ one is freed from the necessity to live-up to the perfect standard of God as well as not have to strive to counter the wrongs (sins) already committed (and yet to be done) - freed to live for God and not bound to live in such a way so as to "get to" God

Basically defined, this is salvation by works (either by earning/maintaining it all or even just some)

Compare this to Rom. 3:21-31 - true righteousness is found apart from the Law, found only "in Christ" which is where Paul gladly forsook all other "trusts" to be

Such cannot "bank" their eternal soul on themselves, their works, their sincerity or that of another - it is in/on Christ alone!

"righteous works" come as a result of being in Christ - they are evidential of faith in Christ, not the means to be "in Him"

We are "made righteous" because of the faithfulness of Jesus Christ versus our "faithfulness" - essentially we have faith in His faithfulness over ours

This pictures rest versus work, total dependence and not personal responsibility (as far as regards salvation)

Sadly, some just don't think at all on these things, motivated more to "suppress the truth in unrighteousness" - Rom. 1:18

a. The first "gain" is "being found in Him" - this is, on this side of eternity (and as affects life now) a loss of personal identity and significance when it comes to "righteousness" (rightness before God, Who sees/defines what is truly right and wrong)

b. This being "found" also has the idea of "proven to be" - to rightly understand this, we must realize the "why" - it is only by the truly righteous (qualifying) works of Christ, in earning the righteousness necessary to come before God, and also Christ Jesus' death and resurrection to pay the debt due our sin - and that completely!

c. This "being found in Him" is contrasted by the phrase "not having a righteousness of my own," and such perceived righteousness is "derived from the Law" - such "self-righteousness" was being endorsed by these "Judaizers"

d. Paul did not want ANY righteousness of his own - the use of "righteousness" here is a qualifying quality (to be truly right before God) - no "earned" (by us) righteousness can ever fall into this category - Paul pictures here **complete dependence on the work of Christ** and a jettison of all righteous accomplishments of his own - Paul was after the freedom/ability to do truly righteous works for the right reason!

e. Note: many will stand before God in their own righteousness, judged in accordance to their works - these will be sent into everlasting torment - See Rev. 20:11-15

f. Such righteousness is obtained **ONLY** by faith (trust) - it is a completely entrusting of one's eternal soul/person to the work of Christ (which is the essence of "faith in Christ") for the obtaining of "the righteousness which comes from God" and, again, that only "on the basis of faith" (reliant trust)

g. It is important to realize at this point, the significance of what is being indicated - Paul is forsaking what would have lost him his soul - what these true "legalists" were "selling" were the "wares of eternal doom" packaged in wrappings that appealed to pride, self-reliance and popular acceptance/admiration - salvation is not a mixture of faith and works; it is faith alone - so again, his loss was gain!

h. The righteousness which comes "though faith in Christ" could also (as some have made a compelling case) be translated "through the faithfulness of Christ" - this easily harmonizes with what is being stressed here, and only adds to the emphasis of the reliance on His work, and the grace by which it is applied by God

i. Notice also the word picture given in the last phrase of verse 9, "Θεοῦ δικαιοσύνην ἐπὶ τῇ πίστει", the righteousness of God upon (as **resting** upon) the faith - so it is only by trust in God's answer (in Christ) that the needed righteousness is achieved

6. Based upon all that he has just stated, it is evident his values system drastically changed - it must be noted though, that before coming to Christ, he was religiously motivated still, just wrongly directed - a good number who will read and hear this text are motivated by a very secular, "temporal values" type way of thinking - so, for many, there will need to be an awareness of their need for "righteousness" altogether

a. Such a marked change/difference is evidence of a genuine conversion

b. The absence of such reliance and focus (and motivation) would evidence no conversion

7. "That I may know Him...." - vs. 10

It comes down to more **Who** he wanted to know and not so much **what** he wanted to know - many may know **about** Christ but truly know Him very little

He "elevated" concepts such as humility and even suffering - if the creator of the universe lives a certain way in His creation, there should be no doubt that He knows how to really live

The power of the reality of His resurrection frees us from the all-consuming drive to get as much out of this life as we can (which leads to a self-pleasing life focus and a purpose defined by the temporal)

The results of His resurrection changes our identity - not sinners awaiting new life, but saints living the new life awaiting the death of the body (and the final results of the "adoption as sons")

It is clear that these terms (power and fellowship) stand in direct opposition to this world that puts forward its "power" — i. as what should be reliable, and its "fellowship" as what should be pursued (and where contentment is to be found)

So these are the pains of societal rejections as well as self-rejections

These are the pains that signal that things are right

Compare this with II Cor. 4:10-12 (bearing death that life may be shown)

Though we often do not see it this way, it is the grace of God that is conforming us to His death (that, as seen in the next verse) we will be conformed to His resurrection (new life as new creations, separated in death from our old selves)

Yet Paul presents it here for what it really is - something to live for (living to die to self because of the honored opportunity to be like the Lord)

- a. It is important to see the connection of this statement with what had just been said - Paul gave up, lost and devalued all he had previously trusted and worked for, so as to not have a "righteousness" of his own (by being "found in Him") all that he (Paul) could **know Him**
- b. Trusting in himself or having other "trusts" to live/work for, are the major blockers to truly coming to know Christ personally (the ultimate friendship) - **see I John 2:3-6**
- c. "To know HIM is more than merely to know a doctrine about Him. Believers are brought not only to redemption, but to the **Redeemer** Himself." JFB
- d. As is about to be seen, this "knowing Him" leads to an insatiable desire to be **like** Him (not just in His resurrected state, but in how He lived while here, what He elevated by His life and what He devalued)
- e. These priority changes were also needed to know "the power of His resurrection" (the results/affects of His resurrection) - this has "ripple affects" throughout our lives - we now can live in light of the genuineness of our **justification** (proved at His resurrection), the reality of life after death, and the assurance of our immortality (which in itself enables us to release our grip on the priorities of "the age", realizing they are fleeting, and that what we have coming is far better) - **I can afford to lose the things of this life**
- f. The thought of death has also lost its **controlling** power - compare with Heb. 2:15
- g. The reality of His resurrection also changes our view of our lives now (in regard to sin) - Paul goes to great lengths in Rom. 6:1-11 to demonstrate that the reality of being "in Christ" has a direct impact on how we are to view ourselves walking "in newness of life"
 - See also Rom. 8:9-12 (no longer "debtors to the flesh")
- h. Living in light of His resurrection (the "powerful" affect its reality has on us) alters what we "set our minds" upon - Col. 3:1-6 demonstrates this in action - "Put to death therefore what is earthly in you..." - this we definitely want to know! - other "worldly" priorities (credentials), because of their apparent immediate urgency (which seems to be immediately urgent throughout most of life), cause us to miss these best of credentials
- i. "That I may **share** His sufferings..." - the emphasized words in this verse are "power" and "fellowship", both of which constitute what Paul strives to "know" - that in the power of this new life, he may now associate with his Lord in facing the opposition of an age that sees no **place** for such a "Lord"
- j. These sufferings (παθημάτων) of His are mental, emotional, and physical - in this case, these are the pains of Christlikeness (which include the persecutions of society as well as the inner pains of self-denial (for selflessness is a quality clearly ascribed to our Lord))
- k. These are the sufferings associated with the pursuits to be like Him, though they are not the pains of something wrong, but are truly "growing pains" - **these are the pains to be embraced because they are good and right** - these come because we are associated with Him and we go where He has been (in life)
- l. Why pursue to embrace such pain? Because these are the agonies associated with "death to self" (συμμορφιζόμενος - **conforming** to His death) - normally death is looked upon as something bad and to be avoided, yet in this case, it is something we wish to mimic - as seen in His resurrection, **life** comes through such death (and death is essentially a separation from something, so here it is a separation from sin and self)
- m. A good parallel picture of this is found in the Lord's usage of the "grain of wheat" needing to die to itself to have new life (John 12:24-25)
- n. This verb (for "conformed") is in the present tense, passive voice - it is, in an ongoing way, **happening to us** - we, with Paul, are to be "dying daily" (I Cor. 15:31) - this gives genuine purpose to what we suffer throughout life - **senseless** suffering drains away life!
- o. One of the benefits of understanding this verse, is the confidence that is gained when we realize that it was the Lord Jesus Himself that lived this way, and therefore, we need not be gripped with doubt if this is how life should be - it's easy to question this "Biblical" way of life (this outlook on life) when the "experts" of this age are constantly promoting its opposite
- p. Remember the context - this is all stated in contrast to the points of "confidence" (trust) in the flesh that are the **normal** course of life

8. "Attaining" (by any means possible) the "resurrection from the dead" - vs. 11

There may also indicate he expected to be risen from among the dead, having physically died

"Not an expression of doubt, but of humility." Vincent

There are "the dead" and then there are the "dead IN CHRIST"

The time when our justification will be fully seen in practice - perfectly pure!

- a. Notice this is the resurrection **FROM** the dead and not in reference to the general resurrection **OF** the dead - this stands out from the general resurrection
- b. "ἐἴ πως" - "if however" is not presenting the sense of doubt on Paul's part, as much as it is the recognition it will happen (occur (practically) over time) in a variety of ways/means - these two words demonstrate Paul's not knowing the **details** of how God will work this out (just that he is assured it will happen)
- c. This resurrection (as distinguished from the general one) indicates more the separation from "the dead" in general - again, death is not the absence of consciousness, but is separation (from this life on Earth or, in the eternal "death", separation from God)
- d. This also includes the idea of "perfection" (completion) which, for the believer "in Christ," is reached when free from the presence of sin and its infection in this body - in the interim, though (while in his body), he was **striving** for this Christlikeness

D. "Pressing on to the goal" - vs. 12-16

1. Paul makes it clear that he recognizes that he, himself, has not reached this goal - vs. 12

One of the pitfalls he was entrapped in, was believing he had reached a level of "completion" - concerning the Law he had reached an apparently defined level of "blamelessness"

Some come to a point where they lose their motivation for service and growth, and go into a mode of "spiritual and mental retirement" - challenges to continue in growing become points of irritations

This does not picture the Lord's interactions as being passive in any way with Paul - this does not communicate a picture where "God hopes to get something out of us" but more the idea of being "saved" (seized) for a purpose and that far more than just the saving of our soul!

- a. Even in his authoritative position as an Apostle, he could make no claim to "having arrived" (having reached the accomplishing of the goal of Christlikeness he had just been describing - true, he had lost all of what he had previously valued and trusted, but that was needed to make the path of progress **clear** (from obstacles)
- b. He makes it clear by saying, "Not that I have obtained it nor am I finished" - there was still much more to be done in his growing process - this type of thinking/realization escapes many in Christianity today - there is a **misdirected contentment** in spiritual "growth" (maturity), producing a lack of motivation to continue to grow and "strive for more" Christlikeness
- c. One of the unavoidable results of entertaining a concept that "one has arrived" (at an acceptable point of maturity) is the **inactivity** it produces
- d. Instead of "coasting" through the rest of life, he was "pressing on" with the purpose to "lay hold of" for what he was "laid hold of" by Christ - the word for "press on" is διώκω which is also translated "persecute" (picturing a pursuing, a tracking down of something to capture/possess it) - this word is key in demonstrating this is a relentless pursuit!
- e. The reason for this drive was the realization that he had already been "seized" by Christ for this purpose - the Lord's (forcible) interaction and overtaking of Paul (on the road to Damascus) was clear to Paul, that his life was to be characterized as the ongoing pursuit of being like Christ (in newness of life (resurrection), in selflessness (sufferings and conformity to His death) - so, plainly put, he was saying, "I am out to grab hold of that for which I was grabbed hold of" (or I am out to achieve that for what I was meant to achieve)

2. Giving all there is to give to finish the "race" - vs. 13-14

He is not above them in this, he is with them in it

To avoid a subjective assessment we need to continually compare ourselves to the objective standard provided for us in Scripture

"He did not attempt to mingle the world and religion, and to gain both. He did not seek to obtain wealth and salvation too; or honor here and the crown of glory hereafter, but he had one object, one aim, one great purpose of soul." Barnes

The true objective (the prize) in the marathon is the finish line, not the mile markers along the way, and not even the "having passed other runners"

- a. Once again Paul expresses an endearing term "Brethren" as he reaffirms that he has not reached the goal (the "finish line") - then he uses λογίζομαι, which is often translated "reckon" (and in this case, it is not a **subjective** reckoning but one based on the objective truths (for some, as did some of the Corinthians, did see themselves as having already reached a required level (of sorts) - see I Cor. 4:8-13)
- b. ἔν δέ is how the next phrase begins - a short little combination meaning "but one" (and in context, if connected with "regard" (λογίζομαι) could also mean "but one thought" - the usage communicates that Paul had a singular focus from here on out (refusing to be **distracted** with diversions)
- c. This "one thing" is described in two ways - basically he declares that the things that are behind him are forgotten, while the things that are ahead of him (Christlikeness), **he strains with all he has to get to**
- d. His descriptions here are that used in a race (more like a marathon) - the focus cannot be (must not be) on what is behind him - there is no looking back to see what he has passed and how far he has come - there is no longing to go backward, to return to a previous point
- e. To look backward can cause either fatigue (considering (focusing on) how far/long he has run), or may cause a false sense of accomplishment (as in "look how far I've come), producing a justification to slow-up or stop the race altogether



Though many other factors may press us to yield and give-up, we press-on - this thought process is the antithesis to that of a quitter (who succumbs to "other inputs" to stop the race, or to at least stop "over-doing it")

Paul references a "crown of life" for finishing "his course" and indicates it's for all those also that "love His appearing" - those living for that time will live anticipating it; those living for this time will not be excited about the thought.

This "high calling" is not a call to salvation since that is won by Christ - it is a calling to use the salvation (faith) given us while in this "marathon"

Those not "in Him" and having their own righteousness are not participants in this "high calling" because they have a calling of their own making (a "low calling")

This is what it looks like to be truly mature (grown-up) before God, driven by eternal goal seeking and not by temporal/fleeting achievements - if too many immature believers become leaders and key points of influence, life standards/priorities are redirected and lessened - this is why in verse 17 he wants them to imitate him

We must not be unified around anything else, no matter how "good", "moral" or popular at the time it appears to be! o It's easy to settle on "good" causes at the expense of the "best"

Sometimes just having been faithful a long time can become a point (the knowing of it/ thinking on it) that causes one to doubt - familiarity (for those that are immature) can make something appear to be "boring" that, in reality, is the "best that can be had" - many have traded what is priceless for what is essentially worthless, thus "conned" by their own "lusts" - see James 1:12-18

- f. The focus is not only forward, but his overall demeanor (like that of a runner) is leaning/ straining forward, **pushing** ahead - "straining forward to what lies ahead" (ESV) - such a picture not only demonstrates determination and focus, but a conquering of **fatigue** (showing such an endeavour to be difficult, but worth the struggles)
- g. This "straining forward" is combined with "pressing on" - Paul terms it "I relentlessly pursue the mark/goal" (the Greek word for "press" being διώκω, which is often translated "persecute" (as in "hunting down")) - **this was no casual approach to life!**
- h. In this illustration, it is more likely a long race and not a short sprint, so the finish line (the mark and what lies beyond) is anticipated (seen in the "mind's-eye") and the objective is not to "win-out" over others - the objective is to **finish** the race, cross the finish line
- i. "...the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" - the "prize" being what is given to the "triumphant" (those who complete the race and do so "legally" - II Tim. 2:5, I Cor. 9:24-27)
- j. This concept is also seen in texts such as II Tim. 4:7-8 where Paul (at the end of his life) is encouraged to say "I have finished my course, I have kept the faith"
- k. The "mark" being pursued is the "prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" - it is a "high calling" in that its end is Heaven (unhindered dwelling with God), and a "high calling" because it is from God to "higher things" (more noble/lofty) than any calling by any "greatness" here - there does appear to be a picturing of what came after such a race was finished, where the judge of the event called the athlete to come up the steps to the judgement throne to receive the reward - such incentive is the motivation to press on pass the weariness of the distance, and distractions to quit or **compromise**
- l. This "mark" (goal) is what is being pursued now (present tense "I am pressing") and it is in "Christ Jesus" indicating its invaluable quality and motivation - we could only receive such a "high calling of God" **because of Christ** (and our being "in Him")

3. "Mature" thinking versus immature thinking - vs. 15-16

- a. All those who are truly "τέλειοι" (mature, full-grown) should "think" this way - the "way" is in reference to the beginning of this section, "Let this mind be in you..." - another way of saying it would be "let them be convinced" (as in "thinking this way on the **inside**" and not just one who looks like they are persuaded but really are not)
- b. So, concisely put, these should be those who humble themselves (versus needing it forced on them), calculating others as more important than themselves, poised to obey, driven to "work out their salvation" (use it to its fullest capacity), not argumentative (with the "Word of Life" being the standard (that we don't argue with)), driven more with the needs of others than for personal needs/desires, not inspired by popular credentials (confidence in the flesh), but more inspired to know and be like Christ, leaving those other "trusts" and "glories" behind and forgetting them, straining to be as completely like Christ as possible
- c. This foundational thinking (philosophy of life) and the evidence of it in how one lives their life is the mark of maturity Paul is stressing - immaturity is seen in the pursuit of **ease**, avoiding responsibility, a life of "pretending" (and the avoidance of reality)
- d. "Christians may differ in their sentiments about other things, this is what they are agreed in, that Christ is a Christian's all, that to win Christ and to be found in him involve our happiness both here and hereafter. And therefore let us walk by the same rule, and mind the same thing. Having made Christ our all, to us to live must be Christ. Let us agree to press towards the mark, and make heaven our end." Henry
- e. God is faithful (in His grace) to reveal if there are other "trains of thought" - if they vary from the standard just provided, God will reveal it - notice though there are still exhortations coming because many, though God will reveal that their thinking is different, may look to press on, unchanged
- f. It is telling that the NASB translates "φρονῶμεν" as "attitude" which is descriptive of an inner guide, that which affects my overall demeanor/behavior
- g. Having come so far, having invested so much, "keep living by the same that you have attained" - don't alter your course of life and don't throw away what you've invested so far
- h. This is also translated, "Only let us hold true to what we have attained." ESV - don't be tempted to pursue "greener pastures" elsewhere

4. One more consideration regarding the “prize” and our “attitude” - there is often much focus given to the pursuit and the receiving of “crowns”, yet as seen in texts like I Thes. 2:19-20, Paul’s “crown of exultation” was these “growing/maturing” Christians in Thessalonica - see also II Cor. 1:13-14

We should look to follow Paul’s example here - we ought to be looking to challenge each other to these “attitudes” and life-focuses rather than seeing as our duty to comfort each other toward nominal Christianity (nominal meaning, “existing in name only” and “minimal in comparison with real worth”

- a. Part of the “glory” of Heaven will be seeing some of the results of the work God gave us to do in the lives of others - the “pressing toward the mark” and the “prize” include those that we get to influence for the right
- b. “Heaven” is **more** than a pursuit of having ourselves “saved” - it is the thrill that will be had **with** those that we get to share it with, and the eternal reminders that all sacrifices and “growth pains” (self-denials) were more than worth it
- c. There are dangers in not “growing” and not continuing faithfully as is about to be expressed; those who “**walk** as the enemies of the cross of Christ”

E. The need to stay focused on our “citizenship” and the sad alternative - vs. 17-21

1. The instruction and warning are both demonstrations that there are those who will be worth “imitating” in the church and those (also in the church) who are dangerous to imitate/follow

Part of our motivation to live right is not just for our own sake, but is also to be for the sake of others - even our neglect (what we don’t do) will and can be an influence on others - good “trends” can be hard to start when going against the tides of popular trends, but such faithfulness typically makes a lasting difference

- a. “Church” is not a place and not a group of people where each is free to live as they see fit in themselves to live - there will be those that MUST not be followed
- b. Churches, and individual families (and groups of friends) will ultimately follow a “trend” set by the priorities of the “group” - these can be places of safe, valuable, encouraging challenges to think and live correctly, while others can be influences that draw its followers into lives that are truly the enemies of Christ (His cross) - and these retaining the name “Christian” (“Christian” in name only; “*chinos*”)

2. “Join in following my example” (Συμμημεταί), or “unite, in being imitators of me” - vs. 17

Then there are those that boldly say “follow me” and set the wrong example - before one can be an example, **they need to scrutinize that they are a good one** (even in their openness about their personal need for growth)

- a. Some react to the idea that Paul is calling them to imitate himself, yet what is he actually asking them to follow? It is not his “magnificence”, or perfection, but more his humble pursuit of Christlikeness and his relentless pursuit of what he acknowledges he has yet to attain
- b. There is a pseudo humility that exists in Christianity that, because it would think it wrong to say what Paul has said here, they sense no urgency to set a “followable” example, thus no one authoritatively can say “follow me”

The word for “pattern” is τύπον which pictures something mark by the impact of something else (as in a coin being struck with a metal stamp) - we all leave an impression on those we influence whether we intend to or not

- c. The prefix συν at the beginning of the word confuses some since it seems unnecessary (since the word without the prefix means “imitate”) - but he is challenging them (with this one of a kind word in ancient Greek) to unite (“together”) in following his example
- d. And not only follow him, but “regard attentively” those around you whose “walk” is characterized by the life “pattern” you have seen in Paul and his “team”

- e. There seems to be a dearth of solid examples to follow in the Church today - there are many who are followed, who are imitated, not for their Godly character or demonstrations of the true walk of faith of a Christian, but because they are popular for far lesser reasons

- f. Note also, many “good examples” of hard work and moral disciplines that lead to a good life are not what is on topic here - these “patterns” are what Paul had been describing since chapter 2 - these examples are rare and ought to be appreciated for their benefit

- g. “Novelty might have its share in producing a change which could be only superficial.... Yet they might not penetrate into the spirit, nor feel its transforming power. **Change of opinion is not conversion, nor is the admiration of truth identical with the reception of its influence**; while belief in immortality may create a distant cloudland where one may wander in fancy, and yet be far from inducing hearty and prolonged preparation for heaven.” (emphasis mine) John Eadie

There are endless examples that can produce change, but not a genuine change for the right - many are changed (and some permanently) only to what is superficial or, in all actuality, changed to their own demise (not necessarily to eternal doom, but to a life of superficialities); the “wood hay, stubble: of I Cor. 3

3. The reason for this exhortation is because of the “walk” of many who are enemies of Christ - vs. 18

Such grief is needed in our congregations and families - it has become common to grieve over temporal losses (or threats of loss) more than the dangerous influence of wrong life philosophies (which can set the course of life wrongly in those we love)!

- a. There are many (even in the Church) that must not be followed! Paul’s reference to these was “with weeping” (not in the fury of his pride, but in his sincere grief over their error and their influence upon those they were pursuing)
- b. It is common to passionately stand against those promoting error and to do so motivated by the offense it is to “our own good sense” - but this is pride and not borne out of compassion desiring change in these, and protection for those that would be so swayed
- c. For many “are walking” (περιπατοῦσιν - conducting their lives) as the “enemies of the CROSS of Christ” - why reference the cross and not just Christ?

τοὺς ἐχθροὺς τοῦ σταυροῦ τοῦ Χριστοῦ - the hateful opposers to the cross of Christ - not necessarily in word but in what they do, how they live (while claiming to be "Christian")

Many, unwittingly, so focus on self-righteousness that they live in such a way as to "excuse" other sins, because they do so well in other areas - these become a "law" to themselves (self-righteousness stems from self-rightness)

Christ did not take the penalty of our sin so that we could live lives of sin - we are freed to be "holy" not "loose" - Eph. 5:26-27, Col. 1:21-23

Thus the weeping (and not indifference)

To the "secular" Christ's cross is "foolishness" and to the religious (self-righteous), it is a "stumbling block" (it stands in the way of their self-saving efforts) - I Cor. 1

The underlying word for "end" carries the idea of one's "destination" and even "purpose" - it is the intended end of the path they are on (the "broad way that leads to destruction" and many (the majority) find it) - the "narrow way" (which leads through the cross of Christ) is the only way to life

There might also be a reference to those that focused so much on dietary laws and the pride they took in them that this was a roundabout way to reference it

Neither being what the cross of Christ represents in the life of those "saved" by means of it and the debt of love it carries with it

see I Cor. 15:32-34, II Pet. 2:18-20

Fads can lure us into shameful trends that, if sobered, we cringe to remember later

φρονούντες is an interesting word picturing a "feeling thinking" - their earthly thinking is "heartfelt" (they love this age) - I Jn. 2:15-17

- d. These are the enemies of the cross of Christ because they live (walk) diametrically opposed to all it represented and accomplished - there are two basic understandings of those who are being spoken of in this verse and verse 19 - some take the position that this is in direct reference to antinomianists (those who live however they please, claiming "freedom from the Law") while some say this is still describing the practical lifestyle of the Judaizes (legalists)
- e. It actually can easily fit both positions, for even the legalist can be guilty of living immorally, feeling justified in their "loose" standards **because they "believe" correctly** - these oppose the cross of Christ because faith/trust is not based in His righteous work, so they design a "perfection" (τέλειοι) of their own, robbing "salvation" of any "love debt" on our part - these also can be those who see themselves as having reached a level of completion/perfection, so growth/improvement is no longer needed ("practical perfectionists")
- f. Then, of course, there are the "libertines" who are the enemies of the cross of Christ because they use it as a philosophical reason to sin freely, not striving for the selflessness exemplified in Christ (and at His cross), but become self-indulgers, mutual "excusers" of wrong/sin, even seeing it as "Christian" to help others get passed guilt altogether and to exercise their "liberty in Christ" with various sinful experimentations (seen as "new realms of freedom")
- g. And such as these were creeping in, and at times flooding in to influence the churches, setting the opposite example Paul had been stressing in verse 17

4. The future and characteristics of those who are the enemies of the cross of Christ - vs. 19

- a. No matter how popular or widely accepted, those who are not for all that is incorporated with the cross of Christ are against it, and all these descriptions fit - this is why Paul does not just say "Christ" or "Jesus" - the cross represents the definitive dealing with sin, which means one must accept not only that they have sinned and that this was required, but that without it, there is nothing to be done for them (they either trust in this work or theirs)
- b. Their "end" is "ἀπώλεια", destruction/ruin (the root for this word meaning to be "cut-off", severed - so it does not imply annihilation) - these are headed for certain ruin (if they do not deviate (turn around) from their course of life) - John Gill wrote of this, "...however pleasing such ways may be to men, the end of them is eternal death; destruction and misery are in all the ways of profaneness and heresy; not only immoralities, but heresies, such as strike at the efficacy of Christ's cross, his blood, righteousness, and sacrifice, are damnable ones, and bring upon men swift destruction, 2Pe_2:1; and how should it otherwise be, for there is no salvation but by the cross of Christ?"
- c. "Whose god is their belly" (or their "appetite") as in reference to the sensualist, these live to serve their physical/carnal desires (which are even practiced under the banner of religion) - such live by the idea "if it feels good it must be good" and if it "feels bad to me it must be bad" (feelings being the judge of right and wrong)
- Rather than the self-denial of the cross, they look on the cross as that which frees them to indulge in their lusts (see Jude 1:4 and the surrounding context)
 - Rather than the cross demonstrating the horrible wrath deserved for sin, sin takes on an attractive/appealing draw, now having its consequences removed
- d. "And glory is in their shame" - what they should be embarrassed about, they "showcase" - this shows that even a professing Christian community can collectively rework their values into something shameful, making the "standard to follow" and goals to be reached something (that if seen for what they really are before God) they should be deeply ashamed of - friendships and associations are VERY important - we should desire to have as our truest friends those that challenge us to Christlikeness, not those catering to our vanity
- e. These are also characterized by setting "their minds on earthly things" (ἐπιγεια φρονούντες - they not only constantly dwell on (in their thinking) the things (priorities, options, offerings) that the earth offers (and the age in which we live), but their "judgment" is also based of the earthly/societal system, so their priorities become harmonious with the world, and the counsels and wisdom of the age become applicable/useful to them (more so than Scripture))

5. For our State (πολίτευμα) is in Heaven, and we eagerly wait to be made like Christ - vs. 20-21

We are always to see ourselves as "stranger/aliens and pilgrims" while on this earth - this will not change until the Lord returns and rules

One does not look forward to someone who will deliver them from something they love - this is one of the dangers of "loving this age", realizing we would not want to be saved from it

This is one of the benefits that comes from God allowing earthly "saviors" to let us down and fail - the coming "antichrist" will deceive many because of his seeming abilities to "save" from various problems

δόξης (glory) being that of honor, since the dishonor that is inseparable from sin has been removed completely

Death is the by-product of sin, so to cure death one must cure sin

Sometimes the error is not seen in what is included, but more in what's missing

- a. The true "commonwealth" is not here nor do we look on ourselves as a "colony" of heaven here on earth - there is no "heaven on earth" - if this is missed or forgotten, it can be imagined as being possible, and goals become affected as we live as though this is our permanent, eternal abode/home
- b. We live in a state of "eagerly waiting" for our savior **from there** (not here)! The word for "eagerly wait" is ἀπεκδεχόμεθα, providing a picture of so intently looking for something, one has no focus left (not attentive to) for what is behind them (not in their focus) - this eager anticipation is based in the expectation of our "deliverer", our Savior!
- c. All other potential "saviors" need to be compared to the "Lord Jesus Christ" - any "deliverer" not from the abode of God (Heaven), is not one who can save truly, because only the one who can "subject all things to Himself" can actually save (to the fullest extent, completely) - many would leaders promise deliverance from a variety of fears and enemies, but are unable to guarantee anything
- d. It is He who will "transform the body of our humble state", which encompasses more than just our bodies themselves, but all that is associated with it (in a sin-infected world)
- e. The whole of ourselves (included with the body) will be fundamentally transformed to be like "the body of His glory" (which contrasts the humble condition we live in now, even with the best of circumstances and the best of earthly credentials)
- f. It's guaranteed realizing He will do this by "the exertion of the power He has" (no other has it, no other can do this) - modern science with all its hopes and potentials, will never cure sin, nor do they possess the power to do so (for it does not lie in the creation but in the Creator - the best of "minds" not only lack omniscience, but also omnipotence)
- g. So do not be tempted to join with the "enemies of the cross of Christ" be they "worldly successful", "worldly wise" or even "worldly religious/spiritual", for in their answers and solutions, they are missing THE ANSWER and therefore CANNOT save or deliver

VI. Practice What You Have Been Taught, Keeping Your Thinking Rightly Focused - 4:1-9

A. "Stand firm in the Lord" - vs. 1

1. The endearing terms Paul uses lend to the imperative for them to persevere

With the lessening of "faith challenges" we are also seeing the lessening of the close family love, camaraderie in churches - as obedience falters, and "standing firm" becomes more compromise with "the age", the need for (relevance) of a church family is no longer seen

As any friend or parent would be in sensing the thrill of sharing the achievements of their children or friends before their "boss" or leader (that the cause is being successfully passed on to others)

- a. He calls them "my brothers" and these he tells that they are his "beloved", they are his "longed for" (those he greatly misses and longs to see again in person)
- b. Such terms are not often used and when they are, are also often "protocol" and not used sincerely - no doubt these terms of endearment stem from Paul's trials while in Rome, and such times build our appreciation for the true friends/family that God has given us in Christ
- c. As each of us is faced with the various "sacrifices" for the faith, we will come to see each other for the close family we really are in Christ - but if we blend-in with society, it becomes far less likely we will face such times of shared sacrifice
- d. These Philippian Christians have stood with Paul and were fellow workers with him in the ministry - thus they were also his "joy and crown" - thinking of them and being with them brought him joy, and he was proud of them (as their faithfulness and genuineness were his "crown" (στέφανός - a crown to the victor, or of honor))

2. To these "beloved" (those closest to him) he insists they "persevere in the Lord"

Those who truly love us want the best for us, and if we are truly loving, we will look for (persistently) the best for those we love - true love is seen more in challenge to such disciplines than it is in coddling

- a. It could also be said something like "**stand your ground in the Lord**"
- b. Such a command carries with it the understanding/expectation that opposition is coming or is already amongst them - see Acts 14:19-23
- c. It also indicates that there will be a tendency to yield or compromise what they should not
- d. The sentence begins with "Ὡστε (therefore) tying this standing firm back to all that has been stated (especially in chapter 3 and what they are to be pursuing)

B. Work at living in harmony "in the Lord" - vs. 2-3

1. There was a public disagreement or dispute between two women in the church

This is NOT an "agree to disagree" solution/suggestion

- a. We are not told the nature of what caused their disunity and it must have been public for Paul to have addressed it as such in a letter that would be expected to be read openly
- b. The instruction (urging) is for them to come to an agreement "in the Lord"



Paul is not encouraging them to not think at all or to just yield what they believe, but to work at (taking time and opportunity) to come to a resolution regarding whatever had come to divide them

Our “called to serve together” service needs to be looked upon as from the Lord and not just in Him - part of our ministry is each other (with our flaws and all)

As intimidating as it is, this work is still essential, and it is hard to find those who would seek to do it, and do it rightly and humbly

We are often too quick to discount any/all good done to us by others when they falter

Not that this is what Paul is indicating, but it is often seen that even the best of friends “in the work” can have issues with each other when things “slow down”

With such a “credential” (as all who are in Christ have) merits an active response to such a conflict

- c. “Be of the same mind in the Lord” - τὸ αὐτὸ φρονεῖν ἐν Κυρίῳ - not necessarily thinking the exact same way, but to be united in directing their thoughts, opinions (and even “feelings” is included in “φρονεῖν”) to what truly constitutes being “in the Lord”
- d. It is truly “Christian” to not only sense the need for unity, but to work at being united around what is “of the Lord” versus what is “of us” (individually)
- e. It is possible (because of how this is worded), that they are being challenged to come into unity with the church (and that each had strayed in some way from the unity of the faith and fellowship) - they may have been united in opposition to the Church
- f. Either way, because of the relationship in Christ, there MUST be the sense of urgency and obligation to constantly be striving to be “of the same mind” (thinking, priorities, faith) with each other in the Church - this is an ongoing objective with all of us

2. And rather than have others “stay at a distance”, Paul asks someone close to him (his “genuine yoke-fellow” (γνήσιε σύζυγε), two united in their job/responsibilities) to assist these women in coming together - vs. 3

- a. It is very possible that “σύζυγε” is a proper name and that Paul is actually “playing off of” its meaning (one who shares in the labor) - this is picturesque of how we are to see each other (co-laborers even when it comes to dealing with conflicts (which most would rather leave to someone else)) - such needs neglected tend to fester and infect others
- b. Paul deems them too important to just leave them to their disagreement - he recalls their sharing in the work of the Gospel ministry - it is a good example to follow for us also; keeping track of the “good” others have done with and for us previously, so as to still heartfully minister to them when they are in the wrong or distracted
- c. There is a mention that they served with “Clement” also, though it is unlikely this is the well known “Clement of Rome” - Paul is demonstrating their involvement in (most likely) the “original team” (“other fellow laborers”) as the church was being founded in Philippi
- d. No matter what, though, “their names are in the book of life” - even though they have issues with each other, Paul (without hesitation) identifies them as genuine believers - there is much debate over what exactly the “Book of Life” involves, but the uses of it demonstrate it is in reference to the redeemed

- Rev. 20:15 - those not found in this book in the end (at the Great White Throne Judgment) will be “cast into the lake of fire”

C. Maintain consistency of attitude - vs. 4-7

1. “Be rejoicing in the Lord always” - vs. 4 - one’s source of joy is crucial

True joy is a deep-seated contentment that affects how one looks at life (even the hard times) rather than it being an emotion that is dependent on the circumstances of life being agreeable

Our feelings reveal our joy- we can experience times when our feelings (reactions) are initially angry or sad, only to have them turn when the realization (based in Truth) “kicks in” and our feelings, at the least, stabilize

see 1 Pet 1:4 regarding our assured inheritance

- a. There can be varying ideas of what exactly it means to “rejoice”, but the core idea is that of cheer, contentment and gladness - the underlying word “Χαίρετε” carries a picture of leaning toward something (because it is liked and it is appealing)
- b. It is often associated mainly with the emotion/feeling of happiness and with that, it must be considered what the source/cause is
- c. The origin/cause is important, to be able to see the doability of the imperative from Paul - how possibly could one rejoice at all times if circumstances fluctuate and are not in line with our natural desires? - so joy is more than a feeling; it contains feeling, but it does not stem/originate from it
- d. The joy is “in the Lord” which requires us to know Him fairly well, and to know Him accurately - clearly, the first objection to this command from Paul would be in regards to hardships and situations that provoke grief - how can we rejoice in that?
- e. Paul is working off the realization that the Philippians know Him and, as he demonstrated in chapter 3, striving to know Him even better - one of the first clues comes from looking back to verse 3 - just knowing that our names are in the “Book of Life,” and that our destination is set, goes a long way to causing joy to win-out over negative circumstances - see Luke 10:20 for a comparison verse regarding what is to stir rejoicing
- f. If we know not only the goodness, kindness, love and graciousness of the Lord, but also that He has absolute authority/control over all that happens, then we can rejoice in that fact even though the outworking (at the time) is painful and we are unsure the purpose in it
- g. If joy is dependent on another source, it cannot be maintained and the instruction here is impossible



"I say" is future indicative active
see Lam. 3:21-24

- h. "...again I will say, rejoice;" - As if to make this an unchangeable instruction Paul reiterates that even in the future, he will always still tell them to "rejoice" - this will not fluctuate!
- i. Obedience to this will be key in warding-off the distracting temptations to yield to discouraging thoughts, and developing a dependence on emotional highs to have energy and **motivation** to do what we ought

2. Let your gracious forbearance be evident to all - vs. 5

- a. The Greek reads "τὸ ἐπιεικὲς" (the gentleness) and can also be translated "patient, selfless, moderate" (even providing the picture of meekness)
- b. This reasonable, calm spirit/attitude is to be evidenced before all men - the opposite would be along the lines of an "angry, rights-seeking reactor" (a "fighter", "brawler")
- c. "...a humble, patient steadfastness, which is able to submit to injustice, disgrace and maltreatment without **hatred** or malice, trusting God in spite of it all."
- d. Since it is to be apparent to all, this patient forbearance is not just to be "exercised" with believers - just as the Lord Himself took His humbling beatings and death with quiet consistency, so we also should seek to demonstrate an unswerving confidence in the sovereign hand of God at work in our lives - see Isa. 53:7, Mt. 26:63; 27:12-14
- e. This concept also deals with the issue of "worry", where some believers convince themselves into unnecessary stress by fretting over their inability to control a situation or simply by fear of the unknown (which, at its core is really fear of self being disappointed or hurt)
- f. This "yieldedness" is not a yielding of truth or what is right over to what is wrong (for that would be compromise) - instead, it is **a resolve to take even injustice against ourselves in defense and standing with what is right**

Peter O'Brien quoting Leivestad

Compare this to I Peter 2:21-15
where Jesus "continued entrusting
Himself to Him Who judges justly."

God's goodness/grace is not just
seen in getting us away from
pain/suffering, but is vividly seen
taking us **through** it

3. "The Lord is near" - vs. 5

- a. This is in reference to either the Lord being near us (spatially) or near, time-wise (as in saying His coming is ever near) - it fits both ideas
- b. If we realize that the "Lord is near" us at all times, it provides reason and motivation for rejoicing as well as moderation before all men - this personal recognition of the Lord's continuing presence with us (as in Heb. 13:5, "...I will never desert you nor will I ever forsake you") enables us to remain calm and controlled, since we are never alone
- c. The second idea (that of His imminent return, that He could return at any time) is to motivate us to obedience, facing whatever He deems best for us to face, and we do not want to be found "derelict in our duty" when He returns
- d. The third idea is closely related to the second - He is always near, thus we are always **accountable** - there is no time when He does not see us
- e. "People indulge their passions - are extravagant in their plans of life, and in their expectations of earthly good for themselves and for their families, because they have no realizing sense of the truth that there is before them a vast eternity. He that has a lively expectation that heaven will soon be his, will form very moderate expectations of what this world can furnish." Barnes

Mt. 28:20, "And behold, I am with
you always, to the end of the age."

In reference to His coming, this
also produces a calmness, real-
izing He will judge those who
are unjust and ill-treat others
and us - no evil tyrant or venge-
ful acquaintance will "get away"
with what they have done

When aspirations and pos-
sessions are compared to His
greatness, they become less
alluring and the pursuit of pur-
pose in them seems insane

4. "Do not be anxious about anything" by "making your requests be made known to God" - vs. 6

- a. The first two words, "μηδὲν μεριμνᾶτε" stated plainly, "for nothing be worried" - the idea is not that we have no "cares" at all, just that we do not fret over them - to be so worrisome is to demonstrate either a distrust in the power of God or in His **goodness**
- b. When we allow ourselves to envision life apart from God's omniscience and omnipotence, we see the potential for useless suffering and loss - and these, lacking an omniscient purpose, become fear-provoking thoughts indeed!
- c. And such is opposed (conquered) by bringing them (potential worries) before God - this is done by means of "prayer" and this is actually to be done/practiced "in everything" - so "in **nothing** worry by bringing **everything** to God" - this is all-inclusive (always done)
- d. This is another way of describing what Peter instructed in I Peter 5:7 - this is the practice and the process by which we "cast all our cares/anxieties on Him" realizing He cares for us
- e. We are to present our "requests" (never forgetting His perspective is one we submit to and my desires may be uninformed) by means of "prayer" and supplication "with thanksgiving"

Read the exhortation of our
Lord in Mt. 6:25-43

Again, worry is evidence of our
taking what God is responsible for
upon ourselves

If we see God as only a well-in-
tended but limited grandfather
type, we will find no comfort
- if we see Him as all-powerful
yet lacking in mercy and grace,
we will not be encouraged to
bring our fears to Him, seeing
He is one of them



Such is the prayer of faith - and it is seen as such because it is in a submissive, trusting state of mind when considering the petitions being brought before the Lord, confident in His goodness and perfect perspective

Prayer is our responsibility, as it is expected there will be protocol in approaching royalty, we should expect to be reverent in our approach to the King of the Universe!

This all leading then to the next point about to be made

Which is why commands such as "rejoice always" seem impossible (when compared to the "authorities" of our age that have come to rule our hearts and minds)

Our peace will then be as strong as we know God to be - a small God in our eyes will make for big fears while an all-powerful God will make threats from all others ineffective in their purposes against us

compare to Isa. 26:3-4, 12; John 14:27, 16:22-23; Rom. 8:5-6; Col. 3:15

O'Brien offers this as one of two possible handlings

For even fleeting thoughts, if left unchecked and unscrutinized can gain a foothold in our minds, infect the heart, and influence our character (who/what we are)

For we have the "peace of God" because we know we have "peace with God" (Rom. 5:1) because of Christ

The power of proper thinking will be found more in where we look than it will be in the lofty thinking that the world looks to for answers - thinking will be involved (sound, well-informed thinking) but only from within the refuge of God's omniscience and omnipotence

- f. The phrase "ἐν παντί τῇ προσευχῇ καὶ τῇ δεήσει μετὰ εὐχαριστίας" is "in all the prayer and the 'expressions of need' accompanied with giving thanks" packages together the approach to God in prayer - the singular (for "prayer" and "supplication") makes it evident that this is to be done with each request
- g. Each is presented with thanksgiving (a grateful heart, rehearsing specific points of what we have to be grateful for) - though this is not just a rehearsing of God's past goodness but of the future "goodnesses" we are assured of, because we know His gracious character
- h. With these prerequisites in place, then we're ready to "make known" (as in declaring) our requests (not demands) to God - it is not that He doesn't know, seeing He knows what we will ask before we ask it (Mt. 6:8) - God has designed it that we are part of the process and if we don't ask or don't ask rightly (because we are un-submissive, demanding or ignorant of what we are doing or asking for), then we should not expect a positive response
- i. In context, this is the way to deal with "anxiety" - without it we will either be worrisome or bitter (or a mixture of the two)
- j. Prayer is bringing our concerns, worries, frustrations, joys, praise and desires to God - it is more than just asking for things; it is an ongoing communication with Him throughout each day, acknowledging His being with us all the time

5. The protective "guard" of the heart and mind - vs. 7

- a. The mind and heart are extremely vulnerable when left unguarded and affect the whole of our being - when unprotected, they become affected by all sorts of godless, faithless and even hellish influences
- b. "The peace of God" is most often taken to mean the "peace which comes from God", though it is natural to take it (in its context) to reference "the peace that God Himself has"
- c. If our confident "resting" is in Him, what can cause us worry? God is not anxious about anything because He is in complete charge of everything - as we practice and grow in our "leaving our fears with Him", we are no longer controlled by our anxieties
- d. The condition for such peace is not contingent upon the results of our requests - the condition is just to bring these to Him (prayer and supplication with thanksgiving) and then **such peace will guard** us (even if what we request is not granted as we wish - this is because of our trust that He knows best and that He loves us best)
- e. Such a calmness (εἰρήνη) surpasses any answer to peace that any other source can even imagine - it is a peace, that to the onlooker, will appear to be absurd (especially when in the midst of troubles)
- f. "...his peace accomplishes more than any human forethought or scheming can achieve, and so is far more effective in removing anxiety than any reasoning power." O'Brien
- g. Paul then uses a military concept when he writes that such a peace will stand guard over their hearts and thoughts - it was a term used to describe a military detachment that was assigned to watch over a city or group of people to protect them from attack and from being taken captive - **many are prisoners to wrong thinking**
- h. The objects of protection are the "hearts and minds" of these Christians - the reference to "heart" is more the seat/source of thought/feeling, which is where our philosophies of life reside (our inner core of who we really are; our character) - and then the "mind" refers to the thought themselves (moment by moment) - see also Pro. 4:23
- i. The means and "place" for such protection is "in Christ Jesus" - if we doubt His work in our stead to take on the judgement we deserve and to fulfill all righteous requirements for peace with God, then we will be unable to trust Him and our hearts will be left unguarded and our lives will be controlled by anxieties/fears and intimidations
- j. In summary, it will not be clever or well-taught thinking/reasoning that will get us through "attacks" of doubt and despair - it will be the entrusting of ourselves and our circumstances to His caring control - in a majority of professing Christianity it has become common (and expected) to have "Christian" thoughts that will "get us through" - Biblical concepts and truths will tremendously aid us, but safety and security is not found in "reason" but in faith (simply trusting God; this is the end-objective in all situations and times of life - faith is the victory, but not faith itself; faith focused solely on God)



D. "Reckon" (account) what is best and do what is best - vs. 8-9

1. "Finally" (and now) brothers, begins a list of six qualities and two qualifiers to dominate the thoughts

None of us is above the need of this - when we "let down our guard" and meditate on the opposites of these, we find ourselves discouraged and/or afraid

- Each adjective is introduced with ὅσα, typically translated "whatever" because it is to be exhaustively inclusive (as in "whatever is true" being "everything that is true")
- This lays out a guard in itself of what is to be deemed good to dwell on - uncontrolled thinking (because it lacks a criteria for entrance onto/into the "trains of thought") leads to **distracted** living and poor choices

2. Whatever is "true" (ἀληθῆ), indicating primarily anything that is real (versus pretend)

It is best to have the standard of truth defined early on in life - parents who provide their children the Bible as the authoritative source of truth do them a world of good - if not, something else will become the standard by which they determine "truth"

- It has been noted that it is what is **real** versus just what is **apparent** (seeming to be real)
- It would be all that is accurate, correct - this will, of course, involve a standard by which to judge what is true and what is not, and this "standard of truth" will dictate life
- The opposite would be whatever is false, pretend or erroneous
- Lives that are characterized as living in "pretend" are often so because there is either a fear of the "true truth" or they have been indoctrinated that there is not absolute, knowable truth that serves as an overriding standard/authority in life

3. Whatever is "honorable" (σεμνά), describing something that is serious, weighty, worthy of respect

And such a quality seems to be unexpected now in the development of our youth now - not having anything of substance to respect (proven to be true), they respect nothing (even themselves)

This trait is needed to contrast the lack of decorum across all aspects of life - if nothing is seen as dignified, nothing is treated seriously

- This is in contrast to what is "frivolous" or "vulgar" - it would be what was the difference often between the focus of adults versus that of children (who were expected to mature to a point where they became serious and knew what to **respect**)
- Paul is pointing them to dwell on all that is truly "majestic" and "noble" in life (and before God) - it is something worthy of reverence and awe - if this is poorly defined in life, what is admired/respected is often unimpressive in itself and lacking lasting, admirable content
- God made us to desire to worship and this may be misdirected to that which does not deserve it, or at that which society artificially builds-up to provide its people a replacement for God (or even for **what should be respected** such as good character, and traits that actually do well to mankind such as sacrifice for others, hard work, good manners, bravery and so on)

4. Whatever is "right" (δίκαια), picturing what is "just" (fair) toward others

The objective is not to think truly "mean" thoughts toward others or God - we are to desire proper justice, having a strong dislike for crookedness
"...scrupulous attention to all relative duties." Cambridge Bible Notes

- It is what is "**evenhanded**" in the treatment of others - the opposite would be a prejudicial thought process that looks on others or circumstances from a partial view to self
- This would translate into the practice of seeking what is "good/right" for others rather than (possibly out of vengeance or bitterness) dwelling on (coming to wish for) injustice to happen to them (or in whatever situation we are thinking on)
- It is "All that ye owe to God, to your neighbor, and to yourselves." Clarke

5. Whatever is "pure" (ἀγνά). indicating what is morally upright

Many Christians are lessening personal and organizational standards based on a misuse of the idea of "liberty" and "freedom" and their thinking is becoming more immoral (deadening conscience, quenching the Spirit)

There is no sincere consideration of giving one's self over to ungodliness

- The opposite being what is immoral, "bad" and corrupt (improper)
- To a Christian, this word is closely related to "holiness" ("set-apartness") as far as the morals, priorities and purposes **compared** to those of "the age"
- This must be in line with what God defines as morally right - we cannot take one good quality and use it to legitimize one that is immoral (as "love" is used to excuse or redefine sin (impurity/immorality))
- Unguarded thoughts lead to the increase of lusts, which if "fed," lead to immoral actions
- This word also entails "innocence" and "integrity," both showing that such would mean one must not meditate on what is "unholy"

6. Whatever is "lovely" (προσφιλῆ), describing what is pleasant, agreeable, encouraging

There is an odd addiction that creeps into lives where they fill their time with sad and depressing stories and accounts - yes, these must be faced throughout life, but there is nothing healthy in dwelling on them non-stop - stop and regularly recount the "goodness of the Lord"

- For the natural pessimist, this is a must! It is very easy to dwell upon the negatives only and fail to consider the graces God has filled our lives with on a daily basis
- There is an ongoing need for each to spend time rehearsing God's goodness - that which brings joy to the heart when recounted - the underlying Greek word pictures something **pleasing** to love (it's attractive - it "draws-in" love), it's likable
- There are many paths of thinking that can rob us of joy and weaken or even cripple our motivation - the answer is not "blind optimism," but a disciplined mind that can hope (in faith) on the good that may occur and have a spirit/drive of resolution and not one of a quitter - such keep their thoughts focused on "the lovely"
- Note this is not "escapism" - it truly thinks on what is genuinely good (as from God)

This is why we need to be attracted to what should be attractive because of its actual content and worth

Contemplating something like, "What would be good to say that would be good for others to hear?" (though not determined by what we expect they would want to hear, but what they ought to (kindly) hear)

There are areas and pursuits where it is best not to have "pioneers" forging a path for others to follow

If it is that which leads to improving for the better and promoting "moral" ideas and behavior, then think on it

The "love" of an outward focus and not the non-virtue of a self-focus

This demonstrates disciplined thinking - no lack of evil and uselessness is to be found with undisciplined minds!

New habits need to be formed and both the breaking with the old and incorporating the new will be challenges themselves - new "mental pathways" need to be formed and followed

The same would go with other areas such as the stressful challenges of the day, looking on them in light of these "thought-guides" - these are protectors (defenses) against all sorts of tempting thoughts to sin, discouragement, depression, covetousness and more

The difference between knowing and doing is far more significant than we realize

e. It also carries the concept of dwelling on/looking for what is truly lovely (what **should** be attractive, which includes the understanding of **why** it is attractive)

f. Society will have fluctuating attractions based on popularity (not innately "lovely")

7. Whatever is "of good repute" (εὖφημα), commendable, "well-speaking", gracious

a. This word/concept is along the lines of dwelling upon what is edifying (properly build-up), and is good to communicate to self/others - it's not just a self-encouragement, but one that dwells on **thoughts** that are also beneficial to self/others (in directing rightly)

b. Practically, this is dwelling on what "nice things" can be communicated - thinking on (strategizing) what can be said to encourage self/others properly

c. As indicated in the NASB translation (good repute), it is thinking on whatever is "reputable" (not questionable in its character) and is "proven" to be **genuinely** good

d. It is common/natural to drift toward what is "shady," either because of curiosity with what is novel to us or because it becomes widely accepted

8. Summarizing the content of what he is about to challenged them to do, Paul uses the concept commonly used in Greek **ethic** resources ("virtue") - if a thought comes to the gate of the mind and it passes the general test of being "**excellent**" (ideal), then let it in

a. This phrase and the qualifiers that came before it, indicate that the "gate keeper" of our mind needs to be **well-taught and cautiously critical**

b. One idea associated with the word for "excellence" (ἀρετή) is the love of what is right (also being proven in one's life by the revulsion to "thinking on" or following after the thought processes of what is wrong (in opposition to the will of God))

c. "Piety and true morality are inseparable. Piety is love with its face towards God; morality is love with its face towards man." JFB (immorality being "anti-love")

d. "The basis of goodness in the Gospel is self-renunciation, in order to the reception of grace, the undeserved gift of God." Cambridge Bible note

e. If it meets this general criteria and is deserving of praise, then it meets the "test" - the Greek word used here is ἔπαινος, and with the prefix "epi" stresses that it is truly fitting for praise (before God) - it is something that can easily be commended (**should** be commended)

f. If it does not pass this scrutiny, don't let it in! - see also I Thes. 5:21

g. These truths are also vital because our thinking dictates our speech - useless and frivolous conversations as well as inappropriate speaking altogether, have their source in an unguarded, lazy/irresponsible **mind**

h. "These things" (all of them) are what we are to continually "reckon with" and think on - we all have habits of thinking, so long-practiced by us, we have a hard time identifying them as unique to us - what Paul challenges here is a **change** of thinking, calculating and distinguishing - we will need to rethink how we think

i. We will need to practice on the basics - take a concept, a part of day in our life, and run it through these "filters", these Godly channels - for instance, thoughts on the people I will face that day; thinking of them in "truth" (who they really are versus my "settled-on" views of them) and looking to see them as needy, "hurttable," desiring purpose and significance, honoring them with the pursuit of honorable, edifying topics of proper encouragement, ranking them above self, poised to deal with them evenhandedly (poised to forgive), and not defraud or cheat them in any way, encouraging them and self to "holy" thought and practice (pursuing what is best), working at encouraging them with the "pleasantness of life" (when seen from God's purposes), speaking well of them and to them (gracious yet truthful compliments, looking to support a good reputation of them)

j. Quite a bit of our lives is often wasted on needless stress and distracting diversions from what we ought to be doing because of undisciplined, **unchecked** thinking

9. Put these things into practice - vs. 9

a. "Practice these things" is not just doing them periodically/occasionally - it is more along the lines of "**be**, in any condition" - incorporate them into who/what you are

b. The things you have "learned and received", demonstrates there is more to be done than just learning (coming to know) - it needs to be "received" as well (the underlying word, παραλαμβάνω, pictures a "joining to one's self" as in "owning it")

"Observe, Paul's doctrine and life were of a piece. What they saw in him was the same thing with what they heard from him. He could propose himself as well as his doctrine to their imitation. It gives a great force to what we say to others when we can appeal to what they have seen in us." Henry

Right or wrong, the skeptic will disqualify what we say if it is apparent we don't follow it either (we don't seem to believe it ourselves)

- c. He then points them again to his example - "what you have heard (of) and seen in me" - living examples are so important to each generation - there is no shortage of those who will declare what needs to be done and what we all should be doing, but so few are actually living/doing it!
- d. "...and the God of peace will be with you" - This reveals why the "peace of God will guard our hearts" because the God of peace Himself is with us! It might be stated that God is always with us, though to better understand this concept, we need to realize that it is not God that "leaves" us, but we who leave Him (and in so doing, lose our "peace")
- e. Not that experience is the highest authority, but it is AN authority - if we teach and don't do, we can be used as a point to discredit what we teach - the doing of what we teach/declare as truth, is a very important part of our passing on these truths - Truth does not pivot on us, but we can discredit it in the eyes of others (becoming a hindrance to it)
- f. Note that it was also what they "heard" of Paul that was to influence them (his consistency with and before others) - so we ought to long for such a reputation (of consistency) with our friends and even before our "enemies"

VII. The Grateful and Contented Receiving of a Gift - 4:10-23

A. Here at the end of his letter, Paul expresses his thrill (rejoicing) at receiving their gift - vs. 10-14

1. His response seems odd to those expecting a straightforward "thank you", but his word (rejoiced) demonstrates his inner thoughts (and demonstrates how a gift such as this ought to be received)

Like a parent who would be over-joyed when their child gives something they love (however small and insignificant it may be), because it demonstrates their growth

This is one of many ways we ought to continually direct others to their being used of God rather than giving the impression it was out of their own goodness

We must not permit ourselves to equate having practical needs met by others with their level of care for us - this would be too easy to fake (some give and don't truly care or just desire the appearance that they do)

- a. As will be seen in verse 17, he was thinking more on the benefit to them and what such a gift demonstrated about them (and their true heart)
- b. Some will give a gift out of guilt, pride or just to get someone "off their back", yet some do so (as was the case here) to participate in the work themselves (being the "fellow laborers" with him (1:5-7))
- c. He was also encouraged because it demonstrated (again) their ongoing concern for him
- d. He also "rejoiced in the Lord greatly" (μεγάλως) - he acknowledged this as **from the Lord** before it being **from them** - this is also key as a reminder of our obedience and work being for the Lord before it is for others (God using them)
- e. When he writes "you have revived your concern for me," it is not an indication that they had stopped caring, but, as clarified in the next phrase, it was more that they were unable to act on it in a practical fashion - sometimes God does not enable us to meet a need or does not open the opportunity
- f. These may not have had money/supplies to spare at the time and/or someone to bring it to Rome - nonetheless, Paul is encouraged at this expression of their love for him

2. His exuberant expression was not because God did not meet needs - he goes on to explain that he had learned to be content in any situation in which God placed him (and such an example (and line of thought) ought to be followed) - vs. 11-14

He did not desire them to believe him to feel neglected (abandoned) - neither do we ever want to communicate to others that God has "let us down" -there is the potential of others taking offense at God for our indications that God has forsaken us in some need

And this he had "learned" by what he had been learning of God and by putting into practice his focus on God meeting all needs sufficiently and in perfect timing and amount

- a. He does not write to them this way because he was in great need (ὑστέρησιν used only one other time (Mk. 12:44) and pictures poverty) - God had not brought him to such a condition, though if so, he had learned contentment
- b. Contentment is a powerful quality to cultivate for it frees us from the endless lures, temptations, and diversions that come with being discontent (dissatisfied) - even the first sin of man can find a close association to discontentment (and that in "paradise")
- c. "...αὐτάρκης expresses his independence of external circumstances, but *only because* he was totally dependent on God." O'Brien - this is clarified by O'Brien because the traditional Greek understanding of this word was associated with self-sufficiency
- d. This steady, trusting satisfaction was in **whatever** circumstance he was - this is only doable with a solid grounding in trusting God's oversight of every detail of life - thoughts/perspectives focused on perceived "lacking" distorts the truth of the ever-present and all sufficient grace of God at all times, in all things
- e. "For I know" ταπεινοῦσθαι (lowliness of both supplies and position) - he knew how to be "abased" as the KJV has it - he knew (as a result of his learning) to be brought low - such times are to be "studied for"

If security (faith) is placed in having excess, we come to feel comfortable in calculating how we have enough for the future rather than our confidence remaining with God's perfect supply at all times

Our expectations typically become the opponents of this - we can live with less or can be controlled when we have plenty, but we can relax our "temperance" and our expectations become unrealistic and not founded in faith

"Success" can be in many areas such as in a job, friendships, health; even in the frivolous such as success (excelling) at having "fun"

Yeager - RNT

It's not so much "I can do all things" as Christ gives me strength, as it is in all things, since I am in Christ, I am empowered to face what must be faced

"Because I am in Him I can confidently face all He leads me to"

We will not pick the "mountains" to be moved; He will bring us to them to be moved

Giving really is "sharing" - not just sharing what we have but sharing in the needs of others - it is a way to join in the hard times as well as the good

- f. He also knew how to "abound" - in context these clearly deal with his "financial" standing (as far as practical needs/supplies) and all that came with either scenario - it is easy to miss the **need** to "know how" to abound (to have more than enough), yet it is in these times that discontent can be catered to (as we come to place our comfort and security in the abundance) - we need to learn how to handle prosperity!
- g. Our idea, though, of prosperity becomes distorted - when we fail to see that "more than enough for today" is prosperous, we are apt to leave this perception "unharnessed" and soon come to be in "fits of worry" when we can't foresee the resources to meet a month's need!
- h. Paul knew how to respond in every situation and circumstance because he had "learned the secret of facing **plenty and hunger**" - the word used for "learned" is μεμύημαι, used of being initiated into something (to then be free to partake of its advantages) - it was commonly used to describe the initiation into a "secret rite" (getting to know what most others will never come to know) - not out of pride, but of **being fortunate**
- i. Both "spectrums" are covered in his clarifying that he has come to know (and practice) being hungry and being full, exceeding/excelling (success) or lacking/falling short (failing)
- j. "Success" can become an overwhelming failure to us personally because reaching a standard of any type of "more than enough" (money, possessions, recognition/appreciation, etc.) can become a point of pride where we sense our deserving (or having earned) it
- k. "Thus the Christian is the only individual who is not enslaved by his earthly environment. Whether he is rich or poor, well fed or hungry, abounding or lacking, it makes no difference."
- l. For, "I can do all things..." - this verse is often used on its own without consideration to its context - it's not so much that **everything** can be done as much as it is that all such situations and positions that he has been describing are "doable," **not just idealistic** and in reality unreachable - **it is the connection with Christ that is key** (as in John 15)
- m. Literally translated it is "πάντα ἰσχύω ἐν τῷ ἐνδυναμοῦντί με", "all things strengthened by the strengthening/empowering of Him" - He is the "constant" in the waves of change! (and since He does not change, we need not fluctuate with changes)
- n. Better to take this verse as in facing all that must be faced with confidence, because He so leads, rather than picturing His readiness to support our endeavors (as we plan them out)
- o. "The "all things" are, of course, not all things absolutely; he is not the Omnipotent. They are "all things" with which he has to do, as the will of God brings them to him; not the boundless field of possibilities, but a straight line across it, the actual path of duty and suffering, chosen not by himself but by his Lord and Master." Cambridge Bible Notes
- p. "Nevertheless, you have done well..." - even though Paul was contented at all times, their gift was greatly appreciated and another demonstrated their "συνκοινωνήσαντές μου τῇ θλίψει" (fellowship/participation with the sufferings) - they were bearing the burdens of the work with him (they were a team!)
- q. So much of the "hard work" of life is made bearable and, at times, enjoyable because of the friendships we form in it and the truly "sweet fellowship" we have in it (with the truest friends that could be had)
- r. There is a "balance" that should be more exemplified today, where there is gratefulness for needs being met, but never ascribing to the "tool" used to meet the need too much credit - God will meet the need without us, so our motive isn't supposed to be out of necessity, but out of opportunity

B. God supplies every need - vs. 15-23

1. At the start of his ministry in their area and beyond, they alone (as a church) supported him

Clearly these were those not waiting for others to "join-in" before moving ahead - they were supportive because it was right and good, not because it was popular

This church genuinely cared for Paul and were not driven more by their own needs - such drive is rare!

- a. They "entered into partnership" with him in the "Gospel" ministry - the practical support of the Gospel ministry is a true partnership - no part of the work, spiritual or practical is deemed unnecessary or lesser than the other - these were the only ones
- b. It's not so much the number of those supporting as much as it is having actual, consistent support - The key is in properly determining how much is "enough"
- c. The underlying word for "shared" (ἐκοινωνήσεν) is often translated "communicate" which is an essential part of any "partnership" - genuine needs and opportunities are missed because of assumptions and presumptions



Read II Thes. 2:1-12

- d. When Paul was in Thessalonica (Acts 17:1-9), even there (where he was initially treated badly by some who stirred-up the crowds) he was supported - it was also there that he worked to support himself as well, and was not receiving support from that church
- e. These Philippian Christians had seen firsthand the suffering Paul and his team suffered in their own city, and rather than be driven by the “avoidance of trouble” they supported him “more than once”

2. It was for their good and spiritual “profit” he was motivated - vs. 17-18

As a parent might receive gifts that meet needs from their children - yet are most encouraged at what such generosity demonstrates in their children

This is a good example of “blessing upon blessing”

see II Cor. 9:6-15

Contentment is key so we can always determine that what we have been given is always enough

read Eph. 5:1-17

- a. “Not that I’m after the gift...” - Paul wanted it clear that it is not out of any form of greed that he is complimenting them (which is often behind the response when gifts are received)
- b. “I seek the profit that increases to your account” - this is likely a financial reference picturing the **results of a wise investment** - though Paul is not looking to motivate a desire in them to give so they can profit financially, but more that such a response on their part demonstrates the fruit of actual growth and maturity, which leads to more “fruit”
- c. Paul was grateful that his needs were met, yet God would have met them anyway - but Paul was even more encouraged that these friends would be benefitted all the more by their own participation in the Lord’s work (with Paul) - he desired that their focus stay on **eternal worth** over and above temporal worth/values - see also Mt. 10:41-42
- d. Paul expressed his contentment and his need “met in full” by the gift brought to him by Epaphroditus - we, as Paul, should never assess the gift provided by God in how it compares to what **we** assess our need to be - the gift (as received from God) is as much as it ought to be, and seen in light of “grace,” is more than we deserve!
- e. And, as also compared in Heb. 13:16, such giving is as a sacrifice, a “sweet smell” before God (as in “thank offerings”) - our purpose for giving to others is to be more motivated by gratefulness to God and His goodness to us, for what do we have that we do not have as part of His grace to us? We, as these did, are to give to be “well pleasing” to God and not for the praise (or even gratefulness) of others - see II Cor. 8:2

3. “My God” will meet your needs! - vs. 19

Not that these sacrifices will be met with needs supplied “when in glory”, but now and always - we are His now!

His “riches in glory” are reference for there is no end to them (no exhausting them)

- a. Paul, not being able to repay them or contribute anything of practical value, places the focus for such “repayment” (reward) back where it belongs; **on God Himself** - He will assuredly supply ALL their needs, for His resources (in “glory”) are limitless
- b. “But still it is by Christ Jesus; through him we have grace to do that which is good, and through him we must expect the reward of it. Not of debt, but of grace; for the more we do for God the more we are indebted to him, because we receive the more from him.” Henry
- c. We will never be lacking because we were too “giving” to God’s service - it has been often said that we cannot out-give God, which is true, but not if we give to “get” for ourselves - if motivated properly, **we long to give to get to give more!**
- d. Our “era” has been pushing financial responsibility so strongly that giving is based mostly upon “our riches in our accounts” than it is considering His riches “in glory”
- e. These “needs” are not just financial and practical; they are mental, emotional, relational and spiritual also - His grace will (Paul assures) more than meet ALL needs - this is key in light of our Lord’s instruction in Mt. 6:25-33, since it is most important we keep the bulk of our focus on “seeking first His kingdom and His righteousness” and these other things (needs) will be “added to you”

4. To God be the glory! - vs. 20

This truth is what enables us to avoid the distractions of our age since they would be unable to even begin to compete with the boundless truths of our God!

This is followed by ἀμὴν, meaning truly, so be it!

- a. This concept has been done a gross disservice in its becoming a cliché with so many Christians - the concept is truer and more profoundly correct than anything that can be said - to God belongs all the glory (all the honor, renown and our being unceasingly impressed), and this is not just seen in our outward, corporate expressions of worship, but in our innermost thoughts
- b. And, His servants ought not ever seek to receive such glory/honor that is exclusively His - we seek honor in as much as others honor us by their honor/glorifying our Father
- c. Especially, in context, such credit is due Him in the supply of all our needs (for it is robbery to praise His instruments more than Him) - this would be too akin to the downward slope of those, out of ungratefulness, worship and serve the creation more than the Creator



- d. This glory is not just seen as for “now” but as (it will be) for all eternity - all of creation was designed and is purposed for this and it makes sense to live for this now - why seek out the “glories” of our age, live for them, love them, covet them, when they are fleeting?
- e. “To give God glory is not to add something that is not already present; it is rather an active acknowledgment or extolling what he is or has already done.” O’Brien

5. Final greeting and “benediction” - vs. 21-23

As we ought to be driven to do - not focused on whether or not we are “greeted” but are we “greeting”?

- a. “Greet every saint..” - the Greek word for “greet” is “Ἀσπάζασθε” included the concept of an “embrace” picturing an affectionate greeting (and that to EACH one) - the wording is such so as to be all-inclusive... don’t leave anyone out (don’t neglect)
- b. Note again the usage of “saint” - just another reminder of who and what they really are (separated/set part ones for the Lord)
- c. Those still associated with Paul in Rome sent their greetings as well including those “of the household of Caesar” - so many of these had become Paul’s friends (and thus the friends of other “saints” in Philippi)
- d. Paul ends with a statement without a verb - it literally reads, “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ with your spirit,” picturing the sense and full awareness of His unending, unlimited grace as being in their innermost self - His goodness, His kindness and His enablement are a part of who/what we are (and to be a part of our innermost thinking)

And such an awareness should serve as a motivator and reminder to be so “gracious” to other believers (saints) as well - we are in this journey/struggle together and need God’s grace as well as needing to **BE** gracious