



Philippians

Chapter 2

- Author: The Apostle Paul
- Recipients: The Church at Philippi
 - First church in Europe, in the region of Macedonia in northern Greece
 - Founded by Paul on his second Missionary Journey, AD 51 – predominantly Gentile
- Time and Place of Writing: Most likely during Paul's imprisonment in Rome, AD 61 or 62
- Occasion and Purpose: Acknowledging the generosity of the church, sending Epaphroditus back, urging unity in the body
- Significant Themes:
 - Joy
 - Right Thinking – knowing Christ
 - Holy Living
 - Exaltation of Christ

Background to Philippians

- I. Opening 1:1-11
 - A. Salutation 1:1-2
 - B. Thanksgiving 1:3-8
 - C. Prayer 1:9-11
- II. Paul's Missionary Report 1:12-26
 - A. Paul's Circumstances 1:12-17
 - B. Paul's Attitude 1:18-26
- III. A Call to Sanctification 1:27-2:30
 - A. Christian Citizenship 1:27-2:4
 - B. Christian Humility 2:5-11
 - C. Christian Obedience 2:12-18
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 - B. A Word of Thanks 4:10-20
 - C. Closing 4:21-23

Outline of Philippians

¹² So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³ for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for *His* good pleasure.

- To resolve the question of “working out” our salvation, look to Phil 1:6 – “For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.” Paul was commending the Philippians for their partnership in the Gospel, and simultaneously acknowledging that it was God who was working in them.
- Paul is speaking of the total experience of salvation for the believer – not just initial justification, but ongoing sanctification. Our status before God is fixed in Christ, we cannot add to that status, but we do experience growth in holiness as we walk with Christ and are sanctified.
- God's working in the life of the Christian is not just limited to the actions of the believer, but to our very wills. He provides the will (desire) to do the work that aligns with His good pleasure.

Christian Obedience: The Believer's Work (Phil 2:12-13)

¹⁴ Do all things without grumbling or disputing; ¹⁵ so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, ¹⁶ holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I will have reason to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain.

- Paul returns to a call to unity, but instead of the conflict being caused by opponents who bring suffering into the church, here we see the corrupt generation that the Philippian church was called to contrast by their behavior.
- Phil 2:1-4 focuses on the danger of selfish motivations for our actions, while this passage zeroes in on grumbling and disputing.
- Paul is likely drawing from the grumbling of the Israelites in the wilderness, including Deut 32:5 – “They have acted corruptly toward Him, They are not His children, because of their defect; But are a perverse and crooked generation.”

Christian Obedience: Blameless Children (Phil 2:14-16)

¹⁷ But even if I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice and share my joy with you all. ¹⁸ You too, *I urge you*, rejoice in the same way and share your joy with me.

- Paul is not manipulating their emotions, but making a sincere appeal, and offering an encouragement to rejoice at the same time.
- “Drink offering” = pouring out a liquid (typically wine) that accompanies a sacrifice. He is willing to spend his life for the sake of the Lord and for the converts God has entrusted to him.
- Paul again juxtaposes great suffering with great joy. As in Phil 1:18-20, he recognizes the possibility of death, and yet rejoices as he rests in God’s perfect will.
- He also commands the Philippians to be joyful. If joy were merely an emotion, the command would be hollow. But joy comes from right thinking (“count it all joy...”), so he can call on them to rejoice by focusing their thinking on the things of God.

Christian Obedience: A Personal Appeal (Phil 2:17-18)

¹⁹ But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, so that I also may be encouraged when I learn of your condition. ²⁰ For I have no one *else* of kindred spirit who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare. ²¹ For they all seek after their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus. ²² But you know of his proven worth, that he served with me in the furtherance of the gospel like a child *serv*ing his father. ²³ Therefore I hope to send him immediately, as soon as I see how things *go* with me; ²⁴ and I trust in the Lord that I myself also will be coming shortly.

- Paul is almost apologetic about not sending Timothy, and twice states that he hopes to send Timothy to Philippi soon.
- The Philippians seem to have been expecting (asking for?) a visit from Timothy, so Paul may have wanted to “soften the blow,” anticipating that they would have been disappointed not to see him, but instead Epaphroditus.
- He offers a hearty commendation for Timothy, could be to emphasize why he has decided to keep Timothy, but also to assure the Philippians that nothing has happened to lessen Paul’s support of Timothy, or Timothy’s concern for them.

Resumption of Paul’s Missionary Report (Phil 2:19-24)

²⁵ But I thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger and minister to my need; ²⁶ because he was longing for you all and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick. ²⁷ For indeed he was sick to the point of death, but God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, so that I would not have sorrow upon sorrow.

- After sounding apologetic that he could not send Timothy at this time, Paul wants to ensure that any potential disappointment on the part of the Philippians is not transferred toward Epaphroditus.
- “distressed” – only other place in NT this verb was used to describe Jesus at Gethsemane (Matt. 26:37; Mark 14:33).
- Paul is emphasizing Epaphroditus’ continual focus on others, especially those in Philippi. Although he had been sick even to the point of death, his concern was not for himself, but that the church would have been troubled to hear of his circumstances.

Resumption of Paul’s Missionary Report (Phil 2:25-27)

²⁸ Therefore I have sent him all the more eagerly so that when you see him again you may rejoice and I may be less concerned *about you*. ²⁹ Receive him then in the Lord with all joy, and hold men like him in high regard; ³⁰ because he came close to death for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was deficient in your service to me.

- Paul directly tells them to welcome and honor Epaphroditus, which may again be an acknowledgement that there would be natural disappointment that it was not Timothy who was sent to bring the message from Paul.
- He also may have wanted to ensure they understood just how serious Epaphroditus' health situation was, because he repeats again how he came close to death for the work of Christ.
- The entire picture of Epaphroditus is of one who is to be highly commended – a brother, a fellow worker, a fellow soldier, one who never tires or wavers in the work of the Gospel and in the spiritual battle going on all around us.

Resumption of Paul's Missionary Report (Phil 2:28-30)

3 Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things *again* is no trouble to me, and it is a safeguard for you.

² Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision; ³ for we are the *true* circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh,

- Paul introduces a rather abrupt change of tone in 3:2, beginning a section that would be described as a polemic (Webster: an aggressive attack on or refutation of the opinions or principles of another) against the Judaizers.
- Paul has extremely strong words against these opponents, similar to 2 Cor 11:13-15 (“For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ”) and Galatians 1:8-9; 5:12; 6:12-13. He is always direct when it comes to the central message of the Gospel, but is harshest toward those who would lead believers astray.
- Paul refers to the Judaizers as dogs – would have been a significant insult to any Jew, especially one who is trying to introduce the Mosaic Law upon Gentile believers. The irony is that those who thought they were being observant Jews are called by the insult typically used for Gentiles.

Doctrinal Polemics (Phil 3:1-3)