



- 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
- IV. Doctrinal Polemics 3:1-4:1
 - A. Judaizers as the Context for Theology 3:1-6
 - B. The Essence of Pauline Theology 3:7-11
 - C. Practical Theology 3:12-4:1
- V. Final Concerns 4:2-23
 - A. Exhortations 4:2-9
 - B. A Word of Thanks 4:10-20
 - C. Closing 4:21-23

Outline of Philippians

¹⁵ Some, to be sure, are preaching Christ even from envy and strife, but some also from good will; ¹⁶ the latter *do it* out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel; ¹⁷ the former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition rather than from pure motives, thinking to cause me distress in my imprisonment.

- Those people preaching Christ out of selfish ambition were not anti-Christ, they were anti-Paul. The gospel they preached was true and led to the salvation of many, and for that, Paul rejoiced in spite of what it meant for himself. Compare his attitude toward the Judaizers, who were preaching a different gospel, in Galatians 1:8-9.
- Paul understood his calling ("I am appointed – literally, 'set in place' – for the defense of the gospel"), as he described in Galatians 1:15-16:
 - ¹⁵ But when God, who had set me apart *even* from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, was pleased ¹⁶ to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles...

Paul's Circumstances (Phil 1:15-17)

¹⁸ What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in this I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice, ¹⁹ for I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, ²⁰ according to my earnest expectation and hope, that I will not be put to shame in anything, but *that* with all boldness, Christ will even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.

- Paul rejoices that Christ is proclaimed, whatever the motivation of those preaching. Our responsibility is to be faithful to God's calling on our lives, the motivations of others are His concern.
- Paul uses several terms related to salvation: deliverance, hope, not be put to shame – it's possible that the deliverance he is expecting could have been physical deliverance from prison, but more likely he is referring to spiritual deliverance in the exaltation of Christ.
- Paul speaks of the means by which God will provide that deliverance, focusing on the prayers of the saints and the work of the Holy Spirit. Ultimately, salvation is a singular work of God, but our prayers for one another have spiritual impact as the Spirit works in the lives of God's people.

Paul's Attitude (Phil 1:18-20)

²¹ For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. ²² But if *I am* to live *on* in the flesh, this *will mean* fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. ²³ But I am hard-pressed from both *directions*, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for *that* is very much better; ²⁴ yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake.

- Paul's teaching here appears to be a departure from OT teaching that regarded deliverance from physical death to be a sign of God's blessing and protection, while death was often an indication of being put to shame. Yet, Paul states a clear preference to depart and be with the Lord, calling it "better."
- "Hard-pressed" = *synechomai* (distressed) – Luke 12:50
- Paul is laying bare his conflicted feelings, his personal preference to depart, and his recognition that remaining in this life is more necessary for the sake of the Church – and also for the glory of the Lord.
- Paul is laying out the principle of considering others before yourself, which he expands in the next chapter. In chapter 2, Jesus chose death for the benefit of those whom He would save. In this chapter, Paul chooses life for the benefit of the Philippians.

Paul's Attitude (Phil 1:21-24)

²⁵ Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith, ²⁶ so that your proud confidence in me may abound in Christ Jesus through my coming to you again.

- Although Paul had just expressed a personal desire to depart this life to be with the Lord, here he reassures the Philippians that not only does he intend to continue living and ministering, but that he expects to return to them again.
- “Remain and continue” = *meno kai parameno* – abide and continue alongside, with the goal being their progress and joy in the faith. Once again, Paul shows his other-focused attitude.
- “Proud confidence” = *kauchēma*, (boasting, grounds for glorying). Elsewhere, Paul admonishes his readers to boast only in the Lord (1 Cor 1:31, quoting from Jeremiah 9:23-24) and not in men (1 Cor 3:21). Proper “boasting” in the Lord is to proclaim His great character and the marvelous things He has done. Proper “boasting” in people, both here and in other places (2 Cor 5:12; 7:4; 8:24; 9:3) should always be about what God has done and is doing in those other people.

Paul's Attitude (Phil 1:25-26)

²⁷ Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; ²⁸ in no way alarmed by *your* opponents—which is a sign of destruction for them, but of salvation for you, and that *too*, from God.

- Paul assured the Philippians that everything would work out according to God's perfect will, but he still felt the urgency of reminding them to live worthy of the Gospel.
- “Conduct yourselves” = *politeuesthe* – to live and behave as a citizen, act in a way that would bring honor to your people.
- Paul emphasizes spiritual tenacity: standing firm and striving together (*synathlountes*), with a focus on unity in the body.
- Paul does not directly name the opponents in v. 28, though he may have been referring to the Judaizers (see 3:2). But regardless of who the specific enemies were, he is encouraging the church that they should not be so much as alarmed by their enemies. The very conflict they are experiencing is a sign of God's working in their lives.

Christian Citizenship: Tenacity (Phil 1:27-28)

²⁹ For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake,
³⁰ experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear *to be* in me.

- Verse 29 explains verse 28 – how the suffering and persecution they are experiencing is not just something to be endured, but is actually ordained by God for His glory and their good.
- Do not look to afflictions as merely inevitable, but as a manifestation of God's gracious dealings with us.
- Once more, Paul calls on believers to look to his example. In this case, he is calling attention to his own sufferings, and by implication confirming that suffering is not a sign of judgement from God, but often is a means of grace and assurance that the believer's faith is genuine.

Christian Citizenship: Suffering (Phil 1:29-30)

2 Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, ² make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. ³ Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; ⁴ do not *merely* look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.

- This is one sentence, around a single imperative: "make my joy complete." They had lost some of their joy in Christ, and had caused others (perhaps Paul himself) to also lose joy, so Paul's reminder and call throughout the letter is to be joyful.
- The main emphasis of his appeal is to unity – being of the same mind, same love, united in spirit (sympsychoi), one purpose.
- The key to unity is humility – place more importance on others than on yourself, and look to bless others.
- Paul is continuing his emphasis on right thinking: regard one another, look out for the interests of others.

Christian Citizenship: Unity (Phil 2:1-4)