

The Epistle of Paul to the Philippians

Intermediate Study:

To be properly prepared for this study in class please read the introduction, the section of scripture which follows it, the teacher's notes following that, and then answer the questions. The questions will cover all the previously mentioned material. Of course, any other research and study you do will be a welcome addition during the class discussion period. Also write out any questions you may have concerning the context which will also help keep the class focused on the subject. Often classes get off the tract because a student has not prepared before hand and thus entertains himself by asking questions unrelated to the current topic.

Introduction:

Paul in his speech to the Athenians had described God as the One in which "we live, move and have our being" (Acts 17:28). His letter to the church at Philippi is an example of the apostle practicing what he preached. Within the realm of God's spiritual world, Paul is able to demonstrate his capability of strong and deep emotion, exhibiting a "heart capacity beyond most men" yet with a sound, sane, balanced and solid core of control.

Although he is in prison, it is an experience being made the most of, as he is able to convert some of his guards, and further, their seems to be good news concerning the latest developments in his case before the imperial court. That he feels strongly about their decision is seen in Philemon 22. In this he expresses his joy, especially since it may not only bring about his release, but also make possible a visit to the Philippians. There is also joy in what he hears of the progress of the gospel by them in spite of his circumstance, actually, because of them.

Timothy is also a part of this as he always has been. He was with Paul when the church was founded. When Timothy was sent back to Thessalonica from Athens he probably went back to Philippi (1 Thessalonians 3:1-2,6). He was in Philippi when Paul decided to send him from Ephesus to Corinth to help in the progress of the gospel (A.D. 57). Timothy also took part in the collection for the saints as they traveled from Corinth to Jerusalem through Philippi (Acts 20:4).

We are privileged to know of the establishing of the church at Philippi through Luke's work (Acts 16:12-15). Its first convert was Lydia along with her household followed by the conversion of the Jailer and his household (Acts 16:27-34). Paul in several letters expresses his appreciation for the gifts this church sent him at times when he really needed help.

Luke was also a part of this church's growth and seems to have worked steadily with the congregation there. His first "we" section stops when Paul leaves Philippi (Acts 16:11-40) implying that he remained in the city. This is further confirmed by the second "we" section which does not begin until Paul returns to Philippi (Acts 20:5-6).

The acceptance of Paul as the author of this letter and the evidence of its authenticity begins as early as the writings of Polycarp and extends all through the early "fathers" to the time Eusebius. The internal evidence is undeniable and an criticism is easily set aside. As one scholar put it, "this letter is so fresh, distinct, inimitable in every way that forgery is impossible."

The interesting thing about this epistle is that it does not really have a theme and its contents are truly letter-like. It mentions the minor matter between two women (4:2). It refers to the gift sent by the Philippians to Paul (4:14-15). It mentions the recovery of Epaphroditus from his terminal illness, which the Philippians had heard about, of which Paul knew that they had heard and were concerned. (2:25-28). There is also joy expressed about various things, so much that no one thing can be singled out as to the occasion for the communication. On the whole, though, it is a very uplifting study.

Philippians 1:1-30

1. Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons:
2. Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
3. I thank my God in all my remembrance of you,
4. always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all,
5. in view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now.
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.
7. For it is only right for me to feel this way about you all, because I have you in my heart, since both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers of grace with me.
8. For God is my witness, how I long for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus.
9. and this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment,
10. so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ;
11. having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.
12. Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel,
13. so that my imprisonment in the cause of Christ has become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else,
14. and that most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear.
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.
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 shall turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus,
20. according to my earnest expectation and hope, that I shall not be put to shame in anything, but that with all boldness, Christ shall even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.
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.
25. And convinced of this, I know that I shall 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.
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 may 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.
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.

Teaching Notes

Verses 1-2

Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

1. In this letter, Timothy joins with Paul as a bond-servant of the Lord in writing to the saints in Philippi. Not necessarily that he helped composed the letter, but more in the sense of seconding the things to be communicated.
2. The term "slave" implies that their only will is God's.
3. To be noted also is Paul's forgoing of establishing his apostleship. He is not dropping the authority with which he writes, he is merely not making it felt, for with these individuals there is no need.
4. The letter is addressed to "all" the saints, the term being a general reference to those who have been washed of their sins, sanctified in Christ Jesus. See John 17:16-20 & 1 Cor. 6:11.
5. From this congregation are those designated "overseers", *episkopoi*. These are the "elders", *presbuteroi*, or "pastors", *poimenas*. All three terms are found in Acts 20:17,28 pertaining to the same group and their qualifications are found in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9.
6. The term "deacon", *diakonois*, is also translated "minister" or "servant" and as an office finds its qualifications in 1 Timothy 3:8-13.
7. The greeting is a standard one of Paul incorporating the dual signature of both the Greek, "grace", and Hebrew, "peace" cultures. Together they wish the recipients all the blessings of God and an absence of all evil in one's life.

Verses 3-11

I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all, in view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now. 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. For it is only right for me to feel this way about you all, because I have you in my heart, since both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers of grace with me. For God is my witness, how I long for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ; having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

1. (v.3) Paul begins the body of this work by thanking God for the many gifts the Philippians have sent him. His inducement to pray for them, however, does not have anything to do with money.
2. When the apostle uses the term "all" it has to do with all that induces him to thank them. All of it comes to mind when he thinks of them, and he is grateful to God.
3. (Verse 4 & 5) comprise a unit. Paul in his every petition does so with joy remembering how much they have participated in the fellowship of the gospel with Paul from the very first day. Fellowship here means far more than a contribution of money.
4. This first day is Acts 16:15 when he baptized Lydia and she insisted they lodge with her. He is thanking God for blessing them and asking God to continue to bless them.
5. (v.6) Paul's confidence is his inner conviction. This conviction is that the work that God had begun from that first day will continue in the Philippians until it finds its completion in the day when Christ comes.
6. The completion will then consist of the raising of the dead bodies into their glorification. This completion pertains to the individuals and not the congregation as a whole.
7. (v.7) The apostle says that it is only "right" that he feels this way. After all they have shared together it would be wrong to see it any other way. When he says he

has them in his heart, he is not saying just that he feels affectionate toward them, but that it goes much deeper. He holds them as being a part of himself, as they have shared so much with him.

8. His imprisonment has lasted possibly four years. And now with his trial they have stood by him in the defense of the gospel – the true defendant.
9. When John wrote of the grace upon grace (John 1:16) he was referring to the type of life God makes of each one us. For Paul his grace was to bear the Name of Christ before the Gentiles and kings (Acts 9:15). Of this the Philippians had been a part.
10. (v.8) Because they were so close, Paul says that God bears witness of his deep affection for them. This is marked by the use of *splagchnois* (the nobler viscera of lungs, liver, the seat of the feelings – opposed to intestines) instead of *kardia* (heart). Note that Paul has the same affection toward them as Christ does.
11. (v.9) Prayer further is made that the Philippians' "love" will consist of "true knowledge and understanding coupled with corresponding purpose" as it continues and "abounds" = gets stronger, wiser, abler.
12. (v.10) Again Paul refers to the "day of Christ" and until then he encourages them to "approve", *dokimazein*, (prove, test out) the things that are "excellent", *diapheronta*, (things that differ, like coins that are alloyed). This reference to the testing of metals or coins is a favorite concept of Paul's, but he is referring to things that may affect the Philippians personally, like various doctrines.
13. Paul's intent is that the Philippians themselves may be "sincere", *eilikrineis*, (unalloyed) and "blameless", *aproskopoi*, (unoffending, undamaged, uninjured). The jest of it being that when Christ comes he wants them to be found without souls that are mixed with worldliness. That is the negative.
14. (v.11) In a more positive analysis, he wants them found brim full with the fruit of righteousness leaving no room for anything else. This is the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22), the fruit of good works (Ephesians 2:10).
15. In summation, Paul prays that in the Philippians love abounds in knowledge and all perception and that they make true tests continually, with the purpose being that they become unalloyed and uninjured, their hearts and lives found to be filled with the fruit of righteousness when their Lord finally comes.

Verses 12-20

12. *Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel,*

Paul begins by informing them of what has become evident in his trial. In the word "inform, know", *ginowskein*, he uses the present infinitive to convey the fact that this bit of news is something that will effect them personally for a long time.

His exciting information is that the things pertaining to his situation have gone rather well for the advancement of the gospel. The word for "advancement" literally means to "administer a blow and impel forward." The circumstances concerning the gospel have been given a strong push in the right direction. The result will be a window of opportunity that will allow the gospel to spread throughout the Roman Empire as a sanctioned religion at least for about ten years.

13. *so that my imprisonment in the cause of Christ has become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else,*

As Paul states, this has had a dual result. First is that it became "well published" that his imprisonment was not the result of a criminal charge, but rather connected only with the cause of Christ. Thus the trial consisted of Paul's legal defense and legal confirmation of the gospel of his Lord. Never had such a thing been heard of and it aroused a large gathering in the courts. This was not a small occasion. It is at this point that the Lord is keeping His promise to His disciples: that the gospel will be witnessed to the uttermost parts of the world (Acts 1:8) and that in particular, Paul is to fulfill his commission as a chosen instrument of God to bear His Name "before Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel" (Acts 9:15).

Now because of this special circumstance, where Paul is not under criminal charges, it allows openness on the part of the Praetorian Guard. From the time of

Tiberius to that of Vespasian this guard consisted of nine cohorts with 1000 men in each. They were the hand-picked body guards of the Emperor, were all Italian, received double pay, enjoyed special privileges and every soldier ranked with the centurions of the regular legions. Every Emperor courted its favor because it was such a powerful influence of the state and usually they bestowed liberal donations up it when they ascended to the throne. (When Caligula went completely mad, it was the Praetorian Guard who took him off the throne and put Claudius in his place as a joke.)

The Praefectus had his office in the emperor's palace and Paul may have been placed there in the guardroom of the praetorian cohort on duty. For two years, day after day, soldier after soldier had stood guard beside Paul in his rented house and they would have become familiar with this unique individual and the message of God. It seemed to have a favorable influence as the Guard became thoroughly conversant with, and interested in, the case.

When Paul adds "and to everyone else" this cannot mean less than all of Rome, and since the imperial court acted favorably, all the publicity would have been favorable as well.

14. *and that most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear.*

This all had a good effect upon the brethren in the Capital. Paul names the more prominent individuals in his letter to the Romans (16:3-16). In 4:22, Paul sends his greetings to those of Caesar's household. In Romans 16:10-11, Paul names two large groups from this special family; the households of Aristobulus and Nacrissus. It might also be added, in the fulfillment of Paul's commission (concerning the "sons of Israel"), that upon Paul's arrival in Roman (Acts 28:24), a great many of the Jewish leaders and rabbis came to his house and entered the faith.

The apostle states that it was because of this great advancement of the Word due to his imprisonment that the brethren became fearless, daring to openly proclaim the Christ of the cross.

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;*

Of course among such a large group there will be a mixture or "alloy" (v.10) of motivation. Paul says of the brethren that there are two groups: one with grave faults and one of noble nature and motive.

The one group, because they are envious of the apostle, are driven to be contentious and thrive on dispute. Their meanness has become great because of the latitude the gospel was now given. These may be individuals who have not received the greater gifts and whose influence had waned and they felt the thrust suddenly into the background. Thus they carp, find fault and raise strife. They preach Christ boldly only to seize the limelight. Interestingly, Paul still talks of them as brethren.

The other group, in contrast, conduct themselves with the noble and magnanimous spirit, the "good will", or free determination, promoting what is right in an honorable manner.

This latter group's inner motivation is a love from understanding and purpose enlightened by a comprehension of Paul's office and what his imprisonment means toward God's plans, knowing that the apostle was "appointed" to this task.

17. *the former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, rather than from pure motives, thinking to cause me distress in my imprisonment.*

The others "announce, proclaim" Christ through "selfish ambition", *epitheia*, the sense of the word meaning, "to work for wages with a mercenary spirit that desires quick returns." Their motives are "mixed, impure, alloyed." They even believed that the progress in their preaching would cause Paul "distress" or "affliction" because he could not compete with them due to his confinement. They believed him to be like them.

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.*

They were wrong. For Paul, it was not a matter of who was making more points, rather, it was the accomplishment of the gospel's spread outward. Christ is being preached, and for this true apostle, he rejoiced and continued to rejoice. He did not confuse the substance with the motive. Because the main objective was being handled, it did not matter at all what the motivation was.

However, this does not mean that Paul condones either improper methods or motives. This is the apostle who states to the Ephesians that the truth must be spoken in love (Ephesians 4:15). Peter says that the case must be presented in meekness and fear (1 Peter 3:15). James warns that, "where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing" (James 3:16). Paul by no means applauds the inner motivation of these hypocrites; rather he is being longsuffering, hoping they will get over it.

19. *For I know that this shall turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus,*

Paul now affirms why he rejoices. There seems to be a consensus among scholars (Lenski, Bruce, Fee to name a few) that he is using what critics call "intertextuality", that is, he is first alluding to Job 13:16 where the term "salvation, or deliverance" might represent his "vindication"; borrowing the language verbatim from the Septuagint. Thus like Job in his distress, Paul is looking to be vindicated by God in the outcome. This is to be achieved by the Philippians' prayer of petition and whatever the Spirit of Christ can supply. This last may be understood in the Lord's own promise to His disciples that the Spirit would furnish them not only what to say but also how to say it (Matthew 10:19-20; Luke 12:12).

Luke 21:14-15 -- *So make up your minds not to prepare beforehand to defend yourselves; for I will give you utterance and wisdom which none of your opponents will be able to resist or refute.*

20. *according to my earnest expectation and hope, that I shall not be put to shame in anything, but that with all boldness, Christ shall even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.*

All just stated Paul says accords with his "earnest expectation and hope." The word used for "expectation", *apokaradokia*, envisions a "stretching forward of the head to view a thing's first appearance." This is coupled with "hope." In the New Testament, hope reflects the highest degree of certainty about the future. This is not wishfulness, but a conviction that he will not be put to shame in anything, but rather be "exalted, or magnified." (This too may be borrowed from the language of the "poor man" in Psalms 34:3-6 and Psalms 35:24-28.)

Thus Paul's confidence is that the Spirit will not let him deport himself in anyway to bring reproach upon the Name of the Lord, but rather will embolden (*parresia* means "in public") him with freedom of speech that is not cowed by fear or consideration of the safety of his own person, whether by life or by death.

Verses 21-26

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

It is easy to see that this verse explains what Paul meant by being exalted in his body, whether by life or by death (v.20). Before he was explaining what the Spirit of would make of him. Here he explains what it means to him.

His first statement is startling, that is, for him to live on in a bodily life "is Christ." This is another way of saying that his living consists of being a bond-servant for Christ. His whole focus of body, mind and spirit is in the serving of his Lord.

The two statements go together. When he talks of his dying being "gain", *kerdos*, it can only be if the life previous was for the Lord, for the term means, "profit obtained from a previous investment."

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.*

The apostle expands the meaning even more. For him to go on living is to do more work as an apostle in the service of God. This would be a surety of more fruit. As to what this "fruit" is, consider **Romans 1:13,15**:

"And I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that often I have planned to come to you in order that I might obtain some fruit among you also, even as among the rest of the Gentiles... thus for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome."

The question that Paul asks of himself contains an element of "cause" when he uses the *gnôrizô*, as if he is saying, "I am without the cause of knowing," or "God does not let me know." It is not merely "I don't know!"

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.*

Thus Paul has no help in knowing which is to come and this brings an also equal pressure from both alternatives. Although, when he speaks of dying he uses a participle that may indicate that the possibility is a minor one, whereas, his expression of the possibility of living is an expression in the finite. These are not accidental.

This own desire to "depart", *anulusai*, "to break camp" and be with the Lord is attached to the minor statement, as if his own choice is out-weighted by the alternative. So he expresses the remaining on in the flesh as the one that is more *necessary*, the major concern, especially since it affords more for his readers.

25. *And convinced of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith,*

Paul now writes that he is confident that he will remain (and this is borne out by history), but this is not a flattering of himself as if only he could do the job. Since it is God who has the say he understands that God is not limited. Rather he is only saying that he is confident in what he thinks God will do. It is not for Paul's sake, but for the sake of the Philippians progress and their joy in the faith. This latter is not a joy over that fact that they believe, but joy over *what* they believe.

26. *so that your proud confidence in me may abound in Christ Jesus through my coming to you again.*

With "so that", *hina*, Paul adds the purpose for their "proud confidence", *kauchêma*, "boasting" literally, in their progress and joy. When Paul is again in their midst, *pros*, "face to face", his very presence will increase their confidence in Christ Jesus.

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 may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;*

With "only", *monon*, Paul puts an admonition toward the true focus of all this, that whether he comes or not, they need to conduct themselves worthy of the gospel of Christ.

The term for "conduct yourselves", *politeuesthe*, has at its root the idea of "citizenship", with the dual idea of living together as a unit and facing ones adversaries. Thus the addition of "in one spirit" and "standing firm."

The adverb "worthy", *agiôs*, means to give "weighty" emphasis with the idea of conduct matching the beauty of the gospel law and matching the saving gifts that it holds.

This is not an individual effort, but a "striving together", *sunathlountes*, as in an athletic contest, with one "mind", *psuchê*, one "soul." Compare:

Acts 4:32 -- *And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own; but all things were common property to them.*

Jude 3 -- ...I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.

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 now adds that they were in no way to be “alarmed”, *pturomenoi*, “being terrified – used regarding horses taking fright”. Though the thought is negative, it’s meaning is more positive: be not scared and rather joyfully courageous.

As to what sort of “opponents”, *tôê antikeimenôn*, “ones opposing, adversaries” Paul is talking about, a reference is given in verse 30. Think of those who had the power to pressure city authorities into driving the apostle from Philippi and Thessalonica.

Why? Because their standing firm and not being scared is a “sign”, *endeigis*, rather, “only a pointer, proof” of “destruction”, *apôleias*, (perdition?) for their enemies and its opposite, “salvation” for them. This salvation includes the act of rescuing and the resultant state of safety. Destruction has to do with the condition after death, the exclusion from salvation as a final fact, when one has become ruined, or perishes. Both Judas (John 17:12) and the Antichrist (2 Thessalonians 2:3) were called “the son of perdition.”

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,*

The “for”, *hoti*, is what A.T. Robertson calls the consecutive conjunction and is best rendered “seeing that.” The reason being is that Paul does not give us the cause that this is from God, rather the consecutive is what the Philippians are encouraged to do: to believe in Christ and suffer for His sake.

To them, and all true Christians, is “granted”, *echaristhê*, “bestowed in kindness, granted as a free favor” to believe and to suffer in behalf of Christ. The two go together and comprise a special dispensation or award. The latter validates the former.

30. *experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear to be in me.*

What they saw was Paul being beaten and thrown into prison (Acts 16:19). What they are “now hearing” is the news about Paul’s imprisonment and trial in Rome. The same types of “conflict”, *agôna*, will be theirs as their reward for enduring the gospel against their adversaries in Philippi.

Philippians 2:1-30

1. If therefore 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 let each of you regard one another as more important than himself;
4. do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.
5. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,
6. who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,
7. but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.
8. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.
9. Therefore also God highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name,
10. that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth,
11. and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

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.
14. Do all things without grumbling or disputing;
15. that you may 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 may have cause to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain.
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. And you too, I urge you, rejoice in the same way and share you joy with me.
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 serving 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 shall be coming shortly.
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, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.
28. Therefore I have sent him all the more eagerly in order that when you see him again you may rejoice and I may be less concerned about you.
29. Therefore receive him 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.

Teaching Notes

Verses 1-11

1. *If therefore 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,*

Paul sets forth four motives to bind the unity of which he will presently speak. The first is "encouragement in Christ." In His prayer in John 17, the Lord encouraged unity.

Next is consolation of love. "Consolation" has to do with "a word that comes to the side of one to stimulate and exhort." Not only did Christ love His disciples, but He wanted them to stimulate one another.

John 15:12 -- This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you.
Hebrews 10:24 -- Let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds.

The good deeds goes along with "fellowship of the Spirit", meaning they are sharing the work of the Spirit as they work with one another, thus giving "diligence to keep unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

The final *motive* for their harmony is the "affection" they have for one another and the "compassion" they show that removes the reasons for quarrels, differences and estrangements.

2. *make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.*

At the beginning of this letter (1:3-8) Paul expressed his fond remembrance of the Philippians and prayed for their perfection. This perfection or "completeness" is attainable and would make Paul's joy in them also complete.

The language here literally means: "to think the same thing." It is a general expression for concord and is defined in the following two clauses.

First, they were to love the same things; each other, the Lord, the things that please the Lord. Second, they were to be intent on one purpose, the service of the gospel, with one soul.

Romans 15:5-6 -- Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus; that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 1:10 -- Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree, and there be no divisions among you, but you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment.

3. *Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself;*

The word “do” that starts this statement does not appear in a literal translation. It is interpretive from the word “nothing.” By the context one can see it is not so much what one *does*, but more of what one *thinks*, how one is *motivated*. Thus, unity is primarily achieved by making sure one is not motivated by selfish ambition, nor is one filled with “pride” that is empty or undeserved. In other words, do not be like...

3 John 9-10 -- I wrote something to the church; but Diotrephes, who loves to be first among them, does not accept what we say... unjustly accusing us with wicked words.

Rather, one is to be “humble or lowly of mind” in relation to God and to his fellow Christians. The apostle properly defines this and lets one know that he is not asking the impossible or the untrue. The expression does not imply that others are above one (i.e. more brains, more ability, more everything), but only deserving first attention. On one’s list of priorities, others go first, self second.

4. *do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.*

The word for “look” means “to fix the attention upon, with desire for or interest in.” Note, as long as it is not selfishness, self-interest is entirely in harmony with the will of God. The warning then is not to let self-interest overshadow concern for others.

Romans 13:9 -- ... you shall love your neighbor as yourself.

5. *Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,*

This “mind, attitude” literally this “thinking” Paul is exhorting them toward, this loving, self-denying humility, is the same disposition that the Lord had when He began to wash the apostles’ feet (John 13:5-15), and as well, what lead Him to the cross.

6. *who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,*

This may be overly simplistic and may not quite do justice to the specific meaning of words, but it will parallel what Paul has said about Christian attitudes. The word “form” here, and there is some scholarly concurrence, is not referring to the “essence” of God, but to the “representation” of that essence.

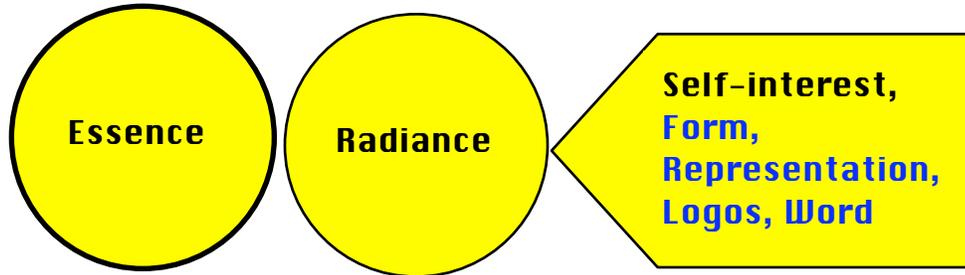
Thus, this representation is the Son of God’s self-interest (Logos, Word), the being and doing of God. Like the sun, there is the difference between its essence and its “shine” or “radiance.” Yet one is fully representative of the other.

What Paul adds is that this self-interest was not “selfish.” The Son did not deport Himself in overt acts concerning His essence of being God. The wording in the translations: “Thought it not robbery”, “not to be seized or grasped” are trying to deal with the Greek word that literally means: “rape, rob.” This is what a man would do looking out for himself to the detriment of others. The Son of God’s self-interest did not exert itself in that way at all.

7. *but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.*

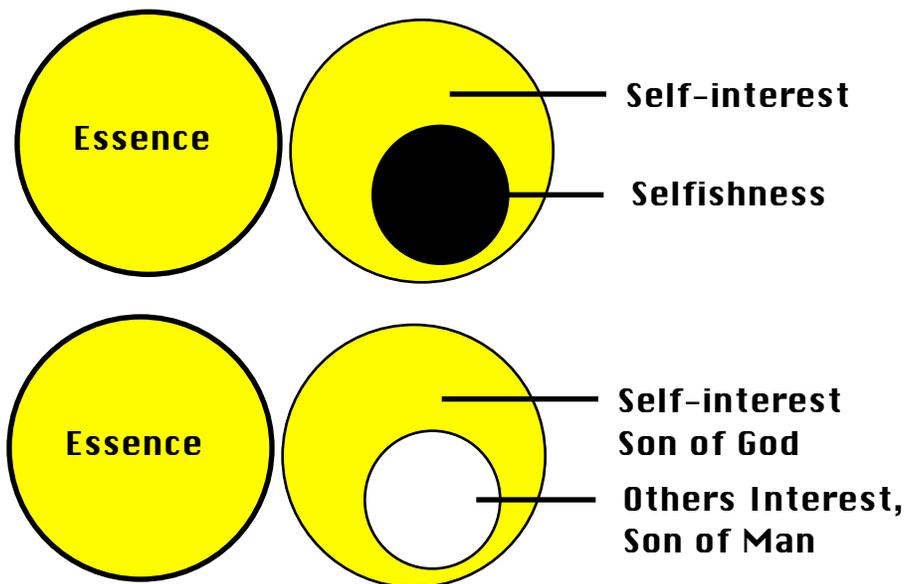
Now comes the problem of what He emptied Himself. First, it could not have been His “essence.” He did not quit being God. If He had, He could not continue to uphold all

things (Hebrews 1:3), nor resurrection Himself (John 2:19,21). Along with this He would not have stopped with His self-interest in being God. So, along with Paul's explanation of what the Christian attitude should be, we will say that what was emptied (or never there really) was any selfishness, and the Son had in its place the interest of others, manifesting itself in the form of service to others. The representation of God also became the representation of man – and the Word became flesh (John 1:14).



8. *And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*

This representation (form) now had self-interest as the Son of God and the dual form of the interest of others as the Son of Man, being in "form" all that God intended for man to be. This *form* was quintessential in "humility" and manifested itself in complete obedience to the Father to the point of ultimate sacrifice on the cross for the sins of man.



9. *Therefore also God highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name,*

Because of the trueness of the Son of Man (Jesus Christ, the One Sent) to this representation, the Father exalted him, the Word in the flesh. In the essence of God this was not likely for as such He was there already, but as Jesus Christ, the man, he could receive a rank and glory above all other beings (See Ephesians 1:18-23).

10. *that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth,*
 11. *and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

Note that the term "Son of God" is not used, but only those designations equivalent to the Son of Man. It is intimated that the individual will also be exalted if he learns and practices such humility.

James 4:10 – Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.

Verses 12-18

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;*

"So then" marks the beginning of a new paragraph. "Always" is defined by "in my presence – in my absence." The Philippians have always obeyed God through Paul. A pleasant surprise, their obedience was even "much more."

The last phrase appears different in the original Greek, "fear and trembling" are placed first to have primary emphasis. This is a holy fear at the thought of doing or omitting anything that will offend God, compelling Him to turn away, and thus endangering one's salvation.

This "salvation" is the genitive of objective, not possessive. It is not fully obtained yet, but rather, still needs to be "worked out." It is easy for those reading only the English to misunderstand the wording as if salvation is an at-one-stroke thing. In the Greek, Christians are *hoi sozomenoi*, "those in the process of being saved."

Luke 13:23 -- And some said to Him "Lord, are there just a few who are being saved?"

Acts 2:47 -- ...And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.

2 Corinthians 2:15 -- For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing.

1 Corinthians 1:18 -- For the word of the cross is to those who are perishing foolishness, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

Galatians 5:4 -- You have been severed from Christ you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.

The danger for the saved is ever that they grow idle, useless, secure, or lead astray, and thus through their own fault lose the salvation bestowed on them by God. A man must eat to remain alive and ever exercise to remain strong. Word and worship are the Christian's food and strength along with his daily service.

The position of the reflexive needs also to be noted as to its position. It is not emphatic as if to say, "one is to work ONLY on their OWN salvation." But this is obvious from the context of verses 2:3-4 and the example given in Christ.

13. *for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.*

This verse seems to contradict the previous, if one were to take it as saying, "God is the one who does all the work in the individual." Paul is neither pitting Arminianism (man adds his part to God's) against Calvinism (Leaving everything to God), nor combining the two. Rather, Paul is assuring Christians that as long as they go to God through His word, His will is made known to them and He will then work through them "toward, on behalf of", *huper*, what pleases Him.

14. *Do all things without grumbling or disputing;*

The apostle is not necessarily implying that what the Philippians are doing is complaining about how things are going, or of each other, even though some are preaching Christ from selfish ambition. What follows is the situation he is referring to – the type of world.

The word order is correct. One first "grumbles" at the injustice that comes upon one for doing what is right. Then one begins to "reason out", or rationalize how to escape by doing less. Again, the context concerns working out or through to salvation.

15. *that you may 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,*

Their “proving to be” goes along with their “working out.” Paul is referencing the final product, the unalloyed substance. The aorist implies a permanent condition to be reached, that is “blameless” (nothing for which to be blamed in their conduct) and “innocent” (nothing wrong in their hearts and motives).

Ephesians 5:27 -- That He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless.

While the Philippians live in a world (generation) that is “crooked” (bent in all ways away from God) and “perverse” (distorted by lies) they are to remain as “lights”, luminaries (self-contained light sources – used of the stars).

Matthew 5:14-16 – You are the light of the world.... Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

Always the Christian must have it impressed upon him that he is different from the world, and must be told what is the matter with the world, and what he must do to make himself different from it.

16. *holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may have cause to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain.*

Paul quickly explains what it means to be a luminary. The light Christians contain are not their own light, but the Word of Life. When they hold to the teachings of the Word, letting God’s will work through them, they show forth the light of Him contained in them.

John 6:63 -- “The words that I speak to you, they are spirit, and they are life.”

The Philippians were a congregation that was not only founded by Paul but was also watched over by him. They are his crowning of joy, his glory if they do not end up going back into the world. Compare:

1 Thessalonians 2:19-20 -- For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming? For you are our glory and joy.

Psalms 126:6 -- He who goes to and fro weeping, carrying his bag of seed, shall indeed come again with a shout of joy, bringing his sheaves with him.

The “day of Christ” is the final day and what Paul is hoping for (his boast) is the Philippians will be standing with him to prove that his commission as an apostle was not empty or futile as the result of his failing efforts.

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.*

Paul would consider his joy, especially if he could share it with the Philippians, if he could be the drink offering poured out on their sacrifice and service. There is prophecy in this, as history bears out that Paul was poured out. As a Roman citizen, his execution later would be by decapitation thus culminating in the pouring (gushing) out of his blood.

18. *And you too, I urge you, rejoice in the same way and share your joy with me.*

Paul is not advocating waiting to the day of Christ for this joy to begin. He states that he is already rejoicing and invites them to rejoice with him in the same way, and thus they can share their joy now.

Philippians 3:1-21

1. 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,
4. although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more:
5. circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee;
6. as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless.
7. But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ.
8. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ,
9. and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith,
10. that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death;
11. in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.
12. Not that I have already obtained it, or have already become perfect, but I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.
13. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,
14. I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.
15. Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, have this attitude; and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you;
16. however, let us keep living by that same standard to which we have attained.
17. Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us.
18. For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ,
19. whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things.
20. For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ;
21. who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.

Teaching Notes

Verses 1-11

22. *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.*

The apostle begins with the far more glorious position of the Philippians in contrast to the Judaizing errorists by referring to them as "brethren." This is especially notable as he contrasts the errorists with himself from verses 3 through 14.

The "same things" refer also to what follows and are frequently taken to be warnings that were written to the Philippians in previous letters, namely letters in which he had also thanked them for their support.

When he alludes to these "same things" as being "no trouble" he is not talking about them being difficult to get his mind around, but rather that they are a practical warning against those who would tear them apart and thus needed to be reemphasized to safeguard the Philippians.

23. *Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision;*

Paul warns them to “beware” (look out for) the dogs. The verb indicates that they were not yet present, but might appear at anytime. These “dogs” are the Judaizing teachers who had invaded the Galatians churches and had done great damage to Corinth.

The term “dogs” was a Jewish derogatory commentary for the Gentiles, but Paul hurls it back at the errorists. In the Orient, dogs were ownerless, roamed the streets, and acted as filthy scavengers.

While the term “dogs” is figurative, “evil workers” is literally. “Evil” refers to their moral baseness. “Workers” refers to their high energy where they seemed to rival the Pharisees in scouring heaven and earth to make one proselyte and then turn that one into a worse “son of hell” than they themselves (Matthew 23:15).

Lost in the translation is the contrasting Greek words used for “circumcision.” Here Paul uses a contemptuous terminology, *katatomê*, meaning more at making a bad job of the surgery = mutilation. It is here applied only to those Jews who mixed the law with the gospel, making physical circumcision a requirement for salvation.

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,*
4. *although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more:*

On the other hand, Paul refers to Christians as the “true circumcision”, *peritomê*. Here the term is not used in the literal since, for the “we” here would also include Timothy and Luke who were not physically altered. He is saying that Christians are THE “ones worshipping the Spirit of God.” The apostle’s expanded commentary on this is Romans 8:26ff.

Romans 2:28-29 – For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, in spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.

[Note: Here the form is not instrument as if one can use the Spirit. One can use one’s own spirit and so we have made the “s” here small in Romans.]

Next Paul contrasts the Christian’s “boast”, *kauchomenoi*, (or trust), in Christ verses the Judaizer’s bragging of their heritage and tradition, both altered as well. The apostle uses himself as an example as to what he means by the “flesh” and in doing so actually shows how far superior his “confidence”, *pepoithêsis*, in such things could be.

“Flesh” is not used in the ethical sense here, as if referring to the depraved human nature, but rather in the physical and Judiastic sense, the prerogatives of Jewish birth and of Jewish religious standing and attainments. There is almost a challenge thrown down by Paul for them to match his own background.

5. *circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee;*
6. *as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless.*

Paul begins by saying that he also has been physically circumcised, but a surgery that according to Law is adjectively an “eighth-day-one.” Not like many who may have had it done later in life.

Second, he is of genuine Israelite stock – the tribe of Benjamin. This tribe and Judah were considered the REAL Jews, especially after the loss of the ten to the north. They were also of the few who had returned after Babylonian captivity.

Third, he was a pure-blooded Hebrew, “a Hebrew of Hebrews” with no ancestor on either side being anything but Hebrew. The term meaning “one from beyond the river (Euphrates)” who returned to Palestine during the time of Ezra and Nehemiah and helped rebuild the walls (and can also mean one who spoke the Aramaic dialect).

Fourth, *kata*, “according to, or measured by the Law” a “Pharisee” (separatist), the strictest Jewish sect that stood for complete observance of law (Acts 26:5).

Fifth, *kata*, “measured by” zeal, a persecutor of the church. The Judaizers only proselyted Christians, Paul (Saul) went after this sect that abrogated the law and followed one who had been accursed of God. He arrested and murdered them.

Sixth, *kata*, “measured by” a standard of “righteousness” in connection with the law, held the verdict and quality of being “blameless” (without fault) by the Jewish leaders.

7. *But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ.*
8. *More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ,*

“Things of this kind”, *atiba*, (Paul had not mentioned all of them) which formerly were considered “gain” are now, and have been considered for a long time (extensive perfect) a fallacious and damaging “loss” compared to what Christ had to offer.

Repeating the last thought, but with more emphasis. Formerly Paul surpassed all his countrymen, but now he found something that far surpassed all he had achieved, the “surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus, his Lord.” When Paul considers the full grace and glory of having Jesus as his Lord, of having Christ live in him (Galatians 2:20), the rest is *skubalon*, “a little bundle and rotten hay. The whole of it decayed – no better than dung.” – *from the papyri*.

9. *and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith,*

Paul elucidates. He finds in connection with Christ and His grace, not a righteousness of his own derived from a keeping of the *law* perfectly (which no one can do – Romans 3:23), but a righteousness based on the *law of faith* in Jesus (Romans 3:27-28), in which God imputes to one the righteousness of His Son through sanctification and justification.

10. *that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death;*
11. *in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.*

First, Paul got to know the surpassing quality of Christ as his Lord when he was relieved of all those things that were forged in man’s futile and boastful pride and experienced the true way of salvation.

Second, he got to know the power of His resurrection on the road to Damascus (Acts 9), by which Jesus was declared the Son of God (Romans 1:4).

Third, he also got to know the joy of sharing the sufferings of His Lord (1 Peter 4:13; Romans 5:3-4). This comprises a unit with “conforming” to His death. [“Faithful unto death” - Revelation 2:10, 25-26]. Paul’s “form” matches that of Jesus’ (2:6) and which is required of all Christians as Christ is “formed” in them (Galatians 4:17).

When one conforms to the sufferings and death of the Lord then they will also be conformed to the glory of His resurrection.

Romans 8:17 – And if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him.

1 Peter 4:13 – But to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing; so that also at the revelation of His glory, you may rejoice with exultation.

Verses 12-21

24. *Not that I have already obtained it, or have already become perfect, but I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.*

Paul left off in verses 8-11 talking of getting to know Christ, the power of His resurrection, the fellowship of His suffering and conforming to His death.

But now Paul says that he has not obtained it yet. What “it” is he elaborates on by saying or become “perfect.” This last word is also translated “complete.” The Christian is filled with life, with a new will, with spiritual power and ability. He must not only use it constantly, but the great moment will come when the final grasp must be made.

The not “have already become” is the perfect tense and means that the apostle has “not been made such,” meaning by God, not himself. The completeness comes only at the last.

1 Corinthians 13:12 -- For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I shall know fully just as I also have been fully known.

So for his part, he must “press on” (still continuing pursuit, still chasing). The intent is to “lay hold of” (capture). Here the paradox is developed. The one who got captured (by Christ on the road to Damascus) does steady pursuing so that he may eventually also get to capture (that which is all the glory of Christ).

25. *Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,*

Paul is making it very clear to the Philippians that he is not perfected or completed yet. Rather, the one thing he does (this is twofold); forget what lies behind and stretching out to what lies ahead.

The thing that he is constantly putting behind him is his Jewish prerogatives, standings and attainments. These have been replaced with knowing Christ, His resurrection, sufferings and a glorious resurrection, all of which in fulfillment lie ahead.

26. *I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*

Thus Paul press or strives toward the goal (*skopos* – a mark that is seen) of the “prize” (derived from the Greek word for *umpire* who bestows the prize at the end of the race.

This prize was mentioned in verse 11, “the attaining of the resurrection of the dead.” To the victor Jesus promised: “I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6:40, 44,54). The apostle is pressing to be found having fought the fight and finishing the course, when all is said and done (2 Timothy 4:7). Note that in that context he will also *have been* poured out as a drink offering.

This “raising up” is the prize of the *upward call*, or as Paul admonished the Philippians, “to conduct themselves worthy of the gospel of Christ” (1:27). People are called through the gospel (2 Thessalonians 2:14). The “call” is from God, it is met in connection with Christ Jesus. Here is a vital and distinct point of the “calling.” Men did not set up the prize, nor did they call themselves to run for it, or does running create the prize or even earn it. The prize and the call are pure grace.

27. *Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, have this attitude; and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you;*

The root *teleios* has a range of meanings, and to translate it “perfect” here and in verse 12 sets up a contradiction, i.e. “has Paul become perfect or not.” It is probably better to understand the first “perfect” as meaning “complete” and to translate the word here as “mature.” Then it is not only Paul who is mature, but also others, the “let us” referring back to verse 3. One can also find this description of particular Christians in other of his letters:

1 Corinthians 14:20 -- Brethren, do not be children in your thinking; yet in evil be babes, but in your thinking be mature.

Ephesians 4:13 – Until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.

“Having this attitude” is to keep thinking (thought along with conduct). Notice how this goes along with 1 Corinthians 14:20. What one is to keep thinking about is all that Paul has been saying, from warning against the Judaizers to fellowship with Christ. This is what makes one mature.

Now if anyone has a different attitude, something they are thinking on, what then? This is not a big differing between all Christians. These are probably small differences among the *mature* Christians. That is the context. What these small differences are even Paul does not seem to know, or at least, doesn't mention them. One possibility is that they may judge the Judaizers less severely than Paul does.

In any case, God has provided the means by which to properly determine what is right, through by His Spirit working through the Scriptures as taught by the apostles. That is how, John says, one even tests false prophets and every kind of spirit (1 John 4:1ff).

28. *however, let us keep living by that same standard to which we have attained.*

Note again, this standard of maturity *has been* attained and by more than just Paul, thus the encouragement to keep living, keep thinking about, having this attitude.

Paul passes this same admonition on to the Galatians who are also dealing with Judaizing errorists, where "walk" (*stoichein*) means to stand and march like a soldier, each in his place in rank and file, the equivalent of "keep living by."

Galatians 6:16 -- And those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.

29. *Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us.*

Paul now encourages them to be "joined together" in imitating him. He is not being self-exalting here. First, he tells the Corinthians to only imitate him as he imitates Christ (1 Cor. 11:1).

Second, he also puts in others – "those who walk according to the pattern." The whole idea is that they are to "observe" (*skopon* – to watch as to copy) and imitate the imitating of others. The "pattern" is *tupos* (the impression left by a blow when the die is struck).

30. *For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ,*

The reason for all this is that Christians need to be careful of their role models. Look to those who are trying to be the best Christ-like people possible. What was a cause of tears to Paul was that many were choosing to "walk" different than the worthy calling of the gospel.

These are described first as being enemies of the cross of Christ. Primarily to be listed are the Judaizers who by their teachings invalidate the work of the Lord. Compare Galatians 5:4. But the description goes on.

31. *whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things.*

"Perdition" is everlasting ruin.

"Whose god is their belly." The things their fleshly appetites dictate to them, in obedience to which they see "their glory," are in reality nothing but their shame and disgrace. Instead of their "thinking on" spiritual things above, they kept their thinking on earthly things. Paul had some of these in Rome.

Romans 16:18 -- For such men are slaves, not of our Lord Christ but of their own appetites; and by their smooth and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting.

32. *For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ;*

As opposed to those who gather to themselves alliances in the earthly realm, those who had their minds on things above have their citizenship (commonwealth: that which stands together against the enemies of the cross) in heaven.

From heaven is where they expect their Savior to come from. The Romans referred to their Emperors as "saviors", their meaning being "helpers" which they scarcely were. The New Testament draws its definition from the Old Testament where the word has the idea of "divine Deliverer."

33. *who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.*

Paul now states in what sense Jesus Christ is our “savior.” He brings us the final salvation by raising our bodies from the dead and glorifying them, conforming them to the body of His own glory.

As the apostle puts it in 1 Corinthians 15:52-54, this corruption shall turn into incorruption and this mortal shall put on immortality.

How He is able to do this is by the exertion of His power. The same power by which He made the worlds (John 1:3; Colossian 1:16), the same power by which He upholds all things (Hebrews 1:3).

Philippians 4:1-23

1. Therefore, my beloved brethren, whom I long to see, my joy and crown, so stand firm in the Lord, my beloved.
2. I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord,
3. Indeed, true comrade, I ask you also to help these women who have shared my struggle in the cause of the gospel, together with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.
4. Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!
5. Let your forbearing spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near.
6. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.
7. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your mind in Christ Jesus.
8. Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things.
9. The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things; and the God of peace shall be with you.
10. But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned before, but you lacked opportunity.
11. Not that I speak from want; for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am.
12. I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need.
13. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.
14. Nevertheless, you have done well to share with me in my affliction.
15. And you yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you along;
16. for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs.
17. Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account.
18. But I have received everything in full, and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Ephaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God.
19. And my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.
20. Now to our God and Father be the glory forever and ever. Amen
21. Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren who are with me greet you.
22. All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar’s household.
23. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

Teaching Notes

Verses 1-9

1. *Therefore, my beloved brethren, whom I long to see, my joy and crown, so stand firm in the Lord, my beloved.*

This verse is actually the concluding appeal of the entire third chapter. No other congregation does the apostle address as he does this group. He knows them as his "joy and crown," recalling chapter 2:16. He had not run in vain as God has given them to him as the victor's crown. No wonder he longs to see them again.

Thus he admonishes them to "stand firm", as in 1:27, especially "in the Lord" as He is their Savior (3:20). The Lord's help is needed for His sheep have tendencies to drift on their own accord or be swayed by every wind of doctrine.

2. *I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord,*

As Paul begins to close down his letter, he "urges" (*parakalô*, admonishes) these two women to "live in harmony" (*auto phronein* – think the same thing). All we know of these women is found in the next verse. They at one point worked well with Paul, now for some reason they are not getting along.

The problem is minor, or Paul would have spent more time on it. Rather, he gives directions to the ladies (they are both at fault), tries to get them to think about this direction being "in connection with the Lord, and bids others to help out.

3. *Indeed, true comrade, I ask you also to help these women who have shared my struggle in the cause of the gospel, together with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.*

Paul has primarily in mind (concerning this problem of the two ladies) "Syzygus," whose name means "yokefellow." The reason the NASV here has "comrade" is because they cannot find this name in the Papyri, however, it is not uncommon for people to be renamed due to some characteristic or event. Cephas became "Peter" (stone), "Barnabas" was named because he was a "son of encouragement", and the jury is still out on "Theophilus."

When Paul writes "genuine Syzygus" he plays on the beautiful meaning of this man's name with the purpose of having him help these women get yoked back together again. The apostle points out that at one time these women shared his struggle in the cause of the gospel, he believes they can again with some help.

Along with Syzygus, Paul calls upon Clement and others who were fellow workers. Of note here is the word the apostle uses for how well they worked together. The two, Clement and the two ladies, "struggled" together like athletes with Paul. They all really pulled together to accomplish much. This term is stronger than "fellow workers."

Yet all are listed as those whose "names are in the book of life." All God's children are written in the book of those who have eternal life. The Scriptures speak also of having one's name blotted out of the book when one ceases to be child of God. When one is justified their name is written on the book's pages.

Revelation 13:8 -- And all who dwell on the earth will worship him (the sea beast), everyone whose name was not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain.

[The reference to the foundation of the world has nothing to do with personal predestination, but to predetermined plans by God to save those who respond to the slain Lamb]

4. *Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!*

Paul now begins to present a lovely picture of the temper, quality and motivation of the true Christian heart and substantially concludes this epistle.

The apostle is not saying that one is to just rejoice always, rather, they are not to let the joy that is "of the Lord" be dimmed no matter what the circumstance. He tells them to rejoice even as he tells them to beware of Judaizers (3:1). He himself rejoices even though in prison. Paul tells how this joy is to be expressed in his letter to the Ephesians.

Ephesians 5:19-20 -- Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ...

5. *Let your forbearing spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near.*

Filled with joy and thanksgiving, the Christian is to manifest a “forbearing spirit” (*epieikeia* - yieldingness) to all. This is not the yielding of a slave or an inferior, but of a superior in a noble and generous spirit. The Christian, as a son of God, condescends (in a good way) to consider the weak and the needy. He has the purest and noblest grace that few are able to resist.

What helps motivate all this is the nearness of the Lord. A Christian realizes that his Lord can return at any time (Mark 13:33) and thus they will constrain to treat others with justice and mercy. The Lord will judge without mercy those who show no mercy (James 2:13).

6. *Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.*

“Anxiety” (*merimnao*) is the mind in an oppressive state; fearful, fretful, and worrying. With the use of the emphatic phrase “in nothing” Paul declares that it is always wrong.

The cure for this anxiety is reliance on God. “Prayer” is conversation with God with dependence upon Him. “Supplication” conveys the idea of asking God to supply what one has need of. “Request” emphasizes the specific petitions of the things to be supplied. All these must be accompanied by “thanksgiving” in appreciation of God’s blessings and help.

1 Peter 5:7 -- Casting all your anxiety upon him, because he cares for you.

7. *And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your mind in Christ Jesus.*

The result of dependence on God is the freedom from all anxiety and a peace that emanates from God and not from our self-determination. This is evident in that it “surpasses all comprehension.” This may mean that it is so profound the human mind cannot comprehend its full blessedness or that it is beyond all that the mere reason of man can do to exercise it.

1 Corinthians 2:9 -- But just as it is written, “Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him.”

The Greek word for “guard” is a military term signifying a sentinel who keeps guard over a castle or camp. The peace of God serves as such to keep one’s “heart” (thoughts) and “mind” (thinking, source) from going in the wrong direction. This is done in practical application found in the following verses in accordance with all such things “in Christ.”

8. *Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things.*

Although this may be considered a list, the predicates all pertain to one subject, the “whatever” making the thing talked of limited. The predicates are describing the subject(s) from different facets, different angles. These “whatever things” are those that are “true,” spiritually true and real, as opposed to those that are lying, false, fictitious or imaginary.

The things that are “true” are also “honorable” [honest]. Wherever truth appears and is recognized, it is respected and revered. Derived from *sebomai*, it connotes what is divinely august and worthy of worship. The opposite are *things worthy of scorn*.

Things that are “true” and “honorable” are also “right” and “pure.” They are “right” because the divine Judge has passed the verdict that they are right. The opposite of “right” is what the Judge condemns as *wrong*. “Right” things must of necessity also be “pure,” without stain of sin or error. The opposite is that which is *unclean*, a term applied to the things of demons and what they do.

Things that are “true” are also “honorable, right, pure” and “lovely” (a compound word meaning “affection”, *philein*, “toward”, *pros*). The heart is inclined toward them

as to embrace them. Their opposite is things *despised, hated, or thrust away*. “Lovely things” are naturally well spoken of and are appealing, thus they are of “good report.” The opposite is *things ill spoken of*.

The next two items are individualized and broader and refer to personal possession “excellence” and to Christian estimate “praise.” “Excellence” signifies moral courage and stability with the disposition of heart that causes one to stand for what he knows to be right, thus it logically appears as first in the list of things to be added to faith (2 Peter 1:5).

The Christian should give attention to anything and everything “worthy of praise.” He should take note of all that is praise worthy in self, as well as, in others. The opposite of “excellence” and “praise worthy” is *worthlessness*.

If the peace of God is to be on one’s mind, being empty of anxiety, the mind must “dwell on” them, not just *think on*, but “keep reckoning with” and “ever taking account of them.”

9. *The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things; and the God of peace shall be with you.*

Paul now defines “these things” in a new way, one that is concrete and personal: “*What things you both learned and received as well as heard and saw in me.*” They were exemplified in Paul and were to be imitated (3:17).

Paul uses two verbs, but he does so because they go together. Learning and receiving are one act, hearing and seeing the other. “In me” is to be construed only with the second. Paul had taught them these things and they were to make them their own.

Instead of “the peace of God,” the apostle now has “the God of this peace,” He who bestows this peace with its power will be with them with this peace.

Verses 10-23

10. *But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned before, but you lacked opportunity.*

Paul had already thanked the Philippians for their monetary gift, which is why he does not thank them again here, rather he writes about the gift and what it means to him and to them.

First he tells them how he had rejoiced, that is, in the Lord “greatly.” With it he lets them see how surprised and delighted he was when their messengers presented the gift so unexpectedly. The word “revived” is used of plants when they sprout again, grow green, or once more flourish (Thayer), and is descriptive of the Philippians being able to blossom again to his needs. It goes well with the Greek word for “concern” (thinking that takes interest, makes plans, and then proceeds to act).

In verse 15 the apostle says that they had helped him at first in his endeavors to preach the gospel, but he knew they had fallen on hard times (2 Corinthians 8:1-3). During that period they had wanted to help but were unable. Now with renewed resources they sought further opportunity to aid their beloved mentor.

11. *Not that I speak from want; for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am.*

In reference to his joy, Paul is not making reference to any lack of means on his part which they may have attributed to, rather he speaks of the gift itself. Paul’s joy is in the flowering of the Philippians, represented by the gift.

Thus when Paul states that he is not speaking from want, he is trying to say that he has learned to rely on God for whatever circumstance he finds himself and does not mean that he has stoically learned to bear any thing that comes along – that would be pagan not Christian.

12. *I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need.*

Paul is well aware of the extreme and opposite experiences of being made lowly or abounding amid plenty. The secret is that Christ is the one who fills all (Ephesians

1:23). He has also learned that godliness is great gain if accompanied by contentment (1 Timothy 6:6).

13. *I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.*

Further, God can comfort one in all circumstances (2 Corinthians 1:3-10) as He is comforting Paul now in prison, especially through the help of fellow Christians, and that God is also able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think (Ephesians 3:20).

The Christian, however, needs to be cautious about is this word “all.” Paul is NOT saying one can do ALL THINGS, but rather (refer back to Philippians 2:13), one can do all the things that God wants done in trying to please Him as one is directed in things pertaining to whatever is “in His Name,” according to His will. Paul was forever in God’s hands, and if this meant being hungry, thirsty, cold and naked (1 Corinthians 4:11; 2 Cor. 6:4-5) so be it.

14. *Nevertheless, you have done well to share with me in my affliction.*

Paul is not ecstatic about his needs being taken care of, but that the gift represented something special in the Philippians. “Done well” means that they acted “nobly, excellently;” especially in their “sharing,” and in their coming together in beautiful Christian fellowship out of concern for his affliction. They were the true gift.

15. *And you yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone;*

16. *for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs.*

Moreover, these Philippians knew as well as Paul did that from the first (their beginning as an infant church in Macedonia) they were willing to help in the preaching of the gospel when no other church was. (Paul does mention other individuals that helped, but not another church – 2 Corinthians 11:9).

And it is not that Paul was looking for help for it was his own determination to preach the gospel without charge (1 Corinthians 9:11-12, 18). This is why he uses the terms “giving and receiving”, language used from business concerning the ledger of an account. The accounting of who supported Paul was not the point, although, in this they alone went into the credit column, and more than once. But Paul was more concerned that their “credit” was more a spiritual accrediting in God’s ledger.

17. *Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account.*

The apostle is seeking the fruit of their blossoming. He is more thrilled about what a precious people they have become, truly Christ-minded Christians grown out of pagan soil. They are wonders to behold, truly his crown, spiritually matured.

18. *But I have received everything in full, and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Ephaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God.*

It is from what they have become that he had received payment in full, the ledger is balanced, and he feels spiritually rich. They are his reward for all his efforts.

Not only had their supply been received through Ephaphroditus, but as noted earlier (2:25), they had also send Ephaphroditus to minister to the apostle. He was their gift too.

When the incense was burned, as well as the sacrificial offerings, there was a pleasant, sweet smell that went up in the smoke. More precious to God, though, was the spiritual condition of the one offering the sacrifice. Jesus’ offering of Himself went up as a fragrant aroma to God (Ephesians 5:2). Paul now finds the same fragrant aroma in the sacrifice of the Philippians, *their* spiritual sacrifice well-pleasing to God.

19. *And my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.*

“My God” the apostle puts it because it was through him that his God received such a sacrifice that was well pleasing to Him.

And God promises that the one who offers such rare gifts shall be supplied in all their needs. He has said, "Give and it shall be given to you" (Luke 6:38; Proverbs 19:17). Paul cannot repay the Philippians for their gifts, but God can, according to His riches. In Christ are all spiritual blessing (Ephesians 1:3).

20. *Now to our God and Father be the glory forever and ever. Amen*

To the glory that is God's own eternal possession is added the glory we ascribe to Him when we know, praise, worship, and glorify Him. Paul encourages all not to forget this.

21. *Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren who are with me greet you.*

22. *All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household.*

Instead of "greet" read "embrace." Of note of those who send this greeting are those who made up the original church in Rome, those of Caesar's household, the imperial slaves of Nero's possession.

23. *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.*

"Grace" is the saving favor of the Lord with all its accompanying gifts.