

Philippians

1:1 Paul and Timothy, bondslaves of the Messiah Jesus, to all those who have been set apart in the Messiah Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and assistants.¹ **1:2** Grace to you and shalom from God our Father and the Lord Jesus the Messiah.²

1:3 I give thanks to my God when I remind myself of you,³ **1:4** always making a request with joy on behalf of all of you in my every request,⁴ **1:5** on the basis of your participation in the good news from the first day until now,⁵ **1:6** because I have been persuaded of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will be in the process of bringing it to its intended goal until the day of the Messiah Jesus,⁶ **1:7** just as it is right for me to think this about all of you because I have you in my heart, since, in both my imprisonment and the defense and confirmation of the good news, you all are participants with me in grace.⁷

1:8 God is my witness as to how I greatly long for you all with the affections of the Messiah Jesus.⁸ **1:9** And this I pray, that your love will increase still more and more in the midst of an accurate understanding and all discernment,⁹ **1:10** so that you may assess to your advantage the things that are different, in order that you may be pure and without fault for the day of the Messiah,¹⁰ **1:11** because you have been filled with the fruit of justification, the fruit that is in light of Jesus the Messiah for the glory and praise of God.¹¹

1:12 Also, I want you to know, brothers, that my circumstances have resulted in more progress for the good news,¹² **1:13** so that it has become clear among the whole praetorian guard and all the rest that my imprisonment is because of the Messiah.¹³

1:14 In addition, many more brothers in the Lord have become persuaded because of my chains to dare even more to speak the message without fear.¹⁴ **1:15** Some people, on the one hand, indeed proclaim the Messiah from envy and rivalry, but some people proclaim him from good will.¹⁵ **1:16** The latter do so out of love, knowing that the purpose of my existence is for the defense of the good news.¹⁶ **1:17** The former proclaim the Messiah out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can create stress for me in my imprisonment.¹⁷ **1:18** What then? Only that in every way, whether on the basis of an invalid reason or a valid reason, the Messiah is being proclaimed. Indeed, in this I rejoice. Yes, for sure I will rejoice.¹⁸

1:19 And I know that, in the light of your prayer and the assistance of the Spirit of Jesus the Messiah, this will turn out for my deliverance,¹⁹ **1:20** according to my eager anticipation and hope, because I will not be ashamed in any circumstance, but in all bold confidence as always, even now the Messiah will be magnified in my body, whether through life or through death.²⁰ **1:21** Therefore, for me, to live is the Messiah, and to die is profitable.²¹

1:22 Consequently, if life in the flesh is what results, this will mean fruitful labor for me. And I do not know which I would choose.²² **1:23** Indeed, I am stressed out by these two things. While having a strong desire to depart and be with the Messiah, for this would be much better,²³ **1:24** yet, to remain in the flesh is more advantageous for you.²⁴ **1:25** And being persuaded of this, I know that I will remain and continue with all of you for your progress and joy of belief,²⁵ **1:26** so that your boasting may abound in the Messiah Jesus because of me through my appearing again to you.²⁶

1:27 Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the good news of the Messiah, so that whether I come and see you or I am absent, I may hear about you that you are standing firm in one spirit, striving together in one existence with respect to belief in the good news,²⁷ **1:28** and in no way alarmed by your opponents, which is a sign of destruction for them, but of salvation for you. And this is from God,²⁸ **1:29** that that which concerns the Messiah was graced to you—not only to believe in him, but also to suffer on his behalf,²⁹ **1:30** while experiencing the same struggle which you saw in me and now hear to be in me.³⁰

2:1 Therefore, if there is any encouragement in the Messiah, if there is any comfort in a time of grief of love, if there is any commonality of spirit, if there is any compassion and sympathy,³¹ **2:2** fill out my joy so that you think the same thing. While having the same love, being united in existence, thinking one thing,³² **2:3** and not according to selfish ambition or empty pride, but with humility, consider one another as more important than yourselves.³³

2:4 Do not pay attention to your own interests but to the interests of others.³⁴ **2:5** Think this way within yourselves, that which also was within the Messiah Jesus,³⁵ **2:6** who, while existing in a form of God, did not consider being equal to God something that he had to claim.³⁶ **2:7** Instead, he emptied himself, choosing the form of a bonds slave. While coming into existence in the likeness of men, and with respect to his outward form, being found as a man,³⁷ **2:8** he humbled himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, indeed, death on a cross.³⁸ **2:9** Therefore, God also highly exalted him and gave to him the name that is above every name,³⁹ **2:10** so that, at the name of Jesus, every knee will bend, of those of the heavens and those of the earth and those under the earth,⁴⁰ **2:11** and every tongue will acknowledge that Jesus the Messiah is Lord to the glory of God the Father.⁴¹

2:12 Therefore, those whom I love, just as you always obey, not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling,⁴² **2:13** for it is God who is accomplishing in you both the desiring and the working for His good satisfaction.⁴³

2:14 Do all things without grumbling and arguing,⁴⁴ **2:15** so that you will be without fault and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a corrupt and perverted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world,⁴⁵ **2:16** holding on to the message of life, so that I may boast in the day of the Messiah, because I did not run in vain nor labor in vain.⁴⁶

2:17 But if, indeed, I am being poured out as a drink offering for a sacrifice and an act of worship for your belief, I rejoice, and I rejoice with all of you.⁴⁷ **2:18** And you also should rejoice in the same way and rejoice with me.⁴⁸

2:19 Plus, I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I also will be encouraged when I learn what is going on with you,⁴⁹ **2:20** for I have no one who is like-minded, who will genuinely be concerned about your affairs.⁵⁰ **2:21** Everyone is pursuing his own affairs, not those of Jesus the Messiah.⁵¹ **2:22** And you know how he has proved himself, that as a child serves his father, he has served with me for the good news.⁵² **2:23** Therefore, on the one hand, I am hoping for this, to send him immediately as I see about things concerning me.⁵³ **2:24** On the other hand, I am persuaded in the Lord that I myself will also come soon.⁵⁴

2:25 But I considered it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, as well as your apostle and minister to my need,⁵⁵ **2:26** because he was longing for you all, and he was greatly distressed because you had heard that he was sick.⁵⁶ **2:27** Indeed, he was sick to the point of death. But God had mercy on him, and not only on him, but also on me, so that I would not be overwhelmed with grief.⁵⁷ **2:28** Therefore, I sent him all the more eagerly, so that when you saw him, you could rejoice again, and I could be less anxious.⁵⁸ **2:29** As a result, welcome him because of the Lord with all joy, and hold such men in high regard,⁵⁹ **2:30** because he came close to dying for the work of the Messiah, risking his life, so that he could make up for what is lacking in your service to me.⁶⁰

3:1 Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you is no trouble for me, and that which is certain for you.⁶¹

3:2 Watch out for the dogs. Watch out for the evil workers. Watch out for those who are the badly circumcised [κατατομή].⁶² **3:3** For we are the well circumcised [περιτομή], those who serve by means of the Spirit of God and who boast in the Messiah Jesus and who put no confidence in the flesh,⁶³ **3:4** even though, indeed, I could have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks that he

could have confidence in the flesh, I more so—⁶⁴ 3:5 circumcised [περιτομή] on the eighth day, from the ethnic group of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew from Hebrews, according to the Covenant—a Pharisee,⁶⁵ 3:6 according to zeal—someone who was pursuing [διώκων] the gathering, according to justification in the Covenant—blameless.⁶⁶

3:7 But whatever things were profitable to me, these things I consider to have produced loss on account of the Messiah.⁶⁷ 3:8 More than this, I consider all things to have produced loss on account of the surpassing greatness of knowing the Messiah Jesus, my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and I consider them but garbage in order that I may have the Messiah as my profit,⁶⁸ 3:9 and I may be found to be in him, not having my own justification which is by virtue of the Covenant, but that which is through belief in the Messiah, the justification from God on the basis of belief,⁶⁹ 3:10 so that I may know him and the powerful effect of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, while being conformed to his death,⁷⁰ 3:11 if somehow I may attain to the resurrection of the dead.⁷¹

3:12 Not that I have already received or I have already myself reached my goal [τετελείωμαι], but I am pursuing it [διώκω], if indeed I may reach it [καταλάβω] on the basis of which I also was reached [κατελήμφομαι] by the Messiah Jesus.⁷² 3:13 Brothers, I do not think of myself as having reached it [κατελήμφομαι]. But one thing I do—on the one hand, I forget the things that are behind me, and on the other hand, I stretch forward towards the things that are ahead of me.⁷³ 3:14 According to the goal, I press on [διώκω] towards the prize of the upward call of God in the Messiah Jesus.⁷⁴

3:15 Therefore, as many as want the goal [τέλειοι], let us think this. And, if anyone thinks differently, God will also reveal this to you,⁷⁵ 3:16 nevertheless to operate on the basis of the dynamics with respect to the same thing to which we have attained.⁷⁶

3:17 Become imitators of me, brothers, and pay attention to those who walk in this way, just as you have an example—us.⁷⁷ 3:18 For many, whom I often told you about and now mention while weeping, live as enemies of the cross of the Messiah,⁷⁸ 3:19 whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly and whose glory is in their guilt, who set their minds on earthy things.⁷⁹

3:20 For our citizenship exists in the heavens, from which we also await a savior, the Lord Jesus the Messiah.⁸⁰ 3:21 He will transform our humble body so that it conforms to the body of his glory according to the activity when he exerts himself powerfully and subjects all things to himself.⁸¹

4:1 Therefore, my brothers whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, thus stand firm in the Lord.

Beloved,⁸² 4:2 I exhort Euodia and I exhort Sunkaya to think the same way in the Lord.⁸³ 4:3 Yes, I ask also you, genuine fellow-worker, to lend help to these women, who have worked with me in the cause of the good news, along with Clement and the rest of my fellow-workers, whose names are in the book of life.⁸⁴

4:4 Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I will say, “Rejoice.”⁸⁵ 4:5 Let your gentleness become known to all men. The Lord is near.⁸⁶ 4:6 Be anxious for nothing, but in every situation, with prayer and entreaty along with thankfulness, let your requests be made known to God.⁸⁷ 4:7 And the shalom of God, which is better than anything that your mind can think of, will protect your hearts and minds in the Messiah Jesus.⁸⁸

4:8 Finally, brothers, whatever things are true, whatever are honorable, whatever are right, whatever are pure, whatever are lovely, whatever are well-spoken of, if something is morally excellent, if something is worthy of praise, ponder these things,⁸⁹ 4:9 which you learned and received and heard and saw in me. Practice these things, and the God of shalom will be with you.⁹⁰

4:10 And I rejoice greatly in the Lord that now at last you have renewed your concern for me. You indeed were concerned, but you lacked opportunity.⁹¹ 4:11 Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am.⁹² 4:12 I know indeed how to be humbled, and I know how to have success. In everything and in all things I have learned the secret, whether to be satisfied, to be hungry, to be in abundance, and to be lacking.⁹³ 4:13 I am able to handle all things because of the One who strengthens me.⁹⁴ 4:14 Nevertheless, you did well when you joined me in my affliction.⁹⁵

4:15 And you indeed know, Philippians, that in the beginning of the good news, when I came from Macedonia, no church participated with me in the matter of giving and receiving except you alone,⁹⁶ 4:16 because even in Thessalonica you sent me something more than once for my need.⁹⁷ 4:17 Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the profit which increases in your account.⁹⁸ 4:18 And I am receiving everything, and I have an abundance. I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the things from you, a sweet-smelling fragrance, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God.⁹⁹ 4:19 And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches because of the glory because of the Messiah Jesus.¹⁰⁰

4:20 Glory be to our God and Father into the ages of ages. Amen.¹⁰¹ 4:21 Greet everyone who is set apart in the Messiah Jesus. The brothers with me greet you.¹⁰² 4:22 All those who are set apart greet you, especially those of the household of Caesar.¹⁰³ 4:23 The grace of the Lord Jesus the Messiah be with your spirit.¹⁰⁴

¹ Παῦλος καὶ Τιμόθεος δούλοι Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ πᾶσιν τοῖς ἀγίοις ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ τοῖς οὖσιν ἐν Φιλίπποις ‘σὺν ἐπισκόποις’ καὶ διακόνους – In Acts 16, while he was in Troas, Paul saw a vision of a man imploring him to come to Macedonia. So he left for there and soon arrived in Philippi, a “leading city of the district of Macedonia.” One of the first people he met was Lydia, “a seller of purple fabrics” and “a worshiper of God.” She and her household respond with authentic belief to the message of Jesus as the Messiah. Paul, with Silas, was eventually jailed in Philippi, but God miraculously broke him out. The jailer becomes a believer, and soon afterwards Paul and Silas leave Philippi. Paul’s conversion was between A.D. 36 and 39, and he visited Philippi approximately fifteen years later between A.D. 50 and 54.

Eventually, he reaches Rome around A.D. 60 and is imprisoned there for two years, awaiting an audience with Caesar Nero to bring a conclusion to the case of his arrest in Jerusalem for supposedly violating Jewish Law by bringing Gentiles into the temple. In the meantime, Epaphroditus has brought a financial gift from the Philippians to Paul, and he has related to Paul the circumstances among the Christians in Philippi (4:15-19). However, somehow the Philippians have heard that Epaphroditus almost died because of the NT message, and Paul has sent him back to them with this letter so that they can be encouraged by his still being alive (2:25-30).

In addition, Paul plans to send Timothy to them soon as someone whom he knows can continue to relate the NT message very accurately, so that Paul can be informed of and encouraged by all that is happening among them (2:19-24). This is Paul’s way of saying that Timothy is one of his *bona fide* apostolic co-workers with whom he trusts implicitly to convey accurately the ideas of the NT message.

Here, Paul identifies Timothy and himself as “slaves of the Messiah Jesus,” meaning that they consider their primary allegiance to God and the information about Jesus as the final king of Israel and as their champion who will rescue them from God’s eternal wrath and condemnation. And they are sending this letter to people in Philippi who have become different from others in the city because God has worked within them to cause them to have authentic belief in God and Jesus.

The mention of elders and assistants in this introduction is unusual, but perhaps Paul simply wants to emphasize that what he is writing is incorporated within the apostolic message which he is authorized to present as an apostle. Considering other uses of the word “assistants,” e.g., 1 Timothy 3:8-13, these are people who help with the physical and emotional care of fellow Christians within a specific Christian community. This also makes sense in the light of passages such as 1 Corinthians 11 regarding the Lord’s Supper and 2 Corinthians 8 & 9 regarding the financial support of the Jewish Christians in Judea, that after the primary pursuit of truth by Christians, their next pursuit is to love one another with respect to their human, existential needs of food, clothing, shelter, emotional support, etc. Belief in the truth of Jesus the Messiah followed by love for God and His people is the mark of an authentic Christian.

² χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ – Paul encapsulates his overall desire for the Philippian Christians with the two words grace and shalom. The first is God’s sovereign and independent kindness towards them to change them inwardly, cause their inwardness and belief to endure, and to grant them mercy and shalom, an eternal existence of moral perfection free from any harm in the eternal Kingdom of God. The second refers to this latter eternal existence of moral perfection. It is these two words that sum up God’s love and purposes for His people, both Jews and Gentiles who have embraced Jesus as their King and Priest now that he has come for the first time.

As a result, grace and shalom are from both God the Father and Jesus the Messiah because they are both involved in necessary ways in starting, continuing, and finishing the process of sinful human beings’ acquiring life in the eternal Kingdom of God.

³ Εὐχαριστῶ τῷ θεῷ μου ἐπὶ πάσῃ τῇ μνηίᾳ ὑμῶν – Paul’s memories of the Philippians are based upon both his initial visit to them around A.D. 50 and his other brief visits during his third missionary journey (A.D. 54-58). These memories are a pleasant reminder of not only their belief, but also God’s grace, which causes their belief, as Paul goes on to say in this paragraph. Here he is in Rome under house arrest with the possibility of being condemned to death by Nero, and his first words after his introduction in this letter refer to his gratitude for the Philippians’ biblical belief and his prayers for them to persevere until the end of their lives, a perseverance that he is convinced will happen because of God’s promise to work graciously in His people throughout their lives.

⁴ πάντοτε ἐν πάσῃ δεήσῃ μου ὑπὲρ πάντων ὑμῶν, μετὰ χαρᾶς ἡ τὴν δέξιν ποιούμενος – Cf. Philippians 1:8-11. And, in the light of all of Paul’s letters, most likely his request to God on behalf of the Philippian Christians is for the endurance of their belief to the end of the lives along with the growth of their understanding of the biblical message, especially the part about the Messiah. But, because of what Paul has observed of these people, that God initially caused them to believe the NT message, and now is continuing to do so six to ten years later, Paul has the confidence to make his requests to God on their behalf with joy, knowing that his requests will not go unanswered and that God will always answer in the affirmative.

⁵ ἐπὶ τῇ κοινωνίᾳ ὑμῶν εἰς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον ἀπὸ ὅτῃς πρώτης ἡμέρας ἄχρι τοῦ νῦν – When Paul first arrived in Philippi around A.D. 50-54, he observed many of the people becoming believers in Jesus as the Messiah. This was “the first day” of their belief. Six to ten years later, after his arrest in Jerusalem and journey to Rome to appeal to Nero, he has received word that they are still believers. He implies that he has heard recently through friends who have visited

him in Rome, especially Epaphroditus (cf. 4:18), that the Philippian Christians are continuing in their belief. This certainly brings joy to the heart of the apostle to the Gentiles. Six to ten years of persevering belief for these Gentiles who were originally pagan idolators (as well as proselytes of Judaism, like Lydia) would have certainly been a remarkable thing in the Roman Empire of the 1st century. They have no Old Testament or other biblical documents. They have only what Paul taught them in their minds. Thus, Paul's request with joy for God to continuing working in their hearts so that they reach the end of their lives with persevering belief has its basis in what God has already done to get them to this point six to ten years down the road. It is truly a miracle that any Christian believed in Jesus throughout the rest of their lives without any written source of information and only the community of believers to remind them of the gospel and encourage them to persevere in their belief and obedience of God.

⁶ πεποιθώς αὐτὸ τοῦτο, ὅτι ὁ ἐναρξάμενος ἐν ὑμῖν ἔργον ἀγαθὸν ἐπιτελέσει ἄχρι ἡμέρας Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ³ – Paul could be making a simple yet profound theological statement about God's promise to cause those whom He has predestined to persevere in their belief and obtain eternal life—the intended goal of Christians. However, it makes more sense in this context that he is making this theological statement specifically in reference to the Philippian Christians, because now, six to ten years later, they are still believing in Jesus as the Messiah, with not much help externally other than the teaching that they received from Paul at his first visit during his second missionary journey (A.D. 50-54) and during some brief visits while he was on his third missionary journey (A.D. 54-58), along with whatever their elders could continue to remind them from what Paul had originally taught them (cf. 1:1).

Nevertheless, this must be a general theological statement, that based upon God's predestination before He brought the creation into existence, those whom He chose to become believers receive the continuous work of the Spirit of God within them to persevere in their belief and obedience and thereby qualify to enter into the eternal Kingdom of God when Jesus returns and afterwards.

Therefore, Paul must be persuaded that they are receiving a tremendous amount of *internal* help from the Spirit of God and, thus, from God's promise to sustain the belief of those whom He has chosen for eternal life. Paul has in mind that theoretically these Philippian believers will live until the return of Jesus when he will destroy the Man of Lawlessness (2 Thessalonians 2) and set up the Messianic government in Israel (Daniel 2, Revelation), which he calls the "day of the Messiah." However, he must know that this day is a long way off as Jesus demonstrated in the Olivet Discourse. Therefore, this is Paul's way of saying that everyone needs to be ready for the return of the Messiah, because it may occur sooner rather than later. And no one knows the exact date, not even Jesus, as he also says in Matthew 24.

⁷ Καθώς ἐστὶν δίκαιον ἔμοι τοῦτο φρονεῖν ὑπὲρ πάντων ὑμῶν διὰ τὸ ἔχειν με ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ ὑμᾶς, ἐν τε τοῖς δεσμοῖς μου καὶ ἐν τῇ ἀπολογίᾳ καὶ βεβαιώσει τοῦ εὐαγγελίου συγκοινωνοῦς μου τῆς ἡμετέρας χάριτος πάντας ὑμᾶς ὄντας – Paul has received a nice gift in his imprisonment from the Philippians (cf. 4:18). As a result, he has good evidence of the authenticity of their belief and is thus encouraged—by virtue of the fact that they care so deeply about an apostle of the Messiah, specifically the apostle who first told them about Jesus! Thus, Paul expresses his deep concern for these believers by saying that they are in his heart, i.e., he loves them genuinely as fellow Christians. He also expresses his confidence in the authenticity of their belief by saying that they are participating in grace with him, which he has already mentioned on the basis of the evidence that he saw when he first visited them six to ten years earlier and that he has received recently from Epaphroditus. It is God's grace alone which causes sinners to believe and continue to believe the gospel during their lives for the purpose of meeting His requirement for obtaining His eternal mercy and life.

⁸ μάρτυς γάρ ἔμουν ὁ θεὸς ὡς ἐπιποθῶ πάντας ὑμᾶς ἐν σπλάγχνοις Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ – Paul is an apostle of the Messiah. Therefore, he represents the Messiah with not only an accurate and full presentation of the biblical message with respect to the Messiah, but also the sentiments and feelings of the Messiah towards God's people, i.e. affections of love, care, and concern for their eternal well-being. In other words, just as Jesus would want to be with his people, the Philippian Christians, and care for their spiritual well-being, Paul wants to do the same.

1 Thessalonians 2:8 Having so fond an affection for you (οὕτως ῥομειρόμενοι ὑμῶν), we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us.

⁹ Καὶ τοῦτο προσεύχομαι, ἵνα ἡ ἀγάπη ὑμῶν ἔτι μᾶλλον καὶ μᾶλλον ῥομρισεύῃ ἐν ἐπιγνώσει καὶ πάσῃ αἰσθήσει – Paul is not explicit about the object of the Philippians' love that he hopes increases. In Ephesians and Colossians he makes it clear that Christians should love one another also his feelings, which are both humans' feelings towards the Philippians, it makes sense that Paul is referring to the Philippians' love for other Christians in their gathering. It is this love which Paul hopes will increase with the accurate knowledge and understanding of the apostolic and biblical message that the Philippians' will continue to gain. Thus, it is a correct knowledge of God that leads to an appropriate love for one's fellow Christians, because, if a person really knows who God is, e.g., His love and eternal mercy, then he knows how to treat others who know God.

¹⁰ εἰς τὸ δοκιμάζειν ὑμᾶς τὰ διαφέροντα, ἵνα ἡτε εἰλικρινεῖς καὶ ἀπόσκοποι εἰς ἡμέραν Χριστοῦ – Paul is saying that it is the Philippian Christians' growth in love for and knowledge of God and the Messiah that will directly have an effect on how they live their lives. It will cause them to be able to assess what is moral vs. immoral, which will be radically different from what the unbelievers in the world think because, by inference, they remain inwardly hostile towards God. In addition, the Philippians will pursue goodness, making them "pure and without fault" when Jesus returns.

And there will be a monumental future advantage of this kind of life. God will consider them qualified for eternal

salvation when Jesus returns and intercedes for them at the final judgment. They will lack the kind of fault, a rebellious heart, that would disqualify a sinful human being from acquiring God's eternal mercy and entrance into the eternal Kingdom of God. Therefore, by "pure" and "without fault," Paul does not mean morally perfect. He means a genuine and unwavering commitment to being forgiven by God for one's sin and disobedience, even if it just an unwillingness to worship God with one's whole heart, mind, and body. In other words, it is a purity of inward commitment, not a purity of morality that God will be looking for at the final judgment when Jesus returns and that will trigger His eternal forgiveness of a sinner.

¹¹ πεπληρωμένοι 'καρπὸν δικαιοσύνης τὸν διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ εἰς δόξαν 'καὶ ἔπαινον θεοῦ' – Considering that καρπὸν δικαιοσύνης is the fruit/effect of justification, i.e., of being marked by God as a person who stands to be forgiven in eternity, instead of Paul's referring to the effect of morality/righteousness, he is saying that God continues to "fill," that is, work powerfully within them through His Spirit, to push and motivate them towards not only continuing to believe in the Messiah now but also continuing to pursue a life characterized by biblical love and to hope expectantly and confidently in their eternal salvation from God's condemnation. This will be the cause of their arriving at the end of their lives with authentic, eternal-life-gaining belief.

Thus, Paul is explicit that their love, knowledge, belief, and moral lives are the result of God's having forgiven them through His inward work in them and the promise of Jesus as their advocate at the judgment when he returns. God is the cause. They and their lives are the effect.

And the final outcome will be the "glory and praise of God," which will permit God and all His creatures to think of Him as the greatest and most magnificent being. Paul is saying that this is the whole purpose of God's rescuing from condemnation and destruction sinful human beings who do not deserve His forgiveness and eternal life. This creation really is all about Him and not about us or anything else. This also makes it all about Jesus because he is the icon of God and the central, human figure of cosmic history.

¹² Γινώσκειν δὲ ὑμᾶς βούλομαι, ἀδελφοί, ὅτι τὰ κατ' ἐμὲ μᾶλλον εἰς προκοπὴν τοῦ εὐαγγελίου ἐλήλυθεν – We know from Acts 9 and the rest of Acts that Paul's God-given responsibility was to be the apostle to the Gentiles. Therefore, even in his imprisonment in Rome, Gentiles are still coming to belief in Jesus as the Messiah as they come in contact with Paul and his appropriate obsession with talking about Jesus as the Jewish Messiah.

So we should never despair in our own difficult or undesirable circumstances, because they may be exactly what God wants to use in order to bring others to belief in Jesus as we come in contact with them. In other words, we never know who among those with whom we meet might be influenced by our belief to become followers of Jesus as the Jewish Messiah themselves.

¹³ ὥστε τοὺς δεσμούς μου φανεροὺς ἐν Χριστῷ γενέσθαι ἐν ὅλῳ τῷ πραιτωρίῳ καὶ τοῖς λοιποῖς πᾶσιν – Indeed, the emperor's own personal guards, the praetorian guards, who are Paul's personal guards too, have obviously become aware of who Paul is and what he is all about with respect to Jesus. It seems that this news has spread even into other parts of the community close to the emperor, including perhaps more of the Roman military. Certainly, it would be impossible for anyone assigned to guard Paul not to hear the biblical message eventually. The implication here, too, is that some of these Roman guards and officials have become believers in Jesus as the Messiah (cf. Philippians 4:22). This is how God has made the message of the gospel available to the closest military circles surrounding the Roman emperor. It took the disturbance in Jerusalem and Paul's subsequent arrest, two years in prison in Caesarea Maritima, and audiences before Felix, Festus, and Agrippa when he as a Roman citizen appealed to Caesar to save his life to get him to Rome.

¹⁴ καὶ τοὺς πλείονας τῶν ἀδελφῶν ἐν κυρίῳ πεποιθότας τοῖς δεσμοῖς μου περισσοτέρως τολμᾶν ἀφόβως τὸν λόγον ἡ λαλεῖν – Paul's success in his imprisonment of spreading the message of Jesus as the Messiah has also provided other Christians (or "Christians") in Rome with the motivation and courage to talk more about this message in their personal contacts with other people.

¹⁵ τινὲς μὲν καὶ διὰ φθόνον καὶ ἔριν, τινὲς δὲ καὶ δι' εὐδοκίαν τὸν Χριστὸν κηρύσσουσιν – However, there are two kinds of people who are motivated by Paul's imprisonment and evangelistic successes among the praetorian guard to speak the same message for seemingly the same purpose.

1) The first group are genuinely concerned for the eternal salvation of others and about presenting the truth of Jesus as the Messiah and of God's grace, so that their listeners may believe it and acquire eternal life.

2) The second group are envious of something about Paul (perhaps his being as well-known as he is among the soldiers who are as close to the emperor as they are) and, having figured out that there are always people who are hostile to Paul's message, talk about Jesus with the hope that they can create problems for Paul in his appeal to the emperor. Perhaps, this second group would even like to get rid of Paul by having the emperor conclude that he is a traitor to the Roman Empire because he posits another and rival king, resulting in the emperor's sentencing him to death. Paul definitely seems aware that this is a possibility.

For example, [Acts 17:5](#) But the Jews, becoming jealous and taking along some wicked men from the market place, formed a mob and set the city in an uproar; and attacking the house of Jason, they were seeking to bring them out to the people. [6](#) "When [the hostile and unbelieving Jews in Thessalonica] did not find them, they began dragging Jason and some brethren before the city authorities, shouting, 'These men who have upset the world have come here also; [7](#) and Jason has welcomed them, and they all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus.'" Therefore, these people in v. 15 are not genuine "brothers" in Christ whom Paul mentioned in the previous verse, but

are more likely unbelieving Gentiles who are forced to use a different strategy from the unbelievers in Thessalonica of Acts 17 to make trouble for Paul, because they cannot grab him and drag him before the city authorities. We recall that Paul's purpose to be in Rome is to go before Nero and seek exoneration from him for his "crime" (of which he was false accused) of bringing Gentiles into the temple in Jerusalem. If these unbelievers can make it even more problematic for Paul in his appeal to Nero by talking about Jesus as the eternal king, or talking about the fact that Paul is talking about Jesus as the eternal king, then this is what they hope to do. Indeed, the more accurately these unbelievers communicate Paul's own ideas of the kingship of Jesus in their conversations with others, the more difficult they can make Paul's defense before the very insecure and tyrannical Nero.

¹⁶ οἱ μὲν ἐξ ἀγάπης, εἰδότες ὅτι εἰς ἀπολογίαν τοῦ εὐαγγελίου κείμεναι – These are the brothers of v. 14. Thus, "some people" have a love for Paul such that they want to see his responsibility of being the apostle to the Gentiles enhanced by their own participation with him in presenting the message of Jesus as the Messiah. Indeed, Paul's courage in the midst of imprisonment gives them the same courage to act like him. Therefore, with good motives, they are advancing the progress of the biblical message and seeing it spread among the people at Rome.

¹⁷ οἱ δὲ ἐξ ἐριθείας ὁτὸν Χριστὸν καταγγέλλουσιν, οὐχ ἀγνῶς, οἰόμενοι θλίψιν ἔγειρειν τοῖς δεσμοῖς μου.³ – "If it is the Messiah Jesus who landed Paul in hot water, then let's make it even hotter for him by proclaiming and emphasizing Jesus wherever we can." This thinking could be the case for even the Jews of the erroneous Judaism of chapter 3. They believe that Moses is more important than Jesus, but to get rid of Paul they will emphasize Jesus until he is gone.

These are the people, probably false Christians, of v. 15. It would seem that the stress which Paul could possibly encounter could include being sentenced to death by Nero. Thus, these people are motivated out of evil to spread the message of Jesus as the Messiah.

¹⁸ Τί γάρ; 'πλήν ὅτι' παντὶ τρόπῳ, εἴτε προφάσει εἴτε ἀληθείᾳ, Χριστὸς καταγγέλλεται, καὶ ἐν τούτῳ χαίρω. Ἀλλὰ καὶ χαρήσονται – Paul is sanctioning the message of the gospel that both kinds of people are presenting, but not the motives of both. He calls their message "the Messiah." And it makes sense that the envious group would want to make be as accurate as possible in the information which they were conveying and thereby make it very clear that Jesus is the king of the Jews in order to upset Nero who would want to be the only person in the Roman Empire whom everyone would consider as "king." Any rival king would mean treason and death for those who advocated such a rebellious idea.

Other letters and even Philippians 3 demonstrate that Paul can rejoice at the teaching of these unbelievers who are trying to compete with him and make life difficult for him only because the information that they are presenting is actually the truth about the Messiah and not a perversion of it like that in Philippians 3 and Galatians, where those people's attitude is one of compelling others to follow the Mosaic Covenant. Thus, while one group of people in Philippians are wanting to cause Paul distress, they must be mimicking Paul's message perfectly, that Jesus is the Messiah, i.e., the king of Israel, through whom sinners can receive God's salvation according to His grace, meaning that they are communicating that God's sovereign grace, Jesus' death, and his role as the eternal king are the basis for sinners' salvation. Their reason for talking about Jesus as the Messiah is invalid, i.e., wanting to cause Paul problems in his trial before Nero, but otherwise they are not acting inappropriately. In other words, these people are certainly not trying to force or compel Gentiles to follow the Mosaic Covenant as the Jewish "Christians" were doing in Galatia (cf. Galatians 2:3,14; 6:12). As a result, Paul can honestly rejoice in their presentation of the message, because it gets at the point clearly and accurately. This sounds strange, but we human beings are complex enough that what Paul is describing here could actually happen.

But how can Paul tell that the "former" people are motivated by selfish ambition? It must be something he simply senses in his interaction with them or as a result of his local friends' interaction with them. If we observe carefully how people are acting, we very likely can pick up on the characteristics of their motivation and what is going on inside them.

Cf. 1 Corinthians where Paul criticizes the Corinthian Christian community for following a distortion of the gospel that has resulted in their moral judgment being clouded. Thus, only the precise apostolic message without an attitude of forcing people to be religious is what Paul is willing to support.

¹⁹ οἶδα ὅτι τοῦτό μοι ἀποβήσεται εἰς σωτηρίαν διὰ τῆς ὑμῶν δεήσεως καὶ ἐπιχορηγίας τοῦ πνεύματος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ – Two options for what Paul means by "deliverance/salvation." 1) Eternal salvation, or 2) Physical deliverance from death when he presents his defense to Nero.

In spite of the fact that, in vs. 20-21, Paul includes death (and therefore eternal salvation) as a possibility for himself, I think that the context lends itself towards #2, so that he really is confident that God is going to deliver him from the death sentence which Nero could give him.

Just as Paul has been praying for the enduring belief of the Philippians for the sake of their eternal salvation, he expects them to be praying for his deliverance from physical death as a result of his meeting with Nero. Consequently, the "this" in the context are both his circumstances whereby the message of Jesus as the Jewish King and Messiah is being spread by both kinds of people in Rome in the midst of his imprisonment and the Philippians' prayers for God's saving him from physical death along with the help Paul knows God will provide him through the work of the Holy Spirit in these circumstances. If God's story (as the Spirit of God, i.e., God's activity within the creation) includes Paul's

escaping the death sentence from Nero, then of course Paul's life will be spared. And he is somehow convinced that this will be the case.

²⁰ κατὰ τὴν ἁποκαταδοκίαν καὶ ἐλπίδα μου, ὅτι ἐν οὐδενὶ αἰσχυνθήσομαι ἀλλ' ἐν πάσῃ παρρησίᾳ ὡς πάντοτε καὶ νῦν μεγαλυνθήσεται Χριστὸς ἐν τῷ σώματί μου, εἴτε διὰ ζωῆς εἴτε διὰ θανάτου – While Paul is firmly convinced (it is his “eager expectation and hope”) that his life will be spared by Nero, nevertheless neither life nor death is problematic for him when it comes to what he is willing to accept from the hand of God. It will not be embarrassing at all for Paul to live or for him to die. They are both acceptable possibilities to him, Paul also puts it in terms of having “bold confidence” that both life and death are good ways for Jesus as the Messiah to be manifested as great and glorious through him—probably because he has the self-assurance that God will grant him the grace and strength to persevere in his belief and obedience through either. If Paul lives, he proclaims the gospel of Jesus as the Messiah as his role as an apostle. If he dies, he confesses Jesus as the Messiah through whatever means Nero (or anyone else) causes him to die.

²¹ Ἐμοὶ γὰρ τὸ ζῆν Χριστὸς καὶ τὸ ἀποθανεῖν κέρδος – Life and death are both viable good options for Paul, because they both involve the Messiah, while death certainly will result in eternal life for him. He cannot lose either way, and he is willing to accept either one.

Life means that he will continue carrying out his responsibility as the apostle to the Gentiles to proclaim the message of the Messiah Jesus. Death means that he will gain eternal life because his next waking moment will be seeing Jesus as he returns to restore the Kingdom of Israel on earth. Obviously the latter is “profitable” just as the former is too.

²² εἰ δὲ τὸ ζῆν ἐν σαρκί, τοῦτό μοι καρπὸς ἔργου, καὶ τί ἁιρήσομαι οὐ γνωρίζω – Paul is the apostle to the Gentiles, and this responsibility implies that he will be successful in seeing Gentiles believe in the Jewish Messiah, Jesus. Consequently, if Nero frees him and he gets to experience “life in the flesh,” he will continue to labor in presenting the message of the Messiah, which, in turn, will result in more Gentiles coming to belief in Jesus. This will be the “fruit” of his “labor.”

However, if he dies because this is what Nero decides, then he will existentially gain eternal life when Jesus returns and he is raised from the dead. And this option is so attractive, too, that Paul is unsure which he would choose, if forced to choose.

²³ συνέχομαι δὲ ἐκ τῶν δύο, τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν ἔχων ὅεις τὸ ἀναλῦσαι καὶ σὺν Χριστῷ εἶναι, ἥ πολλῷ [γὰρ] μᾶλλον κρείσσον – In fact, eternal life in the Kingdom of God is actually a more attractive option for Paul than being the apostle to the Gentiles on this earth, regardless of how much success he is experiencing in the latter. Nevertheless, the two options create a sense of stress within him, because Paul has such a heart for the Gentiles to believe in the Jewish Messiah that he would want to continue being their apostle and seeing more of them become believers in the Jewish Messiah. But he also longs to be with Jesus in the glory of his kingdom of moral perfection and eternal life, which he admits is ultimately the more desirable of the two options.

Paul feels a deep responsibility simply to fulfill his role as the apostle to the Gentiles, but he also has a stronger desire to gain eternal life and salvation with its effects of perfect shalom and a pain-free and suffering-free experience.

²⁴ τὸ δὲ ἐπιμένειν ὅ[ἐν] τῇ σαρκὶ ἀναγκαιότερον δι' ὑμᾶς – Certainly, for Paul as the apostle to the Gentiles, to continue to exist in the present realm and to instruct and encourage the Philippian Christians (and all other Christians at that time) in their belief would be of great benefit to them, indeed more benefit than if he died, because they would lose their living, authoritative source of the truth and have to rely on only one another (and this letter which Paul is writing to them) to remind themselves of it.

Indeed, we should appreciate how valuable it was to have all the apostles alive during the 1st century in the Roman Empire. For us now to translate from koine Greek and interpret their documents is a difficult task, more difficult than it seems a lot of people think. To learn enough information about the history, culture, and use of the Greek language of the Roman Empire in order to have the confidence to understand well what the apostles wrote is an arduous and time-consuming task in comparison to living then and speaking personally with any of these men. And even then, Paul's and others' letters reveal that personal contact with the apostles did not necessarily result in perfect understanding of the gospel. Therefore, if it was difficult for people to whom they spoke directly to grasp the message of Jesus as the Messiah, how much more difficult is it for us in the 21st century half way around the world to do so. Thus, we should hold our theology with great humility and patience with others as we all seek to help one another to learn exactly what the apostles and their associates wrote in the New Testament.

²⁵ καὶ τοῦτο πεποιθὼς οἶδα ὅτι μενῶ καὶ παραμένω πᾶσιν ὑμῖν εἰς τὴν ὑμῶν προκοπὴν καὶ χαρὰν τῆς πίστεως – Somehow Paul has become convinced that he will live and not die, so that he may be of earthly benefit to the Philippians by continuing to teach them the gospel either personally or through his co-workers, thus resulting in the growth of joy and belief in the good news of God's mercy through Jesus in them.

²⁶ ἵνα τὸ καύχημα ὑμῶν περισσεύῃ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ ἐν ἐμοί, διὰ τῆς ἐμῆς παρουσίας πάλιν πρὸς ὑμᾶς – Assuming Paul will be released from prison when Nero makes his decision, he will then travel to Philippi at some point to visit with his readers again—for the third time in ten or so years. Thus, the additional instruction in the biblical message with which Paul will be able to provide them will enable them to brag appropriately about the Jewish Messiah, Jesus.

It makes more sense to me that Paul is speaking here of the Philippians' “boasting” (“proud confidence in the NAS95), which is that which they consider to be the most important element of their existences as sinful human beings, is in

Jesus and not in him. Nevertheless, their boasting has been and will continue to be “because” of Paul who has been their teacher from the beginning of their faith during his second missionary journey of A.D. 50-54. Thus, it will continue to be by his “appearing” again to them after he is released by and delivered from Nero, whenever this happens—hopefully soon.

²⁷ Μόνον ἁγίως τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τοῦ Χριστοῦ πολιτεύεσθε, ἵνα εἴτε ἐλθὼν καὶ ἰδὼν ὑμᾶς εἴτε ἀπὸν ἰακούω τὰ περὶ ὑμῶν, ὅτι στήκετε ἐν ἐνὶ πνεύματι, μιᾷ ψυχῇ συναθροῦντες τῇ πίστει τοῦ εὐαγγελίου – Here we have the only logical deduction from what Paul has said so far in this letter, that the Gentile, Christian readers should continue their pursuit of morality in light of the message of Jesus the Messiah which will result in their eternal salvations. He exhorts them with the imperative verb πολιτεύεσθε, which comes from the word πόλις, meaning city, and refers to how a person conducts himself as a citizen of such and such a city. Thus, Paul wants his readers to live in a manner that is worthy, which is to say, which matches the “good news” of Jesus as the Messiah and God’s call for Christians to choose to be loving and moral to the extent that they can by His grace even as they continue to be sinners this side of the eternal life which He will grant them.

And Paul assures them that this should happen regardless of whether or not he makes it back to Philippi after he is (hopefully) released from his imprisonment in Rome. Paul wants to hear about their “standing firm in one spirit,” which is their unified purpose of remaining committed to the gospel message and its promise of salvation. This will mean, too, that they will be “striving together in one existence with respect to belief in the good news.” The Greek word ψυχή (*psuchay*), from which we get our word psyche, is usually translated “soul,” but I think that the evidence in the Bible indicates that it does not refer to a specific, inner element within us, i.e., the soul, but to the general idea of a person’s existence as a created, embodied, human being. Therefore, Paul wants his Philippian readers to live out their existences as Christians as if they were one person and had one existence. In other words, this too refers to their unity as believers in Jesus the Messiah and their collective obedience to God which will demonstrate that they have the same understanding of God and His salvific and moral purposes for sinners.

[Acts 4:32](#) And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul (καρδία καὶ ψυχή μία); and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own, but all things were common property to them.

²⁸ καὶ μὴ πτυρόμενοι ἐν μηδενὶ ὑπὸ τῶν ἀντικειμένων, ἥτις ἐστὶν αὐτοῖς ἐνδειξις ἀπωλείας, ὑμῶν δὲ σωτηρίας, καὶ τοῦτο ἀπὸ θεοῦ – The Philippians’ unified, collective, and firm belief and obedience to God will also involve courage and boldness in the presence of those who openly oppose the biblical message. Their courage, etc. will speak volumes to their opponents as a sign they the latter will incur God’s anger and eternal destruction at the judgment, while the Philippian Christians will receive God’s mercy and eternal deliverance from His condemnation.

Paul adds that these experiences which the Philippians are having all come from God, so that they should view them as that which “concerns the Messiah.” Just as Jesus suffered the hostility of his opponents, so also his followers are doing the same. In fact, Paul says that the persecution which they are experiencing has been “graced” and given to them by God. This does not sound like the kind of gift anyone would naturally choose, but it does indicate the authenticity of these Christians’ faith and their genuine association with Jesus as their Messiah. Therefore, God has “graced” not only their belief to them by working within them through His Spirit, but also their suffering persecution on behalf of Jesus. Paul had experienced a high level of opposition to the message of Jesus as the Messiah in Philippi, and this same opposition must still be in play towards the Philippian Christians 10 or so years later (cf. Acts 16). In the situation in Philippi, it was people who were committed to the Greek religion for making their living who opposed Paul, in contrast to Thessalonica where it was Jews who were committed to Judaism who opposed him.

Thus, we never know exactly from where opposition to us as Christians and suffering for our belief may come. We just know that God will grace the opposition and suffering to us in the same way that He has graced to us our belief and obedience to Him.

²⁹ ὅτι ὑμῖν ἐχαρίσθη τὸ ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ, οὐ μόνον τὸ εἰς αὐτὸν πιστεύειν ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ πάσχειν – See note above.

Paul assures the Philippian Christians that everything which they are experiencing, including suffering persecution from those in their city who oppose the gospel, is from God. The implication is that they can trust God for every aspect of their lives because He is in sovereign control of everything within the created reality.

³⁰ τὸν αὐτὸν ἀγῶνα ἔχοντες, οἷον εἶδετε ἐν ἐμοὶ καὶ νῦν ἀκούετε ὃ ἐν ἐμοὶ – Two options – 1) Paul is referring to the suffering he endured in Philippi in Acts 16 and now is enduring by having to appeal to Caesar and go to Rome—all because of the gospel, while the Philippian Christians are experiencing the same kind of opposition to the gospel that Paul did in their own city and is still experiencing years later, but now in Rome. 2) Paul is referring to the inner struggle he described in 1:21-24 of having a great desire to die and be with Jesus, while also wanting to remain alive and continue to assist the Philippians in their faith and obedience to God and Jesus.

In the context, I think that #2 is correct, that it is entirely appropriate for all Christians to long more for eternal life than for this life, because they properly understand how wonderful the former will be in comparison to the latter. Yet, they also desire to engage in this life for God’s purposes and accomplish what He has planned for them in regard to having the privilege of participating in the process of sharing the gospel with both believers and non-believers in order to help fill out and grow numerically and intellectually the group who will be in the Kingdom of God.

³¹ Εἴ τις οὖν παράκλησις ἐν Χριστῷ, εἴ τις παραμύθιον ἀγάπης, εἴ τις κοινωνία πνεύματος, εἴ τις σπλάγχνα καὶ οἰκτιρμοί – Assuming that the Philippian Christians will continue to live and not die, and in the light of what he has

just written about his own struggles and those of the Philippians who are both believing in Jesus and suffering persecution on his behalf, Paul encourages them to look to how their association with Jesus as the Messiah provides them with a unity which allows them to love one another in as selfless a manner as possible. Rather than their difficulties as Christians driving them apart, they should bring them together because of all that is true about them as authentic believers in Jesus the Messiah.

First, Paul points out that there is definitely encouragement in being followers of the Jewish Messiah. He is most likely referring to God's promise of eternal life and salvation which comes through Jesus as a sinner's high priest and advocate at the final judgment. It is this to which all Christians should look as the best thing which will ever happen to them in their existence as human beings.

Second, Paul points out that there is definitely comfort in times of grief as the Philippians demonstrate true, Christian love towards one another. In their love for each other, they can assure one another of the truth of the gospel and encouragement one another to continue to believe it for the sake of obtaining God's mercy and eternal life.

Third, Paul points out that these Christians have a common mindset and purpose, i.e., a common "spirit." Ultimately, they are all about the same thing—repentance, belief, obedience, and an eternal destiny of salvation and life in the Kingdom of God. This commonality is obviously a vital part of their unity in the face of the potential dividing effects of the difficulties they encounter when they are persecuted by non-believers.

Fourth, Paul mentions the "compassion and sympathy" which they can show towards one another as they truly feel with each other the sadness, disappointment, and pain of being mistreated by people who are committed to the world and not to God.

While ultimately all these elements of the Philippians' being Christians come from God, I think that Paul is referring to the fact that they express them towards one another as means to help each other through the hard times.

[1 Thessalonians 2:8](#) Having so fond an affection for you (οὕτως ῥομειρόμενοι ὑμῶν), we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us.

³² πληρώσατέ μου τὴν χαρὰν ἵνα τὸ αὐτὸ φρονῆτε, τὴν αὐτὴν ἀγάπην ἔχοντες, σύμψυχοι, τὸ ἔν φρονοῦντες – Many times in his letters, Paul mentions the importance of his Christian readers thinking and believing the same message, the apostolic message, regarding Jesus as the Messiah. He wants them to embrace the exact same truth that he is as an apostle so that their response to it can be the same morally and ethically as his is. Here Paul points out that if this is the case of the Philippians, then it will fill him with joy as they resist any temptation to stray from the truth of the gospel and hold on intellectually and by their belief to only it. Thus, he wants them to "think the same thing" and "fill out" his joy by doing so.

In this way the upshot of their collective sharing in the truth of the biblical message will give Paul the most satisfaction with respect to them and their Christianity. His responsibility as an apostle is to present the Messianic message with the complete accuracy and authority with which Jesus himself presented it. Therefore, his desire is that those who have heard the message from him and believed it embrace and retain the message with the same accuracy that he enjoys.

This, along with their humble love for God and for one another, will constitute their being properly unified as Christians. It would seem, therefore, that one of the things that Paul has heard from Epaphroditus about the Philippian Christians is that some of them are straying from the apostolic message, most likely towards whatever the Jewish teachers are saying about relying on a person's religious performance more than the Messiah for God's approval, an issue that Paul addresses in more detail in chapter 3. But Paul is quick here to point them to the Messiah and not to Moses.

As a result, they will have "the same love" for one another, i.e., a common love which is genuine and comes from a response to the gospel. They will also be "united in existence" as people who think the same, act morally the same, and have the same destiny of God's mercy and eternal life. And, again, they will be "thinking one thing," the gospel of God's grace and Jesus the Messiah which Paul has proclaimed to them and which he exhorts them to keep at the forefront of their minds. All other ideas, especially those of the world and of erroneous Judaism, pale in comparison to these. It is probably the latter which is more problematic for the Philippians, judging by Paul's strong condemnation in chapter 3 of Jews who are emphasizing the Mosaic Covenant, this letter's purpose, like that of 2 Corinthians, Galatians, and Colossians, is to encourage his readers to place Jesus the Messiah and not Moses and his covenant at the center of their relationship with God.

[Acts 4:32](#) And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul (καρδία καὶ ψυχὴ μία); and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own, but all things were common property to them.

³³ μηδὲν κατ' ἐριθείαν ἢ μηδὲ κατὰ κενοδοξίαν ἀλλὰ τῇ ταπεινοφροσύνῃ ἀλλήλους ῥηγόμενοι ἢ ὑπερέχοντας ἑαυτῶν – In turn, the division within the Philippian Christian community implied by all the language of being unified with one another is probably causing those who are focusing on their external, religious behavior as that which gains God's approval to be "selfishly ambitious" with "empty pride" (because it has no real basis in helping them in their relationship with God) to think that they are superior Christians in comparison to those who are relying strictly on the Messiah and their belief in him for their status before God. The gospel is a very humbling message and leaves no room for any Christian to think of himself as superior to other Christians, even if attempts to follow the religious requirements of the Mosaic Covenant or his role within the world and the Christian community is different and more visible than that of others. The fact is both that religious pursuits as the focus of one's Christianity is useless before God and that everyone receives the same outcome of their story and role as Christians in human history, which is

eternal salvation and life. This is the fundamental equality of the gospel which all Christians should keep in mind in order to resist any temptation to think of themselves as greater in God's eyes than other Christians.

Unlike modern Christianity which has created its own religious requirements and, in addition, elevates pastors, missionaries, and evangelistic/missionary organizations and institutions to a level where they get more attention and accolades, even money, than obscure, unknown, and less talented (from a worldly perspective) Christians who are simply quietly living out their obedience to God without any fanfare, Paul wants the Philippians to be marked by not only a unity of belief in the same apostolic message, but also an important ramification of this message, i.e., a mutual humility towards one another whereby no one considers himself as having a greater status within the community than anyone else's. And this within a religion-free environment of the truth of the gospel.

In God's eyes, none of us is superior, even if we have a visible religious system and/or different roles. But these roles (and difficult circumstances of persecution) are graced to us just as our changed hearts, belief, goodness, and eternal salvations are graced to us by God, thus making God the source of our status and activity (cf. Ephesians 3). And our religious additions to Christianity are not important to God. This means that we all have equal eternal status before Him, even if some Christians are more visible in their religion and/or more well-known and appear to have greater status.

³⁴ μή τὰ ἐαυτῶν ἑκάστος ἑσκοποῦντες ἀλλὰ ὁ[καὶ] τὰ ἐτέρων ἑκάστοι – It appears that some of the Philippians are finding an erroneous message regarding the Bible and Judaism to be attractive as implied by Paul in chapter 3. The religion of this Judaism is making them more focused on performing certain rituals than on loving one another appropriately by means of the gospel. Consequently, Paul has to exhort them not to pay attention to their own individual (religious) interests but, instead, to each other's actual physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual needs.

This humble (and not proud, religious) perspective that Paul wants them to have will also result in their genuinely serving everyone in the Christian community equally and each other's needs. It is interesting that Paul feels it necessary to say this in the light of Epaphroditus' having brought a significant financial gift to him that demonstrates how much they are genuinely serving *his* needs. But it must not have taken too much religious influence from false, Jewish teachers to steer them away from loving one another properly.

³⁵ Τοῦτο τ' ὑπονοεῖτε ἐν ὑμῖν ὁ καὶ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ – Now Paul uses Jesus as an example of one who lived out the implications of focusing on him and not on Moses, which is to say that he lived the "Christian" life correctly even if he did not have to be a Christian who needed his advocacy through his death and resurrection for his sin. In other words, the kind of life and attitude towards fellow believers and sinners that Paul just described and is exhorting the Philippians to adopt is the same as that of the Messiah towards his followers.

Thus, to be a follower of Jesus as the Messiah is to adopt that same perspective on reality as his, including not claiming one's rights in the present realm and considering other's rights and needs more important than one's own and than any so-called religious requirements, especially if it means progress for the purposes of God to bring about the eternal Kingdom of God, as it certainly did for Jesus and his willingness to die on the cross in order to qualify to be the one and only high priest and advocate for his followers at the final judgment when he returns (cf. 1 Thessalonians 4 and Revelation 20).

This, then is the antidote to proud religion, following in Jesus' footsteps and thinking about reality the same way he did.

³⁶ ὅς ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων ὁὐχ ἀρπαγμὸν ἡγήσατο τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ – While Jesus was carrying out his very human role of being God and the Messiah in God's story during his first visit on earth ("existing the form of God"), and while he announced himself as both the Messiah and God in the flesh ("consider being equal to God"), the one thing that he did not do was demand that people acknowledge that he was God incarnate or even the Davidic king with an authority just a little below that of the transcendent Creator to rule over the creation. As Paul will go on to intimate in vs. 7-8, this was so that he could fulfill his earthly role by being rejected and crucified by both the Jews and the Romans.

³⁷ ἀλλὰ ἐαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν μορφὴν δούλου λαβὼν, ἐν ὁμοιώματι ἁνθρώπων γενόμενος· καὶ σχήματι ἐὼρεθεις ὡς ἄνθρωπος – Even though Jesus was acting out the role of God in a human body during his visit, he "emptied himself" of the right to claim this role and demand that people worship him. Instead, he "filled himself" by choosing to act out the role of a common slave to God and the very people who were intent upon doing away with him—as well as to the people who were his genuine followers. Whatever the Jews and Romans wanted to do to him, he allowed them to do so as if he were a common slave with no rights and no authority over his life. He permitted other people, his masters of sorts, to decide what to do with him.

He had come into existence "in the likeness of men," which means as a real human being. Thus, "with respect to his outward form," which means what he looked like, he was "found as a man." Jesus was just as human as any other human being has been in history.

Thus, Jesus was a real human being who was manifesting God on earth, i.e., a genuine theophany, and he was a real human being who was choosing to enslave himself to the desires and choices of his bitterest enemies, the Jewish leadership whose purposes towards him were only to get rid of him. And they succeeded by crucifying him on a cross. Thus, Jesus' humility led him simply to serve people as a real human being without their worshiping him and without demanding that they worship him, which worship he rightly deserved.

³⁸ ἐταπεινώσεν ἑαυτὸν γενόμενος ὑπὸ ἡκούς μέχρι θανάτου, θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ – Jesus’ humility as God who did not demand that people worship him as God resulted in his willfully succumbing to the hostile attitudes and actions of the Jewish leaders, so that they succeeded in crucifying him on a cross—even though he could have stopped them at any time by exercising his right as God and the Messiah.

This is how far he went in laying aside his rightful claim of being the incarnate God and instead in choosing to be people’s slave to the extent that he permitted them to do with him whatever they wanted, even crucifying him on a cross.

³⁹ διὸ καὶ ὁ θεὸς αὐτὸν ὑπερύψωσεν καὶ ἐχαρίσατο αὐτῷ ὅτ’ ὄνομα τὸ ὑπὲρ πάντων ὀνόματα – Jesus’ obedience to God in his role as the Messiah by being willing to die in the cross resulted in God’s designating him the final Messiah and High Priest of His people (cf. Romans 1:1ff.). There is no greater role for anything or anyone within the created reality than his role.

Here “name” refers to all that which refers to a person—his identity and role as someone who simply is, such as God Himself, or as someone who has been brought into existence by God, such as Jesus and all other human beings.

⁴⁰ ἵνα ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ πάντες γόνυ κάμψῃ ἐπουρανίων καὶ ἐπιγείων καὶ καταχθονίων – cf. Is. 45:23 “I have sworn by Myself, the word has gone forth from My mouth in righteousness and will not turn back, that to Me every knee will bow, every tongue will swear allegiance (ὅτι ἐμοὶ κάμψει πᾶν γόνυ καὶ ἐξομολογήσεται πάντα γλῶσσαι τῷ θεῷ).”

The phrase “in heaven and on earth and under the earth” (literally “those of the heavens and those of the earth and those under the earth”) seems most likely to refer to all people, dead or alive, in that God’s plan is for every human being who has existed to acknowledge Him and His ultimate purposes for the Messiah, whether completely willingly (believers) or grudgingly (non-believers). In other words, eventually every human being whom God has created during the history of the universe and the earth will admit the truth about God that was available to them through whatever means that God has revealed Himself to them, e.g., through the creation, through the Bible, through the apostles’ preaching, through Christians’ proclaiming the gospel, through the moral behavior of Christians, through the detected inwardness of believers, etc.

Those of the heavens = believers who have died and are destined for eternal life.

Those of the earth = believers and non-believers who are currently alive in Paul’s day.

Those under the earth = non-believers who have died and are destined for eternal destruction.

⁴¹ καὶ πάντα γλῶσσαι ἐξομολογήσονται ὅτι ὁ κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός εἰς δόξαν θεοῦ πατρὸς – Part of what all created human beings will have to admit is that Jesus is the center of God’s plans and purposes for the earth and humanity, that he is the King and high priest for salvific purposes. This, obviously, will include all God’s people of authentic belief, Jews and Gentiles, who will especially acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah, because he was willing to suffer death on their behalf as part of his role. Everyone’s admission of Jesus identity and role will glorify God, the Father and creator of all reality, because this is God’s main purpose with the creation. As a result, Jesus and not Moses is important to know and understand for all sinners, even Jewish sinners for whom the Mosaic Covenant is a national obligation from God to distinguish them from all other ethnic and national groups.

This admission on everyone’s part will basically occur during the first and second resurrections as described in Revelation 20 (cf. 1 Thessalonians 4 regarding the first resurrection).

⁴² Ὡστε, ἀγαπητοί μου, καθὼς πάντοτε ὑπήκουσατε, μὴ ὥς ἐν τῇ παρουσίᾳ μου μόνον ἀλλὰ νῦν πολλῶ μᾶλλον ἐν τῇ ἀπουσίᾳ μου, μετὰ φόβου καὶ τρόμου τὴν ἑαυτῶν σωτηρίαν κατεργάζεσθε – With the focus on Jesus as the Messiah and the kind of life he was willing to live as a slave of people in order to accomplish his initial goal of dying for their sins, Paul exhorts the Philippian Christians to be committed this same kind of life. In other words, his encouragement is to live like Jesus and not like Moses, to serve one another in a sacrificial manner instead of focusing on the ritual commandments of the Mosaic Covenant, even if it were to mean death for them.

This then places them in the correct mindset of appropriately fearing God and His threat of eternal condemnation towards those who persist in rebelling against Him, because they are demonstrating that Jesus with his death, and not Moses and the sacrifices of animals in the temple, is what obtains God’s mercy and eternal salvation from His condemnation for them.

Paul knows that the Philippians lived like this when he was with them in Philippi. And not he encourages them to do likewise in his absence.

⁴³ θεὸς γὰρ ἐστὶν ὁ ἐνεργῶν ἐν ὑμῖν καὶ τὸ θέλει καὶ τὸ ἐνεργεῖν ὑπὲρ τῆς εὐδοκίας – Two options – 1) God works in the Philippian Christians both His desire and His working for His good pleasure; 2) God works in the Philippian Christians both what they desire and they do for His good pleasure.

#1 is a good addition to the exhortation in the previous verse for the Philippians to work at living their lives properly and in line with God’s moral commandments for the purpose of obtaining eternal salvation, and to do so with fear and trembling before God because He controls them, not the other way around and all for that which pleases Him and not necessarily them (especially in the case where their lives and their choices result in pain and suffering instead of sheer joy).

#2 is also a good addition in that it teaches that all the efforts that the Philippians put into obeying God ultimately have their source in God for what will please Him and not necessarily them as they recognize through fear and trembling that He divinely determines their choices and they do not determine His (and all this especially in the case where their lives

and choices result in pain and suffering instead of sheer joy).

Therefore, both options really end up in the same place, supporting God's divine determinism in the light of Paul's exhortation in the previous verse for the Philippians to work hard at obeying God for the sake of obtaining eternal life, and to do so with the proper perspective on just who God is, no one to trifle with. He is to be feared and loved at the same time. However, I think that #2 is what Paul is encouraging the Philippians to embrace, that whatever they desire to do and whatever they actually end up doing in order to "work out their salvation" have their ultimate source in the transcendent Creator. Therefore, they can be assured that God is at work within them and that they will be able to follow through on what Paul is exhorting them to do. This also separates the first ὁ ἐνεργῶν from the second τὸ ἐνεργεῖν, which makes sense in that the first is God's working and the second is the Philippians working, with the first causing the second ὑπὲρ τῆς εὐδοκίας, i.e., on behalf of or for the sake of what God really wants to have happen in the Philippians, which is to live their lives commensurate with His eternal plans and purposes of Christians' pursuing moral goodness before they actually become morally perfect.

Cf. Galatians 5:22,26 and the "fruit of the Spirit," i.e., the effects of God's internal work in sinful human beings that ranges from authentic belief in the apostolic message to love and joy in the midst of His sovereign rule over the universe.

⁴⁴ Πάντα ποιεῖτε χωρὶς γογγυσμῶν καὶ διαλογισμῶν – Loving one's fellow Christians (and also non-Christians), especially when times are hard because of persecution, is not an easy thing to do. And the Philippians may be tempted to grumble against God and even argue with Him about how He is governing the cosmos. Paul encourages his readers to live their lives in humble submission to God and neither grumble nor argue with Him (or with one another).

1 Peter 4:9 Be hospitable to one another without complaint/grumbling (γογγυσμοῦ).

1 Timothy 2:8 Therefore I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and dissension/disputing (διαλογισμοῦ).

⁴⁵ ἵνα ᾠγέννησθε ἄμεμπτοι καὶ ἀκέραιοι, τέκνα θεοῦ ἁμώμα μέσον γενεᾶς σκολιᾶς καὶ διεστραμμένης, ἐν οἷς φαίνεσθε ὡς φωστῆρες ἐν κόσμῳ – Being willing to submit to God's sovereign plans and purposes, even if they involve great hardship and opposition, makes Christians innocent and faultless so to speak in the world compared to others who remain in rebellion against God and ultimately refuse to submit to Him. This humble submission to God is a light of truth in the midst of the darkness of falsehood and immorality which other people inject into the world.

Paul is encouraging his Philippian readers to live morally, rightly, and humbly before God among all their contemporaries who are doing the opposite.

⁴⁶ λόγον ζωῆς ἐπέχοντες, εἰς καύχημα ἐμοὶ εἰς ἡμέραν Χριστοῦ, ὅτι οὐκ εἰς κενὸν ἔδραμον οὐδὲ εἰς κενὸν ἐκοπίασα – The Philippians' willingness to be humble and not complain against God in their difficult circumstances also indicates that they are authentically believing the biblical message that promises eternal life. Thus, their enduring in their belief will allow Paul to boast (humbly) on judgment day that all his work as the apostle to the Gentiles on behalf of the Philippians was not for nothing. It resulted, albeit by God's grace, in the eternal salvation of these people, which will be much to his delight.

⁴⁷ Ἀλλὰ εἰ καὶ σπένδομαι ἐπὶ τῇ θυσίᾳ καὶ λειτουργίᾳ τῆς πίστεως ὑμῶν, χαίρω καὶ συγχαίρω πᾶσιν ὑμῖν – Two options – 1) God is offering Paul as a sacrifice to Himself and as worship of the Philippians' belief, i.e., as an act of worship for the Philippians' belief, or 2) Paul is offering himself as a sacrifice to God and as an act of worship for the sake of the Philippians' belief. The mood of the verb is either passive (#1) or middle (#2).

#2 makes more sense, that Paul's willingness to endure the hostility of the Jews in Jerusalem that landed him in Rome awaiting an audience with the emperor is his way of offering himself to God on behalf of any other Christians who then benefit from his current experience. In this case, the Philippians have a letter from Paul in the midst of his imprisonment as well as having demonstrated their own belief by sending him a financial gift through Epaphroditus (cf. 4:18) and also being able to demonstrate their belief by praying for him and seeing him released in order to visit them again. Thus, Paul's sacrifice of himself is more important than his sacrifice of bulls and goats at the temple in Jerusalem.

All this leads Paul to rejoice in their common belief and to rejoice with the Philippians in the assurance of their eternal salvation.

⁴⁸ τὸ δὲ αὐτὸ καὶ ὑμεῖς χαίρετε καὶ συγχαίρετέ μοι – The Philippians' common belief and understanding of the gospel with Paul should also lead to their rejoicing in such and in their eternal destiny just as Paul is doing. He has already said that they are suffering for the Messiah as he has, both externally by virtue of persecution from non-believers and internally by having a greater desire to depart this life and be with Jesus than to continue in this life (cf. 1:27-30).

⁴⁹ Ἐλπίζω δὲ ἐν ᾧ κυρίῳ Ἰησοῦ Τιμόθεον ταχέως πέμψαι ὑμῖν, ἵνα καὶ γὰρ εὐψυχῶ γνοῦς τὰ περὶ ὑμῶν – Paul has recently received through Epaphroditus not only a financial gift from the Philippians, but also news about them (cf. 4:10-19). In addition, the gift and the news have convinced Paul that they are truly enduring in their belief in Jesus as the Jewish Messiah, even 10 years after he first visited him and with only the instructions that he has given them the three times that he has visited them (cf. Acts 16:12, second missionary journey; Acts 20:1,2 as well as Acts 20:3-6, both during his third missionary journey). Nevertheless, it seems that he is concerned about something in their circumstances, probably their becoming divided in terms of what message they are actually believing, that could affect them negatively so that he wants to send the only remaining traveling companion who is currently with him and

supporting him to them in order to encourage them that he, likewise, may be encouraged by more news about them when Timothy returns. Obviously, this will be after they receive this particular letter through Epaphroditus' returning to them, and Paul hopes that the effect of the letter is to straighten out their belief so that they are united in the purity of the apostolic message, and it is not mixed with the erroneous Judaism which he mentions in chapter 3. Then, Timothy can find this out and return with this good news to Paul wherever hopefully he might be after his release.

⁵⁰ οὐδένα γὰρ ἔχω ἰσόψυχον, ὅστις γνησίως τὰ περὶ ὑμῶν μεριμνήσει – Timothy seems to be the only long-standing traveling companion who is not only with Paul in Rome but also has remained solid in his single-minded commitment to the NT message with the effect that he, like Paul, is also genuinely concerned about the Philippians' belief that is not mixed with error, especially that of the contemporary Judaism that is so focused on the Mosaic Covenant.

⁵¹ οἱ πάντες γὰρ τὰ αὐτῶν ζητοῦσιν, οὐ τὰ 'Ιησοῦ Χριστοῦ' – Others who have been close to Paul simply are not caring as much anymore about both the Messiah and the followers of the Messiah. Paul is not explicit, but these people's concern must be either pagan idolatry or erroneous Judaism.

⁵² τὴν δὲ δοκιμὴν αὐτοῦ γινώσκετε, ὅτι ὡς πατρὶ τέκνον σὺν ἐμοὶ ἐδούλευσεν εἰς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον – Timothy has clearly demonstrated his faithfulness to the NT message by his genuine care for Paul as the apostle to the Gentiles and to remain in accordance with both his thinking and his obedience to God.

⁵³ τοῦτον μὲν οὖν ἐλπίζω πέμψαι ὡς ἂν ἀφίδω τὰ περὶ ἐμὲ ἐξαυτῆς – Perhaps Paul thinks that an imperial decision regarding him and his case is about to happen soon. Or there may be something else that Paul wants to find about. In either case, he wants to wait until he gets more information about his own situation before he sends Timothy to the Philippians. Then, he can send him without his needing him instead.

⁵⁴ πέποιθα δὲ ἐν κυρίῳ ὅτι καὶ αὐτὸς ταχέως ἐλεύσομαι – As Paul stated with confidence in 1:25-26, he has become convinced that Nero really will release him, resulting in his hopefully being able to travel to Philippi in person and to help them in their belief and being unified in what message to which they adhere.

⁵⁵ Αναγκαῖον δὲ ἡγήσάμην Ἐπαφρόδιτον τὸν ἀδελφὸν καὶ συνεργὸν καὶ συστρατιώτην μου, ὑμῶν δὲ ἀπόστολον καὶ λειτουργὸν τῆς χρείας μου, πέμψαι πρὸς ὑμᾶς – Before Paul sends Timothy, he simply cannot wait to get some information to the Philippians about especially Epaphroditus, who, as one of their own, had brought the financial gift from them (their "apostle" and "minister" to his "need") and, subsequently, became so ill that he almost died. The Philippians had found out about Epaphroditus' illness and had also very distressed by it. Therefore, once Epaphroditus recovered, Paul considered it only right that he return to Philippi so that he could show them that he was completely healthy again and alive.

Obviously, Epaphroditus is also carrying this letter with him.

⁵⁶ ἐπειδὴ ἐπιποθὼν ἦν 'πάντας ὑμᾶς' καὶ ἀδελφόνων, διότι ἠκούσατε ὅτι ἡσθένησεν – Epaphroditus truly wanted to go home and show his fellow Philippians that he had recovered from this near-death experience when he was ill, so that they could be comforted by this news and he could be comforted by providing them with this news.

⁵⁷ καὶ γὰρ ἡσθένησεν παραπλήσιον 'θανάτῳ' ἀλλὰ ὁ θεὸς ἠλέησεν αὐτόν, οὐκ αὐτὸν δὲ μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐμέ, ἵνα μὴ λύπην ἐπὶ λύπην σχῶ – Even Paul was, from a human standpoint, going to grieve deeply if Epaphroditus died, even though he knew that Epaphroditus would thus gain eternal life. Because of the way God has designed us in the present realm, the humanly natural thing is to rejoice in the salvation and eternal life of a dear departed one, while also grieving their loss in the present realm. Neither response should be avoided, especially if the apostle Paul experienced both.

⁵⁸ σπουδαιότερως οὖν ἔπεμψα αὐτόν, ἵνα ἰδόντες αὐτόν πάλιν χαρήτε κἀγὼ ἀλυπότερος ὦ – Paul was also anxious about the effect on the Philippian Christians of the bad news about Epaphroditus. Who knows, but his concern may have even been that they would think twice about sending him a gift, or helping anyone else for that matter, the next time someone was in need if it resulted in the death of their messenger. I certainly could see them saying, "Thanks a lot God, for responding to our generosity this way—by causing us so much grief." Clearly, Epaphroditus was as well-respected and well-liked member of the Philippian Christian community.

⁵⁹ προσδέχεσθε οὖν αὐτόν ἐν κυρίῳ μετὰ πάσης χαρᾶς καὶ τοὺς τοιούτους ἐντίμους ἔχετε – Does Paul really need to say this? Of course they will welcome him with joy. But it seems that Paul's emphasis is on pointing them to God and the fact that He is doing all this. Their joy is not merely because Epaphroditus is still alive. But it is because God exists and is operating within the created reality according to His own sovereign plans, which at this point includes keeping Epaphroditus alive for everyone's sake.

⁶⁰ ὅτι διὰ τὸ ἔργον 'Χριστοῦ' μέχρι θανάτου ἡγγισεν 'παραβολευσάμενος τῇ ψυχῇ, ἵνα ἀναπληρώσῃ τὸ ὑμῶν ὑστέρημα τῆς πρὸς με λειτουργίας – Paul is not explicit as to exactly how Epaphroditus "came close to dying for the work of the Messiah." Perhaps, he contracted some life-threatening illness on his way to Rome. Or maybe some people threatened him with death for his faith in Jesus as the Messiah. Unfortunately, we just do not know the details. But in the midst of considering all Christians as equals so that none of them looks at himself as superior to others, the Philippians can hold Epaphroditus in high regard because of his willingness to risk his life for the Messiah. Paul also says that Epaphroditus has made up for what is lacking in the Philippians' serving him, but this cannot be a negative thing. After all, they sent him a very nice financial gift. In Colossians 1:4, Paul speaks similarly of his suffering being that which "fills up what is lacking in the Messiah's suffering." But was Jesus' suffering really not enough, so that he should have suffered more, and then Paul would not have to suffer? Absolutely not. Therefore, this must be some sort of idiomatic expression regarding someone's (the Philippians towards Paul or Paul towards the Colossians) doing something like that which someone else has done (Jesus' sacrifice of himself on the cross for

sinner) in such a way that it does contribute to the overall effect of what the initial person had done (encouragement and upbuilding in the message of the gospel of Jesus the Messiah).

It is not that Jesus' dying on the cross truly fell short of a total amount of suffering that was necessary for him to endure, but that Paul's suffering and the Philippians' sacrificial financial gift to Paul is right in line with Jesus' suffering, and historically, according to God's eternal plans and purposes, imitates Jesus' suffering and continues carrying out God's plans as they pertain to Jesus' suffering. Another example, here, is that Epaphroditus suffered in the midst of carrying out the plans of the Philippians, who sacrificed some of their income, to send a gift to Paul and meet his needs. So it is not really that the Philippians' service of Paul fell short of some measure of fullness, but that Epaphroditus truly got to participate in their serving him by actually going through a kind of suffering (that almost cost him his life) in the midst of carrying out their plans.

⁶¹ Το λοιπόν, ἀδελφοί μου, χαίρετε ἐν κυρίῳ. τὰ αὐτὰ γράφειν ὑμῖν ἐμοὶ μὲν οὐκ ὀκνηρόν, ὑμῖν δὲ ἰσχυρόν – The first part of this verse is the beginning of the conclusion to what Paul has been talking about in the previous section. He simply encourages the Philippians to rejoice in who God is and what He is doing with respect to their ultimate destiny—eternal life. He is faithfully bringing it about for them through Jesus the Messiah according to the apostolic message which Paul has three times presented to them. Therefore, they can and should rejoice in both his difficult circumstances and theirs, and theirs include the circumstances of Epaphroditus where he almost died, but God has spared his life so far. In other words, joy is always the proper response to the gospel in contrast to having to grind out obedience to the Mosaic Covenant according to erroneous Judaism.

The second part of this verse is the end of the conclusion in which Paul declares that he is writing “the same things” which he has spoken to them in person. And Paul also states that this “is no trouble” for him. I think he means that he is willing to repeat the apostolic message as many times as he needs to in order for people to understand it better and persevere in their belief in it and only it so that they do not mix any error with it such as that which he is about to describe in the rest of chapter 3.

Paul also says that his repeating the gospel in this letter means “that which is certain” (ἰσχυρόν – nom. sing. neut.) for his readers. Again, this is in contrast to anything else they might hear and be tempted to believe.

⁶² Βλέπετε τοὺς κύνας, βλέπετε τοὺς κακοὺς ἐργάτας, βλέπετε τὴν κατατομήν – Next, Paul very bluntly and abruptly launches into a strong criticism of those who I think are Jews who are claiming to be followers of Jesus as the Messiah (like those in 2 Corinthians, Galatians, and Colossians), while also erroneously focusing on the Mosaic Covenant, especially its ritual commandments.

The irony is that Jews typically call Gentiles dogs. Paul reverses this and refers to the false teachers among the Jews with this label. In his assessment, they are also evil workers, laboring to present the biblical message from a position of evil and not righteousness, meaning from a position of only their sinfulness without a changed heart by the Spirit of God. These Jews must be referring to their own circumcision as that which demonstrates their proper obedience to the God and is in line with the Mosaic Covenant, which in turn for them is the necessary condition for their receiving God's mercy and eternal life (cf. v. 9). But Paul sarcastically says that they have been badly circumcised, meaning that their *hearts* have not been circumcised by God's Spirit as is required by even the Mosaic Covenant even if their parents properly followed God's commandment to Abraham in Genesis 17 to have all male babies circumcised eight days after their birth (cf. Deuteronomy 10:16; Deuteronomy 30).

⁶³ ἡμεῖς γὰρ ἔσμεν ἡ περιτομή, οἱ πνεύματι ἰσχυροὶ λατρεύοντες καὶ καυχώμενοι ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ καὶ οὐκ ἐν σαρκὶ πεποιθότες – Now Paul takes the Jewish terminology “the circumcision,” which the Jews certainly use for good reasons to refer to their entire ethnic group because of obeying the commandment of male circumcision which God gave them through Abraham in Genesis 17, and he uses it to refer to only Timothy and him as true apostles and teachers of the gospel of Jesus as the Messiah. He says that Timothy and he are the ones who can properly call themselves “the circumcision,” so that in contrast to the words τὴν κατατομήν in the previous verse, these words ἡ περιτομή can be translated “the well circumcised.”

Paul then goes on to say that Timothy and he serve God “by means of the Spirit of God” (οἱ πνεύματι ἰσχυροὶ λατρεύοντες), referring to what God through His Spirit has done inside them by changing their hearts and causing them to become authentic believers in Jesus as the crucified Messiah, so that whatever they do as an act of worship and service before God is graciously caused by God through the work of His Spirit within them.

Paul then says that they “boast in the Messiah Jesus” (καυχώμενοι ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ), indicating that Timothy and he recognize that Jesus with his death, resurrection, and role as king and priest is the only proper basis (along with their belief in him as the appropriate indication of the necessary condition of their having divinely changed hearts) for their receiving God's promise of eternal life and forgiveness—in contrast to the false teachers who are promoting the Mosaic Covenant as the basis of salvation and obedience to it as the necessary condition.

Consequently, Timothy and Paul acknowledge their complete inability to do anything in and of themselves which pleases God, so that he says that they “put no confidence in the flesh” (οὐκ ἐν σαρκὶ πεποιθότες). Again he must be referring to the perspective of the Jewish false teachers who count on their *external* obedience to the Mosaic Covenant, not on either God's grace or Jesus' advocacy through his death, to gain God's blessings of mercy and eternal life.

Therefore, these false teachers are also probably thinking that they are making themselves worthy of God's blessings through their covenant obedience, a perspective that Paul either implies or refers to directly in other letters and that he indicates is a natural effect of an unchanged heart which focuses on religious rituals and ceremonies in a person's

relationship with God.

But Paul and Timothy have made a dramatic switch from living according to their “flesh” to living according to the “Spirit of God,” from looking to their human produced *external* qualifications for God’s blessings to what God Himself has produced *within them* through the work of His Spirit.

⁶⁴ καίπερ ἐγὼ ἔχων πεποιθήσιν καὶ ἐν σαρκί. Εἴ τις δοκεῖ ἄλλος πεποιθέναι ἐν σαρκί, ἐγὼ μᾶλλον – When it comes to *external* qualities or characteristics that could possibly qualify a Jew for God’s blessings, Paul says that no one can top his list.

⁶⁵ περὶ τοῦ ὀκταήμερου, ἐκ γένους Ἰσραὴλ, φυλῆς Βενιαμίν, Ἑβραῖος ἐξ Ἑβραίων, κατὰ νόμον Φαρισαῖος – The list of Paul’s qualities by which he could think of himself as deserving God’s blessings begins with his parents’ having obeyed the Torah exactly by having him circumcised the eighth day after he was born (cf. Genesis 17:1-9-14). It is important to realize that circumcision was neither initiated nor stated extensively within the Mosaic Covenant. It was part of the Abrahamic Covenant in Genesis 17 and then commanded in one verse in Leviticus 12:3 in conjunction with a woman’s giving birth. This, then, makes it something which is required first for a Jew’s becoming a participant in the first promise of the Abrahamic Covenant when this ethnic group will become a “great nation.” And, according to the same kind of thinking, it also is a requirement for a Jew (and any Gentile) acquiring the fulfillment of the second promise of eternal life.

The next item on Paul’s “make me worthy of God’s blessings” list is that he is a true Israelite, a member of the people to whom God chose to include as part of His promises to Abraham in Genesis 12 and to whom He gave the very distinctive commandments of the Mosaic Covenant. He is therefore a descendant of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob. Next on Paul’s list is that he is of the same tribe as King Saul, the first king of Israel, even though it is the smallest tribe. This is the tribe of Benjamin.

Next that he is a Hebrew from Hebrews, which probably is not that much different from his being a pure Jew and of the nation of Israel and intent on obeying God as any Jew should.

He is also a Pharisee, someone who holds strictly to both the written and oral commandments of and derived from the Mosaic Covenant respectively. He is implying by this that he is all about obeying God as a true Jew who is committed to manifesting himself as a *bona fide* member of the chosen people of God, which the false teachers consider to be that which both Jews and Gentiles must do in order to gain God’s blessings of eternal life through Jesus as the Messiah. In their minds, everyone must become a Jew in order to be pleasing to God and participate in the “great nation” of Abraham’s physical descendants and in eternal life of people who imitate Abraham in his obedience of God (both in his faith according to Genesis 15:6 and in his circumcision according to Genesis 17), while also believing that Jesus is the Jewish Messiah. Thus, Gentiles must join the Jews in everything which God has required of them and not stand alone as if they can believe and obey Jesus without also obeying Moses.

⁶⁶ κατὰ ῥῆλος διώκων τὴν ἐκκλησίαν ὁ, κατὰ δικαιοσύνην τὴν ἐν νόμῳ γεόμενος ἄμεμπτος – In this next verse, Paul continues the list of his external qualities by which he could potentially deserve God’s blessings—if this were the way to acquire them. Like the previous characteristics, I think that these two were something Paul could point to before he became an authentic believer and Christian.

Three options for the first one—1) Paul pursued building the community of authentic believers in Jesus as the Messiah, thus making him a prime example of a good apostle of God’s central idea of putting forth Jesus as king and priest; 2) Paul persecuted and tried to destroy the Christian movement, which was distracting people from the Law of God because of its focus on Jesus as the Messiah, thus referring to his zealous desire to uphold the primacy of the Mosaic Covenant as it would appear from the OT that it is important for any Jew to do; 3) Paul pursued building the group of people who would be qualified for both Abrahamic promises, but of course he was doing so from the standpoint that everybody had to be truly “Jewish” in order to participate in this group.

Probably only one good option for the second one—from an external standpoint, he was doing everything he could according to the 613 commandments of the Mosaic Covenant, thus *in his mind* (but not according to God) making himself a moral and good person before God. This is similar to what Paul says in [Romans 9:30](#) What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue (τὰ μὴ διώκοντα) righteousness [justification], attained righteousness [justification], even the righteousness [justification] which is by faith; [31](#) but Israel, pursuing (διώκων) a law of righteousness [justification], did not arrive at that law. [32](#) Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as though it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone.

Since all these are things which Paul says he can boast about as what by putting confidence in his flesh, I think that #3 is correct for the first characteristic in this verse, and that he really believed that he was blameless before God for his obedience to the Mosaic Covenant. He was putting this much confidence in his “flesh,” instead of recognizing that he was unwilling to be humble and face into the depth of his sinfulness and rely strictly on the grace of God for anything which he did that would be acceptable to God.

Notice the above uses of διώκω in Romans 9:30-32 which clearly mean “pursue” and not “persecute.”

⁶⁷ [Ἀλλὰ] ἅτινα ἔργα μοι κέρδη, ταῦτα ἡγήμαι διὰ τὸν Χριστὸν ζημίαν – Paul originally thought that his human obedience to the Mosaic Covenant would gain him the profit of God’s blessings. However, once he faced squarely into the gospel and what God has declared as good news through the Messiah, especially, we can assume, regarding the Messiah’s death by crucifixion and then his resurrection and ascension, he realized that his strictly human obedience to the Mosaic Covenant could produce only the loss of blessings and salvation from God, because there is nothing that he

can do of his own accord that commends him to God.

Instead, it is simple belief in and obedience to Jesus as the Messiah (by means of the inward work of the Spirit of God) which is the necessary condition for obtaining God's blessings. This is because the Messiah with his death, resurrection, and ascension is the basis of any sinner's salvation, whether Jew or Gentile. Paul knows now that he is too profoundly and incurably evil to please God in and of himself, whether or not he is trying to please Him within the context of the Mosaic Covenant given to the Jews. Therefore, Jesus (along with God's grace) is the very basis for his salvation, and belief in Jesus is the necessary condition which God requires in order for him to obtain God's blessings and promises.

⁶⁸ ἀλλὰ μενοῦνγε ὁκαὶ ἡγοῦμαι πάντα ζημίαν εἶναι διὰ τὸ ὑπερέχον τῆς γνώσεως ὁ Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ τοῦ κυρίου μου, δι' ὃν τὰ πάντα ἐζημιώθην, καὶ ἡγοῦμαι σκύβαλα ὅτι, ἵνα Χριστὸν κερδήσω – This verse is not saying too much more than the previous verse, that Paul understands that anything which a sinful human being might want to point to as that which commends him to God, including of course his external qualities as an ethnic, Covenant-obedient Jew are absolute garbage in comparison to knowing and believing in Jesus as his Messiah. The centrality of Jesus to God's plans and purposes for rescuing sinners from His wrath and destruction cannot be overstated. A person can give up everything else in his life, but if he still has Jesus by virtue of his authentic belief and obedience to God, then he has eternal forgiveness and life in the coming Kingdom of God.

⁶⁹ καὶ εὐρεθὼ ἐν αὐτῷ, μὴ ἔχων ἐμὴν δικαιοσύνην τὴν ἐκ νόμου ἀλλὰ τὴν διὰ πίστεως Χριστοῦ, τὴν ἐκ θεοῦ δικαιοσύνην ἐπὶ τῇ πίστει – Paul thought that he had found through his own innate obedience to the Mosaic Covenant the way to being declared forgiven by God, but now he knows that he was wrong. It is only through belief in Jesus as the Messiah which has been brought about by the inward word of the Spirit of God that a person can be declared forgiven by God. This is why he boasts in Jesus the Messiah and not in any outward obedience to the Mosaic Covenant which he has performed (cf. 3:3).

Thus, Paul desires more to be found in association with Jesus the Messiah than in association with the Mosaic Covenant, regardless of how well he has obeyed the latter (which is not very well, because his obedience had all been by virtue of his human effort and not God's grace. It is important to remember that he is saying all this within the context of encouraging the Philippian Christians to be careful of the false teachers among the Jews who are promoting an erroneous Judaism in contrast to the information of Jesus as the Messiah.

⁷⁰ τοῦ γινῶναι αὐτὸν καὶ τὴν δύναμιν τῆς ἀναστάσεως αὐτοῦ καὶ ὅτι τὴν κοινωνίαν ὁ παθημάτων αὐτοῦ, συμμορφιζόμενος τῷ θανάτῳ αὐτοῦ – Paul's purpose in his relationship with God is to know the Messiah and to live a life in this world that reflects his knowing him, i.e., by experiencing the same kind of suffering which comes from being rejected by the world and by looking forward to Jesus' acting out his role of advocate at the judgment for him. This is because Paul "conforms to [Jesus'] death" by facing into and acknowledging the depth of his sinfulness whereby it requires God's grace to cause him to do anything that is pleasing to God, such as believing in Jesus as the Messiah.

The death of Jesus on the cross was a loud sermon by God and Jesus to effect that we all deserve eternal death for our disobedience. And when we face into this fact, confess our sins, and repent by repudiating the sin in our lives and seeking to do what is good and right, we are conforming ourselves to Jesus' death and the message of the cross.

⁷¹ εἴ πως καταστήσω εἰς τὴν ἐξανάστασιν ἑμὴν ἐκ νεκρῶν – Paul hopes and expects that all his belief in Jesus as Messiah, advocate, and basis for receiving God's blessing of eternal life will result in his rising from the dead and being transformed into a morally perfect and immortal person (cf. 1 Corinthians 15, 1 Thessalonians 4, and Revelation 20). This will constitute his surviving the judgment of God with Jesus as his priest and intercessor.

It is not as though Paul is denying the possibility of the rapture which he describes in 1 Thessalonians 4, but I think that he is either implying that it is much more likely that God raise him from the dead because of the long period of time between Jesus' appearances as mentioned by Jesus himself in the Olivet Discourse, or simply hitchhiking off what he just said about Jesus' resurrection in the previous verse while also choosing resurrection from the dead as the ultimate act of God of rescuing believers since it is just that much more dramatic than even lifting a living person from the earth and into the air.

⁷² Οὐχ ὅτι ἤδη ἔλαβον ὃ ἤδη τετελείωμαι, διόκω δὲ εἰ ὁκαὶ καταλάβω, ἐφ' ᾧ καὶ κατελήμφθην ὑπὸ Χριστοῦ ὅτι [Ἰησοῦ] – We should notice that the word "it" is not explicitly expressed by Paul in this verse, but it makes the most sense that he is referring to the goal of obtaining the "resurrection of the dead" that will mean eternal life in the Kingdom of God with Jesus.

Paul does not state explicitly why he has to say this, but I think that he is doing two things. First, he is implying a level of complacency in the Jewish false teachers who emphasize adherence to especially the ritual commandments of the Mosaic Covenant, that by obeying these commandments people, especially Jews, can relax and know that God is so pleased with them that they will receive all His promised blessings. However, the problem is that they are ignoring the depth of their sin and placing too much confidence in their "flesh" as Paul talked about in vs. 2-6.

Second, Paul is emphasizing God's sovereign grace as the key and only possible dynamic and mechanism by which he can "attain to the resurrection of the dead" (v. 11). This is God's "basis [on] which [he] also was reached by the Messiah Jesus." God by His predestined grace worked within Paul to make him an authentic believer. And Paul by God's predestined grace continues to pursue obedience to God's moral commandments as the necessary condition of obtaining eternal life. As a result, he can keep "pursuing" his goal of resurrection, knowing that he will reach it—again,

not because of his own self-efforts in accordance with the teaching by the Jewish false teachers of erroneous Judaism, but because of God alone, who has chosen and predestined him to become an authentic believer and eventually acquire eternal forgiveness and life in the future Kingdom of God.

Therefore, Paul assures the Philippians that he himself is in no way complacent about his sin and how Christianity works and has not yet experienced the ultimate goal of his life, being raised from the dead and acquiring moral perfection and immortality. Nevertheless, he is actively making choices which demonstrate that he is pursuing this goal on the same basis as the Messiah's becoming the most important reality in his life, i.e., the basis of God's grace (he is implying). He must also mean God's grace along with God's sovereign choice to extend mercy to him, because there is no other basis except the Messiah's death by which a sinful human being becomes a genuine believer in Jesus as the Messiah. Just as Paul said earlier in this letter that God is accomplishing all the desiring and working towards eternal life within the Philippian Christians (1:6), He is doing the same through His grace in Paul so that he can pursue his goal, i.e., he can work out his own salvation with fear and trembling (cf. 2:12,13) and eventually obtain that salvation. I think that it makes a lot more sense to translate τετελείωμαι as "I have already myself reached by goal" than the way the NAS95 translates it "I have already become perfect." The context is all about attaining resurrection from death, which certainly will result in believers becoming morally perfect and is also Paul's goal. And this goal is in contrast to the one which the Jewish false teachers believe they have already obtained, which is making themselves worthy of God's promised blessings by their Jewish heritage and outward adherence to the Mosaic Covenant. In other words, false religious systems such as erroneous Judaism, religious Christianity, and any other kind of religion other than that presented in the Bible give people the impression that they have reached their goal by conforming their outward behavior to the religious system. Christianity, on the other hand, presents the only goal as that of "attaining to the resurrection of the dead" and thereby encourages and motivates authentic Christians to continue striving for it through the perseverance of their belief and obedience to God's moral commandments, especially that of loving one's fellow Christians as the NT consistently mentions.

⁷³ ἀδελφοί, ἐγὼ ἐμαυτὸν ὅτι λογίζομαι κατελιγμένον· ἐν δὲ, τὰ μὲν ὀπίσω ἐπιλανθανόμενος τοῖς δὲ ἔμπροσθεν ἐπεκτεινόμενος – Regardless of what Paul has experienced in the past, especially (in this context) his numerous external qualities of being an ethnic, Covenant-obedient Jew, by which he originally believed he could obtain God's promised blessings, he sees these as in the past and worthless to his personal project of appropriately obtaining God's eternal mercy and life and now looks only forward in his life, striving by God's grace to be obedient in the future in line with God's moral commandments so that he may acquire the promise of God's blessing of participating in the eternal Kingdom of God. This constitutes "the things that are ahead of" Paul.

⁷⁴ κατὰ σκοπὸν διώκω· εἰς τὸ βραβεῖον τῆς ἄνω κλήσεως· τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ – Because Paul has mentioned only resurrection from the dead and not the rapture, I think it makes sense to interpret "the upward call of God" as being raised from the dead. Therefore, according to this particular "goal" (σκοπὸν), he is pressing on towards this prize (τὸ βραβεῖον).

If Jesus were to return while Paul is still alive, he would still hear God's call to him to rise from the earth and join Jesus in the air for the purpose of participating in the eternal Kingdom of God. But the context lends itself more to interpreting Paul as still referring to resurrection from the dead in the light of Jesus' resurrection. Thus, if Paul dies before Jesus' return, his call to him would also be an "upward" one, i.e., rising from the grave so to speak, which is probably more what Paul means in this context (cf. 3:11). Consequently, "upward" is a metaphorical direction even if God recreates the existence of perished believers and they return in a downward fashion with Jesus as Paul seems to imply in 1 Thessalonians 4.

And this is all "in the Messiah Jesus," i.e., for Paul to be in association with him as an authentic believer.

⁷⁵ Ὅσοι οὖν τέλειοι, τοῦτο ὀφρονῶμεν· καὶ εἴ τι ἐτέρως φρονεῖτε, καὶ τοῦτο ὁ θεὸς ὑμῖν ἀποκαλύψει – Because Paul has been talking about striving to reach his goal of resurrection from the dead and eternal life, I think that it makes sense to translate τέλειοι as "want to reach the goal," i.e., people who are mature and settled enough in their inwardness, because they have been genuinely changed by the Spirit of God and have heard of God's eternal mercy through the Messiah, that they are always wanting to continue towards the goal of eternal life and never think that they can relax completely as though their goal has been reached in this present life. Certainly, this word does not mean "perfect" as the NAS95 translates it. It refers to the goal of a Christian the same way that the verb τετελείωμαι does in v. 12.

Paul urges all who are thus characterized to think the way he does with respect to life and eternity. He also says that if there are those who authentically want this goal but who have gotten a bit off track in their thinking on this subject, God will get them back on the right track, implying that this is what God's faithfulness to His people is partially all about. Genuine believers in the Messiah will tend towards thinking correctly and biblically by the grace of God as they navigate through life. But they will not always do so, just as they will not always act in a moral and good manner, because they are human and still sinners. Nevertheless, God is committed to keeping authentic Christians on track and will even correct their thinking along the way as He sees fit and according to His sovereignty and timing and to the degree which He wants. In other words, some Christians will grasp the truth better than others, but they will all grasp it to some extent which is far better than the Jewish false teachers of their religious system, and by extrapolation than any teachers of some other erroneous, religious system.

⁷⁶ πλὴν εἰς ὃ ἑφθάσαμεν, τῷ αὐτῷ στοιχεῖν – This verse is difficult to translate, but perhaps Paul is saying that true believers in the Messiah will operate in their lives on the basis of the same dynamics which are true for Paul and Timothy, the dynamics of the initiating work of the Spirit of God according to God's gracious intent to rescue from eternal condemnation the people whom He has chosen. They have already attained to a position of having a changed heart by this dynamic. Now they should strive to reach their goal by the same dynamic of the Spirit of God, not by the dynamic of outwardly obeying the Mosaic Covenant by means of their human self-efforts as a necessary condition.

⁷⁷ Συμμιμηταὶ μου γίνεσθε, ἀδελφοί, καὶ σκοπεῖτε τοὺς οὕτω περιπατοῦντας καθὼς ἔχετε τύπον ἡμᾶς – Paul is a genuine apostle of Jesus the Messiah, and Timothy is his legitimate co-worker, so that both are certainly living their lives according to the dynamic of God's grace, which is working within them through His Spirit and on the basis of God's faithfulness to His promises. Therefore, Paul has no problem referring to Timothy and himself as good examples of people who are thinking and living in a manner which is in line with the biblical teaching in regard to those who attain to God's blessings of eternal mercy and life in the Kingdom of God. As a result, he urges the Philippian Christians to follow their example and model their thinking and choices after them.

Obviously, this is a bold encouragement on Paul's part. But his firm belief in the truth which he understands and is living allows him to speak humbly in this way to the Philippians. Any of the rest of us could also, but we would need to make sure that we grasp the apostolic message very, very well, and that we are seeking to be as committed to it as Paul and Timothy were. This is a tall order and probably to be avoided. The better tact to take is to point people to Paul and encourage them to imitate him.

⁷⁸ πολλοὶ γὰρ περιπατοῦσιν οὕς πολλάκις ἔλεγον ὑμῖν, νῦν δὲ καὶ κλαίων λέγω, τὸ τοὺς ἐχθροὺς τοῦ σταυροῦ τοῦ Χριστοῦ – Paul states explicitly that there are many people like the Jewish false teachers of 3:2 who are not following their example and who operate in their relationship with God according to the opposite dynamics. He describes them as “enemies of the cross of the Messiah,” because they are not understanding Jesus' death correctly—as a complete repudiation of people's ability to please God by their own obedience to Him, i.e., by drawing from their “flesh” in order to do so.

As a result, they have not acknowledged their own inherent and incurable evil to the effect that they have truly cried out to God for His mercy on the basis of both His grace and Jesus' advocacy. The divine irony though is that this can occur only if God causes it to by the inner work of His Spirit.

⁷⁹ ὃν τὸ τέλος ἀπώλεια, ὃν ὁ θεὸς ἡ κοιλία καὶ ἡ δόξα ἐν τῇ αἰσχύνῃ αὐτῶν, οἱ τὰ ἐπίγεια φρονοῦντες – Paul finishes his description of those who are wrongly oriented in how they are living their lives in obedience to God by saying that the outcome of their existences will not be eternal life. It will be the opposite. God will destroy them according to His justice and condemnation.

Paul also describes these people as following their inner appetites, desires, and passions, which obviously are at odds with God's moral commandments and overall message even of obeying Him from a changed heart and not from one's own human and immoral inner resources. The result is that they feel good about themselves because of actions which hide their guilty conscience and the depth of their sinfulness, even when these actions are an attempt to obey the Mosaic Covenant, but from a completely erroneous (and therefore rebellious) perspective. They also “set their minds on earthly things,” meaning they are committed to a worldly way of living that is the opposite of a heavenly way of living, which would correctly take into account everything God is saying about Himself and sinful human beings that requires His grace to do what is right both inwardly and externally.

These people are completely content in the religious systems which they are following on this present earth and who glory in them, when they are still not facing into the guilt of their sin and repenting of it before God.

⁸⁰ ἡμῶν γὰρ τὸ πολίτευμα ἐν οὐρανοῖς ὑπάρχει, ἐξ οὗ καὶ σωτήρια ἀπεκδεχόμεθα κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν – Paul now refers to actual government from which his passport so to speak has been issued. It is not a temporary government in the present realm. It is a future, permanent government which has its origin in God (“in the heavens”), and it will be from this government that Jesus will come when he returns to set up the first stage of the eternal Kingdom of God called the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20. Jesus will save and rescue from God's eternal condemnation and destruction (cf. 3:19) those who have embraced him as lord and king, i.e., the Messiah and Anointed One from the line of David and High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek (cf. Hebrews 7).

With the use of the verb ὑπάρχει = exists, τὸ πολίτευμα is a metonymy where the concept of citizenship refers to the place where Paul and believers will rightly dwell in the future, i.e., in the eternal Kingdom of God. They will not be illegal aliens. They will have qualified for citizenship in the Kingdom of God by virtue of the perseverance of their belief in God and in Jesus.

1 Peter 1:4 to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved [having been kept] in heaven (τετηρημένην ἐν οὐρανοῖς) for you.

⁸¹ ὃς μετασχηματίζει τὸ σῶμα τῆς ταπεινώσεως ἡμῶν τὸν σύμμορφον τῷ σώματι τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ κατὰ τὴν ἐνέργειαν τοῦ δύνασθαι αὐτὸν καὶ ὑποτάξαι τῷ αὐτῷ τὰ πάντα – This is an interesting way of referring to what Jesus will do for genuine believers, because Paul has first talked about attaining to the resurrection of the dead where there will clearly be no body in existence because it will have decayed in the grave. Now he writes as though believers will be alive and have bodies which Jesus will cause some kind of moral conversion to take place by making them morally perfect. Therefore, this must be Paul's way of saying the same thing as in 1 Thessalonians 4 about both those believers who have died before Jesus return and those who are still alive at his reappearance—that they receive the same

outcome of their belief, which is to gain eternal life and moral perfection. Jesus by God the Father's activity through him will take the "humble," sinful, and mortal body of believers and change it into a glorious (awesome, magnificent, wonderful, being imagination, standing out from what existed before), morally perfect, and eternal body like his own. And this change of bodies for believers will be in line with Jesus' other job of destroying the army which has invaded Israel with the intent to annihilate the Jews and restoring the Kingdom of Israel while also ruling over the entire world, thus exerting himself "powerfully" and subjecting "everyone to himself." In other words, I think that it makes more sense to translate τὰ πάντα as "everyone" instead of "all things," so that Paul is referring to the whole inhabited world which Jesus will rule during the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20.

Like the miracles Jesus performed at his first coming when the transcendent Father powerfully worked through him, Jesus will also perform the miracle of transforming existing (or raised from the dead) sinful human beings of authentic belief who have become humble in their acknowledgement of their sinfulness and condition of deserving God's justice and destruction into people whose bodies are gloriously and awesomely morally perfect and immortal like Jesus' own body now. It is not that these people will no longer be humble, but that they will no longer be humbled by their evil condition and the death which they await unless Jesus returns and changes them.

⁸² Ὡστε, ἀδελφοί μου ἀγαπητοὶ καὶ ἐπιτόθιοι, χαρὰ καὶ στέφανός μου, οὕτως στήκετε ἐν κυρίῳ, ἡ ἀγαπητοί – In the first part of this verse, Paul ends his discussion of the false teachers and the importance of persevering in the apostolic message of God's grace and Jesus as the crucified Messiah by urging the Philippian Christians to stand firm in their belief in Jesus with all that he means as their king and priest and the implications of this for how they live out the rest of their lives on earth by pursuing making choices according to God's grace and his definition of morality—as opposed to trusting their "flesh" and outward qualities and actions to commend themselves to God.

Paul also calls the Philippian Christians his "joy and crown" because of the effect that their having become followers and remaining followers of Jesus over the course of perhaps ten years or so has had on him emotionally. As a result, he can wear them as a sort of wreath of victory because his labor among them will result in their obtaining God's eternal mercy and life. They will be his award and prize for running the race of fulfilling his responsibility as the apostle to the Gentiles in the city of Philippi.

I think that the word ἀγαπητοί is the beginning of Paul's next statement of encouragement to the entire Philippian Christian community and specifically the two women of v. 2.

⁸³ Εὐδοίαν παρακαλῶ καὶ Συντύχην παρακαλῶ τὸ αὐτὸ φρονεῖν ἐν κυρίῳ – Apparently, there is some disagreement between these two women (maybe that one is embracing the apostolic message while the other is being wrongly influenced by the Jewish false teachers), and Paul, having heard about their sharp disagreement that is probably causing a lot of disruption within the Christian community, urges them to unite in their understanding and pursuit of the gospel. Εὐδοίαν comes from εὖ = well or good and ὁδός = way. Her name means "good way."

Συντύχην comes from συν = with and τύχην = the condition of happening without human intervention or control, i.e., from fortune in pagan ideology or from God in biblical theology. Her name, therefore, means "that which happens by chance only."

⁸⁴ καὶ ἐρωτῶ καὶ σέ, γνήσιε ῥύζυγε, συλλαμβάνου αὐταῖς, αἵτινες ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ συνήθλησάν μοι μετὰ καὶ Κλήμεντος καὶ τῶν λοιπῶν συνεργῶν μου, ὧν τὰ ὀνόματα ἐν βίβλῳ ζωῆς – My guess is that the singular you does not have to refer to only one person, but it could refer as an idiomatic expression to the entire Philippian community, indicating that Paul expects them to be so united in their belief in the Messiah and love for God that they act as if they were an individual person.

Paul states that these women have previously been very helpful to him in his apostolic responsibilities, as has a man by the name of Clement, who most likely is also a member (indeed, elder?) of the Philippian Christian community. Thus, he wants all the Christians, because they are his fellow-workers in encouraging one another to help these women to be united in their pursuing of truth and morality, thus making the entire group united in such.

And these are all people whom Paul is convinced will gain eternal life, because he describes them as those "whose names are in the book of life."

This is the only use in the NT of the phrase "book of life," except for the seven times in Revelation.

Luke 10:20 "Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven."

Revelation 20:12 And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds.

Revelation 21:27 and nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life. [and five other verses in Revelation]

⁸⁵ Χαίρετε ἐν κυρίῳ πάντοτε· ἄλλιν ἐρῶ, χαίρετε – Paul exhorts the Philippians to adopt an attitude of rejoicing as they look forward to God's finishing the process of bringing about the eternal Kingdom of God under Jesus' leadership when he returns. The importance of a believer's expressing his joy in his future and eternal life is so great that Paul repeats the exhortation.

⁸⁶ τὸ ἐπιεικὲς ὅμων γνωσθήτω πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις. ὁ κύριος ἐγγύς – Paul also urges that the Philippians be people who are gentle and tolerant of all other people in the midst of their sin, not harshly demanding (like the false Jewish teachers most likely) that they conform to their understanding of the gospel, morality, and life, but obviously leaving it up to

God to convince people of their sin and change them to the Philippians' way of thinking and behaving. Certainly, this requires a deep trust in God and His sovereign plan for the world and for each individual, so that these Philippian Christians would not demand to have their way in everything. In this manner, the Philippians will present a different face to the world, different from selfish, demanding, and harsh people who have chosen to make the things of this world primary in their lives.

In addition, he says that "the Lord is near," which is a reference either to time or to position and location. For example, 1 Corinthians 7:29 says, "And I say this, brothers, the season is short (ὁ καιρὸς συνεσταλμένος ἐστίν)." Even though there is a long time between Jesus' first and second comings (cf. the Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21, nevertheless Christians could regard the time as short from a psychological standpoint. Their death will be relatively soon, and their resurrection will seem as though it is right after their death because of their being unconscious (indeed, non-existent) until Jesus' return.

But there is also [Romans 10:8](#) "But what does it say? 'THE WORD IS NEAR (ἐγγύς) YOU, IN YOUR MOUTH AND IN YOUR HEART' — that is, the word of faith which we are preaching." Here, the word refers to location. Similarly, Paul would be saying in Philippians 4:5 that God and His Messiah are near in their work of making them Christians and keeping them Christians for the purpose of their obtaining eternal life. This is to say that God is faithfully operating within them, and therefore they should rejoice in this fact. Plus, it is God's nearness by His working within them that can allow for them to be gentle towards all men. I think that this is the correct option.

Thus, from a subjective and experiential perspective in regard to what is going on inside them right now through God's grace, the Lord is near to them and faithful to them, so that these Philippian Christians should retain their focus on eternal life and not on this life and the things of this life which clamor for and demand their attention constantly. In this way, they will carry out their earthly and temporary responsibilities as well as possible while looking to the future of their eternal salvation as the most important event in their existences as created human beings—all by God's inner gracious work.

⁸⁷ μηδὲν μεριμνᾶτε, ἀλλ' ἐν παντὶ τῇ προσευχῇ καὶ τῇ δεήσει μετὰ εὐχαριστίας τὰ αἰτήματα ὑμῶν γνωρίζεσθω πρὸς τὸν θεόν – Whenever the Philippians feel anxious and need something to assuage their anxiety, Paul encourages them to pray to God for what they need, while they also thank God—for everything which He is about in regard to His promises, love, faithfulness, etc. in the midst of their anxiety. In this way, Paul is encouraging them to pray for the things of this life that help sustain their lives (food, clothing, shelter, etc.), but to do so in the midst of thanking God for all that He has already given them in the manner of His love, the Spirit in their hearts, Jesus and his death for their obtaining His eternal mercy, etc.

⁸⁸ καὶ ἡ εἰρήνη τοῦ ἰεροῦ ἢ ὑπερέχουσα πάντα νοῦν φρουρήσει τὰς καρδίας ὑμῶν καὶ τὰ νοήματα ὑμῶν ἐν Ἰησοῦ – The Greek word εἰρήνη is often used in the LXX to translate the Hebrew shalom (שָׁלוֹם). For example, Numbers 6:26, "May Yahweh lift up His countenance and give you shalom" (ἐπάροι κύριος τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ σὲ καὶ δώῃ σοι εἰρήνην). While uses of it in the OT may lean towards the meaning of peace between two parties, in Numbers 6:26 and even here in Philippians 4:7, it makes more sense to interpret it as referring to a life that ultimately will be equivalent to eternal life with its characteristics of immortality and moral perfection without suffering and pain. Therefore, Paul is saying that God's promise of this kind of existence in the eternal Kingdom of God will protect the hearts and minds of Philippian believers in the midst of the circumstances they encounter in this world, circumstances that make them anxious for the things of this life and moves them to pray to God for His help and remedy of relief from their anxiety.

Paul also includes the fact that the eternal shalom experience which God will eventually bring about for them as authentic believers is better than anything they can imagine. This, too, is what guards their minds in the midst of their belief from being overwhelmed by their anxious circumstances and destroying their belief.

And this protection takes place "in Christ Jesus," i.e., in their being associated with Jesus as the Messiah who provides us with the certainty and guarantee of eternal life through the truth of the information about him.

⁸⁹ Τὸ λοιπόν, ἀδελφοί, ὅσα ἐστὶν ἀληθῆ, ὅσα σεμνά, ὅσα δίκαια, ὅσα αγνά, ὅσα προσφιλή, ὅσα εὐφρονα, εἴ τις ἀρετὴ καὶ εἴ τις ἔπαινος ἢ, ταῦτα λογίζεσθε – And when it comes to their minds, Paul urges the Philippian Christians to make all efforts to ponder continuously those things associated with God, His goodness, His love, His magnificence, and His faithfulness and promises—all which he taught them as part of the gospel (cf. v. 9)—as that which will bring them comfort and encouragement in the midst of their anxious moments.

Whatever things are true are specifically the biblical truth with the gospel of Jesus as the Messiah at the center.

Whatever things are honorable are specifically how God can be honored by the manner in which we live our lives as well as our simply honoring Him through our conscious worship and submission to Him in His sovereign rule over the creation.

Whatever things are right include God's explanation of reality with His definition of morality which is the standard for our behavior.

Whatever things are pure probably also refers to moral purity in contrast to the immoral uncleanness of the Roman culture.

Whatever things are lovely contain intellectual and moral beauty, i.e., truth and obedience of God.

Whatever things are well-spoken of are those things of which God speaks well, i.e., Jesus as the Messiah and all other truth and morality which can be learned from the Bible.

Anything which is morally excellent involves pure, biblical moral behavior by human beings.

Anything which is worthy of praise is anything good associated with God and His eternal plans and purposes.

⁹⁰ ἃ καὶ ἐμάθετε καὶ παρελάβετε καὶ ἠκούσατε καὶ εἶδετε ἐν ἐμοί, ταῦτα πράσσετε· καὶ ὁ θεὸς τῆς εἰρήνης ἔσται μεθ' ὑμῶν – The relative pronoun indicates that the previous list of things to ponder contains those things which Paul has taught them either through his words or his actions as the content of the apostolic message.

Then, in addition to letting their minds dwell on all these important ideas, Paul exhorts them to align their lives with them, and the result will be that the God of an existence of eternal goodness and wholeness will be with them in their circumstances as they navigate through life's ups and downs. This is to say that God will faithfully work within them to ensure they persevere in their belief and reach their goal of eternal mercy and life.

⁹¹ Ἐχάρην δὲ ἐν κυρίῳ μεγάλως ὅτι ἤδη ποτὲ ἀνεθάλετε ἡμεῖς ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ φρονεῖν, ἐφ' ᾧ καὶ ἐφρονεῖτε, ἡκαίρεισθε δέ – Paul now spends the final full paragraphs expressing his gratitude for the financial help which the Philippians have provided him in his imprisonment in Rome. Apparently, they had wanted to send him this kind of aid before this time, but for some reason they were unable.

⁹² οὐχ ὅτι καθ' ὑστέρησιν λέγω, ἐγὼ γὰρ ἔμαθον ἐν οἷς εἰμι αὐτάρκης εἶναι – Paul assures the Philippians that he has learned to get by with whatever God provides in his life, still implying though that he is extremely grateful that they have lightened his financial burden considerably.

Here “want” implies desperation and perhaps even a demanding attitude on Paul's part whereby he has or would strong-arm the Philippians into providing financial help to him.

⁹³ οἶδα καὶ ταπεινοῦσθαι, οἶδα καὶ περισσεύειν ἐν παντί καὶ ἐν πᾶσιν μεμύημαι, καὶ χορτάζεσθαι καὶ πεινᾶν καὶ περισσεύειν καὶ ὑστερεῖσθαι – Paul does not mention explicitly what the secret is that he has learned with respect to handling both poverty and wealth, but we can guess that it is willfully submitting to God's sovereign rule over the creation, while Paul trusts God to finish His project of bringing about the eternal Kingdom of God in the exact and precise way that he wants to and that Paul will be included regardless of what kind of financial circumstances he has experienced during his life.

⁹⁴ πάντα ἰσχύω ἐν τῷ ἐνδυναμοῦντί με – It is God's strength (God's Spirit!) working within Paul, which literally causes him to handle all his circumstances of poverty and wealth with belief and trust in God. Paul's whole theology is all about man's complete inability to do anything good in and of himself, so that it is always God who causes authentic believers to believe and do what is right, even submitting to Him and trusting Him through difficult experiences.

⁹⁵ πλὴν καλῶς ἐποιήσατε συγκοινωνήσαντές μου τῇ θλίψει – In spite of the fact that Paul's faith would have survived by the grace and strength of God in the midst of the financial poverty he was experiencing in Rome under imprisonment, he still commends the Philippians for the good and kind thing they have done towards him by sending him a gift to help him physically.

⁹⁶ οἶδατε ὅδε καὶ ὑμεῖς, Φίλιππῆσιοι, ὅτι ἐν ἀρχῇ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου, ὅτε ἐξῆλθον ἀπὸ Μακεδονίας, οὐδεμία μοι ἐκκλησία ἐκοινωνήσεν εἰς λόγον δόσεως καὶ λήμψεως εἰ μὴ ὑμεῖς μόνοι – Indeed, the Philippians were unique in their generosity to Paul even at the beginning of their relationship with him. No other Christian gathering were as generous towards him as they were.

⁹⁷ ὅτι καὶ ἐν Θεσσαλονίκῃ καὶ ἁπαλὴ καὶ δις ἑῖς τὴν χρεῖαν μοι ἐπέμψατε. – After Paul left Philippi and went on to Thessalonica where he encountered a lot of opposition to the gospel, the Philippian Christians sent a financial gift more than once to help him out. This must have been very encouraging to him in the midst of all the hardship he encountered in Thessalonica.

⁹⁸ οὐχ ὅτι ἐπιζητῶ τὸ δόμα, ἀλλὰ ἐπιζητῶ τὸν καρπὸν τὸν πλεονάζοντα εἰς λόγον ὑμῶν – But Paul is more excited about how the Philippians' generosity reveals their changed hearts, so that in a sense they are filling their bank accounts with more assets by which they will acquire God's eternal mercy and life—not that they will literally buy these, but metaphorically their pursuit of such genuine morality and love towards Paul becomes part of the condition for their obtaining entrance into the eternal Kingdom of God.

⁹⁹ ἀπέχω δὲ πάντα καὶ περισσεύω· πεπλήρωμαι ἡμεῖς ἀπὸ τοῦ ἑαφροδίτου τὰ παρ' ὑμῶν, ὁσμὴν εὐωδίας, θυσίαν δεκτὴν, εὐάρεστον τῷ θεῷ – Now Paul likens their financial gift to him to a sacrifice to God on the altar of the temple in Jerusalem in obedience to the Mosaic Covenant. Their act of love towards Paul pleases God like a sweet-smelling sacrifice by the Jews through the Levitical priesthood, and Paul is delighted that Epaphroditus has brought such a generous gift from them.

¹⁰⁰ ὁ δὲ θεὸς μου ἡ πληρώσει πᾶσαν χρεῖαν ὑμῶν κατὰ τὸ πλοῦτος αὐτοῦ ἐν δόξῃ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ – While it is possible to interpret Paul as saying that, on the basis of the Philippians' providing him a generous financial gift, God will meet all their financial needs, it makes more sense in the light of all Paul's teaching to understand him to be saying that God will supply whatever they need to persevere in their belief that comes from a sanctified and changed heart along with the outcome of such a heart, which will be eternal mercy and life. This will be in line with God's own riches of life and the glory of moral perfection, immortality, and eternal ruling that will be there for the Philippians because of what Jesus as done during his first appearance as well as what he will do during his second appearance to intercede on their behalf.

¹⁰¹ τῷ θεῷ καὶ πατρὶ ἡμῶν ἡ δόξα εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων, ἀμήν – In this final paragraph, Paul begins by expressing that the person who deserves to be admired, praised, worshipped, and extolled for how wonderful He is

God. He is our creator and the source of our existence both now and into eternity. Truly He deserves our worship and praise continually.

¹⁰² Ἀσπάσασθε πάντα ἅγιον ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ. ἀσπάζονται ὑμᾶς οἱ σὺν ἐμοὶ ἀδελφοί – Paul requests that the Philippians who read this letter greet for him all other believers with whom they are in contact. In addition, the Christians in Rome with him greet them, wishing them the best.

¹⁰³ ἀσπάζονται ὑμᾶς πάντες οἱ ἅγιοι, μάλιστα δὲ οἱ ἐκ τῆς Καίσαρος οἰκίας – Recent converts to Christianity, including those who are associated with Caesar there in Rome, greet them, too.

¹⁰⁴ Ἡ χάρις τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ μετὰ ‘τοῦ πνεύματος’ ὑμῶν – Paul’s final words are that the grace of God connected with Jesus as the Messiah be active within their persons, which from all the rest of his theology means that they will persevere in their faith so that they qualify for eternal life when Jesus returns.