

# Philippians Bible Study

Introduction And Background .....	1
1. Occasion Of The Epistle .....	1
2. Its Authority And Date .....	2
3. The Epistles Addresses.....	2
4. The Epistles Inspiration/ Canonicity .....	3
5. The Character, Contents, And Theology .....	3
Chapter outlines : .....	3
6. Relevance To Modern Christianity .....	3
Chapter 1 Verses 1–11 .....	4
Chapter 1 Verses 12–26.....	5
Chapter 1 Verses 27–30 Chapter 2 Verses 1–4 .....	7
Chapter Two .....	8
Chapter 2 Verses 5–13 .....	9
Chapter 2 Verses 14–30.....	10
Chapter 3 Verses 1–11 .....	12
Chapter 3 Verses 12–21 Chapter 4 Verses 1–3 .....	14
Chapter 4.....	15
Chapter 4 Verses 4–23 .....	15

## Introduction And Background

### Philippians is:

- One of the prison Epistles.
- It speaks of Christian joy, peace, and triumph in a context of suffering.
- It provides depth in spiritual things and an intimacy with Jesus Christ.

### 1. Occasion Of The Epistle

- Ten years before the writing of this Epistle Paul had visited Philippi (Acts 16:6-12)
- Biblical scholars have labelled this event as one of the most significant in the Gospel as the centre of the human race, Christianity and missionary efforts was moving from Asia to Europe.
- When Paul, Timothy, Silas, and Luke arrived in Philippi they made their way down to the riverside, a place of prayer, as there was no synagogue. Here was the first convert in Philippi and Europe, an Asian, gentile, woman (Lydia) on business in Europe (v 13-15). It is at this point that the Philippian church is born, approx. AD 52.
- Paul later visited Philippi twice in AD 57, and had frequent contact with them through letters and messengers. When Paul wrote this Epistle the church at Philippi was somewhat mature in the faith after about 10 years of growth.
- The immediate occasion of the Epistle was a gift, which had come from the church at Philippi brought by Epaphroditus (Phil 4:18 ; 2:25).
- Epaphroditus had been seriously ill, but had now recovered and was about to return to the Philippian church with this letter (Phil 2:26-28).
- Philippians is more than a letter of thanks for the gift. It's one written with affection, revealing Paul's love for them, and exhorting them in their spiritual progress. It's personal, informal, cordial, and sincere. A letter from a friend to friends.

## 2. Its Authority And Date

- Conservative scholars assert Paul as author (Phil 1:1). This is supported by early church fathers (Clement of Rome, Ignatius, Polycarp). All linguistic and historical evidence supports it as being an authentic Pauline letter.
- Date of the Epistle depends on the order of the prison epistles and the place of writing. J. B. Lightfoot ' St Paul's Epistle to the Philippians' states that Philippians was probably the first prison epistle to be written approx. AD 62 or 63.
- In addition to Rome the book of Acts records a number of Paul's imprisonments:
  1. *Philippi Acts 16*
  2. *Jerusalem Acts 21, 22*
  3. *Caesarea Acts 23*Some scholars (e.g. F. C. Syngé 'Philippians and Colossians') also support an imprisonment in Ephesus using 2 Cor 1:8-11; 6:5; 11:23 ; Acts 20:16-17, to support this.
- Of these imprisonment's those at Philippi , Jerusalem, and Caesarea are not considered serious candidates for the location of this letter.
- In D. Guthrie's ' The Pauline Epistles', Ephesus is given serious consideration because of:
  - a. *The word 'Praetorium' in Phil 1 :13. It is argued that the word refers to a building (the residence of the Governor, comp. Matt 27:27; Acts 23:35.) and since Rome is the capital it didn't have a provincial government house.*
  - b. *The receipt of gifts, and the proposal of Paul visiting, would have been easier from nearby Ephesus but difficult from faraway Rome.*
  - c. *The frequent communication between Paul and the Philippian church favours a nearer location.*
  - d. *Differences in literary style and content compared to other early epistles might indicate Philippians is from a different period.*
  - e. *Paul's controversy with the Jews would fit Ephesus better than Rome.*
  - f. *There is some disparity between the circumstances of Paul's imprisonment in Rome, and what we would expect to find in the Epistle.*
- Despite this Guthrie favours Rome as the place of authorship:
  - a. *The term 'Praetorium' in Phil. 1:13, can refer to the barracks where the guards stayed, and properly means, praetorium, or, palace guard. The use of the phrase " and to all others " indicates people not buildings.*
  - b. *The total context of Philippians suits Rome better than Ephesus, and fits the circumstances of Acts 28.*
  - c. *There is no question about Paul's imprisonment in Rome, whereas the Ephesian imprisonment is not specifically expressed in Scripture.*
  - d. *Phil 4:22 would seem to be a reference to Paul being in Rome.*
- It is for these reasons most conservative scholars consider Rome the most probable place of completion.
- Paul's arrival in Rome, like his first arrival in Philippi, was a most significant extension of the Gospel.
- Jews had grown in number and influence, to such an extent that Claudius ordered their expulsion (Acts 18:1 -2).
- This was either temporary or not full implemented, because when Paul arrived in Rome some 4 years later , he met a cool reception from the Jewish leaders (Acts 28:14-15 ; 17-20). Paul, however, gave faithful witness to the Gentiles (v 23-28).
- These opponents to Paul made his job harder (Phil. 1:15-17), yet Paul's circumstances in Rome (chained to a Roman guard, Phil 1:7, 14 ; Acts 28:20, 30 -31) presented him with unusual opportunities to preach the Gospel, which otherwise would not have been open to him.

## 3. The Epistle's Addresses

- The birth of the church in Europe, a group of which Paul had fond memories:
  - a. *Lydia, first convert in Europe*
  - b. *A damsel released from a demon*
  - c. *The Philippian jailer and his family*
- Paul had a warm relationship with this church and visited them often (2 Cor. 1:16; Acts 19:21; 20:1-3).
- After Paul's letter to Philippi little is found of this church. It seems this group, the founding of the church in Europe, died out after the time of Paul.
- Although the buildings didn't remain, this letter did.

#### 4. The Epistle's Inspiration/ Canonicity

- Commonly recognised as the work of Paul.
- The church has uniformly included Philippians in its canon.
- Less reason to doubt it's authenticity than any other book in the N. T.

#### 5. The Character, Contents, And Theology

- Not written to correct any doctrinal or moral problem.
- Designed to express joy, love, and appreciation for the gift received.
- Primarily this is a letter of experience rather doctrine
- It contains one of the most important theological utterances in Paul's writings: The Kenosis (self emptying/self-humiliation) of Christ in Chapter 2.
- Important themes of this Epistle are to :
  - a. *Rejoice*
  - b. *Increase in love toward the brethren*
  - c. *Avoid any disunity*
  - d. *Have peace, joy, and fellowship in Christ.*

#### Chapter outlines :

1. *The triumph of Paul's own sufferings is introduced as a portrait of one who is truly magnifying Christ.*
  2. *Side by side illustrations are given, including the important reference to Christ as an example of triumph in Christian experience and dedication, which is reproduced in the lives of Paul, Timothy, and Epaphroditus.*
  3. *The triumph of the believer in Christ walking in fellowship with God is outlined.*
  4. *The present possibility of peace (in the heart, church, and in respect to circumstances) as the believer is strengthened by Christ.*
- The Epistle is related more emotionally to Paul than theologically.
  - Although there is a sharp break in Phil 3:1 it is unjustified to consider Philippians as the combination of two letters.
  - While this is a love letter from a fond parent for his spiritual children, it does contain the loftiest revelation. It's theological importance is in the repetition of major doctrines of the faith:
    - a. *The reminder of salvation by grace.*
    - b. *The emphasis upon the present spiritual experience of victory in Christ with joy and peace.*
    - c. *The ultimate eschatological hope of standing perfect in Christ in resurrection or translation.*
    - d. *The Kenosis of Christ is the supreme theological utterance of the book (God became man, took on the nature of a servant, ending in the supreme humiliation, death, even death on a cross).*
    - e. *We then have the revelation that this one who died was also exalted in resurrection, is Lord, and every knee shall bow and tongue confess.*
  - Most of the essentials of true faith in Christ, true Christian experience, and abundant hope are documented in Philippians.

#### 6. Relevance To Modern Christianity

- The modern world, and church, is afflicted with unbelief, secularism, materialism, and the temporal.
- Philippians gives us a clear vision of our Saviour, an intimate walk of fellowship, inner peace and a power that comes from association with Jesus, and a hope of the life to come.
- Coming from the context of the triumph of its human author suffering in prison for Christ's sake, and limited in earthly things, yet it overflows with spiritual power and joy.

## Chapter 1 Verses 1–11

### V1

- Typical opening for a First Century letter: Author signs his name at the beginning rather than the end.
- Absence of Apostolic titles indicates a warm, intimate affectionate relationship and letter.
- Paul and Timothy considered themselves to be servants (slaves) of Christ. Jesus is to be our Lord.
- The letter is addressed to “all the saints” :
  - a. *The cleansed congregation are the saints, they are not canonised giants*
  - b. *They are saints not because of their own merit but because God has set them apart.*
  - c. *A saint is a person who, through the finished work of Christ, is dedicated to God, Holy, Sacred, set apart for Him.*
  - d. *ALL the saints indicates Paul wanted there to be an atmosphere of unity and harmony in the assembly.*
- Servants and Saints, the trademarks of a Christian.
- The mention of Overseers (Bishops or Elders) and Deacons indicates an advanced organisation of the Church at Philippi. This is the earliest Epistle where elders and deacons are mentioned and the only one where they are separately addressed. Elders are responsible for the spiritual wellbeing of the fellowship, deacons for the material needs.
- This is not a hierarchy but an organisation, we must serve one another as indicated by Paul’s use of the term “together with”. However Paul subtly implies that unity could be maintained by proper recognition of leadership.
- In an authentic Christian community leaders are servants, followers are saints.

### V2

- The twin towers of the Gospel are Grace and Peace. God’s unmerited favour and sustaining power comes first resulting in peace with God, through Christ, and the peace of God (inner spiritual tranquillity). These can only come from God and are not of ourselves.

### V3

- This letter is essentially one of thanksgiving for the work of grace in Philippi and for their thoughtfulness in sending a gift to Paul in prison. Paul was as thankful for his friends as he was for his daily bread.

### V4

- Despite his missionary activity and now in prison Paul dedicated many hours to prayer. Effective Christian work can only be accomplished through prayer.

### V5

- The Philippians partnership (fellowship) in the gospel was as evident now as it was 10 years earlier when the church was formed.
- No matter who we are, what we are, where we’re from or where we’ve been the life in Christ is the same for every member of God’s family. (Witness the examples of Lydia, the slave girl, and the jailer).
- Partnership in the Gospel important, hence Paul’s frequent use of the word “ all” in these opening verses (vv 1, 4, 7-8).

### V6

- Paul uses the words “began” and “ completion” representing the opposite ends of life, and is saying that Salvation from beginning to end is a good, or noble work.
- Compare “ complete” or “ perfect” to Christ’s last word on the cross Tetelestai (finished).
- What God began in them 10 years ago at conversion will be perfected in glorification at the return of Christ.

### V 7-8

- High standard for Pastoral care: To thank God for everyone in their flock.
- These opening 8 verses introduce us to important theological truth: Servants, Saints, Grace, Peace, Prayer, Joy, Confidence, Thanksgiving, Hope.

- Paul longs after them as mother for a child, and He underlines this with 3 thoughts:
  1. *“ I remember you” (v 3). Although in prison Paul had the Philippians on his mind..*
  2. *“ I have you in my heart” (v 7). Paul not only thinks about them but feels for them. This is love on a deeper level.*
  3. *“ with the affection of Christ Jesus” (v 8) This is how it was possible, he loved them through and by Jesus.*

## V 9- 11

- Paul’s fourfold prayer for the Philippian church.
  1. *That their Love may abound more and more*

Overflows like a waterfall; love that cannot be measured, contained, or bound. It’s love without limits. AGAPE the primary quality of Christ-like-ness. (Distinguishes us as Christ’s disciples. John13:35; First fruit of the Spirit Gal 5; Greatest of Faith, Hope, Love and is the indispensable quality of all spiritual gifts 1Cor 13).

This Love is unrestricted and unrestrained, but it’s course can be directed since it’s rooted in “knowledge and depth of insight”. Knowledge is spiritual, theological , the comprehension of the total revelation of God concerning Himself, Man and Salvation. Depth of insight refers to feeling, perception, experience. Knowledge deals with general principles, insight with it’s application.
  2. *So that you may be able to discern what is best.*

Logical progression to a discerning sense of values. Discern means “ to examine carefully, to test”. Literally “ To discriminate between things that are good and bad”.
  3. *That you may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ*

Purity of motive, sincerity, to examine the genuineness of anything in the full light of day. This leads to being without offence (blameless) when judged by God’s standards, standing the searching test of judgement at the Day of Christ.
  4. *To be filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes from Jesus Christ.*

Add love, discernment, being without offence, to all the other fruits of righteousness. (An O.T expression found in Prov 11: 30; Amos 6:12; and also used by James in Jas 3:18).

This fruit comes from a relationship with Christ rather than the Law (Phil. 3:9), and is evidence of a transformed character by the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:22-23), resulting in works of righteousness (e.g. Saving souls,. Prov 11:30). in our lives. Holy character and a Holy life manifesting in the fruit of the Spirit

This isn’t the product of human effort or legalism, it’s a supernatural work of grace in answer to prayer, with the purpose of bringing glory to God.

### Summary of this opening section.

1. *Paul highlights the assurance of Salvation and the certainty of Glorification based on the Grace of God through the finished work of Christ.*
2. *Satisfied of their Salvation Paul wants them to go on to achieve the full fruit of Christian life.*

## Chapter 1 Verses 12–26

### V12

- Humanly Paul would have preferred to out and about in the Synagogues, the Forum, and the houses of Rome, evangelising and encouraging the brethren. He wanted to preach but found himself a prisoner.
- One of the challenges for us is to interpret the tragedies of life in such a way that they become bearable, and that we can understand God’s hidden purpose.
- Paul didn’t get depressed about his situation. He knew God was in control, and his imprisonment furthered the Gospel by;
  - a. *Providing an opportunity to witness at the highest levels in Rome.*
  - b. *Giving time for him to write the prison epistles.*

### V13

- 24 hours a day Paul was chained to a Roman soldier of the Praetorian Guard. Shifts changed every 6 hours giving him ample opportunity to witness to the crack imperial troops of Rome, who would have had direct access to the Palace itself. Many were converted, and knew he was in prison for Christ’s sake.
- Not only were the soldiers aware and affected but so was “everyone else”. Paul’s imprisonment was having a major impact.

#### V14

- Paul's example encouraged many of the Christians in Rome to be bold in their witness and testimony. They thought if he could win so many to Christ while in prison then what was stopping them, who were free, proclaiming Christ.
- Part of God's purpose in Paul's adversity was to stir up the Church.

#### V15-18

- Some were preaching Christ for the wrong reasons and with the wrong motives, and they hoped that their 'success' would irritate Paul just as the friction of the chains on his wrists and ankles would irritate.
- Paul wasn't bothered about who was preaching Christ, but the methods they used: The words Paul used convey the idea of 'canvassing for office in order to get people to support you'. It was party politics, with the aim of getting people to follow them, while Paul wanted people to follow Christ.
- Yet Paul wasn't going to get bogged down by all this. He said "what does it matter?" He didn't approve of their motives, but Christ was being preached, which was better than Him not being preached.

#### V19

- Paul sees his deliverance as being dependant on 2 factors:
  - a. *The human input: The prayerful support of the Brethren*
  - b. *The spiritual input: The bountiful, full supply of the Holy Spirit.*

#### V20

- Paul had eager expectation and hope (watching something so intently that your head is turned away from everything else), a single mindedness to want to please Christ in everything he did. To have sufficient courage magnify Christ whether he lived or died.
- We can magnify microscopically, by making what looks little big, or telescopically, by making what is afar off to come close. Through the trials of our life if we seek to honour Christ then Jesus who is small and far away to many will be made big and brought near.

#### V21

- Key verse of this epistle
- Jesus is number One in Paul's life, the motivating factor in his ministry and in all he sought to do. To live is Christ.
- And to die is not to lose Christ, but to gain: Freedom from chains, self, suffering, and the experience of being completely like Christ.
- The secret of living and dying well is the quality of our relationship with Jesus.
- Paul now has a problem, and he doesn't know what to do: Either to do what is best for him and depart to be with Christ personally, or to do what is more beneficial to the Philippian Christians and stay to help them.

#### V22-24

- Paul is "torn between the two", "held in suspense on both sides", "pressed from every side". He longed to be with Christ but was willing to postpone his departure in order to help Christians grow.
- Paul talks of death in terms of a departure: the word depart means "to loose" or "untie" "to be set free", literally "to break up" as to break camp. Our departure from earth to the presence of God is to break earthly ties and move camp to be with Christ.
- Death held no terror for Paul, for him it was just a change of location, and he would "be far, far better off" to be in the presence of Christ, but the needs of those left behind made this a difficult choice.

#### V25-26

- Having come to the conclusion that his continued life and ministry on earth are more needful than to depart and be with Christ, Paul is confident of his acquittal, which would permit him to minister to the Philippians. (Fulfilled in 1 Tim 1:3).
- The Church would then rejoice because of the answer to their prayer.

### **Conclusion to this section.**

Paul was prepared to set aside his own personal preference so that the purpose of God might be unfolded and fulfilled:

1. *He would have liked to have been freed from prison, but was content to remain incarcerated to further the Gospel.*
  2. *He would have desired to depart and be with Christ, but was content to stay for the benefit of his fellow believers.*
- Paul was totally surrendered to the will of God and content with what he had for him.
  - If he hadn't have stayed in prison and remained alive, we wouldn't have Philippians to study.

### **Chapter 1 Verses 27–30**

### **Chapter 2 Verses 1–4**

Towards the end of chapter one Paul gives the Philippians a call to arms. He urges them to be unyielding, undivided, and unafraid in battle. As good soldiers we must get on with one another and not fragment. We must not forget who the real enemy is, and not fight among ourselves.

#### **V27**

- Conduct means literally 'To perform their duty'. They should be willing to stand up and be counted.
- The Christian lifestyle must be distinctive, as we live as good citizens of the Kingdom of God.
- Our personal conduct speaks volumes. If we have a steady walk with the Lord we will be a credit to Jesus and a challenge to unbelievers.
- The Philippians were urged to live this Christian lifestyle whether or not Paul was present with them. While we should look to the example of spiritual leaders, a mark of spiritual maturity is that we will stand firm in their absence.
- Paul then stresses the need for teamwork in the Church. While there are many players there is only one team and we should all be working for one another. Victory will be secured when we stand together to fight our common foe.

#### **V28**

- Paul tells the Philippians not to be frightened by those who oppose them, in the way horses stampede in the face of battle.
- They were to face tough persecution in a violent period of history and so would need courage not to flee the battlefield.
- Remaining in the fight will be a sign to those that will be destroyed, but we can have confidence that we will be saved, by God.
- Persecution and trial is not a sign that God has forsaken us, or that we are under His judgement. It's a sign that we are separate from a world that knows not salvation or God. Our bravery in such circumstances is a silent testimony of the grace of God in our hearts.

#### **V29**

- Suffering is inevitable for soldiers in the army of the Lord. It will come, we should expect it, and be willing to share in it.
- Rather than avoid suffering by compromise, Paul exhorts that we believe in Christ and bear the suffering that often goes with it.
- Suffering is not easy, but is something God will give us the strength to endure.

#### **V 30**

- Paul reminds the Philippians that they are not alone in their hour of conflict because he too is going through something very similar.
- Paul is referring not only to his current imprisonment but also to the sufferings the Church at Philippi observed in Acts 16.
- Paul wasn't a detached observer to suffering, and part of the reason for his decision to continue to live was motivated by a desire to help the Philippians through their suffering.
- The word for struggle means agony, and is the word used of Jesus in the Garden. So He too knows what it is to go through pain and can empathise with us.

## Review of Chapter One

- Sets the stage for the exhortations and revelations to come.
- Shows Paul's evident love for the Philippians.
- His confidence in God's grace, and desire that the Church attain the fruits of righteousness.
- That Jesus must be our life.
- Provides a platform on which Paul can now exhort them to remedy their only major failing: A lack of close fellowship and unity.

## Chapter Two

Having referred to his own suffering now Paul introduces three additional examples of those who were completely dedicated to the will of God: Jesus, Timothy, and Epaphroditus, and shows that unity is a by product of walking with God.

While chapter two is primarily exhortation and inspiration, it contains the greatest theological statement of what Christ did when He became man, died, and rose again. The Kenosis is the highpoint of the Epistle.

Having alluded to Christian unity in chapter one, Paul now presents the argument in a formal way. Paul's call was not for uniformity (which is imposed from the outside as a pressure to conform to people's ways of doing things) but for unity (which comes from within and is a matter of the heart arising from our conformity to Christ). We are all different, yet we can still be one. There is unity in diversity.

In tackling the problem of disunity Paul tells the Philippians that the way forward is to be a servant.

### V1

- **Paul provides a fourfold incentive to pull together 'Because' these statements are true:**
  1. *We have union with Christ and that is for our encouragement: Gr. Paraklesis, meaning 'one called alongside'. Because Christ reached out to us we can be encouragers, drawing alongside one another.*
  2. *We are the recipients of his love and that is for our comfort: The love shed abroad in our hearts by the H.S. brings us great comfort, and this love must reach out to others so they can experience the same comfort.*
  3. *Our fellowship in the Spirit: The H.S. is the causal factor in spiritual unity. True fellowship only comes in the power of the Spirit.*
  4. *We have felt His heartbeat and compassion: KJV 'Bowels and Mercies'. Seat of the emotions in the bowels, and feelings of compassion seem to grip the whole body, it's not just an intellectual decision. Spiritual unity depends upon the emotional heart of man moved by the Spirit of God.*
- **These four points equip us to realise spiritual unity.**

### V2

- Paul exhorts them on the basis of bringing joy to his heart.
- The thought is "fill full" or "complete" his cup of joy.
- This can be achieved by:
  1. *Being Likeminded: Doctrinal oneness on the essential tenants of the faith*
  2. *To have the same love: Not necessarily loving the same things but having the same love (Agape).*
  3. *To be one in spirit: Lit 'One souled', joint souls. Soul brothers / sisters in harmony with God's people.*
  4. *To be one in purpose: To have the same goals, e.g. Jesus first, surrendered to Him, taking the Gospel to the world.*

### V3

- The practical outworking of spiritual unity.
- Nothing done in the spirit of strife or vain glory.
- Everything in humility.

### V4

- The fruit of spiritual unity: unselfishness, abandoning self-interest, looking out for the welfare of others.
- Be people orientated, go the extra mile.

These opening four verses are the "entwining of Christian hearts" (F.B. Myer), and the way to experience oneness in the body of Christ.

## Chapter 2 Verses 5–13

This passage introduces Jesus, through the incarnation, as the supreme example of humility. It is known as the ‘Kenosis’ (‘to empty’) because Jesus, while retaining his complete deity, restricted its manifestation.

### V5

- We are to think, in our hearts, just as Jesus did when He became incarnate.
- He did not promote His own interests, or defend His own rights, but willingly humbled Himself by:
  - a. *Leaving heaven*
  - b. *Making Himself nothing*
  - c. *Taking the nature of a servant*
  - d. *Being made in the likeness of humanity*
  - e. *He humbled Himself*
  - f. *Became obedient to death*
  - g. *Dying on a cross*
- The abiding principle is ‘The way up is down’.
- This passage probably became a credal statement and hymn for the early church.
- We see here the cross from the perspective of Jesus.

### V6

- ‘Being’ refers to Jesus’ prior existence. Theologically it affirms His eternal existence.
- Before Jesus became man He had the ‘form’ (KJV) ‘very nature’ (NIV) of God. This speaks of His very essence or being, and refers to His inner nature not outward appearance.
- This means in eternity past, Jesus was the eternal God.
- To understand the magnitude of His sacrifice we need to comprehend His lofty position before the incarnation:
  - a. *He and God are one*
  - b. *Co equal, co eternal, co essential*
- Jesus didn’t consider the outward manifestation of His deity a treasure to be grasped and retained.
- Lucifer ascended above the clouds to be like the most high, Jesus descended to earth not concerning Himself with the outward trappings of deity.

### V7-8

- Literally ‘He emptied Himself’. Not of His deity, but of its outward manifestation.
- Jesus became what He never was before, yet never ceased to be what He was eternally.
- The full extent of the Kenosis is:
  - a. *Taking the nature of a servant: Literally a slave. The one who was in the ‘form’ of God is now in the ‘form’ of a servant.*
  - b. *Jesus was made in human likeness: He was like other men (plural, as He represents humanity), a genuine man as Adam was BEFORE he sinned. Jesus was more than God in a body, He became the God-Man, fully God and fully man. He was subject to the same emotions as us.*
  - c. *He was found in appearance (‘fashion’ KJV) as a man: Refers to an outer manifestation that can change. Jesus humanity will continue for ever (1TIM 2:5), but in glory He will resume the appearance of God.*
  - d. *He humbled Himself to death, even death on a cross: Jesus suffered the complete humiliation, voluntarily being willing to die, with unspeakable physical and spiritual suffering. (comp. Ps. 22; Isa. 53).*
- If Jesus was willing to do this for us, what stands in the way of us forgiving others and having unity with those of like mind in Christ?

## V 9 –11

- The cross wasn't the end for Jesus but His entrance into glory, and His supreme vindication.
  - If we share in His sufferings we will share in His glory.
  - Jesus' exaltation was not just the resumption of the glory He had before the incarnation, but the added glory of triumph over sin, suffering and death. A triumph that would reconcile the world to God.
  - The name to be exalted is the second person of the Godhead's human name 'Jesus' meaning 'Saviour'. (Lord refers to His sovereignty and deity; Christ to Him being the anointed Messiah by the Holy Spirit). It's the name of Jesus that sums up both His humiliation and triumph, for only the God-Man could die on a cross and be our Saviour.
  - It is at His name *EVERY* knee will eventually bow to acknowledge His Lordship (whether angel, righteous or fallen, or man, redeemed or lost).
  - All will then confess that the Saviour is also The Christ and Lord.
  - This is done to the glory of God the Father, as it's the Father's will that His Son be glorified.
  - Are we appropriately glorifying Jesus now? Don't wait until All are forced to worship Jesus. Jesus is the pattern we are to copy "There are no crown wearers in heaven who were not cross bearers on earth" (Spurgeon), but more than this He provides us with the power to make it a reality in our lives. Jesus equips and empowers us by His Spirit, so that we follow Him not so much by imitation but by incarnation. Jesus did it, and with Him living in us so can we.
- Now that we have the example of Jesus we must go and do likewise, hence:

## V12 –13

- 'My dear friends' or 'my beloved' (KJV) is Paul's appeal based on affection rather than Apostolic authority.
- If Paul were there obedience would have been automatic, but he appeals to their obedience even in his absence.
- 'Work out' means to achieve or accomplish, to work something through to full completion, like a maths puzzle. It was a term used by miners to reclaim the maximum yield, and by farmers to get the greatest harvest. It's all about releasing the potential that's already there.
- This does not mean we are to work for our salvation, that's a gift from God based on the finished work of Christ on the cross.
- But we are to work at it. Don't sit on the sidelines, get fully involved. Work out to fight the spiritual flab. Work out what God has worked in.
- We are to do this with 'fear and trembling' to avoid self complacency, pride and falling short of the what is attainable for us in our Christian walk.
- This program of working out isn't one of self-effort. We are not alone, because we have infinite power within as God is working out His will and good pleasure.
- 'Works in you' means energy. It is the energy (power) of God that will accomplish this.

## Chapter 2 Verses 14–30

### V 14

- The emphasis is that *everything* must be done without murmuring or arguing.
- The verb 'do' is in the present tense showing that we should not complain or argue at all times and in all circumstances.
- Complaining is plural, referring to all complaints, murmuring, and grumbling, both expressed and unexpressed.
- The Greek word for arguing is a word from which we get "dialogue". It's vocal and abusive.

### V15

- Christians are to be distinctively different from non-Christians.
- We are to be blameless in every action and at all times. This is something we become or achieve; it's not from our natural being.
- Pure means unmixed, innocent of evil, not contaminated by complaining or arguing.
- The implication is that these good qualities are the result of the Divine nature we receive in the new birth as children of God.
- We will then be without fault or blemish (compare to the sacrificial lambs), and our purity of life will shine as lights in a dark world. (Stars: compare with Rev 21:11). Shine can also mean, "To appear", and as Christians our lights must begin to appear in the darkness.
- Crooked refers to a curvature of the spine, showing that this world is disfigured.

### V16

- Hold out the word of God as an offering, such as a gift. This world is spiritually hungry and thirsty and the gospel needs to be held out as a means of satisfying their hunger and thirst.
- Paul's life wouldn't have been run in vain if the gospel were passed on to others.
- At the 'Day of Christ' our Christian testimony will be evaluated.

### V17

- The example of Paul: He is not asking the Philippians to do anything he isn't prepared to do himself. Paul had already suffered for Christ (2Cor 11:23-29) and if anyone had the right to complain it was him.
- Paul is willing to go even further and be a sacrifice poured out, if this would further the cause of the Philippian church.
- "With all of you", shows Paul was not siding with any faction in the church. Paul rejoiced in God's grace to all of them.

### V18

- We too should rejoice in our sacrifice and service to all the brethren.

### V19

- The example of Timothy: Who had a long and close relationship with the Philippian church, and would be a most acceptable representative of Paul's.

### V20

- "Like him" means "Like souled".
- None of the other Christians had quite the same qualities of soul. Timothy had a great faithfulness to the Lord, a loyalty to Paul, and a genuine interest in their welfare.
- "Genuine" is the word for birthright, implying these qualities came from the new nature Timothy received at his new birth.

### V21

- There's no one else like Timothy, for everyone looks out for his own interests, and not Christ's. We will either live in Phil 2:21 or 1:21.

### V22

- Timothy was like a son to Paul. He could bestow upon him no greater honour, nor on the Philippians for sending him.

### V23-24

- Timothy's departure would only be delayed for news of Paul's release.
- Paul himself hoped to come to them as soon as possible, although it seems he was delayed longer than anticipated.

### V25

- The example of Epaphroditus: Although Timothy would be delayed Epaphroditus would be despatched immediately with this Epistle.
- His name means "Charming" and Paul was very generous of this lay mans loyalty. He had not only brought a gift and message from the Philippian church, but also stayed and ministered to Paul.
- Brother: indicates their unity in the same spiritual family.
- Fellow worker: They were both involved in the service of the gospel.
- Fellow soldier: They both faced dangers together in this spiritual battle zone.

### V26-27

- While ministering to Paul, Epaphroditus became ill. They were both concerned that the church hadn't heard of his recovery.
- God's mercy prevented Epaphroditus from dying, and Paul from having to suffer his loss.

### V28

- The decision to send Epaphroditus was not carelessly contrived but grew out of the deep concern both men had for the church.

## V29

- Because of Epaphroditus' exceptional service, Paul wanted the church to honour him as a faithful servant of Christ.

## V30

- Epaphroditus risked his life for the work of Christ. The implications being that if he hadn't have come to Rome he wouldn't have fallen sick, and when he did, he continued to serve Paul endangering his own life.
- Because the Philippians couldn't be with Paul, Epaphroditus filled the gap, and did what they couldn't do.

Both Timothy and Epaphroditus were willing to be sent anywhere and sacrifice anything for the gospel. One was a minister we read a lot about, the other a lay man we know little of, yet God used both of them mightily because their attitude was right.

Chapter 2 is an exhortation to the Philippians to achieve the utmost in Christian love and fellowship, as demonstrated by Christ's example.

This is attainable, as shown in the human examples of Paul himself, Timothy, and Epaphroditus.

Walking close to the Lord and in fellowship with one another would help them cope with the other trials of the Christian life.

## Chapter 3 Verses 1–11

### V1

- An interrupted conclusion. Paul is diverted from concluding the Epistle due to the pressing need to warn the Philippians of dangers that will hinder their walk with Christ.
- They are to keep on rejoicing in the Lord, which must be fixed and rooted in Christ.
- It is no trouble for Paul to remind them of previous exhortations. In fact it is safe for him to do so lest they forget these dangers.
- The error Paul is attacking is twofold:
  1. *The obscuring of the gospel of salvation by grace alone and substituting a works principle for standing before God.*
  2. *Using the Mosaic Law as a criterion for sanctification in the age of grace.*

### V2

- Keep on watching, looking out for:
  - a. *"Dogs"-A Jewish reference to gentiles or anyone guilty of moral failure or ceremonial deviation. Carries the idea of being impure. Dogs in the ancient world were scavengers, fighting among themselves, and attacking passers by. The thought is that these Judaizing teachers, like dogs are eating garbage and affecting others, rather than sitting at the table of grace.*
  - b. *Those guilty of evil deeds*
  - c. *Those 'mutilators of the flesh', referring to the cutting of circumcision. The requirement for converts to be circumcised in order to be saved meant their confidence was in the flesh. The fact that we have been spiritually circumcised means the fleshly operation is redundant. Hence Paul uses the term mutilation in contrast to circumcision.*

### V3

- Salvation is not something outward but is the inner work of the Holy Spirit. It's not of the body but of the heart.
- Three characteristics of the spiritually circumcised:
  - a. *They worship God in the Spirit.*
  - b. *They rejoice in Christ Jesus.*
  - c. *They have no confidence in the flesh.*

### V4

- Paul gives his own testimony of deliverance from confidence in the flesh.
- He assumes the role of a Judaizer in order to show that if exalting the flesh was important, he was in a good position to do so.

## V5-6

- **Four facts attesting to Paul's ancestry:**
  1. *He was circumcised on the eighth day: He didn't convert to Judaism.*
  2. *He was of the race of Israel: He was in covenant relationship with God.*
  3. *He was of the tribe of Benjamin: Benjamin had been born in the land of promise.*
  4. *A Hebrew of the Hebrews: He spoke the language.*
- **Three Statements about Paul's orthodoxy:**
  1. *He was a Pharisee: The strictest and most conservative of the Jewish sects.*
  2. *He was fanatical in his efforts to wipe out the early church: He did more than the Judaizers to persecute the church.*
  3. *He was fastidious in keeping the Law: He applied the Law rigorously to others and to himself.*

## V7

- All Paul's claims to human attainment, which were to his advantage, he now considers them as damaging.
- The implication being that to exalt legalism results in a faulty experience of Christ.

## V8

- The reason Paul is willing to disregard all human attainment is because of the greatness of knowing Christ.
- Knowing Christ is experiential not theoretical.
- What he previously considered as profit, Paul now considered as rubbish (either human excrement or garbage thrown away from the table. In any case it was useless).

## V9

- What Paul has gained from knowing Christ is:
  1. *To be found in him: Both a present reality and an ultimate one at the judgement.*
  2. *To possess the righteousness that comes from God, by faith, rather than by the Law: Accomplished by Jesus in His work and person.*
- Paul's position in Christ is perfect and complete, but experientially there is room for growth and development. This comes not by Law keeping but through knowing Christ.

## V10

- Paul's goal is know Christ, not simply as justifier, but also as sanctifier.
- Again this is knowing experientially, not theoretically.
- For us the order of the experience is different to the order of the event:
  1. *Christ: Suffered, died, rose.*
  2. *After being saved we: experience Christ's resurrection power, in order to enter into the fellowship of His sufferings, and to conform to the will of God represented by Christ's death.*

## V11

- Lit: "The resurrection out from among, the one from the dead".
- In contrast to the general resurrection of the dead Paul is anticipating a special resurrection of the righteous (Rev 20).
- Paul's struggle to attain it is not questioning whether he will be in this resurrection but will he still be alive when this resurrection occurs?

### Paul's vision statement in V 10-11:

1. *He talks of a Person worth knowing: Jesus.*
2. *There is a Power worth having: The power of the Resurrection.*
3. *There is a Passion worth sharing: Taking up our cross and sharing Jesus' passion.*
4. *We have a Position worth seeking: Daily dying to self, sin, and Satan.*
5. *There is a Praise worth having: A better, more glorious resurrection.*

Christianity is not about human achievement or legalistic righteousness. It is nothing less and can be nothing more than our relationship to Christ.

## Chapter 3 Verses 12–21

## Chapter 4 Verses 1–3

### V 12

- The perfection Paul would have at the future Resurrection was not yet attained, as he knew that in his fleshly body he still sinned.
- Paul was conscious of the need to continually make spiritual progress.
- In saying that he was not already perfect, Paul uses a Greek word meaning “to reach a goal” or “fulfil a purpose”, implying a process of attainment.
- Scripture reveals three stages to perfection:
  1. *Positional Perfection*  
This relates to our salvation as having already been given to every Christian (Heb 10:14).
  2. *Progressive Perfection*  
Our growth in spiritual maturity, in such things as the Fruit of the Spirit (2 Cor 7:1; Gal 5; Eph 4:12).
  3. *Ultimate Perfection*  
To be realised only when we are in glory (Eph 5:27).
- Spiritual maturity and moral perfection were not achieved by a single act in the past, and Paul disclaims having achieved it, nevertheless this should ever be the goal of the Christian towards which we should press on.

### V13

- Paul is denying that he has achieved, experientially, sinless perfection or complete holiness.
- The use of the word “Brothers” implies that it wasn’t just Paul who is in this state, but we are all in it together.
- It is his supreme goal to keep moving forward.

### V 14

- Paul “keeps on pressing toward the goal” as a runner in a race does to win the prize (1 Cor 9:24).
- The prize for the Christian is the “upward call” of God.

### V15

- Even Christians who are relatively mature, should take this same view, that they are not sinlessly perfect, and they have further progress to make.
- If we hold a different view to Paul on this, and feel we are already morally perfect, then God will reveal the truth to us.

### V16

- What we have already achieved as mature Christians must be held on to.
- **Regarding this section we should:**
  1. *Be realistic, about our spiritual state. There’s always room for improvement.*
  2. *Be single minded, living for Christ should be our only priority.*
  3. *Be forward looking, not looking back to past mistakes or former glories.*
  4. *Be a plodder, press on, this is a marathon not a sprint.*
  5. *Don’t give up, hold on to what has already been achieved.*
- **Paul then goes on to deal with “enemies of the Cross”.**
- **Here these are:**
- Christians mislead into legalism, but primarily
- Those who maintain anything goes (Antinomians)
- Non Christians contending with the faith

### V17

- Keep following Paul’s good example.
- There are other Christians whose good example we should follow.

### V18-19

- Paul is genuinely concerned for these “enemies of the Cross” and that the Philippians don’t get entangled with them.
- **Paul list four things about them:**
  1. *Their destiny is destruction.*  
A wasted life banished from the presence of God.
  2. *Their god is their stomach.*  
A reference to food laws being more important than grace, but also to the attitude of ‘eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die’.
  3. *Their glory is in their shame.*  
Shameful behaviour is a matter of pride to them.
  4. *Their mind is on earthly things.*  
Living for the things of this life only.

### V20

- The hope of the Christian is based on the fact that heaven is our home.
- Jesus is in heaven preparing a place for us and will come for His Church (John 14).
- We are to eagerly await that day.

### V21

- Our lowly bodies will be changed into a glorious body, by act of God not by our own power.
- This is the ultimate perfection Paul has been alluding to.

## Chapter 4

### V1

- “Therefore” brings together all the preceding exhortation and hope of glory.
- The Philippians are addressed intimately as “brothers” whom Paul loves (Agape) deeply, and yearns to be with.
- It would only be as they stood firm in the Lord, as dear friends, that they would continue to Paul’s joy and become his victors crown at the Day of Judgement.

### V2

- A special word of exhortation to two prominent women in the Church, that they should be of the same mind in the Lord.
- Paul doesn’t take sides, but says, if they both have the mind of the Lord the disharmony will melt.
- Christians who are really yielded to the Lord, may not agree on every point, but should be able to find a meeting place in the mind of Christ.

### V3

- The ‘loyal yokefellow’ is probably Epaphroditus, and he was instructed to help the dispute of these women.
- It is possible that some of the dissatisfaction in Philippi was due to the failure to recognise the proper place of women. They had laboured with Paul for the Gospel, as with the men, and they should be given proper recognition.
- Euodia and Syntyche will be in the Book of Life along with the men.

## Chapter 4 Verses 4–23

### V4

- Paul had urged them to rejoice in 1:18; 2:18 and now he tells them to “keep on rejoicing”.
- This rejoicing will contribute to the peace and harmony in the congregation, as well as helping inner tranquillity.

### V5

- A Christian should be one who is gentle and gracious and not judgemental.
- The Lord’s coming is near and He will soon judge us, so we should not be harsh judges of others.
- Again this has the dual affect of contributing to harmony in the Church and our inner peace.

## V6

- As Christians we should never be filled with anxious care, but should always present our needs to the Lord.
- Prayer is the commanded alternative to anxious care, as it will take the weight off our shoulders.
- We should be continually presenting our requests and concerns to the Lord.
- Three words are used here for prayer:
  1. *The ordinary word for prayer.*
  2. *Petition or supplication, meaning the act of asking for things.*
  3. *Requests, referring to particular petitions.*
- All this should be accompanied with thanksgiving because we can present our prayers to God, and we can be assured that He will hear and answer.
- The result will be, not only that we receive an answer, but also that we receive “the peace of God”.

## V7

- This peace goes beyond any human ways we can devise to try and remove our worry. It is supernatural, a fruit of the Spirit.
- It stands guard against anxieties and worries that can attack our hearts and minds.
- This peace is open to all Christians because we have the Spirit whom ministers this peace.
- Keeping peace in our hearts will help keep peace in the Church.

## V8

- This peace will transform the thought life of the Christian.
- Paul here provides a summary of the qualities that should characterise a Christian's thought life.
- We are to “keep on” thinking these things.
- The best way to keep out wrong thoughts that disturb our inner peace is to concentrate on good things.

## V9

- Paul's example is itemized:
  1. *They had learned from his instruction.*
  2. *They had heard with their own ears.*
  3. *They had seen with their own eyes.*
- Now keep on practicing these things peace and the full presence of the God of peace would be with them.
- If Paul could have peace of mind as a prisoner, then so can we who are free.

## v10

Paul is now referring to the specific experience of joy he had from the Philippians' gift and Ephaphroditus' ministry.

- God had given him peace of mind but he didn't want to downplay the contribution of the Philippians.
- He adds in the Lord because he recognised that his entire circumstances were part of the Lord's dealings with him.
- Paul was grateful that at last their concern was flourishing, now that they had opportunity to serve him.

## V11

- Paul didn't want to appear to be grasping the physical benefits that were coming his way.
- He didn't want to give the impression that something was lacking since he had learned to be content whatever his circumstances.

## V12

- Whether Paul had an abundance or lack of food he had learned the secret of having peace of mind.
- The secret of contentment and peace of mind is The Lord Jesus Christ.

## V13

- The credit for this contentment and peace is not Paul's but Christ's who strengthens him in everything.

#### V14

- Even though Paul would have been content if he remained in deprivation, he commended the Philippians for relieving his sufferings.

#### V15

- Their financial support of Paul began early in his ministry (see 2 Cor 11:7-9).

#### V16

- They had an intimate knowledge of his needs and location and were concerned to support his missionary efforts.

#### V17

- Again Paul wasn't being covetous, he wanted them to be fruitful in doing the work of the Lord. He wasn't seeking gifts but seeking fruit for them.

#### V18

- Paul's cup was overflowing, not just with the supply of his physical needs but in his spiritual life.
- The gift is an acceptable offering because it was given from the heart.
- When such gifts are given, the receiver is blessed, the giver is blessed and so is God as He sees His children acting in a Godlike way.

#### V19

- The Philippians had dug deep into their pockets to support Paul; in return they could expect God to look after their needs.
- It was:
  1. *Personal:* "My God"
  2. *Pointed:* "All your needs"
  3. *Plentiful:* "According to His glorious riches"
  4. *Powerful:* "In Christ Jesus"
- Here their need isn't just physical. God's total care of them would be in view of their eternal benefit, which may include suffering, or a lack of physical things if that is what's needed.

#### V20

- When we invest our lives and resources in the kingdom, and put Jesus first, God the Father gets all the glory.
- Everything we do must bring glory to God.

#### V21-22

- Paul greets the Philippian brethren as individuals.
- Greetings are from:
  1. *Paul's immediate circle of friends*
  2. *All the Saints (possibly those in Rom 16)*
  3. *Those who belong to Caesar's household.*
- Through Paul's imprisonment the gospel had reached into the very heart of the military and political life of the city and empire.

#### V23

- The epistle ends on the note of grace which summarises Paul's yearnings for these Christians who loved and cared for him.
- The epistle began with grace and peace (1:2) and ends with a final prayer for grace in a chapter dealing with peace.

#### Conclusion

At one level this book revolves around the principle characters (Paul, Timothy, Epaphroditus), at another level it centres on the Philippian church, but in its deepest sense Christ is the centre of this epistle.

It is the mind of Christ, His love, humiliation, willingness to suffer, exultation, which constitute the supreme illustration of obedience to God. And after the suffering comes the glory.

A proper relationship to The Lord Jesus Christ would bring about the experiencing of the mind of Christ resulting in unity and love for one another.

This epistle to the Philippians is timeless relating to the needs of Christians in every age.