

Philippians

1:1 Paul and Timothy, slaves 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 prove out to your advantage the things that are different, in order that you may be pure and without fault in 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 bonds 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 is the upshot of all this? 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 I know that, in the light of your request and the assistance of the Spirit of Jesus the Messiah, this will turn out for my salvation.¹⁹ **1:20** I know that, according to my eager anticipation and hope, I will not be ashamed in any circumstance, but in all boldness 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, struggling together in one soul with respect to belief in the good news,²⁷ **1:28** and in no way intimidated by those who are opposing you, which, for them, is a sign of destruction, but, for you, a sign of salvation. And this is from God,²⁸ **1:29** because that which concerns the Messiah was graced to you—not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him,²⁹ **1:30** while you have the same struggle which you saw in me and now hear to be in me.³⁰

2:1 Consequently, if there is a certain persuasion in the Messiah, if there is a certain comfort in love, if there is a certain participation in the Spirit, if there is a certain compassion and sympathy,³¹ **2:2** fill out my joy so that you think the same thing. While having the same love, being united, thinking one thing,³² **2:3** and not according to selfish ambition or excessive pride, but with humility, consider one another as being superior to yourselves.³³ **2:4** Do not watch out for your own interests but for 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, taking the form of a slave. While being 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 who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth,⁴⁰ **2:11** and every tongue will confess 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 on behalf of 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 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 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 And 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 as him 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 the certain truth 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 [περιτομη] on the eighth day, from the ethnic group of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew from Hebrews, according to the Torah – a Pharisee,⁶⁵ **3:6** according to zeal – someone who is pursuing [διώκων] the gathering, according to the morality that is in the Torah – one who has become acceptable.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 Torah, 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 it or I have already myself completed it [τετελείωμαι], but I am pursuing [διώκω] it, if indeed I may reach it on the basis of which I also was reached by the Messiah Jesus.⁷² **3:13** Brothers, I do not think of myself as having reached it. 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 am pursuing [διώκω] the prize of the upward call of God in the Messiah Jesus.⁷⁴

3:15 Therefore, as many as want the goal [τέλειωι], 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 Suntutay to think the same way in the Lord.⁸³ **4:3** Yes, I ask also you, genuine fellow-worker, to lend help to these woman, 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 guard your hearts and minds because of the Messiah Jesus.⁸⁸

4:8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, what is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is well-spoken of, if something is morally excellent, if something is worthy of praise, think about these things.⁸⁹ **4:9** The things that you learned, received, heard, and have seen because of me, do 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 tribulation.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 ἄσὺν ἐπισκόποις καὶ διακόνους – In Acts 16, Paul saw a vision while he was in Troas 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 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. 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.

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.

³ Εὐχαριστῶ τῷ θεῷ μου ἐπὶ πάσῃ τῇ μνείᾳ 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 δεήσει μου ὑπὲρ πάντων ὑμῶν, μετὰ χαρᾶς τὴν δέησιν ποιοῦμενος – 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 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.

⁵ ἐπὶ τῇ κοινωνίᾳ ὑμῶν εἰς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον ἀπὸ ἡμέρας πρώτης ἡμέρας ἄχρι τοῦ νῦν – When Paul first arrived in Philippi around A.D. 50-52, he observed many of the people becoming believers in Jesus as the Messiah. This was “the first day” of their belief. Eight 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. Ten years of persevering belief for 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. 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 ten years down the road.

⁶ πεποιθὼς αὐτὸ τοῦτο, ὅτι ὁ ἐναρξάμενος ἐν ὑμῖν ἔργον ἀγαθὸν ἐπιτελέσει ἄχρι ἡμέρας Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ – 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, 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 ten years earlier 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).

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 possibly 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." 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. No one knows, not even Jesus (Matthew 24).

⁷ Καθώς ἐστὶν δίκαιον ἐμοὶ τοῦτο φρονεῖν ὑπὲρ πάντων ὑμῶν διὰ τὸ ἔχειν με ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ ὑμᾶς, ἔν τε τοῖς δεσμοῖς μου καὶ ὅτι ἐν τῇ ἀπολογίᾳ καὶ βεβαιώσει τοῦ εὐαγγελίου συγκοινωνοῦς μου τῆς ἡμετέρας πάντας ὑμᾶς ὄντας – Paul has received a nice gift in his imprisonment from the Philippians (cf. 4:18). As a result, he is encouraged as to the authenticity of their belief—by virtue of the fact that they care so deeply about an apostle of the Messiah, specifically the apostle who first told them about the Messiah! Thus, Paul expresses his genuine 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 participate in grace with him, which he has already mentioned on the basis of the evidence that he saw when he first visited them 10 years earlier and that he has received recently from Eraphroditus.

⁸ μάρτυς γὰρ 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.

⁹ Καὶ τοῦτο προσεύχομαι, ἵνα ἡ ἀγάπη ὑμῶν ἔτι μᾶλλον καὶ μᾶλλον ἡ περισσεύη ἐν ἐπιγνώσει καὶ πάσῃ αἰσθήσει – Paul is not explicit about the object of the Philippians' love that he hopes increases. And, in the light of v. 8 where he mentions the Messiah's feelings towards the Philippians, it makes sense that Paul is referring to the Philippians' love for God and the Messiah. It is this love in particular that 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 God, because a person really knows who God is, which includes His love and eternal mercy.

¹⁰ εἰς τὸ δοκιμάζειν ὑμᾶς τὰ διαφέροντα, ἵνα ἦτε 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 pursue morality, which will be radically different from the lives of other people in the world who remain in rebellion against God. In addition, there will be a monumental future advantage of this kind of life. God will consider them qualified for eternal salvation when Jesus returns and stands with them at the final judgment. They will lack the kind of fault, a rebellious heart, that would disqualify a morally depraved 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 moral depravity and rebellion. 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 person.

¹¹ πεπληρωμένοι καρπὸν δικαιοσύνης τὸν διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ εἰς δόξαν καὶ ἔπαινον θεοῦ – Considering that καρπὸν δικαιοσύνης is the 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 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 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 morally depraved human beings who do not deserve His forgiveness and eternal life.

¹² Γινώσκεις δὲ ὑμᾶς βούλομαι, ἀδελφοί, ὅτι τὰ κατ' ἐμὲ μᾶλλον εἰς προκοπὴν τοῦ εὐαγγελίου ἐλήλυθεν – Paul's God-given responsibility is 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 obsession with talking about Jesus as the Jewish Messiah.

So we never know who among those with whom we come in contact 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 ὄλῳ τῷ πραιτωρίῳ καὶ τοῖς λοιποῖς πάσιν – 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).

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

¹⁵ τινὲς μὲν καὶ διὰ φθόνον καὶ ἔριν, τινὲς δὲ καὶ δι’ εὐδοκίαν τὸν Χριστὸν κηρύσσουν – There are two kinds of people who are motivated by Paul’s imprisonment and success in seeing more Gentiles come to belief in Jesus to spread the biblical message in their environments in Rome. One group are genuinely concerned about presenting the truth of Jesus as the Messiah and of God’s grace. The other group are envious of something about Paul and, knowing that there are always elements hostile to Paul’s message, talk about Jesus hoping to create problems for Paul in his appeal to the emperor. Perhaps, they 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, so that the emperor sentences him to death. Paul definitely seems aware that this is a possibility. Cf. Acts 17:6,7 – “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; and Jason has welcomed them, and they all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus.’” Therefore, these are not the brothers mentioned in the previous verse, but are more likely unbelieving Gentiles who are forced to use a different strategy from the unbelievers in Thessalonica, because they cannot grab Paul and drag him before the city authorities. He is also there—ready to go before Nero, so that if these unbelievers can make it even more onerous 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 in their conversations with others, the more difficult they can make Paul’s defense before Nero.

¹⁶ οἱ μὲν ἐξ ἀγάπης, εἰδότες ὅτι εἰς ἀπολογίαν τοῦ εὐαγγελίου κείμεαι – These are the brothers of v. 14. Thus, “some people” have a love for God such that they want to see Paul’s responsibility of being the apostle to the Gentiles furthered along 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 courage to act like him. Therefore, they are enhancing the progress of the biblical message and seeing it spread among the people at Rome with good motives.

¹⁷ οἱ δὲ ἐξ ἐριθείας ὅτὼν Χριστὸν καταγγέλλουσιν, οὐχ ἀγνῶς, οἰόμενοι θλίψιν ἔγειρειν τοῖς δεσμοῖς μου.³ – It would seem that the stress which Paul could encounter would 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: ἄλλῃ ὅτι παντὶ τρόπῳ, εἴτε προφάσει εἴτε ἀληθείᾳ, Χριστὸς καταγγέλλεται, τ καὶ ἐν τούτῳ χαίρω.
Ἄλλὰ καὶ χαρήσομαι – 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 “Messiah.” 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 like 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 through whom sinners can receive God’s salvation according to His grace, meaning that they are communicating that God’s sovereign grace and Jesus’ death 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 he 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 γὰρ ὅτι τοῦτό μοι ἀποβήσεται εἰς σωτηρίαν διὰ τῆς ὑμῶν δεήσεως καὶ ἐπιχορηγίας τοῦ πνεύματος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ – 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 the same thing for him, even implying that his imprisonment and possible death depending upon Nero’s decision is a test of his own belief. The “this” in the context are 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. Then, along with the Philippians’ prayers for his eternal salvation in the midst of God’s promises and grace, Paul will obtain eternal salvation, and he knows it. Paul goes on to say that he looks forward to both life and death, thus making clearer that the “salvation” in this verse is eternal. He is also convinced that it is the internal work of the Spirit of God which will enable him to endure in his belief, whether through life or through death, i.e., regardless of

what effect the outside proclamation of the biblical message will have on his appeal to the emperor.

So, in this paragraph, Paul's focus is on eternal salvation and life.

²⁰ κατὰ τὴν ἁποκαταδοκίαν καὶ ἐλπίδα μου, ὅτι ἐν οὐδενὶ αἰσχυνοθήσομαι ἀλλ' ἐν πάσῃ παρρησίᾳ ὡς πάντοτε καὶ νῦν μεγαλυνθήσεται Χριστὸς ἐν τῷ σώματί μου, εἴτε διὰ ζωῆς εἴτε διὰ θανάτου – Paul's firm knowledge of the biblical message of the Messiah leads him to be eagerly excited and anticipating with confidence his own eternal salvation, which, in turn, convinces him that God will continue working in his heart to cause him to endure in his belief in Jesus as the Messiah right up to the point of his death, regardless of how it occurs. In fact, no sense of being embarrassed by such a message, which naturally produces hostility in others because of their rebellion against God, will dissuade him from boldly believing and proclaiming it, even if this results in his being put to death by Nero for it.

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.

²² εἰ δὲ τὸ ζῆν ἐν σαρκί, τοῦτό μοι καρπὸς ἔργου, καὶ τί αἰρήσομαι 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, 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. If he dies because this is what Nero decides, then he will existentially gain eternal life, 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, ἴπολλῳ [γὰρ] μάλλον κρεῖσσον – In fact, eternal life is actually a more attractive option than even being the apostle to the Gentiles on this earth, regardless of how much success he experiences as such. Nevertheless, the two options actually 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. He also must feel a deep responsibility simply to fulfill his role as the apostle to the Gentiles, thus motivating him to move in that direction if at all possible.

²⁴ τὸ δὲ ἔπιμένειν ἴέν] 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 in their belief would be of great benefit to them, indeed more benefit than if he died, because they would lose their authoritative source of the truth and have to rely on only one another to remind themselves of it.

²⁵ καὶ τοῦτο πεποιθὼς οἶδα ὅτι μενῶ καὶ παραμενῶ πάντιν 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, thus resulting in the growth of joy and belief with respect to the good news of God's mercy 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.

²⁷ Μόνον ἀξίως τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τοῦ Χριστοῦ πολιτεύεσθε, ἵνα εἴτε ἐλθὼν καὶ ἰδὼν ὑμᾶς εἴτε ἀπὸν ἄκούω τὰ περὶ ὑμῶν, ὅτι στήκετε ἐν ἐνὶ πνεύματι, μιᾷ ψυχῇ συναθλοῦντες τῇ πίστει τοῦ εὐαγγελίου – The only logical deduction from what Paul has said so far in this letter is that the Gentile, Christian readers should continue their pursuit of morality in light of the message of the Messiah that will result in their eternal salvations. And Paul assures them that this should happen regardless of whether or not he makes it back to Philippi after being released from prison.

Nevertheless, Paul will hear about this, no matter where he is, that they are collectively firm in their belief in the apostolic message of the Jewish Messiah and God's eternal mercy, just as he has heard now from Epaphroditus.

²⁸ καὶ μὴ πτορόμενοι ἐν μηδενὶ ὑπὸ τῶν ἀντικειμένων, ἥτις ἐστὶν αὐτοῖς ἐνδειξις ἀπολείας, ἴμῶν δὲ σωτηρίας, καὶ τοῦτο ἀπὸ θεοῦ – Their collective and firm belief will also result in courage in the face of opposition to the biblical message, which itself says to those who oppose them that they will incur God's anger and destruction at the judgment while the Philippian Christians will receive God's mercy and eternal escape from His condemnation, which all comes from God. 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.

²⁹ ὅτι ἴμῖν ἐχαρίσθη τὸ ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ, οὐ μόνον τὸ εἰς αὐτὸν πιστεῦν ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ πάσχειν – The Philippian Christians will receive God's mercy because belief in the message of the Messiah was gifted to them through God's grace. What was also gifted to them through God's grace was the opportunity to experience the hostility of the world to this message that results in their actually suffering on behalf of the Messiah.

³⁰ τὸν αὐτὸν ἀγῶνα ἔχοντες, οἷον εἶδετε ἐν ἐμοί καὶ νῦν ἀκούετε ἴεν ἐμοί – Because the Philippian Christians understand the wonderful, eternal effect of the biblical message, they will struggle like Paul in the midst of their own

suffering on behalf of it in regard to wanting to live and continue to encourage one another in believing the message and wanting to die and experience the magnificence of moral perfection and the eternal Kingdom of God.

³¹ Εἴ τις οὖν παράκλησις ἐν Χριστῷ, εἴ τι παραμύθιον ἀγάπης, εἴ τις κοινωνία πνεύματος, εἴ τις σπλάγχνα καὶ οἰκτιρμοί – Assuming that the Philippian Christians will continue to live and not die, Paul encourages them to look to the biblical message for how they live and treat one another within the community of authentic believers in the Jesus as the Jewish Messiah.

Knowing what the Messiah is all about should persuade them to hold on to this information for their eternal benefits. This message should also provide them with a level of comfort from the fact that God loves them for the sake of their eternal destinies. This message also indicates that they collectively participate in God's internal work through His Spirit in each one of them individually. And finally this message points to God's own compassion and sympathy towards them as sinners in desperate need of God's grace and mercy to rescue them from His eternal condemnation and destruction.

It makes more sense to see these elements as what God is doing and what is coming from Him because these things from God are what ultimately persuade and comfort Christians, even if other Christians are providing them with genuine love and comfort.

³² πληρώσατέ μου τὴν χαρὰν ἵνα τὸ αὐτὸ φρονήτε, τὴν αὐτὴν ἀγάπην ἔχοντες, σύμψυχοι, τὸ ἔν φρονούντες – Paul wants the upshot of their collective participation in the biblical message to be their adherence to the one true apostolic message and not stray from it. This, in turn, will give him the most satisfaction with respect to them and their Christianity. Paul's 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.

³³ μηδὲν κατ' ἐριθείαν ἢ μηδὲ κατὰ κενοδοξίαν ἀλλὰ τῇ ταπεινοφροσύνῃ ἀλλήλους ἡγούμενοι ἢ ὑπερέχοντας ἑαυτῶν – In turn, this division within the Philippian Christian community is causing those who are focusing on their external, religious behavior as that which gains God's approval 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. This is not unlike modern Christians' elevating 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 pursues acquiring a greater status within the community than anyone else's, because ultimately in God's eyes, none of them is superior, even if they have different roles. But these roles are graced to them just as their changed hearts, belief, goodness, and eternal salvations are graced to them by God, thus making God the source of their status and activity (cf. Ephesians 3). This means that they all have equal eternal status before God, even if they have different roles.

³⁴ μὴ τὰ ἑαυτῶν ἕκαστος ἑσκοποῦντες ἀλλὰ ὡς καὶ τὰ ἐτέρων ἕκαστοι – The humble 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 if some of them are finding an erroneous message regarding the Bible to be attractive (cf. Philippians 3), then he must comment on it.

³⁵ Τοῦτο ἢ φρονεῖτε ἐν ὑμῖν ὃ καὶ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ – Now Paul uses Jesus as an example of one who lived out the implications of the gospel accurately. The kind of life and attitude towards fellow believers and sinners that Paul just described and exhorted 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, 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).

³⁶ ὃς ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων ὁὐκ ἀρπαγμὸν ἡγήσατο τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ – While Jesus was carrying out his role as the Messiah on earth during his first visit, he did not 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. This was so that he could fulfill his earthly role by being rejected and even killed by people.

³⁷ ἀλλὰ ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν μορφὴν δούλου λαβὼν, ἐν ὁμοιώματι ἁνθρώπων γενόμενος καὶ σχήματι εὐρεθεὶς ὡς ἄνθρωπος – Even though Jesus was acting out the role of God in a human body during his visit, he also chose 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. He 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 worshipping him and without demanding that they worship him, which worship he rightly deserved.

³⁸ ἔταπεινώσεν ἑαυτὸν γενόμενος ὑπήκοος μέχρι θανάτου, θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ – Jesus' humility resulted in his willfully succumbing to the hostile attitudes and actions of the Jewish leaders, so that they could succeed in crucifying him on a cross. This is how far he went in laying aside his rightful claim of being the incarnate God and instead 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 ὅτι τὸ ὄνομα τὸ ὑπὲρ πάντων ὀνομα – Jesus' obedience to God in his role as the Messiah by being willing to die 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.

⁴⁰ ἵνα ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ πάντων γόνου 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 γόνου καὶ ἐξομολογήσεται πᾶσα γλῶσσα τῷ θεῷ).” The phrase “in heaven and on earth and 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 detected inwardness of believers, etc.

⁴¹ καὶ πᾶσα γλῶσσα ἔξομολογήσεται ὅτι κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός – 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.

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, ἀγαπητοὶ μου, καθὼς πάντοτε ὑπήκουσατε, μὴ ὡς ἐν τῇ παρουσίᾳ μου μόνον ἀλλὰ νῦν πολλῷ μᾶλλον ἐν τῇ ἀπουσίᾳ μου, μετὰ φόβου καὶ τρόμου τὴν ἑαυτῶν σωτηρίαν κατεργάζεσθε – Because of Jesus, Paul exhorts the Philippian Christians to be committed to living the same kind of life as Jesus, i.e., one that could result in the world's putting them to death, while they appropriately fear God and His threat of eternal condemnation towards those who persist in rebelling against Him. And Paul would have them do this whether he is physically with them or not.

⁴³ θεὸς γὰρ ἐστὶν ὁ ἐνεργῶν ἐν ὑμῖν καὶ τὸ θέλειν καὶ τὸ ἐνεργεῖν ὑπὲρ τῆς εὐδοκίας – Theologically, it makes sense that the Philippian Christians commit themselves to living like Jesus in a hostile world because this is exactly what God is causing them to do in order that He may be pleased with what authentic believers do according to His eternal plans and purposes.

While it's possible to interpret καὶ τὸ θέλειν καὶ τὸ ἐνεργεῖν as referring to God's willing and God's doing, it makes more sense to see these as speaking of the Philippian Christians' desire to pursue obedience to God and their acting in such a way that their lives do correspond to the gospel and good news of God's mercy through Jesus the Messiah. The general principle is that in line with His divine determinism, God causes authentic believers to persist in desiring and acting in such a way that their lives match what He requires and describes as the characteristics of those who will qualify for His eternal mercy and life. Cf. Galatians 5:22,26 and the “fruit of the Spirit,” i.e., the effects of God's internal work in morally depraved human beings that ranges from authentic belief in the apostolic message to love and joy.

⁴⁴ Πάντα ποιεῖτε χωρὶς γογγυσμῶν καὶ διαλογισμῶν – The circumstances of life, particularly if they involve great hardship, which may very well be the case for the Philippians who seemed to be experiencing some intense opposition to the biblical message in Philippi, may lead a person to be tempted to grumble against God and even argue with Him about how He is governing the cosmos. Paul encourages his readers to neither grumble nor argue with God, which is probably an encouragement to himself at the same time to avoid these.

⁴⁵ ἵνα ᾠγένησθε ἄμεμπτοι καὶ ἀκέραιοι, τέκνα θεοῦ ἄμωμα 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 that other people inject into the world. Thus, Paul is encouraging his Philippian readers to live morally and rightly in the midst of all their contemporaries who are doing the opposite.

⁴⁶ λόγον ζῶης ἐπέχοντες, εἰς καύχημα ἐμοὶ εἰς ἡμέραν Χριστοῦ, ὅτι οὐκ εἰς κενὸν ἔδραμον οὐδὲ εἰς κενὸν ἔκοπιασα – The Philippians' willingness not to 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.

⁴⁷ Ἀλλὰ εἰ καὶ σπένδομαι ἐπὶ τῇ θυσίᾳ καὶ λειτουργίᾳ τῆς πίστεως ὑμῶν, χαίρω καὶ συγχαίρω πᾶσιν ὑμῖν – In addition to the endurance of the Philippian’s belief in the midst of suffering providing Paul with a future opportunity to boast humbly about his work on earth, his suffering as an imprisoned and accused criminal in Rome, that could even result in his being executed by Nero, provides the Philippians with an opportunity to rejoice with him as God causes him to be a kind of offering to Him through his suffering. Indeed, even if God sacrifices Paul on the altar of capital punishment in Rome and thus ends his role as the apostle to the Gentiles on earth, he will rejoice in what God is doing, and he will rejoice along with the Philippians’ rejoicing in what God is doing. He also would see his death as a way to worship God for the benefit of the Philippians’ belief, that they could understand further that death is not an end for an authentic believer, but only the beginning of eternal life.

⁴⁸ τὸ δὲ αὐτὸ καὶ ὑμεῖς χαίρετε καὶ συγχαίρετέ μοι – Paul repeats himself and says that he is rejoicing in what God is doing in his life, and, therefore, the Philippians should rejoice with him in what God is doing in their lives, which as he has said is to bring the “suffering of the Messiah” into their experience too as they encounter opposition to the gospel (cf. 1:27-30).

⁴⁹ Ἐλπίζω δὲ ἐν κυρίῳ Ἰησοῦ Τιμόθεον ταχέως πέμψαι ὑμῖν, ἵνα κἀγὼ 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 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 Acts 20:1,2 as well as Acts 20:3-6, both third missionary journey). Nevertheless, it seems that he is concerned about something in their circumstances, i.e., 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 it is united in the apostolic message. Then, Timothy can find this out and return with this good news to Paul wherever he might be hopefully 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 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 in the apostolic message.

⁵¹ οἱ πάντες γὰρ τὰ ἑαυτῶν ζητοῦσιν, οὐ τὰ Ἰησοῦ 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.

⁵² τὴν δὲ δοκιμὴν αὐτοῦ γινώσχετε, 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.

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 any event, he wants to wait until he gets more information about his own situation before he sends Timothy to the Philippians. Thus, he can send Timothy without his needing him instead.

⁵⁴ πέποιθα δὲ ἐν κυρίῳ ὅτι καὶ αὐτὸς ταχέως ἐλεύσομαι – Nevertheless, Paul also has somehow, and he does not tell us how, become convinced that Nero really will release him, resulting in his own traveling to Philippi in person and being able to help them in their belief and being unified in what message to which they adhere.

⁵⁵ Ἀναγκαῖον δὲ ἡγησάμην 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 the Philippians and, subsequently, became so ill that he almost died. The Philippians had found out about Epaphroditus’ illness and had also become stressed out over it. Therefore, once Epaphroditus recovered, Paul considered it only right that he return to Philippi so that he could shown them that he was completely healthy again and alive. Obviously, Epaphroditus is carrying this letter with him.

⁵⁶ ἐπειδὴ ἐπιποθῶν ἦν ἵνα ἴδω ὑμᾶς καὶ ἀδελφῶν, διότι ἠκούσατε ὅτι ἠσθένησεν – 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.

⁵⁷ καὶ γὰρ ἠσθένησεν παραπλήσιον θανάτῳ ἀλλὰ ὁ θεὸς ἠλέησεν αὐτόν, οὐκ αὐτόν 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. The humanly natural thing is to rejoice in the salvation and eternal life of a dear departed one, while also grieving their loss because of the way God has designed us in the present realm. Neither response should be avoided, especially if even the apostle Paul experienced both.

⁵⁸ σπουδαιότερος 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 αὐτὸν ἐν κυρίῳ μετὰ πάσης χαρᾶς καὶ τοὺς τοιοῦτους 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.

⁶⁰ ὅτι διὰ τὸ ἔργον Ἰησοῦ μέχρι θανάτου ἠγγισεν ἑαυτοῦ ἵνα ἀναπληρώσῃ τὸ ὑμῶν ὑστέρημα τῆς πρὸς με λειτουργίας – In the midst of not considering anyone of them as superior to any others, they can also hold Epaphroditus in high regard because of his willingness to risk his life for the Messiah. Paul says that Epaphroditus has made up for what is lacking 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 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 doing something like that which someone else has done in such a way that it does contribute to the overall effect of what the initial person had done. 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 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. For example, here, 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 in the midst of carrying out their plans.

⁶¹ Τὸ λοιπὸν, ἀδελφοί μου, χαίρετε ἐν κυρίῳ. τὰ αὐτὰ γράφειν ὑμῖν ἐμοὶ μὲν οὐκ ὀκνηρόν, ὑμῖν δὲ ἰσχυρὸν – The first part of this verse is 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. Therefore, they can 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. The second part of this verse begins another section in which Paul will identify a particular group of opponents of the apostolic message, but it seems also that his comments about them are simply a repetition of what he has already taught the Philippians on other occasions. He says that repeating this information is not a problem for him, probably because he considers it to be not only vital to the health of their own belief, but also very easy for him since it is something he has firmly in mind because of the number of times he has had to address this issue (cf. Romans, Galatians, 2 Corinthians, etc.), i.e., the issue of erroneous Jewish thinking and teaching about the Mosaic Covenant and Jesus that is characterized by referring to what a person has done outwardly to obey the covenant as the basis for his receiving God’s mercy and eternal life instead Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection being the basis. In addition, there will be the element of relying on a person’s own moral strength to please God and gain His blessings rather than on the intervention of Jesus alone.

⁶² Βλέπετε τοὺς κύνας, βλέπετε τοὺς κακοὺς ἐργάτας, βλέπετε τὴν κατατομήν – 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 moral depravity without a changed heart by the Spirit of God. These Jewish men must be referring to their own circumcision as that which demonstrates their proper obedience to 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 ἐσμεν ἡ περιτομή, οἱ πνεύματι ἰσχυροὶ 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 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 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 idea that obedience to the Mosaic Covenant is what is necessary.

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. 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 περιτομῆ ὀκταήμερος, ἐκ γένους Ἰσραήλ, 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.

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.

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.

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.

He is also a Pharisee, someone who holds strictly to both the written and oral commandments of and derived from the OT 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 blessing of eternal life.

⁶⁶ κατὰ ῥῆλος διώκων τὴν ἐκκλησίαν ὧ, κατὰ δικαιοσύνην τὴν ἐν νόμῳ γενόμενος ἄμεμπτος – In this next verse, Paul continues the list of his external qualities by which he could potentially deserve God’s blessings. By the first of the two qualities, he could mean one of two things, 1) he 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, or 2) he 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.

By the second of the two qualities, he means that from an external standpoint, he was doing everything he could according to the 613 commandments of the Mosaic Covenant, thus *in his mind* making himself a moral and good person before God.

⁶⁷ [Ἀλλὰ] ἄτινα ῥῆν μοι κέρδη, ταῦτα ἤγημαι διὰ τὸν Χριστὸν ζημίαν – However, once Paul faced squarely into what God has declared through the Messiah, especially we can assume through the Messiah’s death by crucifixion, he realized that there is nothing that he can do even in obedience to the Mosaic Covenant that commends him to God. He is too profoundly and incurably evil to please God in and of himself, whether he is trying to please Him within the context of the Mosaic Covenant for the Jews or not. 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 ὑπέρχον τῆς γνώσεως ὧ Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ τοῦ κυρίου μου, δι’ ὃν τὰ πάντα ἐζημιώθην, καὶ ἡγοῦμαι σκύβαλα ὧ, ἵνα Χριστὸν κερδήσω – This verse is not saying too much more than the previous verse, that Paul understands that his external qualities as a Covenant-obedient Jew are absolute garbage in comparison to knowing and believing in Jesus as his Messiah.

⁶⁹ καὶ εὔρεθῶ ἐν αὐτῷ, μὴ ἔχων ἐμὴν δικαιοσύνην τὴν ἐκ νόμου ἀλλὰ τὴν διὰ πίστεως Χριστοῦ, τὴν ἐκ θεοῦ δικαιοσύνην ἐπὶ τῇ πίστει – 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.

Paul thought that he has 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).

⁷⁰ τοῦ γινῶναι αὐτὸν καὶ τὴν δύναμιν τῆς ἀναστάσεως αὐτοῦ καὶ ὧ[τὴν] κοινωνίαν ὧ[τῶν] 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 acknowledging the depth of his sin and depravity 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.

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 Thessalonians 4 and Revelation 20). This will constitute his surviving the judgment of God with Jesus as his priest and intercessor.

⁷² Οὐχ ὅτι ἦδη ἔλαβον ἢ ἦδη τετελείωμαι, διώκω δὲ εἰ καὶ καταλάβω, ἐφ’ ᾧ καὶ κατελήμφθην ὑπὸ Χριστοῦ ἢ [Ἰησοῦ] – Paul does not state explicitly why he has to say this, but he assures the Philippians that he himself has not yet experienced the ultimate goal of his life, being raised from the dead and acquiring moral perfection and immortality. Nevertheless, 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 mean God’s grace along with God’s sovereign choice to extend mercy to him, because there is no other basis by which a morally depraved 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, He is doing the same through His grace in Paul so that Paul can pursue his goal, i.e., he can work out his own salvation with fear and trembling (cf. 2:12,13).

⁷³ ἀδελφοί, ἐγὼ ἐμαυτὸν οὐ λογίζομαι κατελιφέναι· ἐν δὲ, τὰ μὲν ὀπίσω ἐπιλανθανόμενος τοῖς δὲ ἔμπροσθεν ἐπεκτεινόμενος – Regardless of what successes and failures Paul has experienced in the past, whether his numerous external qualities through being a Covenant-obedient Jew or his one authentic belief in Jesus caused by the Spirit of God, he sees these as in the past and now looks only forward in his life, striving to be obedient in the future in line with God’s moral commandments and acquire the promise of God’s blessing of eternal life and mercy.

⁷⁴ κατὰ σκοπὸν διώκω εἰς τὸ βραβεῖον τῆς ἄνω κλήσεως τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ – If Jesus were to return while Paul is still alive, he would hear Jesus’ call to him to rise from the earth and join him in the air for the purpose of participating in the eternal Kingdom of God. Even if Paul dies before Jesus’ return, his call to him would still be an upward one, i.e., to rise from the dead, which is probably more what Paul means in this context (cf. 3:11).

⁷⁵ Ὅσοι οὖν τέλειοι, τοῦτο φρονῶμεν καὶ εἴ τι ἐτέρως φρονεῖτε, καὶ τοῦτο ὁ θεὸς ὑμῖν ἀποκαλύψει – Because Paul has been talking about striving to reach his goal of eternal life, it makes sense to translate τέλειοι as “want to reach the goal,” i.e., people who are mature 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. 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.

⁷⁶ πλὴν εἰς δὲ ἐφθάσαμεν, 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 obeying the Mosaic Covenant as a necessary condition.

⁷⁷ Συμμητῆραί μου γίνεσθε, ἀδελφοί, καὶ σκοπεῖτε τοὺς οὗτος 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. As a result, he urges the Philippian Christians to follow their example and model their thinking and choices after them.

⁷⁸ πολλοὶ γὰρ περιπατοῦσιν οὐς πολλάκις ἔλεγον ὑμῖν, νῦν δὲ καὶ κλαίων λέγω, τὸν ἐχθρὸν 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 considering the point of 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 His grace and Jesus’ advocacy. The divine irony though is that this can occur only if God causes it to be by the inner work of His Spirit.

⁷⁹ ὃν τὸ τέλος ἀπόλεια, ὃν ὁ θεὸς ἢ κοιλία καὶ ἢ 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

produce a guilty conscience, even when these actions are an attempt to obey the Mosaic Covenant 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.

⁸⁰ ἡμῶν γὰρ τὸ πολίτευμα ἐν οὐρανοῖς ὑπάρχει, ἐξ οὗ καὶ σωτήρα ἀπεκδεχόμεθα κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν – Paul now refers to the actual government from which his passport has been issued so to speak. It is not a temporary government in the present realm. It is a future, permanent government which originates from outside the present realm (“in the heavens”) and from which Jesus will come when he returns to set up the beginning of the eternal Kingdom of God called the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20. Jesus will save from God’s eternal condemnation and destruction (cf. 3:19) those who have embraced him as lord, king (the Messiah, i.e., Anointed One, from the line of David), and priest.

With the use of the verb ὑπάρχει = exists, τὸ πολίτευμα is a metonymy referring to the place where Paul and believers will be citizens in the future, i.e., in the eternal Kingdom of God.

⁸¹ ὃς μετασχηματίζει τὸ σῶμα τῆς ταπεινώσεως ἡμῶν ἰσομορφον τῷ σώματι τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ κατὰ τὴν ἐνέργειαν τοῦ δύνασθαι αὐτὸν καὶ ὑποτάξει αὐτῷ τὰ πάντα – 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) morally depraved 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. This will all take place, Paul says, when Jesus powerfully subjects all things, including all people around the world in spite of their continued rebellion against God, to himself. He will rule the millennial kingdom on the land of Israel, and he will rule the world even though there will be people who do not fundamentally desire him to do so.

⁸² Ὡστε, ἀδελφοί μου ἀγαπητοὶ καὶ ἐπιπόθητοι, χαρὰ καὶ στέφανός μου, οὕτως στήκετε ἐν κυρίῳ, ἄγαπητοί – 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 definition of morality. Paul also calls the Philippian Christians his “joy and crown” because of the effect that their having become followers of Jesus has had on him emotionally and the fact that 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 prize for fulfilling his responsibility as the apostle to the Gentiles in the city of Philippi.

⁸³ Εὐδοκίαν παρακαλῶ καὶ Συντύχην παρακαλῶ τὸ αὐτὸ φρονεῖν ἐν κυρίῳ – Apparently, there is some disagreement between these two women, and Paul, having heard about it, urges them to unite in their understanding and pursuit of the gospel.

⁸⁴ καὶ ἐρωτῶ καὶ σέ, γνήσιε ἰσχυγε, συλλαμβάνου αὐταῖς, αἵτινες ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ συνήθησάν μοι μετὰ καὶ Κλήμεντος καὶ τῶν ἰσοπῶν συνεργῶν μου, ὧν τὰ ὀνόματα ἐν βίβλῳ ζῶης – 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 probably is also a member of the Philippian Christian community.

⁸⁵ Χαίrete ἐν κυρίῳ πάντοτε· πάλιν ἐρῶ, χαίrete – 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 ὑμῶν 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 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.

⁸⁷ μηδὲν μεριμνᾶτε, ἀλλ’ ἐν παντὶ τῇ προσευχῇ καὶ τῇ δεήσει μετὰ εὐχαριστίας τὰ αἰτήματα ὑμῶν γνωρίζεσθε πρὸς τὸν θεόν – Whenever the Philippians feel anxious and need something to assuage their anxiety, Paul encourages them to pray to God for this, while they also thank God—I assume for everything which He is about in regard to His promises, love, faithfulness, etc. in the midst of their anxiety.

⁸⁸ καὶ ἡ εἰρήνη τοῦ θεοῦ ἡ ὑπερέχουσα πάντα νοῦν φρουρήσει τὰς καρδίας ὑμῶν καὶ τὰ νοήματα ὑμῶν ἐν ἰσχυρίῳ 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” (ἐπάροις κύριος τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ σέ καὶ δόξῃ 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 should guard the hearts and minds of Philippian believers in the midst of the circumstances they encounter in this world, circumstances that make them anxious 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 from being overwhelmed by their anxious circumstances.

⁸⁹ Τὸ λοιπόν, ἀδελφοί, ὅσα ἐστὶν ἀληθῆ, ὅσα σεμνά, ὅσα δίκαια, ὅσα αγνά, ὅσα προσφιλή, ὅσα εὐφρημα, εἴ τις ἀρετὴ καὶ εἴ τις ἔπαινος ἤ, ταῦτα λογίσεσθε – And when it comes to their minds, Paul urges the Philippian Christians to make all efforts to think about those things associated with God, His goodness, His love, His magnificence, and His faithfulness and promises.

Whatever is true is specifically the biblical truth.

Whatever is honorable is 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 is right is God's explanation of reality that includes His definition of morality which is the standard for our behavior.

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

Whatever is lovely is intellectually and morally beautiful, i.e., truth and obedience of God.

Whatever is well-spoken of is that of which God speaks well, i.e., truth and morality.

Whatever is morally excellent is pure, biblical moral behavior by human beings.

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

⁹⁰ ἅ καὶ ἐμάθετε καὶ παρελάβετε καὶ ἠκούσατε καὶ εἶδετε ἐν ἐμοί, ταῦτα πράσσετε καὶ ὁ θεὸς τῆς εἰρήνης ἔσται μεθ' ὑμῶν – To sum up, Paul says that whatever he has taught them either through his words or his actions as the content of the apostolic message, he wants them to align their lives with his instructions.

And he says that if this is the kind of people they are, then 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.

⁹¹ Ἐχάρην δὲ ἐν κυρίῳ μεγάλως ὅτι ἤδη ποτὲ ἀνεθάλετε ἢ τὸ ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ φρονεῖν, ἐφ' ᾧ καὶ ἐφρονεῖτε, ἠκαιρεῖσθε δὲ – 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.

⁹³ οἶδα καὶ ταπεινοῦσθαι, οἶδα καὶ περισσεύειν ἐν παντὶ καὶ ἐν πάσιν 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.

⁹⁴ πάντα ἰσχύω ἐν τῷ ἐνδυναμοῦντί με – It is God's strength working within Paul (God's Spirit!) 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 ἐποίησατε συγκοινωνήσαντές μου τῇ θλίψει – In spite of the fact that Paul would have survived by the grace and strength of God 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.

⁹⁶ οἶδατε ὅδε καὶ ὑμεῖς, Φιλιππηῖοι, 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 Θεσσαλονίκη καὶ ἄπαξ καὶ δις εἰς 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 Ἵ δεξάμενος παρὰ Ἐπαφροδίτου 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 Levites, and Paul is delighted that Epaphroditus has brought such a generous gift from them.

¹⁰⁰ ὁ δὲ θεός μου ἱκανώσκει πᾶσαν χρείαν 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 their need for persevering 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 to be possessed by the Messiah Jesus upon his return.

¹⁰¹ τῷ δὲ 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 ἑτοῦ 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.