

Philippians 1

A Translation with Interpretation by James Garriss

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Introduction

Philippians 1:1-11

Limits of the Text

This is Paul's introduction to his letter. It includes a greeting, a prayer of thanksgiving, and a prayer of intercession.

Translation

1:1 *From Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Christ Jesus, to all the holy ones in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi including the overseers and deacons:*¹ 2 grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

3 I thank my God every time I remember you, 4 always praying **with joy** in every prayer of mine for all of you 5 because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now 6 having been convinced of this very thing: The one who began a good work in you will be finishing *it* until the day of Christ Jesus. 7 For it is right for me to feel this way about all of you because I have you in my heart, *since* you are partners with me in grace both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. 8 For God is my witness that I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus. 9 And I pray that your love might abound even more and more in knowledge and all discernment, 10 so that you may be able to determine the things that really matter, so that you might be pure and blameless on the day of Christ, 11 having been filled with the fruit of righteousness that is through Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God.

Interpretation

1:1 Παῦλος καὶ Τιμόθεος δούλοι Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ πᾶσιν τοῖς ἁγίοις ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ τοῖς οὖσιν ἐν Φιλίπποις σὺν ἐπισκόποις καὶ διακόνοις,² 2 χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

1:1 *From Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Christ Jesus, to all the holy ones in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi including the overseers and deacons:* 2 grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

This letter begins with a very typical format, specifying the sender and the recipients and then giving a greeting that wished peace upon the recipients. The letter is from Paul and Timothy, yet it's obvious that Paul is the primary author. From verse 3 onward he referred to himself using the first person singular ("I"), not the plural ("we"), and the biographical section in chapter 3 could only be a reference to Paul. Paul

¹ Words in *italics* were implied in the original Greek, words in **bold** were emphasized.

² The Greek text is NA27.

included Timothy in the introduction because Timothy was with Paul when they founded the church in Philippi (Ac 16:11-40) and because Paul planned to send Timothy to them soon (2:19).

In many of the churches that Paul wrote to, such as the churches in Galatia, his apostolic authority was being attacked, and so he had to defend himself. In those letters, he titled himself as an apostle. He had no such concerns in Philippi, but there were issues concerning humility and unity, so in this letter he titled Timothy and himself as bondservants (δοῦλοι). Although this word was used in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, to denote men like Moses, Joshua, and David as servants of the Lord, Paul's use of the word was more likely tied to Greek culture, where it was used of slaves. The word emphasized total commitment and permanent allegiance; the will of the bondservant was totally subjected to the will of the master.³

Paul addressed his letter to all the holy ones in Christ Jesus. Holy ones (τοῖς ἁγίοις) refers to everyone within the church, not to a select group of super Christians;⁴ this title emphasized that they had been set apart from sin and consecrated to a life of service to God. They were holy because they were in Christ Jesus (ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ). To be in Christ means to be in union with him; "believers are united with Christ in his death and resurrection, and the new corporate life into which they have entered is their share in his resurrection life."⁵ Being "in Christ" is the defining reality for who a Christian is and what he does. Paul wrote to all the holy ones, not just some in church; in fact, he used the word "all" three other times in the introduction alone (1:3, 7, and 8), emphasizing the unity he desired in the church.

Paul wrote to the holy ones including the overseers and deacons.⁶ In the church there are two offices, overseer and deacon, and Paul called out both of them; this is the only letter where he did so, other than the Pastoral Epistles, where these offices are defined. He did this most likely because he wanted to acknowledge these leaders and remind them that they would be the ones who would work to resolve the issues with humility and unity in their church. The first office is the overseer (ἐπισκόπος).⁷ In the Greco-Roman world, this title was used by various people who had the function or office of a guardianship; that is, they were responsible for safekeeping or seeing that something was done in the correct way. "This word was taken over by the Christian community, who used it for those called overseers who had a special interest in guarding the apostolic tradition."⁸ Overseers were the leaders of the church, and their primary

³ Arndt, 260; Zhodiatas, 1401.

⁴ The words "saints" is used in some religious traditions to refer to those who were somehow special and better than others. I translated this as the more literal "holy ones" to avoid confusion.

⁵ O'Brien, 46.

⁶ The preposition οὐν has the idea of "together with," but as holy ones includes overseers and deacons (i.e., holy ones is not a different group from overseers and deacons), I translated it as "including."

⁷ This word could be translated as superintendent or supervisor.

⁸ Arndt, 379.

function was to take spiritual care of the people. This same title is used of Christ in 1 Pt 2:25, where he is called the overseer (or guardian) of our souls. This office is also referred to by the titles of pastor and elder;⁹ each of these three titles highlight a different aspect of same office. The qualifications of an overseer are found in 1 Ti 3:1-7 and Ti 1:5-9.

The second office is the deacon (διακόνους). This word was used literally of a slave or a servant, one who gets something done at the behest of a superior.¹⁰ Like overseer, it was taken by the church to refer to the office of those who serve the church. When this word is found in the New Testament, it doesn't necessarily refer to the office of deacon; it might be referring to an ordinary servant.¹¹ If the word is referring to the office of deacon, that must be determined by the context; in this verse (1:1) it is used together with the office of overseer and thus refers to the office of deacon. Deacons served the overseers,¹² thus freeing them to spend more time in prayer and preaching (Ac 6:1-4), and they also served the members of the church.¹³ The qualifications of a deacon are found in 1 Ti 3:8-13.

Having listed the senders and recipients, Paul then wished grace and peace upon his readers. A typical letter in Paul's day began with *chairein*, a word that meant "greetings." Paul substituted a similar sounding word, *charis*, grace, to which he added the traditional Jewish greeting of peace.¹⁴ While these words were expressed as a wish—Paul wanted them to have grace and peace—they were also a summation of the entire gospel. "Grace, the unmerited, undeserved saving work of God in Christ Jesus brings believers into peace, harmonious relationships with God and with each other."¹⁵ Paul concluded his greeting by affirming that grace and peace come from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

This short salutation is very Christocentric. Paul and Timothy were bondservants of *Jesus Christ*. The holy ones were *in Christ Jesus*. Grace and peace come *from Jesus Christ*. If Paul's readers were going to live in a manner worthy of the gospel by standing firm and being united—that's the theme of this letter—then clearly they would only be able to do so through Jesus.

3 Εὐχαριστῶ τῷ θεῷ μου ἐπὶ πάσῃ τῇ μνεΐα ὑμῶν 4 πάντοτε ἐν πάσῃ δεήσει μου ὑπὲρ πάντων ὑμῶν, μετὰ χαρᾶς τὴν δέησιν ποιούμενος,

⁹ Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Pt 5:1-2.

¹⁰ Arndt, 230.

¹¹ Such as in Mt 22:13.

¹² Zodiates, 1249.

¹³ Swanson, DBLG 1356.

¹⁴ Paul used this greeting in most of his letters.

¹⁵ Hansen, 43.

3 I thank my God every time I remember you, 4 always praying with joy in every prayer of mine for all of you

After the greetings, it was typical in ancient letters to give a health-wish, which conveyed the idea that the reader hoped that his recipient was doing well.¹⁶ Today we might say, “I trust this letter finds you doing well.” Paul, however, took this common element and converted it into a distinctly Christian prayer, which he included in all of his letters (except Galatians). His prayer in 1:3-11 “functions rhetorically as an introduction to state the reason for the letter and prepare the audience for his instruction.”¹⁷ But this prayer was not merely some required element in a letter; this is what he genuinely prayed for the church at Philippi. In the first half of the prayer (1:3-8), he thanked God for them; in the second half (1:9-11), he interceded for them.

Paul thanked his God every time he remembered his friends. The verb thank (Εὐχαριστῶ) means to express appreciation or gratefulness for benefits or blessings.¹⁸ To remember (μνεία)¹⁹ is to recall information from memory or to think about someone again.²⁰ Every time he thought about the people of this church, he expressed his gratitude to God in prayer. The reasons for his gratitude are given in verses 5 and 6.

In verse 4, Paul revealed more about his prayers for the Philippians. First, he prayed specifically. The words prayer (δεήσει) and praying (δέησιν²¹) are the same word, and both mean an “urgent request to meet a need, exclusively addressed to God.”²² Though separated by great distance, Paul knew what the church needed and asked God for it. (Paul further described for what he asked in 1:9-11.) Second, he always prayed with joy. Paul he was in jail, yet he emphasized that he felt joy (χαρᾶς) when he prayed for them. Joy is a feeling of gladness and happiness; it is a fruit of the Spirit (Ga 5:22) that “transcends present circumstances.”²³ “Believers who possess God-given joy do not focus on themselves, even in the midst of pain or difficult circumstances. They are rather concerned about their fellow believers’ pain, difficult circumstances, hardships, failures, and sorrows, and they earnestly intercede for them.”²⁴ Third, he prayed for all of them, not just some. Though there were divisions within the church (2:2-4; 4:2), Paul was unwilling to take sides. He said, “I pray with joy for *all of you*” (1:3); “I feel this way about *all of you*” (1:7); and “I long for *all of you*” (1:8). Everyone in the church was important to him.

¹⁶ Fee, 72. John included a health wish in 3 John 2.

¹⁷ Hansen, 44.

¹⁸ Arndt, 415.

¹⁹ Remembered is actually a noun in the Greek, so the sentence could more literally be translated as, “I thank my God upon every remembrance of you.” See the NASB95, ESV, HCSB, and LEB.

²⁰ Louw, 1:346.

²¹ The Greek δέησιν ποιούμενος is literally “making prayer,” which is awkward; thus I smoothed it to “praying.”

²² Arndt, 213. They could be translated as request, plea, or petition.

²³ Fee, 81.

²⁴ MacArthur, 22.

5 ἐπὶ τῇ κοινωνίᾳ ὑμῶν εἰς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον ἀπὸ τῆς πρώτης ἡμέρας ἄχρι τοῦ νῦν, 6 πεπειθῶς αὐτὸ τοῦτο, ὅτι ὁ ἐναρξάμενος ἐν ὑμῖν ἔργον ἀγαθὸν ἐπιτελέσει ἄχρι ἡμέρας Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ.

5 because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now 6 and having been convinced of this very thing: The one who began a good work in you will be finishing *it* until the day of Christ Jesus.

In the previous verse, Paul said that he prayed for the Philippians with joy; in verses 5 and 6, he explained what gave him such joy. The first reason that Paul had joy was that the Philippians partnered with him in the gospel. The Greek word *koinonia* (κοινωνία) was used to describe a variety of close relationships and associations “involving mutual interests and sharing”²⁵ during Paul’s day, including “marriage and family relationships, friendships, business partnerships, common ownership of property, citizenship, and religious organizations.”²⁶ There were two ways in which the Philippians were partners with Paul in the gospel. The first way was a close association of friends who shared a common faith in the gospel.²⁷ This was true from the first day they believed the gospel and was still true “now,” the time of his writing. The second way was a participation in the gospel. Gospel (εὐαγγέλιον) literally means good news, and it’s the glad tidings that God sent his Son, Jesus, to die on a cross as the payment for man’s sins, thus restoring the broken relationship between God and man. God then raised Jesus from the dead, and he ascended into heaven, thus giving those who repent of their sins and believe in Jesus victory over sin and Satan. The Philippian church participated in this gospel many different ways: They defended and confirmed the gospel (1:7); they prayed for Paul (1:19); they suffered for the sake of the gospel (1:28-29); they had a vibrant testimony in a crooked and perverse society (2:15); they sent Epaphroditus to minister to Paul (2:25); and they supported him financially, even when no one else did (4:15) and despite their own poverty (2 Co 8:2-3). It is easy to see how Paul had such joy when he thought about them.

The second reason that Paul had joy was that he was convinced that God would be finishing the good work he began in them. To be convinced (πεπειθῶς) means to be persuaded or assured of something to the point of putting one’s confidence in it.²⁸ Paul was absolutely certain that God would be finishing their good work, the Philippians’ salvation. To finish (ἐπιτελέσει) means to bring to an end something that was started²⁹ or to complete or attain a goal.³⁰ God began their salvation, and he “will be finishing

²⁵ Arndt, 552.

²⁶ Hansen, 48.

²⁷ Hansen, 48.

²⁸ Arndt, 791.

²⁹ Arndt, 383.

³⁰ Swanson, DBLG 2200.

it”³¹ until a time in the future, the day of Christ, when it would be finished. Did Paul expect God to be finishing their salvation, or did he expect the Philippians to be finishing it? Both are statements are true. He told the Philippians to live worthy of the gospel (1:27), work out their salvation (2:12), and reach for the things that are ahead (3:13), yet he also said that God would be finishing it. Perhaps the clearest explanation of this “both/and” answer is found in 2:12-13, where Paul told them to work out their own salvation, knowing that God produces the desire and ability to do just that. “Those who will be saved in the future live holy lives in the present, but the holiness that characterizes their lives is God’s work from beginning to end.”³²

7 Καθώς ἐστὶν δίκαιον ἐμοὶ τοῦτο φρονεῖν ὑπὲρ πάντων ὑμῶν διὰ τὸ ἔχειν με ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ ὑμᾶς, ἐν τε τοῖς δεσμοῖς μου καὶ ἐν τῇ ἀπολογία καὶ βεβαιώσει τοῦ εὐαγγελίου συγκοινωνοῦς μου τῆς χάριτος πάντας ὑμᾶς ὄντας. 8 μάρτυς γάρ μου ὁ θεὸς ὡς ἐπιποθῶ πάντας ὑμᾶς ἐν σπλάγχνοις Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ.

7 For it is right for me to feel this way about all of you because I have you in my heart, since you are partners with me in grace both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. 8 For God is my witness that I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.

Paul said that it was right for him to feel this way about the Philippians. Verse 7 is part of one long, convoluted sentence that began in verse 3, but it functions, along with verse 8, as a short digression,³³ a break in Paul’s explanation of his prayers for his readers, in which he explains why³⁴ is it right, even obligatory,³⁵ for him to have this thankful, joyful attitude about them. The word translated as “feel” (φρονεῖν) has a very broad range of meanings, including both thinking and feeling; Fee defined it as a certain mindset that included both attitudes and disposition.³⁶ The translation “feel,” though perhaps colloquial, corresponds well with the attitudes of thankfulness and joy in the previous verses.

The first reason why Paul felt thankful and joyful was because he had the Philippians in his heart.³⁷ As the heart (καρδίᾳ) was considered to be the center of human consciousness and the seat of a person’s will, volition, and emotions,³⁸ Paul was making

³¹ The verb “will be finishing” is in the future tense, yet it has an ongoing sense because the preposition (ἄχρι) means “until.” Paul used the same verb when he asked the churches in Galatia, “Are you so foolish? After beginning by the Spirit, are you now *being completed* by the flesh?” (3:3). The ISV makes this more explicit in its translation: “The one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Christ Jesus”

³² Thielman, 39. This doctrine is referred to as the perseverance of the saints.

³³ This digression is why I started a new sentence.

³⁴ The conjunction Καθώς is causal and probably connects back to verses 3-6 as a whole.

³⁵ δίκαιον has the sense of proper or fair, but it also has the sense of obligatory (Arndt, 247).

³⁶ Fee, 89.

³⁷ It is possible for this infinitive to read that the Philippians held Paul in their hearts, but this is the less likely translation both grammatically and contextually (Hansen, 52-53; Fee, 90).

³⁸ Fee, 90.

a statement about their importance to him; he was saying that he had a heartfelt commitment to them, which led to such feelings.³⁹

The second reason why Paul felt thankful and joyful was because the Philippians were partners with him in grace.⁴⁰ The word partner (συγκοινωνούς) has the same root as the word partnership in verse 5 and has the same idea of being a partaker or sharer together with someone.⁴¹ The Philippian church had partnered together with Paul in two areas, his imprisonment and his defense and confirmation of the gospel. As discussed in the historical context, Paul was a prisoner at this time, under house arrest in Rome. Paul's trial before Caesar was pending, which is why he used words like defense and confirmation,⁴² which were courtroom language. Defense (ἀπολογία) has the idea of justifying or defending oneself, typically using words; confirmation (βεβαιώσαι) meant to establish or confirm something⁴³ or prove something to be true.⁴⁴ Despite this language, Paul was not referring to *his* upcoming trial, but rather to his defense and confirmation of the gospel. He defended the gospel by "disarming prejudice and overcoming objections to the preaching of the message,"⁴⁵ and confirmed it by corroborating "the truth of the gospel by proof, testimony, and forthright declaration."⁴⁶ So how had the church in Philippi partnered with Paul in these two areas? One, they had supported his ministry while he defending and confirming the gospel, and while he was in chains they sent Epaphroditus to minister to Paul (2:25) and financial support (4:10-14). Two, and more prominently, they were participating in the same experiences that Paul was. They were defending and confirming the gospel where they lived, and it resulted in suffering and persecution, perhaps even imprisonment and potential execution (1:29-30).⁴⁷ Paul and the Philippians had partnered together, and both had experienced God's enabling grace during their work.

The third reason why Paul felt thankful and joyful was because he longed for them with the affection of Christ Jesus. This is a strong statement about his love for them. To long (ἐπιποθῶ) means to "experience a yearning affection"⁴⁸ and regard someone with love.⁴⁹ Affection (σπλάγχνοις) literally meant one's intestines and referred to emotions such as compassion, love, and mercy. Paul intensely loved his friends with the love of Christ himself.

³⁹ Hansen, 52. See also 2 Co 7:3, where he said something similar to the Corinthians.

⁴⁰ The last part of the sentence is a participial phrase of being, literally, "being partners with me." Because it is causal in force, I added the implied conjunction "since" and smoothed the participle to the verb "are."

⁴¹ Zodhiates, G4791.

⁴² These words are similar in concept but are not synonyms nor do they function as a hendiadys.

⁴³ Arndt, 173.

⁴⁴ Louw, 1:339. It could be translated as verification or establishment.

⁴⁵ O'Brien, 69.

⁴⁶ O'Brien, 69.

⁴⁷ Recall from the historical context that emperor worship was the primary religion in Philippi and was considered mandatory and patriotic.

⁴⁸ Louw, 1:293.

⁴⁹ Zodhiates, G1971.

9 Καὶ τοῦτο προσεύχομαι, ἵνα ἡ ἀγάπη ὑμῶν ἔτι μᾶλλον καὶ μᾶλλον περισσεύῃ ἐν ἐπιγνώσει καὶ πάσῃ αἰσθήσει

9 And I pray that your love might abound even more and more in knowledge and all discernment,

Finished with his digression, Paul returned to his main idea, his prayers for his friends. Verse 9 begins with “And I pray,” which refers back to the “every prayer of mine for all of you” in 1:4, and informs the Philippians the contents of what he prayed for. This is an intercessory prayer, concerned about their behavior and God’s glory.

Paul prayed that their love might abound even more and more. Love is the familiar Greek word *agape* (ἀγάπη); it means to have a high regard for someone⁵⁰ and then actively look to do what is best for them. It is in contrast with selfish ambition and conceit (2:3). Love in this case refers to the second greatest commandment, love your neighbor, though this assumes the first greatest command, love God. “While the prayer for love to abound focuses on the fruit of love for one another, the root of love for Christ is always Paul’s highest priority for himself and his friends.”⁵¹

Paul wanted their love to abound even more and more.⁵² To abound (περισσεύῃ) is “to be or exist in abundance, with the implication of being considerably more than what would be expected.”⁵³ This verb is in the progressive present, which means Paul wanted it to continually be growing right now. The HCSB nicely captures this idea, “And I pray this: that your love will *keep on growing*.” “Paul viewed love not as a static possession, but as a dynamic process.”⁵⁴ The adverb “even” (ἔτι) indicates that they were already loving well,⁵⁵ as their partnership in the gospel (1:5) demonstrated, but Paul wanted their love to increase more and more.

Paul wanted their love to abound in knowledge and all discernment. These two areas are the instruments⁵⁶ that instruct and guide growing love. Knowledge (ἐπιγνώσει) is a word that has religious, spiritual, and moral overtones. One writer defined it as the “recognition of the will of God that is effective in the conduct of one who knows God.”⁵⁷ It includes the knowledge of sin and of Christ,⁵⁸ leads to right moral conduct, and avoids error. Paul knew that the more they knew Christ, the more they would love like

⁵⁰ Louw, 1:292.

⁵¹ Hansen, 58.

⁵² He wanted the same thing for the church at Thessalonica: “May the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another” (1 Th 3:12).

⁵³ Louw, 1:599.

⁵⁴ Hansen, 57.

⁵⁵ It means “that which is added to what is already at hand” (Arndt, 400).

⁵⁶ Dative of instrument.

⁵⁷ Hackenberg in Hansen, 59.

⁵⁸ O’Brien, 75-76.

he loved. Discernment (αἰσθήσει) is “the capacity to perceive clearly and hence to understand the real nature of something.”⁵⁹ Discernment would allow the Philippians to assess situations in life involving other people, distinguish between good and evil, and express love with words and actions that would be appropriate.⁶⁰ “Paul’s basic request for the Philippians...is that they might express their love in ways that show both a knowledge of how to obey God’s will generally, and...how to make moral decisions based on God’s will in the give-and-take of everyday living.”⁶¹

10 εἰς τὸ δοκιμάζειν ὑμᾶς τὰ διαφέροντα, ἵνα ᾗτε εἰλικρινεῖς καὶ ἀπρόσκοποι εἰς ἡμέραν Χριστοῦ, 11 πεπληρωμένοι καρπὸν δικαιοσύνης τὸν διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ εἰς δόξαν καὶ ἔπαινον Θεοῦ.

10 so that you may be able to determine the things that really matter, so that you might be pure and blameless on the day of Christ, 11 having been filled with the fruit of righteousness that is through Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God.

When love abounds, there are four results, four things that Paul wanted for his readers. These results are progressive; the first leads to the second, which leads to the third, which leads to the fourth. The first result of abounding love is the ability to determine the things that really matter. To determine (δοκιμάζειν) means “to try to learn the genuineness of something by examination and testing, often through actual use.”⁶² This word was often used of testing gold in the fire to determine if it was genuine, and Jesus used this word of the man who wanted to try out some newly purchased oxen (Lk 14:19). It can focus on the testing of something (to prove, to examine) or the successful results of the testing (to approve, to regard as genuine). The former is in view here, as Paul wanted them to determine the things that really matter. “Things that really matter”⁶³ (διαφέροντα) has the root idea of differentiating one thing from another; it means to examine a set of possibilities and discern which ones are most excellent, most valuable, and most superior. “Love seeks what is best for the other person, but what is best is not always obvious.”⁶⁴ When love abounds in all discernment (1:9), then it will be able to distinguish between good and evil, and love people in a good way. When the church determines the things that really matter, they can look at all the good choices and then select those that matter the most.

The second result of abounding love is to be pure and blameless on the day of Christ. To be pure (εἰλικρινεῖς) literally means to be “free from spot or blemish”⁶⁵ but came to

⁵⁹ Louw, 1:383.

⁶⁰ Hansen, 59.

⁶¹ Thielman, 41.

⁶² Louw, 1:331.

⁶³ Arndt, 239.

⁶⁴ Hansen, 60.

⁶⁵ Zohdiatees, G1506.

mean “sincere, without hidden motives or pretense.”⁶⁶ Paul did not want the church to serve each other out of selfish ambition (1:17) but to have pure motives. To be blameless (ἀπόσκοποι) has the idea of not offending someone or causing someone else to stumble or fall. Paul wanted them to love each other so much that they would do nothing to cause each other to sin. When a church loves each other in the ways that matter the most, then they will be pure and blameless on the day of Christ, knowing that it is God who is working on finishing them until the day of Christ Jesus (1:6). Envisioning future perfection, Paul prayed for growth in the present.⁶⁷

The third result of abounding love is having been filled with the fruit of righteousness. Paul, looking ahead to the day of Christ, knew that if the Philippians loved each other with pure motives and without causing each other to sin, then they would be filled at that time. Filled means to be supplied abundantly or imbued with something.⁶⁸ Having been filled (πεπληρωμένοι) is in the passive voice in this verse, which means that someone else, God, would fill them with the fruit of righteousness; in fact, this fruit comes through Jesus Christ. They were created in Christ to do good works (Ep 2:10), yet no amount of self-effort could produce this fruit. The phrase “fruit of righteousness” (καρπὸν δικαιοσύνης), a word picture from the Old Testament, can have one of two interpretations. The first interpretation is that righteousness produces fruit;⁶⁹ they could produce fruit because they were justified. The second interpretation is that righteousness is the nature of the fruit;⁷⁰ they had fruit that was righteous. Whichever is correct, the end result is not much different; Paul prayed that God’s power would enable them to love each other by doing abundant good deeds for each other. “Righteousness describes the character and actions of a community totally permeated and controlled by love.”⁷¹

The fourth result of abounding love is the glory and praise of God. When a church loves each other by doing what is most important with pure motives and righteous actions, the ultimate result is that God is glorified. Glory (δόξαν) refers to God’s fame, honor, reputation, and prestige. Jesus said, “My Father is glorified by this: that you produce much fruit and prove to be My disciples” (Jn 15:8; HCSB). Praise (ἔπαινον) is “the act of expressing admiration or approval.”⁷² A loving church glorifies God and shows his excellence. “The supreme objective and result of the life of godly love, excellence, integrity, and good works is to manifest the glory and praise of God.”⁷³

⁶⁶ Arndt, 282.

⁶⁷ Hansen, 62.

⁶⁸ Zodhiates, G4137.

⁶⁹ Genitive of source.

⁷⁰ Genitive of definition.

⁷¹ Hansen, 64.

⁷² Arndt, 357.

⁷³ MacArthur, 54.

Structural Diagram

From Paul and Timothy
to all the holy ones who are in Philippi
grace to you and peace

I thank my God
praying **with joy**
because of your partnership in the gospel
having been convinced the one who began a good work will be finishing

For
it is right for me to feel this way
because I have you in my heart
since you are partners with me in grace
For I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus

And
I pray that your love might abound
so that you may be able to determine the things that really matter
so that you might be pure and blameless on the day of Christ
having been filled with the fruit of righteousness
to the glory and praise of God.

Tracing the Argument

Internal – After a fairly typical greeting, Paul described his prayers for the Philippian church. First, he first gave his attitude, thanksgiving and joy, and why he had such an attitude. Then, he digressed to explain why he was so emotional. Finally, he told them for what he prayed, their love to grow.

Textual Outline

1. Paul greeted the church at Philippi (1:1-2).
2. Paul prayed with thanksgiving and joy (1:3-6).
3. Paul justified his feelings (1:7-8).
4. Paul prayed for abounding love (1:9-11).

Central Truth of the Text

Paul wrote 1:1-11 in order to reveal to the church at Philippi how he prayed with thanksgiving and joy and for their love to abound.

Teaching Outline

God's people pray for each other with thanksgiving and joy and for abounding love, and today I want you to begin praying like this for each other. From our text in Philippians, we are going to see 2 ways to pray for each other in our church.

1. Pray for each other with thanksgiving and joy (1:3-8).
 - a. Because we partner together in the gospel (1:5)

- b. Because God is finishing what he started (1:6)⁷⁴
- 2. Pray for each other that love would abound (1:9-11).
 - a. So that we can determine the things that really matter (1:10)
 - b. So that we are pure and blameless (1:10)
 - c. So that we are filled with the fruit of righteousness (1:11)
 - d. So that God is glorified and praised (1:11)

⁷⁴ As verses 7-8 are a digression, I chose not to include them in the main part of my teaching outline. At this point, I would explain them briefly, then move on to Paul's second main thought, starting in verse 9.

Status Update on Paul

Philippians 1:12-18a

Limits of the Text

This is the first half of Paul's status update,⁷⁵ in which he explained the impact that his imprisonment had upon the gospel. It begins with the advancement of the gospel and ends with Christ being proclaimed, two ways of saying the same thing.

Translation

12 Now I want you to know, brothers, that my circumstances have actually occurred **for the advancement of the gospel**; 13 as a result it has become known throughout the entire Praetorian Guard and to everyone else *that* my imprisonment *is* because of Christ, 14 and most of the brothers, relying **upon the Lord** because of my imprisonment, are daring to speak the word boldly. 15 Some are preaching **Christ** from envy and rivalry, but some from good intentions. 16 The latter *preach* from love, knowing that I am appointed **for the defense of the gospel**, 17 but the former proclaim Christ **from selfish ambition**, not sincerely, thinking to cause *me* **trouble** during my imprisonment. 18 What is the result? Only that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is being proclaimed, and in this I rejoice.

Interpretation

Having finished the introduction to the letter, Paul began the main body by providing a status update on his situation, a common element in friendship letters. His friends wanted to know how he was doing and how his imprisonment had affected the spread of the gospel.

12 Γινώσκειν δὲ ὑμᾶς βούλομαι, ἀδελφοί, ὅτι τὰ κατ' ἐμὲ μᾶλλον εἰς προκοπὴν τοῦ εὐαγγελίου ἐλήλυθεν,

12 Now I want you to know, brothers, that my circumstances have actually occurred **for the advancement of the gospel**;

This verse begins with a disclosure formula, "I want you know" (Γινώσκειν...ὕμᾶς βούλομαι), a typical literary device in friendship letters that served to signal the end of the thanksgiving section (1:3-11) and to inform the readers that Paul had new information that he wanted them to know. Though they would have expected him to give information about his health and living conditions, Paul used this section to share about the status of the gospel.

⁷⁵ The second half of his status update is in 18b-26.

As he mentioned previously (1:7), Paul's circumstances were that he was still in Rome under house arrest. Circumstances is a loose translation of the Greek phrase τὰ κατ' ἐμὲ, which is literally "the things with me;" this phrase was commonly used to refer to the situation of a person,⁷⁶ the things that had happened or occurred to him. Since he was under house arrest, his readers naturally assumed that this had curtailed the spread of the gospel, but Paul used the word actually (μᾶλλον) to denote a contrast between what they expected—the gospel would be hindered—with what actually occurred—the gospel advanced.⁷⁷ Advancement (προκοπήν) means "a movement forward to an improved state."⁷⁸ The gospel was doing better because of his imprisonment, and in verses 13 and 14 Paul gave two examples to support his assertion.

13 ὥστε τοὺς δεσμούς μου φανεροὺς ἐν Χριστῷ γενέσθαι ἐν ὅλῳ τῷ πραιτωρίῳ καὶ τοῖς λοιποῖς πᾶσιν, 14 καὶ τοὺς πλείονας τῶν ἀδελφῶν ἐν κυρίῳ πεπειθότας τοῖς δεσμοῖς μου περισσοτέρως τολμᾶν ἀφόβως τὸν λόγον λαλεῖν.

13 as a result it has become known throughout the entire Praetorian Guard and to everyone else *that* my imprisonment is because of Christ, 14 and most of the brothers, relying upon the Lord because of my imprisonment, are daring to speak the word boldly.

Verse 13 begins with a conjunction (ὥστε) that is a marker of result; there are two examples (or evidences) of the impact that Paul's imprisonment had upon the gospel. The first example of the gospel's advancement is that it became known throughout the Praetorian Guard and to everyone else that the reason Paul was in prison was because of Christ. The subject of the sentence is the phrase "my imprisonment is because of Christ" (τοὺς δεσμούς... ἐν Χριστῷ). The NASB95 translates this phrase very literally, "my imprisonment in *the cause of* Christ has become well known," but this is a bit awkward, so I moved it to a dependent clause at the end of the sentence.⁷⁹ Paul was not imprisoned because he was a murderer or was trying to overthrow Caesar; he was there because he believed in and preached Christ. It must have surprised many that he was willing to die for what he believed. And though his movements were restricted, Paul was still very bold in sharing his faith, and soon everyone around knew about Christ.

The Praetorian Guard (πραιτωρίῳ) is a loanword from Latin⁸⁰ that technically referred to the camp (or quarters) of the Praetorian cohorts, a body of select troops instituted by Augustus to guard him and to have charge of the Rome. The word is a metonymy; the camp referred to its soldiers.⁸¹ While Paul's movements may have been curtailed, he

⁷⁶ O'Brien, 89.

⁷⁷ Hansen called it "a marker of a surprising alternative to a negative expectation" (66).

⁷⁸ Arndt, 871.

⁷⁹ Following the lead of ESV, HCSB, NET, and ISV.

⁸⁰ O'Brien, 93.

⁸¹ Zodhiates, G4232; could be translated as Imperial Soldiers or Palace Guard.

was not in solitary confinement, and thus he continued to share Christ with many others. Given that there was always a soldier to guard him (Ac 28:16), it seems possible that over time his story would have spread throughout these 9,000 elite soldiers.⁸² Though they deposed and promoted Caesars—they had assassinated Caligula—Paul was not intimidated,⁸³ and thus the gospel advanced. Fee suggests that “everyone else” refers to everyone that had something to do with his confinement and pending court case.⁸⁴

The second example of the gospel’s advancement is that many believers dared to speak the word boldly. To dare (τολμᾶν) is “to show boldness or resolution in the face of danger, opposition, or a problem.”⁸⁵ The implication is that those who shared a word about Christ had good reason to fear persecution, but they followed Paul’s example⁸⁶—if he could witness to the Praetorian Guard, then they could certainly witness to their neighbor⁸⁷—relied upon the Lord, and spoke the word boldly. “The word” is equivalent to the gospel;⁸⁸ some times Paul used it to emphasize its source (Co 1:25), and at other times its content (Co 3:16). Though Paul would have preferred freedom, he recognized that God used his imprisonment to prod others; he knew the gospel was bigger than his personal role in making it known.⁸⁹ Thus the gospel advanced.

15 τινὲς μὲν καὶ διὰ φθόνον καὶ ἔριον, τινὲς δὲ καὶ δι’ εὐδοκίαν τὸν Χριστὸν κηρῦσσοσιν·

15 Some are preaching **Christ** from envy and rivalry, but some from good intentions.

Although many of the believers in Rome spoke the world boldly (1:14), some did not do so with the right motives. The good news is that everyone preached Christ, explaining the sin of man, the holiness of God, and the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. The bad news is that some were preaching for the wrong reasons. In the second part of this paragraph (15-18a), Paul described these contrasting motives,⁹⁰ laying them out in a chiasmic pattern, which draws attention to those with good intentions and love:

Some preached from envy and rivalry
Some from good intentions
The latter preach from love
The former proclaim Christ from selfish ambition

⁸² O’Brien, 93

⁸³ Hansen, 68.

⁸⁴ Fee, 114.

⁸⁵ Arndt, 1010.

⁸⁶ “Because of my imprisonment” is instrumental dative, the means that God used to grow their reliance upon himself. Hansen says, “The real source of inspiration was Paul’s fearless witness to Christ while in chains” (69).

⁸⁷ “Courage is contagious” (Hansen, 70).

⁸⁸ Speaking the word is also equivalent to preaching and proclaiming Christ (1:15, 17).

⁸⁹ Fee, 114.

⁹⁰ The μὲν...δὲ pair marks the contrast in verse 15.

Some were preaching Christ from envy and rivalry. Those who were envious (φθόνον) of Paul were jealous of him and harbored an ill will because of something Paul was or had;⁹¹ perhaps they were jealous his fame throughout the Praetorian Guard (1:13), the many people who followed his preaching,⁹² or his status as an apostle.⁹³ They also considered themselves to be Paul's rivals (ἔριον) and were willing to cause conflict, contention, and discord.⁹⁴ As envy and rivalry are among the works of the flesh (Ga 5:19-21), it's surprising to hear Paul say that such people were truly preaching Christ.

Despite such people, there were some who preached from the very different motive of good intentions (εὐδοκίαν), which means to delight in a person and thus have good will for them.⁹⁵ These people desired to please Paul, so they helped him by doing what he could not do.

16 οἱ μὲν ἐξ ἀγάπης, εἰδότες ὅτι εἰς ἀπολογίαὶν τοῦ εὐαγγελίου κεῖμαι, 17 οἱ δὲ ἐξ ἐριθείας τὸν Χριστὸν καταγγέλλουσιν, οὐχ ἀγνῶς, οἰόμενοι θλιψὶν ἐγείρειν τοῖς δεσμοῖς μου.

16 The latter *preach* from love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel, 17 but the former proclaim Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, thinking to cause *me* trouble during my imprisonment.

In verses 16 and 17, Paul explained the root cause of their motives. Those with good intentions loved (ἀγάπης) Paul;⁹⁶ they wanted what was best for Paul, which was to spread the gospel. Behind their right actions was right thinking. (This is exactly what Paul had prayed for back in 1:9; he wanted their knowledge to guide their growing love.) They knew that God had appointed (κεῖμαι) Paul, putting him here to defend the gospel.⁹⁷ Appoint was originally a military term, so it might be said that Paul was under orders to defend it.⁹⁸

Those with envy and rivalry proclaimed Christ because they had selfish ambitions (ἐριθείας). They didn't care about the gospel; they only cared about themselves. Louw explained this word as "wanting to make people think they are better,"⁹⁹ and noted that in Aristotle's use of this word it denoted "a self-seeking pursuit of political office by unfair means."¹⁰⁰ In 2:3 Paul said do nothing from selfish ambition. These Christians were not sincere (ἀγνῶς) but duplicitous; their motives were not pure.¹⁰¹ The thinking

⁹¹ Louw, 1:759.

⁹² Hansen, 74.

⁹³ "The envious are those who are annoyed only at their friends' success" (Xenophon, quoted in O'Brien, 99).

⁹⁴ Metaphorically one could say that they loved strife (Zodhiates, G2054).

⁹⁵ Zodhiates, G2107.

⁹⁶ In his prayer, Paul prayed that the Philippians would have abounding love.

⁹⁷ See 1:7 for an explanation of "defense."

⁹⁸ O'Brien, 101.

⁹⁹ Louw, 1:760.

¹⁰⁰ Arndt, 392.

¹⁰¹ Zodhiates, G55.

behind their actions was very different; they thought (wrongly) that they could cause trouble (οἰόμενοι θλίψιν) for Paul, bringing him distress and anxiety. The exact way their proclaiming Christ would cause him trouble is unclear. Perhaps they wanted to annoy Paul by reminding him of his restrictions compared to their freedoms.¹⁰² Perhaps they thought it would make his sentence harsher.¹⁰³

18 Τί γάρ; πλὴν ὅτι παντὶ τρόπῳ, εἴτε προφάσει εἴτε ἀληθείᾳ, Χριστὸς καταγγέλλεται, καὶ ἐν τούτῳ χαίρω.

18 What is the result? Only that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is being proclaimed, and in this I rejoice.

Paul got to the main thought of the second half of this paragraph (1:15-18a) by asking, “What is the result?”¹⁰⁴ Although some were trying to cause Paul trouble, he was focused on only one thing: Christ was being proclaimed. They were not adding anything to the message of Christ—like the Judaizers in Galatians who added Mosaic Law obedience to the gospel—nor were removing anything from it—like the Corinthians who did not believe in the resurrection—so he was happy to let them proclaim. It was true that they were preaching with false motives (προφάσει)—they were “preaching Christ or using his name as a cover or mask for personal or selfish ends”¹⁰⁵—yet Paul rejoiced anyway, knowing that God was sovereignly working and that the gospel was advancing.

Although this paragraph is an update of Paul’s status, it says very little about Paul; it does, however, demonstrate that Paul had learned to see everything from God’s perspective¹⁰⁶ and subject his own personal interests to the cause of Christ.¹⁰⁷ It serves as an example for the Philippian believers on how they should respond to similar difficulties.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰² So O’Brien, 102.

¹⁰³ Suggested by Hansen, 74.

¹⁰⁴ Τί γάρ; is literally “What then?” My translation is a bit loose, but it captures the idea, as Paul gave the result of some preaching from right motives and some from wrong.

¹⁰⁵ O’Brien, 106.

¹⁰⁶ Fee, 125.

¹⁰⁷ O’Brien, 107.

¹⁰⁸ Fee, 107.

Structural Diagram

my circumstances have occurred **for the advancement of the gospel**
as a result
it has become known *that* my imprisonment *is* because of Christ
and
most of the brothers are daring to speak the word boldly

Some are preaching **Christ** from envy and rivalry
but
some from good intentions.¹⁰⁹

What is the result?
Christ is being proclaimed
and
in this I rejoice.

Tracing the Argument

External – Having finished his introduction including his prayer for the Philippians, Paul began the main body of his letter. As typical for a friendship letter, Paul began with an update on his status; atypically, he talked little about himself but lots about the advancement of the gospel.

Internal – Paul asserted that the gospel was still advancing despite his circumstances, then gave 2 evidences. He then noted that some of the Roman Christians were proclaiming Christ with wrong motives, but even so, Christ was being proclaimed, which was good.

Textual Outline

1. The gospel was advancing despite Paul's circumstances (1:12-14).
 - a. Everyone connected to his trial knew why he was imprisoned (1:13).
 - b. Other believers were witnessing boldly (1:14).
2. Christ was being proclaimed despite wrong motives (1:15-18a).
 - a. Some were motivated by envy, rivalry, and selfish ambition.
 - b. Some were motivated by good intentions and love.

Central Truth of the Text

Paul wrote Philippians 1:12-18a in order to share with the Philippian church the good news that the gospel was advancing in Rome despite opposition.

Teaching Outline

God's people share Christ even when there is opposition, and today I want to encourage you to share Christ despite whatever opposition you might face. From our

¹⁰⁹ Verses 16 and 17 are dropped because they simply explain 15 further; they add nothing new to the structure. This is definitely an abridged structural diagram.

text today, we are going to see 2 types of opposition that might discourage you from sharing Christ with the people around you.

1. Share Christ even when you are experiencing difficult circumstances (1:12-14).
2. Share Christ even when you are facing personal opposition (1:15-18a).

Philippians 1:18b-26

Limits of the Text

In this conclusion to his status update, Paul reflected on the possible outcomes of his upcoming trial: Life or death.

Translation

And I will rejoice, 19 for I know that this will turn out for **my** deliverance through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ 20 according to my eager expectation and hope. *I expect and hope* that I will not be ashamed **of anything but** *that* because of my boldness, now as always, Christ will be magnified through my body, whether through life or through death. 21 For to me to live *is* Christ and to die *is* gain. 22 Now if *I go on* living in the flesh, that *would be* fruitful labor for me; I do not know which one I prefer. 23 I am torn between the two, having the desire to depart and be **with Christ**, for that is much better, 24 but to remain in the flesh *is* more necessary for your sake. 25 And being convinced of this, I know that I will remain and stay with all of you for **your** advancement and joy in the faith, 26 so that your boasting in Christ Jesus might abound because of me when I come again to you.

Interpretation

With his trial pending, it's not surprising to find that Paul had been thinking about the future, and how the trial might affect himself and those around him. In this second paragraph of his status update, Paul shared these very personal thoughts with his friends.¹¹⁰

Ἀλλὰ καὶ χαρήσομαι, 19 οἶδα γὰρ ὅτι τοῦτό μοι ἀποβήσεται εἰς σωτηρίαν διὰ τῆς ὑμῶν δεήσεως καὶ ἐπιχορηγίας τοῦ πνεύματος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ

And I will rejoice, 19 for I know that this will turn out for **my** deliverance through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ

This paragraph is connected to the previous paragraph by the word rejoice. Paul was rejoicing because the gospel was being proclaimed, and he would rejoice more when he was delivered.¹¹¹ Deliverance (Σωτηρίαν) means to rescue from danger and return to safety.¹¹² It can refer to physical deliverance, such as the ark that was the deliverance for Noah's family (Hb 11:7), but it can also refer to spiritual deliverance and be translated as salvation, such as when Paul said that God did not appoint them to wrath but to obtain salvation (1 Th 5:9). Which way did Paul use this word in 1:19? If he meant physical deliverance, then he was referring to his release from imprisonment and

¹¹⁰ Fee calls this section the closest thing to a soliloquy that we find in Paul's letters (127).

¹¹¹ The last part of verse 18, "And I will rejoice," is the same sentence as verse 19 and thus goes with it.

¹¹² Louw, 1:240.

a not-guilty verdict from Caesar. There are two reasons why this is probably not what Paul had in mind. First, Paul expected to be delivered whether he lived or died (1:20). Second, his statement is an exact quote from Job, who said, “This will become my deliverance” (Jb 13:16).¹¹³ Even if God killed him, Job had placed his hope in God (Jb 13:15) and knew that God would deliver him. Paul, like Job, was referring to a final, eschatological deliverance, salvation from the wrath of God. “The apostle is not referring to his immediate acquittal and discharge from prison. Instead, his confident assertion (like Job’s) that his present state of affairs will work out for his salvation points to his vindication in the heavenly court.”¹¹⁴

Paul knew that he would be delivered through the prayers of his friends and the help of the Holy Spirit. A prayer (δεήσεως) is an “urgent request to meet a need, exclusively addressed to God.”¹¹⁵ This is the same word Paul used in 1:4, when he shared that he prayed with joy, thanking God for the Philippian church. Paul was asking his friends to pray much for him, so that he would have the help of the Spirit. Help (ἐπιχορηγίας) has the idea of making “available whatever is necessary to help or supply the needs of someone.”¹¹⁶ The Spirit enabled Paul to rejoice when believers tried to cause him trouble (1:17), so long as Christ was proclaimed. He enabled Paul to be bold in sharing his faith, even when facing potential death (1:20). He would help Paul to remain faithful to Christ, regardless of the results of his pending trial before Caesar. Paul wanted this help, so he asked his friends to pray for him. “While the help of the Spirit is not limited to the extent of our prayers, we cannot presume upon the Spirit’s presence and power when there is not a concentrated effort to pray for God’s provision of the Spirit.”¹¹⁷

20 κατὰ τὴν ἀποκαραδοκίαν καὶ ἐλπίδα μου, ὅτι ἐν οὐδενὶ αἰσχυνθήσομαι ἀλλ’ ἐν πάσῃ παρρησίᾳ ὡς πάντοτε καὶ νῦν μεγαλυνθήσεται Χριστὸς ἐν τῷ σώματί μου, εἴτε διὰ ζωῆς εἴτε διὰ θανάτου.

20 according to my eager expectation and hope. *I expect and hope that I will not be ashamed of anything but that because of my boldness, now as always, Christ will be magnified through my body, whether through life or through death.*

Fee rightly calls verses 19 and 20 “an extremely complex sentence,”¹¹⁸ one that is nearly impossible to fully and smoothly translate into English. In essence there are two pairs of clauses (C1 and C2) connected by a prepositional phrase (PP):

(C1) I will rejoice, for I know this will turn out for my deliverance

¹¹³ The exact quote is based on the LXX.

¹¹⁴ O’Brien, 110.

¹¹⁵ Arndt, 213.

¹¹⁶ Louw, 1:460. Help could be translated as provision, support, or assistance.

¹¹⁷ Hansen, 79.

¹¹⁸ Fee, 128.

- (PP) according to my expectation and hope
- (C2) I will not be ashamed, but Christ will be magnified

The first pair of clauses (C1) is modified by the prepositional phrase (PP), while the second pair of clauses (C2) further defines Paul's expectation and hope. Paul's deliverance will turn out as he expects and hopes, and he expects and hopes that he will not be ashamed but Christ will be magnified. Thus the prepositional phrase should be part of both pairs of clauses. The NASB95 resolves the problem by connecting the clauses together with the prepositional phrase between them; that connects them, but it's a run-on sentence and lousy English grammar.¹¹⁹

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

The NET starts a new sentence at 1:20, but in so doing it disconnects expectation and hope from 1:19.¹²⁰

Yes, and I will continue to rejoice, 19 for I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. 20 *My confident hope* is that I will in no way be ashamed but that with complete boldness, even now as always, Christ will be exalted in my body, whether I live or die.

I have compromised and done both, keeping the prepositional phrase with 1:19 while also breaking the sentence at 1:20. It is a clear, though verbose, translation.

And I will rejoice, 19 for I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ 20 according to *my eager expectation and hope*. *I expect and hope* that I will not be ashamed of anything but that because of my boldness, now as always, Christ will be magnified through my body, whether through life or through death.

Paul asserted that his pending trial¹²¹ would turn out for his deliverance according to his eager expectation and hope. An eager expectation (*ἀποκαρᾶδοκίαν*) is literally the idea of looking for something, "as with the neck stretched out and the head thrust forward;"¹²² figuratively it is "that which one looks forward to with eagerness and desire."¹²³ Hope is the "the looking forward to something with some reason for confidence respecting fulfillment."¹²⁴ These words are nearly synonymous and might

¹¹⁹ So also LEB; ESV is similar.

¹²⁰ So also HCSB and ISV.

¹²¹ The "this" in the verse is part of the quote from Job and thus has no immediate antecedent. In Paul's context it probably refers back to "his circumstances in 1:12.

¹²² Zodhiates, G603.

¹²³ Louw, 1:295

¹²⁴ Arndt, 329.

be a hendiadys,¹²⁵ hope-filled eager expectation. With these words Paul conveyed a sense of confidence and certainty about how he expected the future would turn out, and he believed that God's deliverance would match those expectations.

What did Paul expect? He had one expectation that he stated both negatively and positively. Negatively, Paul expected that he would not be ashamed of anything. To be ashamed (αἰσχυνθήσομαι) is to disgraced and dishonored. When his trial and imprisonment was completed, Paul expected that he would be able to look back upon them and have no shame in the eyes of God for his actions, particularly regarding his appointment as the defender of the gospel (1:16). Positively, Paul expected that Christ would be magnified. To magnify (μεγαλυνθήσεται) is "to cause to be held in greater esteem through praise or deeds"¹²⁶ and could be translated as exalted, glorified, or honored. Christ would be magnified because of Paul's boldness. While imprisoned he shared with his captors and everyone around him (1:13) and motivated others to do the same (1:14), and he expected to have this same boldness while defending the gospel at his trial.

Though Paul was certain that God would deliver him, he was not at all certain how his trial would turn out. It could result in his lift or his death, in an innocent or a guilty verdict.

21 Ἐμοὶ γὰρ τὸ ζῆν Χριστὸς καὶ τὸ ἀποθανεῖν κέρδος.

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

In second subsection (1:21-24) Paul contrasted the benefits of the two possible outcomes. If he lived, he would have Christ. Paul's entire life was wrapped up in living in Christ; as he said to the Galatians, "I myself am no longer living, but Christ is living in me; and that which I am now living in the body, I am living by means of faith to him" (Ga 2:20). "Paul's relationship with Christ was so close that his entire existence derived its meaning from his Lord."¹²⁷

If he died, then he would have gain. If living is Christ, then what could be possibly be better than that? The answer can only be "more Christ!"¹²⁸ In death, Paul would be with Christ (1:23; 2 Co 5:6, 8); he would gain what he had spent the latter part of his life pursuing. This would be the closest possible union with Christ.¹²⁹

22 εἰ δὲ τὸ ζῆν ἐν σαρκί, τοῦτό μοι καρπὸς ἔργου, καὶ τί αἰρήσομαι οὐ γνωρίζω.

¹²⁵ A figure of speech in which two words connected by a conjunction are used to express a single notion that would normally be expressed by an adjective and a substantive, such as grace and favor instead of gracious favor (<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/hendiadys>).

¹²⁶ Arndt, 623.

¹²⁷ Thielman, 78.

¹²⁸ Note that in 3:8 he stated that he goal was to gain Christ; that's the same word.

¹²⁹ Thielman, 78.

22 Now if I go on living in the flesh, that *would be* fruitful labor for me; I do not know which one I prefer.

If he lived, then he would have more opportunity for fruitful labor (καρπὸς ἔργου).¹³⁰ These are the good works that he was created in Christ Jesus to do (Ep 2:10). He would continue preaching the gospel and encouraging others to do the same. He would plant more churches and strengthen those he had already planted.

Paul was uncertain which outcome he would prefer, as the benefits of both were good. The final verb at the end of the verse (αἰρήσομαι) can mean “to choose,”¹³¹ which would imply that Paul was contrasting whether he planned to choose life or choose death in his current circumstances, but that might imply he’s willing to choose suicide.¹³² Nothing in this text indicates that Paul condition was so bad that was contemplating killing himself; in fact, he ended the last paragraph and started this one with rejoicing. This verb can also mean “to prefer,” and that’s the better translation.¹³³

23 συνέχομαι δὲ ἐκ τῶν δύο, τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν ἔχων εἰς τὸ ἀναλῦσαι καὶ σὺν Χριστῷ εἶναι, πολλῶ [γὰρ] μᾶλλον κρείσσον· 24 τὸ δὲ ἐπιμένειν [ἐν] τῇ σαρκὶ ἀναγκαιότερον δι’ ὑμᾶς.

23 I am torn between the two, having the desire to depart and be **with Christ**, for that is much better, 24 but to remain in the flesh *is* more necessary for your sake.

Paul was torn between these two options. The verb “am torn between” (συνέχομαι) has the idea of pressure. Its literal meaning is either to be pressed together and crowded in or the resulting distress and torment from such pressure. Paul used it as an idiomatic expression that means, “to be pulled in two directions [and] to have conflicting thoughts.”¹³⁴ Many translations attempt to use the literal meaning, such as the HCSB’s “I am pressured by both,” but the idea being pressed together by opposing choices seems awkward, so it’s probably better to use an equivalent English idiom, such as the NET’s “I feel torn between the two.”

If he died, Paul would be with Christ, which would be much better for Paul. Paul had the desire to depart and be with Christ. Though the word desire (ἐπιθυμίαν) often has negative connotations and can be translated as lust or crave, here it means a desire for something good; in fact it’s the much better choice.¹³⁵ To depart (ἀναλῦσαι) has the idea of untying something and was used of ships leaving a dock;¹³⁶ Paul used it here as

¹³⁰ This is attributive genitive.

¹³¹ So NASB95, ESV, and HCSB.

¹³² TN in NET.

¹³³ So NET, ISV, and LEB. Hansen agrees (85).

¹³⁴ Louw, 1:351

¹³⁵ There are actually two modifiers here, literally much more better, by which Paul conveyed the superiority of this benefit over the other.

¹³⁶ O’Brien, 130.

a euphemism for death. “To depart” is connected to “to be with Christ;”¹³⁷ “when Paul thinks of his death, he thinks of his union with Christ.”¹³⁸ Paul wrote something very similar in 2 Co 5:8 where he said, “So we are confident and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord.”

If he lived, he would be able to help the Philippian church, which would be much better for them. This wasn’t what Paul desired most, but it was needed most. Like a good pastor, Paul was indispensable to his churches.

25 καὶ τοῦτο πεποιθῶς οἶδα ὅτι μενῶ καὶ παραμενῶ πᾶσιν ὑμῖν εἰς τὴν ὑμῶν προκοπὴν καὶ χαρὰν τῆς πίστεως,

25 And being convinced of this, I know that I will remain and stay with all of you for your advancement and joy in the faith,

Having evaluated the benefits of life and death, Paul was convinced that the more necessary of the two was for him to remain and help churches like the Philippians. At this point Paul said something unexpected, “I know that I will remain.” This seems to contradict verse 20, where he was uncertain if he would live or die. How did Paul explain this discrepancy? As Melick notes, Paul didn’t.¹³⁹ Commentators have responded by creating a variety of theories attempting to harmonize these verses:

1. As he was writing, Paul had a revelation from God letting him know that he would live,¹⁴⁰ thus the verse could be paraphrased like this: “I am absolutely certain that I know that I will remain and stay with all of you for your advancement and joy in the faith.”
2. Paul had no certain knowledge of the future; “I know” simply expresses his personal conviction on the matter,¹⁴¹ thus the verse could be paraphrased like this: “I am fairly certain that I will remain and stay with all of you for your advancement and joy in the faith.”
3. The emphasis of the verse is on what Paul was convinced of (staying was more necessary for their sake) not on what he knows,¹⁴² thus the verse could be paraphrased like this: “If I get out I know that I will remain and stay with all of you for your advancement and joy in the faith.”
4. The emphasis of the verse is on Paul’s conclusion to his comparison of the benefits of life vs. death (he preferred to live), thus the verse could be paraphrased like this: “I know that I prefer to remain and with all of you for your advancement and joy in the faith.”

¹³⁷ The infinitives share a common article in Greek.

¹³⁸ Hansen, 87.

¹³⁹ Melick, 86.

¹⁴⁰ Bengel and Lohmeyer, mentioned in Fee, 138.

¹⁴¹ MacArthur, 81; Lightfoot, 94; Silva, 75; Fee, 152.

¹⁴² O’Brien, 138-139.

In the end, none of these theories are completely satisfying, and the reason for Paul's certainty remains unknown.

Paul gave two reasons why he would remain, and the first reason was for their advancement and joy in the faith. Advancement (*προκοπήν*) means "a movement forward to an improved state."¹⁴³ This is the same word that he used in 1:12 where he said his circumstances had occurred for the advancement of the gospel. This word serves two purposes. In the immediate context it means that if Paul lived, he would be able help his friends advance in the faith,¹⁴⁴ they would understand and appreciate the gospel more, and they would love and serve their Savior better. In the broader context, it serves as a bookend (along with the "advancement" in 1:12) to the entire status update section (1:12-26).¹⁴⁵ Paul would also help his friends' joy (*χαράν*) in the faith; that is, their faith in Jesus would bring happiness and gladness to their lives.¹⁴⁶ Joy in the faith is evidence of progress in the faith.¹⁴⁷

This verse provides the reason behind Paul's comparison of the benefits of life or death: He chose to do what was best for someone else, not what was best for himself. Before he commanded them to put others' interests ahead of their own (2:4), he demonstrated that he was willing to put their interests ahead of his.¹⁴⁸

26 ἵνα τὸ καύχημα ὑμῶν περισσεύῃ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ ἐν ἐμοὶ διὰ τῆς ἐμῆς παρουσίας πάλιν πρὸς ὑμᾶς.

26 so that your boasting in Christ Jesus might abound because of me when I come again to you.

The second reason Paul would remain was that their boasting in Jesus would abound when he came to them again.¹⁴⁹ Boasting (*καύχημα*) has the idea of taking pride, glorying, or exulting in someone.¹⁵⁰ It doesn't have a negative connotation here, but rather a positive, as it follows the Old Testament pattern for proper boasting:

This is what the LORD says:

The wise man must not boast in his wisdom;
the strong man must not boast in his strength;
the wealthy man must not boast in his wealth.
But the one who boasts should boast in this,
that he understands and knows Me (Je 9:23-24a, HCSB).

¹⁴³ Arndt, 871.

¹⁴⁴ Objective faith, not subjective.

¹⁴⁵ The technical term for this is an *inclusio*.

¹⁴⁶ This is genitive of source.

¹⁴⁷ Hansen, 91.

¹⁴⁸ Thielman, 79.

¹⁴⁹ The Greek is a prepositional phrase (διὰ τῆς ἐμῆς παρουσίας), literally "through my coming," but "when I come" makes more sense in English, so I converted it to a dependent clause.

¹⁵⁰ It can also have the idea of expressing an unusually high degree of confidence in someone (Louw, 1:430), as the HCSB translates it, "So that your confidence may grow in Christ Jesus."

Fee describes boasting in the Lord as the “ultimate evidence of genuine conversion.”¹⁵¹ Paul wanted their boasting in Christ to abound (περισσεύη), which is the same word he used in 1:9, where he prayed that the Philippians’ love might abound; he wanted them to have more reasons to boast than they ever expected. To further describe how their boasting might abound, Paul used two prepositional phrases in a row, both in the dative case: “Your boasting might abound in Christ Jesus (ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ) because of me” (ἐν ἐμοὶ). Although the same Greek preposition, *en*, (ἐν) is used for both phrases, they each have a different meaning.¹⁵² The first phrase refers to the object of their boasting; the second the cause of their boasting.¹⁵³ “Christ is the ultimate reason for boasting and Paul’s mission is the specific occasion for boasting.”¹⁵⁴ When Paul shared what Christ had been doing in his life, especially throughout his imprisonment and trial, they would have many reasons to boast in Christ. The very similar phrase in 3:3 (we boast in Christ Jesus and do not put confidence in the flesh) suggests that the Philippian may have been boasting in things other than Christ.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵¹ Fee, 155.

¹⁵² Greek prepositions, like those in English, are flexible. According to Swanson (DBLG 1877), ἐν has 21 distinct meanings.

¹⁵³ Dative of sphere and dative of cause.

¹⁵⁴ Hansen, 92.

¹⁵⁵ O’Brien, 141.

Structural Diagram

This will turn out for **my** deliverance
through your prayers and the help of the Spirit
according to my eager expectation and hope
I will not be ashamed
but
Christ will be magnified
whether through life or through death

To live *is* Christ and to die *is* gain
if *I go on* living in the flesh
that *would be* fruitful labor for me
I do not know which one I prefer
I am torn between the two,
having the desire to depart and be **with Christ**
but
to remain in the flesh *is* more necessary for your sake

I will remain and stay with all of you
for **your** advancement and joy in the faith
so that your boasting in Christ Jesus might abound

Tracing the Argument

External – Paul continued to give a status update by focusing on the potential outcomes of his trial. Life and death were both good results.

Internal – Paul began with what he was certain of: He would be eschatologically delivered, whether he lived or died. He then compared the benefits of life versus the benefits of death. For himself, he preferred death; for others, he preferred life. He concluded that he would remain and help the Philippians.

Textual Outline

1. Paul knew he would be delivered, whether he lived or die (18b-20).
2. Paul contrasted the benefits of death with the benefits of life (21-24).
3. Paul knew he would live and help the Philippians (25-26).

Central Truth of the Text

Paul wrote Philippians 1:18b-26 in order to demonstrate how he was prepared to face his pending trial, a life-or-death situation.

Teaching Outline

God's people are prepared to face life-or-death situations, and so this morning I want to help you get ready, just in case you ever face a life-or-death situation. From our text in Philippians we are going to see 3 outcomes from life-or-death situations.

1. Be prepared for God to deliver you (1:18b-20).

2. Be prepared for God to give you fruit (1:21-26).
3. Be prepared to be with Christ (1:21-23).¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁶ The verses in point #2 overlap with the verses in point #3, and this because Paul went back and forth between the benefits of life and of death.

Exhortation to have the Character of Christ

Philippians 1:27-30

Limits of the Text

This section is a shift from Paul's status to the exhortations he had for the church; it also contains the main theme of the book, living worthy of the gospel. It urges them to stand firm, while the next section (2:1-4) urges unity; both are aspects of living worthy.

Translation

27 Only one thing: Live as good citizens in a manner **worthy of the gospel of Christ**, so that whether I come and see you *or* stay away, I will hear that you are remaining steadfast in one spirit, striving together for the faith of the gospel **with one heart** 28 and not being intimidated in any way by your opponents, which is a sign of **their** destruction but of **your** deliverance, and this from God. 29 For it has been graciously given to you not only to trust in Christ but also to suffer for his sake, 30 experiencing **the same struggle** that you saw in me and how hear that I have.

Interpretation

This sentence starts a new section; Paul had finished his status report, so next he exhorted his readers to have the character of Christ. It is a shift from narrative to imperative.¹⁵⁷ Fee calls it a nearly impossible Greek, wherein Paul tried to include all of the urgency of his letter into this one opening sentence.¹⁵⁸

27 Μόνον ἀξίως τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τοῦ Χριστοῦ πολιτεύεσθε, ἵνα εἴτε ἐλθὼν καὶ ἰδὼν ὑμᾶς εἴτε ἀπὼν ἀκούω τὰ περὶ ὑμῶν, ὅτι στήκετε ἐν ἐνὶ πνεύματι, μιᾷ ψυχῇ συναθροῦντες τῇ πίστει τοῦ εὐαγγελίου

27 Only one thing: Live as good citizens in a manner **worthy of the gospel of Christ**, so that whether I come and see you *or* stay away I will hear that you are remaining steadfast in one spirit, striving together for the faith of the gospel **with one heart**

The verse begins with "only one thing," a loose translation of *monon* (Μόνον), which refers to the only entity in a class. The command that follows is the one thing that Paul wanted most from the Philippian church.¹⁵⁹ This command not only drives this section (1:27-30), it is also the theme of the book.

Paul's command was live as good citizens in manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Live as good citizens (πολιτεύεσθε) is a fairly literal translation that means "to conduct

¹⁵⁷ Fee, 156.

¹⁵⁸ Fee, 159.

¹⁵⁹ The ISV translates this well: "The only thing that matters..."

oneself according to the laws and customs of a state.”¹⁶⁰ The first part of the word, *polis*, is the Greek word for city,¹⁶¹ so the verb referred to living as a free citizen of a Roman city. This was not Paul’s usual word for how to live,¹⁶² but it fit his readers very well, as “the Philippians lived in a free Roman city, and thus understood from their own experience what it meant to live as citizens,”¹⁶³ both the privileges and responsibilities. Paul was picking up on that motif and their sense of civic pride. Most translations fail to include this idea of citizenship; Fee characterizes such translations—“conduct yourselves” (NASB95), “live your life” (HCSB), “lead your lives” (LEB)—as bland and unfortunate.¹⁶⁴

Was Paul commanding them to live as good Roman citizens, good heavenly citizens,¹⁶⁵ or both? Most likely he was referring to both. Certainly he wanted his readers to be good, law-abiding citizens where possible (Ro 13:1-2), blameless in the midst of a wicked culture (2:15). Yet the emphasis of the sentence is on living “worthy of the gospel of Christ,” so Paul most wanted them to live as good heavenly citizens. Fee paraphrased it this way: “Live in the Roman colony of Philippi as worthy citizens of your heavenly homeland.”¹⁶⁶ The church in Philippi had dual citizenship; they were a colony within a colony.¹⁶⁷

Worthy (ἀξίως) means to have comparable merit or worth,¹⁶⁸ thus the actions of their life should be comparable to that of the gospel. In what way was Paul expecting their actions to be comparable to the gospel? Paul didn’t give a list of do’s and don’t’s nor a list of virtues and vices, but one comprehensive command that covered “every aspect of the readers’ lives.”¹⁶⁹ He said live by remembering the good news of Jesus, his sinless life and obedient death on the cross, and by knowing what Christ has done in your lives. Live with Christ and the gospel at the center of your life. “Just as all of his own actions were determined with reference to the gospel, so it should be with his readers.”¹⁷⁰

Paul wanted them to live worthy of gospel, and there was one thing in particular he wanted to hear about his friends.¹⁷¹ Although in the previous verse he mentioned coming to see them again, he wanted them to be accountable for something whether he came or not. To live worthy of the gospel, they must be remaining steadfast in one spirit. Remaining steadfast (στήκετε) literally means to stand, but Paul used it

¹⁶⁰ Zodhiates, G4176.

¹⁶¹ *Polis* is still seen in our English word politics.

¹⁶² See περιπατέω in Ep 4:1.

¹⁶³ NET.

¹⁶⁴ Fee, 161.

¹⁶⁵ In 3:20 he said, “Our citizenship is in heaven.”

¹⁶⁶ Fee, 162.

¹⁶⁷ Hansen, 95.

¹⁶⁸ Louw, 1:621.

¹⁶⁹ O’Brien, 145.

¹⁷⁰ O’Brien, 148.

¹⁷¹ I smoothed the translation here by leaving out some words. It’s literally, “I will hear this about you, that you are remaining steadfast.” The NET does the same.

figuratively, meaning “to be firmly committed in conviction or belief”¹⁷² and “to stand firm in faith and duty.”¹⁷³ Paul used this exhortation often, telling his readers to remain steadfast in the faith (1 Co 16:13), in the Lord (1 Th 3:8), and in freedom (Ga 5:1). The church at Philippi had opponents (1:28) and were suffering (1:29) and struggling like Paul (1:30). “Such hostility was intended to destroy their faith and divide them from each other.”¹⁷⁴ They were being pressured to stop trusting in Christ and to stop living for him. Like soldiers together on the battlefield, they were to remain collectively steadfast in one spirit, with the same purpose.¹⁷⁵

Remaining steadfast is modified by two participles that further describe what remaining steadfast looks like. The first way to remain steadfast is by striving together for the faith of the gospel with one heart. Striving together (συναθλοῦντες) has the sense of competition, of being against someone else, but here Paul emphasized their togetherness in the competition. They were to contend with each other, standing by each other’s side,¹⁷⁶ struggling for the spread of the faith of the gospel.¹⁷⁷ Paul used this same verb in 4:3 to remind Euodia and Syntyche how they had previously strived together in ministry. Now he wanted the whole church to strive together with one heart, which again emphasized their common purpose.

28 καὶ μὴ πτυρόμενοι ἐν μηδενὶ ὑπὸ τῶν ἀντικειμένων, ἥτις ἐστὶν αὐτοῖς ἔνδειξις ἀπωλείας, ὑμῶν δὲ σωτηρίας, καὶ τοῦτο ἀπὸ θεοῦ·

28 and not being intimidated in any way by your opponents, which is a sign of **their destruction but of **your** deliverance, and this from God.**

The second way to remain steadfast is by not being intimidated by your opponents. The church in Philippi had opponents (ἀντικειμένων), those who were hostile towards them. This would naturally cause them to be intimidated (πτυρόμενοι), frightened, or even terrified, a word used of horses that were spooked on the battlefield. But if they were remaining steadfast, then they would not be intimidated. If they had the same mindset that Paul did—to live is Christ but to die is gain—then they would not be intimidated. How can you intimidate someone who knows that something better than life with Christ awaits?

Who were these opponents? They were obviously so well known to his readers that Paul didn’t have to mention them by name. A couple hints in the text lead Fee to conclude that they were Philippian citizens who were loyal to Rome and wanted the

¹⁷² Arndt, 944.

¹⁷³ Zodhiates, G4739.

¹⁷⁴ Hansen, 95-96.

¹⁷⁵ The Greek word for spirit (πνεῦματι) is used in the New Testament to refer both to man’s spirit and to God’s Holy Spirit; the usage must be determined by the context. Although Hansen gives three reasons why this refers to the Holy Spirit (96), it most likely refers to man’s spirit, as the “one spirit” in this clause equates to the “one heart” in the next. The emphasis is on community.

¹⁷⁶ Zodhiates, G4866.

¹⁷⁷ The faith that originates from the gospel, which is genitive of source (NET).

church to continue participating in emperor worship.¹⁷⁸ First, Paul emphasized that Christ was their Lord throughout the letter (2:11, 4:1, 4:5, 4:22) replacing their former lord, Caesar. Second, they were experiencing the same struggle that Paul was facing (1:30), persecution from the Roman Empire.

The remainder of verse 28 is a parenthetical encouragement for them during struggles. Not being intimidated is a sign that their opponents would be destroyed while they would be delivered.¹⁷⁹ A sign (ἔνδειξις) or an omen was something that points to or serves as an indicator of something else.¹⁸⁰ This word can also have the sense of evidence or proof that something is a fact.¹⁸¹ While these sound like very different meanings—fate vs fact—Fee notes that an omen constituted proof for most ancients,¹⁸² so they were not too far apart. Destruction and deliverance refer to eschatological events. When Christians remain steadfast and refuse to be intimidated even under the worst of suffering, when they are determined to glorify Christ in their bodies, whether by life or death (1:20), this is a sign that their opponents will face eternal destruction¹⁸³ while they will find eternal deliverance. In 2 Th 1:4-9 Paul made a similar statement: Persevering during persecution is evidence that God is making believers worthy of the kingdom and will mete out punishment to the persecutors. Deliverance (σωτηρίας) is the same word Paul used back in 1:19 and has the idea of final, completed salvation and is a reference to the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. Paul was saying, “When you cannot be intimidated, that’s proof that God will finish your salvation.”¹⁸⁴

Paul finished his encouragement with “and this from God.” The antecedent of “this” is ambiguous. Some take it to mean the sign is from God, others take it to mean destruction and salvation is from God, and yet others take it to mean both. If it refers to the sign, then it means this encouragement was from God. If it refers to destruction/deliverance, then it means he will do the destroying and delivering. Since the sign points to destruction and deliverance, it doesn’t seem to make much difference.

29 ὅτι ὑμῖν ἐχαρίσθη τὸ ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ, οὐ μόνον τὸ εἰς αὐτὸν πιστεῦν ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ πάσχειν, 30 τὸν αὐτὸν ἀγῶνα ἔχοντες, οἷον εἶδετε ἐν ἐμοὶ καὶ νῦν ἀκούετε ἐν ἐμοί.

29 For it has been graciously given to you not only to trust in Christ but also to suffer for his sake, 30 experiencing **the same struggle** that you saw in me and how hear that I have.

¹⁷⁸ Fee, 167.

¹⁷⁹ A similar contrast—destruction vs deliverance—is seen in 1 Co 1:18.

¹⁸⁰ Arndt, 332.

¹⁸¹ Louw, 1:340.

¹⁸² Fee, 169.

¹⁸³ O’Brien says that their opposition “seals their doom as the enemies of the gospel” (155).

¹⁸⁴ Hansen says, “Courage to live or die for the exaltation of Christ is a manifestation of salvation” (101).

The grammar of this sentence is poor. Literally translated it is, “For that which is on behalf of Christ was given graciously to you, not only to trust in him but also to suffer on his behalf for him.” Fee says it’s a broken sentence. Paul started with suffering, then interrupted himself with belief, and then continued his thought on suffering. The idea of suffering for the sake of Christ is repeated, once before the interruption and once after. Like most English translations, I’ve smoothed out the interruption and removed the repetition.¹⁸⁵

In this verse, Paul put their persecution into theological perspective: It’s grace from God. When the church remains steadfast in one spirit, strives for the gospel, and endures persecution without being intimidated, it knows that God will deliver them and complete their salvation. Suffering does not refer to ordinary difficulties in life that everyone faces, but rather persecution for the sake of Christ, the result of believing in him. The ability to trust in Christ was graciously given to the Philippians and so was suffering.

How can suffering be called a gracious gift from God, evidence of his favor and good will? It is a gracious gift because when endured, it gives proof that our salvation will be completed (1:28). It is also a gracious gift because it allows us to share in Christ’s sufferings (3:10). Several New Testament passages indicate that suffering for Christ’s sake is to be expected (e.g., 2 Ti 3:12; Mt 10:22-25).

In the final verse of the chapter, Paul linked together the suffering that the church was experiencing with his own suffering, both while he was in Philippi (Ac 16:19-24) and in his current situation in Rome. “Paul reminds his friends of his experience of suffering so that they will have his example to follow in their own affliction.”¹⁸⁶ He called their suffering a struggle (*ἀγῶνα*), a word used to describe a “contest for victory or mastery such as was used in the Greek games of running, boxing, wrestling, and so forth.”¹⁸⁷ The church should be encouraged, not only because they suffered for Christ but also because they suffered with Paul.

¹⁸⁵ The more literal translations (NASB95, LEB, ESV) leave both in.

¹⁸⁶ Hansen, 102.

¹⁸⁷ Zodhiates, G73.

Structural Diagram

Live as good citizens in a manner **worthy of the gospel of Christ**
so that
you are remaining steadfast in one spirit
 striving together for the faith of the gospel **with one heart**
 and
 not being intimidated in any way by your opponents
 which is a sign of **their** destruction
 but
 of **your** deliverance

For
it has been graciously given to you not only to trust in Christ
 but also
 to suffer for his sake
 experiencing **the same struggle**

Tracing the Argument

External – Having finished his status update, Paul began his first exhortation section. Having related how he was doing while imprisoned—the gospel was advancing and he was determined to glorify Christ by life or death—he exhorted the Philippians to live worthy of the gospel while being persecuted.

Internal – Paul first commanded them to live as good citizens in a manner worthy of the gospel, then he narrowed it down to the specific way they were to live, which was remaining steadfast. Then he further explained that remaining steadfast means to strive together and not be intimidated. Then he put suffering for the sake of Christ into context, explaining that it was a sign of God’s future activity and his grace to them.

Textual Outline

1. Paul commanded the Philippians to live as good citizens in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ (1:27a).
2. Paul exhorted them to remain steadfast by striving together and not being intimidated by their opponents (1:27b-28a).
3. Paul explained that suffering for Christ’s sake was a sign of God’s future activity and his grace to them (1:28b-30).

Central Truth of the Text

Paul wrote Philippians 1:27-30 in order to command the Philippian church to live worthy of the gospel when suffering for Christ’s sake.

Teaching Outline

God’s people live worthy of the gospel when suffering for Christ’s sake, and today I want to help you prepare for suffering. From our text in Philippians, we are going to see two ways to live worthy of the gospel when suffering for Christ’s sake.

1. Remain steadfast, and you will live worthy of the gospel while suffering for Christ's sake (1:27-28a).
 - a. Remain steadfast by striving together.
 - b. Remain steadfast by not being intimidated.
2. Be encouraged, and you will live worthy of the gospel while suffering for Christ's sake (1:28b-30).
 - a. It is a sign of future deliverance.
 - b. It is grace from God.

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