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## CHAPTER 1

1:1 *Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus*- Paul was writing from prison in Rome; Timothy was with him. Yet 2 Tim. 4:9 records Paul's request for Timothy to come and be with him there as he was about to die. Perhaps this letter was written after Timothy arrived; or perhaps Timothy was with Paul there at some earlier stage in Paul's time at Rome. This seems most likely, because Paul says he is going to send Timothy to them (2:19) and hopes to come to them himself (1:26). If this was after Timothy had come to Paul on his deathbed as it were, we see here how Paul valued their encouragement more than his own. The emphasis upon "joy" in Philippians is notable, and is all the more significant when we consider that Paul was writing from prison, and perhaps at the end of his life. And we would then read Paul's words in 2 Tim. 4 as written in depression, whereas here he is confident of release and visiting Philippi again (:26); unless we are to read this as the unrealistic hopes of a dying man. Throughout this exposition I have noted hints which would support the idea that Philippians was written at the end of Paul's life, facing death, at around the time he wrote 2 Timothy (see notes on 2:12,16, 17,23; 3:13,20; 4:1,13; Col. 4:14).

*To all the saints in Christ Jesus that are at Philippi*- The general congregation are addressed first, and then the overseers, as if to emphasize that Paul is writing to all. There would have been a tendency for the illiterate mass of the congregations to feel they were mere spectators at a show, just as there is in large churches today. "Saints" is the term used for all Israel being a "holy people" in that they were all intended to be priests (Ex. 19:6; Dt. 7:6; 14:2). The point was that although they had spiritual leaders, they were all to take priestly responsibility in the new Israel.

*With the bishops and deacons*- We must respect elders (and indeed all people) for who they are as persons, and not for any 'office' they may appear to hold. Notice how in Phil. 1:1 Paul omits the definite article ("the") in addressing bishops and deacons. Those words indicate what they do for people, rather than any position in a hierarchy. Jesus seems to have outlawed the use of any official titles for His ecclesia (Mt. 23:8-12). Paul never speaks of an ecclesial 'elder' but of *elders* in the plural. The same can be said of "bishops (overseers), see Phil. 1:1; Acts 20:28. Our groups may have secretaries or teachers, but this individual must never be seen as *the* elder. There is only one author [Gk. 'pioneer'] of our faith: the Lord Himself, who worked in our lives to bring us to Himself. This is stressed in Acts 3:15; 5:31; Heb. 2:10; 12:2.

*Bishops*- Vine notes that "The word was originally a secular title, designating commissioners appointed to regulate a newly-acquired territory or a colony". Paul may be using it in this sense, for he sought to leave behind in each new church someone who could teach the new converts, whom he saw as colonies on earth of the Heavenly Kingdom. It would therefore be possible to argue that "bishops" were a temporary office designed for a missionary context. "Deacons" are the servants of the church, those serving by practical arrangement of things.

1:2 *Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ-* "Grace", *charis*, often refers to the gift of the Spirit which is received in the heart of every baptized believer. Paul wishes them the peace which comes as a direct gift from God and the Lord Jesus. This then is no mere formal greeting, but a real desire that they experience in their hearts what was potentially available to them.

1:3 *I thank my God upon all my remembrance of you-* This could mean 'every time I remember / think of you'. But 'remembering' someone is a Hebraism for prayer. It would then parallel "every prayer of mine for you" in :4. He would then mean 'Every time I remember you before God in prayer, I thank God for you'.

1:4 *Always in every prayer of mine with joy making requests for you all-* As noted on :3, Paul likely means that every time he prays for them, he does so with joy, as he makes "requests" for them. What started out as requesting things for them merged into a sense of joy and thanksgiving for them. There's nothing wrong with a Christian experiencing both joy and sorrow at the same time. The Lord's description of His 'joy' at the time of His being the ultimate 'man of sorrows' is an obvious example. But consider too Paul's language to the Philippians. On one hand he speaks insistently of his joy: "I pray always with joy... Christ is being preached, and I am glad... I will also continue to be happy... I am glad, and I share my joy... it made me very happy (Phil. 1:4,18; 2:17; 4:10). And yet on the other hand, he speaks of his sorrows at that very same time: "...that I may receive news about you that will cheer me up... keep me from having one sorrow after another" (Phil. 2:19,27).

1:5 *Giving thanks for your fellowship in furtherance of the gospel from the first day until now-* "Your participation in the [preaching of the] gospel" is paralleled with "your faith" (Phil. 1:5). If we really believe, we will be involved in the preaching of what we believe.

Paul felt the Philippians were still assisting him in the furthering of the Gospel even whilst he was in prison, and he was likewise assisting them. They were hugely separated by distance and situation. Yet they still fellowshipped with each other in the Gospel's work through the connection in the Spirit which is actualized by prayer for each other. And similar bonds can easily be created today too thanks to the communication revolution.

"The first day" presumably refers to when Paul first preached in Philippi, and Lydia and her household responded. He was imprisoned and beaten at Philippi, but Paul remembers the positive, the glass half full rather than half empty; when many others would have been so traumatized by the experience that the post traumatic stress displaced any memory of the good. This is a great example to us all.

1:6 *Being confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will keep working at perfecting it, until the day of Jesus Christ-* "Confident" is a Greek word much beloved of Paul in Philippians (1:6,14,25; 2:25; 3:3,4). The word really means 'persuaded'. Writing from prison towards the end of his ministry, Paul could see how he had been persuaded of his positions throughout his walk with the Lord. He was persuaded that the good work begun within them would come to its intended term at the Lord's return. The work begun within believers refers to the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, the gift given to every believer, but which only becomes actualized in those who allow it to. Many like the Corinthians received that gift but were "not spiritual" (1 Cor. 3:1). The gift of the Spirit in our

hearts is the earnest or guarantee / down payment on the salvation we shall finally receive at the Lord's return (2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5). The good work begun and now ongoing will come to its intended end at the Lord's return. It is God who works His works in us (Heb. 13:21), completing the work of faith in the power of the Spirit within us (2 Thess. 1:11). His dynamic power works within us to this end (Eph. 1:19; 3:7). Phil. 3:21 clearly refers to this idea: "Who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to his glorious body, according to the working by which he is able even to subdue all things to himself". The power of transformation at the last day is that same power which is now at work within us. And that is the explicit teaching of Rom. 8:11: "But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall give life also to your mortal bodies- through His Spirit that dwells in you". Gal. 3:3 echoes the ideas here in Phil. 1:6 by speaking of how the Spirit has begun a work in us, which shall be also completed (s.w. "perfecting" Phil. 1:6) at the Lord's return. This is why in :7 Paul says he feels like this about the Philippians because they have all received the grace, the gift, of the Spirit as Paul has.

*1:7 It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, because I have you in my heart, both in my imprisonment and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel-* The "defence and confirmation of the gospel" uses legal terms- the Greek word translated "defence" means a plea entered in a court of law; and "confirmation" refers to supporting evidence offered to a judge. Paul's idea is that in our preaching, our audiences are the judge; and we are entering a plea for the case of none other than God Himself, and His Son. We have to ask whether our witness to the world is indeed a *plea*- or whether it's a case of merely getting people in our own social group to just drop by at *our* church rather than their usual one. The fact we are speaking on God's behalf, pleading for His case to be accepted in the hard hearts of men, should impart an urgency, a desire to penetrate minds, and persistence in our witness.

*You all are partakers with me of grace-* As noted on :6, the grace which they had partaken of was the gift of the Spirit in their hearts, which was constantly at work preparing them for the final salvation of the last day. It is this common experience of spiritual transformation which is the basis of Christian fellowship in practice, rather than solely a common theological understanding. Paul had "fellowship in the Gospel" with the Philippians, "because... ye all are partakers with me of grace" (Phil. 1:5-7 RV). All those in the Lord Jesus by valid baptism, and who remain in Him by faithful continuance in His way, are partakers of His gracious pardon, salvation, and patient fellowship; and they will, naturally and inevitably, reflect this to their brethren as part of their gratitude to Him.

*1:8 For God is my witness, how I long after you all in the tender mercies of Christ Jesus-* The legal term "witness" connects with the legal metaphors noted on :7. God was a witness to how Paul had preached and defended the Gospel and how he truly sought the salvation of his converts. "Tender mercies" translates the Greek word for spleen; the inward heart, the "inner man" where the Spirit works (Eph. 3:16). If we have the spirit of Christ Jesus, then our spirit is His; even His innermost thoughts and feelings are ours, once our spirit becomes His. And the Lord's longing after the Philippians was therefore Paul's. The "fellowship of the spirit" is achieved by having the same spleen, the same innermost values, ambitions and feelings (2:1 s.w.). Just as the Lord's innermost feelings can be ours, so those who have the Spirit of Christ are likewise connected with us. Onesimus is therefore described as Paul's "spleen" (Philemon 12). This is a great example of how the Spirit connects in fellowship; Paul the intellectual rabbi was connected with Onesimus the runaway slave who landed in jail in Rome, because

they had the same Spirit within them. This same connection was between Paul and the Philippians, and was the basis of his longing after them from such a great distance. Those who deny the working of the Spirit are left with only cold intellectual positions, and the pride of common tradition, to hold them together. But that is not the fellowship of the Spirit, and it becomes very fragile and so easily broken.

1:9- see on 2 Cor. 12:15.

*And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and all discernment-* As noted on :8, the connection or love between Paul and the Philippians was a result of the indwelling of the Spirit; yet we have to "put on" the spleen or inner feelings ("tender mercies") of the Spirit (Col. 3:12) and our love likewise grows in that the work of the Spirit is ongoing and must be allowed by us. For God will not force us against our will. Our love abounds more and more through "discernment, so that ye may prove the things that differ" (RVmg.). We grow by being given different situations to respond to, in order to develop our judgment- what Eph. 5:10 calls "proving what is acceptable unto the Lord". By reason of use our spiritual senses are exercised to discern good and evil (Heb. 5:14). This is why, be it in church or family or deeply personal life, our consciences are constantly being probed and exercised by the situations which Providence leads us into. And thus we grow in sensing more keenly right and wrong, more victoriously overcoming all the temptations whose strength lies in the fact that in the heat of the moment we waver as to what is right and wrong... and the end result of this increased and heightened discernment, Paul says, is a love which abounds "yet more and more" (Phil. 1:9).

1:10 *So that you may approve the things that are excellent, so that you may be sincere and void of offence until the day of Christ-* The pinnacle of love is to be a person who gives no cause of stumbling to others (s.w. Acts 24:16; 1 Cor. 10:32). This suggests that naturally we all cause others to stumble, as stated in James 3:2. We need to be aware of this; the maturity of the love which is ever growing (:9) is to come to a point where we are hyper sensitive to the possible effects of our thinking and being upon others. This sensitivity is the ability to judge / approve the things which differ (Gk.), i.e. having wisdom to know what will upbuild and what will make to stumble. The same phrase is used in Rom. 2:18 of how the Jews thought they could judge the things which differ on the basis of the Law. In Philippi as in all Paul's churches, there was the constant pressure from Judaizers. Paul is saying that it is the spirit of Christ within us, and not casuistic study of the Law, which will lead to this position of maturity. We *know* right now the principles on which God will judge us; we can prove [s.w. "approve"] what is acceptable to God (Rom. 12:2), just as He will "approve" or test every man's work in the fire of judgment day (1 Cor. 3:13 s.w.). We can judge what is acceptable to the Lord (Eph. 5:10- judgment day language). We can judge / discern those things which are excellent in His eyes (Phil. 1:10).

1:11 *Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God-* The preceding verses have alluded to the activity of the Spirit within us. The fruit of the Spirit is what we are filled with, as a gift, rather than what we bring forth in our own unaided strength. Such fruits of righteousness are not of ourselves, but on account of the Lord Jesus; which results in praise to God rather than glory to our own psychological strength. The idea of fullness of spiritual attributes is an allusion to the righteous characteristics of God of Ex. 34- which likewise were unto the *glory* of God. The R.V. of Ex.

34:5-7 says that God is *full* of these attributes- hence Phil. 1:11 talks of us being filled with these things too if we bear the Name, even in this life. The idea of fullness and being filled often occurs in the New Testament in the context of the glory. Eph. 1:23 describes the church as "His body, the fullness of Him (God?) that fills all in all". Thus we are "*the*" fullness of God and Christ. "We beheld His glory... full of grace and truth (alluding to Ex. 34)... and of His fullness have all we received" (Jn. 1:14,16). See on Eph. 1:23.

1:12 *Now I would have you know, brothers, that the things which happened to me have turned out for the progress of the gospel-* If we are truly focused on God's agenda, knowing we have His backing, then all setbacks, even our death itself, will be understood by us as all for the ultimate advancement of the aims we are working towards. It's a battle, a war, a campaign, a race, which we can't ultimately lose. With God on our side, we have to win. And we shall. "Progress" is the same word as used in :25 about the progress in their faith. Paul's focus was upon the progress and development of others, and this enabled him to bear with his own apparently dead end situation in a Roman prison.

1:13 *So that my bonds made Christ manifest throughout the whole Praetorian guard, and to all the rest-* It has been suggested that if Paul were constantly chained to a succession of Roman soldiers, he would have preached to them all; and thus the Gospel was spread throughout the guard. And from 4:22 we know that there were believers amongst "Caesar's household", and the list of names in Romans 16 include some which can be traced there too (see notes there). Paul's apparently dead end situation therefore led to the Gospel penetrating the very highest of places within the Roman empire, in a manner which would have been impossible had he not been imprisoned in Rome. The Greek *praetorium* is mainly used of how the Lord Jesus was held in the Praetorium, in chains as Paul was (Mt. 27:27; Mk. 15:16; Jn. 18:28,33; 19:9). Paul quickly perceived that in essence he was continuing the Lord's witness by fellowshipping His sufferings, and we can make the same connections between our chains in life and the Lord's sufferings.

1:14- see on Acts 2:46.

*And further, most of the believers in the Lord, being made confident through my bonds, are more abundantly bold to speak the word of God without fear-* Paul's amazing witness noted in :13, penetrating deep into Caesar's inner circles, was and is an encouragement for other believers to likewise preach. We too can be inspired by the witness of others. "More abundantly" is a common term with Paul, reflecting his sense that the progressive work of the Spirit in our lives makes us ever growing in love and zeal to preach.

1:15 *Some indeed preach Christ out of envy and strife, and some of good will-* Paul's ability to judge motives here may have come from direct Spirit insight. For it is not really for us to judge the motives of some preachers as being of envy. And yet it was quite clear that this category had an agenda- to make trouble for Paul and have his prison sentence extended or turned into a harder prison regime for him (:16). The believers in view were presumably those in the church at Rome. His enthusiasm to see them and be with them, as witnessed in the letter to Rome, may well have guided him in appealing to Caesar. And yet at his trial, none of them stood with him; and we get no impression that they ministered to his needs in prison. It was faithful friends from elsewhere in the empire who had to be asked to bring him a warm coat and writing materials. They may well have advertised Christianity in terms

which were provocative to the Roman leadership, in order to make Paul as the high profile Christian prisoner suffer more. And this was rooted in envy or jealousy of him. Paul could have given in to bitter disappointment with the Roman church, but we never get a hint of it in his letters. He was very positive about the whole experience.

*1:16 The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains-* As noted on :15, these believers were jealous of Paul and were presenting Christianity in a provocative way in order to add to Paul's chains- seeking to get him a longer and harder sentence. And yet in faith he believes he will be released and even visit Philippi again (:26). He could so easily have succumbed to the 'glass half empty' syndrome and wallowed in depression.

*1:17 But the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defence of the gospel-* All preaching of the Gospel is to be motivated by love. But the contrast is with how some preached motivated by a desire to make problems for Paul, whereas others preached from love- and we could assume that the love is therefore love of Paul. And the context of this verse has been talking about Paul's love for the Philippians. Preaching from love for Paul would therefore have referred to witnessing publicly in his support, which meant witnessing for Christ; knowing that Paul had been appointed by the Lord to openly defend the Gospel before the Gentiles.

*1:18 What then? In every way, whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is proclaimed and therein I rejoice, yes and will rejoice-* This is a powerful principle; regardless of the motives others have in their work, we should rejoice Christ is preached. And yet so many believers have so little joy at the witness of others to Christ because of their hangups about those who are doing the preaching work. The 'believers' out to make trouble for Paul were only 'pretending' which suggests they were false brethren, those who faked conversion in order to enter the early Christian communities and derail them (Gal. 2:4). But despite that, Paul still rejoices that the Lord Jesus was getting at least some publicity; he clearly believed that no publicity is bad publicity, and my own ministry led me to the same conclusion. These false brethren were Judaists, and the same word translated "pretence" is used of orthodox Jews in Lk. 20:47 and Jn. 15:22.

*1:19 For I know that this shall result in my salvation, through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ-* The machinations of Paul's enemies, seeking to lengthen or harshen his prison term, would, he believed, turn out in his salvation from prison in Rome- if the Philippians prayed about it. "Salvation" is rendered better by Moffatt: "The outcome of all this, I know, will be my release". The Greek here is almost identical to Job 13:16 LXX: "Though he slay me... even that is to me an omen of salvation". The context is of Job speaking of the good conscience he had maintained with God; similarly, Paul's good conscience made him fearless of approaching death, as he also made clear when on trial for his life (Acts 23:1; 24:16).

I have noted above that Paul felt the fellowship of the Spirit with them because the same Spirit in him was in them- that of the Lord. The operation of the Spirit would result in his salvation from prison. But whether Paul was released at this point (see on :1) is unclear. "I know that..." was written by Paul in faith, although he did not know how exactly the Spirit was going to work in this case. "Supply" is only elsewhere used in Eph. 4:16, concerning how the body functions through each member supplying something towards its total function.

But what they supplied was what the Lord supplied; a related word is used of the Lord's supply of the Spirit to the church (Gal. 3:5). The Spirit is supplied through the functioning of the Lord Jesus through the ligaments of His body. See on Zech. 4:14.

There seems reason to believe that the gift of the Spirit is a way of describing answered prayer. The giving of "good things to them that ask" in prayer is the same as the giving (gift) of the Holy Spirit (Mt. 7:11 cp. Lk. 11:13). Phil. 1:19 parallels "Your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ". Similarly, 1 Jn. 3:24 says that we are given the Spirit as a result of our obedience to the commands; verse 22 says that obedience to those commands leads to our prayers being answered. Thus our confidence is due to having our prayers heard (1 Jn. 5:14) and also due to having the Spirit act in our lives (1 Jn. 3:21,24; 4:13), seeing that prayer is answered by the Spirit's work.

1:20- see on Eph. 6:19.

*According to my earnest expectation and hope, that in nothing shall I be put to shame; but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether by life, or by death-* This seems to echo Job 13:13-15 (especially in RVmg.), where Job says he is willing to face every trial, but knows that death will be his lot; yet he is certain that God will still be glorified through this. All of this is very apposite to Paul's situation. Paul has just expressed confidence that he will be released from prison (:19), but his hope for 'salvation' from prison merges into his confident hope in salvation at the last day, when he [unlike the rejected] would not be put to shame but would glorify the Lord Jesus. Whether he was released from prison or died the death of a martyr, he believed he would glorify his Lord. In this sense the natural panic when faced with death was not with Paul; for his aim was the Lord's glorification, and he could see that whether he lived or died he would achieve that, seeing he intended to use the life he might be given in the Lord's continued service. When faced with death or the cutting short of life or physical opportunity, this is the choice before the believer- and if we are focused upon the Lord's glorification, it is a win-win situation.

"Magnified" means just that. Paul magnified the name of the Lord Jesus through his preaching work amongst men (Acts 19:17 s.w.). And he would achieve the same through dying for Him as a martyr. In this sense we can make the Lord greater by our witness and living. He has partially delegated His own glorification to us, as He has given us His wealth and the run of His house; and shall return to see how we have got on with running His business.

1:21 *For to me to live, is Christ, and to die- is gain-* As noted on :20, Paul faced the possibility of death as a win-win situation. If he lived, he would glorify the Lord through his work with the Philippians and others. If he died, he would likewise glorify the Lord. If he lived further, then Christ would continue living in him. His life would be that of Christ. To live, therefore, would be "Christ". And yet if he died- that would be gain or profit for him. He uses the same word in explaining how he counted all that was once "gain" to him as loss for the sake of Christ (3:7). His real gain was, in a word, "Christ". His life was so absorbed with that of the Lord Jesus, the Lord's Spirit was his spirit, that death itself was no great issue for him. If he lived, he lived "Christ", the Christ who was in him. If he died, whilst he would be unconscious until the Lord's coming, he would eternally have that same connection with his Lord after the resurrection and immortalization which he so eagerly anticipated.

When Paul speaks of "...that I may win Christ....to live is Christ", his idea seems to be of attaining a spirituality even in this life where the life we live is Christ living in us, totally reflected in our actions and spirit. "To die is gain" was effectively Job's attitude too, particularly in Job 10:20-22, where whilst recognizing the unpleasantness of death, he speaks as if he were willing to suffer it to maintain his integrity with God. Paul is reasoning along similar lines.

The picture of Paul in prison, having reached this spiritual pinnacle, fired the minds and living of "many of the brethren in the Lord" (:14). And for me too, the old and brave Paul in that cell is the man I fain would be. And yet as his perception of Christ and his surpassing excellency increased, so did his warnings against apostasy, and the need to hold on to true doctrine. In other words, his absorption and appreciation of the Spirit of Christ was what fired his zeal for purity of doctrine and practice. It was this which gave him the spiritual energy and power to live the life that he did, to the point that he could truly say that for him, to live was Christ; that the life he lived in the flesh, the things he did, the thoughts he thought, was all the result of Christ living in him and through him. He brought *every thought* (and this isn't figurative language) into captivity to Christ (2 Cor. 10:5). My sense is that as he was lead out to face his death, this phrase he'd coined to the Philippians was in his mind: "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain".

1:22 *But if by living in the flesh, this shall bring fruit from my work, then what I shall choose I do not know*- "I do not know" can carry the sense of 'It is all the same'; which was his whole point (see on :20,21). The idea of Paul having a choice to live or die doesn't necessarily mean that he had control over his destiny at that point. He is saying that if he had a choice, it would be all the same what he chose, because his existence was a glorification of the Lord, both now and eternally. Yet if he had to choose, he reasons that he would come down on the idea of living a bit longer, because he saw that was more needful for the new converts (Phil. 1:21-23). This accounts for his emphasis in Philippians on how much he desired their growth; because he had chosen to stay alive in this mortal flesh *solely because* he wanted to achieve this. The tragedy was that all in Asia turned away- when he had 'risked' remaining alive, with the full knowledge he could himself fall away, having been offered certain salvation- all for their sakes.

Understanding the way Paul breaks off into another theme and then resumes is the key to understanding some of the more difficult passages in his writings (examples in Rom. 3:25,26; Eph. 3:1,14). And we have another case here: "But if I live in the flesh [*this is the fruit of my labour... nevertheless to abide in the flesh*] (this) is more needful for you" (Phil. 1:22-24).

1:23- see on 1 Cor. 12:31; 2 Tim. 4:6; 4:6-8.

*I am torn between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better*- I suggested on :22 that Paul had no real choice in the matter of living or dying; he is expressing his internal debate over the hypothetical question of whether it would be better to die as a martyr or be released from prison and bring forth fruit amongst Gentiles like the Philippians. He came down on the side of living longer in the flesh for their sakes. He clearly felt that he had an irreplaceable role to play for them, as their spiritual father. This description of the internal debate is by way of explanation as to why he so firmly believed he would be released from prison (:19) in order to visit them again (:26).

Paul clearly understood that the interval between death and resurrection at the Lord's coming plays no significant role in anything when it comes to our personal salvation. To depart this life in death was effectively to be with Christ- for the second coming would be the next conscious experience after death. That "with Christ" refers to being with Him at His return is made clear in Col. 3:3,4, a passage which has many points of contact with Phil. 1: "For you died, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, our life, shall be manifested, then with him you shall also be manifested in glory".

Another way of reading this language of internal debate about death is to consider that Paul may have written the letter when he was so ill that he had a choice of being able to "depart, and to be with Christ" or remain. Paul may have been so ill that he could give up his will to live if he chose, but struggled for their sake to keep alive. No wonder his mind went to the afflicted Job, to whom he alludes several times.

1:24 *Yet to abide in the flesh is more needful for your sake-* Paul had the choice, at least hypothetically, as to whether he wanted to die and finish his probation; but he chose to stay alive, with all the temptations and spiritual pitfalls of human existence, for the sake of the first century believers. This was love indeed.

1:25 *And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and stay with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith-* Paul was confident that he had reasoned his way to the right decision in this hypothetical case regarding dying as a martyr or being released, and so he is confident that despite the machinations of some towards his death, he would be released. Hence the confident expectation of release in :19 and :20, and his certainty he would again visit the Philippians (:26). Indeed "stay with you all" could suggest Paul even envisaged retiring to Philippi as this was the church which seemed to be the most loyal to him. But it is in all an open question as to whether this is what happened; as discussed on :1, it is possible that this letter was written at the very end of Paul's life, and that he was executed soon afterwards. And if he was released, there is no evidence that he did revisit Philippi and significantly progress their faith. So we do feel that Paul is rather forcing and willing through his argument here, in a way we noted he tended to in his reasoning of 2 Corinthians.

1:26 *That your boasting may abound in Christ Jesus in me through my presence with you again-* I suggested on :17 that some were preaching Christ out of love for Paul, as if they were pressuring for his release and by so doing were witnessing to the Lord Jesus. Perhaps this is the boasting he refers to. For his reasoning seems to be that their boasting of Paul will result in his presence with them; we noted on :19 that he believed their witness for him and the Lord Jesus would lead to his release.

1:27 *Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ. That, whether I come and see you or be absent, I may hear of your state- you standing fast in one spirit, with one mind together striving for the faith of the gospel-* Whether or not their efforts for his release from prison worked out or not, and whether he did in fact use his freedom to visit them, the most important thing was their spirituality. The good news of salvation in Christ was to elicit a manner of life in them. His great wish was that they should remain in the Spirit. The parallel between mind and spirit indicates that the gift of the one Spirit was essentially a state of mind. Because there is only one Spirit- that of the Lord Jesus- they therefore would have one mind. But whose mind? That of Jesus. This is not a call for uniformity of position on all

issues, but rather to be united by having the same one mind and spirit- that of Jesus. This theme will be developed at length in chapter 2.

Whoever really believes the doctrines of the One Faith and lives the life which they naturally bring forth, really will be saved. Therefore we will have a sense of true unity with our brethren who believe as we do, whatever human barriers there may be between us. Therefore "the Faith" is linked with unity between believers (Eph. 4:13; Phil. 1:27). We will live eternally together, and this must begin in life together now. It is inevitable that a certain amount of 'politics' intrude upon our ecclesial experience; one group wants this, another wants that; one sees things one way, another perceives things from a different viewpoint. But here again, the principles of the most basic Gospel must govern us. The Greek word for 'politics' does in fact occur in the New Testament.- when Paul says that our *politeuesthe* must be "worthy of the gospel of Christ" (Phil. 1:27). The principles of the loving, saving, reconciling, patient Christ must work their way through even the politics that are inevitably part of life together.

The early church are held up as our example here: "Stand fast in *one spirit, with one mind* striving together for the faith of the Gospel". Doesn't that sound just like an allusion to the early ecclesia? The theme continues in 2:2: "Be likeminded, having the same love, being *of one accord*, of one mind". There's that phrase "one accord" again. It's hardly used outside the Acts, so we should read that like a signpost, saying 'Go back to the Acts!'. So Paul is saying: 'You believers must always remember the great spirit of "one accord" in the early ecclesia in Jerusalem. Let the early church be your example!'. There are a number of other allusions back to the early chapters of Acts. For example, 2:4: "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others". Twice we read there in Acts of disregarding our own "things". Paul definitely has his eye on Acts 4:32: "The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul (just as Paul spoke about in Phil. 2:2): neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own (cp. "his own things" in Phil. 2:4); but they had all things common". And then in 2:3 Paul warns against doing things "through vainglory". Doesn't that sound like an allusion to Ananias and Sapphira? Then he warns them in 2:14 "Do all things without murmurings and disputings". It can't be coincidental that in Acts 6:1,9 we read twice about there being murmurings and disputings in the early ecclesia. Phil. 2 describes the exaltation of Christ on his resurrection. It seems no accident that this is then described in the very words which the apostles so often used in their preaching in the early chapters of Acts. Thus in 2:9, "God has highly exalted him" is a reference to Peter's words: "Being by the right hand of God exalted... him has God exalted" (Acts 2:33; 5:33). The whole theme in Phil. 2 is of Christ suffering on the cross and then being exalted by the Father, and given the mighty Name. The very same language is used so often in Acts (2:9-11=Acts 2:36; 2:10= Acts 4:10; 3:6,16). When Paul exhorts us to hold forth "the word of life" (Phil. 2:16), he surely has his mind on the way the early preachers held forth "the words of this life" in Acts 5:20. We are to follow their spirit.

The unity of the Philippians is connected with their preaching of the Gospel. It was their unity which would be the greatest witness to the world. The way Simon the Zealot and Matthew the pro-Roman tax collector were all welded together within the 12 would have been an arresting display of unity in the Gospel, which cannot fail to have impressed first century Palestine. And it would have been so in the Antioch ecclesia too- the elders included Paul, the fiery ex-Orthodox rabbi; Manaen, one of the intimates of the Herod family; Barnabus, a Cypriot Levite who had owned land there to get around the Law's demands; Simeon the black man; Lucius from Cyrene, also in Africa. No wonder it was from this

ecclesia that the Gospel really spread outwards. When the early church showed that uncanny unity between Jew and Gentile, slave and master, they converted the world. And so would and could and do we. And yet when and where we are divided, the power of conversion is lost. This is why the Philippians were told to live lives appropriate to the Gospel they preached, and to 'contend as one man' for the Gospel (Phil. 1:27,30). Their united witness, according to John 17, would convert the world. But if they were disunited, that great salvation would not be shared as it could potentially be.

1:28 *And not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, and of your salvation- and that from God-* The "clear sign" is understood by Vine as a legal term, an indictment; as if our lives and situations are played out before the throne of Heaven and judged right now. Lightfoot connects it with the language of striving for the Gospel in :27, claiming that it refers to the sign given by a striving gladiator when he had vanquished his opponent. But all the same, the question arises as to what was the clear sign? Was it persecution, which was the basis of condemnation for their opponents but a proof of their salvation? It could be, but we can look deeper than that. The context of :27 is of having the spirit / mind of the Lord Jesus and remaining firm in faith. This was the victory of the spiritual gladiator. The clear sign of future salvation would then refer to the one mind / spirit; which connects with how the gift of the Spirit in our hearts is seen as the earnest or guarantee of our future salvation in 2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5. Response to the Gospel is a condemnation of others whilst being the portent of our final salvation (2 Cor. 2:16- a savour of death to some, and life to others).

1:29 *Because to you it has been granted in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe in him, but also to suffer in his behalf-* They were not to be frightened / surprised [Gk. 'startled'] at persecution (:28). It goes with territory of being in Christ. If we are Him to this world, then we shall be treated as He was by this world. Difficulties are going to come. The parable of the sower sought to explain this; that some accept Christ but fall away once the inevitable persecution starts. Here too Paul has to warn against an attitude that we are required to simply "believe in Christ". If we are in Him, then we have been given, as a gift, to suffer with him. If we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him. Baptism into His death and resurrection proclaims we are prepared for the process of dying with Him, so that we might live with Him.

By God's grace, the Lord tasted death *for* (Gk. *huper*) *every man*, as our representative: "in tasting death he should stand for all" (Heb. 2:9 NEB). In His death He experienced the essence of the life-struggle and death of every man. The fact the Lord did this *for us* means that we respond *for Him*. "To you it is given *in the behalf of* (Gk. *huper*) Christ, not only to believe on Him [in theory], but to suffer *for his sake* (Gk. *huper*)". He suffered *for us* as our representative, and we suffer *for Him* in response. This was and is the two-way imperative of the fact the Lord was our representative. He died *for all* that we should die to self and live *for Him* (2 Cor. 5:14,15). "His own self bare our sins [as our representative] in his own body [note the link " *our sins*" and "his *own* body"] that we being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness" (1 Pet. 2:24,25). We died with Him, there on His cross; and so His resurrection life is now ours. He is totally active for us now; His life now is *for us*, and as we live His life, we should be 100% *for Him* in our living. He gave His life *for us*, and we must lay down our lives *for Him* (1 Jn. 3:16). See on 2 Cor. 5:15.

1:30 *Having the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear is in me-* The conflict may refer to how the Philippians had been witnesses of Paul's beating and imprisonment in

Philippi for their sakes, and now they were hearing that again Paul was undergoing imprisonment for the Gospel, this time in Rome. But in essence, because of their connection in the Spirit, they were fellowshipping Paul's sufferings. Their experience of persecution was shared by him; it was in essence "the same conflict". He uses the same word *agon*, "conflict", in recalling the great conflict / agony he suffered in Philippi (1 Thess. 2:2). He is experiencing this in a different form in Rome, as they were in Philippi. In each case, they now in Philippi, Paul earlier in Philippi, Paul now in Rome... it was "the same conflict". The unity of the Spirit is thus brought about by experience in practice; and it is experience which unites. Mere intellectual theology tends to divide.

## CHAPTER 2

2:1 *Therefore, if there is any encouragement in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any tender mercies and compassions-* The preceding chapter has spoken of the one mind and spirit which they had, and the unity of suffering experienced by them in Philippi and Paul in Rome. But the receipt of the Spirit, the gift of the Spirit of Christ in the heart of every baptized believer, needs to be realized in practice. That one mind must be put on, and the fellowship of it experienced. "If there is any..." suggests Paul is quoting the great claims made about the Christian faith; and indeed they are true. But he is saying that the Spirit is not going to just zap people with spirituality; there must be moves from our side too. If there is any consolation of love- then we are to have the same love as the Lord has (:2). If there is fellowship from sharing the same one Spirit of Christ- then we are to be of one accord and mind with each other (:2). "Encouragement" and "consolation" translate words from the *parakleo* family, the very term used for the Comforter which is the Holy Spirit which shall be within us who believe. But we can receive that Spirit at conversion and yet not be spiritual (1 Cor. 3:1). The Philippians are therefore being urged to live in practice as they were potentially enabled to by the Spirit. We noted on 1:8 that the very inward 'spleen' of Paul was filled with the Spirit of Christ, and he believed that was how it was with the Philippians; and therefore they had such close fellowship. But now he is arguing that if this is true, then they must act accordingly; for the same word is here translated "tender mercies".

2:2- see on 1:27.

*Make my joy full by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind-* As noted on :1, they were to think and be in practice how they potentially were. The one mind he goes on to define as the mind of Christ. This is the one mind, the point at which we are "like-minded". Paul exhorts preachers to be "with one mind striving together for the faith of the Gospel", and then goes on to define that "one mind" as the mind that was in Christ Jesus in His time of dying. Having outlined the mind of Christ at this time, Paul then returns to his theme of preaching, by saying that the Lord's death was so that each of us should be inspired to humbly confess him as Lord to the world (Phil. 1:27; 2:2,5,11).

2:3 *Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself-* In chapter 1, Paul notes that some preach Christ from the wrong motives. Although he rejoiced Christ was preached, he urges the Corinthians to not be wrongly motivated. "Conceit" translates *keno-doxia*, literally 'empty glorying'. The argument goes on to play with this idea by saying that the mind of the Lord Jesus on the cross emptied itself (:7 *kenoo*) of all human glory and thereby He received the highest glory. Seeking our own glory is not therefore having the mind of the crucified Christ. And "lowliness of mind" is the basic word used of how the Lord there "humbled Himself" (:8), allowed Himself to be brought down, that He might be exalted in due time and not right away. For the believer, that means so realizing our own sins that we *hegeomai*, place others in a hegemony, higher than ourselves. The idea is not that we think others are better than us, for that would mean doing ourselves down in an unrealistic and psychologically unhealthy way. Rather is the nuance of meaning that in any hierarchy or hegemony, we consider ourselves on the lowest level. Paul was secure in himself, confident of his salvation, satisfied with the fight he had fought and the race he had run; but he also considered himself the least of the believers (Eph. 3:8) and the worst of sinners. We are all as the beggars in the parable, who quite undeservedly are invited to the banquet, and so should take the lowest seat- that they might be invited up to a higher seat in the hegemony or ranking when the Lord comes, and not now.

2:4 *Each of you not looking to his own things, but each of you to the things of others-* If we are to consider ourselves as appropriate only to the lowest station in God's household, we will be as a servant of all, the lowest of the slaves, just as the Lord was on the cross. We will as the lowest slave be looking to serve the "others" of :3 within the household. Perhaps Paul is thinking of the Lord's comment about how a slave will not think of his own things, preparing his own supper, but of preparing the supper for others (Lk. 17:7-9).

We should be ever "looking to" the best interests of others- the Greek word *skopos* is the one used in "telescope" or "microscope". Our focus must be upon what is their best interest spiritually. Not upon anything else. Condemning, belittling, comparing, labelling, insulting, condescending, being sarcastic... have absolutely no place in a life driven by this purpose. For we are to have the mind of the Lord as He died, which was so focused upon us and our needs. When we were so immature and only rarely ever seem to 'get it'.

If we are to live lives devoted to the rest of the brotherhood, we need a motivation more powerful than just steel will-power. The constant out-giving of the cross, in the face of the most studied rejection and lack of appreciation, can be the only motivation that time and again, without fail, will revive our flagging will. Paul paints a powerful picture of the Lord's progressive self-humbling in service to others, culminating in "the death of the cross"; and with this in mind, he asks us: "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ...". The Mosaic command to give, every man according to the blessing with which God had blessed him (Dt. 16:17), is purposely similar in phrasing to the command to eat of the Passover lamb, every man according to his need; and to partake of the manna (cp. the Lord Jesus), every man according to his need (Ex. 12:4; 16:6,16). According to the desperation of our need, so we partake of Christ; and in response, according to our blessing, we give, in response to the grace of His giving.

2:5 *Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus-* This is the "one mind" and 'like mind' which Paul has earlier asked us to have. The mind is the spirit; the gift of the Spirit of Christ enables us to have His mind or Spirit. And Paul now argues that the quintessence of the Lord's mind was seen in Him as He died. This is an extremely high calling- to have the mind which the Lord had as He died. The context of this passage must be carefully considered. Paul does not just start talking about Jesus 'out of the blue'. He refers to the mind of Jesus in Phil. 2:5. Back in Phil. 1:27 Paul starts to speak of the importance of our state of mind. This is developed in the early verses of chapter 2: "Being of one accord, of one mind... in lowliness of mind... look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus..." (Phil. 2:2-5). Paul is therefore speaking of the importance of having a mind like that of Jesus, which is devoted to the humble service of others. The verses which follow are therefore commenting upon the humility of mind which Jesus demonstrated, rather than speaking of any change of nature. Just as Jesus was a servant, so earlier Paul had introduced himself with the same word (Phil. 1:1 cp. 2:7). The attitude of Jesus is set up as our example, and we are urged to join Paul in sharing it. We're not asked to change natures; we're asked to have the mind of Jesus- so that we may know the "fellowship of sharing in his [Christ's] sufferings, becoming like him in his death and so to attain to the resurrection from the dead" (Phil. 3:10,11).

Trinitarian theology sees God's salvation of humanity as being on account of His supposed 'incarnation' in Christ, and His sending of the [supposedly] pre-existent Christ into the world. But the New Testament emphasis is upon the *death* of Christ, His victory within Himself and

subsequent resurrection, as the crucial means by which our redemption was enabled. And further, how He saved us through the cross and through His own self-debasement is held up as our very real example in passages like Phil. 2 and 2 Cor. 8:8-10. We are not pre-existent gods in Heaven awaiting an incarnation on earth. We are very real, human guys and gals. His pattern can mean nothing for us if it was all about saving others through submitting to some kind of 'incarnation'. But the Biblical emphasis makes His sufferings, death and victory in resurrection our very real pattern, so real that we are to be baptized into it (Rom. 6:3-5) and live according to this as a pattern for human life every moment.

2:6- see on 1 Cor. 15:45.

*Who, though being-* The Greek word translated “being” here does not mean ‘being originally, from eternity’. Acts 7:55 speaks of Stephen “being full of the Holy Spirit”. He was full of the Holy Spirit then and had been for some time before; but he had not always been full of it. Other examples will be found in Lk. 16:23; Acts 2:30; Gal. 2:14. Christ “being in the form of God” therefore just means that he was in God’s form (mentally); it does not imply that he was in that form from the beginning of time.

*In the mental image of God-* Jesus was “in the form of God”. That “form” (Greek *morphe*) cannot refer to essential nature is proved by Phil. 2:7 speaking of Christ taking on “the form of a servant”. He had the form of God, but he took on the form of a servant. The essential nature of a servant is no different to that of any other man. In harmony with the context, we can safely interpret this as meaning that although Jesus was perfect, He had a totally God-like mind, yet He was willing to take on the demeanour of a servant. Some verses later Paul encourages us to become “conformable unto (Christ’s) death” (Phil. 3:10). We are to share the *morphe*, the form of Christ which he showed in his death. This cannot mean that we are to share the nature which He had then, because we have human nature already. We do not have to change ourselves to have human nature, but we need to change our way of thinking, so that we can have the *morphe* or mental image which the Lord had in His death. The Greek word *morphe* means an image, impress or resemblance. Human beings can have a *morphe*. Gal. 4:19 speaks of “Christ (being) formed in” believers. Because He had a perfect character, a perfectly God-like way of thinking, the Lord Jesus was “in the form of God”. Because of this, He did not consider equality with God “something to be grasped at”. This totally disproves the theory that Jesus was God. Even according to the N.I.V. translation, the Lord did not for a moment entertain the idea of being equal with God; He knew that He was subject to God, and not co-equal with Him. There are many examples in the Greek Old Testament of the Greek word *morphe* being used to mean 'outward form' rather than 'essential nature'- e.g. Jud. 8:18 [men had the *morphe*, the outward appearance, of a king's sons]; Job 4:16; Is. 44:13 [a carpenter makes an idol in the *morphe* or outward appearance of a human being- but not in the very nature of a human being!]; Dan 3:19 [the king's *morphe* or appearance changed because he got angry; his essential nature remained the same]. And likewise in the Apocrypha: Tobit 1:13; Wis. 18:1; 4 Macc. 15:4. If Paul meant nature or essence he would have used the word *ousia* or *physis*- as he does in Gal. 2:16 where he speaks of "We who are Jews by nature [*physis*]...".

We should remember that Philippi was in Macedonia, it was named after Philip, the father of Alexander the Great. Alexander was some sort of hero there. He was held to be successful in his exploits because after conquering a people, he did not have a policy of ruling by suppression but instead made all attempts to befriend them by making himself a servant to the people. Alexander was perceived to have an *hypostasis* (the substantial quality) of both

master and servant. It seems that Paul may be making a conscious connection between the Lord Jesus, and Alexander the Great. But the Lord Jesus went so much further. He emptied Himself of all pride and became a servant to all. In our context, the point I take from this is that Alexander didn't change natures when he, the master, became a servant to his people; and the same is true of the Lord Jesus. His humiliation and self-deprecation was specifically upon the cross; and as such He is our example. We too are to have His spirit. We are unable to change natures; the challenge rather is to change our minds. Peter says the same, perhaps alluding to Paul's words here: "Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time".

*Did not consider grasping at being equal with God-* The essence of the temptation in Eden was to think that the tree of knowledge could bring salvation; it was an attempt to grasp at equality with God, according to Phil. 2, it was a vain belief that possession of knowledge / truth enables us to play God. And we, with our emphasis on the need for truth, for correct understanding, are especially prone to this major temptation. He did not conceive the equality with God with which He would be rewarded as "booty" (Gk.), something to be grasped for: instead, He concentrated on being a humble servant, working to bring about the salvation of others (Phil. 2). This sense of working for *God's* glory must really permeate our thinking. Vincent Taylor analyses Paul's hymn of praise to the Lord Jesus in Phil. 2:6-11 and concludes that it is an adaptation of a Jewish hymn which spoke of "the appearance of the Heavenly Man on earth". Paul was writing under inspiration, but it seems he purposefully adapted a Jewish hymn and applied it to Jesus- to indicate the status which should truly be ascribed to the Lord Jesus. See on Col. 1:15. The lowest of the 30 aeons, Sophia, "yielded to an ungovernable desire to apprehend [God's] nature". And Paul alludes to this in Phil. 2:6 by saying that Jesus by contrast didn't even consider apprehending God's nature, but instead made Himself a servant of all. As more and more is known of the literature and ideas which were extant in the first century, it becomes the more evident that Paul's writings are full of allusions to it- allusions which seek to deconstruct these ideas, replacing them with the true; and by doing so, presenting the Truth of the Gospel in the terms and language of the day, just as we seek to. See on Col. 2:9.

It has been shown that the hymn of Phil. 2:6-11 is alluding to various Gnostic myths about a redeemer, the son and image of the "highest God", who comes down to earth, hides himself as a man so as not to be recognized by demons, shares human sufferings, and then disappears to Heaven having redeemed them (Documented in Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology Of The New Testament* (London: S.C.M., 1955) p. 166. Bultmann showed that many of the 'difficult passages' in John have similar connections (*ibid* p. 175). I would argue that John likewise was alluding to these Gnostic [and other] redeemer myths in order to deconstruct them.). I suggest that these allusions are in order to deconstruct those myths. Paul's point is that the redemption of humanity was achieved by the human Jesus, through His death on the cross, and not through some nebulous mythical figure supposedly taking a trip to earth for a few years. The hymn also alludes to the many wrong ideas floating around Judaism at the time concerning Adam. Messiah was *not* Adam; Adam is compared and contrasted with Jesus in Phil. 2:6-11- he like Jesus was made in the image of God, yet he grasped at equality with God ("you will be like God", Gen. 3:5), which Jesus didn't do. The description of Jesus "being in the form of God" was therefore to highlight the similarities between Him and Adam, who was also made in the form of God. The choice Jesus faced was to die on the cross or not, and it is this choice which Phil. 2:6-11 glorifies. The context of Phil. 2 shows that it was in this that He was and is our abiding example in the daily choices we face. If His choice was merely to come to earth

or stay in Heaven, then there is nothing much to praise Him for and He is not our example in this at all.

*2:7 But poured himself out-* Christ “made himself of no reputation”, or “emptied himself” (R.V.), alluding to the prophecy of his crucifixion in Is. 53:12: “He poured out his soul unto death”. He “took upon himself the form (demeanour) of a servant” by his servant-like attitude to his followers (Jn. 13:14), demonstrated supremely by his death on the cross (Mt. 20:28). Is. 52:14 prophesied concerning Christ’s sufferings that on the cross “his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men”. This progressive humbling of himself “unto death, even the death of the cross” was something which occurred during his life and death, not at his birth. We have shown the context of this passage to relate to the mind of Jesus, the humility of which is being held up to us as an example to copy. These verses must therefore speak of Jesus’ life on earth, in our human nature, and how he humbled himself, despite having a mind totally in tune with God, to consider our needs.

*Taking the mental attitude of a servant, and was the made just the same as all ordinary men-* Trinitarians please note that Phil. 2 was written by Paul with his mind on the *death* not *birth* of Christ, as their false theology requires (Phil. 2:7 = Mt. 10:28; and note the connections with Is. 53). The mixture of the Divine and human in the Lord Jesus is what makes Him so compelling and motivational. He was like us in that He had our nature and temptations; and yet despite that, He was different from us in that He didn't sin. Phil. 2 explains how on the cross, the Lord Jesus was so supremely "in the likeness of men"; and yet the same 'suffering servant' prophecy which Phil. 2 alludes to also makes the point that on the cross, "his appearance was so unlike the sons of Adam" (Is. 52:14). There was something both human and non-human in His manifestation of the Father upon the cross. Never before nor since has such supreme God-likeness, 'Divinity' , if you like, been displayed in such an extremely human form- a naked, weak, mortal man in His final death throes.

The Lord *taking upon himself* the form of a servant is to be connected with how at the Last Supper, He *took* (s.w.) a towel and girded Himself for service (Jn. 13:4). The connection between the Last Supper and Phil. 2, which describes the Lord's death on the cross, would suggest that the Lord's washing the disciples' feet was an epitome of His whole sacrifice on the cross. The passage describing the Last Supper begins with the statement that the Lord "loved us unto the end" (Jn. 13:1). This is an evident description of the cross itself; and yet His service of His followers at the Last Supper was therefore an epitome of the cross. As that Supper was "prepared" (Mt. 26:17,19), so the Lord on the cross "prepared" a place for us in the Kingdom (Jn. 14:1 s.w.). As the observing disciples didn't understand what the Lord was doing by washing their feet, so they didn't understand the way to the cross (Jn. 13:7 cp. 36). There is thus a parallel between the feet washing and His death. But in both cases, the Lord Jesus promised them that there was coming a time when they would understand His washing of their feet; and then they would know the way to the cross, and follow Him. John describes the Lord *laying aside* His clothes in order to wash the feet of His followers with the same word he frequently employs to describe how Christ of His own volition *laid down* His life on the cross, as an act of the will (Jn. 10:11,15,17,18); and how later His sacrificed body was *laid aside* (19:41,42; 20:2,13,15). As the Lord laid Himself down for us, epitomized by that deft laying aside of His clothes, so, John reasons, we must likewise purposefully lay down our lives for our brethren (1 Jn. 3:16). As He did at the last supper, so He bids us do for each other. John uses the same word for Christ's "garments" in his records of both the last supper and the crucifixion (13:4,12 cp. 19:23). It could be noted that the man at the supper without garments was seen by the Lord as a symbol of the unworthy (Mt. 22:11 cp. Lk. 14:16,17). He

humbled Himself to the level of a sinner; He created the story of the sinful man who could not lift up His eyes to Heaven to illustrate what He meant by a man humbling himself so that he might be exalted (Lk. 18:14). And He humbled Himself (Phil. 2:9), He took upon Himself the form of a servant and of a sinner, both in the last supper and the final crucifixion which it epitomized. As the Lord Jesus laid aside His garments and then washed the disciples' feet with only a towel around His waist, so at the crucifixion He laid aside His clothes and perhaps with a like nakedness, served us unto the end: the betrayers and the indifferent and the cautiously believing alike. Throughout the record of the Last Supper, there is ample evidence on the Lord's awareness of Judas' betrayal (Jn. 13:10,11,18,21,25). The account in 1 Cor. 11:23 likewise stresses how the Supper was performed with the Lord's full awareness of Judas' betrayal. It is perhaps therefore inevitable that we in some ways struggle with the problems of rejection, of betrayal, of being misunderstood and not appreciated by our brethren. For these were all essential parts of the Lord's passion, which He asks us to share with Him.

The Lord in His time of dying was and is the definition of self-humbling: "But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted" (Mt 23:11-12). Being a servant to others is the 'abasing' or [s.w.] humbling that will lead to exaltation. The Lord became a servant of all in His death (Mk. 10: 44,45). These things are brought together in Phil. 2:5-11, where we are invited to have nothing less than the mind of Christ in the self-humbling of the cross: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who...thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men...he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name...". The seven stages of the Lord's self-humiliation are matched by seven stages of the Father's exaltation of Him (read on in Phil. 2 and note them!). And this pattern is to be ours. This mind is to be in us. Because of this, "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other... look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others" (Phil 2:3-4). Every time we look on the things of others rather than just our own, not seeking our own glory but esteeming others enough to see them as worth suffering for...we have achieved the spirit of the cross, we have reached self-humbling. As the Lord died for Himself and others, so we are to look on the things of our salvation *as well as* those of others. This must be the foundation principle of all aspirations to preach or strengthen our brethren: esteeming others, thinking they are worth the effort, seeking their salvation.

"In the likeness of man... in human form" doesn't mean that the Lord Jesus only appeared as a man, when He was in fact something else. Rather the emphasis is upon the fact that He truly was like us. Going deeper, F.F. Bruce has suggested that these terms "represent alternative Greek renderings of the Aramaic phrase *kebar-'enash* ("like a son of man") in Daniel 7:13" (F.F. Bruce, *Paul And Jesus* (London: S.P.C.K., 1977) p. 77).

2:8- see on Heb. 2:3.

*And being perceived as a normal man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death-* "Became obedient" suggests that in His mind the Lord worked down and down, until He came to the final humility of the cross. Likewise Heb. 2:9 describes how Christ was "made lower" than Angels- the same Greek word is translated "decrease". He was decreased lower

than the Angels "by the suffering of death"; perhaps because previously the Angels had been subject to Him, but in His time of dying he was 'decreased' to a lower position?

He wasn't a God who came down to us and became human; rather is He the ordinary, very human guy who rose up to become the Man with the face of God, ascended the huge distance to Heaven, and received the very nature of God. It's actually the very opposite to what human theology has supposed, fearful as they were of what the pattern of this Man meant for them. The pre-existent view of Jesus makes Him some kind of Divine comet which came to earth, very briefly, and then sped off again, to return at the second coming. Instead we see a man from amongst men, arising to Divine status, and opening a way for us His brethren to share His victory; and coming back to establish His eternal Kingdom with us on this earth, His earth, where He came from and had His human roots. Take a passage most beloved of Trinitarians, Phil. 2. We read that Jesus was found (*heurethis*) in fashion (*schemati*) as a man, and He humiliated Himself (*tapeinoseos*), and thereby was exalted. But in the next chapter, Paul speaks of *himself* in that very language. He speaks of how he, too, would be "found" (*heuretho*) con-formed to the example of Jesus in His death, and would have his body of humiliation (*tapeinoseos*) changed into one like that of Jesus, "the body of his glory". We aren't asked to follow the pattern or *schema* of a supposed incarnation of a God as man. We're asked to follow in the path of the Lord Jesus, the Son of man, in His path to glory. Repeatedly, we are promised that *His* glory is what we will ultimately share, at the end of our path of humiliation and sharing in His cross (Rom. 8:17; 2 Cor. 3:18; Jn. 17:22,24). The more we think about it, the idea of Jesus as a Divine comet sent to earth chimes in with some of the most popular movies. Think of *Superman* and *Star Trek*- the hero descends to earth in order to save us. Or take the "Lone Ranger" type Westerns, set in some wicked, sinful, hopeless town in the [mythical] American West... and in rides the outsider, the heroic cowboy, and redeems the situation. The huge success of these kinds of story lines suggests that we like to think we are powerless to change, that our situation is hopeless and beyond human salvation... an outsider is needed to save us, as we look on as spectators, feeling mere pawns in a cosmic drama. And this may explain the attraction of trinitarianism and a Divine comet-like Christ who hit earth for 33 years. It breeds painless spectator religion... go to church, hear the Preacher, watch the show, come home and spend another rainy Sunday afternoon wondering quite what to do with your life. Yet the idea of a *human* Saviour, one of us rising up above our own humanity to save us... this demands so much more of us, for it implies that we're not mere spectators at the show, but rather can really get involved ourselves.

*Even the death of the cross*- Our Lord Jesus seems to have gone through seven stages of progressive humbling of himself, rungs up (down) the ladder, before He was *made* perfect (complete) by His sufferings (Heb. 2:10); which equate with the seven aspects of His glorification which this hymn goes on to list. The climax of His humiliation was being obedient not only to death, but even to the death of the cross. In our Lord's progression towards that ultimate height, of laying down his life for others, we see our ultimate prototype. He stepped progressively downwards in the flesh, that He might climb upwards in the Spirit. So Philippians 2:6-9 describes the progressive humiliation of the Lord Jesus on the cross (not in His birth, as Trinitarian theology has mistakenly supposed. Note the allusions back to Isaiah 53). *There* He was supremely "in the form of God", but notwithstanding this He took even further the form of a servant. In that blood and spittle covered humility and service, we see the very form and essence of God. My understanding of Phil. 2:8 is that being in the form of God, being the Son of God and having equality with God are parallel statements. The Lord understood being 'equal with God' as some kind of idiom for His Divine Sonship (Jn. 5:18; 10:33; 19:7). He was in God's form, as His Son, and He therefore didn't consider equality

with God something to be snatched; He had it already, in that He was the Son of God. In other words, "He considered it not robbery to be equal with God" is to be read as a description of the exaltedness of His position as Son of God; not as meaning that it never even occurred to Him to try to be equal with God. He was equal with God in the sense that He and the Father were one, spiritually, and on account of the fact that Jesus was the begotten Son of the Father. This interpretation depends upon understanding 'being equal with God' as an idiom for being the Son of God; it doesn't, of course, mean that 'Jesus is God' in the Trinitarian sense. There, on the cross, the Lord Jesus was the form of God, equal with God in that sense, the only begotten Son. And yet on the cross His form was marred more than that of any man, He finally had no form that could be desired (Is. 52:14; 53:2). And yet this was the form of God. *He* was contorted and marred more than ever, there was no beauty in *Him* that men should desire Him, in those hours in which His Son suffered there. The Lord Jesus then had the form of God, although in His mind He had taken the form of a servant. The Lord made Himself a servant in His mind; He looked not on His own things, but on those of others (Phil. 2:4,7). This is the context of Philippians 2; that we should have the *mind* of Christ, who disregarded His own status as Son of God and humbled Himself, even to death on the cross, so that we might share His status. His example really is ours, Paul is saying (which precludes this passage describing any 'incarnation' at the birth of Christ). The Lord had spoken about the crucial need for a man to humble himself if he is to be exalted (Lk. 14:11); and this is evidently in Paul's mind when he writes of Christ humbling Himself and then being exalted. He saw that the Lord lived out on the cross what He had asked of us all. If that example must be ours, we can't quit just because we feel rejected and misunderstood and not appreciated by our brethren. *For this is the very essence of the cross we are asked to share.* See on Jn. 19:19.

Trinitarian theology uses Phil. 2 to justify their 'V-pattern' view of Christ- that He was high in glory in Heaven, then descended briefly to earth, and then returned to high glory in Heaven. All such talk of a V-pattern, albeit on the lips of eloquent churchmen and theologians, is frankly a serious missing of the point. Phil. 2- and the whole teaching of Jesus- is that the true greatness is in humility, the servant of all becomes Lord of all. The pinnacle, the zenith, the acme- was in the humility of the cross. The New Testament presents the death of Christ as His final victory, the springboard to a J-curve growth, involving even literal ascent into Heaven. What seemed to be defeat turned out to be the ultimate victory.

2:9 *Wherefore God highly exalted him-* The Lord Jesus "humbled himself", and was later "highly exalted" (Phil. 2:9), practising His earlier teaching that he who would humble himself and take the lowest seat at the meal would be exalted higher (Mt. 23:11,12; Lk. 14:10,11). The Lord Jesus at the Last Supper humbled Himself from the seat of honour which He had and took not only the lowest seat, but even lower than that: He washed their feet as the servant who didn't even have a place at the meal. And both James and Peter saw the Lord's humbling Himself at that supper and His subsequent exaltation as a direct pattern for us to copy (James 4:10; 1 Peter 5:6). Paul takes things one stage even further. He speaks of how he humbled himself, so that *his hopelessly weak and ungrateful brethren* might be exalted (2 Cor. 11:7). He is evidently alluding to the Gospel passages which speak of how we must humble ourselves so that *we* may be exalted (Mt. 23:11,12; Lk. 14:10,11). But Paul sees *his* exaltation, which his humbling would enable, as being identical to *theirs*. He doesn't say: 'I humbled myself so that I may be exalted'. He speaks of how he humbled himself so that *they* might be exalted.

We can understand 2 Cor. 8:9 in this same context- the choice of Jesus to 'become poor' for our sakes is held up as an example to the Corinthians, to inspire their financial giving. The

choice is whether or not to live out the cross in our lives- rather than deciding whether or not to come down from Heaven to earth. Jesus gave up the 'riches' of His relationship with God, calling Him "abba", to the 'poverty' of the cross, in saying "My God, Why have you forsaken me?" (Mt. 27:46). Poverty was associated with crucifixion, rather than with a God coming from Heaven to earth: "Riches buy off judgment, and the poor are condemned to the cross" (Quoted in Martin Hengel, *Crucifixion In The Ancient World* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977) p. 60 note 15. ). It is Christ's cross and resurrection, and not this supposed 'incarnation', which is repeatedly emphasized as being the source of our salvation (Rom. 5:15,21; Gal. 2:20; 3:13; Eph. 1:6; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 3:18). This is a far cry from the teaching of Irenaeus, one of the so-called 'church fathers', that Christ "attached man to God by his own incarnation" (*Against Heresies* 5.1.1). The New Testament emphasis is that we were reconciled to God by the *death* of His Son. The whole of Phil. 2 is about the Lord's attitude in His *death* and not at His *birth*. It was *after* His birth but *before* His death that the Lord could talk of his freedom of decision as to whether or not to lay down His life (Jn. 10:18)- and it is this decision which Phil. 2:9-11 is glorifying.

*And gave to him the name which is above every name-* These verses are taken to mean that Jesus was God, but at his birth he became a man. It is significant that this is almost the only passage which can be brought forward to explain away the 'missing link' in Trinitarian reasoning - how Jesus transferred himself from being God in Heaven to being a baby in Mary's womb. Yet "God also has highly exalted" Jesus "and given him a name" (:9) shows that Jesus did not exalt himself - God did it. It follows that he was not in a state of being exalted before God did this to him, at his resurrection.

Jesus carried the name of Yahweh when on earth- He came in the Father's Name (Jn. 5:43) and did and said many things which previously had been specific to Yahweh. Thus He walked on the water and stilled the waves as Yahweh was said to do (Ps. 107:29); yet Phil. 2:9 implies He was given the Name at His ascension: "God also hath highly exalted Him and given Him the Name which is above every name". Does this suggest there are degrees of God manifestation and degrees of bearing His Name?

Peter preached in and about the name of Jesus- this is emphasized (Acts 2:31,38; 3:6,16; 4:10,12,17,18,30; 5:28,40,41; 10:43). The excellence of knowing Him and His character and the wonder of the exalted Name given on His ascension (Phil. 2:9; Rev. 3:12) lead Peter to witness. Because of His exaltation, we confess Jesus as Lord to men, as we later will to God at judgment (Phil. 2:9). According as we confess Him before men, so our judgment will reflect this.

Phil. 2:9 in the AV says that the Lord Jesus has a name "above" every name. Yet His Name surely cannot be "above" that of Yahweh. The Greek for "above" is usually translated "for [the sake of]", and I would suggest we read Phil. 2:9 as saying that the name of Jesus is for [the sake of] every name, in that every man and woman was potentially comprehended in His all-representative sacrifice. By baptism into the name of Jesus, they confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. There was and is no other name given under Heaven by which men can be saved; "every name" under the whole Heaven must take on the name of Jesus in baptism. This is why Acts associates His exaltation (Acts 2:33; 5:31) and His new name (Acts 2:21,38; 3:6,16; 4:10,12,18,30; 5:40) with an appeal for men and women to be baptized into that Name. Realizing the meaning of the Name of Jesus and the height of His exaltation meant that they realized how "all men" could have their part in a sacrifice which represented "all men". And thus they were motivated to preach to "all men". And thus Paul's

whole preaching ministry was a bearing of the Name of Jesus before the Gentiles (Acts 9:15). Christ as our representative means that He is the representative of the church as a whole, the entire body of persons who are “in Christ”, we each have some unique contribution to His body upon earth. This is why He suffered *so* much- so that He found a fellow feeling true with every tempted mind which is in Him. In society and the workplace, nobody is irreplaceable, no cog can somehow not be replicated albeit in a slightly different form. But the part we have to play in Him is unique and in one sense irreplaceable by anyone else. He has been highly exalted and given a name *huper* every name, that each of us should bow our knees before Him (Phil. 2:9). *Huper* here is usually translated “above”, but perhaps the idea is rather that through His representative sufferings, the Lord has now a Name *for* every one of our names / personalities / histories / characters. He tasted death *for* every man (Heb. 2:9), and we are therefore to be *for* Him and all that are in Him. His whole suffering *for* us was to leave us an example, that we should follow in His steps to the cross (1 Pet. 2:21). Forasmuch as He suffered *for* us, we are to arm ourselves likewise with that same mind (1 Pet. 4:1- this is repeating the teaching and reasoning of Phil. 2, that we should have the same mind in us which was in Jesus at the time of His death). As He laid down His life *for* us, so we should lay down our lives *for* our brethren (1 Jn. 3:16)- in all the myriad of large and small sacrifices this requires, from phone calls through thoughtful comments and cash generosity to literal death *huper* others if that’s what’s required. His whole priestly, reconciliatory work is to be ours. Not that *we* are Saviours of the world in ourselves, but we are to do this work *huper* Him and *huper* this world.

*2:10 That in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven and those on earth and those under the earth-* These words are alluding to Is. 45:23,24: “...unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. Surely, shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength”. We all find humility difficult. But before the height of His exaltation, a height which came as a result of the depth of the degradation of the cross, we should bow our knees in an unfeigned humility and realization of our sinfulness, and thankful recognition of the fact that through Him we are counted righteous. The reference in Phil. 2:10,11 to every knee bowing and every tongue confessing the Lordship of Jesus is perhaps a reference back to the great commission to take Him to all peoples. That day when every knee would bow to the Lord Jesus will be the result of the outcome of His exaltation. A grasp of who the Lord Jesus really is and the height of His present exaltation will naturally result in a confession of Him to the world, as well as a deep personal obedience to His word and will (Heb. 2:1).

In Phil. 2:10, the Lord Jesus is said to have been given power over all beings in heaven, earth and the nether-world. The Romans understood the world to be divided into these three spheres of the cosmos. But this passage is based upon Is. 45:23, which says that God has total supremacy – and this has been granted to His Son. As I understand it, Paul is reasoning that if God is all powerful, and if that power has been given to the Lord Jesus, then whatever cosmology there is around, e.g. belief in a nether-world, well, in that case, Jesus has all power over that as well. The same argument applies to demons. If they exist, well the essence is that they are well and truly under the Lord’s control and aren’t essentially powerful. Paul doesn’t so much ridicule the idea of a nether-world, rather he takes the view, as Jesus did in His dealings with the demon issue, that God’s power is so great that their existence is effectively not an issue.

*2:11 And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father-* The whole process of Christ’s humbling of himself and subsequent exaltation by God was to be “to the glory of God the Father”. God the Father is not, therefore, co-equal with the

Son. Is. 45:20-24 speaks of how "all the ends of the earth" will look unto "a just God and a Saviour [Jesus]" and be saved- evident reference back to the brazen serpent lifted up for salvation. The result of this is that to Him "every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess" his moral failures, rejoicing that "in the Lord have I righteousness and strength...in the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory". These words are quoted in Phil. 2:11 in description of the believer's response to the suffering Saviour. And yet they are quoted again in Rom. 14:10-12 regarding our confession of sin before the Lord at judgment day. The connections mean simply this: before the Lord's cross, we bow our knee and confess our failures, knowing the imputation of His righteousness, in anticipation of how we will bow before Him and give our miserable account at the judgment. And both processes are wonderfully natural. We must simply allow the power of a true faith in His cross to work out its own way in us. At the judgment, no flesh will glory in himself, but only in the Lord Jesus (1 Cor. 1:29). And even now, we glory in His cross (Gal. 6:14).

<b>Is. 45:23-25 cp. Rom. 14:11,12, about our reaction at the judgment seat</b>	<b>Phil. 2, about our reaction to the cross of Christ today</b>
:23 every knee shall bow	:10 every knee shall bow
:23 every tongue shall swear	:11 every tongue shall confess
:24 in the Lord	:11 Jesus Christ is Lord
:25 shall glory	:11 to the glory of God

Clearly our response to the cross is a foretaste of our response to the judgment experience.

2:12 *So then, my beloved, even as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence-* The fact they needed exhortation to be obedient when Paul was not present with them is another hint that Paul's warm commendations of them in chapter 1 were how he wished to see things, or because he as it were shared the Lord's approach of imputing righteousness. We noted the same about his "confidence" in the Corinthians, when he goes on to be far less than confident in them (see on 2 Cor. 7:16).

*Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling-* This exhortation is in the light of his preceding poem about the Lord's total focus upon us on the cross. This should motivate us to respond; His efforts for our salvation should elicit similar from us. The "fear and trembling" would more speak of our deep respect for what He has done for us, rather than any idea of our being petrified as to the outcome of judgment day. The parable of the unjust steward makes the point that in the Kingdom, the faithful will be given by Christ "the true riches... that which is your (very) own" (Lk. 16:12). The reward given will to some degree be totally personal. Each works out his *own* salvation, such as it will be (Phil. 2:12)- not in the sense of achieving it by works, but rather that the sort of spirituality we develop now will be the essential person we are in the eternity of God's Kingdom.

Moses' last speeches are often referred to by Paul here (e.g. Phil. 2:15 = Dt. 32:5; Phil. 2:28 = Dt. 31:16; Phil. 2:12 = Dt. 31:8,27,29). This could be a hint that the suggestion on 1:1 was correct- that Paul wrote to the Philippians at the very end of his life, facing death in prison.

2:13 *For it is God who works in you, both to will and to work, for His good pleasure-* Christianity is meant to be lived in a community. Indeed, God has created salvation in a community, in the body of Christ. "Work out your [plural] salvation... for it is God who is working in your midst [as a body]" (Phil. 2:12,13). But our working out (:12) is in response

to God's working within us, in our hearts. The initiative is His. He works in us to work [s.w.] His will- this is fair emphasis on the fact that God is really at work within us, in our hearts. And the will of God is that none of His should perish, but we should all be saved. Eph. 1:11 likewise connects God's will with His working in us. Clearly enough, this working is by the Spirit, which works [s.w.] in each believer (1 Cor. 12:6,11; Gal. 3:5). Eph. 3:18-20 states that this working [s.w.] is through the gift of the Spirit "in the inner man". But we are to respond to that working of God- just as Paul laboured according to God's working which worked mightily within him (Col. 1:29).

2:14 *Do all things without complaining and questionings*- In the preceding light of the Lord's death for us with a mind totally focused upon our redemption, reflecting the will of God for our salvation, and His continued working within us to that end... we should be focused on far higher things than complaining and academic questions and the striving which accompanies them. Our way of life will make an inevitable witness to the world. Simply not moaning and groaning in the daily round will be a holding out of the word of life to those with whom we trudge through this life (Phil. 2:14 cp. 16). The allusion is to how Israel were saved with such great salvation- but murmured and questioned instead of rejoicing in it (1 Cor. 10:10).

2:15- see on Mt. 3:11; Jn. 3:18.

*That you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without blemish, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation; among whom you shine as lights in the world-* "Blameless and harmless" alludes to Lk. 1:6 (as does 1 Thess. 3:13). We are to have the serene spirituality, all down the years, of Zacharias and Elizabeth. "Become..." continues the idea that the Philippians had been given the Spirit, but had much growth left. Lights shining is alluding to the Septuagint of Dan. 12:3, concerning the saints in the Kingdom shining as the stars. Once it is appreciated that we are now in the spiritual heavenlies (Eph. 2:6) then this makes sense. And Paul was using language which Moses had earlier used of how apostate Israel were the "crooked and perverse generation" (Dt. 32:5). The point of his allusion may have been that despite the darkness and apostasy of the surrounding brotherhood, we must all the same shine with the constancy of the stars. Those among God's people who break their covenant with Him, He sees as the world. Thus Moses prophesied of an apostate Israel: "They have dealt corruptly with [God], they are no longer his children because of their blemish; they are a perverse and crooked generation" (Dt. 32:5 RSV). These very words are used by Paul here regarding the Gentile world. Apostate Israel are the pagan world; and therefore the rejected at the day of judgment will be condemned along with the world (1 Cor. 11:32). Likewise Is. 42:1,2 concerning Christ's witness to the *Gentiles* is quoted in Mt. 12:19 regarding His witness to an apostate Israel. Israel were to be made like "the top of a rock" just as Gentile Tyre would be (Ez. 24:7; 26:4). "Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers", the Lord said to Israel (Mt. 23:32)- yet He was alluding to how the Gentile Amorites filled up the cup of God's judgments and then had to drink it. Pharaoh's heart was hardened to bring about God's glory, but Paul uses the very same language, in the same context, to describe what was happening to an apostate, Egypt-like Israel (Rom. 9:17). Korah and his company were swallowed by the earth, using the very language which Moses so recently had applied to how the Egyptians were swallowed by the earth at the Red Sea (Ex. 15:12).

2:16 *Holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not*

*run in vain or laboured in vain*- The context of shining as lights in the world encourages me to translate "holding fast" as in AV, "holding forth". The Lord Jesus was the light of the world; and by doing "all things without murmuring and disputing... blameless and harmless [as the Lamb]... you shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life" [i.e. the Lord Jesus; Phil. 2:14-16]. Paul felt he would have "run in vain" if his converts didn't in their turn preach. The quality of our converts affects the nature of our final reward- for Paul elsewhere uses the image of a race as a symbol for the Christian life which ends in the victory of the Kingdom. But whether he won or lost, he felt that the whole thing would be meaningless if they did not spiritually develop. If as suggested on 1:1 and 2:12,17,23; 3:13,20; 4:1,13 Paul was writing this at around the time he wrote 2 Tim. 4, his comment there that he had run a good race in 2 Tim. 4:7 therefore meant that he was satisfied with the fruit of his labours amongst his converts; for here in 2:16 he says that his race would have been run in vain if they were not spiritually fruitful. And yet all in Asia left him, and so many of his converts clearly fell away, according to how he writes to the Galatians and Corinthians. But some did not, especially some at Philippi, and so he considered his race to have been successful. We too can follow his example and see the glass half full rather than half empty. Paul's joy at the last day was to be a function of the efforts he made in this very brief life for others. And this is the thought which gives eternal significance to our patient teaching and involvement with others who are on the path to the Kingdom. Even a career helping unbelievers will not have the same eternal result; for those folks shall be eternally dead. But life lived for others in Christ shall have this eternal joy of fulfilment. Paul, like us, therefore had a personal investment in the spiritual success of those in his life.

2:17- see on 2 Tim. 4:6-8.

*Yes, and if I am poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all*- As noted on :16, the nature of our eternal experience will be a reflection of what we have sacrificed for others in this life. Paul saw his life as the drink offering which gave acceptability and completeness to the sacrifice of those for whom he laboured. The believer's death is a pouring out of blood on the altar (Phil. 2:17 Gk; Rev. 6:9), which is language highly appropriate to the Lord's death. It follows from this that the death of one in Christ is the pinnacle of their spiritual maturity, as the Lord's death was the pinnacle of His. It is a spiritual victory, more than the temporal victory of the flesh which it can appear. The only other time we encounter the Greek word for 'poured out as a drink offering' is in 2 Tim. 4:6, where Paul felt he was ready to be poured out. This is another reason for thinking that Philippians was written at the very end of Paul's life; see on 1:1; 2:12,16,23.

Paul says that he saw his brethren as an altar, upon which he was being offered up as a sacrifice. He saw his brethren as the means by which he could serve God. And for us too, the community of believers, the ecclesia, be they strong or weak, a pain in the neck or wonderful encouragement, are simply the method God has chosen for us to offer ourselves to Him. Running around for others, caring of others, patient sensitivity with our brethren... these are but the altar provided by God, upon which we can serve Him and give ourselves to Him.

"I am glad and rejoice" is in the present tense; Paul has said that their final acceptance will be his eternal joy at the last day (:16). But we are to live the Kingdom life now, for in this sense we "have eternal life" in that we are living the kind of life which we shall eternally live. Paul felt the Philippians were on track to the Kingdom; if the Lord came at that moment, they would be accepted. And so he rejoiced for them right now.

2:18 *And in the same manner you also should be glad and rejoice with me-* As explained on :16 and :17, Paul would rejoice eternally at the last day because of their salvation; but they were on track for salvation, and so Paul rejoiced even now. And he asks them to share that joy, as if they were in some unnecessary doubt about their salvation. There will be both now and eternally a mutuality in our joy. Joy in its true sense is not selfish; to rejoice regarding issues only pertinent to ourselves would surely be selfish.

2:19 *But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I may also be cheered by news of you-* Paul's joy in their salvation was because he believed they would be saved, just as we ought to believe that others far away from us shall be saved. But he intended to send Timothy to them to actually know the real state of their faith, so that his joy could be based on reality rather than blind faith that they were strong in the Lord and on track for salvation. Paul's "hope in the Lord Jesus" indicates that he saw the Lord Jesus as the One who would decide whether or not Timothy's visit would happen. The Lord is indeed so very active, permitting or blocking various things in our lives, and certainly not sitting idle in Heaven leaving us to our own devices. As noted on 1:1, if this sending of Timothy to Philippi was at the time of 2 Timothy 4, this was indeed a sacrifice. For Paul felt abandoned and forgotten by all, and had begged Timothy to come to him in prison; and this letter to the Philippians was written by Paul and Timothy together whilst Paul was imprisoned (1:1).

2:20 *For I have no one likeminded, who will truly care for your welfare-* Timothy's visit was so as to return to Paul with good news about their spiritual state (:19), but this would perhaps be a result of Timothy's true care for their spiritual welfare. The "care" of all the churches daily pressed upon Paul, and had nobody else who had this same mind as he did apart from Timothy.

2:21- see on 1 Cor. 13:5.

*For they all seek their own, not the things of Jesus Christ-* Paul realized more clearly the apostasy of the brotherhood; "all men seek their own" he commented, in conscious allusion to his earlier words that such self-seeking should not be the case amongst the ecclesia (1 Cor. 10:24). Paul was clearly disappointed in how little care there was for the spiritual welfare of others; he felt Timothy was the only one who 'got it'. And yet he is so positive about his brethren, whilst seeing their deep weaknesses. His 'cup half full' approach was therefore not the result of some naive, Alice in wonderland optimism. It was the more notable because he was not blind to the weaknesses of his brethren. He really believed what he wrote about the imputation of righteousness.

2:22 *But you know his proven character, that as a son with his father he served as an apprentice with me in declaring the gospel-* Paul has been explaining that he feels Timothy is the only one who really 'got it' about caring for the spiritual welfare of others (:20,21). But he partly attributes this to how Paul had spiritually nurtured him, to the point that although Paul had not baptized Timothy, he considered him his spiritual son.

2:23 *Therefore I hope to send him at once, as soon as I see how it goes with me-* This would suggest that Paul was at a critical point in his imprisonment, as noted on chapter 1. He wanted Timothy with him if it came to having to die. Paul is here apparently more realistic about his situation; in 1:19 he had written of being confident of his release from prison and

his continued living in order to strengthen the Philippians. But now he is more realistic, recognizing that he doesn't actually know how things will turn out. There is no record of Paul revisiting Philippi, and so we can assume that perhaps things did not turn out as Paul confidently hoped, and he was executed. In this case this letter to the Philippians was written at the end of Paul's life. His great theme of joy was because he indeed was finishing his race with joy (Acts 20:24).

*2:24 But I trust in the Lord that I myself also shall come shortly-* In 1:19-23 Paul speaks as if his desire to not die but continue living had been accepted by the Lord, and so that was how it would be. But it was a matter of trust / faith, although Paul speaks of what he prayed for as if he had actually received it. As soon as his case was decided positively, Paul would send Timothy to them, and then himself follow shortly afterwards. These were his plans, but there is no record of them coming true.

2:25- see on 1 Thess. 3:1.

*But I considered it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow-worker and fellow-soldier, and your messenger and minister to my need-* The "But..." suggests that Paul knew there would still be some time before his case was decided, and so he had sent Epaphroditus to them, even though this brother was the one who was arranging for Paul's care whilst incarcerated. It was largely over to relatives and friends to provide for the imprisoned, and so this was a huge sacrifice. Especially as Paul writes in 2 Tim. 4 as if he lacked even a cloak and writing equipment. We observe that the church in Rome, who he had felt so warmly towards in his letter to them, were not providing for him. This was indeed a sad way for such a great missionary to meet his end- ignored or avoided by his local brethren. We may consider Paul as the leading light of the early church, but that is not how he was perceived at the time. All Asia turned away from him. He describes Epaphroditus as the one "that ministered to my need". The Greek for "ministered" is used in the LXX concerning the priests (and Joshua) ministering to Moses in practical things; one of several examples of where Paul saw himself as Moses.

2:26- see on Mk. 14:36.

*Since he was longing for you all, and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick-* His longing for them was the longing Paul had for them (1:8 s.w.). Like Timothy, he shared Paul's care for them. This longing for other believers is described with this same word in Rom. 1:11; 2 Cor. 9:14; 1 Thess. 3:6; 2 Tim. 1:4. It was a feature of the believers, and we must ask whether we have that today. For we live in an age of isolationism as never before. And in this connection we note how news of a brother's sickness in Rome travelled as far as Philippi, and they were so concerned about the brother that on his recovery, he wished to go visit them- in an age when international travel was generally unheard of. This was the kind of unity the Lord's death enabled, and which he foresaw in Jn. 17 as alone having the power to convert the world. We live in the time of communication revolution, whereby we can have unparalleled contact with each other. This ought to be powerfully harnessed in the interests of the kind of unity which we have a taste of here.

*2:27 For indeed he was sick and near to death, but God had mercy on him, and not on him only, but on me also, that I might not have sorrow upon sorrow-* Again we see the connection

between brethren. The loss of Epaphroditus would have been a loss to Paul too. Losing him would have been a sorrow and loss- and yet Paul was prepared to lose him by sending him to visit the Philippians. His recovery from the face of death was being used for the Philippians, and in 1:19-23 Paul has said that this is how he wishes to use his salvation from the death penalty and the limitations of imprisonment. In this too we see the connection of spirit between these two believers. And the same connections in the Spirit are forged continually in the Lord's body today, if we are open to them. Losing Epaphroditus in death would have been another "sorrow" for Paul; and yet when he recovered, Paul wilfully lost him again by sending him to the Philippians. And this resulted in sorrow for Paul (:28), which would be compensated for if Epaphroditus were to find the Philippians as strong in faith in reality as Paul imputed to them by faith in their status before the Lord.

*2:28 Therefore I have sent him more diligently, so that when you see him again, you may rejoice and that I may be less sorrowful-* Their joy would reduce Paul's sorrow, because their joy was his joy; see on :27. 2 Cor. 2:3 speaks in similar terms of the joy of the Corinthians being Paul's joy. This is the ideal of fellowship in the Spirit- our spirits are connected if we both have the Spirit of Christ. If we are focused only upon our own feelings then we will never achieve the joy which comes from caring for others' spiritual progress.

*2:29 Therefore receive him in the Lord with all joy and hold such in honour-* That Paul had to ask them to "receive him in the Lord" could be another hint that the spirituality of the Philippians was not as great as he had praised them for in chapter 1. We receive each other on the basis that we are "in the Lord"; to refuse to accept those who are "in the Lord" but who fail to meet some document based fellowship requirement is wrong indeed. Epaphroditus was to be honoured by them because of his labour in the Lord (:30). This respect of others for their labours is all part of the general picture the New Testament gives, of the true church being a place of respect and praise of its members.

*2:30 Because for the work of Christ he came near to death, hazarding his life to supply that which was lacking in your service toward me-* We have just read that Epaphroditus was near to death due to sickness. It could be that this sickness referred to some physical result of persecution he had endured in an incident in which he risked his life to supply Paul's needs. Perhaps his identification with the imprisoned Paul and attempts to provide for him had led to him being so physically beaten up that he was sick and nearly died. Their ministry to Paul was "lacking"; and yet Paul speaks so positively of their great love for him in chapter 1. He later praises them for sending him material help when he was in Thessalonica (Phil. 4:16), and they had also sent gifts for Paul with Epaphroditus when he had previously visited them (Phil. 4:18). In Phil. 4:10 he writes of how their care for him had "revived", and excuses their lack of service to him as not having had the opportunity to do so: "But I rejoice in the Lord greatly, that now at length you have revived your thought for me. I know you did indeed take thought for me, but you lacked opportunity". The rebuke here in 2:30 stands as it does; but Paul positively seeks to excuse them, whilst not turning a blind eye. Seeing the cup half full is no call to naivety or pretending not to notice things; for that is no basis for legitimate, authentic relationship. Just as Paul praises the Corinthians for their love of him and then reveals their lack of love and respect for him, so with the Philippians Paul is so positive about their care and love for him, and yet is not blind to the fact that their lack of service led to Epaphroditus nearly losing his life. This is not merely seeing the cup half full rather than half

empty; this is the rightful praise of others for what devotion they do show, even if it is lacking, insufficient (Gk.), more than half empty. Paul's attitude was surely a reflection of how the Father sees us His wayward children, focusing with joy upon what little obedience and devotion we do show rather than overly lamenting 'that which is lacking in [our] service toward Him'.

"The work of Christ" was done by caring for Paul in prison, and like Paul, Epaphroditus did not consider his life worth holding on to if it meant not doing "the work of Christ". He like Paul considered that "to live is Christ"; and like Paul he did not count his life dear to himself for the sake of the ministry (Acts 20:24). "The work of Christ" may not mean simply 'work done for Christ', for in :12,13 we have read of how God works through our works. So "the work of Christ" would then refer to the work done by Christ through us. And we like Paul and Epaphroditus should be so absorbed in being Him and letting Him work through us, that the continuation of our lives is not significant; for after resurrection we shall eternally continue this way of being.

## CHAPTER 3

3:1 *Finally my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. For me to repeat the same things to you as I did before is not tedious, indeed it only confirms their certainty-* "Finally" sounds as if the letter is being concluded, but Paul is only half way through the letter as we now have it. He seems to get carried away now [in the Spirit] in warning against false teachers and Judaism. Paul says he is repeating what he has said before, and the fact he is doing so prompted by the Spirit inspiring him "only confirms" the reality of the problem. He may have written these things before in an unrecorded letter, or perhaps he is reminding them of the warnings he gave them whilst present with them. He feels he has to make these warnings against legalism because he wants them to "rejoice in the Lord", and legalism takes away the joy of salvation by grace on account of the Lord's work.

3:2 *As so I say again: Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers-* "Dogs" were unclean animals; to call religious Jewish people workers of evil, when they considered themselves full of good works, and unclean body cutters [an allusion to pagan idolatry] was extreme language. Indeed "dogs" could refer to the male prostitutes of the idol temples. This was how Paul saw the Judaists- their legalism was a form of the crudest idolatry.

*Beware of the mutilators!*- "Look out for those dogs... who do evil... who cut the body" (NET). If this is merely a reference to circumcision only, it would contradict Paul's tolerant attitude towards those who in their immaturity still practiced the rite. He wasn't so passionately against circumcision as such; his reference is to those who divide the body of Christ through insisting upon such things. This cutting of the body is so easily done, whenever discord is sown. The language used by the Spirit here is some of the strongest anywhere in the New Testament. Sowing division is *so* seriously wrong.

3:3 *For we are the circumcision who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh-* Circumcision was understood by Paul to refer to what is done to the heart of a person after they have been baptized: "But he is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit not in the letter" (Rom. 2:29). The inward man is where the Spirit operates (Eph. 3:16), strengthening us with God's psychological power. And here in Phil. 3:3, Paul again associates spiritual circumcision with the work of the Spirit; for it is the Spirit which empowers us to cut off the flesh. It is this work of the Spirit which is the seal or token of the fact we are in covenant with God and are His true Israel. Human willpower cannot cut off the flesh; those who seek justification by steel willed obedience are placing "confidence in the flesh" rather than in God's operation through the Spirit. It is by the Spirit that we glory or (as AV) rejoice in Christ. This connects with the opening thought in 3:1, that we are to rejoice in the Lord Jesus rather than go the way of Judaism. There can be no joy for those who try to cut off the flesh by the flesh. And they have no sense of rejoicing or glorying in the Messiah Jesus if they effectively do not need Him to cut off their flesh. Circumcision is something done to another person when that person is immature and powerless. This is exactly what God does to the new born convert to Christ, through sending forth the Spirit of His Son into their heart to cut off the flesh (Gal. 4:6).

3:4 *Though I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If any other man thinks to have confidence in the flesh, I yet more-* Paul is not boasting here, but rather saying that even the best qualifications of Judaism were irrelevant to salvation. Phil. 3:4-11 reads rather like an encomium [see on Gal. 1:10], with Paul writing of how he was "circumcised on the eighth

day... of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews" (Phil. 3:5). But then he as it were alters course half way through, as if to say 'Nah, just kiddin'. He speaks of his "confidence in the flesh", his former "gains", as being now "loss for Christ"; he's almost sarcastic about his humanly impressive encomium. For he says all this in the context of the preceding chapter, Phil. 2, where he has shown that the only true path of glory lays after the pattern of the Lord Jesus, who had to die the death of the cross in order to be highly exalted. A similar sarcasm about his humanly impressive encomium is to be found at more length in 2 Cor. 11:21-12:10.

*3:5 Circumcised the eighth day, of Israelite stock, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews. As touching the law, a Pharisee-* Benjamin was in the middle of Israel, the tribe of their first king, and the only son of Jacob born in the promised land, indeed he was Jacob's favourite son; and the only tribe faithful to Judah. The battle cry of Israel was "After thee, O Benjamin". Paul was a pure blooded Jew with no question of intermarriage in his recent ancestors, a Hebrew of Hebrews in that his Hebrew parents had not become Hellenised; and belonging to the strictest school of interpretation of the Law (Acts 26:5).

3:6- see on Phil. 1:10; 1 Tim. 1:16.

*As touching zeal, persecuting the church. As touching the righteousness which is in the law, found blameless-* Judaism at the time apparently considered persecuting Christians as a sign of high qualification as a Jew. In saying that he persecuted the Christian church "zealously" he was alluding to the way that Phinehas is described as 'zealous' for the way in which he murdered an apostate Jew together with a Gentile who was leading him to sin (Num. 25). Note that the Jews in Palestine had no power to give anyone the death sentence, as witnessed not only by the record of the trial of Jesus but Josephus too (*Antiquities* 20.202; *BJ* 2.117; 6.302). Paul was a criminal murderer; and he had justified it by saying that he was the 1st Century Phinehas. Ps. 106:30 had commented upon the murder performed by Phinehas, that his zeal "was accounted to him for righteousness". This sets the background for the converted Paul's huge emphasis upon the fact that *faith* in Jesus is what is "reckoned for righteousness", and it is in *this* way that God "justifies the unGodly" (Rom. 4:3-5; 5:6; Gal. 3:6). Paul is inviting us to see ourselves as him- passionately obsessed with going about our justification the *wrong* way, and having to come to the *huge* realization that righteousness is *imputed* to us by our faith in the work of Jesus. Paul saw himself as learning the lesson of Job. Phil. 3 has several allusions back to him- like Job, Paul suffered "the loss of all things" (:8), although he considered himself previously "blameless" (:6). He threw away his own righteousness, that he might be justified by grace and know thereby the essence of Christ (:9), just as Job did.

Paul's technical obedience to the Law was "found blameless"; but it was only "found" that way by men, externally; for in Rom. 7:15-25 he admits to gross and continued disobedience to the Law in his spirit. If we seek justification before God by legal obedience to the Law, we shall be "found sinners" (Gal. 2:17). We can only be found truly blameless before God if He imputes righteousness to us through our being in Christ, and we are "found in Him" (:9).

*3:7 However, what things were gain to me, these have I counted loss for Christ-* Paul saw himself as the man who gives all to buy the pearl (Mt. 13:45,46 = Phil. 3:7,8; although this passage also alludes to Moses; as if he took inspiration from Moses to be like the man in the parable). He saw the excellency of the knowledge of Christ as the pearl whose beauty inspired even a rich man to give up all that he had. "Gain" could imply financial gain; but Paul has recently used the word in saying that "to die is gain" (1:21). This is the radical

inversion of values which there is in Christ; secular gain becomes spiritual loss, and secular loss becomes spiritual gain. Paul alludes to this idea when he says that the shipwreck on the way to Italy was gaining from a loss (Acts 27:21 uses the same words). It could well be that he had reflected on that incident, the casting overboard of secular wealth with his own hands, and it now influenced his later thought now imprisoned in Rome.

3:8- see on Lk. 9:23-25.

*Yes indeed, I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ-* Paul truly believed, "doubtless" (AV), without even temporal doubt, that the loss of secular things was gain. We tend to doubt that sometimes; waves of worry about our financial future and longer term security swamp us at times. But Paul was without doubt about his position. The "all things" which Paul lost were largely psychological values and standing amongst men; although the words for gain and loss can have a distinct financial sense too. And he likely lost much of his family, seeing he was from a line of proud Pharisees. The power of Paul's teaching about singleness is backed up by his personal situation. As a member of the Council who condemned Stephen, he would have had to be married. An unmarried Orthodox Jew would have been a contradiction in terms at that time. And yet he is evidently single in his Christian ministry. It seems fairly certain that his wife either died or left him at the time of his conversion, probably taking the children with her. If this is so, it gives extra poignancy to his comment that he had suffered the loss of all things for the sake of his conversion. The chances are that he thought and wrote that with a difficult glance back to that Jerusalem girl, the toddlers he'd never seen again, the life and infinite possibilities of what might have been... And it gives another angle on his description of his converts as his children.

Paul "counted" the things of this life as loss "for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ" and His sufferings, so that he would gain the resurrection. Moses likewise rejected the world for the same two reasons: the excellency of sharing the reproach of Christ, and secondly from respect unto the recompense of the reward, at the resurrection. He uses the same word translated "esteemed" when we read of how Moses "esteemed" the reproach of Christ as greater riches than the treasures in Egypt (Heb. 11:26). The "reproach" of Christ is the same word used concerning Christ being "reviled" on the cross. Paul felt that the intellectual heights of knowing the mind of our crucified Lord, of being able to enter into the riches than are even now in the mind of Christ (Col. 2:3) more than compensated for his sacrifice of all material things in this life. And Moses was the same; he esteemed the "reproach of Christ", the knowledge that he was sharing the sufferings of his future saviour and would thereby enter the Kingdom which he would make possible, as far greater than the possibility of being King of Egypt. He knew that he was sharing the sufferings of Christ, and that therefore he would be rewarded. It was this knowledge which motivated him in rejecting the riches of Egypt.

Paul could have been such a high flyer; he profited (materially, the Greek could imply) in the Jews' religion above any one else (Gal. 1:14). But he resigned it all. He wrote some majestic words which ought to become the goal of every one of us: "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss *for the*

*excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord*: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ" (Phil. 3:7,8). Why did he do it? Not just because he wanted to get salvation. "For the *excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord*". For the *excellency* of who Christ is, as *my Lord*, he did it. Grasping the wonder of our salvation in the Lord Jesus should do even more than motivate us to write out a cheque; Paul not only gave, but he counted the things of this life as *dung* (and that's just what it means); he *despised* material advantage. This is a stage beyond just being generous.

3:9 *And be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own which is of the law, but which is through faith in Christ- the righteousness which is from God by faith-* As noted on :6, it matters not if we are "found" blameless before men; it is our standing in Christ which matters. Righteousness "of the law" is not God's righteousness, but 'our own'. A feeling good about ourselves because we were technically obedient to some laws. Righteousness which comes from God has to be imputed, or given- on account of our faith in Christ. This is absolutely what Paul taught the Romans and he is repeating it here.

3:10- see on Acts 9:16.

*That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, becoming conformed to his death-* The full knowledge of the Lord Jesus will be when we know materially the "power of His resurrection". Eternity will be about relationship with Him, and that is why eternity begins now insofar as we have relationship with Him. Knowing Him, therefore, refers to relationship rather than technical knowledge of theological propositions concerning Him.

The centrality of the cross is reflected in the way in which to live a life crucified with Jesus is set up as the ultimate aim of the Christian life. We are "becoming conformed [coming towards His *morphe*, His form and appearance] unto his death" (Phil. 3:10 RV). Slowly, our lives are working out towards that end; this is intended by God to be the final position we all reach by the time of our death or the Lord's return; that we will in some vague, faint way, have become conformed to the mind of Jesus as He was at *His* death. For as chapter 2 has explained, His *morphe* there is to be our pattern. His Spirit is to be ours. And through His resurrection, we are given that Spirit to displace our natural spirit (Jn. 7:39). The process of transformation by the gift of the new spirit, of "becoming conformed", is ongoing now and continues until our last breath. Old age is thereby given meaning once we grasp this. And then finally at the Lord's return, our body will be "conformed" (same Greek word) to His in a physical sense (Phil. 3:21). And this is why we should count all things loss in order to come to know Christ (Phil. 3:8)- which the context suggests we are to read as knowing the spirit of His death. This is why His cross, the mind He had at His death, is so vital and central to our lives.

3:11 *If by any means I may attain to the resurrection from the dead-* As noted on :10, the idea is that it is through this ongoing conforming to His *morphe* our mind / spirit, we shall become fully like Him at the resurrection from the dead. This is the "means" by which we shall share His resurrection in literal terms. Paul clearly speaks of "the resurrection" as meaning 'the resurrection to eternal life'. Some will indeed be raised, condemned, and shall die "the second death". But Paul is focused on our resurrection being that of the Lord, and so he speaks of "the resurrection" as meaning 'the resurrection to life'. Paul uses the same word for "attain" in writing that through the work of the Spirit we shall come to 'attain' the full knowledge of the Lord Jesus and become like Him, a "perfect man", fully sharing His spiritual stature (Eph.

4:13). This shall finally happen at the transformation of resurrection; for "we shall be changed", not just physically, but into Him in the fullness of all that means. Note that Paul here uses the same ideas of attaining to a 'perfect' state (:12) and knowing the Lord Jesus (:10).

3:12- see on Acts 18:18; 2 Tim. 4:6-8.

*Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me-* As explained on :11, the final attainment of perfection will be at the resurrection. Relatively late in his career Paul could comment: "Not that I have already obtained, or am already made perfect", alluding to the Lord's bidding to be perfect as our Father is (Mt. 5:48). Through this allusion to the Gospels, Paul is showing his own admission of failure to live up to the standard set. Yet we must compare this with "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect..." (Phil. 3:12,15). In 1 Cor. 13:10, he considers he is 'perfect', and has put away the things of childhood. Thus he saw his spiritual maturity only on account of his being in Christ; for he himself was not "already perfect", he admitted. We are counted as if we are in Christ, as if we are Him; but we are to live like that in practice. In a marvellous statement of our mutuality with the Lord, we are to lay hold on what we have been laid hold of for; and what is in view is the final perfection of body and spirit which shall be achieved at the resurrection to life. We have been seized (Gk.), laid hold of, for salvation. The grip is tight, and only by our wilfully wriggling out of it will the Lord not achieve His intention with us.

3:13 *Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own yet. But one thing I do, forgetting the past and looking forward to those things which are ahead-* Paul twice stresses that he does not consider himself to have arrived at the "perfected" state (:12). Perhaps this was in response to slander that he considered himself perfect. "Forgetting the past" doesn't mean to delete past events from our memory banks- because that is not within our power to do. And Paul talks freely about his awful past, he had not obliterated memories. So Paul presumably means that we are not to wallow in past failure. The certainty of what is ahead means we will focus on that; the glass is not only half full rather than half empty, but more than half full. We admit we have not yet attained perfection, but this doesn't mean we are to allow the past to exist as a fountain of constant regret. We are to look forward in sure hope to the things ahead- which is to know Christ, to be perfectly and fully like Him through the resurrection to life (:10,11,14). Paul sees this hope as being "ahead". He looks forward to it without any doubt as to whether it shall be true for him; because 'hope' means a confident assurance that what we hope for we shall certainly receive. It is not a mere 'hoping for the best'. But "looking forward" is literally 'reaching forth', and connects with the image of the runner which will be used in :14. The idea is of the athlete stretching forth head and body towards the finishing line. Paul felt that the end of his race was very near- another indication that he wrote this at the very end of his life, when he felt he had all but finished his race (2 Tim. 4:7). See on 2:16. Here he speaks as if he is but centimetres away from the tape and is reaching forward to touch it.

3:14- see on 2 Tim. 4:6-8.

*I press on toward the goal, to the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus-* The Greek for "goal" is literally 'the line'; Adam Clarke's commentary gives examples of its usage like this in contemporary literature. As noted on :13, Paul is reaching forth towards the finishing

line, just centimetres away. The "prize" is to be as the Lord Jesus (:10,11,14). This is the essence of our future salvation and eternity; the Abrahamic land promises are incidental to this. Eternity will be about knowing Him, and the location of that relationship is not much emphasized in the New Testament. It is a high or heavenly calling in that to be called to be like Him is the highest calling, the greatest end point of the journey, which could be imagined.

3:15 *Let us therefore, as many as are mature, be thus decided; and if in anything you are otherwise decided, this also shall God reveal to you-* "Mature" or "perfect" (s.w.) is the state which Paul says we have not yet attained (:12). But we are counted as perfect by being in Christ. "Decided" is literally "minded" (AV). Paul repeatedly brings everything back to the state of our hearts, how we think, and whether we are letting the Spirit operate within us or not. Those who have received the Spirit will be thinking of the things of the Spirit (Rom. 8:5 s.w.). The "mind" we should have is that of the Lord Jesus, and that is a gift, of His Spirit (Rom. 15:5). The same word has been used in 2:2,5 of how we should have the mind or spirit of Christ in His time of dying on the cross. In the immediate context, the "mind" we should have is one of pressing toward the goal or finishing line of final and total identity with the Lord Jesus. But a mindset is an outlook which incorporates many aspects of thinking, attitude and behaviour. In some things we will be out of step with the total mind of Christ; the work of the Spirit is to transform us towards His image in every way. And so in those things or aspects wherein we are 'otherwise minded', the Spirit will reveal these areas to us. We think of how the Lord used the same word in commenting that the Father, rather than the unaided mental strength of the flesh, had "revealed" the Lord to Peter (Mt. 16:17). The Father both hides and reveals things to people (Lk. 10:21); and He does all things by the Spirit. The arm of the Lord has to be revealed to men (Jn. 12:38). 1 Cor. 2:10 is clear as to the connection between the Spirit and God's 'revealing' things to believers: "God has revealed them unto us by His Spirit" (also Eph. 3:5). God revealed His Son *within* Paul (Gal. 1:16). Stage by stage, aspect by aspect, those areas of our thinking and being which are not of the spirit of Christ will be revealed to us, so that we might move towards that total transformation into Christ which shall be at the last day.

3:16 *For now, according to that understanding unto which we have attained, by that same rule let us walk-* As noted on :15, we are on a journey towards the full mind of Christ within us. But we are not yet perfect (:12), aspects of the Lord's mind are still being revealed to us (:15); but we are to live according to what we do currently understand. This conception of each believer being on a journey is important in enabling us to live together in the church, being at different stages on the journey. We cannot expect another to have grasped what has been revealed to us; we have to be patient, recognizing that full completeness of understanding and Christ-mindedness will only come at His return. It has been observed of Paul here: "In Phil. 3 he concludes a fundamental statement of his own Christian conviction by commending his opinion: 'So let those of us who are mature think in this way. And if in any way you think differently, this too will God reveal to you. Only we must stand by that conclusion which we have already reached' (3:15,16). That is: I am sure that mine is a correct, mature, Christian view, and I believe that in God's time, you will in the end share it. But what matters is that you honestly maintain and live by the position you have at present reached". "Rule" translates *kanon*, a line or boundary. And yet we will each have different lines or boundaries. It is this question of drawing lines and establishing boundaries which tends to divide believers, especially once they are written down as 'canon', as documents such as statements of faith and definitions of behaviour. All this is an attempt to impose the

understanding or maturity of one upon another. We are to each individually walk according to the *kanon* which we have come to understand, realizing that we will likely have other aspects revealed to us as the Spirit transforms us towards full understanding or knowing of the Lord Jesus (:15). We simply cannot impose our *kanon* upon another. The fact the wider church has spoken of 'canon law' is the tragic opposite of what Paul is teaching here.

3:17 *Brothers, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern-* The example in view may specifically refer to the attitude expressed in the notes on :16. They were to be 'co-followers', bound together by a common attempt to walk as Paul did. The 'walking' in view is surely that just spoken of in :16, of walking according to our present state of understanding of the Lord Jesus. Paul's tolerance of others, of meeting them where they stand and going further with them, is to be our pattern. And yet it is also clear from 1 Tim. 1:16 that Paul saw himself as "a Christ appointed model" (Robert Roberts).

3:18 *For many walk, of whom I told you often and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ-* The 'walking' is that of :16, walking according to our current understanding of the mind of Christ, and open to being taught further of Him (see on :15). Those who did not walk like that, in the context of this chapter, were the legalistic Judaizers. Legalism requires that all jump the same bar; the idea of each individual being on a personalized journey, being progressively led by the Spirit ever closer towards the full mind of Christ, is all anathema to legalism. Such Judaizing requires that each have an identical understanding and position at the same moment. Growth is thereby disallowed. And Paul wept tears on the parchment, as it were, because he saw that such attitudes were robbing the cross of Christ of its power in men.

The cross of Christ is personified here as if to show that the Lord's whole being and life was crystallized in His cross. He could take the bread and wine with the comment that *right then* His body was being broken and His blood shed (note the present tenses).

We can be active *enemies* of the Lord's cross unless we carry it, no matter how soporific and unaggressive our lifestyles may be.

3:19 *Whose end is destruction, whose god is the belly and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things-* The Judaizers in view (see on :18) were not actually bringing people closer to God by their insistence upon a common obedience to the same set of legislation. They were glorying in shameful things, and worshipped their own sensual desires as a god. Again, Paul brings it all down to the state of mind, whether we have the Lord's Spirit or not. And they were minding or thinking of *earthly* things; for the *heavenly* calling is to think with the mind / Spirit of the Lord who is now in Heaven (see on :14). We noted on :2 what extreme language Paul uses of the Judaizers. By teaching obedience to a few rules, they were allowing shameful behaviour to be glorified, and sensual desires in other areas to become a god to people. This is why we have noted time and again in expounding Paul's letters that Judaism was so attractive to newly converted Gentile Christians, who didn't want to leave behind the sensuality and shameful behaviour they had once enjoyed. Their "end", *telos*, is in contrast to the end or perfection / maturity (*teleios*) of the Spirit filled believer, which is to be immortalized with the mind of Christ at His return. But the end of legalism and these Judaizers at the Lord's return would be destruction; the same word is used of how Jews justified in their own minds by the Law are destined to "destruction" (Rom. 9:22). The 'enemies' of the Philippians of 1:28 had advance notice of their "destruction" (s.w.); and these opponents were therefore the Judaizers who are here referred to. The Jewish Christians who

were drawing back from Christ, rather than reaching forward unto Him (3:13,14), were drawing back unto destruction (Heb. 10:39 s.w.). Peter uses the same word about the end of the Judaizers in 2 Pet. 2:1,2,3.

3:20- see on Mt. 6:10.

*For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ-* When Paul speaks of redemption, he alludes to the practice of manumission, whereby a slave could be redeemed by his master and given the breathtaking gift of the much coveted Roman citizenship. Thus there were slaves who actually became Roman citizens. Hence here he invites all of us to see ourselves as a citizen of a Heavenly state (Phil. 3:20). We learn from Acts 22:26 that Paul was a Roman citizen from birth. The question therefore arises as to how they obtained citizenship. It would not have been through army service, because they were observant Jews (Phil. 3:5) and Jews didn't serve in the army. "The most common origin of this status for Jews outside Palestine was the manumission of Jewish slaves by masters who were themselves Roman citizens. In this case the citizenship was acquired... after one or two generations" [Simon Legasse, 'Paul's pre-Christian career' in Richard Bauckham, ed., *The Book Of Acts* Vol. 4 (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1995) p. 372.]. So it seems Paul's father may have been 'redeemed' by manumission. And yet he uses the very language of manumission about all who are redeemed and freed in Christ. Roman citizenship was the most coveted thing in the Roman empire. Phil. 3:20 claims that we *all* have the coveted citizenship of the Kingdom / empire of Heaven. The Judaizers were minding earthly things (:19); but our minds should be full of Heavenly things. We are pressing towards the goal of being made fully like the Lord Jesus (:10,14), and this pressing towards that is spoken of here as eagerly awaiting the second coming. Rom. 8:23 uses the same word for "eagerly wait" in describing how we who have the spirit / mind of Christ therefore and thereby eagerly await the redemption / manumission of our bodies. And Paul is to speak of this in :21. It is by or on account of the Spirit that we "eagerly await" the Lord's coming (Gal. 5:5). The Spirit is progressively at work in us, transforming us into His mind- and so due to that work, the work of our lives and hearts, we eagerly await the moment when we shall be fully changed into His image. This is why all who eagerly look for His coming on this spiritual basis shall be saved (Heb. 9:28; 2 Tim. 4:8). We note the connection of thought with 2 Tim. 4:8, written by Paul apparently at the end of his life in Rome: "From this time forward there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give to me at that day; and not to me alone, but also to all those that have loved his appearing". This would be further reason for thinking that Philippians and 2 Timothy were written at around the same time, at the end of Paul's life and imprisonment in Rome. See on 2:16.

3:21 *Who will transform our lowly body-* The link between our mortality and humility is brought out in Paul's description of our present state as being "the body of our humiliation" (Phil. 3:21 RV). Believing we are mortal ought to be a humbling thing. The fact we lose faculties and memory, needing to be cared for by others, is humbling. But it is built into our human experience purposefully, because God's whole game plan with us is to progressively humble us, to bring us down, so that He might exalt us in due time (2:2,5). We must go with the program and not resist it, humbling ourselves under His humbling hand that we might be exalted in due time (1 Pet. 5:6).

*That it may be conformed to his glorious body, according to the working by which he is able even to subdue all things to himself-* There is a clear parallel in Rom. 8:11: "But if the Spirit

of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall give life also to your mortal bodies- through His Spirit that dwells in you". The gift of the Spirit given at baptism is the means whereby God is "working" within us. That gift is the guarantee of our eternal salvation (2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5). The transforming work of the Spirit is leading us through processes which will come to their final term in our body being transformed into the form of His glorified body, at His return. Bit by bit, every part of our lives is being subdued to Him through the internal work of the Spirit. This is the huge significance of our death; that is the point at which we will have been humiliated and subdued unto Him. As noted on 2:2-5, we are called to have the *morphe* of the mind of the Lord Jesus, especially His *morphe* in His time of dying. This will be revealed in more physical terms at the second coming by our bodies being "conformed" to His body. This is the end intention of the entire working of the Spirit in transforming our minds now.

## CHAPTER 4

4:1 *Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, my beloved, stand firm in the Lord-* This longing for each other in Christ was how Paul opened the letter (1:8); and see on 2:26. The joy of the Kingdom will therefore be far greater for those who longed for their brethren, than for they who went off into spiritual isolation from others, seeing only the issues that made them differ rather than what they had in common. There will be differences between us, but we are united by what we have in common in Christ. This again is a case of Paul seeing the cup half full rather than half empty. Paul assumed that at this moment in time, his brethren were in Christ and would be accepted in God's eternal Kingdom at the Lord's return. For to think any other way is to judge / condemn in a way we are unqualified to do. But his earnest desire was that they should "stand firm in the Lord", just as the Lord in John's Gospel speaks of "abiding" in Him. Their abiding in the Lord would mean that Paul's joy and crown in the Kingdom was them. The nature of his eternity was therefore bound up in their endurance in the faith. Our attitude to the endurance or stumbling of others simply cannot be to shrug the shoulders. In 2 Tim. 4:8 Paul at the end of his life wrote from prison that he looked forward to receiving "the crown" (2 Tim. 4:8). This would be another indication that Philippians was written around the time of 2 Timothy, at the end of Paul's life. See on 2:16. But that "crown" was the immortality of his brethren for whom he had laboured (1 Thess. 2:19). This may be why Peter uses the same image in saying that faithful pastors will receive a crown at the last day (1 Pet. 5:4).

4:2- see on 1 Cor. 14:34.

*I exhort Euodia and I exhort Syntyche, to be of the same mind in the Lord-* This repeats the earlier appeals to have the same mind, that of the Lord Jesus (2:2,5). The appeal is not simply that they should have the same mind about the issues dividing them, but to have the same mind which is "in the Lord" Jesus. Whatever the differences between these two sisters (:3 "these women"), the fundamental issue was that they were not of the mind of the Lord Jesus. We will never have the same mind over many issues; but we can each be devoted to the replication of the mind of Jesus within us, and this of itself will bring about the unity of the Spirit.

4:3- see on Mt. 11:29; Eph. 1:5.

*Yes, I urge you also, true companion, help these women, for they laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also-* The women are Euodia and Syntyche (:2); although as noted on :2 they were not fully of the mind of Christ, yet they laboured with Paul in the work of the Gospel. As explained on 3:15 and :16, we do not fully have the mind of Christ and it is progressively revealed to us where we fail to have it. But this doesn't mean that we cannot work for the Lord or be accepted by Him as we are. We note that again "the gospel" is put for "the work of the Gospel", because the Gospel of itself elicits labour for it. The "help" required from the undefined "true companion" was presumably to help these women to have the mind of Christ, so that they would be united. The anonymity may have been to avoid naming someone in a document for reasons of avoiding persecution; or it could be that *synzugos* should be read as proper noun, the name of a person, and it should just be transliterated as that. Or it could refer to Epaphroditus. Paul clearly saw those women as just as much his fellow workers as men like Clement; we see here an example of how Paul was so far ahead of his time in considering man and woman equal in Christ, and the work of the Gospel equally open to women as well as men.

*And the rest of my fellow-workers, whose names are in the book of life-* Perhaps the idea is that these other fellow workers were already dead, asleep in Christ, and assured of salvation. Heb. 12:23 speak of those who had died faithful as "written in heaven". Our names are written already in that book, but can be blotted out from it (Rev. 3:5; Ex. 32:32). Salvation is assured for each baptized believer, but we can lose it if we do not stand fast (:1). All Paul's fellow workers were written in the book of life. And so the feuding sisters of :2 were also written in the book of life, for they were also fellow workers. Despite their division between each other and lack of the complete mind of Christ (see on :2). This is a comfort when we consider the immaturity of our brethren.

*4:4 Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say: Rejoice!*- Such joy is only possible if we are confident of our future salvation; that our names are written in the book of life (:3). If the Gospel is perceived not so much as good news as a list of theological tenets we must believe, then there will be little joy. Faith is not the same as understanding theology; it is faith in the good news that truly I shall be saved because I am in Christ and counted as Him. This is why the call to rejoice is predicated upon being "in the Lord". That status is constant, and so our rejoicing likewise is to be "always", at all times. If indeed Paul is writing this facing death (see on 1:1; 2:16), his repeated focus upon joy is wonderful (3:1). He was indeed achieving his aim of finishing his race with joy (Acts 20:24).

*4:5 Let your gentle attitude be known to all men. The Lord is at hand-* The appeal to be gentle is perhaps in the context of the fierce dispute between the two sisters of :2. There was a particular need for this to change because they were involved in the work of Gospel proclamation (:3), and disunity between believers is the biggest disadvantage for the Gospel. The 'making known to all men' is because "the Lord is at hand". We should preach especially in the last days, knowing that a witness must be made to all nations before the Lord comes; and Phil. 4:5 seems to imply that just because "the Lord is at hand" we should let our "moderation" [RVmg. "gentleness"] be known unto all men" in the hard world of the last days. "The Lord is at hand" is also how Paul signs off his letter in 1 Cor. 16:22, although he uses the Aramaic equivalent of this term: "Maranatha".

However, it is possible to understand "at hand" as meaning near in space rather than near in time. The appeal for gentleness would then be based around the fact that the Lord is present with us, and in His close presence we should be always gentle. In support of this we note that the same Greek phrase is used in the LXX of Ps. 119:151 "You are near, O Lord".

Forbearance and tolerance are to be characteristic of our attitude to others (Eph. 4:2; Phil. 4:5). Paul was aware that on some matters, brethren can quite honestly hold different points of view (Rom. 14:5,6). But there is a difference between tolerance and indifference. The tolerance which is the fruit of the spirit is something hard to cultivate, and it can only spring from love. It's not that we think something doesn't matter... but rather that in sympathy with the other person, we seek to understand why the other person is thinking and behaving as they do. There is some truth in the saying that to know all is to forgive all. And when false doctrine does have to be challenged, the truth must be spoken *in love* (Eph. 4:15). Opponents are to be corrected "with gentleness" (2 Tim. 2:23-25; 1 Pet. 3:15). It is all too easy, knowing the truth as we do, to win the argument but lose the person. And so often I have been guilty of this.

*4:6 In nothing be anxious, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God-* This surely alludes to the six occurrences of the same

word in Mt. 6:25-34. But here Paul explains how concretely we can "take no thought" for our lives. It is by praying consciously for every little thing that you need in secular life, e.g. daily bread. It can be that we take the exhortation to "be careful for nothing" as meaning that we are intended to live a care-free life. But the sentence goes on: "but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God", and a few verses later we read of how the Philippians were "careful" to support Paul's ministry in practice (Phil. 4:6,10). The idea is surely that we should have no anxiety or care about the things of this life- and the world in which we live is increasingly preoccupied with the daily issues of existence. The same Greek word for "careful" or "anxious" (RV) is repeatedly used by the Lord in the context of saying we should *not* be anxious (Mt. 6:25,27,28,31,34)- but rather, we should be anxious to serve and hear the Lord in practice. We must "be careful to maintain good works" (Tit. 3:8), "care for one another" (1 Cor. 12:25), "care" for the state of others (Phil. 2:20). So the NT teaching is that we should not have the anxious care about our daily existence which characterizes the world, but rather, should translate that into a life of anxiety for *others*. See on Lk. 10:42.

Prayer should be "with thanksgiving". Any request we make known to God should be framed within deep gratitude for what He has already done for us. Paul perhaps realized the tendency to make prayer just a list of requests when he commanded his Philippians: "In every thing by prayer and supplication *with thanksgiving* let your requests be made known unto God". This is what prayer is all about; an opening up of life before God, not specific requests; a conscious casting of our care upon Him (1 Pet. 5 :7). The believers of the parable told their Lord of the ungrateful behaviour of their brother (Mt. 18:31)- they brought the situation before Him, without asking specifically for something to be done.

*4:7 And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus-* The peace of God fills the mind simply as a result of making our requests known. Praying alone in the room, kneeling, maybe at the bedside, pressing your little nose into that mattress as you concentrate your thoughts and requests; the very experience of this close communion will *of itself* enable you to unbend your legs and rise up a new man. But "peace" Biblically refers to peace with God on the basis of having been forgiven. This is the wonderful atmosphere in which we are to live daily life, and which guards our thinking. That peace passes all definition or "understanding" expressed in words. This guarding or keeping of our minds is due to God's action, through the Spirit. We are "kept [s.w. "guard"] by the power of God" (1 Pet. 1:5).

*4:8 Finally brothers-* This is the second "Finally..." (3:1). We get the feeling that Paul is writing in a flow of consciousness, albeit under Divine inspiration. I have commented much more about this in discussing the apparent contradictions within Paul's arguments in 2 Corinthians 7-9.

*Whatever things are true, whatever things are honourable, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report; if there be any virtue and if there be any praise, think on these things-* Again Paul is focusing upon where our thoughts are. We are to have the mind or spirit of Christ, and in practice this means making a conscious effort to think on spiritual things. If we are to achieve spiritual mindedness, we need to surround ourselves with positive influences- Bible verses on the walls, regular Bible reading, not filling our minds with the trash which passes for entertainment; and cultivate a culture of gratitude and appreciation for all in our lives. Too

much of our lives can so easily be spent going over the past, reliving old hurts- when our mental space should be taken up with positive spiritual things.

*4:9 The things which you both learned and received and heard and saw in me, these things do-* Ours isn't just a religion like anyone else's; it is *real*, creative life. There is congruence between belief and action, an honest admission of our humanity, just as there was then, and this yet further compels a response in those who see it. Paul could tell the Philippians to think on whatever *things* were true, honest, just, pure etc.; and then boldly say that "Those things [which he has just listed] which ye hath both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, these things do" (Phil. 4:8,9 RV). What they had learnt and heard from Paul, they had seen in him. He was the word which he preached made flesh, after the pattern of his Lord. Paul could speak of "my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church" (1 Cor. 4:17). His ways, his life, his person, was what he taught- there was congruence between his teaching and himself. And this congruence was consistent- in every place and in every ecclesia, be it in Corinth, Jerusalem or Rome, Paul the person was reflected in the teaching of Paul. The lack of congruence between the message and the life is what is turning people away from the true church in these last days; and yet the opposite is true now as never before. Congruence between life and teaching, to the point that they are one and the same, is powerfully attractive, especially in these days of shallowness of personality, playing out of roles and other forms of hypocrisy. This was why people believed in Jesus.

*And the God of peace shall be with you-* The God of peace can mean the God who gives peace. In response to their conscious effort to copy Paul in thinking about spiritual things, God would give peace in their hearts.

*4:10 But I rejoice in the Lord greatly-* Paul's joy, as explained on :1, was in the spiritual progress of others. His joy in this context was that they were showing spiritual fruit by caring for him.

*That now at length you have revived your thought for me-* In the form of the gift he has just received from them (:18).

*I know you did indeed take thought for me, but you lacked opportunity-* Paul has rebuked them for not caring for him to the extent that Epaphroditus nearly lost his life (see on 2:30). But as in writing to the Corinthians, Paul puts the best possible slant on their behaviour, saying that they had not had the chance to help as they must have wished to. This is a worked example of the mind which thinks on positive spiritual things (:8) having the love which covers weakness; not in a naive, cup half full way, not papering over disappointment and failure, but genuinely wanting to move on from that which is past and press forward positively, as noted on 3:13.

*4:11 Not that I speak regarding want-* If Paul didn't really need material help whilst imprisoned, why does he make such an issue about it in 2:30 (see notes there)? It could be that his reasoning is similar to that we find in 2 Corinthians, where he says that the project of donating for the Jerusalem poor, and also temporarily excommunicating the immoral member, was not for the sake of the poor or for the sake of that individual (see on 2 Cor. 7:12). Rather it was all an opportunity to bring forth fruit for the Lord. He states that specifically in :17: "Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that accrues to your account".

*For I have learned to be content whatever my situation-* This is the same word used in :9, where he asks the Philippians to "learn" from him. But he the teacher has also had to learn. He does not place himself above them, but rather as an example of how to learn. "Content" is similar to the word found in 2 Cor. 12:9, where Paul was taught that the Lord's grace was "sufficient" or content enough for him. If Paul had nothing materially but had the Lord's grace- that was enough. "Whatever my situation" is an attempt to render a strange phrase- literally 'with what I am'. This is a concept far wider than simply his material state. To be content with ourselves, recognizing that we are not perfect nor as mature in the mind of Christ as we should be (see on 3:13,15,16)- but content with how "I am", knowing that we are in the true Name of "I am", Yahweh of Israel.

4:12 - see on Lk. 3:5.

*I know how to be abased and I know also how to abound. In everything and in all things have I learned the secret both to be filled and to be hungry, both to have plenty and to be in want-* Life is littered with examples of people who do not know how to be. They may abound or be abased, but they do not know how 'to be' in that situation. We noted on :11 that Paul was content with 'how I am'. From how he reasons here, we can assume that Paul had experienced wealth. He had "profited" in Judaism, and the word has a distinct financial meaning (Gal. 1:15). At the start of his imprisonment he had funds to rent a house large enough to entertain a large crowd of visitors in; he was considered wealthy enough to pay a significant bribe (Acts 24:26), and his family were wealthy enough to send him to Jerusalem to study under Gamaliel. And yet he had to work with his own hands at other times, and needed material assistance ("to be in want" is used of his situation whilst living at Corinth, 2 Cor. 11:9). He says here that he has experienced actual hunger; and yet he doesn't mean that he has simply experienced those things. He had learned the secret how to be both hungry and filled. This is different from simply experiencing things, for there is no secret to be learned by experience alone. People experience things and yet never learn 'how to be'. He had been "instructed" (AV) by those things, he had learnt from experience rather than simply passed through experience. "To be in want" is a phrase quarried directly from the parable of the prodigal son (Lk. 15:14), as if Paul felt he had squandered so much opportunity, and had come back to the Lord only "in want". But he had learnt from it all- and therefore didn't need their material assistance for the sake of the assistance in itself.

4:13 *I can do all things in him that strengthens me-* The "all things" refer to the attitudes to plenty and want he has just spoken of in :12. The strengthening of Paul was therefore psychological, and that ability to learn and cope with varying life situations is granted by the work of the Spirit in our minds. The same word for 'strengthen' is to be found in Col. 1:11; Eph. 3:16,20 about the strengthening "by his spirit in the inner man". The Lord Jesus strengthening him is exactly how he concludes 2 Timothy (2 Tim. 4:17 s.w.), again encouraging us to see Philippians as written about the same time and in the same broad circumstances. See on 2:16.

4:14 *However you did well in that you had fellowship with my affliction-* Fellowship is not simply an on paper agreement about theological propositions, sharing membership in the same church or fellowship. It means feeling in common with an afflicted brother and therefore doing something in response; or as :15 puts it, a fellowship in giving and receiving. "My affliction" may have specific reference to the "affliction" which had been brought upon the imprisoned Paul by false brethren seeking to create "affliction" for him in prison (1:16

s.w.). The Philippians would have been amongst those who sought to help him out of that situation (see on 1:17). They suffered his afflictions with him, just as he and we all share in the afflictions of the crucified Lord Jesus. If we ask how exactly we do that in concrete terms, the answer is that we fellowship with the afflictions of His body, which is the members of His church.

4:15 *And you yourselves also know, you Philippians, that in the beginning of the gospel's work, when I departed from Macedonia, no church had fellowship with me in the matter of giving and receiving, but you only-* As noted on :14, "fellowship" is no theoretical matter, but concerns not just giving to those we have commonality with, but the art of receiving from others too. Paul was not perceived in his lifetime as the charismatic Christian leader whom all tried to support. In his time of need after leaving Macedonia, not one church apart from the Philippians sent him material support. He would have been perceived as a difficult maverick, a pariah figure rejected by conservatives and liberals alike in the church. We note that although the Antioch church sent him forth on the Gospel's work (Acts 13:1-3), they did not support him in his time of material need; when they as his sponsoring church would surely have been the ones who ought to have done so. We can assume there was some falling out between them and Paul. And yet he speaks of their fellowshiping him in "giving *and receiving*". It is too simplistic to read this as meaning that they fellowshiped him by giving to his material needs; for they fellowshiped in giving "and receiving". This consideration makes attractive the GNB rendition: "You were the only ones who shared my profits and losses". The trading metaphors continue in :17,18: "I want to see profit added to your account. Here, then, is my receipt for everything you have given me..." (GNB).

4:16 *For even in Thessalonica you sent often to my need-* How are we to square this with Paul's claims elsewhere that he did not receive personal support but was self supporting financially? Maybe the answer is in the way that Paul saw his brethren's need as his personal need. We see this by studying the apparent contradiction between Paul's comment that the Philippians sent support to him repeatedly for *his* necessities (Phil. 4:16), and the way he boasts to the Corinthians (2 Cor. 11:7) and Thessalonians (1 Thess. 2:9) that he did not receive personal financial support from others, but worked with his own hands so as to be self-supporting (see too Acts 20:33-35). Yet he wrote those things at roughly the same time as the Philippians were sending him help towards 'my necessities'. The conclusion seems to be that Paul viewed the necessities of his converts as *his* personal necessities- hence he can say that the Philippians sent money and support for *his* necessities, whilst at the same time truly stating that he took no *personal* support from his converts. Perhaps he is arguing that he took donations to support others, but not for himself.

4:17- see on 1 Thess. 3:12.

*Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that accrues to your account-* Paul prayed that others would bring forth fruit (Col. 1:9,10), and he here tells the Philippians how he is willing to accept donations from them, because he wanted them to bear fruit. We can help others please God- by our prayers for them, and by giving them the opportunities to bear fruit. Their 'minus' by giving to Paul's work was a 'plus' in God's accountancy. The cattle on a thousand hills are His, and in that sense nothing can be given to Him (Ps. 50:8-14). And yet, for our benefit, He asks for sacrifice to be given to Him. And Paul realized that it is similar with their giving for him. "Fruit that accrues" is read by some as referring to interest on a deposit paid

by a bank. The actual money was given to God, but the interest upon the gift was spiritual fruit, which arises from the process of giving.

4:18- see on Jn. 12:3.

*But I have all things and abound. I am filled, having received from Epaphroditus the things that came from you, they were as the odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, pleasing to God-* "I have all things" is quoting from Jacob in Gen. 33:11. Having earlier deceived Esau of the blessing, he asks Esau to now "take away my blessing, for God has dealt with my in grace, and I have all things". Jacob eagerly resigned all the material blessings he once held dear, because God's grace was "all things" to him. The same argument is used to Paul in 2 Cor. 11, where he is told that having God's grace is sufficient; we need nothing more, because with that we have all things. Paul is reasoning here that he is "filled", his cup is not half full but full; not because of what they have sent in itself, but because that gift was spiritual fruit for them, and a very acceptable sacrifice to God. Paul has earlier written that the sacrifice of his life to God was made upon their sacrifice to Him; he wrote in 2:17 in the conditional tense: "If I be offered upon [your] sacrifice... I joy and rejoice with you all". Now he had seen their sacrifice, he was the more ready to be offered himself. And this is why he could speak of his joy at their offering (:10). Again we see how the nature of his eternal salvation was bound up with their salvation; his offering of his life and theirs went together. Truly no man is an island in Christ; we are inextricably linked, both now and eternally, with our brethren.

4:19 *And my God shall supply every need of yours according to His riches, in glory in Christ Jesus-* This is a tacit recognition that Paul did have material needs, although he discounts them. He understands "riches" to refer to spiritual blessings given through the gift of the Spirit in the inner man (Eph. 1:7; 3:16). The "riches in glory" is the term used in Rom. 9:23 and Eph. 1:18 for our final salvation. The response to such generosity was going to be eternal. This is not to say that we can buy our salvation, but all the same, there will be an eternal outcome of generosity. And in this life too, the gift of the Spirit is given as a foretaste and guarantee of that great salvation in the future. Paul has used the idea of "supply" earlier, writing of "the supply of the spirit of Jesus Christ" (1:19). That supply of the Spirit, that great spiritual richness, would be granted in response to their giving; for grace, giving, *charis*, the gift of the Spirit, would be God's response to their giving. "Supply" is the same word just used in :18 for "full". As Paul had been filled with their gift, so God would fill them with the Spirit and all its rich blessings. For the same word is in Eph. 5:18: "Be filled with the Spirit" (as Rom. 15:13 "the God of hope *fill* you... through the power of the Holy Spirit).

4:20 *Now to our God and Father be the glory forever and ever. Amen-* The whole wonderful way of God's working, filling us with grace and His Spirit that we might be saved, our response to that in giving... all this leads to glory to Him, and not to ourselves. And we shall glorify Him eternally for the wonder of it all, perhaps recalling incidents from this life where His giving and our giving meshed together, to the glory of His grace and gift in His Son.

4:21 *Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brothers that are with me greet you-* "Every saint" is a reminder again that Paul is not writing just to the eldership. Every believer, including the illiterate and the slaves who could rarely attend meetings, were saints in Christ. Likewise in :22, "All the saints...". Paul saw himself as facilitating person to person communication, real

fellowship between ordinary people, and not just high level communication between elders. The brothers with Paul could refer to his fellow prisoners whom he had converted, or the few faithful friends who had come to Rome to minister to him. We note he does not extend greetings from the Roman church, with whom he seems to have parted company; for nobody stood with him at his final trial (2 Tim. 4:16). To die in such isolation from local brethren was a hard thing, but he clearly felt the Lord's personal presence with him compensating for it (2 Tim. 4:17).

4:22 *All the saints greet you, especially they that are of Caesar's household-* "All the saints" again emphasizes the value of the rank and file believers; see on :21. As noted on 1:13, Paul's witness (presumably via the soldiers he was chained to) had led to conversions within the extended family and slaves of Caesar's palace; although according to Romans 16 there were already some believers there. Through all the hard things that happened to Paul, the Gospel had entered the very elitest centre of the Roman empire. Josephus even suggests that the Empress Poppaea may have been favourably inclined to Christianity. This is an encouragement for all time that even the worst experiences and situations have a role to play in the extension of the Lord's saving way amongst men. And Paul realized that, hence "especially they...".

4:23 *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit-* The gift or *charis* of the Lord Jesus often refers to His gift of the Spirit to every baptized believer. And that is surely in view here, having alluded to the work of the Spirit so much in this letter. His gift, of His Spirit, was to be with *your* spirit. Paul's greatest wish was that the Lord's spirit would displace our carnal thinking or spirit.