

Philippians

1

Summary: *Paul and Timothy write to the believers in Philippi, expressing gratitude for their partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. Paul describes his imprisonment as having advanced the gospel rather than hindered it, reports that Christ is being proclaimed even by rivals, and declares his famous conviction: 'to live is Christ and to die is gain.' He urges the Philippians to conduct themselves in a manner worthy of the gospel, standing firm in one spirit.*

What Makes This Remarkable: *Philippians is the warmest of Paul's letters, written from prison yet saturated with joy. The word 'joy' and its cognates appear sixteen times across four chapters. Paul's relationship with Philippi was uniquely close — they were the only church from whom he accepted financial support (4:15). The theological climax of chapter 1 is the 'to live is Christ' declaration (v. 21), which frames existence itself as participation in Christ. Paul's candid reflection on preferring death yet choosing to remain for the Philippians' sake reveals a pastoral theology shaped by self-giving love.*

Translation Friction: *The identity of Paul's opponents in verses 15-17 is debated. Some preached Christ from envy and rivalry, hoping to afflict Paul in his imprisonment. Whether these are rival missionaries, Judaizers, or local preachers is unclear from the text alone. We render the Greek without resolving this ambiguity. The location of Paul's imprisonment — Rome, Ephesus, or Caesarea — is likewise debated; the text itself does not specify, though the mention of the praetorium (v. 13) suggests Rome.*

Connections: *The letter connects to Acts 16, which narrates the founding of the Philippian church through Lydia's conversion and the jailer's baptism. Paul's language of 'partnership in the gospel' (koinonia tou euangeliou) echoes the covenant fellowship vocabulary of the Old Testament. The citizenship language in verse 27 anticipates the explicit heavenly citizenship declaration of 3:20.*

¹Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons: ²Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ³I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, ⁴Always in every petition of mine for you all making request with joy, ⁵Since your fellowship in the gospel from the foremost day until now. ⁶I am confident of this very thing, that the one who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. ⁷It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, because I hold you in my heart, since both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, all of you are partners with

me in grace. ⁸For God is my witness, how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus. ⁹And this is my prayer: that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and all discernment, ¹⁰That you may approve things that are excellent. So you can become sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; ¹¹Indeed, being overflowing with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. ¹²Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel, ¹³As a result, it has become widely known throughout the whole imperial guard — and to everyone else — that I am in chains for the sake of Christ. ¹⁴Numerous of the brothers and sisters in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the message without fear. ¹⁵Some indeed proclaim Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of good will. ¹⁶The latter do it out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. ¹⁷The former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment. ¹⁸What then? Only this: that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice. Yes, and I will continue to rejoice, ¹⁹For I know that this will turn to my salvation by way of your petition, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,. ²⁰According to my earnest expectation and my confident expectation, that in nothing I will be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. ²¹And to die is gain, and for to me to live is Christ. ²²If I am to go on living in the body, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I will choose I cannot tell. ²³I am hard-pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. ²⁴But to remain in the body is more necessary for your sake. ²⁵Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, ²⁶Then when I come to you again, you will have even more reason to be proud in Christ Jesus because of me. ²⁷Only this: live as citizens worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear that you are standing firm in one spirit, contending side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel, ²⁸In nothing intimidated by those who oppose you — which is to them a clear sign of their destruction, but to you of salvation, and that of God. ²⁹For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, ³⁰Having the same conflict which you noticed in me, and now hear to be in me.

TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The Greek *douloi* ('slaves, servants') denotes total allegiance. Paul identifies himself not by apostolic title but as a slave of Christ — unusual for his letter openings and perhaps reflecting the intimate tone of this letter. The term *episkopoi* ('overseers') is rendered 'overseers' rather than the KJV's 'bishops,' which carries later ecclesiastical connotations absent from the first-century context. *Diakonoi* ('deacons, servants') refers to recognized servants of the congregation.
2. Paul's standard greeting fuses the Greek *charis* ('grace') with the Hebrew *shalom*-equivalent *eirene* ('peace'). The pairing of God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ as co-source of grace and peace is a high christological claim embedded in an ordinary salutation.
3. The phrase *epi pase tee mneia hymōn* can mean either 'upon every remembrance of you' (each time Paul thinks of them) or 'for all your remembrance of me' (their remembering him through gifts). The former reading is more natural in context and is followed here.
4. The repetition of *pas* ('all, every') is characteristic of Philippians — Paul uses the word more frequently here than in any other letter relative to length. Joy (*chara*) appears for the first time, establishing the letter's dominant theme.
5. The Greek *koinōnia* ('partnership, fellowship, sharing') is richer than the English 'fellowship' suggests. It denotes active participation and mutual sharing — the Philippians were not passive recipients of the gospel but active partners in its advancement, including through their financial support of Paul's mission.
6. The verb *enarchomai* ('to begin') and *epiteleo* ('to bring to completion') form a deliberate pair — what God initiated, God will finish. The 'day of Christ Jesus' (*hemeras Christou Iesou*) is an eschatological reference to Christ's return, adapted from the Old Testament 'day of the LORD' (*yom YHWH*).
7. The phrase *echein me en tee kardia hymas* is ambiguous — it could mean 'I hold you in my heart' or 'you hold me in your heart.' Both are grammatically possible; we follow the former as the more natural subject-object order. The compound *synkoinōnous* ('co-partners, fellow-sharers') intensifies the *koinōnia* theme of verse 5.
8. The Greek *splanchna* ('intestines, inner organs') was the ancient seat of deep emotion, equivalent to the modern 'heart.' The KJV's literal 'bowels' is misleading in modern English. Paul claims that his longing for the Philippians originates not from natural affection but from Christ's own love working through him.

9. Paul prays not merely for love but for love informed by epignōsis ('full knowledge, deep understanding') and aisthēsis ('perception, discernment, moral insight'). This is not sentimentality but a love that sees clearly and acts wisely.
10. The verb dokimazein ('to test, examine, approve') means to distinguish what truly matters from what merely appears important. The adjective eilikrineis ('pure, sincere') may derive from heilē ('sunlight') and krinō ('to judge') — that which is judged genuine when examined in full light.
11. The singular 'fruit' (karpon) follows the SBLGNT against the KJV's plural 'fruits.' Righteousness here is both status and conduct — the right standing before God that produces right living, all mediated through Christ. The phrase 'to the glory and praise of God' marks the goal of all Christian ethics in Paul's thought.
12. The Greek adelphoi ('brothers') is used inclusively here for the entire congregation, hence 'brothers and sisters.' The word prokopē ('advancement, progress') was a Stoic term for moral progress; Paul repurposes it for the spread of the gospel. His imprisonment, which might seem a setback, has paradoxically furthered the mission.
13. The praitōrion ('praetorium') could refer to the praetorian guard in Rome, the governor's residence in Caesarea, or a provincial headquarters in Ephesus. If Rome, Paul's chains have become a witness to the imperial guard itself. The phrase en Christō ('in Christ') modifies the imprisonment — his bonds are recognized as being 'for Christ' rather than for criminal activity.
14. Paul's suffering has had the opposite of its intended effect: rather than silencing the movement, his imprisonment has emboldened other believers. The verb tolmaō ('to dare, to be bold') suggests courage in the face of real danger — these believers preach knowing that imprisonment is a real possibility.
15. Paul acknowledges a painful reality: not all who preach Christ do so with pure motives. The pair phthonon ('envy') and erin ('rivalry, strife') suggests personal antagonism toward Paul rather than doctrinal error — these preachers proclaim the true Christ but from corrupt motives.
16. The SBLGNT reverses the order found in the KJV's underlying text (Textus Receptus), placing the love-motivated group in verse 16 and the rivalry-motivated group in verse 17. We follow the SBLGNT order. The verb keimai ('I am placed, I am appointed') suggests Paul views his imprisonment as a divine assignment rather than a misfortune.
17. The Greek eritheia ('selfish ambition, self-seeking') originally referred to working for hire and came to mean partisan, self-interested maneuvering. These preachers aim to increase Paul's suffering by highlighting his confinement while they enjoy freedom. Despite their malice, Paul will rejoice that Christ is preached (v. 18).
18. Paul's response to rivalrous preachers is astonishing generosity: as long as Christ is proclaimed, he rejoices regardless of the preacher's motives. The Greek prophasei ('pretext, false motive') contrasts with aletheia ('truth'). The shift from present chairō ('I rejoice') to future charēsomai ('I will rejoice') extends his joy from the present crisis into the future.
19. Paul echoes Job 13:16 (LXX: touto moi apobēsetai eis sōtērian). The word sōtēria here may mean spiritual salvation, physical release from prison, or vindication at trial. The 'supply' (epichorēgia, 'generous provision') of the Spirit is not a meager trickle but an abundant provision.
19. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Job 13:16. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
20. The rare compound apokaradokia ('eager expectation') literally suggests craning the neck forward in anticipation. Paul's singular concern is not his own survival but that Christ be 'magnified' (megalynthēsetai) in his body — whether that body lives or dies. The phrase 'whether by life or by death' sets up the extraordinary meditation in verses 21-26.
21. This is one of the most compressed and profound statements in the Pauline corpus. The Greek lacks a verb — literally 'to me the living Christ and the dying gain.' Life is not merely lived for Christ or with Christ but is Christ — existence itself is absorbed into Christ's person. If living is already Christ, then death can only bring more of him, hence 'gain' (kerdos). The logic is airtight: Paul cannot lose.
22. The syntax is notoriously difficult. Paul seems to say: if continued life in the body means productive ministry ('fruit of labor'), then he genuinely does not know which to prefer — death with Christ or fruitful service. The verb hairēsomai ('I will choose') is striking, as if the choice were actually his to make.
23. The verb synechomai ('I am pressed, constrained') conveys being squeezed from both sides. The verb analysai ('to depart, to break camp, to set sail') is a metaphor for death — either striking a tent (a soldier's image) or loosing a ship from its moorings. Paul's conviction that death means being 'with Christ' (syn Christō) reflects a personal eschatology of immediate presence with Christ after death.
24. Paul resolves the tension of verses 21-23 in favor of continued life — not because life is better for him, but because it is more necessary (anankaioteron) for the Philippians. His pastoral love overrides his personal preference. The shift from 'flesh' (sarx) to 'body' in our rendering avoids the negative connotations 'flesh' carries elsewhere in Paul.
25. The verbs menō ('remain') and paramenō ('continue alongside') are nearly synonymous, creating emphasis through repetition. Paul expresses confidence in his release, though this is pastoral assurance rather than prophetic certainty. The pair prokopē ('progress') and chara ('joy') captures Paul's dual goal for the Philippians — growth and gladness.
26. The Greek kauchēma ('boast, ground of boasting') is not sinful pride but legitimate exultation — and it is 'in Christ Jesus,' not in human achievement. Paul envisions his return to Philippi as occasion for the church to celebrate God's faithfulness in preserving his life.

27. The verb politeuesthe ('live as citizens, conduct yourselves as citizens') is loaded with meaning for the Philippians, who held Roman citizenship as residents of a Roman colony. Paul calls them to a higher citizenship — one defined by the gospel rather than by Rome. The athletic metaphor *synathlēō* ('to contend together, to compete as teammates') pictures the church as a team striving in unified effort.
28. The verb *ptyromai* ('to be frightened, startled') is used of horses shying at danger. The Philippians' fearless stand serves as a double sign: it signals the opponents' destruction (*apōleia*) and the believers' salvation (*sōtēria*). The final phrase 'and that from God' (*kai touto apo theou*) means that both the sign and the salvation originate from God.
29. The verb *echaristhē* ('it has been graciously given') shares the root of *charis* ('grace'). Suffering, like faith, is presented as a gift — a startling claim that reframes persecution as divine privilege rather than misfortune. This theology of suffering as gift is distinctly Pauline.
30. The Greek *agōn* ('struggle, contest, fight') is an athletic term for a competitive event. The Philippians witnessed Paul's struggle firsthand when he was beaten and imprisoned in their city (Acts 16:19-40), and now they hear of his continued imprisonment. Their own suffering mirrors his — they share the same contest.

2

Summary: *Paul appeals for unity and humility in the Philippian church, grounding his appeal in the supreme example of Christ's self-emptying. The Christ Hymn (2:5-11) traces the arc from pre-existent divine equality through incarnation, servanthood, and crucifixion to exaltation and universal lordship. Paul then urges the Philippians to work out their salvation with fear and trembling, commends Timothy and Epaphroditus as models of self-giving service, and prepares to send both to Philippi.*

What Makes This Remarkable: *The Christ Hymn (2:5-11) is one of the highest christological passages in the New Testament. Whether Paul composed it, adapted an existing hymn, or quoted early liturgy is debated, but its theology is clear: Christ possessed equality with God, voluntarily emptied himself, took the form of a slave, became human, died on a cross, and was exalted to the highest place with the name above every name. The *kenosis* ('emptying') of verse 7 has generated centuries of theological reflection on how divinity and humanity relate in Christ. The hymn's climax — 'every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord' — echoes Isaiah 45:23, where every knee bows to YHWH alone, making an implicit identification of Jesus with the God of Israel.*

Translation Friction: *The precise meaning of *kenosis* ('he emptied himself,' v. 7) is a perennial theological question. The text does not say of what Christ emptied himself — it says he emptied himself by taking the form of a servant. We render the Greek without resolving the systematic theology. The phrase *harpagmon* ('something to be grasped/exploited,' v. 6) is one of the most debated words in Pauline studies; we render it as 'something to be exploited' following the majority consensus that Christ did not cling to his divine prerogatives.*

Connections: *The hymn's language echoes Isaiah's Servant Songs (especially Isaiah 52:13-53:12), where the Servant is exalted after humiliation. The universal confession of verse 11 quotes Isaiah 45:23. The 'form of God' / 'form of a servant' contrast recalls the Adam-Christ typology of Romans 5:12-21 — where Adam grasped at being like God, Christ did the opposite. Epaphroditus's near-death illness connects to 2 Corinthians 1:8-10 and Paul's theology of shared suffering.*

1So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any partnership in the Spirit, any affection and compassion, 2Fulfil you my delight, that you be likeminded, possessing the same devotion, being of one accord, of one mind. 3Do nothing from selfish ambition or empty conceit, but in humility regard others as more significant than yourselves. 4Let each of you look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. 5Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, 6Though he existed in the very form of God, he did not consider equality with God something to be grasped for his own advantage. 7However, made himself of no reputation, and picked up upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men;. 8And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death — even death on a cross. 9Therefore God has highly exalted him and granted him the name that is above every name, 10That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of matters in heaven, and matters in earth, and things under the world;. 11To the glory of god the father, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. 12Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, therefore, my dear, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much

more in my absence. ¹³Indeed, since it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. ¹⁴Do all things without grumbling or arguing, ¹⁵So you can become blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom you shine as lights in the present age;. ¹⁶as you hold firmly to the word of life. Then on the day of Christ I will be able to rejoice, knowing that my effort and hard work were not wasted. ¹⁷But even if I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. ¹⁸In the same way you also should be glad and rejoice with me. ¹⁹I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I too may be encouraged by learning how you are. ²⁰For I have no one like-minded who will genuinely care about your welfare. ²¹For they all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. ²²But you know Timothy's proven character, that as a child with a father he has served with me in the gospel. ²³I hope therefore to send him just as soon as I see how things will go with me, ²⁴However, I trust in the Lord that I also myself will come shortly. ²⁵But I thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus — my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, and your messenger and minister to my need — ²⁶Since he longed following you all, and was full of heaviness, because that you had listened to that he had been sick. ²⁷Indeed he was ill, near to death. But God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, so that I would not have sorrow upon sorrow. ²⁸I am the more eager to send him, therefore, so that when you see him again you may rejoice, and I may be less anxious. ²⁹So receive him in the Lord with all joy, and hold people like him in honor, ³⁰On account of the fact that for the labor of Christ he was nigh to passing, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me.

TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The fourfold 'if' (ei tis) is not expressing doubt but stating conditions Paul knows to be true — 'since there is encouragement, since there is comfort...' The rhetorical force is: given all that you have experienced in Christ, act accordingly. The word paraklēsis ('encouragement, exhortation, comfort') is the noun form of the verb from which 'Paraclete' derives.
2. The verb phroneō ('to think, to set one's mind on') appears twice here and is the key verb of Philippians, occurring ten times in the letter. Unity is not uniformity of opinion but a shared orientation of mind and purpose. The compound sympsychoi ('united in soul, of one spirit') appears only here in the New Testament.
3. The word kenodoxia ('empty glory, vain conceit') appears only here in the New Testament. The noun tapeinophrosynē ('humility, lowliness of mind') was generally a negative quality in Greco-Roman culture — it meant 'servile-mindedness.' Paul and the early Christians transformed it into a virtue, modeled on Christ's own self-lowering (vv. 5-8).
4. The verb skopeō ('to look at, to pay attention to, to consider') does not prohibit self-care but redirects primary attention outward. The word 'also' (kai) is important — Paul does not forbid attention to one's own affairs but insists that concern for others must accompany it. This verse provides the ethical principle that the Christ Hymn will illustrate christologically.
5. This verse introduces the Christ Hymn (vv. 5-11). The verb phroneite ('think, have this mindset') connects back to the call for unity in verse 2. The phrase en hymin can mean 'in you' (individually) or 'among you' (corporately) — both senses are likely intended. Christ's mindset is not merely an external example to imitate but an internal reality for those who are 'in Christ Jesus.'
6. The Greek morphē theou ('form of God') does not mean mere appearance but essential character — the outward expression that corresponds to inner reality. Christ's pre-existence in the 'form of God' is an assertion of genuine divinity. The word harpagmon ('something seized, something exploited') is extremely rare and debated. The rendering 'something to be exploited' follows the res rapta interpretation: Christ possessed equality with God but refused to exploit it for his own advantage. The KJV's 'robbery' follows a different interpretation.
7. The verb ekenōsen ('he emptied') is the source of the theological term 'kenosis.' Crucially, the emptying is described not as subtraction (losing divine attributes) but as addition — 'by taking (labōn) the form of a servant.' Christ emptied himself of his prerogatives by adding servanthood to his identity. The 'form of a servant' (morphēn doulou) deliberately contrasts with 'form of God' (morphē theou) in verse 6. The word homoiōma ('likeness') affirms genuine humanity while preserving the distinction that Christ was not merely human.
8. The word schēma ('outward form, appearance, fashion') differs from morphē in verse 7 — schēma refers to the observable, external presentation. The descent continues: from divine form, to servant form, to human likeness, to humiliation, to obedience, to death, and finally to the most degrading form of death — crucifixion. The phrase 'death on a cross' (thanatou de staurou) is added as a shocking afterthought — the em-dash captures the Greek particle de, which introduces an unexpected intensification. Crucifixion was reserved for slaves and the worst criminals; it was so shameful that Roman citizens were exempt from it.
9. The conjunction dio ('therefore, for this reason') marks the turning point of the hymn — the exaltation is God's response to Christ's self-humiliation. The verb hyperypsoō ('to super-exalt, to raise to the highest position') is a compound intensification found only here in the New Testament. The verb echarisato ('graciously gave, granted as a gift') shares the root of charis ('grace'). The 'name above every name' is almost certainly 'Lord' (kyrios) as specified in verse 11, which in the Septuagint translates the divine name YHWH.

- 10.** Paul quotes Isaiah 45:23, where YHWH declares: 'To me every knee shall bow.' By applying this text to Jesus, Paul makes an extraordinary claim: the homage owed to the God of Israel is now rendered to the crucified and exalted Jesus. The threefold cosmos — heaven, earth, and under the earth (epouraniōn, epigeiōn, katachthoniōn) — encompasses every realm of existence. Nothing is excluded from Christ's lordship.
- 10.** [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Isaiah 45:23 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
- 11.** The confession *kyrios Iesous Christos* ('Jesus Christ is Lord') is the earliest Christian creed. In the Roman Empire, the declaration *kyrios Kaiser* ('Caesar is Lord') was an oath of political allegiance; the Christian confession was therefore both theological and politically subversive. The title *kyrios* ('Lord'), when applied to Jesus in a context quoting Isaiah 45:23, carries the full weight of the divine name YHWH. Yet this exaltation of Jesus is not competitive with the Father — it is 'to the glory of God the Father,' maintaining the unity of divine purpose.
- 11.** [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Isaiah 45:23. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
- 12.** The command *katēgagazesthe* ('work out, bring to completion') does not mean 'earn' but 'bring to full expression' — salvation is a reality already given (by God, v. 13) that must be actively lived out in community. The phrase 'fear and trembling' (*phobou kai tromou*) echoes the Old Testament posture before God's holiness (Psalm 2:11; Isaiah 66:2). Paul's absence makes their obedience more significant — they must mature beyond dependence on his physical presence.
- 12.** [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Psalm 2:11. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
- 12.** [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Isaiah 66:2. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
- 13.** This verse completes the paradox of verse 12: work out your salvation because God is the one working in you. Human effort and divine agency are not competitors but partners — God produces both the willing (to *thelein*) and the doing (to *energein*). The word *eudokia* ('good pleasure, delight, purpose') indicates that God's work in believers flows from his own joyful purpose, not reluctant obligation.
- 14.** The word *gongysmōn* ('grumbling, murmuring') echoes Israel's wilderness complaints (Exodus 16:7-12; Numbers 14:27). Paul warns the Philippian church not to repeat Israel's pattern of dissatisfaction with God's provision and leadership. The word *dialogismōn* ('arguments, disputes, questionings') refers to divisive internal debates.
- 14.** [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Exodus 16:7-12. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
- 14.** [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Numbers 14:27. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
- 15.** The phrase 'crooked and twisted generation' (*geneas skolias kai diestrammenēs*) quotes Deuteronomy 32:5 from the Song of Moses, where it describes faithless Israel. Paul applies it to the surrounding pagan culture. The word *phōstēres* ('lights, luminaries, stars') is used in the Septuagint of Genesis 1:14-16 for the celestial bodies — believers are like stars set against the darkness of a corrupt world.
- 15.** [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Deuteronomy 32:5 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
- 15.** [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Genesis 1:14-16 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
- 16.** The verb *epechō* can mean either 'hold fast' (retain) or 'hold forth' (offer). Both senses may be intended — the Philippians cling to the gospel and display it to the world. Paul's running and laboring metaphors draw from athletics and manual work. His boast (*kauchēma*) on the day of Christ will be the Philippians themselves — their faithfulness will validate his ministry.
- 17.** The verb *spendomai* ('I am being poured out as a libation') is a sacrificial term — Paul pictures his life (or death) as a drink offering poured over the Philippians' faith, which is itself the main sacrifice. The imagery is drawn from Old Testament sacrificial practice where wine was poured as a libation alongside the primary offering (Numbers 15:5-10). Even contemplating martyrdom, Paul rejoices.
- 17.** [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Numbers 15:5-10. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
- 18.** Paul commands mutual rejoicing — even in the face of his possible death. The imperative *chairete* ('rejoice!') is a command, not merely a wish. Joy in Philippians is not dependent on circumstances but on the shared reality of being in Christ.
- 19.** The rare verb *eupsycheō* ('to be encouraged, to be heartened') appears only here in the New Testament. Paul's concern for the Philippians is not one-directional — he needs news of them as much as they need Timothy's visit. The phrase 'in the Lord Jesus' frames even travel plans within the sphere of Christ's lordship.
- 20.** The adjective *isopsychon* ('like-souled, kindred in spirit') appears only here in the New Testament. Timothy is uniquely aligned with Paul's pastoral heart. The adverb *gnēsios* ('genuinely, sincerely') comes from *gnēsios* ('legitimate, born in wedlock') — Timothy's care for the Philippians is not performative but authentic.

21. This stark assessment — 'all seek their own' — echoes the warning of verse 4 and contrasts with the Christ of the hymn who sought others' interests above his own. The 'all' is likely hyperbolic, referring to those currently available as potential envoys rather than every believer everywhere.
22. The word dokimē ('proven character, tested quality') means worth demonstrated through testing — Timothy is not untried. Paul starts to say 'as a son serves a father' but corrects the image to 'as a child with a father he served with me' — changing the hierarchical metaphor to one of partnership. Timothy is not Paul's subordinate but his co-laborer.
23. Paul will send Timothy once his own situation becomes clearer — presumably the outcome of his trial. The verb aphidō ('to see from a distance, to perceive clearly') suggests Paul is waiting for clarity about his case before sending his most trusted associate away.
24. Paul's confidence in his own visit is grounded 'in the Lord' — not in legal optimism but in trust in Christ's sovereign purposes. This hope of release aligns with his expectation in 1:25 that he will remain for the Philippians' benefit.
25. Paul introduces Epaphroditus with five titles arranged in two groups: three from Paul's perspective (brother, fellow worker, fellow soldier) and two from the Philippians' perspective (their apostolon — 'sent one, messenger' — and minister to Paul's need). The military metaphor systratiotēs ('fellow soldier') frames gospel ministry as warfare.
26. The verb adēmoneō ('to be distressed, troubled, anxious') is the same word used of Jesus in Gethsemane (Matthew 26:37). Epaphroditus's distress is not about his own illness but about the Philippians' worry — he is upset that they are upset. This other-centered concern exemplifies the mindset Paul commended in verses 3-4.
27. The phrase paraplēsion thanatō ('near to death, close to dying') indicates a life-threatening illness. Paul's candor is striking — he does not attribute the healing to his own prayers or apostolic power but simply to God's mercy (eleēsen). The phrase 'sorrow upon sorrow' (lypēn epi lypēn) suggests Paul already carries grief (perhaps from imprisonment) and would have been overwhelmed by Epaphroditus's death.
28. The comparative spoudaioterōs ('more eagerly, with greater urgency') and alypoteros ('less sorrowful, less anxious') show Paul's pastoral sensitivity — he acts swiftly to relieve both the Philippians' worry and his own. The so-called 'epistolary aorist' (epempsa, 'I sent') refers to the sending that will take place when the letter arrives.
29. The imperative prosdecheste ('receive, welcome') suggests that Epaphroditus might need an advocate — perhaps some in Philippi questioned why he returned without completing his mission to Paul. Paul preemptively defends him and commands the church to honor him.
30. The verb paraboleusamenos ('having risked, having gambled') is a gambling term — Epaphroditus wagered his life on Christ's work. The phrase 'what was lacking in your service' (to hymōn husterēma tēs leitourgias) is not a criticism of the Philippians but acknowledges that their physical distance prevented personal service to Paul; Epaphroditus bridged that gap at the cost of his own health.

3

Summary: Paul warns the Philippians against Judaizing opponents whom he calls 'dogs' and 'mutilators of the flesh,' then offers his own credentials as a model of what he now considers worthless compared to knowing Christ. He describes his pursuit of Christ in athletic terms — pressing on toward the goal, forgetting what lies behind, straining toward what lies ahead. He contrasts those whose 'god is their belly' with believers whose citizenship is in heaven, from where they await a Savior who will transform their lowly bodies.

What Makes This Remarkable: Paul's autobiographical section (vv. 4-14) is the most detailed account of his Jewish credentials anywhere in his letters: circumcised on the eighth day, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews, a Pharisee, blameless under the law. His sweeping renunciation of these credentials as 'rubbish' (skybalon, v. 8) is not self-hatred but a radical revaluation — everything is loss compared to the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus. The athletic metaphor of pressing toward the goal (vv. 12-14) has become one of the most quoted Pauline images, expressing the Christian life as disciplined forward movement rather than passive arrival.

Translation Friction: The sharp warning in verse 2 ('beware of the dogs') represents Paul's most aggressive anti-opponent language outside of Galatians. The identity of these opponents is debated — they may be the same Judaizers addressed in Galatians, or a different group. The term skybalon (v. 8) is deliberately vulgar, ranging from 'refuse' to 'excrement'; we render it as 'rubbish' to preserve the force without gratuitous shock. The phrase 'enemies of the cross' (v. 18) may refer to the same opponents or to a different group focused on libertine behavior.

Connections: Paul's list of Jewish credentials parallels 2 Corinthians 11:22 and Galatians 1:13-14. The athletic imagery of pressing toward the goal connects to 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 and 2 Timothy 4:7-8. The heavenly citizenship (politeuma) in verse 20 picks up the citizenship language of 1:27. The transformation of the body (v. 21) anticipates the resurrection theology of 1 Corinthians 15:42-54.

¹Finally, my brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is a safeguard for you. ²Watch out for the dogs, watch out for the evildoers, watch out for those who mutilate the flesh. ³For we are the circumcision — we who worship by the Spirit of God and boast in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh — ⁴Though I may as well possess confidence in the physical nature. If any other man thinketh that he has whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: ⁵I was circumcised on the eighth day, born into the people of Israel from the tribe of Benjamin — a Hebrew descended from Hebrews. In regard to the law, I was a Pharisee. ⁶Concerning zeal, persecuting the church. Touching the moral integrity which is in the instruction of Moses, blameless. ⁷But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ ⁹Be discovered in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is by way of the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by way of faith: ¹⁰I want to know Christ — to experience the power of his resurrection, to share in his sufferings, and to become like him in his death. ¹¹If by any means I may attain to the resurrection of the no longer alive. ¹²Not that I have already obtained this or have already been made perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. ¹³Brothers and sisters, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵Let those of us then who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. ¹⁶Only let us hold true to what we have attained. ¹⁷Brothers and sisters, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. ¹⁸For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. ¹⁹Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. ²⁰But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we eagerly await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹Who will change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like to his glorious body, in keeping with to the working whereby he is able indeed to subdue all things to himself.

TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The phrase to loipon ('finally, as for the rest') does not necessarily signal the end of the letter — Paul has two more chapters to go. It functions as a transition marker. The reference to 'the same things' suggests Paul has warned them before, either in person or in a previous letter now lost. The word asphales ('safe, secure, a safeguard') implies that repetition protects against error.
2. The threefold blepete ('watch out, beware') is urgent and aggressive. 'Dogs' (kynas) was a term Jews used for Gentiles; Paul turns it against the Judaizers themselves. The word katatomē ('mutilation, cutting') is a biting pun on peritomē ('circumcision') — Paul reduces their prized covenant sign to mere flesh-cutting. This is among the harshest language in Paul's letters.
3. Paul claims the title 'the circumcision' (hē peritomē) for believers in Christ, redefining the covenant marker from physical surgery to spiritual reality. Three characteristics define true circumcision: worship by God's Spirit, boasting in Christ Jesus (not in credentials), and refusal to trust in the flesh. This echoes the prophetic tradition of 'circumcision of the heart' (Deuteronomy 30:6; Jeremiah 4:4).
3. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Deuteronomy 30:6 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
3. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Jeremiah 4:4 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
4. Paul pivots from theological principle to personal testimony. His argument is not that flesh-credentials are unattainable but that he possessed them in abundance — and chose to abandon them. This makes his renunciation in verses 7-8 all the more powerful: he is not sour grapes but a man who walked away from genuine wealth.
5. Paul lists seven credentials in ascending order of personal achievement. The first four are inherited: circumcision on the proper day (not a proselyte), Israelite descent, Benjaminite tribal identity (the tribe that gave Israel its first king, Saul — Paul's namesake), and 'Hebrew of Hebrews' (likely meaning Hebrew-speaking from Hebrew-speaking parents, not Hellenized). The last three (vv. 5b-6) are chosen: Pharisee, persecutor, and blameless under law.

6. Paul's zeal (*zēlos*) manifested as violence against the church — he considers this a credential, not a confession, within the value system he is about to reject. His claim to be 'blameless' (*amemptos*) under the law does not mean sinless perfection but that he fulfilled the law's external requirements without fault. The rhetorical force is devastating: even flawless Torah observance is 'loss' compared to Christ (v. 7).
7. The commercial metaphor shifts: what was once in the 'profit' column (*kerdē*, plural 'gains') Paul has transferred to the 'loss' column (*zēmian*). The perfect tense *hēgēmai* ('I have counted and still count') indicates a past decision with continuing force. This is not a momentary emotion but a settled conviction.
8. Paul intensifies: not just his Jewish credentials but 'everything' (*panta*) is loss compared to knowing Christ. The rare word *skybala* ('refuse, rubbish, excrement, scraps thrown to dogs') is deliberately crude — Paul uses the coarsest available term to express how worthless his former advantages now seem. The phrase 'knowing Christ Jesus my Lord' (*tēs gnōseōs Christou Iesou tou kyriou mou*) is deeply personal — 'my Lord' is intimate, not merely doctrinal.
9. Paul contrasts two kinds of righteousness: his 'own' (*emēn*) righteousness based on law-keeping versus the righteousness 'from God' (*ek theou*) received through faith. The genitive *pisteōs Christou* ('faith of/in Christ') can be read as 'faith in Christ' (objective genitive) or 'the faithfulness of Christ' (subjective genitive). We follow the objective genitive reading, which is more consistent with Paul's argument here about human response to God's gift.
10. Paul's supreme goal is not theological knowledge about Christ but relational knowledge of Christ — the Greek *gnōnai* ('to know') carries the Old Testament sense of intimate, experiential knowing. The order is striking: resurrection power first, then suffering. Paul does not romanticize suffering but sees it as inseparable from genuine knowledge of the risen Christ. The verb *symmorphizomenos* ('being conformed to, being shaped into the pattern of') means taking on the very form (*morphē*) of Christ's death — echoing the hymn's language of Christ taking the 'form' of a servant (2:7).
11. The rare compound *exanastasin* ('out-resurrection, resurrection out from among') is more specific than the common *anastasis* — it may emphasize resurrection out from among the dead, distinguishing the believer's resurrection from a general raising. The conditional 'if by any means' (*ei pōs*) does not express doubt about salvation but humility before a goal not yet achieved, consistent with the 'not yet perfected' language of verse 12.
12. The verb *diōkō* ('I press on, I pursue, I chase') is the same verb translated 'persecute' in verse 6 — Paul the former persecutor of the church is now a pursuer of Christ. The verb *katalambanō* ('to seize, to take hold of, to make one's own') appears twice: Paul pursues in order to grasp what Christ has already grasped in him. The logic is: because Christ seized me, I press on to fully realize what he seized me for.
13. The verb *epekteinomenos* ('straining forward, stretching out toward') is an athletic term picturing a runner leaning forward with every muscle extended toward the finish line. The 'forgetting' (*epilanthanomenos*) of what lies behind includes both Paul's former Jewish achievements and his past failures — neither past glory nor past shame determines his forward movement.
14. The *skopos* ('goal, target, mark') is the finish line toward which the runner strains. The *brabeion* ('prize') is the victor's wreath awarded at Greek athletic games (cf. 1 Corinthians 9:24). The 'upward call' (*anō klēseōs*) may mean the call that comes from above (God's heavenly summons) or the call to go upward (the final resurrection). Both senses converge in Paul's thought.
15. The word *teleioi* ('mature, perfect, complete') is deliberately paradoxical after verse 12, where Paul said he has not been 'made perfect' (*teteleiōmai*). The mature person is precisely the one who knows they are not yet perfected. Paul trusts God to correct any remaining disagreement — a remarkably patient approach to theological differences within the community.
16. The verb *stoichein* ('to walk in line, to keep in step, to conform to') is a military term for marching in formation. Whatever level of understanding they have reached, they must live consistently with it. The SBLGNT has a shorter text than the Textus Receptus behind the KJV, which adds 'let us mind the same thing.'
17. The compound *symmimētai* ('co-imitators, joint imitators') means 'imitate me together' — the imitation is communal, not individual. Paul does not hesitate to offer himself as a model (cf. 1 Corinthians 11:1), not from arrogance but because the Christian life is learned through embodied example. The verb *skopeite* ('observe, watch closely') is related to *skopos* ('goal') in verse 14.
18. Paul's tears (*klaiōn*, 'weeping') reveal that his harsh language in verse 2 is not cold fury but grieved love. These 'enemies of the cross' are not outsiders but people within or near the Christian movement who reject the cross's implications — that God's power works through weakness and self-giving rather than through triumphalism.
19. Four damning descriptions: (1) their destination is destruction (*apōleia*), (2) their god is appetite (*koilia*, 'belly, stomach'), (3) their boast is in what should shame them, (4) their thinking is earthbound. Whether 'belly' refers to food laws, gluttony, or physical indulgence generally is debated. The verb *phroneō* ('to set one's mind on') appears again — their fundamental orientation is toward earthly things rather than heavenly realities.
20. The Greek *politeuma* ('citizenship, commonwealth, colony') is loaded for Philippian readers. Philippi was a Roman colony whose citizens held Roman citizenship and governed themselves by Roman law even while living far from Rome. Paul says believers are a colony of heaven — they live on earth but their governing allegiance, legal identity, and ultimate homeland are heavenly. The verb *apekdechometha* ('we eagerly await') is used exclusively for Christ's return in Paul's letters.
21. The verb *metaschēmatisei* ('will transform, will refashion') uses the *schēma* root from 2:8 — the outward form of our humble bodies will be remade. The compound *symmorphon* ('conformed to, sharing the same form') uses the *morphē* root from 2:6-7 — our bodies will share the essential form of Christ's glorified body. The chapter that began with warnings against flesh-confidence ends with the promise that even the physical body will be glorified. The cosmic scope — 'subject all things to himself' — echoes Psalm 8:6 and 1 Corinthians 15:27-28.

21. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Psalm 8:6. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.

4

Summary: *Paul closes Philippians with pastoral exhortations, beloved promises, and gratitude. He urges Euodia and Syntyche to agree in the Lord, commands the church to rejoice always, and delivers the famous promise that 'the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus' (4:7). He provides a catalogue of virtues worthy of contemplation, declares his contentment in all circumstances through the strength of Christ (4:13), and thanks the Philippians for their generous financial support — the occasion that prompted this letter.*

What Makes This Remarkable: *This chapter contains two of the most quoted verses in the Pauline corpus: 'the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding' (v. 7) and 'I can do all things through him who strengthens me' (v. 13). The latter is frequently decontextualized as a promise of unlimited ability; in context, Paul is describing his learned capacity for contentment in both poverty and abundance. The virtue catalogue of verse 8 is remarkable for its overlap with Greco-Roman moral philosophy — Paul affirms pagan ethical vocabulary while grounding it in the gospel. The financial section (vv. 14-20) is a masterclass in gratitude without dependence, expressing deep appreciation while insisting that Paul's true sufficiency comes from God.*

Translation Friction: *The identity of the 'true companion' (gnēsie syzge, v. 3) is unknown — proposals include Luke, Silas, Epaphroditus, or even a proper name ('Syzygus'). We transliterate the options in the notes without resolving the question. The phrase 'I can do all things' (v. 13) must be read in its immediate context of financial contentment, not as a blank check for any endeavor; our notes address this common misapplication.*

Connections: *The peace of God (v. 7) connects to the 'God of peace' (v. 9) and to Christ's peace discourse in John 14:27. The virtue catalogue (v. 8) parallels Wisdom of Solomon 8:7 and broader Stoic lists. Paul's financial language of 'giving and receiving' (v. 15) uses Greco-Roman accounting terminology. The 'fragrant offering' (v. 18) echoes Genesis 8:21 and Leviticus 1:9 — the Philippians' gift is described in sacrificial terms.*

¹Therefore, my brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in this way in the Lord, my beloved. ²I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to agree in the Lord. ³Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women, for they have labored side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life. ⁴Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. ⁵Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. ⁶Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. ⁸Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable — if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise — think about these things. ⁹What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me — practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you. ¹⁰I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last you have revived your concern for me. You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity. ¹¹Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. ¹²I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. ¹³I can do all things through him who strengthens me. ¹⁴Yet you did well to share with me in my affliction. ¹⁵And you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving, except you only. ¹⁶For even in Thessalonica you dispatched once and again to my necessity. ¹⁷Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the profit that accumulates to your account. ¹⁸I have received full payment and more. I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent — a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God. ¹⁹And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. ²⁰To our God and Father be glory forever and ever.

Amen. ²¹Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brothers and sisters who are with me greet you. ²²All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household. ²³The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The warmth of Paul's language is extraordinary — five affectionate terms in one verse: beloved, longed for, joy, crown, beloved again. The *stephanos* ('crown, wreath') is the victor's garland, not a royal crown (*diadēma*) — the Philippians themselves are Paul's prize at the finish line of his apostolic race (cf. 1 Thessalonians 2:19).
2. Both names are feminine — these are women leaders in the Philippian church. The repetition of *parakalō* ('I urge') with each name gives equal weight to both, refusing to take sides. The verb *phroneō* ('to think, to have a mindset') appears again — the letter's key verb. Their disagreement apparently affected the whole congregation, warranting a public appeal.
3. The Greek *syzge* ('yokefellow, companion') may be a proper name (*Syzygus*) or a description of an unnamed colleague. The adjective *gnēsie* ('true, genuine, legitimate') would be a pun if *Syzygus* is a name ('truly named Yokefellow'). The women 'labored side by side' (*synēthlēsan*, 'contended together as athletes') with Paul — the same athletic verb used in 1:27, indicating full co-laborer status. The 'book of life' (*biblos zōēs*) is an image drawn from Exodus 32:32-33 and Daniel 12:1.
3. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Exodus 32:32-33 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
3. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Daniel 12:1 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
4. The double imperative *chairete* ('rejoice!') from a man in prison is the letter's climactic command. The word *pantote* ('always') makes joy a non-negotiable posture, not dependent on favorable circumstances. The deliberate repetition — 'again I will say' — emphasizes that this is not casual advice but an apostolic command.
5. The Greek *epieikes* ('gentleness, forbearance, graciousness, reasonableness') is a quality Aristotle defined as 'justice that goes beyond the letter of the law' — a willingness to yield one's strict rights for the sake of others. The brief declaration *ho kyrios engys* ('the Lord is near') can mean temporal proximity (Christ's return is imminent) or spatial proximity (the Lord is present with you). Both readings are likely intended.
6. The verb *merimnate* ('be anxious, worry') is the same word Jesus used in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 6:25-34). The antidote to anxiety is not suppression but redirection — prayer, petition, and thanksgiving. The triad of *proseuche* ('prayer,' general worship), *deēsis* ('supplication,' specific requests), and *eucharistia* ('thanksgiving') forms a complete pattern of communication with God.
7. The verb *phrouresei* ('will guard, will garrison') is a military term — God's peace stands sentry over the believer's inner life like a soldier guarding a city. For Philippians living in a Roman garrison city, this image was vivid. The peace 'surpasses all understanding' (*hyperechousa panta* noun) not because it is irrational but because it exceeds what the human mind can produce or comprehend on its own. It guards both 'hearts' (*kardias*, the seat of will and emotion) and 'minds' (*noēmata*, thoughts and purposes).
8. This virtue catalogue is remarkable for its overlap with Greek moral philosophy. The words *aretē* ('excellence, virtue') and *epainos* ('praise') are rare in Paul but common in Hellenistic ethics. Paul does not reject pagan moral insight but baptizes it — whatever is genuinely excellent in human culture is worth a Christian's contemplation. The sixfold 'whatever' (*hosa*) creates a sweeping inclusiveness: truth, honor, justice, purity, loveliness, and good repute are valued wherever they are found.
9. Four verbs of transmission — 'learned' (*emathete*), 'received' (*parelabete*, a technical term for receiving tradition), 'heard' (*ēkousate*), and 'seen' (*eidete*) — cover every mode of instruction. Paul again offers himself as a living example (cf. 3:17). The promise shifts from 'the peace of God' (v. 7) to 'the God of peace' — not merely God's gift but God's presence.
10. The verb *anethalete* ('you have revived, you have blossomed again') is a botanical term for a plant putting forth new growth after winter. Paul immediately softens any hint of reproach — they always cared but lacked opportunity (*ēkairēsthe*, 'you had no favorable occasion'). The delay in sending support was circumstantial, not attitudinal.
11. The word *autarkēs* ('content, self-sufficient') was the supreme Stoic virtue — the wise person who needs nothing external. Paul adopts the term but radically redefines it: his sufficiency comes not from inner philosophical detachment but from Christ's empowering (v. 13). The verb *emathōn* ('I have learned') indicates this contentment was not innate but acquired through experience.
12. The verb *memyēmai* ('I have been initiated, I have learned the secret') comes from the mystery religions — it means to be inducted into hidden knowledge through experience. Paul borrows the language of pagan initiation to describe his education in contentment. The four pairs — brought low/abound, full/hungry, abundance/need — cover the full spectrum of material circumstances.
13. The Greek *panta ischyō* ('I am strong for all things, I have strength for everything') in context refers to Paul's ability to endure any circumstance — poverty or abundance, hunger or plenty — not a promise of unlimited capability for any endeavor. The SBLGNT does not include 'Christ' (*Christō*), reading simply 'the one who empowers me' (*tō endynamounti me*), though Christ is clearly implied. The verb *endynamōō* ('to empower, to strengthen within') indicates that the power source is internal — Christ working within Paul — yet external in origin.

14. After declaring his self-sufficiency through Christ, Paul immediately affirms the Philippians' gift — his contentment does not make their generosity unnecessary or unappreciated. The compound *synkoinōnēsantes* ('having shared in, having partnered with') extends the *koinōnia* theme: their gift was not mere charity but co-participation in Paul's suffering.
15. Paul addresses them by name — 'Philippians' (*Philippēsiōi*) — the only letter where he does this except Galatians. The phrase *logon doseōs kai lēmpseōs* ('an account of giving and receiving') uses Greco-Roman commercial bookkeeping language. The Philippians were the sole church to establish a mutual account with Paul — they gave financial support, he gave spiritual ministry. This unique relationship sets Philippi apart from all other churches.
16. Thessalonica was Paul's next stop after Philippi (Acts 17:1). The Philippians supported him even while he was in a neighboring city — their generosity was not a one-time gesture but repeated ('once and again,' *hapax kai dis*). This is remarkable given that Philippi was likely not a wealthy congregation.
17. Paul maintains his careful balance: he values their gift not for his material benefit but for the spiritual 'profit' (*karpon*, 'fruit') it produces in their account (*logon*, 'ledger'). The commercial metaphor continues — the Philippians are building up credit in a heavenly account through their generosity.
18. The verb *apechō* ('I have received in full') was the standard commercial term for acknowledging full payment — it appeared on receipts. Paul then shifts abruptly from accounting to altar: the Philippians' gift is a fragrant offering (*osmēn euōdias*), a sacrifice (*thysian*) acceptable and pleasing to God. The phrase 'fragrant offering' echoes the Hebrew *reiaḥ niḥoach* used for offerings that please God (Genesis 8:21; Leviticus 1:9). Money sent to a prisoner becomes worship offered to God.
18. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Genesis 8:21 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
18. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Leviticus 1:9 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
19. Paul responds to their generosity with a promise: the God who received their sacrifice will supply (*plērōsei*, 'fill to the full') their every need. The measure of God's supply is 'according to his riches in glory' — not out of his riches (as if taking a portion) but according to the full standard of his wealth. The phrase 'my God' (*ho theos mou*) is warmly personal.
20. The doxology *eis tous aiōnas tōn aiōnōn* ('to the ages of the ages') is the strongest Greek expression for eternity — ages multiplied by ages. The letter that began with grace (1:2) ends with glory — the proper destination of all that God gives and all that believers offer back.
21. The greeting is to 'every saint' (*panta hagion*) — individually and without exception. Paul's companions send their own greetings, indicating a community around him even in imprisonment.
22. The phrase *hoi ek tēs Kaisaros oikias* ('those of Caesar's household') does not mean members of the imperial family but slaves and freedmen in the vast network of the emperor's administrative staff. That the gospel has penetrated even Caesar's household is a stunning demonstration of 1:12-13 — Paul's imprisonment has advanced the gospel into the heart of Roman power.
23. The SBLGNT reads 'with your spirit' (*meta tou pneumatōs hymōn*) rather than the Textus Receptus 'with you all.' The letter closes as it opened — with grace (*charis*). The singular 'spirit' (*pneumatōs*) may address the congregation as one body. The SBLGNT does not include 'Amen' at the end.