

OVERVIEW & OUTLINE

# Philippians

The evangel according to Paul

“To make known the secret of the evangel” (6:20)

**BOB EVELY**

2011.

“For our realm is inherent in the heavens, out of which we are awaiting a Saviour also, the Lord Jesus Christ, Who will transfigure the body of our humiliation, to conform it to the body of His glory, in accord with the operation which enables Him even to subject all to Himself.”

Philippians 3:20-21

*All Scriptures taken from the Concordant Literal New Testament  
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## About the Author

Paul begins by identifying himself as the writer of this letter (1:1) Let us recall the commission Paul received on the road to Damascus: *He is a choice instrument of Mine, to bear My name before both the nations and kings, besides the sons of Israel.* (Acts 9:15-16) And we know from Acts that Paul did go first to the synagogues to proclaim Christ to the Jews, and then to the Gentiles. Peter, John, James and other New Testament writers had a commission to Israel only. Paul alone was commissioned to go to the Gentiles.

We cannot assume Paul's message to the Gentiles was the same as the message proclaimed by the others unto Israel. Paul stressed that the gospel he proclaimed was not received from man, *but it came through a revelation of Jesus Christ.* (Galatians 1:11-12) If he preached the same gospel, why would he not have studied under the Twelve who had heard and observed Christ Himself during His earthly ministry? And why would Paul refer to his proclamation as "my evangel" instead of "the evangel?" (Romans 2:16; 16:25-26). Paul notes that he had been entrusted with the evangel of the Uncircumcision, and Peter had been trusted with the evangel of the Circumcision. (Galatians 2:7). He did not say that his was the evangel to the Uncircumcision; but of the Uncircumcision. It was a different message, and this can be clearly seen if we examine the details. Paul is the only one to have mentioned the rapture in 1 Thessalonians 4:13, or the expectation of the body of Christ in the celestials in Ephesians 2:6. Israels' expectation was always upon the earth, not in the celestials or heavens.

Paul was abandoned by nearly all at the end of his ministry (see 2 Timothy 1:15; 4:16; Acts 21:20). Note in the Acts passage that when Paul returned to Jerusalem he was opposed not by unbelieving Jews, but by believing Jews who were zealous for the law – a clear signal that Paul's message was different than that of the Twelve, and as a result Paul was opposed by Jewish *believers*.

Paul, in his writings, refers to a mystery that had been previously concealed, but which he was now revealing as God had instructed him. ... *His body, which is the ecclesia of which I became a dispenser, in accord with the administration of God, which is granted to me for you, **to complete the word of God** ... the **secret** which has been **concealed** from the eons and from the generations, yet now was **made manifest** to His saints ...* (Colossians 1:24-16) ... *by revelation the secret is made known to me ... the secret of the Christ, which, in other generations, is not made known to the sons of humanity ...* (Ephesians 3:3-5)

Clearly Paul was commissioned to address a group not previously addressed by the Twelve (the Gentiles), with a different message that had been revealed to him not by man but by Christ Himself.

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**Introduction: The address on the envelope of this letter**

The letter opens by identifying Paul as its author. Timothy is with him, as they send their greetings to the saints (“holy ones,” or “set-apart-ones”) in Philippi, *together with the supervisors and servants* (1:1).

The structure of the ecclesia (church) was much simpler in Paul’s day, with very few titles and a rather informal structure; unlike what the man-made church has become in the present day. Here we see two titles used of those within the ecclesia ... supervisors (from the Greek “episkopos” and often translated bishop) and servants.

**Paul’s prayer (1:3)**

Paul thanks God for the believers’ contribution to the evangel. He notes that *He Who undertakes a good work among you, will be performing it until the day of Jesus Christ ...* (1:6). God is responsible for the good work being accomplished by the believers. It is not, therefore, something the believers have simply elected to do on their own.

**Love to superabound (1:9)**

Paul prays that *love may be superabounding ...* (1:9). While there may have been love among the believers, there is a need for it to grow and superabound.

**Test the things of consequence (1:10)**

*... be testing what things are of consequence, that you may be sincere and no stumbling block ...* This is as if to say, don’t argue over lesser things, and in so doing become contentious and a stumbling block to those observing this behavior, but focus on the major things; the things of consequence.

And be *filled with the fruit of righteousness ... for the glory and laud of God* (1:11).

**Paul’s trials have advanced the evangel (1:12)**

Never one to complain or to pray for escape from his often unpleasant situations, Paul instead rejoices that his bonds have resulted in the evangel being heard *in the whole pretorium ...* where it would not have otherwise been heard. Additionally, because of Paul’s situation other brethren *are more exceedingly daring to speak the word of God fearlessly*. What an attitude! Paul is so focused on that which will bring glory to God that he is unconcerned with his own trials and afflictions, and even sees benefit in going through those trials.

**Some proclaim the evangel for lesser motives (1:18)**

Some who proclaim the evangel are seeking to cause Paul affliction in his bonds. They are perhaps finding fault with Paul, and blaming his afflictions on his behavior or perhaps his teachings. But still Paul rejoices that the evangel is being proclaimed *... by every method, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is being announced ...*

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Paul's desire is that always *Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether through life or through death.* (1:10) If Paul lives there will be *fruit from work.* And if he dies his fate will result in boldness in other believers who witness his example, just as they have been encouraged by his attitude and actions while in bondage.

Paul's preference is *the solution and to be together with Christ ...* (1:23). Here Paul is obviously making reference to the time when Christ calls the believers heavenward to be with Him (1 Thessalonians 4:13). But despite this preference, Paul acknowledges that his time in the flesh is necessary for the benefit of the believers ... *for your progress and joy of faith ...* (1:26).

#### **Walk worthily ... strive for unity (1:27)**

Paul does not threaten with punishment or issue a commandment to be observed. He instead encourages the believers to walk worthily. He pleads for there to be *unity* among the believers ... *standing firm in one spirit, one soul ...* (1:27).

#### **Those opposing the evangel (1:28)**

And they should not be *startled by those who are opposing ...* (1:28). Opposition to the proclamation of the evangel should come as no surprise, *for to you it is graciously granted, for Christ's sake, not only to be believing on Him, but to be suffering for His sake also ...* (1:29). The inference is that those who know and proclaim the evangel with Paul are able to do so because God has graciously enabled them ... and those who oppose do not know the evangel because to them it has not been graciously granted. Had God not chosen *some* to understand and to proclaim the evangel, none would do so ... *for not one is seeking out God* (Romans 3:11). So God's method, in the process of bringing all things into subjection to Himself, is to graciously grant *some* to understand and to proclaim the evangel ... to be Christ's ambassadors. And therefore it should come as no surprise when others oppose the evangel.

#### **Some specifics in walking worthily (2:1)**

Be mutually disposed (i.e. subjected to one another).

Have mutual love.

Let there be no faction among you.

Have no vanity.

Deem others as being superior to one's self.

#### **The example of Christ (2:5)**

Follow the example of Christ, Who was in the form of God ... but Who emptied Himself and took the form of a slave, and the likeness of humanity, and Who humbled Himself and was obedient even unto death. And as a result, God exalted Christ and gave Him a name above all names, that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow and every tongue acclaim that He is Lord.

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**Carry your own salvation into effect (2:12)**

... *with fear and trembling, be carrying your own salvation into effect, for it is God Who is operating in you to will as well as to work for the sake of his delight.* It is not that salvation is somehow earned by works. As a matter of fact it is made clear here that when one desires to work for God, it is because God is operating in that person ... not because the person has decided independently to work for God. Salvation has been graciously given by God as a gift, lest any should boast. And as a result of that salvation, Paul now encourages the believer to manifest the effects of God's work, through works for the glorification of God instead of self.

If it is God working in me that causes me to desire good works, and if these works are not of me, why does Paul encourage good works at all? Is God not simply causing these desires and works that flow from me, without any personal desire or work on my part? Here is my understanding on this matter. Without God's work within the believer, none would desire God, or seek Him, or have any inclination toward working for Him. We would simply carry out our own selfish flesh-driven desires. God has graciously chosen to reveal the evangel to the believer, and He has graciously granted to us a desire for the things of God. But there is a tension within us as we live within these bodies of flesh. While God is working within us, we still have our fleshly will at work too. Paul is encouraging the believer to set aside our fleshly will, considering ourselves as figuratively dead (as Christ literally died) and now alive in Christ ... concerned with the will and the work of God. This is Paul's encouragement to the believer ... Set aside the desires of the flesh, and focus on the desires of God as He enables you to do.

**More specifics concerning walking worthily (2:14)**

Don't murmur.

Become blameless.

Become children of God.

Be flawless in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation.

Be luminaries (lights) in the world.

**Plans to come to Philippi (2:19)**

Paul has confidence in the Lord that he will be able to come in person to Philippi (2:24), but until then he expects to send Timothy ... who is sensitive, and cares about the concerns of the believers in Philippi; while others *are seeking that which is their own, not that which is Christ Jesus* (2:21). Timothy *slaves* with Paul for the evangel.

For the immediate, Epaphroditus is sent (perhaps to deliver Paul's letter to Philippi). Epaphroditus is described as Paul's brother, fellow worker, fellow soldier, apostle and minister (2:25). He has been infirm, *but God is merciful to him.*

**Rejoice, and beware of evil workers (3:1)**

*Rejoice in the Lord.*

Beware of *evil workers* and *the maimcision* (3:2). Here Paul interjects a play on words. There are those that are circumcised as to the flesh, but they are not the true Circumcision ... and Paul refers to them as the *maimcision* instead of the *circumcision*.

*We are the circumcision who are offering divine service in the spirit of God, and are glorying in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in flesh* (3:3). Here, then, is what the evil workers are guilty of, and what Paul is warning of; confidence in the flesh instead of confidence in God.

Paul goes on to show that he would have every right to be confident in the flesh. He was circumcised, an Israelite of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews, a Pharisee, zealous, and a keeper of the law. But all of this Paul forfeits and considers refuse because of Christ (3:8). Why? Because righteousness is not out of law (which those dependent on the flesh were saying), but is from God ... for faith to know Christ and the power of His resurrection (not possible for those dependent on the flesh).

Unlike those who have confidence in the flesh, Paul is conforming to Christ's death (death of the flesh) so as to somehow attain to the resurrection ... although he readily admits that he has not yet obtained that goal or is yet perfected. Still, he is pursuing for the prize of God's calling (3:14). The mature are likewise disposed as is Paul (3:15), and for those not likewise disposed in any matter God will reveal this to them. (Is this not the purpose of faithfully proclaiming the evangel?)

And *in what we outstrip others* (i.e. we have an understanding that others do not yet have) *there is to be a mutual disposition to be observing the elements by the same rule* (3:16). That is to say, it is possible to live amongst those that lack a full understanding while agreeing on the "elements" or basics. We faithfully proclaim the evangel as we are called to do, without lauding it over those that do not yet understand.

### **Has the Body of Christ replaced Israel as the Circumcision?**

If Paul is saying that those who are confident in their fleshly circumcision are really the maimcision, and we (Paul's audience in Philippi) are the true circumcision, does this mean that everything promised to Israel in the past now belongs to the Body of Christ?

*... callousness, in part, on Israel has come, until the complement of the nations may be entering. And thus all Israel shall be saved, according as it is written, Arriving out of Zion shall be the Rescuer. He will be turning away irreverence from Jacob. And this is My covenant with them whenever I should be eliminating their sins.* (Romans 11:25-27)

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So Israel's turning away, or callousness, is only temporary. And while those of Israel that have confidence in their fleshly circumcision are deemed to be the maimcision, this is not a permanent condition. Ultimately Israel as a people will be restored as the prophets have said; they will not be rejected forever with another people-group taking their place.

In the Philippian context Paul is not saying that Israel (the Circumcision) has been replaced by the Uncircumcision. He is obviously speaking figuratively in terms of the Body of Christ being the circumcision. Clearly if Paul was saying that the Circumcision was literally being replaced by the Body of Christ, this would be contrary to Paul's statement in Romans 11, and it would be contrary to the words of the Prophets when they speak of Israel's restoration (not replacement).

### **Become imitators (3:17)**

*Become imitators together of me, and be noting those who are walking thus, according as you have us for a model ...It is one thing to be told how we are to live, but much easier to grasp when we have a model; like Paul and others who serve as examples.*

### **Enemies of the cross (3:18)**

There are many who walk as enemies of the cross, whose end is destruction, whose god is their bowels (or their self-absorbed will) and who are disposed to things terrestrial as opposed to things spiritual. A study of the word *apoleia* in the Greek (*destruction*) reveals that the meaning is a loss of life, either in this age or in the age to come. Destruction is not a permanent condition; it is a "save-able" condition, as demonstrated in Luke 19:10 where we read that the Son of Mankind came to seek and to save the *lost* (same Greek as *destroyed*).

Note the word *god* in this passage. God (*theos* in the Greek) means "subjector." God the Father is the ultimate Subjector, for one day all things will be brought into subjection to Him (2 Corinthians 15:28). In this present era, and in Paul's era, all things have not yet been brought into subjection to God the Father, and there are other gods operative that many are subjected to. Satan is described as the god of this eon (2 Corinthians 4:4). In this Philippians passage we see that some are subjected to their own flesh, which subjects them through the dominance of fleshly desire. There are many "subjectors" at work, but God calls for all to be subjected to Him. And through the work of Christ (The One completing the all in all – Ephesians 1:23 and 1 Corinthians 15:25-28), and through the faithful ambassadorship of the Body of Christ (The complement of the One completing the all in all – Ephesians 1:23), one day there will be but one Subjector operative; when all things are subjected to God the Father, that He becomes all in all (1 Corinthians 15:28).

### **Your realm is not terrestrial, but in the heavens (3:20)**

Whereas many are currently disposed to (or subjected to) terrestrial things, Paul reminds the believer that their realm *is inherent in the heavens, out of which we are awaiting a Saviour also, the Lord Jesus Christ, Who will*

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*transfigure the body of our humiliation, to conform it to the body of his glory, in accord with the operation which enables Him even to subject all to Himself* (3:20-21). We are reminded of Christ's "transfiguration" during His earthly ministry, which was a demonstration of His glorified condition that was to come. Likewise we, too, will one day be "transfigured" from these fleshly bodies of humiliation to a glorified body (see 1 Corinthians 15:42-55).

And in this passage we also see God's intent to bring all things into subjection to Himself. We see this being realized at the end of the eons, in 1 Corinthians 15:20-28.

#### **Being mutually disposed (4:1)**

Paul calls for the believers to *stand firm in the Lord*. He has provided instructions and served as a model.

Paul calls upon two individuals (Euodia and Syntyche) to be *mutually disposed in the Lord*, or mutually subjected and in unity. He calls upon the believers to help them. Always Paul calls for unity, and for believers to be subjected to God and to the things of God, and to be subjected to one another (see Ephesians 5:21 – 6:9 where Paul talks much of this mutual subjection and provides examples from various kinds of relationships).

#### **Rejoice, pray and give thanks always (4:4)**

The believer is to rejoice in the Lord always, and to be lenient with others.

And the believer is not to worry, but in everything to pray, give thanks, and let requests be made known to God. And the peace of God will garrison hearts, regardless of the frame of mind.

#### **The focus of the believer (4:8)**

The focus should be on that which is true, grave (sincere), just, pure, agreeable and renowned (good). Again, as to Paul's example, *What you learned also, and accepted and hear and perceived in me, these be putting into practice ...* (4:9).

#### **Contentment (4:10)**

*I learned to be content in that in which I am.*

Whether humbled or superabounding!  
Whether satisfied or hungering!  
Whether superabounding or in want!

*For all am I strong in Him Who is invigorating me – Christ!* (4:13).

#### **Contributions (4:14)**

Paul notes the ideal way in which the Philippians contributed to the work of the evangel. In the early days of Paul's ministry, it was only the Philippians that contributed to his need. This giving Paul describes as *an odor fragrant, a*

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*sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God ... drawing a parallel between Old Testament sacrifices and making contributions toward the advancement of the evangel. Now my God shall be filling your every need in accord with His riches ... (4:19).*

**Greetings (4:21)**

Paul closes with greetings from all the saints, *especially those of Caesar's house* where he is imprisoned.

EPILOGUE.

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Philippians focuses primarily upon behavior within the body of Christ. In light of opposition and affliction Paul encourages the believer to:

- ✓ *Be walking worthily*
- ✓ *Have mutual love that superabounds*
- ✓ *Seek unity*
- ✓ *Seek for the advancement of the evangel*
- ✓ *Be luminaries in the world*
- ✓ *Be mutually disposed (subjected) to one another*
- ✓ *Give thanks and pray always, in all circumstances*
- ✓ *Focus on the things of God, and not the terrestrial (things of this world)*
- ✓ *Be content*

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