

EPISTLE OF PAUL TO THE PHILIPPIANS

Approximate date: 61 C.E.

Time period: first imprisonment of Paul

Author: the Apostle Paul

Location of author: Rome (majority view), Ephesus or Caesarea (minority view)

Target audience and their location: largely non-Jewish Believers in Philippi

The letter to the Philippians is commonly classified among the Prison Epistles (also including Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon). Genuine Pauline authorship of Philippians has not been substantially challenged by either conservatives or liberals, per the many personal references witnessed in this letter (even though the latter may argue that some sections of Philippians are non-Pauline, or that the letter has been strung together from various fragments of other writings by Paul to the Philippians).¹ Paul composes this letter from prison (1:13-14), even though it is debated where Paul was imprisoned when Philippians was written. Largely, Philippians is a letter of personal thanks, as the Philippian congregation of Believers helped support Paul financially (4:15-20; cf. 2 Corinthians 11:7-9). The great advantage, of a letter like Philippians, is that there is no detection of a major crisis, problem, or false teaching that has erupted. Philippians is a letter of thanks and appreciation from the Apostle Paul to some of his closest friends,² who have always been kind and courteous to him.

The city of Philippi was named after King Philip II of Macedon, the father of Alexander the Great. It was the place of a decisive battle in 42 B.C.E. between the Second Triumvirate of Octavian, Antony, and Lepidus against the Roman Republicans. The victory of Octavian resulted in the city being made a Roman military colony. The people of Philippi were chiefly Roman, and many retired military personnel resided there. "Phillipi had been

thoroughly colonized by the Romans after 30 B.C., but the city was still more Greek in culture than Roman" (*NIDB*).³ Philippi, as a Roman colony, would be administered not that much differently than Rome itself. Philippi did not have a large enough Jewish presence to warrant a synagogue. "[E]vidently, because of the strong Roman consciousness of the citizens, the Jews were not allowed to have a synagogue within the city walls, so they had only a place of prayer outside the west gate at a river (Acts 16:13)" (*ISBE*),⁴ which was the first place Paul would have gone when evangelizing. Philippi was the first European congregation established by Paul (Acts 16:11-40).⁵ Being aware of the high Roman patriotism of the city of Philippi, can certainly unlock some difficult statements that Paul makes in his letter (cf. 1:27; 3:20).

The traditional view of the composition of Philippians is that this letter was written by Paul from Rome in about 61. C.E., when the Apostle was under house arrest (Acts 28:30), possibly getting ready to go to trial or final sentencing (cf. 1:7, 13, 17). This view went largely unchallenged until the early Twentieth Century, when some examiners began to suggest that the letter may have been written from Ephesus at a slightly earlier date. The principal reason in support of this view is that Ephesus and Philippi were geographically closer than Ephesus and Rome. At the same time, when witnessing the presence of terms like praetorium (1:13) or Caesar's household (4:22), this would lend some strong support for a Roman imprisonment, although these terms could also have been used in any city in the Empire where there was an imperial garrison and administrative staff.⁶ Whether or not Rome or Ephesus was the composition locus of the

³ Lorman M. Petersen, "Philippians, Letter to the," in *NIDB*, 782; cf. Hawthorne, "Philippians, Letter to the," in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, pp 707-708; Wanamaker, "Philippians," in *ECB*, 1394.

⁴ B. Reicke, "Philippians, Epistle to the," in *ISBE*, 3:837.

⁵ Cf. Petersen, "Philippians, Letter to the," in *NIDB*, 781; Hawthorne, "Philippians, Letter to the," in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, 708.

⁶ G.S. Duncan, "Philippians, Letter to the," in *IDB*, 3:790; Reicke, "Philippians, Epistle to the," in *ISBE*, 3:839.

¹ Cf. Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, pp 555-559; John T. Fitzgerald, "Philippians, Epistle to the," in *ABD*, 5:319-322; G.F. Hawthorne, "Philippians, Letter to the," in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, 709; Carolyn Osiek, "Philippians, Letter to the," in *EDB*, 1049; Charles A. Wanamaker, "Philippians," in *ECB*, 1394.

² Cf. Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, pp 541-543.

letter does not affect its overall theology.⁷ Some other examiners of Philippians consider Caesarea to be the letter's place of origin. Rome, however, is still generally regarded as the default choice for the letter's place of origin.⁸

What cannot be explained, of course, is why there would be some in the Messianic community today who would think that Paul wrote his letter to the Philippians in Hebrew or Aramaic. The Jewish community in Philippi at the time seems to be miniscule at best. The largely Greek and Roman audience that Paul writes to in Philippians would have had no difficulty understanding Greek, the international language of business and commerce in the Eastern Mediterranean. Yet, a written Greek origin for Philippians does not at all discount the Tanach intertextuality seen in the letter. It is also true that the hymn of Philippians 2:5-11 bears some Semitic rhythms,⁹ a good indication that Paul has imported a piece used by the early Believers, into his composition.

On the whole, the theology of Philippians is not very complicated, as there is seldom a negative rebuke in this letter, although the message of Philippians is very rich. Paul thanks the Philippians for sending him a financial gift (1:5; 4:10-19), he encourages the Philippians to rejoice in the face of their circumstances (1:27-30; 4:4), he wants the Philippians to be unified (2:1-11; 4:2-5). Paul writes that he is sending Timothy and Epaphroditus to them to instruct them (2:19-20). The *Carmen Christi* hymn of Philippians 2:5-11 is one of the most important parts of the epistle, as it has helped inform theologians and examiners as to the pre-existence of Yeshua, His Incarnation and service for humankind, and His exaltation as LORD (cf. Isaiah 45:23).¹⁰

While writing to an almost entirely non-Jewish audience in Philippians, the Apostle Paul strongly affirms his own Jewishness. He testifies that he was "circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee" (3:5, NASU). But he also testifies of the grand superiority of Yeshua over his human pedigree and achievements: "But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Messiah" (3:7, NASU). While Paul does not discount his Jewish upbringing, it is inferior to him knowing Yeshua as his Lord. Did Paul write this because there were many retired Roman soldiers in Philippi, who might think that their

military careers were superior to knowing the Jewish Messiah? Thankfully, Paul sent Timothy and Epaphroditus to Philippi to instruct the Philippian Believers in what they needed to know (2:19, 25). The Jewish character of Paul is certainly present in Philippians, but he writes very carefully to a unique non-Jewish audience in Philippi.

There are some unanswered questions that expositors have not been able to fully answer, regarding Paul's warning to the Philippians, "Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision" (3:2, NASU) or "those who mutilate the flesh" (RSV). Who are the dogs? Who are those who promote a false circumcision? There is discussion as to whether or not these people would ever even encounter the Philippians, and if so, these remarks would be only a warning to the Philippians that they could show up. Among a spectrum of interpreters, some favor Judaizers/Influencers who advocated non-Jewish Believers being circumcised as proselytes, some favor those who adhered to proto- or incipient-Gnostic beliefs, and others favor some kind of libertines who disregarded any moral authority.¹¹ Carson and Moo offer us the worthwhile summary: "The references to Jewish practices make it clear that either Jewish opponents or Judaizers were involved, who may well have held to some opinions that were later taken up into the great gnostic systems."¹²

Paul's letter to the Philippians tends to be highly valued by today's evangelical Christians, on various levels. "Although not a theological treatise, Philippians does have a great deal to say about God and his ways with people, about Christ Jesus and about Christians and how they should live in this world" (Hawthorne).¹³ Those who are going through difficult times, similar to Paul in his confinement, have passages from Philippians to reflect upon and gain encouragement from. Paul's desire to depart and be with the Messiah in Heaven (1:23) has brought great comfort to those Believers facing death. Similarly, Paul's words about the resurrection and the bodies of the redeemed being transformed (3:20-21) have brought great comfort to those who have lost loved ones, knowing that Yeshua will return and the reign of Heaven will be brought to the Earth. The Apostle Paul desires to be identified with his Savior in as many areas of his own life and service as possible (3:8-11), and so should any born again Believer likewise wish to have such a close identification with the Lord Yeshua. The tenor of Philippians 2:12-13, emphasizing "work out your salvation with fear and trembling" (NASU), has borne

⁷ F. Foulkes, "Philippians," in *NBCR*, 1126.

⁸ For a summary of all options, see: Reicke, "Philippians, Epistle to the," in *ISBE*, 3:838-839; Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, pp 545-555; Fitzgerald, "Philippians, Epistle to the," in *ABD*, 5:322-323; Hawthorne, "Philippians, Letter to the," in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, 709-711; Carson and Moo, pp 503-506.

⁹ Carson and Moo, pp 499-500.

¹⁰ Reicke, "Philippians, Epistle to the," in *ISBE*, 3:840; Hawthorne, "Philippians, Letter to the," in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, pp 711-712; Carson and Moo, pp 500-503.

¹¹ Cf. Fitzgerald, "Philippians, Epistle to the," in *ABD*, 5:323; Hawthorne, "Philippians, Letter to the," in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, 711.

¹² Carson and Moo, 511.

¹³ Hawthorne, "Philippians, Letter to the," in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, 707.

much significance for those Christian theological traditions that focus on the significance of human free will.

Discussions on Christology from the *Carmen Christi* hymn of Philippians 2:5-11 are certainly quite important for any reader of Philippians. The considerable development in properly understanding the term *harpagmos* (ἄρπαγμός)¹⁴ in 2:6, which has been often rendered as “grasped,” has widely affirmed that Yeshua did not use His equality with the Father “as something to be exploited” (NRSV) or as “something to be used to his own advantage” (TNIV).¹⁵ Yeshua’s exaltedness was largely put aside for Him to serve fallen humanity, be humiliated, and be sacrificed to atone for sin. Yeshua’s exaltation at the Father’s right hand, and His integration into the Divine Identity as YHWH, are assured by the intertextual allusion to Isaiah 45:20-23. Of particular interest to examiners should be the connections that Hawthorne has detected between Philippians 2:5-11 and John 13:3-17, in how “an incident from the life of Christ...provides an almost perfect model for the movement of the Christ hymn of Philippians 2.”¹⁶

Today’s Messianic movement has a somewhat uncertain relationship with the Epistle to the Philippians. There are struggles among many Messianic Believers, who are unable to fully focus on Yeshua the Messiah as the center of their spiritual identity. Statements which appear to be negative about Judaism and the Torah tend to be overlooked (3:8-9), and are not carefully analyzed for what they would have meant to the largely Roman Philippians. If the Apostle Paul could think of his Jewish pedigree and achievements as effectively being “worthless” in view of Yeshua, by extension this meant that any Roman Philippian achievements were “less than worthless.” There are likewise Messianic struggles over the Christological assertions from Philippians 2:5-11, as understanding the *Carmen Christi* hymn will need to play a key role in discussions our faith community has regarding Yeshua’s Divinity and humanity. Perhaps most difficult of all, though, the Epistle to the Philippians forces Messianic Believers to directly engage with First Century Greco-Roman society and issues, given the historical setting of Ancient Philippi. Paul’s letter to the Philippians, at present, may be too commonly avoided by various Messianics, in no small part due to the overstated and rather simplistic “Greek mindset” rhetoric that one finds in too many quarters. There is much room for future improvement and refinement, for our collective Messianic engagement with Philippians.

Consult the commentary *Philippians for the Practical Messianic* by J.K. McKee for a more detailed examination of Philippians.

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¹⁴ “*someh. to which one can claim or assert title by gripping or grasping, someh. claimed*” (*BDAG*, 133); “probably, as not forcefully retaining something for one’s own advantage” (*BibleWorks 9.0: Friberg Lexicon*).

¹⁵ Cf. Carson and Moo, pp 499, 501.

¹⁶ Hawthorne, “Philippians, Letter to the,” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, 712.

1

Salutation

¹ Paul and Timothy, servants of Messiah Yeshua, to all the holy ones in Messiah Yeshua who are in Philippi, with the overseers and deacons:

² Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Yeshua the Messiah.

³ I thank my God in all my remembrance of you,

⁴ always in every supplication of mine for you all, making my supplication with joy,

⁵ for your participation in the good news from the first day until now.

⁶ I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Yeshua the Messiah,

⁷ just as it is right for me to think this way about you all, because I have you in my heart, since both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the good news, you all are partakers of grace with me.

⁸ For God is my witness, how I long for you all with the affection of Messiah Yeshua.

⁹ And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and all discernment,

¹⁰ so that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense unto the day of Messiah;

¹¹ having been filled with the fruit of righteousness, which *comes* through Yeshua the Messiah, to the glory and praise of God.

To Me to Live is Messiah

¹² Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the things *which have happened* to me have come, rather, to the progress of the good news,

¹³ so that my imprisonment in *the cause of* Messiah has become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard, and to all the rest,

¹⁴ and that most of the brothers and sisters, having been made confident in the Lord because of my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word of God without fear.

¹⁵ Some indeed proclaim Messiah even from envy and strife, but some also from good will;

¹⁶ the latter *do it* out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the good news;

¹⁷ the former proclaim Messiah out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, thinking to raise up affliction for me in my imprisonment.

¹⁸ What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Messiah is proclaimed; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice.

¹⁹ For I know that THIS WILL TURN OUT FOR MY SALVATION^a [Job 13:16]^b, through your supplication and the provision of the Spirit of Yeshua the Messiah,

²⁰ according to my earnest expectation and hope, that in nothing will I be put to shame, but *that* with all boldness, as always, even now, Messiah will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.

²¹ For to me to live is Messiah, and to die is gain.

²² But if *I am* to live *on* in the flesh, this *will mean* fruitful work for me; and I do not know what I will choose.

^a Grk. *sōtēria* (σωτηρία); many modern versions have "deliverance," which is an appropriate alternative rendering, often chosen on the basis of the "salvation" in view not being eternal redemption from sin, but either Paul's going to be with the Lord (1:23) or being released from prison. Of course, there are elements to one's "salvation" beyond that of just redemption from sins.

^b "This also will be my salvation, for a godless man may not come before His presence" (Job 13:16, PME).

²³ But I am hard-pressed between the two, having the desire to depart and be with Messiah, for *that* is very much better;

²⁴ yet to remain in the flesh is more necessary for your sake.

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

²⁶ that your boasting may abound in Messiah Yeshua, in me, through my coming to you again.

²⁷ Only let your manner of life be worthy of the good news of Messiah, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one soul striving together for the faith of the good news;

²⁸ and not being frightened in anything by *your* opponents—which for them is a sign of destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God.

²⁹ For to you it has been granted for the sake of Messiah, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake,

³⁰ experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear *to be* in me.

2

The Messiah's Humility

¹ Therefore if there is any encouragement in Messiah, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion,

² make my joy complete, that you be of the same mind, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.

³ Do nothing from selfish ambition or empty deceit, but in humility of mind consider one another better than himself,

⁴ each of you not *only* looking out for his own interests, but each of you also for the interests of others.

⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which was also in Messiah Yeshua,

The Carmen Christi

⁶ who, existing in the form of God^a, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited^b,

^a Grk. *en morphē Theou huparchōn* (ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων); inappropriately rendered as “was in the form of God” (RSV/NASB/NRSV/ESV), as *huparchōn* is a present active participle, best translated as “existing” (ASV/TLV), followed by “being” (KJV/NIV).

^b Grk. *ouch harpagmon hēgēsato to einai isa Theō* (οὐχ ἀρπαγμὸν ἡγήσατο τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ); the term *harpagmos* (ἀρπαγμός) is widely rendered as “a thing to be grasped” (NASU), but it can more specifically relate to “**someh. to which one can claim or assert title by gripping or grasping**” (BDAG, 133), often with some degree of violence or abuse involved. As is summarized by the *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*:

“In the Christ-hymn of Phil 2:6-11 it is said of the preexistent one (who ‘was in the form [μορφῇ] {*morphē*} of God’) that he did not ἀρπαγμὸν ἡγήσατο [*harpagmon hēgēsato*] ‘equality with God.’ The phrase under discussion must be taken as an unceremonious expression, even as a kind of slogan: take advantage of (or seek to take advantage of) something for oneself...But in what sense does this apply to ‘equality with God’ — as something which seductively offers itself as booty (*res rapienda*) or as something which the preexistent one already possesses (*res rapta*)? The better arguments favor the latter interpretation, esp. in view of the antithesis in v. 7. This would yield the most likely sense: The heavenly Christ did not believe that he should regard his position of honor, i.e., his ‘equality with God,’ as something to *take advantage of for himself, to grasp, to treat as booty*” (BibleWorks 9.0: EDNT).

Modern translations which have kept this in view, have more appropriately rendered 2:6 with: “did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited” (NRSV); “did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage” (TNIV); “did not consider equality with God as something to be used for His own advantage” (HCSB); “he did not consider being equal with God something to exploit” (Common English Bible); “did not regard his equality with God as something he ought to exploit” (Kingdom New Testament).

Appropriate paraphrased versions of 2:6 include: “For he, who had always been God by nature, did not cling to his privileges as God’s equal” (Phillips New Testament); “He had equal status with God but didn’t think so much of himself that he had to cling to the advantages of that status no matter what” (The Message).

⁷ but emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness.

⁸ And being found in appearance as a human being, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a wooden scaffold.^a

⁹ Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name,

¹⁰ that at the name of Yeshua EVERY KNEE WILL BOW [Isaiah 45:23]^b, in Heaven and on Earth and under the Earth,

¹¹ and every tongue will confess that Yeshua the Messiah is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Shining as Lights in the World

¹² So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;

¹³ for it is God who is working in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.

¹⁴ Do all things without murmuring or disputing;

¹⁵ that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world,

¹⁶ holding fast the word of life, so that I may have something to boast in the day of Messiah because I did not run in vain or labor in vain.

¹⁷ But even if I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice and rejoice with you all.

¹⁸ And in the same way, you also rejoice, and rejoice with me.

Timothy and Epaphroditus

¹⁹ But I hope in the Lord Yeshua to send Timothy to you shortly, so that I also may be cheered when I learn of your condition.

²⁰ For I have no one *else* like-minded, who will genuinely care for the things concerning you.

²¹ For they all seek after their own interests, not those of Yeshua the Messiah.

²² But you know his proven worth, that as a child with a father, *so* he served with me in the good news.

²³ Therefore I hope to send Him immediately, as soon as I see how things *will go* with me;

²⁴ and I am confident in the Lord that I myself also will be coming shortly.

²⁵ But 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;

^a Grk. noun *stauros* (σταυρός) or verb equiv. *stauroō* (σταυρόω); “to fasten to a cross, crucify” (BDAG, 941). History fully attests that criminals in the Roman Empire were crucified upon some kind of a cross. It was an extremely brutal, humiliating, and painful way to suffer and die. It was intended to serve as a public warning to others not to infuriate the Roman state:

“Under the Roman Empire, crucifixion normally included a flogging beforehand. At times the cross was only one vertical stake. Frequently, however, there was a cross-piece attached either at the top to give the shape of a ‘T’ (*crux comissa*) or just below the top, as in the form most familiar in Christian symbolism (*crux immissa*). The victims carried the cross or at least a transverse beam (*patibulum*) to the place of the execution, where they were stripped and bound or nailed to the beam, raised up, and seated on a *sedile* or small wooden peg in the upright beam. Ropes bound the shoulders or torso to the cross. The feet or heels of the victims were bound or nailed to the upright stake. As crucifixion damaged no vital organs, death could come slowly, sometimes after several days of atrocious pain” (Gerald G. O’Collins, “Crucifixion,” in *ABD*, 1:1208-1209).

A Messianic version the CJB often uses an alternative like “execution-stake,” instead of the more traditional “cross” for *stauros*, some of which is intended to counter traditional Jewish hostility to the sign of the cross. A Messianic version like the TLV, however, will frequently use the traditional “cross” for *stauros*, although it may also use “execution-stake” as well. The PME uses the new alternative, “wooden scaffold.”

^b “Declare and set forth *your case*; indeed, let them consult together. Who has announced this from of old? Who has long since declared it? Is it not I, YHWH? And there is no other God besides Me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none except Me. Turn to Me, and be saved, all the ends of the Earth; for I am God, and there is no other. **I have sworn by Myself, the word has gone forth from My mouth in righteousness and will not turn back, that to Me every knee will bow, every tongue will swear allegiance.** They will say of Me, ‘Only in YHWH is righteousness and strength.’ To Him *people* will come, and all who were angry at Him shall be put to shame” (Isaiah 45:21-24, PME).

²⁶ since he has been longing for you all, and has been distressed, because you heard that he was sick.

²⁷ For indeed he was sick, nearly to death, but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, so that I might not have sorrow upon sorrow.

²⁸ Therefore I have sent him quite eagerly, so that when you see him again you may rejoice, and that I may be less anxious.

²⁹ Receive him then in the Lord with all joy, and hold such people in honor;

³⁰ because for the work of Messiah he came close to death, risking his life to complete that which was lacking in your service to me.

3

The True Righteousness

¹ Finally, my brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you is indeed not troublesome, and for you it is a safeguard.

² Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the mutilation

³ for we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Messiah Yeshua and have no confidence in the flesh,

⁴ though I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else thinks to have confidence in the flesh, I far more:

⁵ circumcised the eighth day, of the race of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Torah^a, a Pharisee;

⁶ as to zeal, persecuting the assembly; as to the righteousness which is in the Torah^b, found blameless.

⁷ But whatever things were gain to me, these have I counted as loss for the sake of Messiah.

⁸ But even more so, I count all things to be loss for the surpassing value of the knowledge of Messiah Yeshua my Lord, for whom I suffered the loss of all things, and count them but refuse in order that I may gain Messiah,

⁹ and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own from the Torah, but that which is through the faithfulness of Messiah^c, the righteousness which is from God on the basis of faith,

¹⁰ that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, becoming conformed to His death;

¹¹ if somehow I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Pressing toward the Mark

¹² Not that I have already obtained *it*, or have already become perfect, but I press on if indeed I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Messiah Yeshua.

¹³ Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have laid hold of *it*; but one thing *I do*: forgetting the things which are behind and straining forward to the things which are before,

¹⁴ I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward calling of God in Messiah Yeshua.

^a Grk. *kata nomon* (κατὰ νόμον); “according to [the] law” (Brown and Comfort, 691); “in regard to the law” (NIV).

^b Grk. *en nomō* (ἐν νόμῳ); best rendered with “in the l/Law” (ASV/NASU/HCSB), followed by “based on the law” (TNIV); poorly rendered as “under the law” (RSV/NRSV/ESV/Kingdom New Testament); value judgments are present in renderings like “legalistic righteousness” (NIV) or “legalism” (CJB).

^c Grk. *dia pisteōs Christou* (διὰ πίστεως Χριστοῦ); the rendering “through the faithfulness of Messiah” treats the genitive clause as subjective (cf. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, 115); it has been more traditionally approached as an objective genitive: “through faith in Christ” (NASU).

The subjective “faithfulness” is employed to represent the Son’s willful obedience to the Father, to be submissive to die for the sins of humanity.

¹⁵ Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, be thus minded; and if in anything you are otherwise minded, this also God will reveal to you;

¹⁶ however, to what we have attained, let us walk by that same *rule*.

¹⁷ Brothers and sisters, join in imitating me, and observe those who are thus walking according to the example you have in us.

¹⁸ For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, *that they are* the enemies of the wooden scaffold of Messiah,

¹⁹ whose end is destruction, whose god is the belly, and *whose* glory is in their shame, who set their minds on Earthly things.

²⁰ For our citizenship is in Heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Yeshua the Messiah;

²¹ who will transform the body of our humiliation, *that it may be* conformed to the body of His glory, according to the working of the power He has even to subject all things to Himself.

4

¹ Therefore, my brothers and sisters—beloved and longed for, my joy and crown—in this way stand firm in the Lord, my beloved.

Exhortations

² I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche, to be of the same mind in the Lord.

³ Yes, and I ask you, true yokefellow^a, help these women, for they contended together with me in the good news, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice!

⁵ Let your forbearance be known to all people. The Lord is at hand.

⁶ Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your thoughts in Messiah Yeshua.

⁸ Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever things are true, whatever things are honorable, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good repute, if there is any virtue and if there be any praise, think about these things.

⁹ The things which you have both learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things; and the God of peace will be with you.

Acknowledgment of the Philippians' Gift

¹⁰ But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at last you have revived your concern for me; in which you did indeed have concern *before*, but you lacked opportunity.

¹¹ Not that I speak in regard to lack; for I have learned, in whatever state I am, to be content.

¹² I know how to be humbled, 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 abound and to be in need.

¹³ I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.

¹⁴ Nevertheless, you have done well to share *with me* in my affliction.

^a Grk. *gnēsie suzugo* (γνήσιου σύζυγε); also rendered as “true companion” (NASU/ESV); the CJB renders it with the proper name “Syzgyus.”

¹⁵ And you yourselves also know, Philippians, that in the beginning of the good news, when I departed from Macedonia, no assembly shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you only;

¹⁶ for even in Thessalonica you sent *me help* once and again for my need.

¹⁷ Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your account.

¹⁸ But I have all things and I abound, I have been filled, having received from Epaphroditus the things *that came* from you, a fragrant aroma^a, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God.

¹⁹ And my God will supply every need of yours according to His riches in glory in Messiah Yeshua.

²⁰ Now to our God and Father *be* the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Final Greetings

²¹ Greet every holy one in Messiah Yeshua. The brothers and sisters who are with me greet you.

²² All the holy ones greet you, especially those who are of Caesar's household.

²³ The grace of the Lord Yeshua the Messiah *be* with your spirit.

^a The CJB has bolded "a fragrant aroma" for 4:18, noting a possible allusion to Genesis 8:21; Exodus 29:18:

"*ADONAI* smelled the sweet aroma, and *ADONAI* said in his heart, 'I will never again curse the ground because of humankind, since the imaginings of a person's heart are evil from his youth; nor will I ever again destroy all living things, as I have done'" (Genesis 8:21, CJB).

"Then offer up the whole ram in smoke on the altar. It is a burnt offering for *ADONAI*, a pleasing aroma, an offering made to *ADONAI* by fire" (Exodus 29:18, CJB).