

PHILIPPIANS

Page

2	Acts 16: 1-40, Acts 20: 1-6
3	Phil 1: 1-11
4	Phil 1: 12-13
5	Phil 1: 14-18
6	Phil 1: 19-21
7	Phil 1: 22-30
8	Phil 2: 1-5
9	Phil 2: 6-16
19	Phil 2: 17-30
11	Phil 3: 1-8
12	Phil 3: 9-21
13	Phil 4: 1-9
14	Phil 4: 10-23

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Life Application (NIV) Bible; Tyndale's New Testament Commentary on
Philippians; William Barclay's Daily Study Bible Series on Philippians,
Colossians, and Thessalonians; A Translators Handbook on Paul's Letter
to the Philippians; and Gene Getz's Pressing On When You'd Rather Turn
Back study in Philippians.

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page is included.

This work is dedicated to Sheila Smith, my wife.

William S. Smith

BACKGROUND: Philippi sits at a pass that is between Asia and Europe. This made it important both militarily and commercially. According to Barclay the area had a lot of gold and silver mines which had been played out long before Paul's arrival. Paul wrote the Philippian letter while he was in jail. Many believe that this was from the jail in Rome.

Acts 16: 1-12

Before we start our study of Paul's letter to the Philippians, let's see what we learn about Philippi from Acts. Paul first visited Philippi on his 2nd missionary journey. Timothy had just joined him (in Derbe). The Holy Spirit prevented them from going into Asia so they went to Troas where Paul had a vision of a man from Macedonia asking Paul to come there. They sailed across and immediately went to Philippi, which Luke describes as a Roman colony and a leading city in its district (or area) of Macedonia. Some people like to speculate whether Luke's home town was Philippi. Luke had joined Paul in Troas, and possibly Luke helped influence Paul's decision to go to Philippi in answering the Macedonian call. Of course, it's equally possible that Philippi was simply the best logical choice of a starting point in Macedonia based on their current Troas location. Notice the mention that Philippi was a Roman colony. This was important as Roman colonies were thought of as being a physical part of Italy, not just part of the Roman Empire. They followed Roman law and Roman ways. Colonies were usually settled by retired soldiers who had been granted citizenship.

Acts 16: 13-40

This portion of Acts records Paul's evangelistic efforts in Philippi. We are told of three incidents. First, the conversion of Lydia and her household. Lydia was a dealer in purple cloth and was probably quite well to do. The 2nd incident involves the slave girl (no conversion recorded) which leads to Paul's and Silas' beating and arrest. Note the charge ("Jews ...throwing our city into an uproar by advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice.") Can you see how this relates to Philippi's status as a Roman colony? The 3rd incident is the conversion of the jailer (who was probably a Roman civil servant) and his household. We see all three social stratospheres: rich, poor, and middle class. I suspect this all had a great impact on Timothy, as it was his first missionary experience. Again, imagine the impact of the town officials upon hearing that they (a Roman colony) had just beaten Paul, a Roman citizen.

Acts 20:1-6

When several of the men accompanying Paul go on to Troas, Paul and Luke stay on at Philippi until after the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Why did Paul stay there? Because either Paul or Luke (or both) wanted to stay there. Paul had a special relationship with the Philippians, who on several occasions (maybe regularly) provided support to Paul. (see Philippians 4:16 and 2 Corinthians 11:9). They also sent Epaphroditus to Paul while Paul was in prison. Paul mentions Epaphroditus in his Philippian letter.

Phil 1: 1-2

While this is a fairly standard opening for a letter, we can see three things: First, Paul is including Timothy in the opening. Possibly Timothy was acting as Paul's scribe, but I personally believe that Paul did this because he would be sending Timothy to them, and was establishing Timothy's authority. Second, Paul describes himself (and Timothy) as "servants of Jesus Christ". He doesn't describe himself as an Apostle. Timothy would not be described as an Apostle, so Paul may have wanted to avoid giving himself a title that Timothy wouldn't share. Also, Paul's authority as an Apostle has not been challenged by the Philippians. Servants has two connotations. They are servants of Jesus, acting on his behalf and acknowledging that they are "owned" by Jesus who has purchased them (and us) by his sacrifice on the cross. As a Jewish rabbi, Paul may also be thinking of the Old Testament people who were servants of God and highly respected as such. Finally, or third, Paul addresses the letter to the "saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi together with the overseers and deacons". The overseers and deacons, along with all of the church members at Philippi were part of the "saints ...at Philippi". Why did Paul mention the leaders? It may have been a simple courtesy, but I suspect that it was because he knew that the leaders would have been behind the gifts that he had received from the church, and he wanted to express his gratitude.

Phil 1: 3-8

Next we see the many reasons that Paul is thankful for the Philippians. Can you see the personal relationship that Paul has with them? Look through this section and see how many examples you can find. Here are a few: "I thank God every time I remember you". "I pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now". "I have you in my heart". "I long for all of you". What a relationship he had with them. It was a relationship that started from the very first and continued through the years. Acts tells us that Paul was only able to stay a short time at Philippi. But when he went on to Thessalonica the Philippians sent him aid "again and again" (Philippians 4:16).

Phil 1: 9-11

In all the stories about wishes, whether they be granted by genies, fairies, or leprechauns, the wishes are either self centered (things for me) or they are for others. But even when they are for others, they are for temporary things such as wealth, health, and happiness. Here we see Paul's prayer for the Philippians. What were some of the things that he prayed for? Did he pray for himself or for the Philippians? Did he pray for temporary earthly things for them, or did he pray for things that would lead them to an eternal life with the Father? Why do you think that Paul includes both love and knowledge? What happens if you have one without the other?

What are things that you pray for, and who are the people that you pray for? What personal relationships do you have?

Phil 1: 12

The Philippians were concerned about Paul, and had sent Epaphroditus to Paul to deliver their gift and to assist him. If I were in under guard I would not be as cheerful as Paul. Rather than tell them of his problems, Paul wants them to know that as a result of all that has happened to him the gospel is being advanced. It's true of many things in life that we can see past the pain to the good if the final result is a worthy one. Think of the many expectant mothers who suffer morning sickness and great (so I hear) discomfort at child birth. Yet all that is forgotten the moment they hold the new born babe in their arms.

What is it that has happened to Paul? If we are correct in placing his whereabouts at Rome, then he has been to Jerusalem where he was beaten because he was accused of teaching against the Jewish law and violating the temple by bringing a non-Jew into it and then arrested (Acts 21: 27-33); put in chains (Acts 21:29); arraigned before the Sanhedrin (Acts 22:30); made the subject of an assassination plot (Acts 23: 12-13); transferred to and placed under guard in Herod's palace in Caesarea (Acts 23: 31-35); placed on trial before Felix (Acts 24: 1-2); kept under guard there for 2 years (Acts 24: 23, 27); placed on trial before Festus, Felix's successor (Acts 24:27, 25:6); appealed to Caesar rather than be transferred back to Jerusalem (Acts 25: 9-11); shipped to Rome and shipwrecked along the way (Acts 27:1, 27:41); bitten by a poisonous snake (Acts 28:3); and finally upon arriving in Rome placed under guard while awaiting trial by Caesar (Acts 28: 16,20).

Phil 1: 13

Verse 12 ended with the statement that everything that had happened to Paul had served to advance the gospel. This happened in two ways: first Paul's guards heard the gospel message. How did they hear the gospel? While Paul was allowed visitors, he was still under guard, and most likely attached by a chain to his guard. The guard would hear Paul's conversations as he talked to his visitors about Christ. Who was the palace guard? Again, assuming that Paul wrote this from Rome, then this was the *praetorian* guards. Now, there are two ways to interpret praetorian. Either as a place or as a group of people. If a place, it would most likely be the emperor's palace or possibly a influential person's home or maybe the guard's barracks. But none of these would seem to apply, as Acts 28:30 tells us that Paul stayed in a rented house. This leaves us with a group of people, which is pretty much accepted to be the Emperor's personal guard. In Rome, they numbered about 9,000 which is one reason some people feel that Rome is the wrong choice for where Paul wrote from (9,000 being too many to say "all" heard the message). I have no problem with this myself. Over a two year period, assuming three shifts a day, many guards would have been with Paul. And his story would certainly be one talked about among the guards.

Phil 1: 14-18

The gospel was advanced in a second way. Other Christians were also speaking the word of God. It always amazes me that whenever there was persecution, the church would grow. And it's still true today. As a big coward, I would think that people would be afraid to speak up - after all look what happened to Paul when he spoke up. But it doesn't work that way. Instead, people are emboldened to make themselves heard as well. Why is this?

I think that part of it has to do with the "hero" aspect. We all are inspired by acts of bravery by others, and often respond with acts of bravery of our own. But probably more importantly, it has to do with God empowering us.

This section concludes with an interesting comparison of those that preach out of love (for God) and those that preach out of jealousy (for Paul's success). There are different thoughts as to who Paul is referring to when he talks about those preaching out of envy and rivalry and selfish ambition. Who do you think he is talking about?

Some believe that he is talking about the Jews. In attempting to counter act Paul's successes in winning people to Jesus, they attempt to show that Jesus is not the Son of God. Some listening to them may believe what they say, but others will decide they are wrong - and thus by their very preaching against Jesus they bring some people to Jesus. Others believe that Paul is talking about Christians who do believe in Jesus, but are still self-centered enough to worry about their personal popularity versus Paul's popularity. It is easy for us to put such people down, but before we do we need to examine ourselves to see if we have ever done anything similar. Has your dislike for someone colored your attitude towards successes that they may have. I can't speak for you, but I certainly have been guilty of this. I also find myself needing to consider my attitude towards certain TV evangelists. I think some of them are not really sincere, but are in it for the bucks. But only God can see what's inside of them. So, I need to leave it to God to judge them, and I need to be more like Paul - thankful that the word is being preached, regardless of the intention. As the text says, regardless of the reason for the preaching, Paul rejoices because God is being preached.

How do you feel about the music in church today? Is it too loud, too modern? Do you miss the old hymns? What do you think about the new songs? Is it too geared towards the youth or younger adults? How do we balance our personal likes and desires with the need to constantly position ourselves to preach the word? I'm sure that compromises are always possible. (Speaking of which, I once heard that a camel was a horse designed by committee).

Phil 1: 19

Paul will continue to rejoice, not only because Jesus is being preached, but also because Paul knows that he will be delivered from his current situation. How does he know this? Because of their (the Philippians) prayers and because of the Holy Spirit. Prayers are important to Paul, and they should be important to us as well. Paul often asked for prayers (see Colossians 4:3-4; 1 Thessalonians 5:25; 2 Thessalonians 3:1-2; and Philemon 1:22). Even more, he encouraged everyone to pray in general and he shared how he kept them in his prayers. Why do you think prayers are so important? Does God need our prayers to give Him power? I wonder who benefits from our prayers more - the people we pray for or ourselves as we're drawn closer to God. Here's another thought - exactly what is prayer?

What help did the Holy Spirit give Paul? What previous encounters had Paul had with the Holy Spirit? How does the Holy Spirit speak to you?

What is the deliverance that he is talking about? Is Paul talking about being freed from jail like he was in Philippi? Is he talking about being delivered from a possible death sentence? Is he talking about being delivered from fear so that he will continue to preach the word courageously? Is he talking about being delivered as in being saved? Was Paul talking about earning his salvation? I don't think he was talking about earning salvation, as Paul understood that we are only saved through Jesus Christ. We need to accept the precious gift of salvation, but we don't earn it through works. We need to hear, believe, accept, confess, be baptized, and to then live lives pleasing to God. I believe that Paul was talking about being delivered from his present circumstances. Some people would disagree and point out that the following verses show that Paul knew that death was a possible outcome facing him.

Phil 1: 20-21

Paul anticipates that he will not do anything shameful. Instead, others will see Christ through his actions and his words. When people watch you, do they see Christ? When people hear you talk, do they see Christ? What do you think Paul means when he says "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain."? I wish that I was as directed as Paul. For him, to live was Christ. Christ was the focus of everything that he did, that he talked about, that he planned about, that he focused on. I find myself often distracted by other things. How is my job going? How is my family doing? Where will I be going this summer? It's OK to be distracted, but we should keep our priorities in order, and that means that our personal relationship with God must be the number one priority in our lives. And number two priority needs to be sharing our number one priority. There is nothing wrong with the other things - as long as our priorities are kept in order. To die would be gain for Paul, because that would mean that he would be with Jesus. As Christians, this is our final abode as well.

Phil 1: 22-26

Paul is willing to stay on earth a little longer because he knows that he is needed by the Philippians. He knows that by staying, he will continue to produce “fruitful labor”. Is it wrong for us to want to stay on earth a little longer? Are we less of a Christian for such thinking?

Phil 1: 27-30

The NIV says “whatever happens...”, which would lead us to ask whatever is Paul talking about when he says “whatever”. He is either talking about whatever happens to him, or he is talking about whatever happens to them. I think he is talking about whatever happens to them.

In either case, he is saying that he wants to be proud of them - either in person seeing them in action, or in absence hearing about what they’ve done. Isn’t this the way it is with our children? We want them to behave so that we can be proud of them. We want them well behaved, rather we are looking over their shoulders, or whether we’re relying on what others tell us about them.

“Worthy of the gospel of Christ” is an interesting statement. I like the Simple English translation which says “Live as though you were worthy of the Good News.” When you hear bad news or sad news you react in a number of ways, ranging from sad to mad. But when you hear good news, you react joyfully or happily. You don’t mope around, but you almost dance a little jig. And the translation of the word Gospel is Good News. It’s good news that Christ came to die as a sacrifice for our sins, in our place.

How should we act (or conduct ourselves) that shows we have received the gospel? Paul says three things: Stand Firm, Stand Together, and Stand Courageously. And what do we Stand for? For the Gospel message which we need to share with others. But there’s more to what Paul said than just standing for the Gospel. Notice the emphasis on “one spirit” and “one man”. Now, Paul wasn’t telling them to act independently, as separate individuals. He was telling them to be unified together. Every church will have problems, and every one of us will at some time be unhappy with the decisions/direction of the church. But, we need to remember that almost all of these type things are non-salvation issues.

What was it the Philippians were facing? I think they were facing people who opposed them because they were sharing the message about Jesus. Paul said they were “going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have.” While Paul was in Philippi, he was accosted for speaking things that they (good Roman citizens) shouldn’t hear. Acts 16:20-21 says “They brought them before the magistrates and said, “These men are Jews, and are throwing our city into an uproar advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice.”

Phil 2: 1-2

If you're watching an advertisement on TV, and it starts off with "if you love chocolate...", what do you think the next thing said will be? That's right, it will be about some new product that is chocolate or chocolate favored. The advertisement assumes that you really do like chocolate. If your spouse says "if you loved me...", what do you think the next thing they say will be? Is there usually any real question about whether or not you love them? No. It's usually a lead in to asking you to do something. Well, this is the same thing really that Paul is doing here. Remember, he's writing to the Christians at Philippi, so there isn't really any question whether or not they love Jesus. The difference between what Paul is doing and what our "hypothetical" spouse was doing is that Paul is not interested in getting us to do something for him, but he is interested in getting us to do something for others. Another way to look at this is to read it this way: In the same way that you receive comfort from your relationship with Jesus, you should also be sharing that comfort with other Christians.

Paul is continuing to build on the "stand together" statement from last chapter. I like how he does this. He starts off by asking if we feel (receive) any encouragement from being united with Christ. Being united means being one with. And, if we're united with Christ, then we are united with other Christians who are also united with Christ. If we're comforted by this relationship, then shouldn't we be sharing this comfort with other Christians? As Christians, we should be concerned if we don't get any comfort, or encouragement out of our relation with Jesus. And, if we do receive it and don't share it, what does that say about our Christianity?

By the way, what do you think about Paul's statement that our being like-minded and united will make him very happy? Anyone who has grown children can tell you what a joy it is to see them all together and all getting along fine.

Phil 2: 3-5

How can we maintain or keep this unity? Paul tells us that we need to keep our attitude in check. We need to examine our motives in everything that we do. We need to ask ourselves if we're doing something out of "selfish ambition" or "vain conceit". If we can truly say that the things we do not only serve our own needs, but also meet the needs of others - then we are doing a good thing.

Was there a problem with unity in the Philippian Church? Or, was Paul addressing this topic because it was a universal problem that can affect any church. What causes disunity in churches today? What is usually at the root of such problems.

What was Jesus' attitude? What examples can you give from the gospels?

Phil 2: 6-11

Some people think that these verses were an early church hymn. Others think that they are Paul's writing about Jesus' attitude. Of course, it could be both - an early church hymn that Paul included because it fit nicely with what he was writing about. Let's take a look at it in light of verses 3-4. Can you give examples of Jesus as a servant? Can you describe Jesus' birth in terms of humility? What would a "proud" birth have looked like? None of us existed before we were born. Jesus did. Where did He exist, and who was He? If we did exist before being born, and if we had a say in who we would be and where we would be born, how many of us would have chosen being born in a stable to humble parents? Jesus put our needs before His own. Paul was telling the Philippians that they needed to put others needs before their own. What about today? How many church problems would be nonexistent if we always put the needs of others before our own?

How was Jesus' death on the cross an example of humility and servanthood? What were the results? When will "every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord"?

Phil 2: 12-13

In light of all of the above, Paul wants the Philippians (and us) to continue to obey in working out our salvation. Does this imply that we must WORK to earn salvation? No! Does it imply that we must continue to work out our salvation and not rest on our laurels and earlier decision to accept Christ as our Savior? Yes! Why does Paul use the words "fear and trembling"? What is it that we should be in fear and trembling over. Well, first I want to say that we do not need to fear not working hard enough to earn salvation. It's a gift. we don't earn it. We do good works out of gratitude to Jesus for what He did for us. We do them because we are following Jesus' example and His instructions.

Phil 2: 14-16

Do you remember Jesus' parable about the man with two sons, both of whom he asked to work in the vineyard (Matthew 21: 28-31)? Why was the first son identified as having done what his father requested? Well, in a similar way, we can agree to do something, and we can actually do it, but if we grumble and complain the whole time, what is the effect? Why do our spouses really appreciate it when we do something right away without griping or complaining; or maybe even do something without even being asked? How do/did you feel when your children did what was asked without arguing? How does this advice fit in with Paul's call for the Philippians to be united? Does this advice hold true in the work place as well as at home? What about at church? What do you think Paul meant by his reference to "stars in the universe"? When do we see the stars? What do they do for the night sky? If the Philippians followed Paul's advice, why would Paul feel that he had not run the race in vain?

Phil 2: 17-18

Several commentators view Paul's reference to himself as a drink offering in terms of a pagan or heathen drink offering. Myself, I like to see Paul's reference more in terms of the Old Testament drink offerings. There are many references to drink offerings in the Old Testament. Here are just a few taken from the book of Numbers: 6:14-15; 15:5-10; 28:4-8; and so forth. These drink offerings accompanied the regular burnt offerings. I think Paul is thinking of these when he talks about being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of the Philippians. If the Philippians followed Paul's advice outlined in the previous verses, then this would be a pleasing sacrifice to God. Several commentators instead see this as Paul considering that his death may be near at hand (related to the confinement), and his life blood being spilled. In any case, Paul would rejoice because of the acts and behavior of the Philippians.

Phil 2: 19-24

Paul now addresses his intention to send Timothy to the Philippians. Why? So that Timothy could tell the Philippians how Paul was doing, and could return to Paul to tell Paul how the Philippians were doing. Don't be misled by Paul's use of the word "soon". When I visit my mother, who lives in another state, I tell her that "I hope to see her again soon". The key is in verse 23 where Paul says "I hope, therefore, to send him as soon as I see how things go with me". The question is how soon or how long will it be before Paul finds out how things will go with him. I admit to not fully understanding this. On one hand, it seems that if Paul finds out that he will be released, then it would be immediate, and Paul would be able to accompany Timothy to Philippi. After all, it's not likely that Paul would be found "guilty" and given two more years of house arrest (jail time). But it seems reasonable that Paul expected to send Timothy before he himself would be able to go. Paul chose Timothy for three reasons: First, Timothy took or showed a "genuine interest in" the Philippians' welfare. Second, Paul says that he has no one else like Timothy. Others are more interested in their own personal goals, but Timothy puts Christ's goals ahead of his own. Third, Paul says that Timothy has supported him in the work of the gospel as a son would a father. Paul concludes with a statement that he is confident that he will soon see them himself.

Phil 2: 25-30

But meanwhile, Paul feels that he needs to send Epaphroditus back to them. Paul refers to Epaphroditus' illness. Some speculate that he was homesick. Homesickness doesn't usually lead to nearly dying, but it can lead to physical ailments. It makes more sense though to assume that Epaphroditus may have been homesick, but that he also became very physically sick. What from we don't know. In any case, Paul wants to insure that Epaphroditus is welcomed back as a hero and not as a failure when he returns, and so he writes these verses. Some people, myself included, believe that Epaphroditus delivered this letter to the Philippians. Others believe that he departed before the letter was sent.

Phil 3: 1 Paul says two things here. First, he tells his Philippian brethren to rejoice in the Lord. Second, he tells them that he doesn't mind repeating things to them, since it is for their safety. The question that arises is this: what is he repeating? Whatever answer we come up, we need to make it fit the "for your safety" thought. It may be that he is repeating his call for them to rejoice. Not only does this keep them in the right attitude, but it would help further unity. It might relate not to the rejoicing, but to the need for unity. Or, it might relate to what he is about to write about - people teaching the need to be circumcised (and to follow the Law) in order to be saved. This certainly was a problem that affected the early church, both before and after the Jerusalem Conference that dealt with the issue (Acts 15: 1-29). You might ask "when did Paul speak to the Philippians earlier about this subject that he is now repeating again?". He may have mentioned these things when he first taught them, or he may have sent earlier letters which have been lost.

Phil 3: 2 Paul now warns them about these teachers of false doctrines. He calls them three things: dogs, evil doers, and mutilators of the flesh. Let's look at each of these three things. For us today, a "dog is man's best friend". But in Paul and Jesus' time, dogs were not so well thought of. Gentiles were thought of as dogs who could not inherit heaven. Paul said that these false teachers were the dogs - not the Christian gentiles. In the Jewish way of thinking, a man earned salvation by following the law and by doing good works. Paul said that these false teachers were evil doers, not righteous doers. The Jews were chosen people who, as descendants of Abraham had their new born sons circumcised. Paul said that these false teachers thought they were saved by circumcision, but if they put all their hopes in that one act, then they were just mutilating themselves. (Actually, Paul had some fun with the Greek here. The words for circumcise and mutilate are nearly identical).

Phil 3: 3-8 No, says Paul, it is we Christians who are the true worshippers of Christ. We do not put our faith in our flesh (either heritage or personal actions). The false teachers may answer this with "but you don't have all the facts". To this Paul says "look, if anyone could claim this, it would be me. I was..." and he gives a short overview of his Jewish heritage and upbringing. If you've heard the saying "a man's man", then you can appreciate Paul's stating that he was, in fact, "a Jew's Jew". But he willingly gives up all those claims in order to claim Jesus (to know Jesus). Everything else is worthless (easily lost because it has no value) when compared to Jesus. Our righteousness doesn't come from a strict following of the law, but instead comes from our faith in Jesus.

Much of Paul's history can also be found in Acts, 2 Cor 11:22 - 12:10, and Gal 1:13 - 2:10. Acts 22:3 tells of Paul's past before conversion.

- Phil 3: 9-11 Paul continues his thought that he wants to gain Christ. He wants to be found in Christ. What does this mean? Well, if I'm found in prayer it would mean that I was praying. To be found in Christ would mean that I was a follower of Christ and acting Christ-like. Paul compares this to trying to earn righteousness by a strict following of or living by the law. Instead, our righteousness comes from knowing, claiming, and following Christ until finally our race (life on earth) is over and we attain that final resurrection from the dead..
- Phil 3: 12-14 Will we continue to sin? Yes. Why? Because we are not perfect yet. But we must continue to strive towards being more Christ-like. We can't rest on our laurels. More than that, we need to keep our focus on the future, and not let ourselves be blinded or binded by events from our past. In communications theory you learn about filters and how they can prevent someone from hearing exactly what you are saying. Their filters come into play and either filter out part of the content or they change it by affecting how it is interpreted. I believe that we need to forget about our past - we need to forgive those who have hurt us or failed us, as well as forgiving ourselves for what we've done or failed to do. In Christ Jesus we are all new creatures, born again. We need to look to the future - a future based on Jesus and our need to become more like Him. Do you believe that this is supposed to happen in an easy laid back manner? If so, go back and look at words such as "press on", "reaching", and "straining". These are heat of the race (contest) terms and the imagery speaks for itself.
- Phil 3: 15-17 Paul is not just speaking for himself. He is speaking for all mature believers. If you haven't reached this point yet yourself, don't worry as the Spirit will make it clear to you as you continue to mature. I like Paul's statement that we should live up to what we have already attained. We don't have to live a perfect life in order to get to heaven. We should try to live a perfect life because we've been given the gift of heaven. Compare this to Romans 6:1. Are they both saying the same thing? What's the difference between the two statements? Take a look at Paul's ending statement here. Who are the people that you look to for example?
- Phil 3: 18-21 There were some people, either at Philippi or who might influence the Philippians who apparently thought their Christianity was license for ungodly living. Paul refutes such ideas here, and reminds us that our true home (citizenship) is in heaven. Our minds need to be on Christ, not on earthly things. Here on earth we await Christ. Either His return or our death. Then, Christ will transform our lowly bodies. The King James Bible refers to "our vile body". As Barclay points out this is because "vile" used to simply mean valueless. Today it carries a much stronger meaning which is why most bible translations use terms such as "lowly" or "humble" bodies.

- Phil 4: 1 Therefore, or in light of all that we've just been talking about, mature Godly living is what we should all be doing. This is the way to "stand firm in the Lord".
- Phil 4: 2-3 Who were these two women? All that we really know is that they were known to the Philippians and that they had worked with Paul in the cause of the Gospel. Based on Paul's urging them to agree, and his earlier statements about unity, it would seem that the two women had fallen apart over some disagreement. Paul would like to see them reconciled. What do you think Paul is referring to when he says they worked at his side? More unknowns: who was the true yoke fellow, and who was Clement? No one really knows. The Philippians would have known.
- Phil 4: 4-5 "Rejoice" Paul says, and then he goes on to repeat it a 2nd time. Why is this "rejoicing" so important? It's a matter of attitude. If we have a spirit of rejoicing, then we will not have a spirit of contention. Would you rather talk to someone who has an attitude of rejoicing or someone who has an attitude of grouchiness? In addition to rejoicing, Paul also says that we should have a spirit of "gentleness" that is evident to all. What does he mean by "gentleness". Let's look at other translations. NIV and New King James both use "gentleness". King James uses "moderation". New American Standard uses "forebearing". Other translations use such terms as "kindness", "good sense", and "gentle spirit". Barclay explains that this word "*epieikeia*" is very difficult to translate. He explains it this way: "A man has the quality of *epieikeia* if he knows when *not* to apply the strict letter of the law, when to relax justice and introduce mercy. Who is the "all" that Paul refers to? Is it just fellow Christians or is it everyone that we come into contact with? What does Paul mean by "the Lord is near"? I personally think that the early Christians expected Jesus' return (or 2nd coming) to come within their generation's life time. As others have said, we will either see Jesus at His 2nd coming or at our death.
- Phil 4: 6-7 This is one of those verses that many people cherish. Exactly what does Paul tell us to pray to God about? Verse 6 tells us that we are to bring *everything* to God in prayer and petition. That certainly includes a lot, doesn't it? Will God give us everything that we ask for? No. If God might not give us what we want, is there any value in praying to Him about it? Yes. Why? I share with my friends, and as I share with them our relationship grows stronger. It's the same with prayers. As we spend more time in prayer, our relationship with God grows stronger.
- Phil 4: 8-9 Concentrate on the good things that we see around us. Don't spend time going over and over the bad things. Keep the good things uppermost in our minds and our spirits will be lifted. Paul exhorts the Philippians to imitate him. His actions match his words, and so should ours.

Phil 4: 10-14

Practicing what he wrote, Paul rejoices in the Lord over the support that he has received from the Philippians. It has been a while (we don't know how long) since they had sent him financial aid - hence the "at last". But, Paul goes quickly on to tell them that he is aware that they always had him in their thoughts, and he understands that they had not had the opportunity to send him aid sooner. If you're not sure whether or not Paul is talking about aid (or gifts) that the Philippians sent him, then take a quick peek ahead to verse 18. Paul wants them to understand that he is not saying all of this because he is in need. He lets them know that he has learned the secret of being content in whatever situation/condition he finds himself in, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. He has had experience with both. What is Paul's secret to being satisfied? It's always easy to be satisfied when you have everything you need - or is it? Don't we usually just want more? I remember when Sheila and I were first married. I was in the Air Force during the Viet Nam war. I was lucky, and was stationed in San Bernardino, California - about 60 miles from both our parents homes. Our budget was really close. We did manage to have a little money left over each month for one big treat - we would go down to Dairy Queen and share a banana split. Ice cream has never tasted as good as it did back in those days. We didn't have much - but we had each other and we had the Lord. That is what Paul had - he had the Lord. And because he had the Lord, Paul had the strength to do anything. But, never the less Paul appreciated the gift that the Philippians had sent him.

Phil 4: 15-20

Paul reminds them that this gift is not the first time they had helped him. Verse 15 mentions a gift given when Paul first left the Macedonia region. Verse 16 mentions multiple gifts given while Paul was in Thessalonica, and finally, verse 18 mentions the gift just received. Is Paul looking for more money from them? No - he tells them that he is "amply supplied". What do you think Paul is referring to when he says "Not that I am looking for a gift, but I am looking for what may be credited to your account."? Is he implying that the Philippians owed him and that now they have paid their debt? I don't think so. What then does he mean? I think he is saying that he is not looking for a gift, but is looking for the attitude behind the gift - an attitude that he finds present in the Philippians. God too looks beyond the gift to the heart of the giver. God doesn't want sacrifices, but obedience. God doesn't want excessive giving, but cheerful giving. This is why Paul can say the Philippians gift was a "fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God."

Phil 4: 21-23

Paul ends with greetings. We might ask who Paul had in mind when he mentioned "Caesar's household"? It could have been a reference to servants/slaves serving there, or it could have been a reference to people serving in the "civil service", or military (guards). All are possible.