

Philippians 2

**Realize that the call of God is a call to give not get
2:1-2:8**

2:1 If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy,

2:2 make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.

2:3 Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves.

2:4 Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others.

Paul had already expressed the joy that he had over the believers in Philippi (1:4). He now asks that they make his joy complete (2:2a).

In 2:1 four themes are placed side by side and form the basis for Paul's previous appeal for Christians to live as citizens worthy of the gospel (1:27 - see above discussion). 2:2b-4 gives concrete expression to what it means to walk in a way worthy of the gospel.

To put it another way, "Paul argues that if you have enjoyed a certain wealth of experience [2:1], then this precious treasure becomes a mandate to specific conduct [2:2b-4]" (Carson, 59).

What then is the experience that the apostle appeals to?

The appeal is expressed in four clauses beginning with "if": "(1) if then there is any encouragement in Christ, (2) if any consolation from love, (3) if any sharing in the Spirit, (4) if any compassion and sympathy. . ."

1) encouragement (or comfort) in Christ:

God is the source of all comfort and encouragement in times of sorrow and is a common experience to every believer.

2) consolation from love:

The thought is very similar to the first. The comfort (or, consolation) is that which comes from Christ, but might also include love from other believers. In either case, it is comfort that goes beyond normal human experience.

3) sharing in the Spirit:

The believer also has a relationship to the Holy Spirit, experiencing His gifts and benefits.

4) compassion and sympathy:

Much of the sympathy and compassion we receive is mediated through God's people.

Paul is saying this: If being a Christian has brought a sense of comfort in times of pain or loneliness, if we have felt the ministry and benefits of having a relationship to the Holy Spirit, if others in the faith have exercised love and concern for us, then we owe the same to others. If we do reciprocate in the same way we have received (being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind), it brings joy to Paul and contributes to the unity of the body and our own personal humility.

2:3 Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves.

2:4 Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others.

The type of unity that Paul desires the church to achieve can only come about if believers reject all forms of seeking self and humbly place others and their interests above their own.

"Selfish ambition" comes from the idea of a "hireling," or "one who works for pay." One man describes it, "the nature of those who cannot lift their gaze to higher things." It's the person who puts their own interests first, seeking something in return.

"Conceit" is composed of the word "glory" (*doxa, dovxa*) and forms a stark contrast to the glory Paul mentions in his gospel. In its proper perspective, glory is the fruit of the Christian's life (1:11), the result of confessing Jesus as Lord (2:11), an attribute of Christ (4:19), and will be attributed to God forever (4:20). Conceit is trying to move the glory from God to self and is not only unbecoming of a Christian but is also destructive to the body.

But in contrast to the spirit that is destructive to community life is the spirit of humility exemplified in Christ (2:6-8). It is only when one possesses true humility that they will be able to put another's interest above their own.

Verse 5 tells us that we should have the same attitude that Christ had. This attitude is described in verses 6-8. In order to understand the extent of what is being said, these verses need to be examined in some detail.

2:5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,

2:6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,

2:7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.

2:8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

(Many quotes in this section are from BB Warfield - *"The Saviour of the World: Sermons preached in the Chapel of Princeton Theological Seminary.* New York: Hodder and Stoughton, 1913)

"The one subject of the whole passage is Christ's marvelous self-sacrifice. Its one exhortation is, "Let it be this mind that is also in you." As we read through the passage we may, by contact with the full mind and heart of the apostle, learn much more than this. But let us not fail to grasp this, his chief message to us here,—that Christ Jesus, though He was God, yet cared less for His equality with God, cared less for Himself and His own things, than He did for us, and therefore gave Himself for us. . .

In *English* the word "form" can simply mean outward appearance. For example, we could speak of a statue that was made in the form of man. Though it does not possess the attributes of man (i.e. it cannot walk, think, talk, etc.), outwardly it looks like a man. However, "form" (*morphe* - μορφή) in *Greek* had a more substantial meaning than this. "Form" included external appearance, but also referred to the essential nature and attributes of the thing. "Form," in a word, is equivalent to our phrase "specific character" (BB Warfield). In other words, something said to be in the form of man would possess all the characteristics and inner nature of a human. In essence it would be human. Jesus was said to exist in the form of *God* and therefore possessed both the outward appearance (the glory- Jn. 17:5) and inward essence of *God*. "What Paul asserts then, when he says that Christ Jesus existed in the "form of *God*," is that He had all those characterizing qualities which make *God* *God*, the presence of which constitutes *God*, and in the absence of which *God* does not exist. He who is "in the form of *God*" is *God*.

Nor is it without significance that, out of the possible modes of expression open to him, Paul was led to choose just this mode of asserting the deity of our Lord. His mind in this passage was not on the bare divine essence; it was upon the divine qualities and prerogatives of Christ. It is not the abstract conception that Christ is *God* that moves us to our deepest admiration for His sublime act of self-sacrifice: but rather our concrete realization that He was all that *God* is, and had all that *God* has,—that *God*'s omnipotence was His, His infinite exaltation, His unapproachable blessedness. Therefore Paul is instinctively led to choose an expression which tells us not the bare fact that Christ was *God*, but that He was "in the form of *God*,"—that He had in full possession all those characterizing qualities which, taken together, make *God* that all-holy, perfect, all-blessed being which we call *God*. Thus the apostle prepares his readers for the great example by quickening their apprehension not only of who, but of what Christ was" (BB Warfield).

Though the Son of *God* was exalted far above all creation, He did not regard "equality with *God* something to be grasped" (2:6). That is, He did not view His position as something to be exploited or used for His own advantage; "instead of holding on to His own interrupted glory, He chose to set it aside" (Begg). As Ware says, to empty Himself means "He did not grasp or clutch onto the privileged position, rights, and prerogatives that his

full equality with God, his Father, afforded him. . . " (Ware, *The Man Christ Jesus*, 19). Instead, He "emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave, being made in the likeness of man."

"It was then in a spirit of pure unselfishness and self-sacrifice, that looked not on its own things but on the things of others, that under the force of love esteemed others more than Himself,—it was in this mind: or, in the apostle's own words, it was as not considering His essential equality with God as a precious possession, but making no account of Himself,—it was in this mind, that Christ Jesus who was before in the form of God took the form of a servant. This was the state of mind that led Him to so marvelous an act,—no compulsion from His Father, no desires for Himself, no hope of gain or fear of loss, but simple, unselfish, self-sacrificing love." (BB Warfield)

In just what sense Jesus "emptied Himself" is greatly debated. Some say that He laid aside His divine attributes, but this hardly seems possible for if He did so, He would cease to be God. Furthermore, it doesn't say He emptied something out of Himself as if in so doing He became less than God (Ware, *The Man Christ Jesus*, 19). It is more probable that "to empty Himself" is a metaphorical way of saying that He "poured out Himself, putting Himself totally at the disposal of the people" (O'Brien, 217), or "gave up all His rights" as God" (Carson, 45). In other words, though the Son of God was God and had the right to behave like God, He did not cling to those rights, but gave them up for His creation.

The way that Christ did this is described as:

taking the form of a slave,
being made in the likeness of man.

Both verbs "taking" and "being made" are modal participles, describing the mode or manner in which Jesus emptied Himself. As Ware says, "he poured Himself out by taking the form of a servant . . . He empties by adding" (Ware, *The Man Christ Jesus*, 20)

This is not saying that the Son exchanged one form (the inward essence and outward appearance) for the other; that is, it does not mean

that He gave up His "godness" (His divine nature) and became a slave instead. Rather, He added human nature and the characteristics of a servant to His divine nature.

As BB Warfield says, "There is no metamorphosis of substance asserted here: the "form of God" is not said to have been transmuted into the "form of a servant"; but He who was "in the form of God" is declared to have taken also to Himself "the form of a servant." Nor is there, on the other hand, any deceptive show of an unreal humiliation brought before us here: He took, not the appearance, mere state and circumstances, or mere work and performance, but veritably "the form of a servant,"—all those essential qualities and attributes which belong to, and constitute a being "a servant." The assumption involved the taking of an actually servile nature, as well as of a subordinate station and a servant's work. And therefore it is at once further explained in both its mode and its effects. He took the form of a servant "by coming into the likeness of men": He did not become merely a man, but by taking the form of a servant He came into a state in which He appeared as man. His humanity was real and complete: but it was not all,—He remained God in assuming humanity, and therefore only appeared as man, not became only man. And by taking the form of a servant and thus being found in fashion as a man. He became subject to obedience,—an obedience pressed so far in its humiliation that it extended even unto death, and that the shameful death of the cross. Words cannot adequately paint the depth of this humiliation. But this it was,—the taking of the form of a servant with its resultant necessity of obedience to such a bitter end,—this it was that He who was by nature in the form of God, in the full possession and use of all the divine attributes and qualities, powers and prerogatives,—was willing to do for us."

He also "emptied Himself" or "put Himself at the disposal of the people" by coming into existence in the likeness of a human. "Likeness" could mean one of two things. It could signify "equivalence" or "identity" and point to Jesus' identification with the human race (O'Brien, 225). In other words, it could mean that He became in all respects like other human beings (Heb. 4:15). On the other hand, "likeness" could speak of "similarity" or "resemblance" and imply a distinction from other humans. In the second case

it Paul would mean that though Jesus was a real human being, He was much more. He also possessed the form of God. Probably, the former idea fits the context better. The emphasis of the passage is that the eternal Son of God took the form of a servant even to the point of obedience of death on the cross.

Verse 8 describes the climax of Christ's supreme humility and obedience. He humbled Himself to the utmost limit - even death on a cross. The cross was Christ's demonstration of supreme obedience to the Father.

In summary, "the peculiarity of our present passage is only that it takes us back of Christ's earthly life and bids us imitate Him in the great act of His incarnation itself. . . . The very force of the appeal lies, in a word, in the infinite exaltation of Christ above us: and the mention of the incarnation is the apostle's reminder to us of the ineffable majesty which was by nature His to whom he would raise our admiring eyes. Paul prizes at our hearts here with the great lever of the deity of our exemplar. He calls upon us to do nothing less than to be imitators of God." (BB Warfield). Jesus' humiliation provides the extreme model for self-sacrifice and self-giving service; the type of service that Paul had been encouraging us in verses 1-4. The Son of God, above all others, has intrinsic rights because of who He is. However, He did not insist on clinging to those rights because of the benefits they would afford Him, but put the interests of creation above His own and became a servant to us. Paul said to have this attitude in yourself.

BB Warfield draws three inferences from this passage:

First, "Let us remember that it is a fundamental conception in the Christian idea of God that God is love; and that it is the fundamental dogma of the Christian religion that God so loved us that He gave Himself for us. Accordingly, the primary presupposition of our present passage is that our God was capable of, and did actually perform, this amazing act of unselfish self-sacrifice for the good of man." The marvelous truth we must never forget is that "we have a God who is capable of self-sacrifice for us."

"The second inference that we should draw from our passage consists simply in following the apostle in his application of this divine example to our

human life: a life of self-sacrificing unselfishness is the most divinely beautiful life that man can lead. He whom as our Master we have engaged to obey, whom as our Example we are pledged to imitate, is presented to us here as the great model of self-sacrificing unselfishness. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus," is the apostle's pleading. We need to note carefully, however, that it is not self-depreciation, but self-abnegation, that is thus commended to us. If we would follow Christ, we must, every one of us, not in pride but in humility, yet not in lowness but in lowliness, not degrade ourselves but forget ourselves, and seek every man not his own things but those of others."

Thirdly, we are encouraged to remember, "He who was in the form of God took such thought for us, that He made no account of Himself. Into the immeasurable calm of the divine blessedness He permitted this thought to enter, "I will die for men!" And so mighty was His love, so colossal the divine purpose to save, that He thought nothing of His divine majesty, nothing of His unsullied blessedness, nothing of His equality with God, but, absorbed in us,—our needs, our misery, our helplessness—He made no account of Himself. If this is to be our example, what limit can we set to our self-sacrifice? Let us remember that we are no longer our own but Christ's, bought with the price of His precious blood, and are henceforth to live, not for ourselves but for Him,—for Him in His creatures, serving Him in serving them. Let all thought of our dignity, our possessions, our rights, perish out of sight, when Christ's service calls to us. Let the mind be in us that was also in Him, when He took no account of Himself, but, God as He was, took the form of a servant and humbled Himself,—He who was Lord,—to lowly obedience even unto death, and that the death of the cross. In such a mind as this, where is the end of unselfishness?"

Charles Hodge in his Systematic Theology also comments on the Philippians 2:6-11 (Systematic Theology, I:514, 515):

It is said, (1.) That He "was (or existed, *ὑπάρχων*) in the form of God," i.e., was God both as to nature and manifestation. He could not be the one without being the other. The word *μορφή* may mean either the mode of manifestation, that which appears, as when it is said "the king of heaven appeared on earth *"ἐν μορφῇ ἀνθρώπου;"* or the nature or essence (*φύσις* or *ουσία*) itself. The latter view is adopted by most of

the fathers. The former, however, is more in accordance with the common usage of the word, and with the immediate context. He who existed in the form of God, took upon Him the form of a servant (μορφῆν δούλου), i.e., the real condition of a servant. (2.) He is declared to be equal with God. The ἴσα εἶναι θεῷ he did not, consider as an ἀρπαγμὸν, i.e., an act of robbery, or an unjust assumption. He was fully entitled to claim equality with God. (3.) This truly divine person assumed the fashion of a man, which is explained by saying He was found "in the likeness of men." He appeared in form, carriage, language, mode of thinking, speaking, feeling, and acting, like other men. He was not *purus putus homo*, a mere man, but "God incarnate," God manifest in the flesh. (4.) This divine person, clothed in man's nature, humbled Himself even unto death, even to the death of the cross. (5.) Therefore He (not God, or the divine nature in Christ, but the Theanthropos), is exalted above every name that is named, "that at the name of Jesus (i.e., the name of the Theanthropos, as it is He as a divine person clothed in the nature of man, who is the object of worship), every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth." This is an exhaustive amplification. It includes the whole rational creation, from the highest archangel to the weakest saint; all, all that have life acknowledge Christ to be what God alone can be, their supreme and absolute Lord. It is because Christ is and has done what is represented, that the Apostle says, in the following chapter, that He counted all things as nothing for the knowledge of Christ, and that his only desire was to be found in Him and clothed in his righteousness. This divine Redeemer is to come again, and "shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself. (3:21).

The Son's exaltation

2:9-11

2:9 Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name,

2:10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

2:11 and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

"Therefore" clearly marks the Father's decisive intervention on behalf of the Son. "Jesus' self-humbling reached the absolute depths in His most shameful death, a death on a cross. But now, by way of vindication and approval of Jesus' total self-humbling, the Father has magnificently exalted His Son to the highest station and graciously bestowed on Him the name above all other names, that is His own name, Lord (=Yahweh), along with all that gives substance and meaning to the name. In His exalted state Jesus exercises universal lordship" (O'Brien, 233).

The events listed in this verse do not suggest an order in which things occurred, that is, the Father did not first exalt Jesus then give Him a name above all others. Rather, the giving of a name is parallel to the exaltation and amplifies its meaning and nature. Jesus' new position involved universal dominion.

In ancient times names were much more than something to call someone, but they reflected the person's character. They revealed the inner being, the true nature of the individual (O'Brien, 237). When God gave Jesus a name that is above every name, He gave Him a name that revealed who He is and what He has done. Although the name is not specifically mentioned, it appears from the context that the name that God gave Him is none other than His own name (Yahweh [LORD]).

In John 5:23 Jesus said that all are to honor the Son just as they honor the Father (for an example of the Father and Son receiving equal honor see Rev. 5:11-14). Anyone who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him. This is now expressed by Paul in that "at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

This same honor is given only to the Father in Isaiah 45:22-25.

Since God does not share His glory with another (Isa. 42:8), the only conclusion that can be drawn is that Jesus too is deity. Such verses reveal the doctrine known as the trinity.

In commenting on Philippians 2:9 and 10 Hodge says, "This is a perfectly exhaustive statement. All in heaven, all in earth, and all under the earth, include all rational creatures. The person to whom they are to bow the knee is Jesus, not the Logos, but the God-man. And the acknowledgment which they are to make is, that He is Lord, i.e., their Lord, their absolute proprietor and Sovereign. It is in this sense also, that the Apostle says (Heb. 1: 2), that God hath appointed the Son heir of all things. It is in virtue of this dominion over the universe that Christ is called Lord of lords and King of kings, i.e. the Sovereign over all other sovereigns in heaven and on earth." (Hodge, Systematic Theology II, 600).

When men bow and confess Jesus' lordship over all (See O'Brien, 242 for evidences that universal lordship is intended, not simply lordship over the church as some have claimed), some do it in full acknowledgment and praise, others do it in shame and defeat (Isa. 45:24). Whether in shame, fear, and forceful submission or out of joyful acknowledgment, all will confess Him as Lord whether in heaven (angels and the spirits of departed believers), on earth (people on the earth), or under the earth (demons and the spirits of the departed dead) (cf. Rev. 5:13).

The exaltation of the Son was predicted in the OT (Psa. 2:6-9; 110:1-4; Isa. 9:6-7; Dan. 7:13-14) and occurred at Jesus' resurrection (Eph 1:20-23). He will exercise His authority from the time of His second coming forever more.

"God has exalted His Son Jesus Christ; He has enthroned Him as Lord, graciously conferred on Him His own superlative name, with the result that He has not only the title of Lord but also all the prerogatives that go with it. Further, God has purposed that the whole of creation should bow the knee to Jesus as Lord and openly confess that He alone has the right to rule. But this lordship of Jesus in no way threatens or rivals God. Quite the reverse, for it actually reveals the divine glory since the Father has planned that this should be so" (O'Brien, 251).

In 1:27 Paul urged the Philippians to keep one thing in focus above everything else. Namely, they were to conduct their lives in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. This would involve them standing firm in their commitment to the gospel (1:27-30) and resisting all forms of division (2:1-4). In 2:5-8 Jesus is offered as the extreme example of self-humiliation to encourage and motivate the believer. Then verses 9-11 demonstrate how Jesus' attitude and behavior received divine approval and vindication. Christ became what we are so that we can become like Him (cf. Phil. 3:20-21). The power He has received allows us to be transformed as well.

Realize that the call of God is a call to be worked out throughout our lives

2:12-18

2:12 Therefore, my beloved, 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;

2:13 for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.

"Therefore" introduces the application of the truth just presented in 2:5-11. Paul's presence among the Philippians was a great motivating factor in their walk with the Lord. In light of the fact that all shall bow to Christ (2:10) and be accountable to Him on the last day, the Philippian believers would be wise to walk in a way that pleases Him. But more importantly, they should continue to work out their salvation because just as Christ was vindicated, so shall they be.

Paul's desire is that the Philippians don't stop in their pursuit of God. They started off well ("as you always obeyed" - 2:12) but should not be content with that. Instead, they should continually press forward, working out their salvation until they meet the Lord.

It is crucial not to read the wrong message into this passage. It does not say, "Work to gain your salvation." Neither does it say, "God has saved you but you need to do your part so you don't lose it." Rather, it says we should work out our salvation *precisely because God is at work in us.*

The word translated "work out" is commonly used to describe a farmer who cultivates the land. In other words, we are told to cultivate the salvation God has given us, "to work out what God has worked in; apply the salvation you have received to every area of your lives - work, recreation, family, life, culture, art, science, and the like. In other words, Paul is telling believers to take an active part in the advancement of their sanctification" (Hoekema, *Created in the Image of God*, 9),

A lot of time has been spent trying to understand how God's sovereignty and our will work together. Some assume that if God controlled everything then we would be puppets and have no will at all. Others think that if we choose the direction of our lives then God cannot be sovereign. But the Bible doesn't present human will and God's sovereignty as conflicting ideas. Rather, it is God's sovereign working in our lives that gives us hope and motivates endurance and change. For example, consider God's sovereignty in evangelism. The Bible teaches that no one comes to Christ on his own initiative, but it is God who calls men to be saved. This could be viewed as a disincentive for evangelism. Why share the gospel with people when, no matter how much we say, people cannot come to Christ unless God calls them? But the Bible teaches that it is precisely because God calls men that we should be motivated to do evangelism. God told Paul in Acts 18:9-10 that he should keep on preaching because God "has" many people in Corinth who were called. Even before they came to faith, God had chosen individuals to be saved. The sovereignty of God gave Paul a reason to preach the gospel since if God was calling people, Paul knew with certainty that some would come to faith when the message was preached.

So it is here; knowing that God is at work gives us incentive to press on with fear and trembling. If God was not at work and our success was left up to us, what hope would we have in ever glorifying Him? God is asking us to do the impossible, but He is not leaving it up to us to do it with our own devices.

As O'Brien so nicely puts it, "The God who mightily raised His Son from the dead now by His indwelling Spirit effectively works in the Philippians to supply both the determination to obey His own gracious purpose and the power to carry it out." (287)

The infinitives (to will, to work) in the verse can be understood as:

The one producing in you both the willing and the working . . .

The one bringing forth in you both the desire and the effort . . .

The one who "gives you the intention and the powers to act . . .

In other words, the persistency of the Philippians in doing the things of God was because *He* was "willing" (i.e. He had resolved to accomplish His purposes in them) and was "working" (i.e. He was carrying through with what He willed in action) in them. As Calvin says, "There are, in any action, two principle parts, the will and the effective power. Both of these [Paul] ascribes to God; what more remains to us to glory in (Silva, 140).

Since God is working in us we will both desire and do His will. We simply need to allow the riches we have attained in Christ to work themselves out in our lives.

A fine interpretive summary comes from John Murray:

"God's working in us is not suspended because we work, nor our working suspended because God works. Neither is the relation strictly one of cooperation as if God did His part and we did ours so that the conjunction or coordination of both produced the required result. God works and we also work. All working out of salvation on our part is the effect of God's working in us. . . We have here not only the explanation of all acceptable activity on our part but we also have the incentive to our willing and working. . . The more persistently active we are in working, the more persuaded we may be that all the energizing grace and power is of God." (quoted by Silva, 140).

We, then, when thinking about our sanctification, can see that God's influence extends not only to what we do, but also to what we want to do. He asks us "to work out our salvation with fear and trembling," and in Phil 2:13

we realize that we are able to do so only in utter dependence on what He has worked in. He supplies us with both "the determination to obey" and "the power to carry it out." Consequently, our activity "takes place not in a legalistic spirit, with a view to gaining God's favor, but rather in a spirit of humility and thanksgiving," that He has given us everything we need to please Him and He alone deserves the glory.

The last phrase of verse 13 is very significant. God is doing all of this simply because it pleases Him to do so. There is no other motive in the mind of God. Just as it was God's good and gracious pleasure to save us, so it is His pleasure to bring our salvation to maturity. "God energizes your will and your activity in order that you may fulfill His good pleasure in your completed salvation." (O'Brien quoting Vincent, 289).

Paul now moves on to specific examples of what working out our salvation should look like. He says,

2:14 *Do everything without complaining or arguing,*

2:15 *so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe.*

2:16(a) *as you hold out the word of life—*

Whining, self-pitying, and self-centered mentality is typical of a crooked and depraved world and forms a stark contrast to the contentment possessed by the believer.

The Christian is to be blameless, pure, and without fault. Only by laying aside complaining can these attributes come to the surface in the believer's life. To be blameless is to be free from accusation. We are to give no reason to be accused or blamed either from the side of God or other human beings. "Purity" was a word used to describe undiluted wine or unalloyed metals. We should also be pure, free from any contaminants that may ruin our testimony. Unblemished (without fault - NIV) was a word used to describe the absence of defects in sacrificial animals (Ex. 29:1). It is Christ's goal (Col. 1:27; Eph. 5:27), and should be ours, that we are unblemished. In essence, we are to reflect our Father's nature as His children.

Paul's language in verses 14 and 15 reminds us of Israel in their wilderness wanderings and their grumblings against Moses, the representative of God (Deut. 32:5; Exo 15:24; 16:2, 7, 9, 12 etc.). Moses, in Deuteronomy 32:5, describes the Israelites who did not live up to God's standards.

He says, "They have acted corruptly toward him; they are no longer his children because of their blemish, but a warped and crooked generation."

Through their constant complaining, the Israelites looked like the world, not the children of the living God. They were a blemished people. Though they were to be a light to the nations (Isa. 58:8-10; Dan. 12:3), their light grew dim.

But God's children, through their contentment and their testimony, shine like the stars in a darkened sky as they hold the word of life out for others to see.

The word translated as "stars" signified any light-giving body or luminary and was also used of navigation beacons. "In the OT light is described as emanating from Yahweh Himself (Ps. 27:1; Isa. 60:20; Mi. 7:8). Its creation is mentioned in Genesis 1:3; it is said to be near to Yahweh, and it can represent Him or even appear as His hypostasis (Ps. 43:3; 44:3). Of particular significance is the teaching on light that is linked with the Lord's Messiah and His people (Isa. 9:2-7; 42:6, 7; 49:6). In Judaism, Adam, Israel, the Torah [the law] and important rabbis were regarded as 'light-bearers' in the world." (O'Brien, 296). Jesus also called the believer "the light of the world" (Matt. 5:14, also see Matt. 13:43). In Daniel 12:3, in speaking of the resurrection age, it says, "Those who are wise [i.e. who know God] will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever." "Paul's Christian friends at Philippi who now share Christ's risen life *already* 'anticipate the ministry of the resurrection age'" (O'Brien, 296).

The way the Christian acts as light is described by the first part of 2:16a; "as you hold out the word of life." The gospel is a message of life and

as it is proclaimed and held out for others to see and receive, we fulfill our role as light to a world darkened by sin.

2:16(b) in order that I may boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor for nothing.

Paul consistently lived his life in light of the day of Christ's return. In this case, he was zealously desiring that the Philippian believers not only live blameless and pure lives but that they stand firm in the midst of a corrupt world.

Paul, in sharing among the Philippians and teaching them, envisions himself like an Olympic runner competing for the finish line. If they were to fall away, his effort would be in vain.

The second metaphor (translated by the NIV as "labor") is used of "a beating" or "weariness." It is also often used of the physical weariness induced by heavy labor. In this case, his toil has been for the gospel.

2:17 But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you.

2:18 So you too should be glad and rejoice with me.

Paul next depicts the life of the Philippians as an offering acceptable to God, himself as a drink offering.

There were two types of sacrifices in the OT. The first was called a non-sweet savor offering. "These sacrifices had to do with guilt and defilement and uncleanness of sin. They are called non-sweet savor sacrifices in which God did not take delight because the question of sin was being dealt with. (Pentecost, 105). On the other hand, there were sacrifices that were called sweet savor sacrifices. These were sacrifices in which God took particular delight, for they were freewill sacrifices of worship and praise. One such offering was called a drink offering. This was a measure of wine that was poured over the altar or around it after the normal sacrifice was laid upon the altar (Exo. 29:38-41; Lev. 23:12-13).

The Philippians' faith and walk with Christ were like an offering to God (cf. Heb. 13:15) and Paul desires that his life be sacrificed and added to their account. He rejoices that he can lay down his life in order that God might be glorified even more through the Philippians' sacrifice. In essence he is saying something like this: "The sacrifice to God you are offering by faith brings pleasure to His heart. If it were possible for me to add my life to that sacrifice - like a drink offering - and bring even more of the pleasure of God your way, I would rejoice."

There should, therefore, be mutual joy; Paul rejoices because God has used him for the sake of the Philippian believers, while their sacrificial service to God is something that they can offer joyfully to Him.

The word translated by the NIV as "glad" (2:17-18) is literally, "I congratulate myself," "I count myself privileged." Paul did not congratulate himself on all the things that were done through him but rather, over the privilege he had to lay down his life for the gospel.

Emulate those who are interested in the well being of others, not in their own
2:19-21

At first glance, Paul's remarks about his travel plans in 2:19-30 appear to have little significance. But further study reveals that there are verbal parallels to the condescension of Christ in 2:4-11.

2:4 Paul exhorts all to look out for the interests of others

2:7 Christ is our example of humble servanthood

2:8 Jesus lays down His life in service of others

2:21 Timothy looks out for the interests of others

2:22 Timothy serves others for the gospel

2:30 Epaphroditus almost dies in service of Christ

Paul is not just commenting about things he intends to do, but is lifting up two godly men as examples to illustrate the manner of life that is worthy of the gospel he has just described.

2:19 *I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you.*

2:20 *I have no one else like him, who takes a genuine interest in your welfare.*

2:21 *For everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.*

Paul says that he has no one else like Timothy (lit. I have no one of like soul), for he and Paul are like-minded, especially in their genuine concern for the Philippians. The word translated as "genuine concern" by the NIV was often used in a negative sense of being worried about something such as the worries of someone in poverty who doesn't know where his next meal will come from or what trials he will face in daily life. This is how the verb is used in Philippians 4:6 - "stop worrying about anything". But it also has the positive sense of caring for the well-being of other people (I Cor. 7:32-34; 12:25) and it is this way that it is used here.

One of the reasons that Paul says that he has no one like Timothy is because everyone else who might have gone to visit Philippi was more concerned about their own affairs than those of Christ Jesus.

Emulate those who have proven themselves in hardship 2:22-30

The second reason that Paul says that he has no one like Timothy is found in verse 22 (see above section).

2:22 *But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel.*

To be "proved" means that he has been tested and the results of the test have been positive. Timothy had proven character which the church had

known about ever since it was founded; he had shown great commitment with Paul in the advancement of the gospel and endured persecution (1:30). In short, Timothy had used Christ as his model (Phil. 2:7) and served others.

2:23 *I hope, therefore, to send him as soon as I see how things go with me.*

2:24 *And I am confident in the Lord that I myself will come soon.*

At the time of Paul's writing Timothy was unable to visit the church, but it was Paul's desire that he would be able to make the trip soon. Paul was even confident that he himself would be making the trip in spite of the immense obstacles.

2:25 *But I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger, whom you sent to take care of my needs.*

"The apostle focuses attention on this member of the Philippian congregation, not only in order to inform them of what has happened to their fellow Christian and to explain his return with the letter itself, but also to provide them with still another striking illustration of the self-sacrificing service that is demanded of all Christians, in other words, to give a further godly example of the way the Philippians should imitate Christ," (O'Brien, 329).

The name Epaphroditus is derived from Aphrodite which was a common name in his time and means "lovely," "charming," or "amiable." "Perhaps his parents had been worshippers of the goddess Aphrodite and it is likely that he was a Gentile convert (O'Brien, 329). Paul makes it clear that it is *his* decision that Epaphroditus return.

Paul uses five terms to express his loving and grateful regard for the man.

Although all believers are brothers and sisters, Paul is no doubt using "brother" as a term of endearment. Epaphroditus was also a fellow worker sharing in the same goals and conflicts as Paul. The term "fellow-soldier" is

more specific and was used of men who fought side by side. The last two expressions focus on the responsibilities of Epaphroditus on behalf of the church; he was a messenger (i.e. in Greek ἀπόστολος, *apostolos*) and minister of Paul's needs.

All agree that Epaphroditus brought money to meet Paul's needs (cf. 4:16-18), but whether he was sent with more in mind is unclear.

There are two reasons given for Epaphroditus' early return.

2:26 *For he longs for all of you and is distressed because you heard he was ill.*

After leaving Philippi, Epaphroditus had fallen ill. As Paul says,

2:27 *Indeed he was ill, and almost died. But God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, to spare me sorrow upon sorrow.*

This brought great concern to his friends at home who had heard the news. Epaphroditus longed to see them again and was also anxious over their concern for him. It is possible that Epaphroditus fell sick on the way and nearly died in an effort to do what his church had commissioned him to do, but he could have gotten ill after he had reached Paul.

God's mercy, however, delivered him from death and spared Paul the sorrow he would have had to bear had Epaphroditus died.

2:28 *Therefore I am all the more eager to send him, so that when you see him again you may be glad and I may have less anxiety.*

Even though after Epaphroditus recovered he would have remained with Paul and ministered to him, Paul desired that the church no longer worry over the well-being of their dear friend and he too would feel better knowing that he had returned safely.

2:29 *Welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honor men like him,*

2:30 *because he almost died for the work of Christ, risking his life to make up for the help you could not give me.*

"Since Epaphroditus is being sent back as quickly as possible so that the Philippians may rejoice again when they see him, let them therefore welcome their colleague wholeheartedly. Indeed, he deserves more than this, so let them hold him and others like him in high esteem." (O'Brien, 340).

Paul insists on a warm welcome since some may think, perhaps, that Epaphroditus had stopped doing all that he was sent to accomplish. Paul affirms that such was not the case - it was his desire that Epaphroditus return.

In this case, "to honor" can mean to hold something as valuable or precious, or to esteem. Both ideas are related. To honor someone is to hold a proper estimate of them.

The reason that he should be honored is because he almost died doing the work of the Lord on behalf of the church. Though Paul knows that the whole church would have loved to see him and he them, Epaphroditus made up for the impossibility of all of them coming to see him (i.e he made up for the help they could not give Paul - 2:30).