

PHILIPPIANS

A QUESTION & ANSWER STUDY GUIDE

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PHILIPPIANS: A QUESTION & ANSWER STUDY GUIDE

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Quotations of Scripture are from the New King James Version.

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CHAPTER ONE

1. Who sent this epistle?

“Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ”
(Philippians 1:1).

The apostle Paul is the main sender and he had Timothy with him. Individual pronouns – I, me, my, mine – tremendously outweigh collective pronouns – we, us, our; even when the collective pronouns are employed, they almost always include the recipients, not the co-sender so much. Moreover, the statement *“I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you”* (Philippians 2:19) makes clear that Paul was primary and Timothy secondary.

2. Who were the recipients?

“To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons” (Philippians 1:1). This letter is

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unique in mentioning congregational leadership in the opening salutation. Hebrews, which was not written by Paul, is the only other epistle to send greetings to overseers, but that was included in the farewell remarks (Hebrews 13:24).

3. Describe the establishment of the church in that location.

The beginning of the church in Philippi was directed by the Holy Spirit who prevented Paul, Silas, and Timothy from preaching in Asia and Bithynia (Acts 16:6-8), and who showed Paul a vision of a Macedonian man inviting them to come preach (Acts 16:9-10). First, Lydia of Thyatira was converted at the riverside (Acts 16:11-15). Some persecution happened (Acts 16:16-24), but the resulting incarceration yielded the jailer's conversion (Acts 16:25-34).

4. Explain what bishops and deacons are.

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“Bishops” is a transliteration of a Greek word that is more helpfully rendered as *“overseers.”* Those who oversee the church are also called *“elders”* and shepherds (1st Peter 5:1-2). Requirements to hold this office involve character, experience, ability, and qualified family (1st Timothy 3:1-7, 11; Titus 1:5-9). The work of these overseers is the most important on earth (Hebrews 13:7, 17; 1st Thessalonians 5:12-13) besides parenting (Ephesians 6:4).

“Deacons” is a word with both a generic and specific meaning. It appears dozens of times in the New Testament, usually translated *“ministers”* or *“servants.”* In this instance, though, mentioned next to the bishops, deacons clearly refer to a specific office within the church. This office has serious qualifications resembling those of bishops (1st Timothy 3:8-13).

5. **Where was the epistle written from?**

Paul was a prisoner (Philippians 1:7, 13, 14, 16) in Rome (4:22).

6. How did Paul remember the Philippians?

He thought of them fondly, with thankfulness (Philippians 1:3), joyfulness (4), confidence (6), longing (8), and affection (8).

“I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ; just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers with me of grace. For God is my witness, how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ” (Philippians 1:3-8).

7. **What did Paul have in mind referring to the Philippians' *"fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now?"***

"Fellowship" is another word with various applications. The Greek term means participation and has reference to the relationship Christians have with each other and Christ (1st John 1:7; Galatians 2:9), or *"communion"* as in the Lord's Supper (1st Corinthians 10:16), or giving to help needy brethren (Romans 15:26; 2nd Corinthians 8:4; 9:13; Hebrews 13:16).

The application here is in the vein of financial sharing, which we know because Paul refers to the same subject more straightforwardly at the end of the letter: *"Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only. For even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities. Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that*

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abounds to your account. Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God. And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:15-19).

It is not incorrect to think of a preacher’s pay as “wages” (2nd Corinthians 11:8), but it is incorrect to think of it only as wages. A preacher is not an employee, but a fellow, a partner, a co-worker.

8. What did Paul pray for concerning the brethren at Philippi?

“And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus

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Christ, to the glory and praise of God” (Philippians 1:9-11).

He wanted them to keep loving so much that there was not only a sufficiency of love, but an overflow of it (Philippians 1:9_a). There had been no deficiency in love among the Philippians and this is no criticism, but an encouragement to keep doing what they were already excelling at.

He wanted them to love intelligently (Philippians 1:9_b) because love must be correctly channeled (1st John 2:15-17). Emotion without knowledge is unhelpful (Romans 10:2). With knowledge and discernment (1st Thessalonians 5:21), the Philippian brethren could approve excellent things and do so sincerely (Philippians 1:10).

With abundant love, directed correctly, causing them to sincerely approve of what is excellent, the Philippians

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would be righteously fruitful (Philippians 1:11; cf. Proverbs 11:30; Ephesians 5:9; Matthew 7:16-20).

9. **Name two benefits the apostle observed about his incarceration.**

“But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel, so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ; and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear” (Philippians 1:12-14).

First, Paul had been told he would bear Christ’s name before gentiles and kings (Acts 9:15), and here he was under custody to Caesar (Philippians 4:22), where Caesar’s guards recognized he was not a mere criminal, but a prisoner for Jesus’ sake (1st Peter 4:15-16).

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Second, the people of God need role models, exemplars of the faith (1st Timothy 4:12), whose courage will motivate others (James 5:10-11). And Paul had become exactly that!

Like Joseph, who knew God can turn adversity into blessings (Genesis 50:20), Paul saw the good even in prison.

10. **Why was Paul rejoicing?**

“Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from goodwill: The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains; but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel. What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice” (Philippians 1:15-18).

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He was joyful that Christ was being preached, regardless of motive. He is not at all approving of any sin whatsoever, so they must not have been speaking error. Only their motives were flawed. If people with impure hearts were preaching the pure gospel, then new souls could be saved, even if the proclaimers would be judged.

The details of this strange situation are not articulated and cannot now be known specifically. They are irrelevant (Deuteronomy 29:29). The take-away is that Paul's skin was thick enough to shrug off animosity directed toward himself and his heart was big enough to love hearing the gospel being proclaimed no matter what.

11. What did he expect through their prayers and the *“supply of the Spirit?”*

“For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ” (Philippians 1:19). “And being confident of this, I

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know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith, that your rejoicing for me may be more abundant in Jesus Christ by my coming to you again” (Philippians 1:25-26).

Paul believed in the efficacy of prayer (James 5:16) and of faith (Mark 11:22-23). He trusted his release from prison would be forthcoming as a result.

12. ***“Whether by life or by death,”* what did Paul intend?**

“According to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death” (Philippians 1:20).

He meant to magnify Christ no matter what. If he perished, he would do so as a martyr, glorifying Jesus. If he was released from prison, he would credit answered prayer. Either way, the Lord would be praised.

13. What did he perceive to be the benefits either of life or death?

“For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you” (Philippians 1:21-24).

For some, life is a career or a sport or a hobby or some other temporary activity (2nd Corinthians 4:18), but for Paul, life is Christ! He perceived no greater purpose to existence under the sun than to serve the Son of God (Ecclesiastes 12:13; Acts 17:26-27). If his life persisted, there would be fruitful labor insomuch as his brethren needed him.

Death, though, was gain! Death was not hopeless annihilation nor terror-stricken judgment, but a reward to

be received (2nd John 8). Departure would put him “with Christ.” Despite what many brethren insist on, that death means going to Hades to await final judgment, which may technically be true, that is not at all what Paul’s heart was set on! When he died, he wanted to be with the Lord and expected it confidently (2nd Corinthians 5:1-6).

14. What goals did he set before them?

“Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel, and not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from God” (Philippians 1:27-28).

- 1) Worthy conduct
- 2) Standing fast
- 3) Unity of spirit and mind

4) Striving for the gospel

5) Not terrified

15. What challenges lay before them?

“For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, having the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear is in me” (Philippians 1:29-30).

What challenges they would face, all Christians must anticipate – suffering for His sake (1st Peter 4:13; 2nd Timothy 3:12). In their case, though, it was something God “granted” them because, like the apostles earlier, they were “worthy” (Acts 5:41), so it was something to “rejoice” about (Colossians 1:24; Matthew 5:10-12).

CHAPTER TWO

1. Upon what would Paul's joy be predicated?

"Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy" (Philippians 2:1-2). He counted on consolation, love, fellowship, affection, and mercy; otherwise there would be no joy. And all that came from Christ and the Spirit.

2. How would Paul's joy be fulfilled?

"Fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind" (Philippians 2:2). He would have completeness of joy if the brethren would attain to unity, which means loving the same, but also, and this is said twice: having the same mind, thinking alike (1st Corinthians 1:10).

3. What is the obstacle to unity? How is that overcome?

“Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others” (Philippians 2:3-4). Selfishness and arrogance prevent unity, but humility brings it about (Ephesians 5:21). Christians must not only not be selfish, but we must be selfless (Romans 12:10).

4. Whom should we emulate?

“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:5). We should always follow Christ’s example (1st John 2:6) of lowliness (John 13:14-15) and keep that example in our minds (Romans 15:3).

5. Compare translations of verse 6.

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“Who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God” (NKJV; cf. KJV).

“Who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped” (ESV; cf. ASV, NASB, NIV).

There is no manuscript variation for this verse. Translators simply present it differently, which is troubling because the Greek word rendered *“robbery”* (NKJV, KJV) or *“a thing to be grasped”* (ESV, ASV, NASB, NIV), is, in fact, a noun as the NKJV/KJV put it, not a verb as the others do. The ESV, ASV, NASB, NIV requires the explanation that He did not need to reach for His divinity because He was already in possession of it.

The point of the passage, in any translation, is that Jesus really is God and yet He chose to humble Himself by becoming human. The NKJV/KJV emphasizes this fact, while the others seem to detract from it.

6. How did Christ demonstrate lowliness of mind?

He “made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross” (Philippians 2:7-8).

- 1) He experienced humanity.
- 2) Specifically, He chose to become a no-reputation bondservant.
- 3) He experienced death.
- 4) Specifically, He chose to die in a violently gruesome manner: crucifixion.

7. Describe Christ’s reputation.

He “made Himself of no reputation” (Philippians 2:7), means He chose an earthly existence in which He would be unliked. This was foretold (Psalm 22:6-8; Isaiah 53:3).

8. How was Jesus' death obedience?

"He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death" (Philippians 2:8) means that He was doing God's will more than His own when He suffered (Matthew 26:39, 42). In surrendering Himself to abuse, He was obeying what God commanded (Isaiah 50:5-6; Hebrews 5:8).

9. What is the outcome of Christ's humility?

"Therefore God also has highly exalted Him" (Philippians 2:9). His humble obedience led to eternal grandeur (Acts 5:30-31; Hebrews 12:1-2). He intends the same for us (1st Peter 5:6). When we practice humility even in social settings, it can lead to exaltation (Luke 14:7-11), so it must be even greater in spiritual things.

10. What is the status of Jesus' name?

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“Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:9-11).

His name excels all other names, even the name Jehovah, despite what the Watchtower crowd would have you believe. His name is the only one that brings salvation (Acts 4:10, 12). Even in heaven, they exalt His name (Revelation 4:9-11). There is no salvation without confessing His name (Matthew 10:32-33).

11. What did Paul expect the Philippians to “work out?”

“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; for it is God who works in you both to will and

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to do for His good pleasure” (Philippians 2:12-13). Their salvation was their own personal responsibility and it came by obedience. While God was working in them, they could not be passive. Active participation was required for their salvation.

- 12. What should be eliminated from a Christian’s behavior in order to *“become blameless and harmless?”***

“Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless” (Philippians 2:14-15). The reason a complainer is blameworthy and harmful is that complaining communicates discontent (Hebrews 13:5-6), ingratitude (1st Thessalonians 5:18), anxiety (Matthew 6:31, 33), and hopelessness (Romans 5:1-5).

- 13. What is the proper role of God’s children in this world?**

“Children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights

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in the world” (Philippians 2:15). We are expected to be faultless in the midst of perversion and lights in the darkness. Christians absolutely must be different than worldly people (Romans 12:2; James 1:27).

- 14. What would cause Paul to know in the judgment that his work was worthwhile?**

“Holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain” (Philippians 2:16). The steadfastness of his converts would be eternally satisfying. Being evangelistically energetic is of little value if the converts are not built up for ongoing faithfulness following conversion.

- 15. Why should the Philippians rejoice with Paul?**

“Yes, and if I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. For the same reason you also be glad and

rejoice with me” (Philippians 2:17-18). Paul considered himself a libation, as if spilling his blood would be an offering to God. He took literally Jesus’ words about rejoicing in persecution (Matthew 5:10-12; cf. James 1:2) and expected the brethren to join him.

16. How was Timothy special?

“But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, that I also may be encouraged when I know your state. For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus. But you know his proven character, that as a son with his father he served with me in the gospel. Therefore I hope to send him at once, as soon as I see how it goes with me. But I trust in the Lord that I myself shall also come shortly” (Philippians 2:19-24).

Timothy was as genuinely concerned about the Philippians’ progress in the gospel as was Paul. This makes

sense because Philippi was the first congregation that Timothy helped to plant (Acts 16:1-40).

17. Who was Epaphroditus to Paul and who was he to Philippi?

The apostle called him *“Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier, but your messenger and the one who ministered to my need”* (Philippians 2:25).

We should count all who obey the Lord as brothers (Mark 3:33-35) and this is how Paul perceived Epaphroditus. Disciples who labor together for the Lord have an even deeper bond (1st Corinthians 3:8-9). Those who have fought side by side, even more so (Philemon 2). This man was useful to the apostle, who was not eager to release him.

To them, he was their messenger, sent for Paul's relief (Philippians 4:15-18), and Paul was keeping him busy in that work.

18. Why was Paul sending him?

"I considered it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus... since he was longing for you all, and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick. For indeed he was sick almost unto death; but God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. Therefore I sent him the more eagerly, that when you see him again you may rejoice, and I may be less sorrowful" (Philippians 2:25-28). The Philippians needed reassurance their messenger was recovered from the serious ailment they had been informed of, and he was homesick, ready to get back, so he was sent before Timothy. Very similar to the situation with Onesimus (Philemon 10-16), Paul did not want to send away such a useful helper as Epaphroditus, but it was "necessary."

19. How severe had the illness become?

“He was sick almost unto death” (Philippians 2:27). Even in the age of miraculous healing, believers experienced illness (2nd Timothy 4:20, even chronic illness (1st Timothy 5:23; 2nd Corinthians 12:7-10), and, yea, even life-threatening illness. Miracles served the explicit purpose of confirming inspired messages (Mark 16:17-20) in order to produce saving faith (John 20:30-31), not for the convenience or even comfort of the saints.

20. How are men like him to be regarded?

“Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness, and hold such men in esteem; because for the work of Christ he came close to death, not regarding his life, to supply what was lacking in your service toward me” (Philippians 2:29-30). It is important to respect the Lord’s workers (1st Corinthians 16:18).

CHAPTER THREE

1. **How many times has Paul urged the Philippians to “rejoice” up to this point? What is the cause for joy in this instance?**

“Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord” (Philippians 3:1) is the sixth use of the word thus far in the epistle (1:18; 1:18; 2:17, 18, 28). It is used here to reaffirm what was set forth on the previous occurrence (2:28), that they should be pleased to welcome Epaphroditus’s return.

2. **What might seem “tedious?” What was it, actually?**

“For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe” (Philippians 3:1). Most people, including Christians, get annoyed to hear the same reminders over and over. They are irked by redundancy. However, reminders are offered for the sake of caution and are, thus, necessary (2nd Peter 1:12-15; 3:1).

3. Whom did he warn about? Why did he call them what he did?

“Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation!” (Philippians 3:2). The epithets hint at whom he is referring to, but the assertions which follow make it abundantly clear he is talking about circumcisers.

He called them *“dogs”* because they were always barking and snapping at his heels (Acts 15:1-29; 21:21). They were so persistent that he had to mention the issue in seven of his thirteen epistles (Romans; 1st Corinthians; Galatians; Ephesians; Philippians; Colossians; Titus).

He called them *“evil workers”* because they thought they could work circumcision to earn salvation (Ephesians 2:8-13).

He called them *“the mutilation”* because they, literally, commanded genital mutilation as a condition of

acceptance before God. This was once a sacred token of God's covenant with Abraham (Genesis 17:10-15), but was decidedly unnecessary once gentiles were brought into the household of faith (Acts 15:1-29).

4. In contrast to those he warned against, whom does he count himself among?

"For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh" (Philippians 3:3). Just as the church has become *"the Israel of God"* (Galatians 6:16), overtaking the old nation, so the church is now the new *"circumcision"* (Romans 2:28-29; Colossians 2:11). As such, we are the ones *"who worship God in the Spirit"* as opposed to those who merely worship in Jerusalem (John 4:20-24). Our joy is centered in the anointed one, Christ, and this is the seventh reference to rejoicing in the book. All that being said, our confidence has nothing to do with the *"flesh"* (Galatians 5:17).

5. If Paul was inclined to boast in the flesh, what claims could he stack up against an opponent?

Like the reluctant hero in many an action flick, who wishes to avoid fisticuffs, but ultimately is a far superior fighter than all his enemies, so Paul put forth: *“though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so”* (Philippians 3:4). His bona-fides as a super-Jew were:

- 1) *“Circumcised the eighth day”* (Philippians 3:5) as the law required (Leviticus 12:3) in accordance with what God had even earlier commanded Abraham (Genesis 17:13).
- 2) *“Of the stock of Israel”* (Philippians 3:5) meant he was a biological descendant of Jacob, whose name God changed to Israel (Genesis 32:28), not a proselyte (Matthew 23:15) who converted to Judaism.
- 3) *“Of the tribe of Benjamin”* (Philippians 3:5) communicates that his ancestors had remained loyal

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to the house of Judah even when the rest of their kinsmen forsook the Davidic line and worship in the temple (2nd Chronicles 11:1-12).

- 4) *“A Hebrew of the Hebrews”* (Philippians 3:5) shows that he and his family had retained the culture of their people even when others became Hellenized (Acts 6:1). He spoke the language (Acts 22:2).
- 5) *“Concerning the law, a Pharisee”* (Philippians 3:5). No party was more strict in adherence to the law than were the Pharisees (Acts 26:5).
- 6) *“Concerning zeal, persecuting the church”* (Philippians 3:6) is a fact well documented throughout the New Testament (Acts 8:1-3; 9:1-2; 22:4-5; 26:9-11; Galatians 1:13-14; 1st Timothy 1:13).
- 7) *“Concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless”* (Philippians 3:6) indicates he never violated his conscience (Acts 23:1).

6. What had all these gainful things in Judaism become to him in Christ?

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“But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ” (Philippians 3:7-8). He called them “loss” and “rubbish” or “dung” (KJV) or “refuse” (ASV). Discipleship starts with sacrifice (Matthew 16:24-26).

7. How did Paul intend to be found in Christ?

He wanted to *“be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith” (Philippians 3:9). Self-righteousness accomplishes nothing for the Lord (Luke 18:9-14; Romans 10:3). Since the Old Covenant is obsolete (Colossians 2:14; Hebrews 8:13), and, therefore, cannot justify anyone (Acts 13:39), trying to keep it amounts to*

self-righteousness. Thus, all that is needed is righteousness by faith (Romans 10:4).

8. What was the apostle gladly anticipating?

“That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead” (Philippians 3:10-11). Except for those alive at Christ’s return (1st Thessalonians 4:13-17), all will resurrect, even the unrighteous (John 5:28-29; Acts 24:15); obviously, Paul was eager to get to the resurrection of life (2nd Corinthians 4:14).

9. Why was he pressing on?

“Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting

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those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:12-14).

He had not yet “attained” his “goal” or “prize” – he was not “perfected” yet. Although there is a sense in which every Christian has already risen from the dead when putting off the old man of sin in baptism and rising to new life (Romans 6:3-6; Colossians 2:12), the final resurrection has yet to occur (2nd Thessalonians 2:1-2), and it definitely will happen (1st Corinthians 15:12-19). Nobody will miss it. Because of what he was eager to receive in the resurrection, Paul kept pushing forward.

10. How could he reach forward?

“Forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ

Jesus” (Philippians 3:13-14). Reaching forward requires forgetting what is behind (Luke 9:57-62). Lot’s wife disobeyed this precept and taught us all a lesson (Genesis 19:17-26). Elisha obeyed and taught us the same lesson in a more positive fashion (1st Kings 19:19-21).

11. What did he tell the mature to do?

“Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you. Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind” (Philippians 3:15-16). He was calling on mature people to think how he thinks (1st Corinthians 1:10) and if any were not quite there yet, he was confident they would learn (John 7:17).

12. Whose pattern and example must be followed?

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“Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern” (Philippians 3:17). Paul presented himself as an example worthy of emulation (1st Corinthians 4:16) and he instructed others to become examples (1st Timothy 4:12; Titus 2:7), so there are others who should be imitated, so long as they, themselves, are imitating Jesus (1st Corinthians 11:1).

Noting, or marking, others is a two-way street. Good examples should be marked and followed, but bad examples should be marked and avoided (Romans 16:17).

13. Why did Paul insist the Philippians think like he did and follow his and similar examples?

“For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ” (Philippians 3:18). With an awareness of the opposition, he was warning them.

14. Why would the enemies of the cross meet their end in destruction?

“Whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame — who set their mind on earthly things” (Philippians 3:19). They would be destroyed, implicitly in hell, because of their worldly mindset (1st John 2:15-17). Christians need a different perspective (Colossians 3:1-2).

15. Where is our citizenship?

“For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Philippians 3:20). Jesus is in heaven (Luke 24:51; Hebrews 1:3). If He is our Prince (Acts 3:15; 5:31), our Lord (Acts 2:36), our King (Revelation 17:14), and our Sovereign (1st Timothy 6:15), then our citizenship is where He is. If our kingdom is not of this earth (John 18:36), we better behave accordingly.

16. What are we waiting for Jesus to do?

He *“will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself”* (Philippians 3:21). He went to heaven to get our permanent home ready (John 14:1-4) and that is what we set our hope upon (2nd Corinthians 5:1-8). It will be transformative, and we cannot yet fathom what the changes will be like (1st Corinthians 15:35-53), but they will be grand (1st John 3:2)!

CHAPTER FOUR

1. How are the Philippians described?

He called them, “*my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown*” and repeated “*beloved*” (Philippians 4:1). Clearly, brotherly love defined this relationship. Moreover, Paul considered this church a shining achievement of his; the church in Thessalonica is the only other to be described as his “*crown*” (1st Thessalonians 2:19-20).

2. What were they told to do?

Paul told them to “*stand fast in the Lord*” (Philippians 4:1). This is a common admonition throughout the New Testament (1st Corinthians 16:13; Galatians 5:1; Philippians 1:27; 1st Thessalonians 3:8; 2nd Thessalonians 2:15). It is a call to be resolute, determined, unwavering from the goal.

3. Why were they to do so?

It begins with, *“Therefore”* (Philippians 4:1), which makes it depend on the foregoing promise of heavenly transformation (Philippians 3:21). Because of what awaits in heaven, there is good cause to be steadfast.

4. What did Euodia and Syntyche need to do?

“I implore Euodia and I implore Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord” (Philippians 4:2). Agreement is essential to brotherhood (Amos 3:3; Psalm 133:1). Paul had, evidently, received a report that these sisters were not getting along as well as they should and so implored them to improve. He did not elaborate as to the nature of their disagreement and seems satisfied this mild rebuke would suffice to rectify the situation. That is how strong the church at Philippi was. The only corrective remark in the epistle has to do with two individuals, not the whole congregation or even factions within, and the admonition

required nothing further than a single sentence, indicating Paul expected these women to straighten up quickly.

5. Who was the “*true companion*” and what was his task?

“And I urge you also, true companion, help these women” (Philippians 4:3). The “*true companion*” is unidentified, but would most likely have been Epaphroditus (2:25-30; 4:18). His role was to help Euodia and Syntyche, which, in context, might mean mediating their dispute.

6. How does Paul describe Euodia and Syntyche, along with Clement and others?

He describes them as those “*who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the Book of Life*” (Philippians 4:3). Despite their lack of unity, Euodia and Syntyche were still regarded by the apostle as his coworkers and, more than that, as eternally saved. It is possible for

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Christians to pursue the same goals separately (Acts 15:36-40) without jeopardizing their souls.

7. **What was so important that he told them twice?**

“Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!” (Philippians 4:4). What he has told them several times in this epistle already, he now tells them twice in one verse. Despite disagreements, despite persecutions, despite whatever the world would do to us, Christians are to be a joyful people because we are enrolled in the Book of Life!

8. **What were the Philippians to let everyone know?**

“Let your gentleness be known to all men” (Philippians 4:5 NKJV), or your *“moderation”* (KJV), *“forbearance”* (ASV), *“forbearing”* (NASB), or *“reasonableness”* (ESV). Essentially, their courtesy and fairness were intended to be visible to all. Perhaps this quality was lacking between Euodia and Syntyche, but we cannot be sure.

9. Why were they expected to visibly demonstrate that quality?

“The Lord is at hand” (Philippians 4:5). This might refer to the omnipresence of the Lord (Proverbs 15:3; Matthew 28:20b) or it could refer to His imminent return (1st Peter 4:7). In either case, it serves as a reminder of accountability.

10. What should a Christian be anxious about?

“Be anxious for nothing” (Philippians 4:6). Jesus was straightforward in saying that worry has no place in the life of a Christian (Matthew 6:25-34; Luke 10:38-41).

11. How can anxiety be solved?

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all

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understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6-7). The word “but” provides contrast; instead of worrying, we need to pray (1st Peter 5:6-7). The outcome will be hearts and minds guarded by God’s peace!

12. How should requests be presented in prayer?

“With thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God” (Philippians 4:6). Not one soul has any right to make demands of God. What requests we offer must be accompanied by gratitude for all that has already been given. We must always be thankful (1st Thessalonians 5:18).

13. What should a Christian think?

“Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are

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of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things” (Philippians 4:8). True submission to Christ includes every thought that passes through our minds.

14. What should a Christian do and what would be the result?

“The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you” (Philippians 4:9). Once again (3:17), he sets himself forth as an example to be emulated. Everything about his behavior and speech which could be observed needs to be practiced. The outcome is God’s peace!

15. Why did Paul rejoice greatly?

“But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your care for me has flourished again; though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity” (Philippians 4:10). He was

appreciative not only of the financial support they provided, but, more so, the expression of their care, which care he recognized transcended their ability (2nd Corinthians 8:12).

16. What had he learned?

“Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need” (Philippians 4:11-12). It takes learning to know how to be abased and to know how to abound. Being abased requires cutting out all unnecessary expenses – used cars, no Starbucks, buying groceries from the dollar store with nickels and dimes – and it can be difficult to become accustomed to. Abounding requires a different kind of restraint, still avoiding unnecessary expenses, but in this case to prevent wasting it all (Proverbs 25:16).

17. **In what context did the apostle write, “*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me?*”**

Immediately before this, he mentioned learning to abound and to suffer need, having learned how to be full and how to be hungry. That is precisely what he had in mind when mentioning all the things he can do through Christ’s strength. He was not saying that he could do some dangerous stunt and the Lord would be obliged to protect him (Luke 4:9-12).

18. **What had the Philippians “*done well*” in?**

“Nevertheless you have done well that you shared in my distress” (Philippians 4:14). Although he had learned to abound and to suffer, he was not dismissing the fact that their relief was both needed and appreciated.

19. **What had Philippi been doing since “*the beginning of the gospel?*”**

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“Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only. For even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities” (Philippians 4:15-16).

By *“the beginning of the gospel,”* he does not refer to the actual start of John’s ministry (Mark 1:1), but means the beginning of Philippi’s obedience to it. They had been sharing with him from the start (Philippians 1:5).

They were the only church sharing with him when he left their country, and in fact, were already sharing with him while still in Macedonia, but already departed from Philippi, being in Thessalonica (cf. Acts 16:39-17:4).

20. What was Paul seeking?

“Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account. Indeed I have all and abound. I am full,

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having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God” (Philippians 4:17-18). The pleasant aroma of a burnt offering to God has long been an indication of His acceptance of the same (Genesis 8:20-21). What they were doing for Paul’s account materially meant a great deal for their spiritual accounts.

21. What would God do for them?

“And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19). Giving helps the giver most of all (Acts 20:35; Malachi 3:10; 2nd Corinthians 9:6-15).

22. Who greeted whom?

“Now to our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen. Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren who are with me greet you. All the saints greet you, but

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especially those who are of Caesar's household. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen" (Philippians 4:20-23).

Paul sent greetings to all the saints (4:21) again (1:1). So did all the brethren who were in his company and that included those who lived in the emperor's house (4:22)! He was effective with the gospel even as a prisoner.