

Notes on the Greek New Testament Day 272 – September 29th – Philippians 1:1-26

Introduction to Philippians

The Dating of the Prison Epistles

Paul refers to himself as being in prison in his letters to the churches at Philippi, Colossae, and Ephesus and to the individuals Philemon and his second letter to Timothy. It is generally assumed that these letters (and the other 'Pastorals') were written during the period of Paul's imprisonment at Rome. However, some scholars have argued that at least one or two of the 'prison epistles' may have been written at an earlier period, namely during an imprisonment of Paul at Ephesus (cf. 2 Cor 11:23; 1 Cor 15:32; 2 Cor 1:8; Rom 16:7). Drane summarises the arguments for an early dating of Colossians, Philippians and Philemon as follows:

- "It is claimed that the friends of Paul who are mentioned as having made contact with him during this imprisonment would have been more likely to have been in Ephesus than in Rome, which was a long way from their homes."
- "It is argued that Philemon's slave Onesimus would be more likely to run away to Ephesus, which was only about eighty miles from his home in Colossae than to Rome, which was 800 miles away."
- "In Philippians we get the impression that there was much travelling to and from Paul's prison; and Ephesus was much nearer to Philippi than Rome."
- "The strongest argument for an Ephesian origin of these letters is that in them Paul was looking forward to an early release, after which he intended visiting his friends in both Philippi and Colossae. In Romans 15:28, however, he had made it plain that after his visit to Jerusalem his intention was not to revisit churches he had founded before, but to go west to Spain."

Drane is not fully convinced by any of these arguments, though he does think that they are strongest in the case of Philippians. If Philippians were written from Ephesus, it would be dated about 55 AD instead of 62 AD and would precede 2 Corinthians and Romans. Others have suggested that some or all of the 'prison epistles' were written during Paul's imprisonment in Caesarea. However, most scholars now follow the traditional supposition that these letters were written from Rome.

Assuming that all of the 'prison epistles' were written from Rome, their order of production remains unclear.

Philippi and the history of its Church

Philippi was a Roman colony situated at the far eastern end of a large fertile plain in central Macedonia and was the urban political centre of its region. It was about 10 miles inland from the seaport of Neapolis and was situated on the Egnatian Way. "Its population was both Roman and Greek; and although Latin was the official language, Greek was the predominant language of everyday life" (Fee).

The church evidently included people from a variety of social backgrounds: Lydia the well-to-do business woman, the Philippian jailer and the a slave girl. The church had taken Paul to heart and supported him in his continuing missionary activity (Phil 4:15-16 cf. 2 Cor 8:1-5), and now sent a gift to him in prison (Phil 4:10,18).

It is evident that the church has experienced opposition and has had to face suffering (Phil 1:27-30). Paul's words suggest that they may be suffering at the hands of the Roman authorities even as he is presently imprisoned by that same power. However, Paul is also concerned that the Philippians may face pressure from Judaisers to may seek to persuade them to adopt the protection of Judaism and its law-code (Phil 4:2-3 and following). Paul is

concerned that, at this critical moment in history, these Christians live lives distinct both from Roman society and from Judaism.

Paul's letter to the Philippians

Paul's letter to the Philippians is an informal letter rather than a doctrinal treatise or a logical argument. Paul makes use of Epaphroditus' return to Philippi as an opportunity of writing as a friend to friends¹. Paul is writing to the firstfruits of Europe, not to settle a debate or to correct errors (though he does address local difficulties Phil 4:2), but to express his appreciation of these Christians, thanking them for their gift and encouraging them to single-minded devotion in following Christ.

If there is a single theme to this letter it is the effect of Christ's death and resurrection for the believer. The Christian is one who knows Christ, and this means more than knowing that they benefit from Christ's death and resurrection; it involves being united with Christ in his death and resurrection. This was the burden of Paul's preaching and the driving reality of his life. It is evident in Phil 3 where he describes the radical transformation knowing Christ has made on his thinking, his values and his hopes and ambitions. More than that, knowing Christ has transformed his whole pattern of life; his driving desire is to know more of Christ even though this means being conformed to him in his death that he might be conformed to him in his resurrection life.

Christians are those who must live in union with Christ under the shadow of the cross. They are to be a people transformed in heart, mind and character of life. They are to be visibly different. Thus Paul exhorts the Philippians to possess the mind of Christ, to possess a common mind one with another, to do all things without murmuring or complaining, to rejoice in the Lord always...

This dynamic, which comes from the life of Christ in the life of the Christian, is seen in Paul's own behaviour – in prison, under threat of death, yet remaining useful, pressing on to glory, content and rejoicing in whatever circumstance may befall him. Paul's words, 'for me to live is Christ and to die is gain' are no mere words but voice the passionate conviction that shapes his life.

Nor does Paul think himself at all extraordinary, but exhorts the Philippians to follow his example and to take special note of those who live according to the same pattern (3:17).

This is a very special letter that breathes a passion for Christ. It was written that, by God's grace, the same passion might dominate those to whom it was sent – and that includes us.

Works frequently referenced in these notes on Philippians

Drane, John	<i>Paul</i> , Lion Publishing, Berkhamstead, 1976
Eadie, John,	<i>A Commentary on the Greek Text of the Epistle of Paul to the Philippians</i> , T & T Clark, Edinburgh, 1894
Fee, Gordon D	<i>Paul's Letter to the Philippians</i> (The New International Commentary on the New Testament), Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1995
Hendriksen, William	<i>Philippians</i> , Banner of Truth, London, 1962
Lightfoot, JB	<i>St Paul's Epistle to the Philippians</i> , 3 rd Ed., MacMillan, London, 1873
Motyer, J Alex	<i>Studies in the letter to the Philippians</i> , IVF, London, 1966

¹ Fee categorises Philippians as a 'letter of friendship.'

Verses 1-2

The letter begins with the common threefold salutation consisting of writer, addressees and greeting.

Verse 1

Παῦλος καὶ Τιμόθεος δούλοι Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ
πᾶσιν τοῖς ἁγίοις ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ τοῖς οὖσιν
ἐν Φιλίπποις σὺν ἐπισκόποις καὶ διακόνοις·

"Timothy is associated with Paul as one who was well known to this church, and who had been with him on his first visit, who afterwards was sent by him to labour in Macedonia, and who cherished a fervent regard for the welfare of the Philippian saints. Acts 16:1,10; 19:22; Phil 2:19,20." Eadie.

Fee suggests that Timothy may also have acted as secretary or amanuensis.

δουλος, ου m slave, servant

Cf. Paul's use of this term to describe Christ in 2:7.

ἅγιος, α, ον holy, consecrated, set apart to/by God; οἱ ἅγιοι God's people

"The saints' i.e. the covenant people: a term transferred from the old dispensation to the new. The chosen race was a holy people (λαος ἅγιος), the Israelites were saints (ἅγιοι), by virtue of their consecration to Jehovah: see e.g. Exod 19:6; Deut 7:6; 14:2,21 ... The Christian Church, having taken the place of the Jewish race, has inherited all its titles and privileges; it is a 'chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation (ἔθνος ἅγιον), a peculiar people' (1 Peter 2:9)." Lightfoot

Motyer draws attention to the contrast between the common Christian language which speaks of 'The Letter of *Saint Paul* to the Philippians' (see for example, the title of Lightfoot's commentary), with these words in which Paul speaks of himself as a slave and the Philippians as saints. Christians are termed 'saints' or holy ones because they belong to a holy God. The term implies a holy calling.

οὖσιν Verb, pres ptc, m & n dat pl εἰμι
Φιλίπποι, ων Philippi, Proper name, plural in form

ἐπισκοπος, ου m overseer, guardian;
bishop

"The official term ἐπισκοπος, of Greek origin, is in the diction of the New Testament the same as πρεσβυτερος, of Jewish usage... The mention of ἐπισκοποι in the plural, and the naming of both classes of office-bearers after the general body of members, indicates a state of things which did not exist in the second century." Eadie.

"No evidence exists for a single leader as the 'head' of the local assembly in the Pauline churches." Fee – though Fee suggests that this may be due to the fact that Paul, though not regularly present with them, was viewed as their leader.

διακονος, ου m & f servant, helper,
minister, deacon

"From our distance it is nearly impossible to know either what their function was or how they are to be distinguished from the 'overseers,' although it is almost certain that they are. If the functional sense of these terms is also the clue to their titular use, then the 'overseers' are probably those who give general oversight to the congregation, while the 'deacons' are distinguished by their actual deeds of service." Fee

Verse 2

χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν
καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

χαρις, ιτος f grace
εἰρηνη, ης f peace

Cf. Eph. 1:2. "Here is a marvellous example of Paul 'turning into gospel' everything he sets his hand to. The traditional greeting in the Hellenistic world was χαρειν – the infinitive of the verb 'to rejoice,' but in salutations meaning simply 'Greetings!' (see Acts 15:23; Jas 1:1). In Paul's hands this now becomes χαρις ('grace'), to which he adds the traditional Jewish greeting *shalom* ('peace,' in the sense of 'wholeness' or 'well-being'). Thus instead of the familiar 'greetings,' Paul salutes his brothers and sisters in Christ with 'grace to you – and peace.'" Fee

Verses 3-8

The salutations in Paul's letters are commonly followed by a thanksgiving. The thanksgiving anticipates the contents of the letter itself.

Verses 3-8 are a single convoluted sentence in Paul's Greek.

Verse 3

Εὐχαριστῶ τῷ θεῷ μου ἐπὶ πάσῃ τῇ μνεῖᾳ
ὑμῶν

εὐχαριστω thank, give thanks
μνεια, ας f remembrance, mention

It is just possible that the Greek could mean 'because of *your* every remembrance [of me]' – ἐπι has the sense 'on the basis of' in v.5. But the traditional view, 'at all *my* remembrance of *you*' is the more likely, particularly in context.

His remembrance of them would have included all that is recorded of his work in Philippi in Acts 16.

Verse 4

πάντοτε ἐν πάσῃ δεήσει μου ὑπὲρ πάντων ὑμῶν, μετὰ χαρᾶς τὴν δέησιν ποιούμενος,

παντοτε always

χαρα the first of 16 occurrences of this word in this letter.

δεησις, εως f prayer, plea

Some suggest that ὑπὲρ παντων ὑμων is to be connected with the εὐχαριστω of the previous verse.

"Not only is he a man of prayer, but a man whose prayer is filled with thanksgiving as with petition, and whose thanksgiving is for God's people, for whom Paul himself feels deep and passionate longing... Here, then, is the paradigm of Pauline spirituality: thanksgiving and prayer, filled with joy, on behalf of *all* of God's people in Philippi." Fee. It is good when our prayers are marked by thanksgiving for *all* whom we name in prayer.

Verse 5

ἐπὶ τῇ κοινωνίᾳ ὑμῶν εἰς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον ἀπὸ τῆς πρώτης ἡμέρας ἄχρι τοῦ νῦν,

κοινωνια, ας f fellowship, sharing in, participation

This term is used by Paul in 2 Cor 9:13 and Rom 15:26 for (financial) 'contribution' to Paul's Gospel work – and it could have that sense here (cf. 4:15-16). But the term seems here to be used in a more general sense. Eadie takes it in the wider sense of 'participation' (cf v.7): "Thus understood, it denotes participation, or community of interest in whatever had the gospel for its object. All that belonged to the defence and propagation of the gospel was a matter of common concern to them – of sympathy and co-operation. The pecuniary contributions sent to the apostle and acknowledged in this epistle, are, of necessity, included." Fee thinks that the meaning is that they are contending for the gospel *in Philippi* as Paul does *in Rome*. So they both participate in the one work of spreading the gospel.

εὐαγγελιον, ου n good news, gospel

"It does not take much reading of Paul's letters to recognise that the gospel is the singular passion of his life; that passion is the glue that in particular holds this letter together." Fee

πρωτος, η, ον first, leading, foremost
ἄχρι until, as far as

Verse 6

πεποιθὼς αὐτὸ τοῦτο ὅτι ὁ ἐναρξάμενος ἐν ὑμῖν ἔργον ἀγαθὸν ἐπιτελέσει ἄχρι ἡμέρας Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ·

πεποιθως Verb, perf act ptc, m nom sπειθω persuade; perf act & pass have confidence, be confident

πεποιθως αὐτο τουτο 'since I have this very confidence'. For this construction cf. Gal 2:10; 2 Cor 2:3.

Motyer draws attention to the connection with the previous verse: "It was when he recollected their partnership in the gospel (verse 5) that he was led on to express his certainty of their eternal security ... In other words, Christian assurance is the product not only of the truth that God will never forsake his people or let them slip from his grasp, but also arises from certain observable facts which give immediate evidence that these individuals in particular are true members of the people of God."

ἐναρξάμενος Verb, aor midd dep ptc, m nom s ἐναρχομαι (deponent) begin, make a beginning

ἀγαθος, η, ον good, useful, fitting

The 'good work' of the gospel, realised in them by God. This is the foundation of their 'participation' in the gospel.

ἐπιτελεω complete, accomplish

Paul's confidence is expressed in the face of his awareness of the opposition they already experience and his fear that they may suffer further attacks upon the gospel. It is a confidence that is rooted not in circumstances but in God.

The work that his goodness began
the arm of his strength will complete;
His promise is yea and amen,
and never was forfeited yet.

Toplady

The work of grace in the believer has its beginnings in an act of God (cf. Acts 16:14 for reference to the Lord opening Lydia's heart) and we may be confident that he will never leave a work half finished.

"Believers in Christ are people of the future, a sure future that has already begun in the present. They are 'citizens of heaven' (3:20), who live the life of heaven, the life of the future, in the present in whatever circumstances they find themselves. To lose this future orientation, and especially to lose the sense of 'straining towards what is ahead, toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called us heavenward' (3:13-14), is to lose too much. Thus, triggered by their present gift, Paul digresses momentarily to remind them that even in the midst of present difficulties, God has in Christ both guaranteed their future and blessed their present situation in Philippi." Fee

Verse 7

καθώς ἐστὶν δίκαιον ἔμοι τοῦτο φρονεῖν ὑπὲρ πάντων ὑμῶν, διὰ τὸ ἔχειν με ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ ὑμᾶς, ἐν τε τοῖς δεσμοῖς μου καὶ ἐν τῇ ἀπολογία καὶ βεβαιώσει τοῦ εὐαγγελίου συγκοινωνοῦς μου τῆς χάριτος πάντας ὑμᾶς ὄντας·

δίκαιος, α, ον righteous, just

Here 'quite right,' 'proper'

ἐμοὶ Pronoun, dat s ἐγώ

τουτο 'this way' "probably refers to the whole sentence [beginning at v.3] to this point." Fee

φρονεω think, have in mind

Having or developing a certain 'mindset.'

δια το ἔχειν με ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ ὑμᾶς The infinitive takes two accusatives and it is therefore impossible to judge which is subject and which object simply by case. The proximity of με to the verb, and the general context, indicate that it should be read "I have you in my heart" rather than "You have me in your heart."

δεσμος, ου m (& n) chain, imprisonment
ἀπολογία, ας f verbal defence, defence
βεβαιωσις, εως f confirmation, establishing firmly

ἀπολογία and βεβαιωσις have a single definite article linking them together as two aspects of one activity: a negative aspect, defending against prejudice and false accusation; a positive aspect, declaring and establishing the truth.

εὐαγγελιον, ου n good news, gospel
συγκοινωνος, ου m sharer, participant

'Both in my bonds and in my defence and maintenance of the gospel, you are all participants with me in grace.' "If it is a privilege to preach Christ, it is not less of a privilege to suffer for Him: cf. v.29." Lightfoot

How are the Philippians participants in 'the grace' of Paul's imprisonment and defence of the gospel? "The language and the context suggest that Paul minimally has in mind their most recent 'sharing with him in the gospel,' by means of a material gift while he was in prison. That, after all, is the immediate cause of his thanksgiving. Nonetheless, in light of how the rest of the letter unfolds, he seems here also to be embracing them for their long-term association with him in the gospel – by their helping him to share the gospel in other settings to be sure, but also by their own activity in Philippi, especially in the face of similar hostility to his. The hostility, after all, comes from the empire itself, of which they are both citizens, both of whom are now in trouble because they hold allegiance to a citizenship in which Lord Christ holds sway even – especially – over Lord Caesar." Fee

Verse 8

μάρτυς γάρ μου ὁ θεός, ὡς ἐπιποθῶ πάντας ὑμᾶς ἐν σπλάγχνοις Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ.

μαρτυς, μαρτυρος m witness

"This is one of several such oaths in Paul's letters, where he wishes to emphasise a point that usually has to do with his own thinking or feelings. God must serve as witness, of course, because this is a matter of the heart, and only God can know his heart in this way. In effect, he says to them, 'God himself knows how I feel about you.'" Fee

ἐπιποθεω long for, desire

It is not that he longs for something from them, he longs after them. Note the continual repetition of 'you all.'

σπλάγχνον, ου n one's inmost self, affections, heart

His longing for them and for the continuation of God's work in them is one with Christ's longing for them. "A powerful metaphor describing perfect union. The believer has no yearnings apart from his Lord; his pulse beats with the pulse of Christ; his heart throbs with the heart of Christ." Lightfoot

Verses 9-11

Paul now tells the Philippians the substance of his prayers. Although he is confident of God's continuing work in them, yet he prays for them. The two are not contradictory but complementary. "Paul's prayer for them is that they may live the life of the future in the present, so that they might thereby be blameless at its consummation on the day of Christ. The concern is with present life in Christ; the orientation is toward its consummation – that they live for Christ now, and do so in the light of the coming Day." Fee

Verse 9

καὶ τοῦτο προσεύχομαι ἵνα ἡ ἀγάπη ὑμῶν ἔτι μᾶλλον καὶ μᾶλλον περισσεύῃ ἐν ἐπιγνώσει καὶ πάσῃ αἰσθήσει,

προσευχομαι pray

The love, ἀγάπη, is the root and sustaining power of the κοινωνία: thus the love spoken of here is love for Christ, love for his work, love for his people, love for the gospel... It is this love that is evident also in Paul (v.8). Fee, drawing on the similar expression in 1 Thess 3:12, suggests that the primary emphasis is upon love *for others*.

ἔτι still, yet, moreover

μᾶλλον adv more

περισσεύω increase, abound, excel

ἐπιγνώσις, εως f knowledge

αἰσθησις, εως f insight, judgement

Here only in the NT.

"While ἐπιγνώσις deals with general principles, αἰσθησις is concerned with practical application." Lightfoot
The first deals with knowledge of the truth, particularly the truth concerning God, while the second is moral discernment and insight, the application of truth to life.

Verse 10

εἰς τὸ δοκιμάζειν ὑμᾶς τὰ διαφέροντα, ἵνα ἦτε εἰλικρινεῖς καὶ ἀπρόσκοποι εἰς ἡμέραν Χριστοῦ,

The two purpose clauses in this verse express: i) immediate purpose, and ii) ultimate purpose.

δοκιμάζω test, examine, prove, discern
διαφέρω be worth more than, be superior to

'Discern what is best' or 'discern what counts' – make proper assessments about how they should live as disciples of Christ; discern the things that matter and what do not.

εἰλικρινής, ες pure

The meaning of the term is 'not mixed (with any impurity).' Could here refer to unmixed motives, following the thought of v.9.

ἀπρόσκοπος, ον blameless, faultless

Not causing any offence, not causing any to stumble.

Cf. end of verse 6. As Christ will continue his work in them so it will result in their faultless presentation before him. εἰς here expresses direction – a goal which must govern their conduct *now*, cf. 3:12-14.

Verse 11

πεπληρωμένοι καρπὸν δικαιοσύνης τὸν διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ εἰς δόξαν καὶ ἔπαινον θεοῦ.

πεπληρωμένοι Verb, perf pass ptc, m nom pl
πληρωω fill

καρπος, ου m fruit, harvest, outcome

δικαιοσυνη, ης f righteousness

The phrase 'fruit of righteousness' is taken from the Old Testament, see Prov. 11:30; Amos 6:12; see also James 3:18. The OT background and the context here suggest that the sense is 'fruit that *consists in* righteousness,' rather than 'fruit that *comes from* righteousness.' The call is to display the righteous behaviour fitting to one who is in Christ. In the context of this letter it is a call to the Christ-like life of a servant – the cruciform life.

"What Paul wants is for them to stand on *that* day 'full of the fruit of righteousness.' But to do so they must *now* be *living out* such righteousness." Fee

Christian righteousness is the result of the life of Christ in the life of the Christian (cf. Gal 2:20).

δόξα, ης f glory

ἔπαινος, ου m praise

Cf. Eph 1:6. The glory of God is the proper end of the work of Christ, including his work in the believer.

Postscript on Paul's Prayer

"Here is one who has a keen sense of priorities in Christ, and is concerned when those in his care grow slack in some areas. That this prayer anticipates so much of the letter itself tells us much about Paul in prayer. Before talking to them about some matters that need an 'increase,' he talks to God about them – and tells them so. We could learn much here." Fee

Verses 12-14

Paul now speaks of his circumstances. The Philippians knew of his imprisonment. He wants to allay their fears by showing them that he continues to be in God's hands and that even his present circumstances, like those of his imprisonment in Philippi, are planned by God for the furtherance of the Gospel. His words are designed also to encourage the Philippians in the face of the similar trials which they are experiencing (1:30) – he provides them with a model of how the believers at Philippi should respond to such difficulties.

Vs 12-14 form a single sentence in the Greek.

Verse 12

Γινώσκειν δὲ ὑμᾶς βούλομαι, ἀδελφοί, ὅτι τὰ κατ' ἐμὲ μᾶλλον εἰς προκοπὴν τοῦ εὐαγγελίου ἐλήλυθεν,

βούλομαι want, desire, wish

τα κατ ἐμὲ my circumstances (cf. Eph 6:21; Col 4:7). Cf. the balancing τα περι ὑμῶν in v.27.

What were the things that had happened to Paul? He had nearly been lynched by a mob in Jerusalem and had scarcely escaped a flogging in a Roman prison (Acts 22:22ff). He had been the subject of an assassination plot (23:12ff), had been kept languishing in prison at the whim of a local official craving popularity or seeking financial gain (24:26,27), had survived storm and shipwreck only to be delivered into imprisonment in Rome. And all this, says Paul, has turned out for the advance of the Gospel. Here, Paul's primary reference is to his current imprisonment – note the repeated phrase 'my chains' in vv. 13, 14, 17.

μᾶλλον adv more; rather

προκοπή, ης f progress, advancement
ἐλήλυθεν Verb, perf act indic, 3 s ἐρχομαι

The Philippians might have thought that Paul's imprisonment would have put a stop to his Gospel work. The reverse has proved to be the case.

Verse 13

ὥστε τοὺς δεσμούς μου φανεροὺς ἐν Χριστῷ γενέσθαι ἐν ὄλῳ τῷ πραιτωρίῳ καὶ τοῖς λοιποῖς πᾶσιν,

ὥστε so that, with the result that

"The conjunction ὥστε is followed by the infinitive denoting result." Eadie

δεσμός v.7

φανερὸς, α, ον known, evident, plain

Eadie argues that the words φανεροὺς ἐν Χριστῷ belong together i.e. "it has become evident that it is for the sake of Christ that I am imprisoned." (so NIV rather than AV). Fee suggests that the awkwardness of the phrase may be the result of Paul seeking to express something more, something about the nature of discipleship. "He probably means something like, 'it has become clear that I am in chains because I am a man *in Christ*, and that my chains are in part a manifestation of my discipleship as one who is thereby participating in the sufferings of Christ himself.'"

ὅλος, η, ον whole, all, entire

πραιτωριον, ου n palace guard

The word may mean the palace of a king or judgement hall of the praetor. Here it seems to mean the barracks of the imperial guard, and thereby the guards themselves (this was the common usage of the term in later writings). Paul's testimony was well known among the guards who by shift came to keep charge of him. And through such guards, and also other visitors (cf. Acts 28:30,31) his testimony became widely known throughout the barracks, among the Roman authorities and maybe throughout the city.

λοιπος, η, ον rest, remaining, other

Verse 14

καὶ τοὺς πλείονας τῶν ἀδελφῶν ἐν κυρίῳ πεποιθότας τοῖς δεσμοῖς μου περισσοτέρως τολμᾶν ἀφόβως τὸν λόγον λαλεῖν.

πλειων, πλειον most, the majority, many

των ἀδελφων i.e. the believers in Rome.

Lightfoot, Eadie and Fee argue that ἐν κυρίῳ belongs with πεποιθότας and not with τῶν ἀδελφοί as read by AV (and NIV).

πεποιθότας Verb, perf act ptc, m acc pl πειθω persuade; perf have confidence, be confident

περισσοτέρως adv all the more, to a greater degree

τολμᾶν Verb, pres act infin τολμαω dare, be brave

ἀφοβως without fear

λαλεω speak, talk

λογον λαλειν the text here is uncertain. This shorter reading is rather weakly supported. There are several longer readings. Metzger writes, "It must be acknowledged that, on the basis of weight and variety of external evidence, the reading λογον του θεου λαλειν seems to be preferable. Because, however, the position and wording of the genitive modifiers vary, a majority of the Committee preferred the reading λογον λαλειν as that which best explains the other readings, which have the appearance of scribal expansions."

Paul's imprisonment might have been expected to discourage others, but, on the contrary, most were encouraged by Paul's readiness to endure imprisonment for the Gospel and by his determination to continue to testify of Christ even though in chains. "The sight of the apostle inspired them with his own heroism." Eadie.

Fee draws attention to the historical situation in Rome. "Nero's madness was peaking and the church there had begun to fall under suspicion, as Nero's pogrom against them just a couple of years later bears witness. The present situation in Rome for the followers of Christ had perhaps (understandably) led them to a more quiescent form of evangelism than was usual for early Christians. For good reason, then, Paul joyfully explains to the Philippian believers that the net effect of his own imprisonment has been to give their Roman brothers and sisters extraordinary courage to proclaim Christ, at the heart of the empire itself, where storm clouds are brewing."

Verse 15

Τινες μὲν καὶ διὰ φθόνον καὶ ἔριν, τινες δὲ καὶ δι' εὐδοκίαν τὸν Χριστὸν κηρῦσσοῦσιν·

φθονος, ου m envy, jealousy, spite
ἐρις, ιδος f strife, rivalry

Lightfoot believes these may have been members of the Judaizing party who call down the apostle's rebuke in 3:2ff. Eadie thinks simply an anti-Pauline faction (see below).

εὐδοκία, ας f good will, pleasure, favour, desire

κηρῦσσω preach, proclaim

Those spoken of here are probably the πλειονες of v.14.

Verses 16 & 17

The 16th and 17th verses are transposed in the Received Text but with very little textual evidence to support that ordering.

Verse 16

οἱ μὲν ἐξ ἀγάπης, εἰδότες ὅτι εἰς ἀπολογίαὶν τοῦ εὐαγγελίου κεῖμαι,

'Love' here is love *for Paul*.

εἰδότες Verb, perf act ptc, m nom pl οἶδα
(verb perf in form but with present meaning) know, understand

ἀπολογία v.7

κεῖμαι lie; stand; be destined or appointed for

Motyer says that the term used here is a military term. Just as the praetorian guards were *set* to guard him by shift, so Paul himself, as a man under authority, was *set* for the defence of the Gospel. Paul was on guard just as much as were his captors.

"As they well knew that he had been set for the defence of the gospel, they felt that they could not better prove their love to him than by appreciating his vocation, acting in his spirit, and seeking, above all things, to realise the noble end to which he had devoted his life." Eadie. Cf. what Paul says concerning the Philippians partnership in the Gospel, vv 5,7.

Verse 17

οἱ δὲ ἐξ ἐριθείας τὸν Χριστὸν καταγγέλλουσιν, οὐχ ἄγνως, οἰόμενοι θλίψιν ἐγείρειν τοῖς δεσμοῖς μου.

ἐριθεια, ας f selfishness, selfish ambition

Party spirit, or a mercenary spirit.

καταγγελλω proclaim, preach

No difference of meaning between this and κηρῦσσω

ἄγνως adv with pure motive

"They did God's work in the devil's spirit."

Eadie

οἰομαι, οἰμαι suppose, think

θλίψις, εως f trouble, suffering

ἐγείρω raise

δεσμος v.7

Eadie argues that these were not Judaizers since Paul speaks of them as preaching Christ and does not condemn them as he did those in Galatia. Eadie thinks that the 'suffering' Paul speaks of is not the same as his bonds/imprisonment but is mental anguish: they thought to cause Paul anguish in addition to his bonds. Eadie suggests that they were Jewish Christians (not Judaizers), perhaps similar to those in Corinth who said that they were "of Cephas". They were "a company of believing Jews, who held the essential doctrines of the gospel, but [were] combative on points of inferior value, and ... were bitter and unscrupulous antagonists of the apostle." They may have thought Paul's imprisonment their opportunity to further their party. Fee adopts a similar view, suggesting that Paul's earlier letter to the Romans shows that there were divisions between Jewish and Gentile believers at Rome. He suggests that these divisions had not entirely been healed by Paul's letter and that it is now a Jewish faction who are taking advantage of Paul's imprisonment to seek to advance their own cause. Fee believes them to be evangelising Jews and seeking to keep Jewish believers faithful to the Mosaic law. They are not seeking to impose Jewish law-code on Gentile believers otherwise Paul's response to them would have been more hostile (cf. 3:2).

Verse 18

τί γάρ; πλὴν ὅτι παντὶ τρόπῳ, εἴτε προφάσει
εἴτε ἀληθείᾳ, Χριστὸς καταγγέλλεται, καὶ ἐν
τούτῳ χαίρω· ἀλλὰ καὶ χαρήσομαι,

τι γαρ What then?

πλην nevertheless, however

τροπος, ου m way, manner

ειτε if, whether

προφασις, εως f false motive, pretence

αληθεια, ας f truth, reality

χαίρω rejoice, be glad

Paul's concern was not for himself or for his own cause but for Christ.

χαρήσομαι Verb, fut pass dep indic, 1 s

χαίρω

The beginning of a new thought which continues in vv 19 & 20.

Verse 19

οἶδα γὰρ ὅτι τοῦτό μοι ἀποβήσεται εἰς
σωτηρίαν διὰ τῆς ὑμῶν δεήσεως καὶ
ἐπιχορηγίας τοῦ πνεύματος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ,

οἶδα know

What is the 'this' which will result in his salvation? Various opinions are expressed by commentators, some rather odd. It is perhaps best to understand it simply of the sum total of his present circumstances – as Rom 8:28, and as Paul had said of the Philippians in verse 6 above.

ἀποβήσεται Verb, fut midd dep indic, 3 s

ἀποβαινω result (in)

σωτηρια, ας f salvation

Does not necessarily mean his physical deliverance from prison. The meaning is expanded by the thought of the following verse. Fee draws attention to the parallel between this phrase and Job 13:16 and suggests that Paul is echoing Job's expectation that he will be *vindicated*.

δεησις, εως f prayer, plea

ἐπιχορηγια, ας f supply, support, help

ἐπιχορηγιας του πνευματος – is the genitive του πνευματος subjective or objective? Is the Spirit the giver or the gift? Lightfoot thinks that since the phrase will bear either sense, both are intended.

Eadie and Fee both argue that the Spirit is the gift. Eadie writes, "The apostle's thought seems to be that the supply of the Spirit to him would be the result of their prayers for him." Fee points to the parallel with Gal 3:5 and comments, "Paul knows that Christ will be glorified in his life or death only as he is filled with the Spirit of Christ himself. That is, it is Christ resident in him by the Spirit who will be the cause of Paul's – and therefore the gospel's – not being brought to shame and of Christ being magnified through him."

Verse 20

κατὰ τὴν ἀποκαταδοκίαν καὶ ἐλπίδα μου ὅτι ἐν
οὐδενὶ αἰσχυνθήσομαι, ἀλλ' ἐν πάσῃ παρρησίᾳ
ὡς πάντοτε καὶ νῦν μεγαλυνθήσεται Χριστὸς
ἐν τῷ σώματί μου, εἴτε διὰ ζωῆς εἴτε διὰ
θανάτου.

The κατα points back to what precedes: 'My knowledge that it shall issue in my salvation is based upon ...'

ἀποκαταδοκια, ας f eager longing, deep desire, expectation

ἐλπις, ιδος f hope

Qualifies the previous noun by grounding expectation in the certainty of Biblical hope.

οὐδεις, οὐδεμα, οὐδεν no one, nothing

αἰσχυνθήσομαι Verb, fut pass dep indic, 1 s

αἰσχυνομαι be ashamed, be made

ashamed

Cf. Rom 5:4 and context which, though using a slightly different form of the verb, expresses similar convictions. Fee suggests that Paul is "picking up a motif from the Psalms, where the same words ('shame' and 'be exalted') often stand in collocation (e.g., Ps 34:3-5 [LXX 33:4-6]; 35:26-27 [LXX 34:26-27])."

παρρησια, ας f boldness, assurance
παντοτε always
μεγαλυνθήσεται Verb, fut pass indic, 3 s
μεγαλυνω enlarge, make or declare
great, praise

"The meaning here is that Christ should be evinced in His greatness – disclosed in his majesty." Eadie

σωμα, τος n body
ειτε if, whether
ζωη, ης f life

I.e. his deliverance.

θανατος, ου m death

Verse 21

ἐμοὶ γὰρ τὸ ζῆν Χριστὸς καὶ τὸ ἀποθανεῖν κέρδος.

Many commentators, including Calvin, treat κέρδος as governing the whole sentence – 'for me in life and in death Christ is gain.' This is not the natural meaning of these words. The traditional translation, 'for me, to live is Christ and to die is gain' reflects the natural meaning and fits with what follows.

ἐμοὶ Pronoun, dat s ἐγώ
ζῶ live, be alive

Cf. Gal 2:20. For Paul, his devotion to Christ so dominated his life that it may be characterised as Christ living in him and pursuing his ends through him.

ἀποθνήσκω die, face death
κέρδος, ους n gain

We often speak of death as a loss, and so indeed is the death of a loved one to those left bereft. But for the Christian, death is gain for it is to be with Christ, which is better by far (v.23). For all that Paul now considered 'gain' see 3:4ff. Death, for him, will be entering totally into the possession of all that he now counts gain – it will be to gain *Christ* in an ultimate and complete sense (cf. v.23).

Verse 22

εἰ δὲ τὸ ζῆν ἐν σαρκί, τοῦτό μοι καρπὸς ἔργου – καὶ τί αἰρήσομαι οὐ γνωρίζω·

σαρξ, σαρκος f flesh, physical body
καρπος, ου m fruit, grain, harvest,
outcome, offspring

καρπος ἔργου 'fruitful labour.'

αἰρεομαι choose, prefer
γνωρίζω know

Lightfoot suggests the disjointed grammar reflects the apostle's hesitancy as he does not know what to prefer. He thinks the meaning of the verse is, "But if my living in the flesh will be fruitful through a laborious career, then what to choose I know not."

Fee takes a different view. He says that the sense could be either:

- If [it is] 'to live' in the flesh, *then* this for me [means] fruitful labour; and which I shall choose, I cannot tell. Or,
- If 'to live' in the flesh this [means] fruitful labour for me, *then* what I shall choose, I cannot tell.

Fee, contrary to Lightfoot, prefers the former.

"Here the apostle asks himself whether it would be better for him to live or to die. This question has often presented itself to us, and perhaps we have answered as the apostle did; but, it is to be feared, in a very different feeling. When we have desired death, it rather meant, 'I know not which is most fearful, the afflictions of life, from which death would deliver me, or the terrors of death, from which life preserves me;' that is to say, that life and death appear like two evils, between which we do not know which is the least. To the apostle they appeared as two immense blessings, of which he doubted which was the greatest." Adolphe Monod, *Farewell to his Friends and to the Church* (New York: Robert Carter and Brothers, 1858), p.9

Verse 23

συνέχομαι δὲ ἐκ τῶν δύο, τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν ἔχων εἰς τὸ ἀναλῦσαι καὶ σὺν Χριστῷ εἶναι, πολλῶ γὰρ μᾶλλον κρεῖσσον,

συνεχω hem in, hold prisoner; pass. be
occupied with

"I am hemmed in between the two" Lightfoot

δυσ gen & acc δυο two
ἐπιθυμια, ας f desire, longing
ἀναλω return home, depart

Lightfoot suggests that this term, which is used of breaking up camp, reflects the camp-life of the Israelites in the wilderness in contrast with their permanent dwellings in the promised land. Motyer adds that Paul, the old tent-maker, "resorts to the language of his trade... Camp-life is exchanged at death for home-life with Christ." Cf 2 Cor 5:1ff.

εἶναι Verb, pres infin εἶμι
μαλλον adv more; rather
κρειττον and κρεισσον adv. better

πολλῶ γὰρ μάλλον κρείσσον "for it is much by far better." Eadie

Verse 24

τὸ δὲ ἐπιμένειν ἐν τῇ σαρκὶ ἀναγκαιότερον δι' ὑμᾶς.

ἐπιμενω remain, stay, persist in

σαρξ see v.22

ἀναγκαιότερος, α, ον (comparitive from ἀναγκαιος, α, ον) more necessary, more pressing, more urgent

"Departure is better, stay more necessary; the one better for himself and the other more necessary for the churches." Eadie

Verse 25

καὶ τοῦτο πεποιθῶς οἶδα ὅτι μενῶ καὶ παραμενῶ πᾶσιν ὑμῖν εἰς τὴν ὑμῶν προκοπὴν καὶ χαρὰν τῆς πίστεως,

πεποιθῶς Verb, perf act ptc, m nom s πειθῶ persuade; perf have confidence, be confident

μενῶ Verb, fut act indic, 1 s μενω remain, stay, abide

παραμενῶ Verb, fut act indic, 1 s παραμενω remain, continue in office, serve

Note the use again of the adjective 'all' when Paul mentions the Philippian believers. "This otherwise unnecessary mention of 'all' most likely points to the friction that is currently at work among them." Fee

προκοπή, ης f progress, advancement
πίστις, εως f faith

Belongs with both of the previous nouns. "These two words together summarise his concerns for them in this letter: the first refers to the quality or character of their life in Christ, and especially to their 'advancing,' moving forward, in such; the second denotes the quality of their experience of it. And both of these are 'with regard to the faith,' which may refer to their own faith in Christ, as in 2:17, but in this context more likely refers to the gospel itself." Fee

Verse 26

ἵνα τὸ καύχημα ὑμῶν περισσεύῃ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ ἐν ἐμοὶ διὰ τῆς ἐμῆς παρουσίας πάλιν πρὸς ὑμᾶς.

καύχημα, τος n boasting, pride

περισευω increase, abound, excel

"Although a bit strained in its expression, the sense of this clause is straightforward enough. The occasion of Paul's coming to them again (thus 'in me') will cause their 'glorying/boasting' to overflow, and all of this takes place 'in Christ Jesus.' This is how Christ's being glorified 'through life' (v.20) is to find fulfilment." Fee

ἐμοὶ Pronoun, dat s ἐγω

ἐμος, η, ον 1st pers possessive adj my, mine

παρουσία, ας f coming, arrival, presence

πάλιν again, once more

"The return of the released prisoner to Philippi would be of incalculable benefit. It would furnish occasion for deeper and more extended lessons on Christianity, so as that their faith might make progress, and its joy might be resuscitated, and this possession of a faith conscious of progress and buoyant with gladness, would furnish matter of abundant boasting in Christ Jesus, through the apostle's visit." Eadie

Eadie discusses the difficulty of reconciling Paul's words in v.25 with Acts 20:25. He points out that the contradiction is not eased by the supposition of two imprisonments separated by a period of freedom during which Paul may have visited them: that would still be contrary to Act 20:25. Eadie suggests that Paul had no revelation concerning what might be the outcome of his imprisonment and therefore is merely expressing his hopes, sometimes optimistically while at other times less so.