

# Notes on

## Paulus' Letter to the Filippians

### Authorship and Date:

There is some dispute about when this letter was written, although there is no dispute that it was written by Paulus of Tarsus. Some scholars place the date as late as 63 CE, near the end of Acts, while others place its composition several years earlier.

Proponents of the later date suggest that Paulus' imprisonment was his final Roman incarceration. Since Paulus wrote the letter with Timotheos, it could not have been written any earlier than Acts 16, when Timotheos met Paulus. In the letter, Paulus refers to his bonds. This may have been his short time of imprisonment while he was in Filippi (ch. 16), or it may have been one of his later, longer, times of bondage.

At any rate, Paulus refers to his departure from Makedonia (4:15), which places the writing of the letter no earlier than Acts 17. We date the writing just after his defense before the Jews in ch. 22-4, during his time with Felix. This would date the writing c. 58 CE. This is the date that John A.T. Robinson ascribes it. Whatever the case, it was one of Paulus' later letters, and the NET places it last.

Nevertheless, the themes are the same as usual: Judaizers and other Christians are at odds with one another. At Filippi, there was a great deal of dissention being caused by the Jews, who were pushing not only adherence to the Torah but also circumcision. The letter is a very emotional one, riding on highs--praising God, and expressing great anger as well (particularly in ch. 3). If our estimate of the time of writing (shortly after the Jews arrested Paulus) is accurate, this may have added to the already-existing tension that Paulus felt.

### Commentary:

*Paulus and Timotheos, slaves of Anointed Jesus,  
To all of those holy ones in Anointed Jesus who are in Filippi, together with overseers  
and servants.*

This is the traditional greeting, with a seemingly minor addition. As we will see soon, Paulus is going to emphasize the internalization of the Torah message, as explained by Jesus. In his greeting, he mentions the overseers and servants in the area, whose task it was to make sure that the poor Christians were being fed. This mention serves as subtle recognition of the love that the Filippians showed toward one another and the commitment that they had toward demonstrating that love.

**1:2** *Hello to you, and peace from God our Father and Lord Anointed Jesus.  
I thank my God about every memory of you, always, in my every prayer on behalf*

*of all of you, as I make the prayer with joy because of your sharing in the good message. From the first day to the present, I have been persuaded of this same thing: that the one who began a good deed in you will be completing it until the day of Anointed Jesus.*

Their conversion had occurred at the beginning of Paulus' first trip. In fact, they were the first in the region (Ac 16:11-15) to embrace Jesus as Messiah. The "good deed" that God began through Paulus was the introduction of Jesus' teachings, internalizing the Torah to the principles of trust and love. Paulus expresses confidence that his readers will continue to grow in those areas.

"The day of Anointed Jesus" refers to the time of judgment on Israel. Their love will be a distinction between the Filippian Christians and their non-Christian Jewish opponents all the way through to that time, when Priestly Judaism would be removed. Paulus refers to the coming judgment on account of the problems that they were having with Judaizers, pointing ahead to the eventual judgment (and vindication for the readers) rather than focusing on the present distress. The judgment served to separate them from the non-Christian Jews, and it was the core teaching of Jesus, about love, which created this distinction.

*It is certainly right for me to have this attitude about all of you, on account of your holding me in your hearts, both while I was in my bonds and in the defense and confirmation of the good message--all of you shared the gift together with me. For God is a witness of how I yearn for all of you with the deep feelings of Anointed Jesus.*

Paulus' relationship with the group was a close one, and here he expresses his gratitude for their continuing support. The "defense" is mentioned because it refers explicitly to his successful defense of the message of Jesus before the Jewish people (Ac 22), thus reminding the readers of the truth of that message and of their own relationship with someone who was making a public stand for the teachings of the Messiah.

*And I pray this: that your love may yet be more and more abundant in recognition and all perception to the point of examining what things mean, so that you may be sincere and not a cause of stumbling until the day of the Anointed One, after being filled with the fruit of Right which exists through Anointed Jesus to God's glory and my praise.*

The "recognition and perception" to which Paulus refers is their acceptance and understanding of the internal Torah. If they would do this, then they would continue to grow in love (the "fruit of Right") and would not face the judgment that was soon to come on Priestly Judaism.

**12** *Now I wish you to know, brothers, that the things which relate to me transpired rather for the progress of the good message. And so, my bonds in the Anointed One became apparent in the Praetorium and everywhere else. And the majority of the brothers in the lord were persuaded by my bonds to be more abundantly emboldened to speak the message fearlessly. Indeed, certain ones do this also on account of envy and strife, but some also are heralding the Anointed*

*One on account of goodwill. Indeed, these ones are doing it out of love, knowing that I have been placed here for the defense of the good message. But those who are announcing the Anointed One out of bigotry, not purely, are thinking to raise the affliction of my bonds.*

The conflict between the Jewish leaders and Paulus was well known throughout gentile Christendom at the time. Paulus wants his friends in Filippi to recognize that his arrest and detention is not necessarily a bad thing, for he wants the readers to maintain a proper attitude. At the end of his defense, Paulus had made an appeal to his Roman citizenship (Ac 22:25f.), causing him to be brought before the governor of the region (Felix, Ac 24:10ff.). During his stay with Felix, Paulus was able to spread the message still further, and so in his eyes his incarceration has served the message well.

Paulus acknowledges that some people are spreading the message of the internal Torah in order to divide the Jewish people and cause more animosity toward him, but on the other hand many people have become genuine adherents of the message of love. Paulus views his time in prison as having one purpose: to make a defense of the message, causing it to spread even further.

The "bigotry" to which our author refers is the party-spirit or factiousness of the Judaizers, who oppose the admission of gentiles to the covenant without circumcision and the consolidation of the written statutes of the Torah into the divine attribute of love.

*For what? It is still true that in every way, whether in deception or in truth, the Anointed One is being announced. I rejoice also in this, and I will continue to rejoice. Now I know that this will result for salvation for me, on account of your asking and a supply of the spirit of Anointed Jesus. This is according to my assumption and hope that I will be disgraced by nothing, but (as always) that in all freedom of speech the Anointed One will be magnified in my body--whether through life or through death.*

The author wants his readers to focus away from any animosity that they might hold for the Judaizers, most of whom they probably knew personally. If Paulus rejoices, they should rejoice.

"Result in salvation" refers most likely to his release from imprisonment. Paulus was convinced that if he continued to defend the message with the same spirit (mental attitude and emotional strength) that Jesus showed, then because so many Christians were asking for his release, he would indeed be released. Yet he expresses the possibility that he might die in prison, which is something that the Filippians feared. Yes, it might happen, he acknowledges, but even if it does, Paulus would continue to speak freely until the end, and after his death, others would speak the message freely, so that if he were to die, the message would continue to grow. He himself was much less important than the message in his own estimation.

**21** *For to me living is the Anointed One, and dying is profit. And if I am living physically, this is a fruit of work for me, and I don't know what to choose! Now I have these two things together: I have the strong desire to be released from the*

*body and to be with the Anointed One (for this is a great advantage). But to stay on in the flesh is more abundantly needed on your account.*

It is plausible that Paulus is making a play on words here. Χριστος signifies the Anointed One, and for Paulus, his life means more service to the message of the Messiah. But χρηστος indicates "an advantage" -- something of benefit. Thus, either life or death is of benefit to Paulus. Thus, the comparison is "dying is profit." For dying would mean that he joined the Anointed One in God's presence.

As a comfort to his readers, Paulus portrays himself as so excited about either possibility -- living or dying for the message -- that he is unable to choose.

*And since I am persuaded of this, I know that I will stay and continue on with all of you for your progress and your joy in the faith, so that your boasting in Anointed Jesus may become abundant in me, through my presence again with you.*

Despite the wonder that lie ahead for Paulus in the afterlife, he realized that he was not about to die. This was true, although he would remain in Roman custody for several years prior to his eventual death. Apparently, he never did rejoin the Filippians as he had hoped.

**27** *Only be worthy citizens of the good message of the Anointed One, so that whether I come and see you or whether I am absent and hear things about you, I would hear that you are standing spiritually, working hard together as one soul for the faith of the good message, and that you are not frightened by anything from those who oppose you -- which is something that points out destruction to them but salvation to you. And this is from God, because it was freely given to you not only to trust in the Anointed One but also to suffer on his behalf. You are having the same agony which you saw in me and which you are now hearing about.*

Being "worthy citizens of the good message" meant living lives of love. Whether or not Paulus was ever able to join them again, as long as he lived, he wanted to hear that they were striving together to become more loving.

Their opponents wanted them to embrace a legalistic view of the Torah, and they had political clout and had imprisoned Paulus, but the readers should not worry about them, because the good message -- the internalization of the Torah -- created such a distinction between the two groups that it "pointed out destruction to them." Their way of life would be taken from them, but the Filippians' would remain, even if the readers would have to suffer through the next few years.

**2:1** *Therefore, if there is any comfort in the Anointed One,  
if there is any soothing to love,  
if there is any sharing of the breath--  
If anything I say has deep feelings and compassions, then make my joy complete,  
so that you would have the same attitude, having the same love, having united*

*souls, having this one thing in mind: to do nothing out of bigotry or worthless conceit. On the contrary, with a humble attitude regard one another as being superior to yourselves. Each person should not look after his own interests, but also the interests of others. For you should have this attitude in you that was also in Anointed Jesus:*

The comfort should come in knowing the things that he has just written. That is, they should be comforted because of the perspective they have -- that their sufferings are only temporary.

The Christian way of life should provide them with a "soothing" for their emotional distress. Consequently, if anything that Paulus has written so far has struck an emotional chord for them, then they should continue to emphasize love as the primary bond of all Christian relationships.

The "holy breath" provided them with another common bond, a proof that God had anointed Jesus and that the Christian teaching was blessed by God.

Therefore, Paulus provides them with the model for Christian relationship. First of all, their shared focus on the internal gospel should be a common bond for all of them. "This one thing" is translated this way in some translations but as "the one thing" in others. If "the one thing" is correct, it refers to love as the completion of the Torah and duty of humanity. If the "one thing" is what follows, this is still the meaning, for what follows is the comparison between love and self-centeredness. The word "attitude" is centrally important here, for it pervades all that follows.

Bigotry is the attitude of putting one's group first. Worthless conceit is the attitude of putting one's self first. Paulus says that in Christian relationship, there should be none of this "us first" or "me first" attitude. Instead, the attitude should be "YOU first." Each party in the friendship should regard the other as at least his equal. Each Christian should look out for everyone else's interests, instead of selfishly pursuing his own.

Finally, Paulus provides them with the example of Jesus' own attitude, an attitude of putting others first that all Christians should follow with respect to one another:

**6**     *who existed in God's form,  
but did not consider plundering to be like God.  
On the contrary, he emptied himself,  
taking a slave's form,  
having become in human likeness and being found in a human scheme.  
He humbled himself,  
becoming in subjection until death, even the death of the cross.*

The passage continues to be about **attitudes**. Here, Paulus contrasts the "me first" attitude with "you first," as Jesus' own life portrayed his servanthood.

Jesus was in "God's form" -- as the Messiah, he had authority, which was given to him from God (see Mt 28:18). He had the right, then, to put himself first. But even he did not even consider

trying to become like God. He didn't try to make himself supreme, realizing instead his own humanity.

There is a possible allusion to Adam in this passage. Not only was Adam faced with a similar decision -- to put himself first or follow God -- but also Adam's dilemma was whether to accept who he was or try to "be like God" -- a phrase that denotes seeking equality with God. Adam and Eve had succumbed to the temptation to "be like God, knowing good and evil" (Gen 3:5), but they discovered this knowledge by doing something evil. Although Jesus was faced with the same temptations (see, for example, Lk 4), he did not try to become God's equal. "Consider," here, means "hold in (any) regard." Jesus had no regard for the act of plunder that it would have meant for him "to be like God."

Instead, he "emptied himself." The phrase is the opposite of "filling himself," which would have signified becoming selfish to the point of disregarding others. Jesus disregarded even his own concerns, putting others ahead of himself as Paulus was urging the Filippians to do.

"Taking a slave's form" signifies adopting the attitude of someone who has no authority and who can only put others first. Although Jesus was our superior, he put others ahead of himself, setting an example and establishing a model for Christians.

Jesus had been made just like us both internally ("in human likeness") and externally ("human scheme"). The term "scheme" includes his emotions and manner. In other words, he had been made just like any other human being and was observed to be just like the rest of us. Consequently, the Filippians were capable of following his example of love, for he had been just like they were.

And what did he do? He emptied himself to the point of suffering a disgraceful death on behalf of others, in order to complete God's plan.

*So, God also lifted him up and freely gave him the name that is above every name, so that in Jesus' name every knee would bow (in the sky, on earth, and underground) and every tongue would acknowledge that the Lord is Anointed Jesus, to Father God's glory.*

Jesus had not tried to elevate himself, and so God rewarded his humility. And so, the author points out that there is a reward for such sacrificial love, although at least in Jesus' case that reward did not come here. Still, Jesus was made the superior of every human being. Everyone will acknowledge that their superior is Jesus, the Messiah, and this acknowledgement will glorify God. Paulus places this acknowledgement at the end of the judgment, for as Priestly Judaism ceased to exist but Christianity remained, people everywhere are portrayed as realizing that Jesus had been who he claimed to be. Of course, Paulus is extending his point in order to comfort and advise the Filippians. His immediate application is that the Filippians' opponents would realize who Jesus had been.

**12** *And so, my beloved, just as you always listened, not only when you were in my presence, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear*

*and trembling. For it is God who is working among you, that you would want and do things out of goodwill. Do all the things without grumbling or disputing, so that you will be blameless and harmless, blameless children in the midst of a crooked and misguided generation. Among them you appear like stars in the universe, holding to the message of life, for me to boast about in the day of Anointed Jesus--that I didn't run in vain or labor in vain.*

"Work out your salvation" refers to living by the spiritual Torah. The "salvation" in question is the judgment on Israel, and the Filippians would avoid such judgment if they lived in love, with relationships like Paulus just described.

Referring again to the judgment, Paulus advises them that if they do live according to the good message, they will be found blameless when their opponents are judged. Among the members of their generation, they shine like stars because they have "the message of life" -- the internal Torah.

When this judgment comes -- between 10 and 15 years from the time of writing -- their living in love (and not undergoing the judgment) would serve as proof that Paulus' work had had value. Furthermore, if he survived until that time, Paulus hoped to boast about their fidelity to God.

*But if I were also poured out as a sacrifice and temple service for your trust, I would rejoice alone and would rejoice together with all of you. Now for this same thing, rejoice alone also, and rejoice together with me. But I hope in Lord Jesus to send Timotheos to you quickly, so that I may also be happy in my soul to know the things about you.*

Acknowledging again that he might be dead by the time the judgment happens -- as indeed he was -- he explains that he will still rejoice on their behalf. Apparently, Timotheos was to carry this letter to them, and so Paulus hoped also to gain information from them about their own situation, but as he states below, he could not send Timotheos yet, for Paulus needed him.

*For I have no one whose soul is like his, who will care for your matters naturally. For everyone is seeking their own interests--not the interests of Anointed Jesus. But you know the proof about him--that as his father's child, he entered slavery with me for the good message. Therefore indeed, I hope to send him, immediately, as soon as I see how things go with me.*

Not knowing yet whether he would soon be released, Paulus wanted to wait until he knew more about his own situation. He needed Timotheos by his side until then, but afterward, Timotheos would care for the Filippians' needs without regard to personal gain, and Paulus recognized their need for someone like him. He praises Timotheos, his "son" in the faith, by pointing out to the readers that Timotheos has learned to be just like Paulus himself, as Paulus followed the Messiah and taught the good message.

**24** *Now I am confident in the Lord that I too will come quickly. But I regarded it as a necessity to send to you Epafroditus, my brother and coworker and fellow-*

*soldier but your envoy, and a religious servant of my need. I sent him since he was longing for all of you and was depressed because you heard that he was sick. For indeed he was sick, fully about to die, but God was merciful to him--not him only but also me--so that I would not have sorrow on top of sorrow. Therefore, I sent him more eagerly, so that when you see him again you might rejoice and I might be less sorrowful.*

*Therefore receive him in the Lord with all joy, and hold all such people as valuable because he was near the point of death on account of the Anointed One's work, risking his life so that he might fill up what lacked in your own religious service toward me. My brothers, what remains is for you to rejoice in the Lord.*

Epafroditus had been sent by them, as their envoy, to Paulus with a "gift" -- quite possibly a gift for him to pass on to poor Christians, although it could have been a gift for Paulus himself. While Timotheos would be sent to them soon, Paulus was going to send the letter with their friend Epafroditus.

Apart from what is written in this letter, we know nothing of Epafroditus. He was a Filippian who longed to return home, and he had taken ill since he had joined Paulus -- sick almost to the point of death. Paulus attributes his sickness to the hard work that he was doing in trying to meet Paulus' own needs. In this way, he was helping Paulus as the readers knew they would have wanted him to help.

**3:1** *Indeed it is no problem for me to write the same things to you, but it is your safety. Watch out for the dogs. Watch out for those who work bad things. Watch out for the castrators. For we are the circumcision, those who are doing religious service to God spiritually and are boasting in Anointed Jesus and who are not persuaded by the physical things. However, I indeed was persuaded by the physical things.*

He reminds them of something that they already know: that they are to watch out for the Judaizers.

The term "dog" was a racist insult normally used by some Jewish people toward gentiles (see Mt 15). Paulus applies it to the Judaizers. They are really the "dogs" here.

The phrase "those who work bad things" refers to the result of the Judaizers' religion. It profits nothing but results in what is bad.

Finally, Paulus uses another unkind term. Referring to the Judaizers as "castrators," he implies that their emphasis on **physical** circumcision is actually castrating them spiritually. In other places, we read that the "circumcision" was a name used of Jewish Christians and of Judaizers in particular. Paulus says that they are castrators, but those who adhere to a spiritual Torah are the true circumcision -- God's covenanted people.



In living by a completed, spiritual Torah, the Filippian Christians are performing true, spiritual religious service, rather than adhering to a code of physical rituals. They are boasting in "Anointed Jesus" -- in the coming of the Messiah rather than in the scrolls of the Torah and in their own sex organs.

Paulus contrasts physical religion with spiritual religion, pointing out that he was once an advocate of physical religion.

*If someone else thinks he is persuaded by physical things, I was more so:  
Circumcised on my eighth day, from the race of Israel, a Hebrew of Hebrews  
from the tribe of Ben-Yamin, a Perush according to the Torah, persecuting the  
assembly according to my jealousy. I had become blameless according to what  
was right in the Torah.*

Here are examples of Paulus' former way of life, according to a religion that addressed physical things. He was circumcised, physically, as prescribed in the Torah. He identifies himself by tribe, as was the custom. He was "a Hebrew of Hebrews" = "the most Hebrew" among them. Paulus had been a Perush -- a member of that party of Jews who were nicknamed sticklers for adherence to the legal code. He had persecuted Christians because he felt so strongly about his physical religion. As far as his opponents were concerned, Paulus was blameless, for he lived according to every legalistic rite and interpretation that arose from the Torah. In particular, none of the Filippians' opposition could have said anything bad about his life.

*Whatever things were to my profit, I have regarded these things as forfeit on  
account of the Anointed One. On the contrary, no rather I regard all things to be  
forfeit on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Anointed Jesus my Lord.  
On his account, I forfeited all things, and I consider those things to be manure, so  
that I may be profited by the Anointed One, and so that I may be found in him not  
to be holding to my justification which came from the Torah but to that  
justification that came through the Anointed One's trust.*

At first, Paulus compares in a businesslike mindset. What once was considered profitable is now a loss. He had thought that his physical religion made him a better person, but now he realizes that none of the legalism was meaningful, for the Torah was not a code of actions. Therefore, everything he had was meaningless, because knowing who the Messiah was and how he explained the Torah is so excellent.

So great is the spiritual Torah that he gave up everything. But none of that matters now -- the former legalism is all manure to Paulus, now that he realizes the true spiritual teachings that the Torah was intended to convey. And it was necessary to give up that way of thinking so that he could "be profited by the Anointed One." For it would have been impossible for him to have both retained his former reliance on physical things and to spiritualize and internalize the Torah as Jesus taught. It is impossible (for both Paulus and the Judaizers) to continue to believe that justification comes through adherence to a code and to accept that justification is a gift from God. For Paulus, the life of trust and love led by Jesus clearly show that the path that leads to justification is the way of trust in God.

*This is a justification from God based on trust: knowing him, and the power of his resurrection, and sharing in his sufferings, conforming to his death, so that possibly I might attain the resurrection from the dead. It is not true that I have received it already, [or have been embraced already,] or have been made complete already. But I am pursuing it, so I may also lay hold of that for which Anointed Jesus laid hold of me.*

Justification comes from knowing that the Messiah came and embracing what he taught. This is evidenced by the fact that Jesus was raised from the dead. By analogy, if Paulus and the Filippians die to their selfish natures as Jesus did, they too will be "resurrected". The language is slightly different because the "resurrection from the dead" refers to the afterlife. "Dying to self" is a continuous process, one which the author does not think he has completed yet. But Paulus wrote elsewhere that it is the pursuit of the spiritual principles in trust that God looks at when judging people. God's judgment is not based on whether or not Paulus (or we) can be sinless, but on his trust. God's generosity makes up for his lack of perfection.

It is the afterlife for which Paulus is destined, if only he continues to follow Jesus' teachings. To return to legalism would be worthless.

**13** *Brothers, I do not consider myself as having laid hold of it, but I consider one thing: Forgetting the things that indeed are behind me, and stretching out toward what is in front of me, I am pursuing the prize at the finish line--God's high calling in Anointed Jesus. Therefore, as many as are complete, these people should have this attitude, and if you have any other attitude, God will also reveal this to you. Nevertheless, regarding what we have reached, let us keep in step with it.*

If Paulus were to consider himself as having "arrived," he would cease to grow. But he views life as a maturation process. Should he return to ritualism? No, he "forgets" his past and heads toward the future, to which God and Jesus have called him. He hopes that every one of the readers will have the same attitude of perseverance.

"What we have reached" (or "anticipated") refers to their understanding of the Messianic teachings. By no means should any of them get "out of step" with the Messiah by rejecting part of his principles in order to go into religion.

*Brothers, become imitators together of me, and watch those who are walking, just as you have us as a type. For many people are walking as enemies of the cross of the Anointed One, as I have told you often but now tell you while crying. Their end will be destruction, these people whose god is their penis and whose glory is in their shame, these people who have earthly attitudes.*

The readers are urged to imitate Paulus. This is not referring to imitation in every respect but to the imitation of his determination to become mature in love. Both Paulus and Timotheos serve as examples, types, to the Filippians of this growth process.

Paulus cries not for himself, nor for the Filippians, but for his countrymen who have not embraced the internal way of devotion to God. Instead of worshipping God, they worship their penises because they place such an emphasis on physical circumcision. "Shame" is often used of "nakedness" in a negative connotation. Thus, the Judaizers boast in their physical circumcision, as Paulus depicts them waving around their penises and bragging about them. This is a sad state for people for whom the author cares so deeply.<sup>1</sup>

*For our citizenship exists in the heavens, from which we are also expecting a savior, Lord Anointed Jesus, who will change the scheme of our bodies of humiliation into a form like his body of glory, according to the working of his power to also arrange all things under himself.*

But Paulus and the Filippians do not depend on physical things. Nor do they brag about physical things. Rather than being citizens of earthly Israel -- which would soon cease to exist -- the Christians are citizens of a spiritual kingdom. Thus, their physical bodies ("of humiliation") would be ignored. After the earthly kingdom was removed, the dependence on physical things would be removed with it. Thus, they would be transformed. Instead of being regarded as physical beings, the teachings of Jesus transform Christianity into something spiritual. The "arranging of all things" refers to his lordship over the assembly in the Messianic era, which began shortly after 70 CE.

*4:1 And so, my beloved brothers whom I long for, my joy and crown, stand in the Lord, O beloved ones! I advise Euodia and I advise Suntutche to have the same attitude in the Lord. And I ask you also, genuine yoke partner, to help those women, who contended together with me in the good message, along with Clementus, and the remaining co-workers, whose names are in the scroll of life.*

Now, Paulus concludes his admonition to remain with Jesus instead of sliding into legalism. Certain people who would be reading the letter are then addressed personally. Euodia and Suntutche were women who worked hard to spread the good message together with Paulus. Apparently they were having personal problems of some nature -- perhaps a point of disagreement, and so Paulus urges them to maintain a loving attitude toward one another. Then he asks one of the readers (who is not identified) to help them smooth over their problems.

*4 Always rejoice in the Lord. Again I say it: rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to all people. The Lord is near. "Do not be anxious about anything," but in all things let your requests be made known to God with prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, and God's peace, which is beyond every mind, will guard your hearts and your minds in Lord Jesus.*

"Rejoice in the Lord" means specifically that the Filippians should always be joyful over the fact that they are not participants of a ritualized religion but that they have the internal teachings of Jesus.

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<sup>1</sup> Some will object to the translation of κοιλιᾱ in this passage. However, this general word for "cavity" may indicate the abdomen or anything in that region, including body fat; "cavities" in the muscles; the uterus, rectum, intestines, or (as here) the male sex organ. That usage is most appropriate, given the context.

Even so, in the midst of persecution it is necessary for them to adopt the attitude of Jesus -- to be gentle. After all, "the Lord is near." Indeed, Priestly Judaism and physical Israel would not be long on the land. Realizing that they might be concerned as persecution increased, the author urges his friends to listen to the saying of Jesus about anxiety (Mt 6). If only they would put God first, God would provide for their needs. Therefore, what they needed most was to focus on God, realizing that he was in control of everything. Then they would experience emotional peace, free of all the earthly stress.

*This remains, brothers: whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is reputable--if there is any virtue and if there is any praise, consider these things. Also, whatever you learned and received and heard and saw in me, put these things into practice, and the God of peace will be with you.*

Paulus has been reluctant to refer to their persecutions, but clearly this was a point of agitation for them. If they were not to focus on these things but on God, what should they think about? The answer is somewhat simple: anything godly. Anything that God would have them think and do, they should think and do. Knowing as they did how Paulus faced opposition, they should do likewise, for Paulus himself was at peace.

**10** *Now I rejoiced greatly in the Lord, because already you have revived your concern for me. You have been concerned for me, but without any opportunity to do anything. It is not that I'm saying this about what I lack, for I am content to be in whatever situations I'm in. I know both how to be of humble means and how to have abundance. I have experienced everything, and in all ways--both to be well fed and to be hungry, both to have abundance and to lack. I am strong enough for everything in the one who empowers me.*

They might have asked, "How is it possible that Paulus is at peace?" After all, he had been hunted and persecuted, then imprisoned. Paulus explains:

Paulus is glad that they care so much about him, for it means that they truly have embraced the love taught by Jesus -- and so he rejoices in the Lord. But he really doesn't need anything from them. After all, he has found that the teachings of Jesus allow him to be content in whatever situation he finds himself. God provides him the strength to continue, no matter the hardship.

**14** *But you did well in sharing together with me in the affliction. You know also, Filippians, that at the beginning of the good message, when I was departing from Makedonia, no assembly shared with me in the message of giving and receiving except for you alone, because in Thessalonike also, both one time and a second, you sent what I needed. It is not that I am hunting the gift, but that I am hunting the fruit which is growing in your account. But I have all things fully, and I have abundance. Now I am filled, having received things from you from Epafroditus. It is a smell with a good odor, an acceptable sacrifice which is well pleasing to God. Now my God will fill every need of yours, according to his wealth in glory in Anointed Jesus.*

In closing, Paulus reminds the Filippians of the fact that they have already endured alongside Paulus, and he praises them for the good things that they have done. Whatever they sent to Paulus in Thessalonike, he was grateful, and he is hopeful that they will continue to be so loving. Paulus himself wants nothing more from them, and he makes this plain. It is their continued expression of love that Paulus hopes to see.

**20** *Now to God also, our Father, be the glory for ever and ever. A-mein.  
Greet everyone who is holy in Anointed Jesus. Those brothers who are with me  
greet you. All of the holy ones greet you, but especially those from the household  
of Caesar.  
The favor of the Lord, Anointed Jesus, be with your spirits. A-mein.*

Paulus' reference to Caesar's household -- possibly servants -- is used by some to imply that the letter was written after the end of the Actions, during his incarceration in Rome. However, Paulus says nothing about Rome in the letter or about being in Rome. Further, he refers only to his "defense" -- not to his second or later defense. It appears that he was aware that some members of Caesar's family staff had accepted Jesus as Messiah. He mentions this so as to point out how far and how greatly the message was spreading. Otherwise, the close is entirely traditional.