

PHILIPPIANS

Chapter 2

Christ's Example of Humility

So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, 2 complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. 3 Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. 4 Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. 5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. 9 Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

2:1 *any encouragement* – Paraklyeesis is a tender encouragement which addresses itself to the will of a Christian. Every true exhortation is based upon Christ, upon what He is and what He has done for us. The Apostle calls upon the Philippians to be moved to action for Christ's sake. Christ must always be the chief motivation for Christian action. Christians undertake every project to glorify Christ. Christ ever moves them to humble obedience. (Stoeckhardt)

in Christ. Or “united in Christ.” In Paul's teaching, this personal union is the basic reality of salvation. To be in Christ is to be saved. It is to be in intimate personal relationship with Christ the Savior. From this relationship flow all the particular benefits and fruits of salvation, like encouragement (see, e.g., 3:8–10; Ro 8:1; 2Co 5:17; Gal 2:20). (CSB)

If the Philippians and other believers are to stand firm against the enemies of the gospel that threaten them from without, they must first be firmly united among themselves. (PBC)

comfort from his love. The comforting knowledge and assurance that come from God's love in Christ, demonstrated especially in Christ's death for the forgiveness of sins and eternal life (see Jn 3:16; Ro 5:8; 8:38–39; 1Jn 3:16; 4:9–10, 16). (CSB)

In this appeal of love the person admonished is to feel that the speaker is not trying to force his own will upon the person addressed, but rather that only his good and the glory of Christ is sought. (Stoeckhardt)

participation in the Spirit. The fellowship among believers produced by the Spirit, who indwells each of them (see 2 Co 13:14). (CSB)

“Fellowship” or joining together of the Holy Spirit with the believer, which comes about through the inspired Word. (TLSB)

Pneumatosis indicates that the fellowship here is not a natural one, but one wrought by the Spirit. (Stoeckhardt)

affection and sympathy. Christians are to have intense care and deep sympathy for each other (see 1:8; Col 3:12). All these benefits—encouragement, comfort, fellowship, tenderness and compassion—are viewed by Paul as present realities for the Philippians. (CSB)

Paul speaks to the Philippians' hearts, reminding them of the gospel blessings that are theirs in Christ, then appealing to them on the basis of those blessings. (PBC)

Splanchna really means the heart as the seat of affection. The readers as believers are united by the Spirit, and so they are already filled with cordial affection and mercy and sympathetic regard for the very thing which the Apostle's exhortation here is driving at. (Stoeckhardt)

2:2 *same mind ... same love.* Emphasizes the unity that should exist among Christians. (CSB)

That means they should love the same object in such a manner that one loves the other as he desires to be loved of the other. They should be animated by the same sentiment. Love shows itself in the agreement of thought and sentiment, however, in such a way that at the same time they agree with the will of God. The things in which they must all agree lies outside of themselves, and that is the Word of God. (Stoeckhardt)

lone mind. Not uniformity in thought but the common disposition to work together and serve one another—the “attitude” of Christ (v. 5; see 4:2; Ro 12:16; 15:5; 2Co 13:11). (CSB)

Christ is the head of His Body, the Church, which He calls to be of one mind and to think the same things. Scripture reveals to us Christ's mind. The Spirit gives us a renewed mind. Love will to extend the kingdom of God's grace to everyone. This is the single-mindedness of Jesus, of Paul, and of God's Church. (TLSB)

The Philippians had already brought much joy to the apostle. Their partnership in the gospel, their faith and love, their generosity all brought him joy every time he thought about them or prayed for them. But there was one more thing the Philippians could strive to do, Paul's says, that would truly make his joy complete. That one thing was to seek a greater measure of harmony in their dealings and relationships with one another. (PBC)

2:3 *selfish ambition or conceit.* The mortal enemies of unity and harmony in the church (cf. 1:17; see Gal 5:20, where “selfish ambition” is listed among the “acts of the sinful nature”). (CSB)

humility.† This is the mind-set of the person who is not conceited but who has a right attitude toward himself. (CSB)

count others more significant than yourselves. Not that everyone else is superior or more talented, but that Christian love sees others as worthy of preferential treatment (see Ro 12:10; Gal 5:13; Eph 5:21; 1Pe 5:5). (CSB)

View yourself conservatively: other people are greater in need or in wisdom. Such a perspective leads you to help or to be helped. (TLSB)

In flourishing congregations, where many members are knowledgeable and gifted, there is always the danger of the more gifted members looking down on the less gifted, and of the less gifted envying the more gifted. And it is always characteristic of human nature to minimize one's own

weaknesses and to exaggerate one's own strengths, while doing just the opposite when observing the weaknesses and strengths of others. (PBC)

Lowliness, or humble-mindedness, is also a key New Testament concept, a distinctive mark of the committed Christian. Lowliness is the opposite of the selfishness and pride of our corrupt and sinful natures. First century society placed little value on lowliness. It regarded it, in fact, as the equivalent of cowardice and equated pride and self-assertiveness with manhood. The non-Christian world today thinks in the same way. Books and classes offering assertiveness training and ever more effective methods of exercising power and "looking out for number one" are tremendously popular and profitable. But the attitude of a heart changed by God's grace is no longer "me first and everybody else after me, if at all." Rather it is an attitude that humbly and lovingly places the interest of others before one's own. (PBC)

Paul is advocating a false modesty? He does not want talented believers to deny their special gifts or hide or neglect them. A humble child of God, no matter how many or how few his gifts may be, will strive to put the best construction on everything the neighbor does. He will happily acknowledge and respect whatever gifts the neighbor has, be they many or few. In everything the humble Christian will strive to give the neighbor first consideration. (PBC)

A Christian is to esteem the other as higher and wiser than himself, as he is conscious of his own weakness and shortcomings, while the in the neighbor he observes much merit and superiority. (Stoeckhardt)

2:4 *own interests*. These are proper, but only if there is equal concern for the interests of others (cf. Ro 15:1). (CSB)

We are to be concerned about our brother's affairs and interests in the same measure as we are interested in our own. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

With God's providence as our foundation, we relinquish concerns for ourselves in order to care for others. (TLSB)

Harmony becomes practical among Christian in helpfulness, when each believer strives to do those things that serve and help the neighbor in every possible way. The world's way is to look out for oneself. It considers the needs of others only when it sees some ultimate advantage for itself, but believer's concern for their neighbor's interest will supersede concern for their own. (PBC)

2:5-11 The Epistle for today is pivotal, providing a bridge from death to life while giving us both promise and reason for following where Christ leads. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 2)

2:5 *have this mind...in Christ*. In spite of all that is unique and radically different about the person and work of Christ (see vv. 6–11), Christians are to have his attitude of self-sacrificing humility and love for others (see vv. 2–4; Mt 11:29; Jn 13:12–17). (CSB)

The Beck Bible is to preferred: "Think just as Christ Jesus thought." (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

Paul presents the imperative to think with our minds as Christ thought with His. A soul regenerated in Christ's image (Titus 3:4-7) has the revelation of Christ through the Word. (TLSB)

There is some disagreement over how to translate the word *phroneō*, “to think.” The series of imperatives in the verses preceding may explain why some manuscripts included “for” at the beginning of this verse, understanding that the mind of Christ in us would explain compliance with the imperatives. For our purposes we might let the tension stand and consider the verb as both indicative and imperative. The presence of God’s inspired Word in our lives, confirmed in our Baptism, means that we do have the mind of Christ. The fact that our regenerate, inspired soul dwells within a contrary human nature means that it is imperative that we continually reorient our thinking to match that of our Savior. The verses that follow are Gospel in nature but also provide an insurmountable logic that is effective in Christian apologetics. No other religious system even begins to suggest a parallel to Christ, true God who became incarnate, provided redemption for the whole world, and rose from the dead. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 2) The more they are in Christ and Christ is in them, the more Christ-like and unselfish they will be in their attitudes and actions. (PBC)

As if the Apostle would say, “All that I asked of all of you is to be meek and humble so as to be of one mind and one soul, all that you see exemplified in the person and conduct of our Lord. I would like to have you cultivate a mind that is similar to the mind found in Christ. (Stoeckhardt)

2:6–11 The poetic, even lyric, character of these verses is apparent. Many view them as an early Christian hymn (see note on Col 3:16), taken over and perhaps modified by Paul. If so, they nonetheless express his convictions. The passage treats Christ’s humiliation (vv. 6–8) and exaltation (vv. 9–11).

Note from Colossians 3:16 – *psalms, hymns and spiritual songs*. Some of the most important doctrines were expressed in Christian hymns preserved for us now only in Paul’s letters (1:15–20; Eph 5:14; Php 2:6–11; 1Ti 3:16). “Psalms” refers to the OT psalms (see Lk 20:42; 24:44; Ac 1:20; 13:33), some of which may have been set to music by the church. “Psalm” could also describe a song newly composed for Christian worship (cf. 1Co 14:26, where “hymn” is lit. “psalm” in the Greek text). A “hymn” was a song of praise, especially used in a celebration (see Mk 14:26; Heb 2:12; see also Ac 16:25), much like the OT psalms that praised God for all that he is. A “song” recounted the acts of God and praised him for them (see Rev 5:9; 14:3; 15:3), much like the OT psalms that thanked God for all that he had done.

2:6-8 Paul repeats the Greek term *morphe*, “form,” and also uses *schema*, “manner,” or “shape.” The Son of God took human form, a body like ours except without sin. Note how here and elsewhere Paul’s account of Jesus’ life fits readily with the historical accounts in the Gospels. (TLSB)

2:6 What follows is truly a remarkable passage. Here Christ is presented as our model, our example in lowliness. But at the same time this passage is very important for the doctrine of the person and two states of Christ. Christ is our example in lowliness. That’s ethical. But we cannot imitate His states or saving work. This text reminds us of the necessity of preaching the person and two states of Christ. This also reminds us of the necessity of preaching the person and work of Christ for justification and sanctification. (Exegetical Notes – Bult)

though – *nuparchao* – *come into existence* – (*be present or at hand*); *expletively*, to *exist* (as copula or subordinate to an adjective, participle, adverb or preposition, or as auxiliary to principal

verb):—after behave, live. – Implies his pre-existent deity, previous to his birth, and his continued deity afterwards.

form of God. Affirming that Jesus is fully God. (CSB)

We need to be careful here (as many translations are) not to misunderstand “form” (*hē morphē*) as form only without content. The Son of God does not simply bear the form of God. Rather, “He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power” (Heb 1:3); “In him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell” (Col 1:19). The fact that Jesus is God made it both possible and necessary for him to empty himself on our behalf—possible because no one and nothing could ever really strip him of his divine nature, necessary because the essence of his character is love. We see this clearly in John 13, when Jesus sets aside his garments (as he set aside his divine prerogatives) in order to offer the most humble of services, washing his disciples’ feet. Contrast Jesus with the competitive and self-serving nature of people. Our unwillingness to serve others betrays an absence of certainty about our nature. This has only become worse since Darwin and evolutionary deception has stripped humanity of any kind of inherent dignity as the crown of God’s creative work. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 2)

From all eternity Jesus has been one with the Father, truly God. His eternal existence as God is unshakeable and unchangeable. In Jesus’ incarnation the human nature Jesus assumed shared in all the characteristics of His divine nature. The two natures are now perfectly united. After the incarnation the Bible speaks of one divine-human Christ, the God-man. (PBC)

form. Essential form, the sum of those qualities that make God specifically God. (CSB)

As the Son of God, Jesus is God (Col 1:15). Not simply appearance. (TLSB)

equality with God. The status and privileges that inevitably follow from being in very nature God. (CSB)

Jesus, as the true Son of God, cannot be less than fully God. He is equal with His Father according to His divine nature. (TLSB)

Jesus is indeed true God, equal with the Father in power, authority and majesty, and He possesses all the characteristics of God. This He clearly demonstrated during His earthly ministry. Here was a man who read the hearts of men, feed multitudes, control the weather, cast out devils, heal the sick and even raise the dead. Those who observed Him at closest range had to declare, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Jesus was and is in very nature God. (PBC)

a thing to be grasped.† Something to be forcibly retained—the glory Christ had with the Father before his incarnation. But he did not consider that high position to be something he could not give up. (CSB)

The Greek word means “a thing for self-glorification.” (Exegetical Notes – Bult)

Fully God, He felt no necessity to cling to the honor or privileges that were His as God’s Son (John 13:3-4). God grants us a similar ability ourselves in the service of others, because we are His children too. (TLSB)

anaragmos *plunder* (properly concrete):—robbery. This divine equality was not something Jesus had to steal or even strive for.

In Paul's day victorious generals and other public figures would frequently honor themselves and their achievements by using their "moment in the sun" to erect monuments to themselves and their achievements. Today, too, the great men of the world frequently use the privileges and trappings of their offices to enhance their reputations, further their careers, perhaps even line their pockets. (PBC)

Jesus, though He was God in very nature, did not appear on earth to glorify Himself. He did not look for His own advantage. Nor did He arbitrarily use the divine privileges and powers He possessed to satisfy passing fancies or to gain earthly fame and power. (PBC)

2:7 emptied himself. Lit. "emptied himself." He did this, not by giving up deity, but by laying aside his glory (see Jn 17:5) and submitting to the humiliation of becoming man (see 2Co 8:9). Jesus is truly God and truly man. Another view is that he emptied himself, not of deity itself, but of its prerogatives—the high position and glory of deity. (CSB)

This verse begins the gradual descent of Jesus in his redemptive service to us—first taking the form of a servant, then humbling himself in death, then even lower by dying on a cross (as one accursed from God). Notice once again, that "form of a servant" means really a servant! The whole life of Christ as recorded in the Gospels is one of constant service to others (so that he had no time even to eat). The Son of God's adoption of a human nature is beautifully and fully considered in the Book of Hebrews; because he was human he can sympathize and can be a faithful and merciful High Priest for us (e.g., Heb 4:14–16). "Being found in human form" (v 8) reminds us that Isaiah had prophesied that the Messiah would be so fully human as to be unrecognizable: "He had no form or majesty that we should look at him" (Is 53:2). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 2)

"[The Son of Man] was received into God when He was conceived of the Holy Spirit in His mother's womb, and His human nature was personally united with the Son of the Highest. Christ always had this majesty according to the personal union. Yet He abstained from using it in the state of His humiliation, and because of this He truly increased in all wisdom and favor with God and men. Therefore, He did not always use this majesty, but only when it pleased Him." (FC Ep. VIII 15-16). (TLSB)

The Beck Bible says, "But He emptied Himself, made Himself a slave, became like other human beings. (Exegetical Notes – Bultmann)

During His earthly ministry Jesus emptied Himself of the full and constant use of all the prerogatives of His divinity. He laid aside the unlimited exercise of His power and did not always use or demand His rights as God. (PBC)

form of a servant. Emphasizes the full reality of his servant identity (see Mt 20:28). As a servant, he was always submissive to the will of the Father. (CSB)

Jesus was, in every way, completely a servant to those around Him. (TLSB)

doulos a *slave* (literally or figuratively, involuntarily or voluntarily; frequently therefore in a qualified sense of *subjection* or *subserviency*):—bond (-man), servant.

It was as if He covered the glory of His divine majesty with the tattered rags of a beggar. He became altogether lowly. He became like every other human being – lowlier, in fact, than most – in His earthly manner of living. Though He Himself was sinless, He assumed human nature in the weakened condition in which have it, burdened with the consequences of sin. Although He is the Lord of the universe, He was born in a stable. He never possessed earthly property or wealth. He was despised by many of His contemporaries. He placed Himself under the demands of God’s law. (PBC)

born in the likeness of men – Not mere resemblance. He was conceived as a man like any other man, except without sin. (TLSB)

2:8 *found in human form*. Not only was Jesus “like” a human being (v. 7), but he also took on the actual outward characteristics of a man (see Jn 1:14; Ro 8:3; Heb 2:17). (CSB)

Jesus shared all the characteristics of a human being. (TLSB)

humbled himself. See v. 7; 2Co 8:9. (CSB)

The Son of God humbled himself; true love is given freely and at one’s own expense. Even as the Son of God did not think equality with God something to cling to selfishly, so also he did not think that he was above enduring death for the sake of his beloved ones. Now we see that this process of humbling himself to effect our redemption knew no limits, so that he humbled himself even to die the most accursed of all deaths. Mention of the cross here brings up all the significant imagery of the devil, who once overcame by a tree, now being overcome by a tree; the First Adam failing before a tree, the Second Adam winning absolute victory on a tree (Rom 5:12–21); he became accursed so that we might be blessed (Gal 3:13–14). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 2)

obedient. How Jesus humbled himself (cf. Heb 5:7–8). A “servant” (v. 7) obeys. (CSB)

Jesus put all His thoughts, words, and actions under the direction of His Father’s will. (TLSB)

to the point of death. Stresses both the totality and the climax of Jesus’ obedience. (CSB)

In a person of Christ, God truly died. (Exegetical Notes – Bult)

on a cross. Heightens Jesus’ humiliation; he died as someone cursed (see Gal 3:13; Heb 12). Crucifixion was the most degrading kind of execution that could be inflicted on a person. (CSB)

stauros – a *stake* or *post* (as *set* upright), that is, (specifically) a *pole* or *cross* (as an instrument of capital punishment); figuratively *exposure to death*, that is, *self denial*; by implication the *atonement* of Christ:—cross. – The kind of death he submitted himself to amazes believers,

confounds unbelievers: this was the style of execution reserved by the Romans for slaves, foreigners, and barbarians – never Roman citizens.

The most despised and cursed death. According to OT Law, being hung on a tree meant you were cut off from God. You were left there all day as an example to others (cf. Dt. 21:22-23). The Romans crucified criminals by the main entry roads into a city in order to humiliate them and to warn those who entered not to make the same mistake. (TLSB)

In OT Israel, after a wrongdoer had been put to death, the civil laws prescribed that his dead body be nailed to a post or a tree. This was to impress on the people that that individual, by his transgression, had suffer the ultimate curse of being cut off from God and His believing people. If in the sight of God, than hanging of a dead body signified His curse, how much more would the hanging of a living person be considered a curse, especially when that person was experiencing anguish beyond description. How deliberately and heavily the words fall as the apostle describes the ultimate humiliation of the God-man: EVEN DEATH ON A CROSS. (PBC)

2:9 *therefore* - *dio*, “therefore; that is why.” The first word of this verse is the pivot and shows the proper relationship between man (in this case the Son of Man) and God: man humbles himself in submission to God and love of neighbor, and God exalts man as is right. What we give away for the benefit of others God restores again, but if we would keep what God has given, how can God give any more to us? Remember that “name” (*to onoma*) is not just an empty title, but includes all the power and prerogatives of a being. Jesus is not only Creator but also now Redeemer. This truth is the basis and justification of v 10. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 2)

highly exalted. See Mt 28:18; Ac 2:33; cf. Isa 52:13. (CSB)

auperupsoo to *elevate above* others, that is, *raise* to the *highest* position:—highly exalt. (qv)

The Apostle’s Creed lists the various events of Jesus’ exaltation: “He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.” What a glorious victory these words describe. Jesus, our Savior, having successfully completed His redemptive work for us, openly triumphed over the forces of hell. Death had to relinquish its hold on Him. Earth could no longer contain Him. Heaven opened its doors to receive Him. Jesus, our victorious Savior, now holds in His hands the reins of the universe. He rules all things in heaven and on earth in the interest of His believers, and He will come again to end this age, judge the world, and take His believers to be with Him and to share His glory in eternal life. (PBC)

the name ... above every name. Reference doubtless is to the office or rank conferred on Jesus—his glorious position, not his proper name (cf. Eph 1:21; Heb 1:4–5). (CSB)

In ancient times, people were given names to describe them. The name of Jesus describes the essence of who He is: “salvation is of the Lord.” There is no other savior or means of salvation. “After His resurrection, He entirely laid aside the form of a servant, but not human nature, and was established in the full use, manifestation, and declaration of the divine majesty. In this way He entered His glory” (FC Ep VIII 16). (TLSB)

His name, spoken with contempt by His enemies, especially by those who condemned Him to death as a blasphemer, is the only “name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.” Only through Jesus’ name, and through faith in His name and the gospel revelation which stands behind it, can sinners be saved. (PBC)

2:10–11 *bow ... confess.* Cf. Isa 45:23. God’s design is that all people everywhere should worship and serve Jesus as Lord. Ultimately all will acknowledge him as Lord (see Ro 14:9), whether willingly or not. (CSB)

All created beings must and will confess Jesus as Lord: The saints and angels in heaven, all human beings on earth, even the demons and the damned in hell. (PBC)

God the Father exalts the Son to the place that is rightly his (see last week’s Gospel) so that creation relates rightly to him. When every knee bows in submission and every tongue confesses the truth of Christ, then creation will experience paradise. Life is found in God’s design. Life is conveyed in the Word of the Lord. When all is right in God’s creation for all eternity, then God will be glorified as is proper to him. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 2)

Bow is synonymous with worship toward God (Ex. 4:31; 34:8; Ps. 95:6; 1 Sam 1:28; see note Ex 33:10) or respect and service for a human being (Gn. 33:3; 43:26-28; 1 Sam 20:41; 28:14; Est 3:2). God expressly forbade bowing to false gods (Ex 20:4-5). People also bowed to (1) greet someone (Gen 18:2; 19:1), (2) signal humility and repentance (Ezr 9:5; 10:1, and (3) express thanks (Gen 24:52). Bows were done in a variety of ways (1 Ch 29:20; 1 Kg 18:42; Ne 8:6) and likely included tilting the head, tilting the upper body, kneeling with one’s face to the ground, or lying prostrate. The more elaborate the bow, the greater the expression of devotion or emotion (Gn. 33:3). (TLSB p. 1276)

under the earth – This is a figure of speech that refers to the souls of those who have gone not to heaven, but to damnation in the “lower regions” (1 Peter 3:18-20). (TLSB)

2:11 *Jesus Christ is Lord* – An early creed. See p. 1975. Jesus (Greek) or Joshua (Hebrew) is the name given to the Son conceived by the Holy Spirit (Mt. 1:21) in the Virgin Mary. Christ (Greek) or Messiah (Hebrew) is the title of the One whom God promised to send to save His people. This Jesus, who is the Christ, demonstrated Himself to be Lord over all His nature, life, death, and resurrection. No one is Lord over Him, but He is Lord over all. (TLSB)

This verse emphasizes what was said in verse 10. It is a comfort for us to know that every rational creature, be that in heaven, on earth or of the underworld, cannot but make this confession. That says two things to us: (1) God is glorified by the person and work of our Lord Jesus. Therefore Jesus ought have our utmost confidence. (2) With Jesus as our example we ought humble ourselves as Paul here tells us to do. And if we so do, although what we do is so foolish in the eyes of the world, the Lord will not forget us. (Exegetical Notes – Bult)

2:1–11 Paul couples the imperatives of a Christian life with a description of Christ, who makes that life possible. We are certainly not lords, nor have we any excuse for refusing to honor Jesus Christ as Lord. Yet the fulfillment of the imperative to live like Christ is supported by all that Christ gives freely: the encouragement, comfort, love, and mind of Christ, along with the participation of the Spirit. • Dear Lord Jesus, place firmly in our minds and hearts both who You are and what You are so that we may proclaim Your grace and image to others. Amen. (TLSB)

Lights in the World

12 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, 13 for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. 14 Do all things without grumbling or disputing, 15 that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, 16 holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain. 17 Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. 18 Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me.

2:12–18 Paul’s teaching in vv 12–18 flows from His teaching about the humility of Christ in vv 1–11. (TLSB)

2:12 *Therefore.* Because of Christ’s incomparable example (vv. 5–11). (CSB)

The Apostle begins anew to exhort his Christians, joining his words to what he has said with a “therefore (hoste).” Efforts have been made to connect what is said here with the foregoing. But a close connection can hardly be discovered. The “therefore” goes farther back to when the Apostle began his exhortations, 1:27, and and there said, “Walk worthily of the Gospel.” (Stoeckhardt p. 43)

my beloved. Plural. The congregation—not an individual—is described in this passage. (TLSB)

obeyed. The commands of God as passed on to the Philippians by Paul (see Ro 1:5; 15:18; 2Co 10:5–6). (CSB)

Paul highly regarded the Philippians and spoke charitably toward them. (TLSB)

In the NT, especially in Paul’s writings, the term “obedience” is sometimes used as a synonym for faith. Here it no doubt includes both faith and living the kind of lives that result from faith, that “conduct worthy of the gospel.” Since they had become Christians, and especially when the apostle had been personally present with them, the Philippians had shown real obedience to the gospel. They had eagerly accepted the apostle’s instruction and put it into practice in their lives. Now, in a very positive way Paul urges them to continue to live in that same way and to do so even more in his absence. (PBC)

Such a testimony encourages Christians when we day to them, “You have always been obedient, and now continue in this course” If we can speak with approval of what they have done in the past, it gains their willingness to accept further admonition. (Stoeckhardt)

my presence. During the course of Paul’s second (see Ac 16:12–40) and third (see Ac 20:1–3, 6) missionary journeys. (CSB)

The apostle here draws a conclusion and makes a practical application: Wherefore, my beloved, as you have always been obedient, not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence. (Kretzmann)

work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. Work it out to the finish; not a reference to the attempt to earn one's salvation by works, but to the expression of one's salvation in spiritual growth and development. Salvation is not merely a gift received once for all; it expresses itself in an ongoing process in which the believer is strenuously involved (cf. Mt 24:13; 1Co 9:24–27; Heb 3:14; 6:9–11; 2Pe 1:5–8)—the process of perseverance, spiritual growth and maturation. (CSB)

Cf v 13; God's action is the cause of the Philippians' salvation and good works. (TLSB)

Paul uses the word “salvation” here in a broad sense. He refers not only to believers' coming to faith and receiving the gift of eternal life, but also to their continuing in faith until they enter into eternal life. (PBC)

In this time of grace Christians should be concerned about their faith in the Gospel, lest they lose their hold on it. In this way obedience and salvation belong together. (Steckhardt)

It is true, of course, that salvation is not earned by obedience, it is complete and perfect in Christ. But it may so easily be lost through disobedience, and therefore striving after it with fear and trembling, with the consciousness of inherent weakness and of the dreadful power of temptation, is essential in sanctification. There is here no contradiction of chap. 1, 6, where Paul states that he was sure that God would continue the good work to the end. A Christian must be sure that God will give him firmness and confidence and faithfulness, keep him from falling from grace, and he must still be in fear, lest he lose his salvation by his own foolishness. (Kretzmann)

fear and trembling. Not because of doubt or anxiety; rather, the reference is to an active reverence and a singleness of purpose in response to God's grace. (CSB)

The congregation cannot boast about its accomplishments, least of all their salvation. Paul commanded that fear and trembling accompany the lives of believers to keep our rebellious, sinful human nature (Rm 5:6–10) subdued in the service of God and neighbor. (TLSB)

With his encouragement to work out their salvation with fear and trembling the apostle wants to remind the Philippians, and all believers, that believers' live in the world and are in a constant struggle. Daily a host of spiritual enemies, led by the devil and his scheming allies, seek to rob believers of their faith and of the eternal treasures the Lord has in store for them. To ward off these enemies and continue safely along the way to eternal life on which their Lord has placed them, believers must always be watchful and alert. They must fear and tremble at the thought of their own weakness and at the possibility that they, by spiritual laziness or carelessness, may foolishly throw their spiritual treasures away. They must strenuously battle against their spiritual enemies to remain in faith. (PBC)

If a Christian looks upon his own flesh, he may well tremble, because it is weak and a willing ally of all enemies; but if a Christian looks to God, he is sure that he will remain in the faith, that he will overcome all the dangers which threaten his faith, that he will finally be victorious over world, flesh, and Satan. This admonition in itself is a means and instrument in the hands of God to keep the Christian in the way of sanctification. (Kretzmann)

2:13 *God works in you* – And yet, all depends upon the power of God: For God it is who is working in us both to will and to do for His good pleasure. God works, performs, all good things in His Christians; He urges them on to true obedience. (Kretzmann)

We live with our fallen human nature. But God works in us by subduing our sinful nature, regenerating our souls, and giving us His Spirit of grace. “The preaching and hearing of God’s Word are the Holy Spirit’s instruments. By, with, and through these instruments the Spirit desires to work effectively, to convert people to God, and to work in them both to will and to do” (FC SD II 52). (TLSB)

to will and to work. Intention, or faith, and our obedience cannot be separated (cf. Gal 5:6; Jas 2:18, 20, 22). (CSB)

The single most important element in this working and struggling is believer’s diligent use of the means of grace, the gospel in word and sacrament. This means, by which the Holy Spirit first made them spiritually alive, are also the means by which He continues to work in believers’ hearts to strengthen and nourish their faith and their spiritual lives. Believers who remain diligent and conscientious in using the means of grace will find in them all the spiritual strength necessary for the spiritual working of which the apostle speaks so urgently in our text. (PBC)

God grants us to conceive the good intention as well as the power to carry it out. So every good deed in us is accomplished. (Stoeckhardt)

A believer shows his faith by good works. This makes two things necessary, namely, the will to do, the good intention to live as it becometh the Gospel of Jesus Christ, as it is wrought through the Holy Ghost, and then the carrying out of this intention, the changing of will into performance, so that the doing will be properly and effectually performed. (Kretzmann)

his good pleasure – God effects good works in us, so that He might find His delight in them. The emphasis lies on “God,” as the position of this word in the sentence indicates. Christians are to work out their salvation lest they should forfeit God’s good pleasure. It is God’s will that Christians should please Him. So this sentence really substantiates what the Apostle said before. Since everything depends upon God and God’s good pleasure, therefore Christians ever should be found obedient. (Stoeckhardt)

God is pleased when His creation lives and thrives, meets all its potential, and has life to the fullest. (TLSB)

And all this on account of God’s good pleasure, to carry out His own, gracious will. God really wants to find pleasure in the good works of the believers. And He does find it because of the fact that they are of divine kind and nature, and their works flow out of the divine power in them. In order to be pleased with the works of Christians, He Himself works the good things in them. God gives and donates the will to do good; the regenerated will of man, in the power of God, wills and performs the good thing. The regenerated will of man is controlled, governed, and directed by the will of God. So the believers dare not lose God’s assistance in sanctification. (Kretzmann)

2:14–17 Some things involved in working out our salvation. (CSB)

2:14 *grumbling.* Being discontented with God’s will is an expression of unbelief that prevents one from doing what pleases God (v. 13; cf. 1Co 10:10). (CSB)

A problem indicative of the sinful human nature, which is selfish and unbelieving. (TLSB)

When God commands something, we should have no more questions about it as to whether God really wants us to do it. (Stoeckhardt)

disputing. Over debatable points that do not need to be settled for the good of the church (see 2Ti 2:23; Tit 3:9). (CSB)

Willing and acting according to God's good purpose requires the correct attitude of the heart. Grudging obedience is not really obedience at all. In the course of our lives as Christian we are often called on to do things that do not come naturally to us, things against which our selfish natures angrily rebel. We are often asked to do things which we know will bring scorn and ridicule from our non-Christian friends and associates. We are to do all these things, Paul says, without murmuring and complaint. There is to be no second-guessing of God, no grumbling about what God expects of us, no rationalizing or calculating about how we might escape our responsibilities or get by with doing less. (PBC)

The apostle mentions one point in which their sanctification may find expression: Do everything without murmurings and hesitations. The Christians of Philippi, like the believers of all ages, should do the will of God in all things, do all that God expects of them, even when the flesh is not pleased with it, even when questionings and criticisms want to arise in their hearts. There should be no bickerings and questionings whether this or that is really necessary, whether it is necessary to be so strict in observing the Word of God, whether it really is the Christian's duty to take part in all the enterprises of the Church. The ideal condition of mind is that which simply, sincerely does what is needed. (Kretzmann)

2:15 *blameless and innocent... without blemish.* Not absolute, sinless perfection, but wholehearted, unmixed devotion to doing God's will. (CSB)

Everything that is wrong with us has been forgiven by the Lord Jesus. According to our new nature, there is nothing wrong (1 John 3:8-9). (TLSB)

Christians are to lead a clean life, and so be spared from disgrace. It is this that God desires, and that should also be the purpose of all Christians. If Christians walk in this way, then they are obedient children of God. (Stoeckhardt)

The result of such behavior is: That you may be irreprehensible and innocent, guiltless children of God in the midst of an iniquitous and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding up the Word of Life to a glorification for me upon the day of Christ, that I may not have run in vain or labored in vain. The goal of sanctification cannot be reached at one step, it must be reached by a gradual process. Christians must strive more and more to show and prove themselves irreprehensible, without reproof. (Kretzmann)

of God – God provides regeneration so that by His Word and Spirit we are a new creation according to the inner person. This nature, generated by God Himself, is inclined to live as His child. (TLSB)

crooked and twisted generation. A description of the unbelieving world (see Ac 2:40; Eph 2:1–3; cf. Mt 17:17). (CSB)

God created us to live in perfect harmony with Him, His creation, and one another at every point of contact, in every way. Since the fall, our human nature contradicts that design at every point, nothing matches or fits right. (TLSB)

In the midst of a world steeped in every form of sin and shame they must guard against all contamination, not only to be without reproach on the part of others, but actually innocent of wrong-doing, able to meet all criticism as unjust aspersion. Christians should avoid all offense and be guiltless in this world. (Kretzmann)

shine as lights. The contrast, like light in darkness, that Christians are to be to the world around them (cf. Mt 5:15–16). (CSB)

By God's grace the bright light of the gospel has dispelled the spiritual darkness that was by nature in Christina's hearts. Now God wants Christians, who have the light of life through Jesus, to be both light-reflectors and light-bearers in the sin-darkened world. As light-reflectors Christian should stand out from their worldly contemporaries as light shines in darkness. Their words and actions should cause people to see that believers belong to Christ and should lead those who observe them to glorify God. (PBC)

This is an important theme for John and Paul. Light may be directed or reflected. We reflect God's light (His truth and grace) by receiving it and directing that light to shine on others. (TLSB)

There should be a plain and unmistakable distinction between the Christians and the children of this world. They should stand out from the unbelievers, as the light stands out from the surrounding darkness. The entire life of the believers will offer a splendid contrast to all works of darkness and will be a constant reproof to wrong-doers. But not only are the Christians to shine as lights in their good works, in obedience to the will of their heavenly Father and in all subsequent works of faith, but they are also to be the torch-bearers of the Word of Life. The Christians should present to the world, extend before the eyes of the children of this world, the Word of Salvation for their acceptance, that it may serve to enlighten them also unto eternal life. (Kretzmann)

2:16 *holding fast to the word of life* – Christians should also hold forth the Word of life to the unbelievers, and this is done by living a pure life. The good conduct of Christians is also a sermon through which many are won for Christ. If Christians walk carefully and are seriously concerned about their soul's salvation, they also at the same time become helpful to lead others to eternal life. (Stoeckhardt)

This means the Holy Scriptures. God gives life through the Word, as creation and the Gospel show. (TLSB)

proud. Not out of pride or a sense of self-accomplishment, but because of what God has done through Paul (see 1Th 2:19). (CSB)

Paul enjoyed a warm and affectionate relationship with the members of the congregation at Philippi. He had founded the congregation and was still its spiritual counselor and friend. (PBC)

This they do through the works of the divine life in them. Their entire behavior before the world will be a sermon in words and deeds. Their entire life will show what the Word of God is able to accomplish. The mere existence of believers in this world is a missionary factor. And all this, in turn, redounds to the honor of the apostle on the great day of Jesus Christ, the Day of Judgment. He wanted to be able to point to the Christians of Philippi with pride, as a result of his missionary efforts in Christ Jesus. It would show that his efforts had been crowned with success, for the Philippians would present visible, tangible evidence. Note: The Christians of our day may well

keep this word in mind in their relation to their pastors, that they may be a credit to the teaching which they have received, both here in time and on the great day of Jesus Christ. (Kretzmann)

day of Christ. Day of Judgment. (CSB)

in vain. Cf. 1Co 9:24–27. (CSB)

When he stands before the Lord on judgment day, he wants their lives to be evidences that his apostolic labors were not in vain. Paul had labored strenuously for the Philippians. What a wonderful testimony to the effectiveness of Paul's efforts their faith and Christian lives would be in the judgment. (PBC)

Paul uses the term “walk” to describe the Christian life. Life is active, with a path to follow, and a goal. Because Paul's life was vigorous, he ran rather than walked. He labored because of his confidence in the Word of God. (TLSB)

2:17–18 *I ... rejoice ... you too should ... rejoice.* Christian joy ought always to be mutual. (CSB)

2:17 *I am being poured out.* The reference may be to his entire ministry as one large thanksgiving sacrifice. However, it is more probable that Paul refers to his present imprisonment, which may end in a martyr's death. His life would then be poured out as a drink offering accompanying the sacrificial service of the Philippians. (CSB)

Paul had been instrumental in bringing the Philippians to faith and to constancy in the same. That is a savory offering and acceptable to God. To help others to believe is the best service anyone can render. Therefore Paul is also willing to seal this his offering and service with his blood. (Stoeckhardt)

To impress this last fact upon his readers, the apostle adds: But if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice, and rejoice with you all; in the same way also you rejoice, and rejoice with me. In and by his imprisonment Paul was being poured out like a drink-offering. But at the same time he was offering a sacrifice, a twofold sacrifice. The first sacrifice is that of the Christians' faith. He had succeeded in working faith in their hearts and in strengthening this faith to the present state of growth in sanctification. That was a pleasing sacrifice in the sight of God. The consequence was that the Philippians were now living a sacrifice in service, a true ministry. The apostle assumes that he himself will be offered upon his sacrifice. He may suffer the death of a martyr because of his preaching the Gospel. He knows that he will soon be liberated from the present imprisonment, but that merely places his martyr's death at a somewhat greater distance. The final disposition of his body is even now pretty sure: martyrdom looms up before him. But even should this take place very soon, it cannot hinder the fruits of his labor. He has cause for rejoicing at the faith and Christian life of the Philippians, he is happy in the thought of what has been accomplished. (Kretzmann)

like a drink offering. The OT background is the daily sacrifices in Ex 29:38–41. (CSB)

Wine or oil was poured out in the OT sanctuary (Nu 28:7). (TLSB)

In the OT rituals the drink offering was poured out next to the altar on which the burnt offering was sacrificed. Paul regarded believers' lives of obedience to the gospel as living sacrifices (Roman 12:1) to the Lord. His own martyrdom, should it occur, would be a willing sacrifice on

his part, a sacrifice poured out next to the sacrifices of the Christian lives of the Philippians. (PBC)

offering of your faith. Genuine faith is active and working. (CSB)

The last two phrases above might literally say, “the sacrifice and service of your faith.” Faith produces a sacrificial attitude (cf. vv. 4-8), which frees us to lay down our temporary physical life in the interest of eternal life (Romans 12:1-3)

2:18 *be glad and rejoice* – Far from hindering his labors on the Philippians’ behalf, his martyrdom would crown those labors. Viewing it in that light the apostle could find joy even in the prospect of such a death, and he wanted the Philippians to find it, too. (PBC)

Paul would impress upon his readers that they also have all reason to rejoice with him over the fact that the Word had borne fruit. We see here obedience to God forms the main thought throughout. (Stoeckhardt)

And in the same way his readers should rejoice in their faith, and rejoice with him, as it behooves good Christians, in the love of Christ. (Kretzmann)

2:12–18 Paul’s exhortation flows from the previous section revealing the significance of Jesus’ life and sacrifice. Like Paul, our labor would be meaningless and of no use to others if we lived crookedly and perversely as the world around us lives. But God is at work in us, moving us to hold fast to His Word of life, by which He extends His image and kingdom to others. • Dear Lord Jesus, please work in us to will and to do Your good pleasure, that we may be blameless in this crooked generation and blameless in the day of Your return. Amen. (TLSB)

Timothy and Epaphroditus

19 I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I too may be cheered by news of you. 20 For I have no one like him, who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare. 21 For they all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. 22 But you know Timothy’s proven worth, how as a son with a father he has served with me in the gospel. 23 I hope therefore to send him just as soon as I see how it will go with me, 24 and I trust in the Lord that shortly I myself will come also. 25 I have thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, and your messenger and minister to my need, 26 for he has been longing for you all and has been distressed because you heard that he was ill. 27 Indeed he was ill, near to death. But God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. 28 I am the more eager to send him, therefore, that you may rejoice at seeing him again, and that I may be less anxious. 29 So receive him in the Lord with all joy, and honor such men, 30 for he nearly died for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was lacking in your service to me.

2:19–23 Paul plans to send Timothy, who is with him in Rome (see 1:1), to discover and report on conditions in the Philippian church. (CSB)

2:19 *in the Lord* – The Apostle does everything in the Lord, together with the Lord, in His faith in, and in his prayer to, the Lord, even when it concerns external matter, such as sending one away on a journey. (Stoeckhardt)

Paul had the hope to God and his Lord Jesus that he might soon be able to send Timothy. He proves his communion with God by placing the entire course of his life in God's hands. Whatever God has ordained with regard to him he is willing to accept without grumbling. (Kretzmann)

send Timothy – His recommendation of Timothy shows the intimacy of the feeling between these two men, a cordial relation which the difference in age in no way affected. (Kretzmann)

be cheered – Yet his hope in this instance is all the more fervent because he wishes to be refreshed, to have his heart and spirit strengthened by receiving information regarding their state; their spiritual and physical welfare is a matter of deep concern to him. Timothy would return in a short time with news from the Philippians, and this, he hoped, would be of a nature to satisfy his heart. (Kretzmann)

2:20 *I have no one else like him.* Timothy was a good example of the kind of person envisioned in the exhortation of v. 4. (CSB)

Timothy is truly a sincere person, who is seriously concerned about the congregation. In that respect he is "likeminded" with the Apostle. (Stoeckhardt)

His reason for choosing Timothy for this mission he states: For I have none of the same mind who sincerely is anxious about your circumstances; all seek their own, not that of Jesus Christ. Timothy was equal-souled with Paul, and therefore felt the same pure, cordial interest in the Philippians as his teacher, since he was just as anxiously concerned about the work of Christ. Timothy's solicitude for the Philippians was genuine, sincere, just as Paul's was. (Kretzmann)

2:21 A sharp contrast between Timothy and Paul's other associates—an outstanding commendation for one so young. (CSB)

All the co-workers of the Apostle pursued their own interest. The Apostle had but one co-worker that was different, and that was Timothy. So matters stood in the Church, even in the Apostle's time. A certain interpreter at this point remarks that an investigation of these matters in the Church at any time would reveal that conditions, sad to say, have remained the same. (Stoeckhardt)

Of the others, however, of the great majority, Paul was constrained to say that they had nothing of this unselfish devotion, that they, the members of this group, were all seeking their own ends, being interested only in promoting their selfish ambitions. That is a hard criticism and judgment. Paul does not say that these men deliberately and maliciously pervert the work of the Gospel, but they have some selfish motive; they are in danger of losing faith and a good conscience. This is true at all times and should prove a spur to all pastors to become free from all selfish motives and interests and to serve their Master, Christ, in singleness of heart. (Kretzmann)

2:22 *as a son with his father.* This relationship between Timothy and Paul is developed at length in 1,2 Timothy. (CSB)

"But you know his tried character." Both Timothy and Paul had preached at Philippi, and both had been imprisoned. So the readers knew Timothy, and at that time already he had shown his worth. (Stoeckhardt)

served. Like Jesus and Paul, Timothy had a servant attitude. (CSB)

2:23 *see how it will go with me* – He is waiting for circumstantial evidences for his release to develop so far that everyone can foresee he will be set free. (Stoeckhardt)

This man, therefore, I hope to send at once, when I see clearly how things will fare with me. The Christians of Philippi had had ample opportunity of observing Timothy and of judging his motives, the state of his mind and heart; they knew his approvedness. They knew that he had served by the side of the great apostle in the ministry of the Gospel as a loving son serves his father. This man, therefore, surely would be especially welcome to them, Paul intended to send him quickly, just as soon as he had definite information as to his own fate, how matters would turn out with regard to him. The decision of the imperial court might be expected any day, and the sending of Timothy would take place immediately thereafter. (Kretzmann)

2:24 Paul anticipates his release in the near future (see 1:25). (CSB)

Paul is certain in the Lord that even he himself will come to the Philippians. It is through the Lord that he has this assurance. (Stoeckhardt)

Paul is expecting still more: I trust, however, in the Lord that I myself may come quickly. That firm confidence he has in the Lord that he will be able to come in person. He wants to follow Timothy just as soon as certain matters in Rome will have been disposed of. He wants to follow up his letter by a personal visit. Note that Paul always places the disposition of his life with all its vicissitudes into the hands of God, in childlike trust. (Kretzmann)

2:25–30 Epaphroditus, too, after a close brush with death (vv. 27, 30), is being sent home to Philippi. (CSB)

2:25 *messenger*. A broader use of the Greek word often translated “apostle,” applied here to Epaphroditus as a representative of the Philippian church (cf. 2Co 8:23). (CSB)

Now Paul makes personal comments concerning Epaphroditus, who had transmitted the loving gift of the Philippians to the Apostle at Rome. He was a sincere man and also served in the ministry of the Word. He was also a brave contender for the cause of the Gospel and for Christ’ sake had already suffered much. He had ministered to Paul’s want, what the Apostle needed, meaning a gift of their love. That was also a good work on the part of Epaphroditus that he had conveyed this gift to the imprisoned Paul. (Stoeckhardt)

It may be that Timothy made the journey to Philippi with Epaphroditus; but, however that may be, the latter left immediately after the writing of this letter and acted as its bearer. So Paul includes a recommendation and admonition with regard to this messenger of the Philippian congregation: But I believed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, the brother and coworker and fellow-soldier, but your apostle and the minister of my want. He is Paul’s brother in Christ, a son of the same Father in heaven through the redemption gained by Christ; he is his coworker, he had labored by the side of the apostle, he had continued the work of the apostle in Philippi; he is his fellow-soldier, he fought as a soldier of Christ in the same ranks. And the Philippians should regard Epaphras (abbreviated form of Epaphroditus) as their apostle, who not only had taught them in the past, but was now again returning to their midst as Paul’s representative. Thus Paul repaid some of the kindness which they had shown him when they sent Epaphras as the minister of Paul’s wants, with substantial aid for the apostle’s needs. (Kretzmann)

2:26 *longing for you all* – This man the Apostle sends, because he was homesick, learning that the Philippians were much concerned about him upon hearing of his being ill. (Stoeckhardt)

To send this man at this time had seemed especially necessary to Paul, because he was yearning, he was in a state of longing, of homesickness for the brethren at Philippi; his love desired to see them and to be with them. This longing of Epaphroditus was increased by the fact that he was also troubled, being in sore anguish of mind because the report had been brought to Philippi that he had been sick. Either on the way to Rome or in Rome the messenger of the Philippian congregation had been taken ill, and, as Paul writes, indeed he had been badly ill, so severely sick that he had been in danger of death, his life had been almost despaired of. (Kretzmann)

2:27 Cf. 1:21–26. (CSB)

But God had restored his health. That was not only a great benefit to Epaphroditus, but Paul as well. Paul's first grief was his imprisonment, and the second would have been the death of Epaphroditus. (Stoeckhardt)

But God had had mercy on him, He had changed the course of his sickness and had brought him back to life and health. In doing so, however, God had had mercy also on the apostle, who would have been deeply grieved, thrown into mourning, bereaved of a faithful coworker: it would have resulted in bringing one sorrow after another upon him. God had spared him at least this sorrowful experience. All the more quickly Paul was now sending him to Philippi, partly because there was danger of a relapse (the sickness may have been malaria), partly in order that the solicitous anxiety of the Philippians might be alleviated. (Kretzmann)

2:28 *anxious*. The legitimate cares and concerns that come with the Christian life and the gospel ministry. (CSB)

The Apostle sent Epaphroditus back more speedily than he had ordinarily planned, that the Philippians so much sooner should be relieved of their anxiety and be gladdened. But he was doing this also for his own sake, so that he, the Apostle, might be spared further anxiety. He wished to be spared of more painful anxiety. Very likely the Apostle feared Epaphroditus might suffer a relapse of his illness. (Stoeckhardt)

In order to show his high regard for Epaphroditus, and in order to impress upon the Philippians the proper regard which they should have toward their ministers in the Lord, Paul here gives Epaphroditus a very cordial recommendation. They should receive him in the Lord with all joy. (Kretzmann)

2:29 *receive him* – The Apostle exhorts the Philippians to receive Epaphroditus with joy. Even the Philippians were in need of such admonition to hold faithful servants in honor. (Stoeckhardt)

It was to be not only the rejoicing of a friend on account of a dear friend, but also the cordial reception of a servant of Christ. For the sake of the Lord in whose service he is working, for the sake of the Gospel which he is preaching, they should give him a hearty welcome. This includes, incidentally, the full and unequivocal acceptance of the Word which is proclaimed by the servant of Christ. (Kretzmann)

2:30 *for* – All good works are done in Christ and through Christ. That was not a mere outward performance, but a true Christian one; for it was the fruit of faith. In performing this work he ventured near death's door. But this was not foolhardy act, but a deed of faith. (Stoeckhardt)

And the same applies in the case of all such as preach the Gospel, as are true servants of Christ. Those elders should be counted worthy of double honor that labor in the Word and doctrine. As for Epaphroditus, Paul says that he risked his very life, he drew near, up to death, hazarding his life, for the Gospel. The fevers that were prevalent in Rome, due to malaria borne by mosquitoes from the near-by swamps, ravaged the populace, but were still more dangerous for visitors that had had no opportunity to become at least partially immune. The service of Epaphroditus had been very valuable to Paul. And this fact should find due acknowledgment also from the Philippian Christians. While in their service, while engaged in bringing gifts to Paul, he was, in their absence, fulfilling the service which they owed to the apostle. Since the entire congregation could not come, he, as their representative, took the place of them all and ministered to the wants of the great teacher in his imprisonment. The gifts and good wishes of the Philippians were supplemented by the personal comfort and service of Epaphroditus in Rome. This they should always remember, and receive him accordingly. Note: Throughout this passage the intimate and cordial relationship among the early Christians is brought out most beautifully; a fine example in view of the callousness and indifference prevalent at the present time. (Kretzmann)

Epaphroditus worked and traveled extensively so that he could deliver the support for Paul that the Philippians had sent with him. This self-denial made him vulnerable to an illness that almost took his life. (TLSB)

was lacking in your service to me – The Philippians wanted to support Paul in spreading the Gospel, but Paul had been traveling **and** now was under arrest. Epaphroditus brought both financial support and moral support from the Philippians. (TLSB)

2:19-30 Paul takes a moment to inform the Philippians about the significance and well-being of two close associates, Timothy and Epaphroditus. These men provide remarkable examples of devotion to the Lord's mission and to his missionary Paul. God's grace makes a person genuinely concerned for the welfare of others and sustains us in such service. - Dear Lord Jesus, by your mercy, make us faithful servants, looking after the welfare of your fellow servants. Amen.