



## Philippians - Chapter Three

### Summary of Chapter Three

Paul opens with a warning against the Judaisers, yet he does so from the perspective of an insider. The Jews prided themselves on their ancestry back to the Patriarchs through the twelve sons of Jacob that distinguished their tribal heritage. Paul's pedigree and zealous nature were a match for anyone. However, Paul argues strongly that all that has changed because of the Cross. To revert to national pride, identified through the rite of circumcision, was no better than the old pagan ways, for those who follow Christ are to be spiritual people and not those identified by their ethnicity.

In fact, Paul describes everything that had gone before to be worthless in comparison to knowing Jesus as the Christ and to following him by faith, knowing the power of his resurrection and waiting for the day when all will join him in righteousness through their own resurrection.

Paul acknowledges that he is far from being the finished article but that he is determined to press on towards the end, giving no regard for what has gone before, i.e. his heritage. His focus is on completing the work God has set before him, while holding on to what he has already been given through the Gospel. His exhortation is that his readers will do likewise.

Paul concludes the chapter by calling the Philippians to follow his example and that of people like him, and to avoid those who are enemies of the Cross, whose future judgement will lead them to destruction. Believers are citizens of heaven and are awaiting the return of their King, who has the power to restore everything to the way it was intended to be. They are to live in a way that reflects the culture and values of heaven.

<sup>1a</sup> Finally, my brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord

Verse 1a was commented on at the end of Chapter Two. Paul will return to the theme of rejoicing in Chapter Four.

## **IV Philippians 3:1b-4:1 - Opponents of the Gospel: Where Does Righteousness Come From?**

Paul begins this section by warning the Philippians about the Judaising opponents of the Gospel (vv.2-3). In contrast, Paul has renounced his spiritual and ethnic privileges for the sake of knowing Christ (vv.4-11); his righteousness comes through Christ, not the law (vv.12-16). He then calls the Philippians to follow his example of commitment to Jesus as Lord (vv.17-21).

Some interpreters suppose that the abrupt transition after v.1 indicates that Chapter 3 is a later interpolation into the letter. But there is no need for such a theory. The vocabulary of Chapter 3 is reflected in the rest of the letter, and its themes of 'progress' and 'example' are central to Paul's overarching purposes. While the Judaisers, people who insisted that Christians had to obey all the OT ceremonial laws, hold out a promise of spiritual progress through adherence to the rules of the old covenant, Paul holds himself out as an example of someone who knows that real progress consists only of being increasingly conformed to the image of Christ's death and resurrection.

Paul's conflicts with the Judaisers can be seen in greater detail in Acts and Galatians, e.g. Acts 15:1-19; Galatians 2:15-21 and 3:6-4:31, as well as in the rest of his letters. Their teaching that Gentiles must first become Jews and obey all the OT laws in order to be saved was abhorrent to Paul. Not only did it show a lack of welcome, in complete contrast to God's own attitude, but it also sought in effect to divert Gentiles away from Christ into a covenant that could never save them. While the law might be 'holy and righteous and good' (Romans 7:12), the old covenant pertained to the age before the giving of the Spirit, and thus inevitably brought curse rather than blessing since human beings were unable to keep it. The righteousness it offered could only be an incomplete, superficial righteousness, in contrast to the perfect righteousness given as a gift to believers by virtue of the life and death of Christ. The fury of Paul's response in these verses was fuelled by his thankfulness for his own deliverance from this system.

### **IV.a Philippians 3:1b-11 - Breaking with the Past**

Paul had begun this chapter by calling the Philippians to rejoice in the Lord (v.1), but then warns them about the Judaising opponents of the Gospel (vv.2-3). In contrast, Paul has renounced his spiritual and ethnic privileges for the sake of knowing Christ (vv.4-11).

#### **IV.a.i Philippians 3:1b - Paul untroubled by repetition**

Paul makes it known that he is untroubled in repeating instructions from or explanations of the Gospel, seeing it as a safeguard for their spiritual wellbeing.

<sup>1b</sup> To write the same things to you is not troublesome to me, and for you it is a safeguard.

## Philippians 3:1b

To write the same things to you. This refers to what Paul had either written to them in a previous now unknown letter, or simply to what he had taught them in person. He is content to repeat himself with regard to any issue and he sees it as a safeguard otherwise they overlook something or more likely hold an incorrect perception about an important issue.

### IV.a.ii Philippians 3:2-4a - Contrast between the opponents of the Gospel and the true people of God

Paul critiques the Judaisers and explains the contrasting characteristics of the true church.

<sup>2</sup> Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of those who mutilate the flesh!

## Philippians 3:2

The term dogs was not only a general form of derision in the ancient world, it was particularly a word used by some Jews in reference to Gentiles, who were considered ritually unclean: <<*For dogs are all around me; a company of evildoers encircles me*>> (Psalm 22:16a). With biting irony, Paul says that the Judaisers, not the Gentiles, deserve that label. Jesus used the word in an interesting and provocative way to test a Syrophœnician woman's faith: <<*Now the woman was a Gentile, of Syrophœnician origin. She begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. He said to her, 'Let the children be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs.'* But she answered him, 'Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs.' Then he said to her, 'For saying that, you may go – the demon has left your daughter'>> (Mark 7:26-29). Refer also to the comments made on that chapter. John uses the term to describe those who will face condemnation at the final judgement: <<*Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and fornicators and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practises falsehood*>> (Revelation 22:15).

Paul's irony continues as he labels those who extol good works of the law as evil workers and those who mutilate the flesh. This last phrase, Greek *tēn katatomēn*, is a play on words with circumcision, Greek *peritomē*. The Judaisers' supposed badge of pride turns out to be the sign of their destruction. On Jewish and Gentile views of circumcision refer to the comments made on Acts 15:1.

<sup>3</sup> For it is we who are the circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and boast in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh –  
<sup>4a</sup> even though I, too, have reason for confidence in the flesh.

## Philippians 3:3-4a

We who are the circumcision refers to those who have circumcised hearts: <<*Rather, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly, and real circumcision is a matter of the heart – it is spiritual and not literal. Such a person receives praise not from others but from God*>> (Romans 2:29). This is something foretold

in the OT: <<*Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, remove the foreskin of your hearts, O people of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, or else my wrath will go forth like fire, and burn with no one to quench it, because of the evil of your doings*>> (Jeremiah 4:4).

In contrast to those promoting physical circumcision (v.2), the true people of God, i.e. the circumcision, are those who worship in the Spirit of God: <<*But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth*>> (John 4:23-24). They boast in Christ Jesus: <<*so that I may share abundantly in your boasting in Christ Jesus when I come to you again*>> (Philippians 1:26), and put no confidence in the flesh, that is, as Calvin put it, in 'everything that is outside of Christ'.

This verse is one of only a few that mentions all three members of the Trinity: God the Father, Christ Jesus the Son, and the Spirit of God, i.e. the Holy Spirit, as Paul does in: <<*The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you*>> (2 Corinthians 13:13).

#### IV.a.iii Philippians 3:4b-11 - Paul's renunciation of spiritual and ethnic privileges for the sake of knowing Christ

Paul regards his prior privileges and achievements as spiritual rubbish in comparison to the surpassing worth of knowing Christ, and being justified (v.9), sanctified (v.10), and glorified in him (v.11).

<sup>4b</sup> If anyone else has reason to be confident in the flesh, I have more:  
<sup>5</sup> circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; <sup>6</sup> as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.

#### Philippians 3:4b-6

Paul's opposition to the Judaisers is not because he himself in any way lacked a Jewish pedigree. When it came to the things of the flesh, the whole system of life that held sway before the coming of Christ and the giving of the Spirit, Paul had perfect credentials.

He was circumcised on the eighth day in accordance with OT law: <<*Throughout your generations every male among you shall be circumcised when he is eight days old, including the slave born in your house and the one bought with your money from any foreigner who is not of your offspring*>> (Genesis 17:12), and: <<*On the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised*>> (Leviticus 12:3). Jesus, as a Jewish child, was no different: <<*After eight days had passed, it was time to circumcise the child; and he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb*>> (Luke 2:21), thus circumcision is not itself the problem.

A member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin. Paul was an ethnic Israelite and knew the tribe from which he descended. To know one's ancestry in this way was a matter of pride, for its heritage marked one as a member of God's chosen people.

A Hebrew born of Hebrews probably indicates his descent from Jewish ancestors, and many think it also means that he spoke Aramaic, the national language of Israel in his day, even though he came from Greek-speaking Tarsus. Although most of Paul's OT quotes are from the Greek Septuagint, as a Pharisee he may well have been able to read the Hebrew or Aramaic versions as well.

He was from the strictest religious sect – the Pharisees: *<<They have known for a long time, if they are willing to testify, that I have belonged to the strictest sect of our religion and lived as a Pharisee>>* (Acts 26:5).

His zeal was such that he had even been a persecutor of the church. He probably had thought of himself as following in the footsteps of men like of Phinehas: *<<Phinehas son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the priest, has turned back my wrath from the Israelites by manifesting such zeal among them on my behalf that in my jealousy I did not consume the Israelites>>* (Numbers 25:11), and Elijah: *<<He answered, 'I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away'>>* (1 Kings 19:10) in his zeal.

If anyone could be said to be blameless in following the law, it was Paul. However, before God it was no righteousness at all, for although Paul thought he was pleasing God, in persecuting the church he had shown himself to be the worst of sinners: *<<The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners – of whom I am the foremost>>* (1 Timothy 1:15).

<sup>7</sup> Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. <sup>8</sup> More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ <sup>9</sup> and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith. <sup>10</sup> I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, <sup>11</sup> if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

### Philippians 3:7-11

Paul's accounting, however, has now changed completely. What formerly went in the gain column: his power, prestige and obedience, now goes into the loss column. Likewise, the crucified Messiah, whom he had assumed must be a loss, is now seen as the ultimate gain. The language of loss and gain probably alludes to Jesus' teaching: *<<For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those*

*who lose their life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life?>> (Matthew 16:25-26).*

In 2:6-8 Paul had described that Jesus did not exploit his equality with God but rather used it as a powerful demonstration of love and self-sacrifice. In a similar way, Paul did not exploit the privileges of his Jewish ethnicity and being a member of God's chosen people. Instead, he willingly sacrificed all of that and endured much hardship and suffering in order to have a personal relationship with Christ and, by faith, receive the eternal rewards that he knows and trusts God will give to him.

The surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord is not knowing about Christ but the resulting effect that a personal relationship with him has on the believer, and is the primary reason why some people are given their spiritual gifts: *<<The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ>> (Ephesians 4:11-13), thus it is personal knowledge: <<May grace and peace be yours in abundance in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord>> (2 Peter 1:2).*

I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ. Paul had been willing to sacrifice everything in his life to serve his Lord, as did the other apostles, for which Jesus subsequently promised to reward them: *<<And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold, and will inherit eternal life>> (Matthew 19:29).*

Found in him means being spiritually united to Christ and therefore found not guilty before God as divine judge. Paul had trusted in a righteousness of my own based on obedience to the law rather than on the right standing before God that comes through faith in Christ. God imputes Christ's lifelong record of perfect obedience to the person who trusts in him for salvation; that is, he thinks of Christ's obedience as belonging to that person, and therefore that person stands before God not as guilty but as righteous. This is the basis on which justification by faith alone is considered fair in God's sight. As explained in Romans 10:1-8, righteousness cannot come by the law because all human beings sin, and therefore right standing before God as the divine judge is possible only through faith in Jesus Christ, who is the believer's righteousness before God. Refer to the comments made on Galatians 2:16.

The goal of trusting in Christ is to know him, that is, to know Christ in a personal relationship, and also to know the power of his resurrection; namely, the power Christ exerts now from the right hand of God. This power is made known as the believer shares the same kind of sufferings Jesus faced, the sufferings that attend faithful witness in a fallen world. The good news is that those who suffer with and for Christ will attain the resurrection from the dead, even as he did.

#### IV.b Philippians 3:12-4:1 - Pressing towards the Goal

Paul acknowledges that his righteousness comes through Christ, not the law (vv.12-16). He then calls the Philippians to follow his example of commitment to Jesus as Lord (vv.17-21 and 4:1).

##### IV.b.i Philippians 3:12-16 - Paul's progress in the Gospel: through Christ, not the law

Paul emphasises the need for progress in Christian living, presenting himself as one who continually reaches ahead to see God's Kingdom expanded.

<sup>12</sup> Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.

##### Philippians 3:12

Paul stresses that he is far from perfect, i.e. not that I have already obtained this, for he is still involved in the struggles of life in a fallen world and hence he still sins; the full glory of the resurrection remains in the future.

I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. There is a balance of faith and works, of God's call and the believer's response. All Paul's efforts for holiness, all the work of the Gospel, after the eventual goal of resurrection, are not a matter of his unaided effort to do something that will make God pleased with him. They all take place within the context of God's grace: Jesus Christ has grasped hold of him and all that he does is now a matter of responding in love to that firm hand on the shoulder.

The language here is quite familiar in Paul's letters and alludes to athletics, something of great interest in the region because of the Isthmian and Olympic Games: <<Do you not know that in a race all the runners all compete, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win it>> (1 Corinthians 9:24), <<You were running well; who prevented you from obeying the truth?>> (Galatians 5:7), and: <<I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith>> (2 Timothy 4:7).

<sup>13</sup> Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, <sup>14</sup> I press on towards the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.

##### Philippians 3:13-14

The goal, Greek *skopos*, could also refer to the finish line in a race or an archery target. Paul's life is purposeful, for he constantly aims toward a heavenly goal.

The prize is the fullness of blessings and rewards in the age to come: <<From now on there is reserved for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all

*who have longed for his appearing*>> (2 Timothy 4:8), most especially being in perfect fellowship with Christ forever.

Addressing fellow believers, Paul again emphasises that he has not yet laid hold of that which Christ had taken hold of him to do. His life and his whole effort are focused on the remaining path before him, which also means that no time or effort is to be wasted looking back. All effort is for those things that still lay ahead in the Christian life.

The heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus is perhaps a surprising description for the ultimate goal. Yet for Paul that is exactly his aim. Thus it is not time to slow down as the finish line is in sight; all effort must continue. The prize is that which God had called him to receive in Christ Jesus. He was called to faithfully persevere to the very end in his service to God, as are all who accept Jesus as Lord.

Is Paul saying his life will be complete when he finishes the race and receives his crown and glorified body in heaven? This seems unlikely as is revealed in vv.20-21, for Jesus will return back to earth! Thus the goal is not living in heaven but living in God's new world with new resurrection bodies. Therefore, the heavenly call here is most likely the final resurrection.

<sup>15</sup> Let those of us then who are mature be of the same mind; and if you think differently about anything, this too God will reveal to you.

<sup>16</sup> Only let us hold fast to what we have attained.

### Philippians 3:15-16

Mature, Greek *teleios*, is the same adjective referring to the perfection Paul has not achieved in v.12. Thus, Paul is saying, in effect, 'If you are really perfect and mature, you will realise you are not yet perfect or mature!'

This is a clear warning to those who advocate super-spirituality as Christians and perhaps believe that once they are mature in the faith, their work is done and all they need to do is sit it out. Paul clearly states that even the mature Christians are to continue pressing on towards the end. It seems that some in Ephesus had fallen into the trap of complacency: <<*But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first*>> (Revelation 2:4).

If you think differently about anything. Having given his own example of faithful service, Paul now turns to his readers to exhort them to the same mindset and determination to complete their course. If there is anything in this life that distracts them or slows them down in their endeavours, God will reveal this to them to ensure it is dealt with appropriately.

Only let us hold fast to what we have attained. Paul is saying this is no time to be deviated from the course they are called to follow, the white lines of the track that God has marked out for their race. A good analogy here might be an athlete leading a race who then slackens off before the finishing line only to be subsequently passed by others, losing a race he should have won if only he had persevered right to the finishing line.

#### IV.b.ii Philippians 3:17-4:1 - A call to follow Paul's example of commitment to Jesus as Lord

Paul calls the Philippians to imitate him, a common theme in his letters. Paul's intent is not for the Philippians to focus on him per se but rather for them to join him in humble, radical dependence on Christ.

<sup>17</sup> Brothers and sisters, join in imitating me, and observe those who live according to the example you have in us.

#### Philippians 3:17

While Paul is not yet perfected, he is confident enough in his Christian walk to ask the Philippians to join in imitating me and other mature Christians. Much Christian growth comes through imitation of other Christians: <<*I appeal to you, then, be imitators of me*>> (1 Corinthians 4:16), <<*Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ*>> (1 Corinthians 11:1), <<*Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you*>> (Philippians 4:9), <<*For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us; we were not idle when we were with you, and we did not eat anyone's bread without paying for it; but with toil and labour we worked night and day, so that we might not burden any of you. This was not because we do not have that right, but in order to give you an example to imitate*>> (2 Thessalonians 3:7-9), <<*Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity*>> (1 Timothy 4:12), <<*Now you have observed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions, and my suffering the things that happened to me in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra. What persecutions I endured! Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them*>> (2 Timothy 3:10-11), <<*Remember your leaders, those who spoke the word of God to you; consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith*>> (Hebrews 13:7), and: <<*Do not lord it over those in your charge, but be examples to the flock*>> (1 Peter 5:3).

<sup>18</sup> For many live as enemies of the cross of Christ; I have often told you of them, and now I tell you even with tears. <sup>19</sup> Their end is destruction; their god is the belly; and their glory is in their shame; their minds are set on earthly things.

#### Philippians 3:18-19

The enemies of the Cross could be the Judaisers of v.2, who are devaluing the work of Jesus by trying to impose the burden of Jewish law and rites on the Gentiles who wish to follow Christ's example: <<*It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh that try to compel you to be circumcised – only that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ*>> (Galatians 6:12), or they could be worldly people in general.

I tell you even with tears is probably a twofold emotion: sadness for those who have failed to grasp the realities of a life for Christ and the final outcome they will face; and the dangers it poses to those who fail to heed such warnings. Paul had

used a similar expression in his final address to the Ephesian elders in Miletus: <<*I know that after I have gone, savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Some even from your own group will come distorting the truth in order to entice the disciples to follow them. Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to warn everyone with tears*>> (Acts 20:29-31).

The destiny of such people refers to their final judgment, i.e. their end is destruction: <<*But when I thought how to understand this, it seemed to me a wearisome task, until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I perceived their end*>> (Psalm 73:16-17).

They worship themselves, their belly, perhaps also alluding to the ever increasing sin of gluttony, something now seen as an increasing danger in the western world, and they are consumed with earthly things, an allusion to selfish ambitions. Such people are warned of by the Lord's brother: <<*These are blemishes on your love-feasts, while they feast with you without fear, feeding themselves. They are waterless clouds carried along by the winds; autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, uprooted; wild waves of the sea, casting up the foam of their own shame; wandering stars, for whom the deepest darkness has been reserved for ever*>> (Jude 12-13).

<sup>20</sup> But our citizenship is in heaven, and it is from there that we are expecting a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

### Philippians 3:20

Our citizenship is in heaven. Philippi prided itself on being a Roman colony, offering the honour and privilege of Roman citizenship. Paul reminds the congregation that they should look to Christ, not Cæsar, for their model of behaviour, since their primary allegiance is to God and his Kingdom: <<*So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God*>> (Ephesians 2:19).

Just as the Philippians never intended a mass migration to Rome, the source of their citizenship, neither does Paul mean that Christians are bound for heaven. Philippi was intended to reflect the lifestyle and culture that identified it as Roman, with Cæsar as its lord and saviour. Therefore, what Paul is saying is that Christians are to live a life that reflects the values of heaven, with Jesus as their Lord and Saviour.

For the Philippians to turn away from Cæsar to Christ was a difficult and dangerous challenge, but one that was necessary if they were to avoid the worldly draws of paganism that endangered their faith and final destiny. The modern church faces the same choices in meeting the challenges of a secular world that draws so many away from the values of the Gospel.

It is from there that we are expecting a Saviour. Jesus had already come as Saviour and will come again from heaven when the time is right for judgement: <<*So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth, for you have died, and your life is*

*hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory*>> (Colossians 3:1-4), and: <<*For the Lord himself, with a cry of command, with the archangel's call and with the sound of God's trumpet, will descend from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up in the clouds together with them to meet the Lord in the air; and so we will be with the Lord for ever*>> (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

<sup>21</sup> He will transform the body of our humiliation so that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, by the power that also enables him to make all things subject to himself.

### Philippians 3:21

He will transform the body of our humiliation so that it may be conformed to the body of his glory echoes 2:5-11. Those who follow Christ's example of service will share in his vindication and glory as well. Perfection will come only at the resurrection (vv.11-12 and 1 Corinthians 15:12-28).

To make all things subject to himself is messianic language drawn from the OT: <<*You have given them dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under their feet*>> (Psalm 8:6), and: <<*The Lord says to my lord, 'Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool'*>> (Psalm 110:1).

Philippians 4:1 is commented on here as it concludes the major section currently under review.

<sup>4:1</sup> Therefore, my brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, my beloved.

### Philippians 4:1

Therefore. This transitional verse can be read as either the conclusion to the previous section or the introduction to Chapter 4. In this translation it is taken as the former.

My joy and crown. The Philippians' spiritual success would be Paul's crowning achievement, along with the other successful church plants he had been involved with: <<*For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you? Yes, you are our glory and joy!*>> (1 Thessalonians 2:19-20), and their perseverance and final salvation will bring him great joy: <<*But even if I am being poured out as a libation over the sacrifice and the offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you*>> (Philippians 2:17).

Stand firm in the Lord in this way. Paul summarises what he has just said with an exhortation to remain resolute in their faith. He had issued a similar exhortation to Corinth: <<*Keep alert, stand firm in your faith, be courageous, be strong*>> (1 Corinthians 16:13); a call for the global church.