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The Philippian Affairs

1:27 to 2:18



In **1:25-26 Paul** concluded **his** reflections on imprisonment (**1:12-26**) with a noticeable shift of focus from **himself** to **his** relationship with the church at **Philippi**, in terms of an anticipated reunion. **He** follows that transitional passage by throwing the spotlight now entirely on **them** and **their** present circumstances (**1:27 to 2:18**). Therefore, this section is obviously about “**their** affairs” as **1:12-26** was about **his**. With this section we come to the heart of the matter, the primary reason the letter was written - why **he** takes the occasion of **Epaphroditus’** return to *write* to them, rather than waiting until he himself returns. And here in particular the threefold bond that holds the letter together stands out. First, the problem is not a church split, but posturing and bickering - selfish ambition, empty conceit, complaining, and arguing. Secondly, at stake is **the Gospel** in **Philippi** - **Messiah Himself**, if you will. Consequently, **Messiah** and **the Gospel** are **Paul’s** ultimate concern. And thirdly, the concern with **the Philippians’** relationship with **Messiah**, and thus for **the Philippians themselves**, whose unity for **Messiah** is under attack from outside pressure: **by those who oppose you (1:28a)**. Therefore, **Paul** appeals, on the one hand, to the example of **Messiah** and **himself**, and on the other hand, to **his** and **their** long-term and secure relationship in **Messiah** and **the Spirit**.

This section follows a chiasmic structure. There is a parallelism, where the first letter is antithetical to the second letter, with the letter **C** being the turning point.

A Appeal to steadfastness and unity in the face of opposition **(1:27-30)**

B The appeal to unity, based on **Paul's** and their common life in **Messiah**
(2:1-4)

C The appeal to Messiah's example (2:5-11)

B Application of the appeal, again based on **their** mutual relationship
(2:12-13)

A Further application: unity in the face of opposition (for the sake of witness)
(2:14-18)⁵⁵