

## Philippians 3:17-21

An Original Translation from the UBS-5 by [Tyler Robbins](#)

Revised December 2016

### 1. FINISHED TRANSLATION:

Brothers, join together and imitate me, and pay close attention to people who are walking this way, according to the example you have in us. Because many people are walking, whom I often spoke about to you, but now tell you with tears – [they are] the enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end - damnation, whose god - the belly, and whose glory - in their own disgrace. They set their minds on worldly things.

For our community exists in heaven, from which also we are eagerly awaiting a Savior, [the] Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body by making it like the body of His glory according to the operation of his power; that is, the power by which He also will subject everything to Himself.

### 2. THOUGHT-FLOW DIAGRAM:



### 3. DETAILED TRANSLATION NOTES:

This translation follows the diagram, above.

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Phil 3:17a	Συμμηταί	μου	γίνεσθε,	ἀδελφοί,
	npm	1st,s,g	2 <sup>nd</sup> ,pl,p,m,imp	vpm
	fellow-imitators	my	you must become	brothers
	Brothers, join together and imitate me,			

**Συμμηταί.** A predicate nominative (note the equative verb γίνεσθε) which functions to qualify something about the subject. That is, the “brothers” (the subject) must become “fellow-imitators” (predicate nominative).

The sense seems to be that Paul is commanding the Christian in Philippi to follow Paul’s example *together*<sup>1</sup> (note the prefix Συμ). This word only appears here in the New Testament, and doesn’t appear at all in patristic literature. It next appears in some 4<sup>th</sup> century Christian writings which are apparently quoting from this text.<sup>2</sup> The sense is *to emulate*; “all [examples] are used with an ethical aim and are linked with the obligation to a specific kind of conduct.”<sup>3</sup> Silva points out that Paul’s point is not that the Philippians should simply copy his behavior. Instead, the “example in view has to do with conduct that is shaped by a definite goal and by the experience of persecution and suffering for Christ’s sake – in short, it is life in fellowship with Christ.”<sup>4</sup>

But, who are the “others?” They could be all the people in the church at Philippi, or it could be other Christian communities around Asia Minor who are also following Paul’s example.<sup>5</sup> Because Paul does not mention any other communities in the context, it seems best to simply say that he was calling them to band together and follow his personal example as a corporate body (e.g. “be followers together of me,” KJV). This is the way Hellerman<sup>6</sup> and Hawthorne<sup>7</sup> both understand this. It also accounts for the middle voice in the verb γίνεσθε; it does not *have* to be interpreted as a deponent middle.

**Μου.** An objective genitive, functioning as the implied object of this “following.” Whose example should they join together as a corporate body to imitate? Paul’s. It doesn’t seem Paul wants them to follow him *per se*; he seems to want them to follow

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<sup>1</sup> See (1) Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, ed. Frederick W. Danker, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000; reprint, Bibleworks v.10), s.v. “6959 συμμητής,” and (2) Timothy Friberg, Barbara Friberg, and Neva F. Miller, *Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000; reprint, Bibleworks v.10), s.v. “25321 συμμητής.” Hereafter abbreviated “BDAG” and “Friberg,” respectively.

<sup>2</sup> Moises Silva (ed.), *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis*, 5 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 3:305. Hereafter abbreviated “NIDNTE.”

<sup>3</sup> NIDNTE, 3:305.

<sup>4</sup> NIDNTE, 3:305.

<sup>5</sup> This seems to be the way many English translations (e.g. RSV, NASB, ESV, NKJV) take this.

<sup>6</sup> Joseph H. Hellerman, *Philippians*, in *Exegetical Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2015; Kindle ed.), KL 7004-7006.

<sup>7</sup> Gerald Hawthorne, *Philippians*, vol. 43, in *Word Biblical Commentary* (Waco, TX: Word, 1983), 159-160.

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his *example*<sup>8</sup> of love for Christ which impels godly living, as explained in the preceding verses.<sup>9</sup> I left it as “me,” instead of “my example,” because this is a matter for the Pastor to bring out. This *could* also be a genitive of social relationship (cf. 1 Cor 1:12).

**γίνεσθε.** A direct middle, indicating the subject (the “ἀδελφοί” in Philippi) is being commanded to directly upon itself. The Philippians are commanded to “join together” and follow his example *as a group*. They must act upon one another, stir one another up to love and good works, impelled and motivated by a love for Christ and deliberate, corporate disregard for the things of this world (cf. Phil 3:2-16). It seems the middle voice is deliberate here, because Paul drops it in favor of the simple active voice for the verb which immediately follows.

Context suggests a descriptive present. It *could* be taken as an iterative present, conveying the idea of habitual or continuous action. Paul is not suggesting they simply begin following his example. Nor does he expect them stop at some point. He wants them to be *customarily* or *always* following his personal example. I left it as a descriptive present, because I fear this is a nuance best left to the preacher, not the translator.

An imperative of command; this is not a suggestion! For stylistic reasons, I left the verb untranslated but kept the imperative mood (“imitate me”). It would be awkward to render the verb (“join together and *become* imitators of me”) and it is ultimately unnecessary; the verb is clearly implied.

**ἀδελφοί.** A vocative of direct address. This is also functioning as the subject of the clause.

Phil 3:17b	καὶ	σκοπεῖτε	τοὺς	οὕτως	περιπατοῦντας
	conj	2 <sup>nd</sup> ,pl,p,a,imp	apm	adv	papapm
	and	you must pay attention, take note,	the	in this way	those who are walking
	and pay close attention to people who are walking this way				

**καὶ.** This conjunction is a simple additive, and it links what came before with the statement that follows.

**σκοπεῖτε.** A simple active, indicating the subject (the “ἀδελφοί” in Philippi) is being commanded to directly perform the action of the verb. Context suggests a descriptive present but, like the other verb, it may well imply an iterative flavor which the preacher can bring out in exposition. An imperative of command.

Paul is commanding the Philippians to “watch carefully” or “take special note of”<sup>10</sup> people who are living their lives in accordance with his own example. “Basically the

<sup>8</sup> cf. Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 160.

<sup>9</sup> cf. Jac J. Muller, *The Epistles of Paul to the Philippians and to Philemon*, in NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1955), 128.

<sup>10</sup> BDAG, s.v. “6715 σκοπέω.”

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verb means ‘to look attentively,’ that is, to fix one’s attention on something with keen interest. It is certainly more than mere watch.’”<sup>11</sup>

In other words, take a look around your local church and model yourself after the good example of Christian conduct and personal holiness certain people are setting. Look for role models so you will improve your own walk with the Lord.

**τοὺς . . . περιπατοῦντας.** A substantival participle, functioning as the subject of the clause. Simple active voice, indicating “those who are walking” are performing the action of the participle. Context suggests a descriptive present. As they receive this letter and hear it read in the assembly, the Philippians are exhorted to look for role models in their midst and “carefully watch” how they live their lives, so they will learn.

Paul is telling them to watch for people living holy lives *at that particular moment*, whenever this particular moment is. The accusative case indicates “those who are walking” are the direct object of the verb σκοπεῖτε.

**οὕτως.** An adverb of manner, answering the implicit question “those who are walking . . . *how?*”<sup>12</sup> In the way Paul just described; those who are living after his own good example (“this way”<sup>13</sup>). The second adverb of manner which follows clarifies this.

	καθὼς	ἔχετε	τύπον	ἡμᾶς.
Phil 3:17c	adv	2 <sup>nd</sup> ,pl,p,a,i	asm	1 <sup>st</sup> ,pl,a
	just as	you are having	pattern	us
	according to the example you have in us.			

**καθὼς.** An adverb of manner, further clarifying what “this way” means. In this context, it gives the sense of comparison (“according to”).<sup>14</sup> That is, they must follow the example of Paul, Timothy and the others who are in leadership with him according to the pattern they all (“us”) set for them. The ultimate role model in this comparison are not the mature Christian in the congregation, but Paul and Timothy.

Hawthorne points out that Paul does not specify who the “us” are.<sup>15</sup> He suggests it is Paul, Timothy and Epaphroditus, as do Hellerman<sup>16</sup> and did Lightfoot.<sup>17</sup> There are really two points of comparison for the Philippians; (1) the mature people in their

<sup>11</sup> Loh, I-Jin and Eugene Nida, *A Handbook on Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, in UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1995), 115.

<sup>12</sup> cf. Richard A. Young, *Intermediate New Testament Greek* (Nashville, TN: B&H, 1994), 197.

<sup>13</sup> BDAG, s.v. “5445 οὕτω/οὕτως,” 2.

<sup>14</sup> See BDAG, s.v. “3843 καθὼς,” 1.

<sup>15</sup> Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 161.

<sup>16</sup> Hellerman, *Philippians*, KL 7062.

<sup>17</sup> J.B. Lightfoot, *Saint Paul's Epistle to the Philippians*, 8<sup>th</sup> ed. (London, UK: MacMillan, 1888), 154.

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congregation whom they are commanded to pay close attention to – which perhaps included Luke,<sup>18</sup> and (2) Paul, Timothy and Epaphroditus (“us”).

**ἔχετε.** A simple active voice. Context suggests a descriptive present. Paul is writing to them about the example they have right now, as he pens the letter. A declarative indicative.

**τύπον ἡμᾶς:** This construction is a double accusative, where ἡμᾶς is the direct object receiving the action of the verb ἔχετε, and τύπον is a predicate which qualifies the object.

A literal rendering would be, “according to (**adverb**) you have (**verb**) us (**direct object/first accusative**) as an example (**predicate/second accusative**).” For stylistic reasons, the predicate accusative was moved before the verb in translation (“according to **the example** you have in us;” cf. NASB).

Philippians 3:18 is grammatically very awkward, and I’ve *tried* (☺) to present a coherent visual sense of my interpretation of v.18 with the following color-coded chart:

<p style="text-align: center;"> <span style="background-color: #00FFFF; padding: 2px;">Πολλοὶ</span> <span style="background-color: #FF0000; padding: 2px;">γὰρ</span>  <span style="background-color: #D2B48C; padding: 2px;">περιπατοῦσιν, οὓς</span>  <span style="background-color: #D3D3D3; padding: 2px;">πολλάκις ἔλεγον ὑμῖν,</span>  <span style="background-color: #D3D3D3; padding: 2px;">νῦν δὲ καὶ κλαίω</span>  <span style="background-color: #D2B48C; padding: 2px;">λέγω, <span style="background-color: #00FF00; padding: 2px;">[εἰσὶν]</span> τοὺς</span>  <span style="background-color: #ADD8E6; padding: 2px;">ἐχθροὺς τοῦ σταυροῦ</span>  <span style="background-color: #800080; padding: 2px;">τοῦ χριστοῦ</span> </p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <span style="background-color: #00FFFF; padding: 2px;">Nominative subject</span></li> <li>- <span style="background-color: #FF0000; padding: 2px;">Explanatory conjunction</span></li> <li>- Verb the subject performs</li> <li>- Relative pronoun referring back to antecedent subject (note gender and plural) <i>and</i> functioning as direct object of two verbs in parenthetical aside (note accusative)</li> <li>- Parenthetical aside</li> <li>- <span style="background-color: #00FF00; padding: 2px;">Implied equative verb, referring to subject</span></li> <li>- Direct object of implied equative verb</li> <li>- <span style="background-color: #FFFF00; padding: 2px;">Partitive genitive, defining the whole which the enemies oppose – Messiah’s cross</span></li> <li>- <span style="background-color: #800080; padding: 2px;">Genitive of possession; the cross belongs to Messiah</span></li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"> <span style="background-color: #FF0000; padding: 2px;">Because</span> <span style="background-color: #00FFFF; padding: 2px;">many people</span>  <span style="background-color: #D2B48C; padding: 2px;">are walking, whom I</span>  <span style="background-color: #D3D3D3; padding: 2px;">often spoke about to</span>  <span style="background-color: #D3D3D3; padding: 2px;">you, but now tell you</span>  <span style="background-color: #D2B48C; padding: 2px;">with tears – <span style="background-color: #00FF00; padding: 2px;">[they are]</span></span>  <span style="background-color: #ADD8E6; padding: 2px;">the enemies of the</span>  <span style="background-color: #FFFF00; padding: 2px;">cross of Christ</span> </p>
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	πολλοὶ	γὰρ	περιπατοῦσιν
Phil	nrm	conj	3 <sup>rd</sup> ,pl,p,a,i
3:18a	many	for	they are walking
	Because many people are walking,		

**πολλοὶ.** The subject nominative of the clause.

**γὰρ.** The conjunction provides an explanation for the imperative commands which came before (“because”).

<sup>18</sup> Merrill C. Tenney speculated that Luke may well have been left behind at Philippi to shepherd this new church, because the “we” passages end at Philippi and do not resume until Paul returns there, several years later; cf. Acts 16:18 – 20:5ff (*New Testament Times* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1965], 256).

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**περιπατοῦσιν.** A simple active, indicating the πολλοὶ are directly performing the action of the verb. Context suggests a descriptive present, a situation going on at the time Paul wrote the letter. These “many people” are “walking” in this way as Paul writes this letter. A declarative indicative.

	οὓς	πολλάκις	ἔλεγον	ὑμῖν.
<b>Phil 3:18b</b>	apm	adv	1 <sup>st</sup> ,s,imp,a,i	2 <sup>nd</sup> ,pl,d
	who	often	I was speaking	to you
whom I often spoke about to you,				

**οὓς.** A relative pronoun which performs two functions.

First, it refers back to an antecedent, in this case to the “many people are living,” who are the subject. The gender and number (masculine, plural) of the subject nominative and this relative pronoun match, supporting this conclusion.

Second, it also functions as the direct object of the two verbs ἔλεγον and λέγω in the parenthetical aside. The accusative case supports this. As Wallace has observed, “the relative pronoun (RP) agrees with its antecedent in gender and number, but its case is determined by the function it has in its own clause.”<sup>19</sup>

The phrase ought to be translated to bring the proper direct object out clearly. That is, it should be rendered something like “**whom** I often spoke **about** to you,” where the supplied “about” refers the reader back to the pronoun “who,” and also makes it clear the pronoun receives the action of the verb. For example, the NASB makes it seem as if the dative pronoun (“you”) is the direct object; “For many walk, of whom I often told **you**.” I disagree that the relative pronoun “anticipates the acc. τοὺς ἐχθρούς.”<sup>20</sup>

**πολλάκις.** An adverb of time (“often”), expressing how often Paul spoke to them about these people.

**ἔλεγον.** A simple active. Context suggests an iterative imperfect,<sup>21</sup> indicating that in the past Paul spoke to them about “these enemies” again and again, over and over – something made clear by the adverb of time πολλάκις. I translated it as a simple descriptive imperfect, because the adverb takes care of the iterative flavor for me.

**ὑμῖν.** A dative of indirect object.

	νῦν	δὲ	καὶ	κλαίῳν	λέγω,
<b>Phil 3:18c</b>	adv	conj	conj	papnsm	1 <sup>st</sup> ,s,p,a,i
	now	but	and	he is weeping	I am saying
but now tell you even with tears -					

<sup>19</sup> Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 336.

<sup>20</sup> Hellerman, *Philippians*, KL 7100. See also Vincent, *Philippians*, 117.

<sup>21</sup> cf. A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1933), Php 3:18.

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**νῦν.** An adverb of time (“now”).

**δὲ.** A contrasting conjunction (“but”).

**καὶ.** An ascensive conjunction (“even”).

**κλαίων.** An adverbial participle of manner,<sup>22</sup> modifying the verb λέγω. The manner participle adds color or emotion to the verb. It does not so much explain *how* something was done (i.e. means), but it conveys the attitude which accompanies the action.<sup>23</sup> This *could* also legitimately be conveying time (e.g. “**while** weeping”).

This has a simple active voice, indicating Paul is performing the action of the verb. Context suggests a descriptive present, indicating an event taking place at the time of the writing. The nominative is a structural marker to let the reader know Paul is the subject.

This word is used over 140 times in the LXX, and it “expresses profound grief.”<sup>24</sup> The sense in this context is certainly “strong emotion.”<sup>25</sup> Peter began to weep when he denied Jesus the third time (Mk 14:72). Jesus’ feet were anointed by a woman who wept (Mk 7:38). Mary wept as she stood outside Jesus’ tomb, not realizing He had already risen (Jn 20:11). Peter went outside and “wept bitterly” when the Messiah turned and looked directly at him after the third denial (Lk 22:62). This is not a fleeting sadness, or a melancholy wistfulness. This is strong emotion, characterized by strong tears and weeping. It is remarkable how sad Paul felt for those whom he called “enemies of the cross of Christ.” This is true evangelical zeal for the lost.<sup>26</sup>

I stayed with the translation “with tears.” In some contexts, an English reader could construe “with tears” to be milder than “weeping.” I do not want to give this impression, but I cannot figure out a way to fit “weeping” into the sentence in an elegant way. However, a moment or two of constructive thought will yield the conclusion that one does not say something “with tears” unless he is being afflicted by very strong emotion.

**λέγω.** A simple active voice; Paul is still the actor and subject. Context suggests a descriptive present. Paul is not telling the Philippians anything new here, but he *is* repeating himself “with tears.” The repetition of this sad truth has driven him to weeping. A declarative indicative.

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<sup>22</sup> cf. Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 164 and Hellerman, *Philippians*, KL 7111-7112.

<sup>23</sup> Wallace, *Greek*, 627. He remarked this use could be termed “the participle of style.”

<sup>24</sup> *NIDNTTE*, s.v. “κλαίω,” 2:685.

<sup>25</sup> *NIDNTTE*, s.v. “κλαίω,” 2:686.

<sup>26</sup> “One of the secrets of Paul’s success as a missionary was his genuine, personal interest in those whom the Lord had committed to his spiritual care. Because his love for them was so real and tender, his heart was stirred to its very depths when danger threatened them,” (William Hendrickson, *Philippians, Colossians and Philemon* [reprint; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1979], 180).

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Phil 3:18d	τοὺς	ἐχθροὺς	τοῦ	σταυροῦ	τοῦ	Χριστοῦ,
	apm	apm	gsm	gsm	gsm	gsm
	the	enemies	of the	cross	of the	Messiah
[they are] the enemies of the cross of Christ,						

**τοὺς ἐχθροὺς.** The accusative of direct object, receiving the action of the implied verb εἶσιν (“they are;” see chart, above). There are really three scenarios possible here:

**Scenario #1.** τοὺς ἐχθροὺς functions as the direct object of περιπατοῦσιν from the beginning of the sentence:

- πολλοὶ γὰρ περιπατοῦσιν οὓς πολλάκις ἔλεγον ὑμῖν, νῦν δὲ καὶ κλαίων λέγω, τοὺς ἐχθροὺς τοῦ σταυροῦ τοῦ Χριστοῦ.

If this is *not* the direct object, then the verb remains mysteriously open-ended and incomplete before the parenthetical aside (e.g. “for many walk . . .” KJV), and a translation usually has to supply an equative “being” verb to bring coherence to the clause (e.g. “they are the enemies . . .” KJV). Therefore, some commentators believe it is better to see this as the direct object of the verb. Hawthorne, for one, agrees.<sup>27</sup> The end result is usually a transfer of the verb to the *end* of the parenthetical aside for stylistic reasons (e.g. Hawthorne, ESV, NIV, RSV). So, for all intents and purposes, the Greek would then read like this:

- πολλοὶ γὰρ [verb moved] οὓς πολλάκις ἔλεγον ὑμῖν, νῦν δὲ καὶ κλαίων λέγω, περιπατοῦσιν [new verb position] τοὺς ἐχθροὺς τοῦ σταυροῦ τοῦ Χριστοῦ.

This usage plays a bit too fast and loose with the text. Paul seems to be writing at speed, and the original Greek here is not good grammar. Should we really try to “clean things up” for Paul? Or, should we preserve the emotion (“with tears”) which may well have driven Paul to write an incomplete sentence? I opt for translating the original awkwardness, because it brings out the emotion and the true sense of the original text. The Holy Spirit inspired the text as it stands, and we have a duty to render it that way.

This also changes the theology of the passage. Do these “many people” merely *live* like enemies of the cross of Christ, or *are they actually* the enemies of the cross of Christ? There is a difference! Paul did not place the verb at the end of the parenthetical

<sup>27</sup> Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 162.



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aside, and to do so would alter the meaning of the last clause. The entire theology of “the enemies” would change.<sup>28</sup>

**Scenario #2.** τοὺς ἐχθροὺς is an accusative of apposition, modifying the relative pronoun οὗς.<sup>29</sup> It would be rendered something like this:

- Because many people are living, whom I often spoke about to you, but now tell you with tears; **that is**, enemies of the cross of Christ

Hellerman remarks that, although this is technically correct, it is usually rendered in apposition to the subject nominative for stylistic reasons.<sup>30</sup> This makes little sense, and the fact that it cannot be coherently rendered into English is a mark against it. This makes an already awkward sentence well-nigh indecipherable. Many people are living, whom Paul has already told them about, but now tells them once more with tears . . . now comes a bizarre break where Paul qualifies some info about them – “the enemies of the cross of Christ.” This sentence begs and cries out (“with tears”?) for an implied equative verb in English, which is why the third option is best . . .

**Scenario #3.** My option, where τοὺς ἐχθροὺς simply functions as the direct object of the implied equative verb, which itself hearkens back to the subject nominative. The Greek would read thus:

- Πολλοὶ γὰρ περιπατοῦσιν, οὗς πολλακίς ἔλεγον ὑμῖν, νῦν δὲ καὶ κλαίων λέγω, **εἰσὲν [implied verb]** **τοὺς ἐχθροὺς [direct object]** τοῦ σταυροῦ τοῦ χριστοῦ

Wallace suggests it is *possible* acts as the object of the verb λέγω.<sup>31</sup> The article was used deliberately to distinguish these rebels as a particular class of people. It should be translated as “the enemies” for emphasis.<sup>32</sup>

**τοῦ σταυροῦ.** An objective genitive,<sup>33</sup> functioning as the implied direct object of “the enemies.” What do they hate? They hate the Messiah’s cross. It is speculative to try to divine what, precisely, they hated about “the cross.” Commentators have speculated at length on this. It is sufficient to say they hated what Jesus accomplished; they hated

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<sup>28</sup> See especially Muller, *Philippians*, 129-130 and fn. #2-3.

<sup>29</sup> Hellerman takes this position (*Philippians*, KL 7121), as does Martin R. Vincent, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles to the Philippians and to Philemon*, in *International Critical Commentary* (Edinburgh, UK: T&T Clark, 1897), 117.

<sup>30</sup> Hellerman, *Philippians*, KL 7121.

<sup>31</sup> Daniel B. Wallace, “The Semantics and Exegetical Significance of the Object-Complement Construction in the New Testament,” in *Grace Theological Journal* (GTJ 06:1), Spring 1985, 95.

<sup>32</sup> cf. Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 164. Muller (*Philippians*, 130 and fn. #3) also makes this point forcefully.

<sup>33</sup> cf. Hellerman, *Philippians*, KL 7129-7130.

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His death – therefore they hate the Gospel itself. “Enmity to the cross might include any or all of these particulars.”<sup>34</sup>

**τοῦ Χριστοῦ.** A partitive genitive, defining the whole (“the cross”) in relation to the part (“the enemies”). Where do these “many people” stand in relation to the noun, the fact, the objective truth that is “the cross of Christ?” They are enemies of it. This is a partitive idea; the other “part” is being a member of God’s “community” in heaven.

Some see this as an objective genitive,<sup>35</sup> where “the cross” functions as the implied object of a verb. But, which verb? “Enemies” is a noun. “Living” already has a direct object. This does not fit well.

	<b>ὧν</b>	<b>τὸ</b>	<b>τέλος</b>	<b>ἀπώλεια.</b>
<b>Phil 3:19a</b>	gpm	nsn	nsn	nsf
	whose	the	end, result	ruin
	whose end - damnation,			

**ὧν.** A relative pronoun referring back to the implied equative verb “they are” just before the τοὺς ἐχθροὺς, which itself points back to the subject nominative “many people” from v.17. This pattern will be repeated throughout this verse. Here is a visual representation of the subject nominative and the relative pronouns which hearken back to it through vv.18-19:

- <sup>18</sup> πολλοὶ γὰρ περιπατοῦσιν οὓς πολλάκις ἔλεγον ὑμῖν, νῦν δὲ καὶ κλαίων λέγω, [implied equative verb] τοὺς ἐχθροὺς τοῦ σταυροῦ τοῦ Χριστοῦ, <sup>19</sup> ὧν τὸ τέλος ἀπώλεια, ὧν ὁ θεὸς ἡ κοιλία καὶ [implied relative pronoun] ἡ δόξα ἐν τῇ αἰσχύνῃ αὐτῶν, οἱ τὰ ἐπίγεια φρονοῦντες.

A genitive of possession (“whose”).

**τὸ τέλος.** The subject nominative of the clause. This word is used in Greek literature “with great, even bewildering diversity.”<sup>36</sup> Broadly speaking, it could refer to a *goal* or purpose to which something is appointed or moving, an *end* or destiny, or a *conclusion* of a matter, or various nuances from all points in between these concepts!

Here, the context suggests this “end” is the final outcome in store<sup>37</sup> for these people who are the enemies of the cross of Christ. Hawthorne does not see

<sup>34</sup> Vincent, *Philippians*, 117.

<sup>35</sup> Hellerman, *Philippians*, KL 7129-7131.

<sup>36</sup> *NIDNTTE*, s.v. “τέλος,” 4:471.

<sup>37</sup> See BDAG, s.v. “7310 τέλος,” 3.

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determinism here, and explains this “end” as the *natural result* of their hatred.<sup>38</sup> If determinism is in view, this could be translated as “destiny” (e.g. NIV).

I am content to leave this open-ended and translate it as “end.” I think there are shades of both meanings. These people will suffer the natural result of their folly, and therefore their “end” will be ruin and destruction. On the other hand, if you emphasize unconditional election to salvation, these people are indeed destined to destruction, though their refusal to repent and believe is ultimately their own fault.

I think it deserves to be a bit ambiguous, and the reader ought to puzzle this over a bit. I think the NIV crosses the line in translating this “destiny.”<sup>39</sup> This is a matter for the Pastor to bring out in exposition and the Christian to puzzle over at home, not for the translator.

**ἀπώλεια.** A predicate nominative, identifying what precisely this “end” is. An equative εστιν is implied here, and in the descriptors which follow, in this way:

- ὧν τὸ τέλος [εστιν] ἀπώλεια, ὧν ὁ θεὸς [εστιν] ἡ κοιλία καὶ ἡ δόξα [εστιν] ἐν τῇ αἰσχύνῃ αὐτῶν, οἱ τὰ ἐπίγεια φρονοῦντες.

This is another instance where Paul is evidently writing at speed, perhaps carried away by emotion, and lapses into an almost shorthand manner of speech. The grammar of v.18 was awkward, and this verse is, too. It reads more like notes, not formal prose. A literal rendering of the first portion of the verse would read something like this:

- whose end = ruin, whose god = the belly, and whose glory = in their own disgrace.

This raises the question as to whether the translation really ought to be “smoothed out.” It is tempting to render it as it reads in Greek. A translator will either have to argue (1) the equative verb is clearly implied and Paul meant for it to be there, in which case Paul was perhaps deliberately writing sloppily, or (2) Paul was writing at speed and dropped formal grammar, but the English reader should have it in a smoother, cleaner format. This issue of the equative verb is not addressed by the majority of commentators. Hellerman merely mentions it should be supplied.<sup>40</sup>

At any rate, this is clearly something the preacher needs to bring out in exposition. I tend towards retaining the awkwardness, or else the English reader will have no idea it is even there.

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<sup>38</sup> Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 165. See also Vincent, *Philippians*, 117.

<sup>39</sup> Interpretively, however, *NIDNTTE* agrees the sense here is “destiny,” (s.v. “τέλος,” 4:475).

<sup>40</sup> Hellerman, *Philippians*, KL 7137.

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**Meaning.** The word's semantic range generally encompasses the ideas of (1) destruction which one causes, or (2) destruction which one experiences.<sup>41</sup> "The ideas conveyed by this group of words usually involve injury (of a violent nature), destruction, or the final end of earthly existence."<sup>42</sup> Paul contrasted the states of "destruction" for the wicked and salvation for the redeemed (Phil 1:28). Judas is referred to as the "son of perdition," (Jn 17:12).

"The antithesis between life and death becomes a hostile one, and in this form it has a central place in NT religion, esp. in Paul and John. In contrast to σώζεσθαι or to ζωὴ αἰώνιος, ἀπόλλυσθαι is definitive destruction, not merely in the sense of the extinction of physical existence, but rather of an eternal plunge into Hades and a hopeless destiny of death in the depiction of which such terms as ὀργή, θυμός, θλιψίς and στενοχωρία are used (R. 2:8 f.)."<sup>43</sup>

The Scriptures speak of the eternal state for the damned as being eternal and everlasting. "With flaming fire he will mete out punishment on those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will undergo the penalty of **eternal destruction**, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his strength," (2 Thess 1:8-9). The Apostle John wrote about the "lake of fire and sulfur" into which all the damned will be cast, where the beast and false prophet and Satan already are, being "tormented there day and night forever and ever," (Rev 20:10). John also recorded the divine revelation which confirms that all who will worship the Antichrist, and thus decisively reject the *real* Messiah, "will be tortured with fire and sulfur in front of the holy angels and in front of the Lamb. And the smoke from their torture will go up forever and ever," (Rev 14:10-11).

ἀπώλεια is a standard word used to describe somebody who has rejected Christ, and thus their fate is "perdition." Indeed, this is the gloss *NIDNTTE* assigns to this word; "[o]ver against life with God there stands the terrible possibility of eternal perdition."<sup>44</sup> TDNT observed this does not describe a cessation of existence. "What is meant here is not a simple extinction of existence, but an everlasting state of torment and death."<sup>45</sup>

**Translation.** If this is the case, perhaps the translation "destruction" is more than a bit misleading, even though most English translations use it. *NIDNTTE* prefers "eternal perdition," and TDNT opts for "everlasting torment." A contemporary English dictionary

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<sup>41</sup> BDAG, s.v. "1057 ἀπώλεια."

<sup>42</sup> *NIDNTTE*, s.v. "ἀπώλεια," 1:358.

<sup>43</sup> Albrecht Oepke, "ἀπόλλυμι, ἀπώλεια, Ἀπολλύων," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 10 vols., ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 1:396.

<sup>44</sup> *NIDNTTE*, s.v. "ἀπώλεια," 1:360.

<sup>45</sup> *TDNT*, s.v. "ἀπόλλυμι, ἀπώλεια, Ἀπολλύων," 1:397.

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defines “perdition” as *utter destruction* (which it notes is an archaic sense now) or, more importantly, as *eternal damnation*.<sup>46</sup>

William Tyndale, in his 1534 NT, used “damnation.” This may well be the best possible rendering. Their end is damnation. The addition of “eternal” may be a bit much, it could be added or left to the Pastor to bring out.

	ὧν	ὁ	θεός	ἡ	κοιλία
Phil	gpm	nsm	nsm	nsf	nsf
3:19b	who	the	God	the	belly
	whose god - the belly,				

**ὧν.** A relative pronoun referring back to the implied equative verb “they are” just before the τοὺς ἐχθροὺς, which itself points back to the subject nominative “many people” from v.17. A genitive of possession (“whose”), indicating what follows belongs to them.

**ὁ θεός.** The subject nominative of the clause.

**ἡ κοιλία.** A predicate nominative, identifying what precisely their “god” is. The equative “being” verb is implied, again.

As far as the meaning of the term, context will have to decide the issue. The word can mean either (1) “the belly” as the literal place where food is digested (e.g. “my belly hurts after Thanksgiving!”); (2) “the womb” as the place where a child grows before birth, or (3) a figurative way of describing lusts, appetites and desires.<sup>47</sup> On this last usage, *NIDNTE* observes that the word “in such contexts may correspond to σαρξ.”<sup>48</sup>

Here we have a great dividing line in the commentaries. Some believe Paul is warning against Judaizers in vv.17-21; others believe he is simply warning against antinomianism and unholy living.

It is clear Paul speaks against the Judaizers in Phil 3:1-16. Therefore, some commentators believe Paul is *still* speaking of the Judaizers now (or perhaps actual Jews; see Hawthorne<sup>49</sup>), and interpret this extended description of the “many people” as referring to Judaizers. Therefore, they see the reference to “the belly” as referring to a zeal for the Mosaic dietary laws. Hawthorne, for example, even translated the passage with this emphasis:

<sup>46</sup> *Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary*, 11<sup>th</sup> ed. (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, 2003), s.v. “perdition,” 1a, 2a.

<sup>47</sup> BDAG, s.v. “4295 κοιλία.”

<sup>48</sup> *NIDNTE*, s.v. “κοιλία,” 2:705.

<sup>49</sup> Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 165-167.

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- “Their observance of food laws and their glorying in circumcision has become their god.”<sup>50</sup>

This is interpretation, not translation. This is a particular theological viewpoint which has been allowed to trample the text, and has left the English-speaking reader powerless to puzzle the matter over himself. Vincent retorted that this interpretation “is fanciful.”<sup>51</sup> Bateman stated this passage “says nothing to support a reference to ethnic Jewish opponents.”<sup>52</sup> Muller protests, “While the New Testament nowhere describes licentiousness as ‘serving the belly,’ the Judaists were the people who enforced the observance of all kinds of laws relating to meat and drink, by which they do not do justice to the all-sufficient merits of the cross of Christ.”<sup>53</sup> He then appealed to Romans 16:18 for support.

**LXX.** In Ps 40:8 (LXX 39:9), David uses the word to refer to his inner-self, and it is translated “heart.” In Prov 20:27, the word is used with the same sense; “the human spirit is like the lamp of the LORD, searching all his **innermost parts**.” See also Prov 20:30. In Songs of Solomon 5:4, the word is used to refer to innermost feelings; “my feelings were stirred for him.” Indeed, *NIDNTTE* observed the word in these contexts may simply be rendered “heart.”<sup>54</sup>

**NT.** Jesus spoke of “the belly” in an obvious metaphorical way which refers to the innermost being (Jn 7:38). Paul used the word to refer to enemies of Christ, and in context it is likely a metaphorical reference to general lusts from within:

- “Now I urge you, brothers and sisters, to watch out for those who create dissensions and obstacles contrary to the teaching that you learned. Avoid them! For these are the kind who do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own **appetites**. By their smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of the naïve,” (Rom 16:17-18).

Muller far overstates his case. There is enough lexical data to understand this use of κοιλία to be referring to the innermost being, synonymous to “flesh.” It ought to be translated “belly” and left to the Pastor and reader to puzzle over. Hendrickson,<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 162.

<sup>51</sup> Vincent, *Philippians*, 117.

<sup>52</sup> Herbert W. Bateman, IV. “Were the Opponents at Philippi Necessarily Jewish?” in *Bibliotheca Sacra* (BSAC 155:617), Jan 1998, 59.

<sup>53</sup> Muller, *Philippians*, 131.

<sup>54</sup> *NIDNTTE*, s.v. “κοιλία,” 2:704.

<sup>55</sup> Hendrickson, *Philippians*, 182.

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Homer A. Kent, Jr.,<sup>56</sup> Kennedy,<sup>57</sup> Lightfoot<sup>58</sup> are representative of those who see these “enemies” as antinomians who live for themselves. Vincent seems to believe gluttony is in view<sup>59</sup> (see also Blomberg<sup>60</sup>) which seems a most unlikely sin to be labeled an “enemy of the cross of Christ” for! See Hellerman for an extended discussion;<sup>61</sup> he concludes antinomianism is more likely. As de Silva observed, these “enemies” are best seen as “a foil for the positive example of Paul and those who, following his example, become exemplary themselves.”<sup>62</sup>

	καὶ	ἡ	δόξα	ἐν	τῇ	αἰσχύνῃ	αὐτῶν,
Phil 3:19c	conj	nsf	nsf	prep	dsf	dsf	gpm
	and	the	glory	in	the	disgrace	their
and whose glory - in their own disgrace.							

**καὶ.** A simple additive, connecting this next bit with the statement which came before

**ἡ δόξα.** The subject nominative of the clause. The relative pronoun is assumed here, as this clause is connected to the one preceding it, which has the relative pronoun (“whose glory is . . .”). The equative “being” verb is also assumed, to bring it in line with the preceding clauses.<sup>63</sup>

Some see the “belly” and the “glory” as one single subject, linked together by the conjunction, with “god” functioning as the predicate.<sup>64</sup>

**ἐν.** The preposition is expressing close association.<sup>65</sup> What the enemies of Messiah’s cross glory in is precisely that which *ought* to disgrace them.

**τῇ αἰσχύνῃ.** In the dative because it is the direct object of the preposition. The usual gloss is “shame.”<sup>66</sup>

**αὐτῶν.** The personal pronoun is being used as a reflexive (“their own”), and it refers to the antecedent “the enemies” in the implied equative verb.

<sup>56</sup> Homer A. Kent, Jr., *Philippians*, in Expositors Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1981), 147.

<sup>57</sup> H. A. A. Kennedy, *The Epistle to the Philippians*, in Expositor’s Greek Testament, vol. 3 (New York, NY: Hodder & Stoughton, n.d.), 111.

<sup>58</sup> Lightfoot, *Philippians*, 155.

<sup>59</sup> Vincent, *Philippians*, 117.

<sup>60</sup> Craig L. Blomberg, “The New Testament Definition Of Heresy (Or When Do Jesus And The Apostles Really Get Mad?)”, in *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* (JETS 45:1), Mar 2002. 70.

<sup>61</sup> Hellerman, *Philippians*, KL 7157ff.

<sup>62</sup> David de Silva, “No Confidence In The Flesh: The Meaning and Function of Philippians 3:2–21,” in *Trinity Journal* (TRINJ 15:1), Spring 1994, 53.

<sup>63</sup> Vincent, *Philippians*, 117.

<sup>64</sup> Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 166.

<sup>65</sup> See BDAG, s.v. “2581 ἐν,” 8 for more on this category.

<sup>66</sup> BDAG, s.v. “215 αἰσχύνῃ.”

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<b>Phil 3:19d</b>	<b>οἱ</b>	<b>τὰ</b>	<b>ἐπίγεια</b>	<b>φρονοῦντες.</b>
	npm	apn	apn	papnpm
	the	the	worldly things	they are being intent on
	They set their minds on worldly things.			

**οἱ . . . φρονοῦντες.** A substantival participle<sup>67</sup> functioning as a noun (“the enemies”). This should begin a new, short sentence (e.g. NIV). It *could* be interpreted as an adjectival, attributive participle which refers back to “the enemies.” The end-result is the same; the reader will understand who is being spoken about.

A simple active, indicating “the enemies” are performing the action of the participle. Context suggests a descriptive present. It *could* be an iterative present (“**always** obsessed with worldly things”), but this would likely be over-translating a bit. The nominative case indicates it is the subject nominative of the sentence.

The word gives the general sense (1) *to think* or *hold an opinion*, (2) *to give careful consideration to something*, or (3) *to develop an attitude based on careful thought*.<sup>68</sup> In this short letter, Paul uses the word five times. Once as *think* (Phil 1:7), once with the sense of *agreement* or *like-mindedness* (Phil 2:2), twice with the sense of *attitude* (Phil 2:5, 3:15) and once here.

It seems the best sense is that Paul is saying these “enemies of the cross of Christ” have their minds *set on* worldly things.

**τὰ ἐπίγεια.** The accusative of direct object, receiving the action of the participle. As far as translation goes, I like “worldly” for earthly . . . just because I do. Tyndale used it here in his 1534 NT, so it must be good. 😊

<b>Phil 3:20a</b>	<b>ἡμῶν</b>	<b>γὰρ</b>	<b>τὸ</b>	<b>πολίτευμα</b>	<b>ἐν</b>	<b>οὐρανοῖς</b>	<b>ὑπάρχει.</b>
	1 <sup>st</sup> ,pl,g	conj	npr	npr	prep	dpm	3 <sup>rd</sup> ,s,p,a,i
	our we	for	the	country	in	heavens	is, exists
	For our community exists in heaven,						

**ἡμῶν.** A personal, possessive pronoun modifying the subject nominative (“community”). It seems to be a genitive of possession, even though grammars caution that an abstract noun cannot be “owned” by anybody.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>67</sup> cf. Hellerman, *Philippians*, 7215.

<sup>68</sup> BDAG, s.v. “7819 φρονέω.”

<sup>69</sup> cf. Young, *Intermediate Greek*, 25.



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**γὰρ.** The conjunction is expressing the reason for the exhortation in v.17.<sup>70</sup> It is *not* contrasting with the behavior of “the enemies.” The conjunction γὰρ is not used to express contrast (“but”), and this is not even classified as a possible use in two standard reference grammars<sup>71</sup> or in BDAG!<sup>72</sup> This still did not stop several English translations (and some commentators<sup>73</sup>) from using it this way (e.g. Tyndale, ESV, NET, NIV, RSV).

Proponents of the contrasting idea often point to the allegedly emphatic positioning of the possessive personal pronoun at the head of the sentence, something Young refers to as “fronting.”<sup>74</sup> However, this is not a hard and fast rule, and it should not be relied on as a Gospel truth (pun intended).

Kostenberger (et al) observe; “Context must clarify the purpose of the deviation. Possibly a new topic is being introduced, or a contrast is being drawn. Only the literary context can clarify the author’s purpose in deviating from typical Greek word order.”<sup>75</sup> However, even in their grammar, Kostenberger (et al) do not list the γὰρ conjunction as a *contrast* when it is fronted, but as a *causal* conjunction!

No, the conjunction explains the *reason* for the exhortation in v.17. Vv.18-19 are an aside to contrast righteous living motivated by an all-encompassing love for Christ (v.17) with the way an enemy of the cross of Christ lives. “There is no evidence . . . for an adversative γὰρ.”<sup>76</sup>

**τὸ πολίτευμα:** The subject nominative of the clause. The proper translation of this word, and the implications of this choice, is perhaps the most contested and studied issue in this passage.

**Lexical Survey.** BDAG defines the word in this context as *commonwealth* or *state*. The sense is “a colony of foreigners or relocated veterans.”<sup>77</sup> Mounce opted for “the administration of a commonwealth,” and suggested the glosses *community* or *commonwealth*.<sup>78</sup> Friberg makes the point that Phil 3:20 is a figurative use, “of belonging to God's kingdom; place of *citizenship, homeland*.”<sup>79</sup> Louw-Nida observed,

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<sup>70</sup> See Hellerman (*Philippians*, KL 7259-7262) and Hawthorne (*Philippians*, 168). For classification, see BDAG, s.v. “1599 γὰρ,” 1.

<sup>71</sup> Young, *Intermediate Greek*, 182-183, and Andreas J. Köstenberger, Benjamin L. Merkle, Robert L. Plummer, *Going Deeper with New Testament Greek: An Intermediate Study of the Grammar and Syntax of the New Testament* (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2016; Kindle ed.), KL 10881-10886.

<sup>72</sup> BDAG, s.v. “1599 γὰρ.”

<sup>73</sup> See Vincent, *Philippians*, 118. Lightfoot conjectured the “original” conjunction was δε, on the basis of extraordinarily flimsy evidence (*Philippians*, 156).

<sup>74</sup> Young, *Greek*, 217-218.

<sup>75</sup> Kostenberger (et al), *Greek*, KL 11894-11895.

<sup>76</sup> Hellerman, *Philippians*, 7258.

<sup>77</sup> BDAG, s.v. “6034 πολίτευμα.”

<sup>78</sup> William D. Mounce, *Complete Expository Dictionary of Old & New Testament Words* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), s.v. “4487 πολίτευμα,” pg. 1249.

<sup>79</sup> Friberg, s.v. “22481 πολίτευμα.”

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“the place or location in which one has the right to be a citizen - *state, commonwealth, place of citizenship*.”<sup>80</sup>

Moulton & Milligan preferred the term *citizenship*. “Holding that πολιτεύμα sometimes denotes a settlement whose organization is modelled on that of the mother-city, many modern commentators would translate ‘we are a colony of heaven.’ But we should like clearer evidence that πολιτεύμα can be used in this distinctive sense, and, further, such a translation reverses the relation presupposed between the colony and the mother-city.”<sup>81</sup>

Gingrich straddled the fence, preferring *commonwealth* or *state*, and suggesting there might *perhaps* be an allusion to relocated veterans and the “colony” concept.<sup>82</sup> Danker went with *commonwealth* or *state*. He preferred the colony concept wholeheartedly; “imagery of God’s people who consider themselves citizens of heaven while residing on earth.”<sup>83</sup>

Spicq stated the word can refer to an *administration, legislation, government, a party in power, an association, or a community, civic body, or entity*. He wrote, “In the strict sense of the word, a politeuma is an organization of citizens from the same place, with the same rights (isonomoi) in the midst of a foreign state. We have particularly full information for the Jewish communities at Berenice in Cyrenaica, at Antioch and especially at Alexandria, colonies of immigrants living in the midst of a populace of a different race, but having a religious character, professing the worship of the true God.”<sup>84</sup>

This word first appears in the LXX, where it gives the sense of *community* or *city* (2 Macc 12:7). “Then, because the city’s gates were closed, he withdrew, intending to come again and root out the whole **community** of Joppa.” Even without this English translation, context tells you the basic idea is “all the people within Joppa.” As a collective whole, you would translate this idea as *community*, with the understanding that this community had a discernable membership restricted to a certain geographic location.

In Josephus (*Ant* 12.108), the word gives the sense of “the Jews living in a particular place.”<sup>85</sup> In Philippians 3:20, *TDNT* stated the word means *commonwealth*.

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<sup>80</sup> Louw-Nida, s.v. “11.71 πολιτεύμα.”

<sup>81</sup> J. H. Moulton and G. Milligan, *Vocabulary of the Greek Testament* (London, UK: Hodder & Stoughton, 1930; reprint, Bibleworks v.10), s.v. “3474 πολιτεύμα.”

<sup>82</sup> Gingrich, s.v. “5246 πολιτεύμα.”

<sup>83</sup> Danker, s.v. “5226 πολιτεύμα.”

<sup>84</sup> Ceslas Spicq and James D. Ernest, *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament* (reprint; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), 130.

<sup>85</sup> Hermann Strathmann, “πόλις, πολίτης, πολιτεύομαι, πολιτεία, πολιτεύμα,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 10 vols., ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 6:527.

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“Exposition, then, is not to be based on the usage which employed πολιτεύματα for foreign colonies outside the mother country with certain specified rights. If so, the Christian community would be a heavenly πολίτευμα in the world. What we have here is rather a figurative use of the term in the sense of state or commonwealth and with a view to describing the fact that Christians are inwardly foreigners, not specifically in relation to the earthly state, which is not mentioned at all in the context, but very generally in relation to the earthly sphere. More positively, the word is used to describe their membership of the heavenly kingdom of Christ, to which they belong as it were by constitutional right. The βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν is the πολίτευμα of Christians.”<sup>86</sup>

**Analysis.** Moving beyond mere compilation of lexical data to actual analysis, we find the word is only used in the NT once, and in the Apocrypha once. In 2 Macc 12:7, as mentioned above, it gives the sense of community; that is, of the whole of a population within a particular geographic area. In the NT, it occurs in our passage in Phil 3:20.

The conjunction at the beginning of Phil 3:20 indicates this is expressing the grounds for the exhortation in v.17.<sup>87</sup> It is *not* contrasting with the behavior of “the enemies.” The conjunction γὰρ is not used to express contrast, and this is not even classified as a possible use in two standard reference grammars.<sup>88</sup> This still did not stop several English translations (and some commentators<sup>89</sup>) from using it this way (e.g. Tyndale, ESV, NET, NIV, RSV).

In other words, in v.17, Paul urged the Philippians to be imitators of him and others (presumably in the congregation) who are living after his own example. He makes a number of sub-points about people who *do not* live after his own example (vv.18-19). Then, in v.20, Paul explains why they must be imitators of him and live holy lives. He makes several statements (what follows is my own translation):

- (1) “*For our community exists in heaven . . .*” A Christian’s country, citizenship, community, is not of this earth. It is not of this world. His community exists in heaven – where God rules and reigns (cf. Rev 4). In light of this, it makes Paul’s exhortation even more imperative!
- (2) “*from which also we are eagerly awaiting a Savior, [the] Lord Jesus Christ . . .*” This community exists in a particular, actual place. It exists in heaven, where “ten thousand times ten thousand - thousands times thousands” (Rev 5:11) of angelic beings give worship to God day and night without ceasing. This is where Jesus is sitting as High Priest, and it is where He will leave from in order to retrieve His saints. This is the impetus for Paul’s command to be imitators of him and live holy

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> See Hellerman (*Philippians*, KL 7259-7262) and Hawthorne (*Philippians*, 168).

<sup>88</sup> Young, *Intermediate Greek*, 182-183, and Köstenberger (et al) *Greek*, KL 10881-10886.

<sup>89</sup> See Vincent, *Philippians*, 117. Lightfoot conjectured the “original” conjunction was δε, on the basis of extraordinarily flimsy evidence (*Philippians*, 156).

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lives. They ought not to pattern themselves after the things of this world, but in light of their own community in the heavens before Yahweh's throne.

- (3) "*who will transform our lowly body by making it like His glorious body by the operation of his power; that is, the power [by which] He also will subject everything to Himself.*" This is finished sanctification, the perfect holiness which allows saints to dwell in God's very presence in heaven. It is the perfect sanctification which will allow God's people to come worship directly at God's literal throne in the literal New Jerusalem, where the Lord God and the Lamb will be the temple of God (Rev 21:22).

All told, the choices seem to be between (1) an abstract status granted by God (i.e. **citizenship**), (2) a place where their citizenship exists (i.e. **country**), or (3) a particular group of people who are gathered in a particular place (i.e. **community**).

I believe *community* best fits the context. Either one will work, of course. There is a subtle difference in emphasis between the options, but nothing revolutionary. But, Paul's focus is on how Christians ought to behave. The focus is on *people*. They should live like Paul and the other mature Christians. They should not live like the enemies of Christ. Why this exhortation? Because their people, their community, exists in heaven. That is where they belong. It is where their comrades from days gone by live. It is where God's throne sits. How, then, can Christians possibly live like a community of people who forsake all their brethren back home (i.e. with God in heaven) stand for?

The idea of "community" implies shared values, mores and law codes. In other words, there is the idea of a shared system of government which binds them together. Thus the concept of "country" and "citizenship" are very similar, and overlap at some points. As Spicq wrote, "In the strict sense of the word, a politeuma is an organization of citizens from the same place, with the same rights (isonomoi) in the midst of a foreign state."<sup>90</sup>

It is probably appropriate to bring out both nuances, but the priority should be on *community*. That is, they are God's people ("community"), and therefore they must follow His laws and His constitution ("country"). Regarding the common rendering of "citizenship," Hellerman remarked, "The tr. 'citizenship' (NIV, NRSV, HCSB) is one of the least attested meanings for the term."<sup>91</sup>

ἐν. The preposition is expressing the location where Christian citizenship resides. It is not of this world, but of another world.

οὐρανοῖς. In the dative because it is the direct object of the preposition.

ὑπάρχει. A simple active. Context suggests a descriptive present. A declarative indicative.

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<sup>90</sup> Spicq, *TLNT*, 130.

<sup>91</sup> Hellerman, *Philippians*, KL 7272-7273. See also Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 170.

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<b>Phil 3:20b</b>	ἐξ	οὗ	καὶ	σωτήρα	ἀπεκδεχόμεθα
	prep	gsm	conj	asm	1 <sup>st</sup> ,pl,p,m,i
	from	which	and	savior	we are eagerly waiting for
from which also we are eagerly awaiting a Savior,					

**ἐξ.** The preposition is expressing the source of Jesus’ return. Despite what some allege, this verse offers no hint whatsoever that Christ is “presently ruling from heaven.”<sup>92</sup> The text simply says Christ is presently *in* heaven now.

**οὗ.** An adverb of place, answering the implicit question “where.” It modifies the noun **οὐρανοῖς**.

**καὶ.** An adjunctive (“also”). Not only is a Christian’s true community located in heaven, Jesus the Christ will return *from* that place for His elect children.

**σωτήρα.** An accusative of direct object; this is what Christians are eagerly waiting for.

**ἀπεκδεχόμεθα.** Direct middle; all Christians are eagerly awaiting the Savior’s return. Believers directly perform this action on themselves, for their own benefit. Context suggests a descriptive present, describing a present, ever-expecting watchfulness and anticipation. A declarative indicative.

<b>Phil 3:20c</b>	κύριον	Ἰησοῦν	Χριστόν,
	asm	asm	asm
	Lord	Jesus	Christ
	[the] Lord Jesus Christ,		

**κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν.** A string of accusatives in apposition to the direct object σωτήρα.

Philippians 3:21 is also a complicated sentence, particularly because the two infinitives are difficult to classify. Here is another color-coded chart which may help the reader “see” my interpretation of the syntax of the verse:

<p>ὃς μετασχηματίσει τὸ σῶμα τῆς ταπεινώσεως ἡμῶν σύμμορφον τῷ σώματι τῆς</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Relative pronoun, referring back to “the Lord Jesus Christ.”</li> <li>Subject nominative</li> <li>- Verb, action performed by Jesus</li> <li>- Direct object, receiving the action of the verb</li> </ul>
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<sup>92</sup> Gary Nebecker remarked, “Since the exalted Christ is presently ruling from heaven, the Christian’s manner of life and expectations must transcend those of his or her earthly-minded counterparts, who are destined for destruction . . . Thus, from Phil 3:20 it can be seen that Paul combines realized eschatology (Christ’s present reign from heaven) with future hope (expectation of moral transformation by means of resurrection),” (“Christ As Somatic Transformer (Phil 3:20-21): Christology In An Eschatological Perspective,” in *Trinity Journal*, (TRINJ 21:2), Fall 2000. 171, 172).

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<p>δόξης αὐτοῦ κατὰ τὴν ἐνέργειαν τοῦ δύνασθαι αὐτὸν καὶ ὑποτάξαι αὐτῷ τὰ πάντα.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Attributive genitive, modifying direct object</li> <li>- Genitive of possession (“our bodies”)</li> <li>- Adverbial accusative of manner, describing how verb is accomplished</li> <li>- Dative of association, referring to Jesus’ body</li> <li>- Attributive genitive, modifying dative of association</li> <li>- Genitive of possession (“body of His glory”)</li> <li>- Correspondence (“according to”)</li> <li>- Adverbial accusative of manner, describing how verb is accomplished</li> <li>- Epexegetical infinitive, modifying the adverbial accusative</li> <li>- Accusative subject of the infinitive (“his”)</li> <li>- Adjunctive conjunction (“also”)</li> <li>- Anarthrous infinitive in apposition to first infinitive</li> <li>- Indirect object, reflexive pronoun</li> <li>- Direct object, receiving action of the second infinitive</li> </ul>
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<b>Phil 3:21a</b>	<b>ὅς</b>	<b>μετασχηματίσει</b>	<b>τὸ</b>	<b>σῶμα</b>	<b>τῆς</b>	<b>ταπεινώσεως</b>	<b>ἡμῶν</b>	<b>σύμμορφον</b>	<b>τῷ</b>	<b>σώματι</b>	<b>τῆς</b>	<b>δόξης</b>	<b>αὐτοῦ</b>
	nsm	3 <sup>d</sup> ,s,f,a,i	asn	asn	gsf	gsf	1 <sup>st</sup> ,pl,g	asm	dsm	dsm	gsf	gsf	gsm
	who	he will transform	the	body	of the	lowliness, humility, humble station	our	similar in form	the	body	of the	glory	of his
who will transform our lowly body by making it like the body of His glory													

**ὅς.** A relative pronoun referring back to the “Lord Jesus Christ,” the Savior whose return all Christians are eagerly awaiting. Jesus is the subject nominative of the sentence.

**μετασχηματίσει.** A simple active; Jesus will perform this action. Context suggests a predictive future. A declarative indicative.

**τὸ σῶμα.** The accusative of direct object, receiving the action of the verb. This is what Jesus will change.

**τῆς ταπεινώσεως.** An attributive genitive, describing an attribute of the head noun τὸ σῶμα. Many commentators opt for a genitive of reference<sup>93</sup> (“our bodies with respect to lowliness”), but this is both grammatically awkward and nonsensical.

The main objection given is that our bodies are not lowly at all. “The body itself is not ‘lowly.’”<sup>94</sup> Vincent retorts, “the apostle is far from characterizing the body which

<sup>93</sup> See both Hellerman (*Philippians*, KL 7347) and Hawthorne (*Philippians*, 172).

<sup>94</sup> Hellerman, *Philippians*, KL 7437.

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Christ honored by his tenancy as base in itself.”<sup>95</sup> Hawthorne adds that the attributive genitive reduces our bodies to some kind of “outer husk covering the human spirit.”<sup>96</sup>

These arguments are weak.<sup>97</sup> If our bodies are not lowly, then why was the incarnation such a condescension on Christ’s part? Why does the Apostle Paul, the same man who wrote this letter, refer to himself as “wretched,” and long to be set free from “this body of death,” (Rom 7:24)? Why does Paul refer to the “old man” as the body (τὸ σῶμα) of sin (Rom 6:6)? Why are our mortal bodies perishable, and sown in dishonor and weakness (1 Cor 15:42-43)?

As to Hawthorne’s argument, if our bodies are not lowly and wretched, then why are we promised *immortal* bodies at the rapture? This is clearly an attributive genitive, and Wallace agrees.<sup>98</sup>

**ἡμῶν.** A personal, possessive pronoun which indicates to whom the body belongs – to Christians (“our”).

**σύμμορφον.** An adverbial accusative of manner, describing how, exactly, Jesus will change our lowly body. He’ll do it by making our body like His own!

**τῷ σώματι.** A dative of association (a subset of the instrumental dative), which indicates “people or things that are connected with the subject of the verb as the action is carried out.”<sup>99</sup> For this classification here, see also Hellerman<sup>100</sup> and Robertson.<sup>101</sup>

**τῆς δόξης.** An attributive genitive; this is in parallel to our “lowly body.” It describes an attribute of Jesus’ resurrected body – it is a “body of glory.” The glory, in this context, seems bound up with the idea of “transcendent being and majesty.”<sup>102</sup> There is the visual sense (i.e. transfiguration), but the real idea is that we will be made like Jesus, in some form or fashion. We will receive incorruptible, immortal bodies and be made completely new, like the new creation which awaits in eternity.

**αὐτοῦ.** A genitive of possession, modifying the glory (“the body of His glory”).

Phil 3:21b	κατὰ	τὴν	ἐνέργειαν	τοῦ	δύνασθαι	αὐτὸν
	conj	asf	asf	gsm	p,m,inf	asm
	according to	the	energy, operation	of the	to have power, ability	he
according to the operation of His power;						

**κατὰ.** The preposition is expressing correspondence (“according to”).

<sup>95</sup> Vincent, *Philippians*, 120.

<sup>96</sup> Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 174.

<sup>97</sup> See especially Muller, *Philippians*, 134 for an excellent discussion.

<sup>98</sup> Wallace, *Greek*, 88.

<sup>99</sup> Kostenberger (et al), *Greek*, KL 3496-3497.

<sup>100</sup> Hellerman, *Philippians*, KL 7361-7363.

<sup>101</sup> A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1934), 528.

<sup>102</sup> *NIDNTTE*, s.v. “δόξα,” 1:765.

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**τὴν ἐνέργειαν.** Another adverbial accusative of manner, modifying the verb μετασχηματίσει.

**τοῦ δύνασθαι.** An articular infinitive, functioning epexegetically<sup>103</sup> to describe and explain what this “operation” actually is. It is the “operation of His power.” Context suggests a descriptive present. The genitive case identifies this as a probable epexegetical infinitive.<sup>104</sup> An indirect middle; Jesus does all things for the glory of the Father.

**αὐτὸν.** An accusative subject of the infinitive δύνασθαι (“his”).

Phil 3:21c	καὶ	ὑποτάξαι	αὐτῷ	τὰ	πάντα.
	conj	aor,a,inf	dsm	apn	
	and	to bring under control, to subject to	to him	the	everything
	that is, the power by which He will also subject everything to Himself.				

**καὶ.** An adjunctive conjunction (“also”).

**ὑποτάξαι.** An anarthrous, simple infinitive which is in apposition to the infinitive δύνασθαι. A simple active voice. Context suggests a futuristic aorist. Hawthorne suggest this is a complementary infinitive.<sup>105</sup>

**αὐτῷ.** A dative of indirect object. This is a personal pronoun functioning as an intensive.

**τὰ πάντα.** An accusative of direct object of the infinitive ὑποτάξαι.

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<sup>103</sup> See Hawthorne (*Philippians*, 173) and Wallace (*Greek*, 607).

<sup>104</sup> See Young (*Greek*, 175).

<sup>105</sup> Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 173.



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