



# PHILIPPIANS

FOR ME TO LIVE IS CHRIST

PART TWO

 **GraceCity**  
Church Nagoya

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# How To Use

In GraceCity Church we use the C.O.M.A. (Context, Observation, Meaning, Application) method to work through the biblical text. We believe it is appropriate to replace “discussion questions” (that focus on the theoretical) with “response questions” (which require participants to personally interact with the central theme of the text).

## Context →

1. Pay attention to the surrounding verses, paragraphs, chapters, events, etc. to see how this passage fits within the context of this particular book of the Bible.
2. Note how this passage fits within the larger storyline of the whole Bible, i.e. how God is saving a people through Jesus Christ to live under his rule in his place.

## Observation and Meaning →

3. Make careful observations of the biblical text. Notice details such as linking words (eg. “for”, “if”, “therefore”),

repetition, dialogue, narrative, and Old Testament quotations.

4. To understand the meaning of the biblical text, we need to discern the author’s purpose or intent: Why is the biblical author writing this?
5. Helpful questions to ask include:
  - Who is writing and to whom?
  - What is the situation of the author and of the readers?
  - Are we made aware of any problems that need to be addressed?
  - Are there any repeated themes, or a single idea that holds everything together?

## Application →

6. Apply God’s word to the heart. Move beyond merely addressing circumstances and behaviours by asking good “heart” questions. For example: Why do we do what we do? What do we really desire?
7. Always connect the gospel to application. For example, what difference does knowing Christ make to our obedience to God?
8. Ask what the passage teaches us about God, ourselves, salvation in Christ, the church, the world, etc.



# Introduction

# Introduction

The main theme of Philippians is encouragement: Paul wants to encourage the Philippians to live out their lives as citizens of a heavenly colony. This should be evidenced by a growing commitment to serve God and one another. The way of life that Paul encourages was not only evident in the life of Jesus Christ, but also in the lives of Paul, Timothy, and Epaphroditus.

## Placing It in the Bigger Story

The church at Philippi had a special significance for Paul, since it was the first church he founded in Europe (see Acts 16:6–40). The first convert was Lydia, a seller of purple goods, and women continued to have a prominent role in the Philippian church (see Philippians 4:2). Paul and Silas were imprisoned there for exorcising a demon from a fortune-telling slave girl, but God miraculously delivered them, and they proclaimed the gospel to the Philippian jailer. Paul likely visited the Philippians a few times after his initial departure, and they maintained active support for his ministry (Philippians 4:15–16).

Paul wrote to the Philippians from prison, prompted in part by his reception of their latest gift, sent with Epaphroditus (himself a member of the Philippian congregation). But the letter is far more than a *'thank-you'* note. Paul wanted to pass along the important news that Epaphroditus had recovered from an illness (Philippians 2:25–30), and that he was sending Epaphroditus to them with the hope that soon he might also send Timothy (Philippians 2:19). Timothy and Epaphroditus were also mentioned because they exemplified the Christ-centred, gospel-focused life Paul wanted the Philippians to live.

Paul wanted to encourage the Philippians in their faith, and his imprisonment meant he could do that only through a letter. With the possibility of his execution looming, Paul wanted to assure the church that he was still in good spirits (Philippians 1:12–18). He was also eager to thank them for their continued support. Imprisonment carried with it a social stigma, and it would have been easy for the Philippians to turn their back on Paul at this point. But they had remained faithful to him.

Paul's number one priority is that the Philippians continue to make progress in their faith (Philippians 1:25). While there were no doubt conflicts within the congregation, notably between Euodia and Syntyche (see Philippians 4:2), the Philippians appear to be a healthy congregation. This church stood in contrast to the troubled groups in Corinth and Galatia. Despite their health, Paul sees no reason for them to relax. The world is perilous and the gospel glorious, therefore the Philippians should not be content with their past achievements (Philippians 3:12-16). They must follow Paul's example and '*press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus*' (Philippians 3:14).

Paul explains what spiritual progress looks like. Christian maturity does not come through special mystical insights available to only a few, but rather through the patient practice of the virtues of love and service to others. Paul presents himself as a model for such a life (see Philippians 1:12-18; 3:17; 4:9), and commends Timothy and Epaphroditus for the way they also model a similar lifestyle (Philippians 2:19-30). Knowing all believers fall short of the glory of God, Paul points beyond his own modelling to the supreme model; Jesus Christ.

The centrepiece of his letter to the Philippians is the '*hymn of Christ*' (see Philippians 2:5-11). Jesus willingly let go of the privileges of divine glory to take up the form of a servant. Jesus embraced the ultimate humiliation of the cross, in order to liberate the world from sin. Therefore, Jesus is accorded the highest glory, receiving universal worship as God's Messiah. Those who follow Christ's example have the hope that God will also vindicate them, and therefore they can rejoice (Philippians 1:18; 3:1; 4:4). They can be confident that God will not leave them alone to make their way through the world as best they can. Spiritual progress involves effort: they are encouraged to 'work out [their] own salvation with fear and trembling' (Philippians 2:12). But they can do so knowing that 'it is God who works in [them], both to will and to work for his good pleasure' (Philippians 2:13).

**Jesus willingly let go of  
the privileges of divine glory  
to take up the form of a servant**



TIMOTHY AND EPAPHRODITUS

# Philippians 2:19-30

# Philippians 2:19-30

## Timothy and Epaphroditus

### Scripture Text

Philippians 2:19-30

### Big Idea

The main theme of Philippians is encouragement: Paul wants to encourage the Philippians to live out their lives as citizens of a heavenly colony. This should be evidenced by a growing commitment to serve God and one another. The way of life that Paul encourages was not only evident in the life of Jesus Christ, but also in the lives of Paul, Timothy, and Epaphroditus.

### Overview

The examples of Jesus (vv.1-11) and Paul (vv.2:16-17) are not the only motivation for the Philippians to live in other-centred, joyful humility. Paul now holds up two other servants already known to the Philippians as Christlike models of servant-humility:

- **Timothy** (vv.19-24), who is genuinely concerned for their welfare.
- **Epaphroditus** (vv.25-30), who nearly died twice in his service for the Lord.

Timothy emulates Christ's model of not merely looking to his own interests (v.4), as he is '*genuinely concerned*' for the '*welfare*' of the Philippians (v.20). Others seek only their own interests (v.21). Timothy, Paul's partner in the gospel, is like a son to Paul, and Paul intends to send Timothy to visit the Philippians, assuming that he will return to Paul with good news about them (v.19).



Similarly, Epaphroditus, another partner in the gospel, exemplifies Christlike, other-centred gospel service, and so Paul had already sent him to Philippi. Paul's sense of gospel unity and partnership with Epaphroditus is so strong that he speaks of him as a *'brother'*, *'fellow worker'*, *'fellow soldier'*, *'messenger'* and *'minister'* — in a single verse (v.25). Paul's affection for Epaphroditus was so potent that his death would have caused *'sorrow upon sorrow'* (v.27).

Christians need biblical teaching on godly self-sacrifice, but we also need models of those who have placed their faith and hope in Christ. Jesus is the primary model of humble service. But let us also look around ourselves for men and women who, like Timothy and Epaphroditus, set an example of humble, sacrificial service because they are living in gratitude for God's grace. People like Timothy and Epaphroditus should be honoured (v.29), commended and unleashed for ministry (vv. 19, 25, 28). Living for Christ is not easy. It requires humility, service, and dependence on God's grace.

## Observation and Meaning

1. Why did Paul plan to send Timothy to the Philippians (2:19)? What was Paul's opinion of Timothy (2:20)? What was Timothy's relationship with the church at Philippi (2:20)? In Paul's view, why did Timothy stand out (2:21-22)?

The apostle's remarks about two of his colleagues fill in some of the details about Paul's past, present, and future relationship with the Philippians. But they also provide practical examples of putting other people first.

2. When would Paul send Timothy to the Philippians (2:23)? Why was Paul confident that he would revisit the believers at Philippi (2:24)?
3. Who was Epaphroditus (2:25)? Why did the Philippians send Epaphroditus to Paul (2:25)? How did Epaphroditus feel about his friends in Philippi (2:26)? What happened to Epaphroditus (2:26-27)? How did God spare Paul tremendous sorrow (2:27)?

Epaphroditus, who himself from Philippi, is another example of genuine Christian love. He has been longing for the Philippians just as Paul longs for them (1:8; 4:1), and has been eager to let them know that God has spared him from his severe illness.

To die and be with Christ is far better (1:21), and yet God shows mercy to Epaphroditus in sparing his life. Christians can be assured that a fellow Christian truly is in Christ's presence upon his or her death; even so, it is proper on such occasions to feel sorrow upon sorrow.

4. How did Paul demonstrate his selflessness (2:28)? How were the Philippians told to welcome home Epaphroditus (2:29-30)? Why were the Philippians told to honour their messenger (2:30)?

The Christlikeness of Epaphroditus is highlighted by Paul's careful use of words. Having said that Christ was obedient *'to the point of death'* (v.8), Paul now says that Epaphroditus was *'near to death'* (v.27) and that he nearly died (v.30). On both occasions, Paul uses the same Greek word (*mechri Thanatos*).

Epaphroditus had faced this peril on behalf of the Philippians, who had desired to send gifts to support Paul but had not been able to do so until Epaphroditus made it possible (see Philippians 4:10, 18).

### Application

- Can you describe a time when another Christian has impacted you as a result of their genuine concern for your welfare?
- Jesus is our primary model of humble service. But there should also be men and women who, like Timothy and Epaphroditus, set an example. How might you be a better example of humble and sacrificial service to others?
- Paul's sense of partnership with Epaphroditus is so strong that he says Epaphroditus' death would have caused *'sorrow upon sorrow'* (2:27). Are all our friendships in church equal? Is it okay to have different depths of friendship with different people in church? Explain your answer.



RIGHTEOUSNESS THROUGH FAITH IN CHRIST

# Philippians 3:1-7

# Philippians 3:1-7

## Righteousness Through Faith in Christ

### Scripture Text

Philippians 3:1-7

### Big Idea

The main theme of Philippians is encouragement: Paul wants to encourage the Philippians to live out their lives as citizens of a heavenly colony. This should be evidenced by a growing commitment to serve God and one another. The way of life that Paul encourages was not only evident in the life of Jesus Christ, but also in the lives of Paul, Timothy, and Epaphroditus.

### Overview

Paul begins this section by calling the Philippians to rejoice in the Lord (3:1), but then warns them about the Judaizing opponents of the gospel (3:2-3). One of the greatest obstacles to applying the gospel to ourselves is our human tendency to depend on our own resources. In these verses Paul demolishes any dependence on human ability for righteousness. The 'dogs' who 'mutilate the flesh' (3:2) are Judaizers who taught that circumcision was necessary for salvation.

Paul lists the reasons that he himself might put 'confidence in the flesh' (3:4-6) only to claim that these trophies are nothing but rubbish (3:7-8a) in comparison with the righteousness that comes from God by faith (3:8b-9). Rather than taking pride in his own accomplishments, Paul says he 'gains' Christ by the loss of all such things. His salvation comes not from his accomplishments but from depending on nothing but the Saviour's provision.

## Paul's Identity

At various times in his ministry, Paul highlighted different facets of his identity:

- Jewish
- Christian
- Hellenistic
- Roman

Paul used a typical Hellenistic, urban-oriented self-identification (Acts 21:39) when he introduced himself to a Roman tribune by saying, “I am a Jew, from Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no obscure city”. Here in chapter three, Paul defends his Jewish identity. He is one who spent his youth in Jerusalem learning the Scriptures from teachers who were Pharisees. He was also born a Jew and therefore was not a pagan proselyte to Judaism.

The Philippian church knew Paul was a Roman citizen, since he claimed that identity publicly after being imprisoned in Philippi (see Acts 16:37–38). Intriguingly, in his own letters Paul never speaks of his Roman citizenship.

Apparently he felt no need to use this element of his identity in his letters, perhaps because his citizenship was already known by his audience, or, more likely, because he used it only when it was to his advantage (i.e., when he confronts governmental authorities). Paul was by birth a Roman citizen (see Acts 22:28), which meant his father or another family member in a previous generation had been made a citizen before Paul was born. Citizenship could be a reward for a valuable service rendered to the Roman state. It is possible that Paul's family had provided tents to one of the many Roman armies active around Tarsus during the Roman civil wars in the mid-first century BC. Such service would have been sufficient cause for being awarded citizenship. Roman citizenship came with certain privileges such as the right to vote, exemption from certain taxes, and legal protection.

**One obstacle to applying the gospel to ourselves is our tendency to depend on our own resources**

## Observation and Meaning

1. What did Paul call on believers to do (3:1)? Why did Paul repeat essential truths to the Philippians (3:1)?

Paul will pick up this theme of joy (and rejoicing in the Lord) again in chapter four. But first Paul must deal with the Judaisers.

2. What did Paul say about certain false teachers (3:2)?
3. Whom did Paul identify as "true" (3:3)?

Paul critiques the Judaisers and explains the contrasting characteristics of the true church. 'Dogs' was not only a general term of derision in the ancient world, it was also a word used by some Jews to refer to Gentiles, who were considered unclean (3:2). In irony, Paul says the Judaisers and not the Gentiles deserve this label. Paul's irony continues as he labels those who extol good works of the law as evildoers and those who mutilate the flesh. The Judaisers' badge of pride turns out to be a sign of their destruction.

In contrast to those promoting physical circumcision (3:2), the true people of God are those who worship by the Spirit of God (see John 4:23-24). They glory in Jesus Christ (see Philippians 1:26) and put no confidence in the flesh.

4. What autobiographical facts did Paul give (3:4-6)?

Paul's opposition to the Judaisers was not because he lacked a Jewish '*pedigree*'. Paul had the perfect credentials. Paul's opposition was a matter of the gospel.

## Application

- One obstacle to applying the gospel to ourselves is our tendency to depend on our abilities for a sense of righteousness. When are you tempted to put your confidence in your own accomplishments?
- What are some of the dangers that come from putting confidence in our own accomplishments?
- How would you help a fellow believer who is putting too much confidence in their own abilities and accomplishments?



FULLY SATISFIED

# Philippians 3:8-11

# Philippians 3:8-11

## Fully Satisfied

### Scripture Text

Philippians 3:8-11

### Big Idea

The main theme of Philippians is encouragement: Paul wants to encourage the Philippians to live out their lives as citizens of a heavenly colony. This should be evidenced by a growing commitment to serve God and one another. The way of life that Paul encourages was not only evident in the life of Jesus Christ, but also in the lives of Paul, Timothy, and Epaphroditus.

### Overview

Paul aims to be in Christ, to know him and the power of his resurrection, sharing (koinonia) in his suffering (3:10) and his death, so that he might attain (arrive at) the resurrection (3:11). Sharing in this suffering does not 'earn' us the resurrection but enables us:

- to identify more with Christ,
- to experience the power that gave him new life, and
- to understand more of the love of the Saviour (who had to endure immeasurable pain for his resurrection and ours.)

When we take stock of our lives in light of the gospel, we realise we must repent not only of our sins but also of the achievements we use to justify ourselves before God. This identifies us with the risen Saviour, who gave up heaven's honour to suffer for our sin. God's righteousness comes by faith alone, in Christ alone (3:9). God invites us to share, to fellowship (koinonia), not just in grace (Philippians 1:7) but in Christ's suffering as well (3:10). He does this so we might grasp the greatness of his love and the power of his resurrection.



Can we say with Paul that we consider the achievements of our lives to be 'rubbish'? In Christ, we can not only say such things but also discover that the greater wonders of the resurrection are ours no matter what we face in this life. Life under the gospel involves rejecting our moral resume (not only the bad but also the good). Jesus Christ is all. He alone has '*surpassing worth*' (3:8).

### Observation and Meaning

1. In what sense was Paul not boasting, even though he was calling attention to his accomplishments (3:7-9)? Why did Paul view his former accomplishments as "rubbish" (3:8)?

This language of loss and gain alludes to Jesus' teaching (see Matthew 16:25-26). What Paul used to put into the '*gain*' column (his power, prestige and obedience), he now puts into the '*loss*' column. Likewise, the crucified Messiah (who Paul had assumed was a '*loss*') is now seen as the ultimate '*gain*'.

2. What was Paul's status in Christ (3:9)?

When Paul mentions being '*found in him*' (3:9a), he is referring to being spiritually united to Christ and not being found guilty before God. Paul had trusted in a righteousness of his own (based on obedience to the law), rather than a right standing before God (which comes through faith in Jesus Christ). God imputes Christ's record of perfect obedience to those who trust in him. Righteousness cannot come by the law (see Romans 10:1-8) because all human beings sin, and therefore right standing before God is only possible through faith in Christ (who is the believer's righteousness before God).

3. What longings did Paul admit to the Philippians (3:10-11)? What hope did Paul express (3:11)?

### Application

- Can you say like Paul that you consider your achievements to be '*rubbish*'? What makes it difficult for you to consider your achievements this way?
- How does the fact that Christ's perfect obedience has been 'imputed' to you change the way God views you?
- How does this same truth change the way you view yourself?



STRAINING TOWARDS THE GOAL

# Philippians 3:12-15

# Philippians 3:12-15

## Straining Towards the Goal

### Scripture Text

Philippians 3:12-15

### Big Idea

The main theme of Philippians is encouragement: Paul wants to encourage the Philippians to live out their lives as citizens of a heavenly colony. This should be evidenced by a growing commitment to serve God and one another. The way of life that Paul encourages was not only evident in the life of Jesus Christ, but also in the lives of Paul, Timothy, and Epaphroditus.

### Overview

Paul is about to return to the imagery of heavenly citizenship (Philippians 3:20) to depict the complete rule, and righteousness of Christ that we will someday see. This future glory is something toward which Paul is '*straining forward*' to obtain (Philippians 3:13-14). Paul forgets what lies behind and strains toward what lies ahead, pressing toward the prize in heaven.

**God does not give us  
everything we want,  
but he does fulfil his promises—  
leading us along the best and  
straightest path to himself**

– Dietrich Bonhoeffer

## Observation and Meaning

1. What was Paul's testimony (3:12-14)? In what ways did Paul's spiritual life resemble the discipline of a runner (3:12-14)?

Paul stresses that he is not already perfect — he is still involved in the struggles of life in a fallen world. This means he still sins (the full glory of the resurrection remains in the future). However, Paul presses on to make it his own, because Jesus Christ has made Paul his own. Some people argue that if you are assured eternal life there is no motivation to persevere in a life of serving Christ. Yet here Paul indicates that his motivation to persevere is just because *“Christ Jesus has made me his own”*.

2. What was Paul's view of the past (3:13)? What was Paul's goal (3:14)?

Paul's life is purposeful for he constantly aims towards a heavenly goal. The prize is the fullness of blessings and rewards in the age to come (especially being in perfect fellowship with Christ forever).

3. How did Paul call the Philippians to share his view (3:15)? What did Paul hope for the believers who disagreed with him (3:15)?

When Paul writes *‘mature’* he is using the same adjective which previously was translated as *‘perfect’* (3:12). In effect Paul is saying, *“If you are really perfect or mature, you will know you are not yet perfect or mature!”*

## Application

- Paul indicates his motivation to persevere is just because *“Christ Jesus has made me his own”*. How does this work? Why might the assurance that Paul belongs to Christ motivate him to “strain forward” toward heaven?
- What kind of race are you running for Christ? What prize do you seek? What kind of opposition do you face in your struggle to live as a Christian?
- In what way can you renew your commitment to press on toward the goal of being like Christ?



IMITATION

# Philippians 3:16-21

# Philippians 3:16-21

## Imitation

### Scripture Text

Philippians 3:16-21

### Big Idea

The main theme of Philippians is encouragement: Paul wants to encourage the Philippians to live out their lives as citizens of a heavenly colony. This should be evidenced by a growing commitment to serve God and one another. The way of life that Paul encourages was not only evident in the life of Jesus Christ, but also in the lives of Paul, Timothy, and Epaphroditus.

### Overview

Paul wants the Philippians to imitate him (3:17) and any who walk according to his example. The call to *'imitate'* is a common theme in Paul's letters. Paul's intent is not for the Philippians to focus on him, but rather for them to join him in humble and radical dependence on Christ.

Tearfully, however, Paul points out that many are enemies of the cross (3:18). They set their minds on earthly things (3:19) and do not look forward to the return of Christ (3:21). Their end is destruction (3:19). This is the destiny of all those whose hearts are not transformed by the gospel. As those who belong to Christ, we are not to grow too comfortable on earth. Nor are we to be distracted by the pleasures of the earth. Our citizenship is in heaven, where Christ has been exalted (Philippians 2:9-11). With Paul, we eagerly strain toward our heavenly prize.

**Christian growth often comes through the imitation of other Christians**

## Observation and Meaning

1. What was Paul's plea to the Philippians (3:16)? How did Paul want believers to imitate him (3:17)?

While Paul is not yet perfected, he is confident enough in his Christian walk to ask the Philippians to join in imitating him and other mature Christians. Christian growth often comes through the imitation of other Christians (see Philippians 4:9; 1 Corinthians 11:1; 2 Thessalonians 3:8-9; 1 Timothy 4:12, 15-16; 2 Timothy 3:10-11; Hebrews 13:7; 1 Peter 5:3).

2. How did Paul describe God's enemies (3:18-19)?

The enemies of the cross could be the Judaizers (3:2) or 'worldly' people in general. Their destiny is final judgement (destruction). Such people worship themselves (their belly) and are consumed with earthly things.

3. Where did the Philippian Christians have their citizenship (3:20)? Whom did the Philippian believers eagerly await (3:20)?

The city of Philippi prided itself on being a Roman colony, offering the honour and privilege of Roman citizenship. Paul reminds the Philippians to look to Christ, not Caesar, for their model of behaviour. They need to stand with one another and with Paul in striving for the gospel.

4. What characterises citizens of heaven (3:21)?

Those who follow Christ's example of service will share in his vindication and glory. Perfection will come only at the resurrection (see Philippians 3:11-12; 1 Corinthians 15:12-28).

## Application

- In what ways have you seen mature believers 'standing firm' and gone on to imitate them in your own life? How can you imitate Paul's life and example?
- What causes you to grow tired of waiting for Jesus? When are you most susceptible to setting your mind on earthly things?
- How does it affect you to know that you are a citizen of heaven and not this earth? What does it say about God's attitude toward you that he makes you a citizen of heaven years before you arrive there?



EXHORTATION

# Philippians 4:1-9



# Philippians 4:1-9

## Exhortation

### Scripture Text

Philippians 4:1-9

### Big Idea

The main theme of Philippians is encouragement: Paul wants to encourage the Philippians to live out their lives as citizens of a heavenly colony. This should be evidenced by a growing commitment to serve God and one another. The way of life that Paul encourages was not only evident in the life of Jesus Christ, but also in the lives of Paul, Timothy, and Epaphroditus.

### Overview

Paul further applies the gospel:

- *firstly* to two partners in ministry, and then
- *secondly* to the Philippians church as a whole.

The ministry partners Euodia and Syntyche need to agree in the Lord. Their disunity contradicts the model of Christian servanthood and humility Paul outlined earlier in his letter (see Philippians 2:1-11). Paul continues his teaching on joy and unity with a call to rejoice (4:4). The reason for rejoicing is the proximity of the Lord's presence. God conquers anxiety, which often creates tensions in and among believers, through:

- *petition, with*
- *thanksgiving, which*
- *invites God's all-surpassing peace (4:7).*

The following verses (4:8-9) are a reminder to meditate on all that is honourable, pure, and lovely in the gospel.

Our Christian community is to be marked by unity and joy. Relational discord and unappeased anxiety rob our communities of joy. God's presence amongst us means we can cultivate thankful, praying, peaceful hearts — which are marked by a joyful reflection on what is good.

### Observation and Meaning

1. How did Paul feel toward the Philippian congregation (4:1)? What did Paul exhort the Philippian believers to do (4:1)?
2. Why did Paul plead with Euodia and Syntyche (4:2)? Why do you think Paul makes such a public display of these women (4:2)? Why is Paul so concerned for unity in the Philippian church? What does it mean to “agree in the Lord” (4:2)? How had Euodia and Syntyche helped Paul in the past (4:3)? Why might it be significant that their names are in the book of life (4:3)? What was Paul's relationship with Clement (4:3)? How could Paul count on his “loyal yokefellow” (4:3)?

Paul does not reveal the source of tension between Euodia and Syntyche. Instead, he exhorts them to apply the principles he stated earlier. ‘Agree’ (4:2) and ‘being of the same mind’ (Philippians 2:2) are the same phrase in Greek. Reconciliation often requires third-party intervention — in this case a ‘true companion’. Paul is eager to see Euodia and Syntyche reconciled because they have ‘laboured side by side’ with him ‘in the gospel.’ Earlier in his letter (Philippians 1:27), Paul encouraged unity among those who are ‘striving side by side’ for the gospel. Paul did not isolate himself and minister alone; he deliberately worked with others. In view of first-century culture, Euodia and Syntyche likely ministered among women. The ‘book of life’ refers to God's record of those who belong to him.

3. What did Paul encourage his readers to do (4:4)?

Paul calls the Philippians to attitudes of joy and reason, so that they replace anxiety with expectant and grateful prayer. Paul calls them to think upon and practice certain Christian virtues.

4. How did Paul tell the Philippian Christians to treat others (4:5)? How should an awareness of Christ's imminent return affect a person's attitude (4:5-7)? What did Paul say about anxiety (4:6-7)? What were the Philippians to do instead of worrying (4:6-7)?

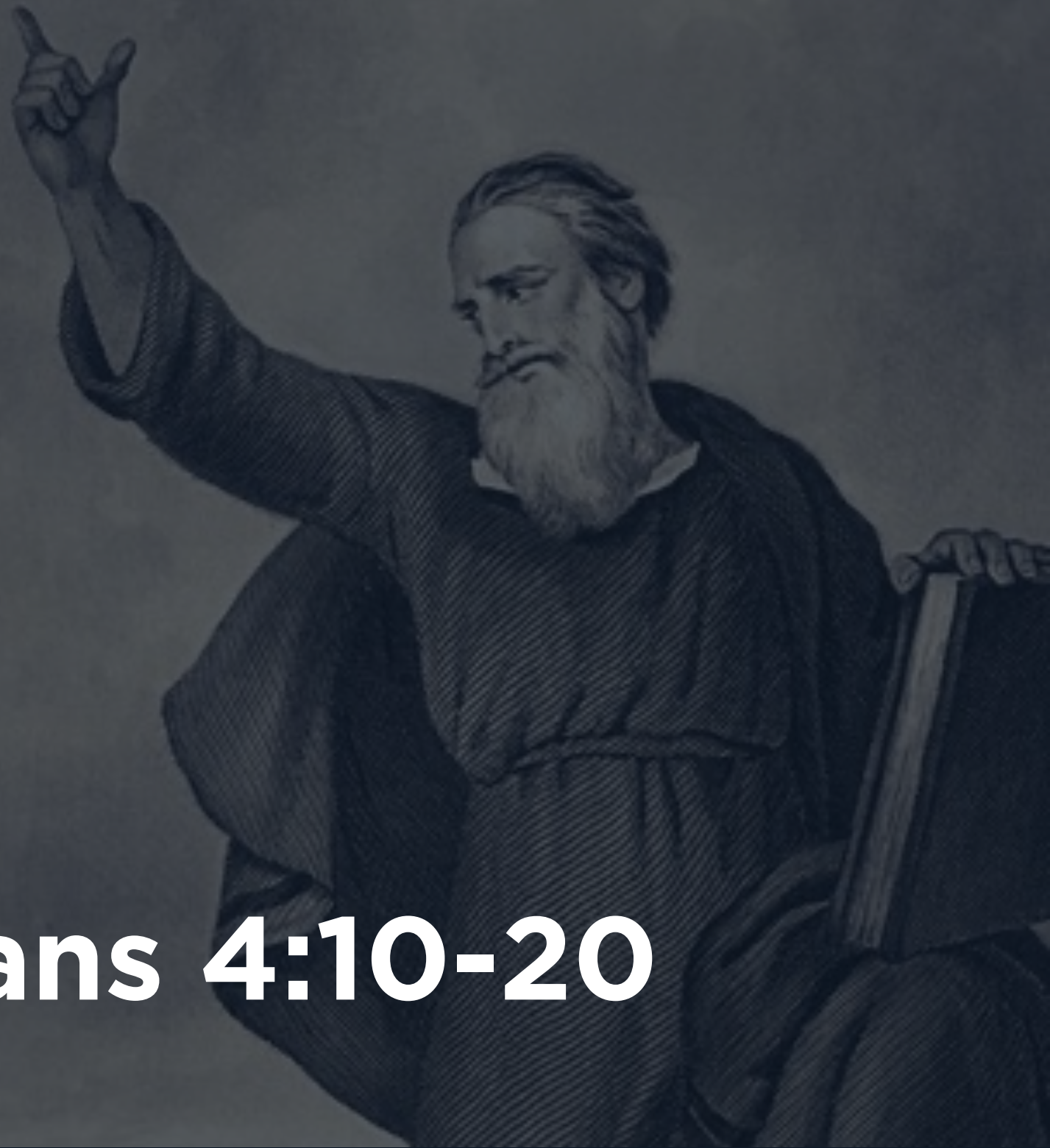
Reasonableness is crucial for maintaining community; it is this disposition that seeks what is best for everyone, and not just for oneself. When Paul writes that 'the Lord is at hand' he is emphasising the fact that Jesus will surely return to judge and hold people responsible for their deeds (see James 5:9). Paul echoes Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount (see Matthew 6:25-34) that believers are not to be anxious but are to entrust themselves in the hands of their loving heavenly Father, whose peace will guard them in Christ Jesus (4:6-7). Paul's use of the word '*guard*' may reflect his imprisonment or the status of Philippi as a Roman colony with a military garrison. In either case, it is not Roman soldiers who guard believers — it is the peace of God. Because God is sovereign and in control, Christians can entrust all their difficulties to him (see Romans 8:31-39).

5. What are the qualities of wholesome thoughts (4:8)? What were the Philippians to put into practice (4:9)?

The Philippians are to fill their minds with things that will inspire worship of God and service to others. Beyond this, they are to practice what they have seen Paul doing. As they progress in this way, they will find that it is not simply the peace of God but the God of peace who will be with them.

### Application

- What sorts of things occupy your mind? How does your preoccupation with these things affect your relationships? In particular, how does it affect your joy?
- When you feel anxious what do you do to feel better? What would it look like for you to use prayer and your mind to fight for the peace Paul is describing (think about how Jesus, his person or work, is joyful to you)?
- What things currently occupy your mind which you need to give up? What would replace them? How might we pray for these concerns right now?



GOD'S PROVISION

# Philippians 4:10-20

# Philippians 4:10-20

## God's Provision

### Scripture Text

Philippians 4:10-20

### Big Idea

The main theme of Philippians is encouragement: Paul wants to encourage the Philippians to live out their lives as citizens of a heavenly colony. This should be evidenced by a growing commitment to serve God and one another. The way of life that Paul encourages was not only evident in the life of Jesus Christ, but also in the lives of Paul, Timothy, and Epaphroditus.

### Overview

As Paul concludes his letter, he returns to the theme of rejoicing despite difficulty (4:10). Cheered as he is by the Philippians' concern for him, his contentment lies elsewhere. He is not dependent on their support to find contentment (4:11). He rejoices in the oneness the gospel brings, but emphasises humility. He has learned the secret of facing both plenty and hunger. Our contentment as Christians, likewise, rests in the fruit of the gospel — including our oneness in Christ. Paul teaches us to look beyond our circumstances, whether we have much or little, and rejoice in Christ. In him, we have all we could ever need or desire. Paul centres a troubled Philippian church on the humble joy and fruit of the gospel. From first to last, his letter is a summons to grace:

- to *receive it*,
- to *rest in it*, and
- to *work it out together* in one another's lives.

## Observation and Meaning

1. Why was Paul glad (4:10-13)? What lesson had Paul learned about contentment (4:10-13)? Why could Paul handle any kind of circumstance (4:13)?

Paul is grateful for the Philippians' support, but he wants them to know that even in difficult circumstances he has learned to be content. The secret to living amid life's difficulties is simple: trusting God in such a way that one can say, *'I can do all things through him who strengthens me'*. This doesn't mean God will bless whatever a person does; it must be read within the context of the letter, with its emphasis on obedience to God and service to others.

2. What did the Philippians do about Paul's troubles (4:14)? How did Paul feel toward the Philippian believers, and why did he feel this way (4:14)? How had the Philippians supported Paul in the past (4:15-16)?

The Philippians share in Paul's ministry, not just at the spiritual level but at the practical level of financial support. They contributed to his work after Paul had left Macedonia (4:15) and well as when he was in Thessalonica (4:16).

3. What did Paul not want (4:17)? What did Paul want for the Philippians (4:17)? What was Paul's current financial situation (4:18)? How did Paul respond to the Philippians' generosity (4:18-19)? How would God reciprocate the believers' generosity (4:19)?

Paul is well supplied by the Philippians' gift, and because it has been offered to him for the service of the gospel, he can return to images drawn from Israel's worship. The gift is a *'fragrant offering'* and a *'sacrifice acceptable'* to God. While the literal offerings of the Old Testament system have been done away with in Christ, the principle behind them of costly devotion to God remains. Those who are general toward God will find that he is generous towards them and will supply their every need (in Christ Jesus).

4. To whom did Paul give thanks and praise (4:20)? Who sent final greetings to the Philippians (4:21-22)? To what did Paul give prominence in closing his letter (4:23)?

Just as the 'hymn of Christ' (Philippians 2:5-11) ended with 'to the glory of God the Father,' so Paul concludes his letter with a doxology: 'To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen'. The exhortation to greet every saint reinforces the personal nature of Paul's communication and shows this letter is to be lived out by real people in the real world.

### Application

- Many people think of Philippians as a thank you letter. Yet Paul never thanks the Philippians for their partnership with them. Instead, he says he "*rejoiced in the Lord*" for their concern. What does that tell us about Paul's perspective on their financial help? Why would it be significant for the Philippians to know that Paul is not rejoicing because they alleviated his need (consider what Paul is rejoicing for)?
- What keeps you from feeling the contentment that Paul felt? When do you live as though God were not meeting "*all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus*"?

- How have you seen God provide for you in the past (it might be physically, spiritually, or otherwise)? How does it affect you to think of God's generosity as "*glorious riches*"? How does it affect you to remember that God provides for those "*In Jesus Christ*"? What would it look like to recognise God's provision in your life? How would it change the way you think about yourself, or your circumstances?

**Who has God put into your life  
that is in need? What would it look  
like for you to partner with them  
and show concern for them?**

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