

**Closing Thanks**  
**Philippians 4:1—23**  
**Week 7**

**OPENING PRAYER**

*Gracious Lord, your Word is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path. We need that light, not just in our time together today, but in our daily living and in the life of our hurting world. May your Holy Spirit soften our hearts that we might be open to the new things you have to say to us and the hard things you may want to reveal to us. Help us to be gracious with ourselves and one another, leaning on Jesus, who emptied himself and took the form of a servant to save us that we might grow into more faithful followers of you in Christ we pray. Amen.*

**Check-in question**

Describe a time when you felt like all your needs were met? Can you think of a time when you were perfectly content? If not why? How did that affect you or your relationships?

**STUDY GUIDE**

After a series of summary exhortations ([Phil. 4:1–9](#)), and before his final greetings ([Phil. 4:22–23](#)), Paul acknowledges with thanks the Philippian church's financial support, brought by Epaphroditus ([Phil. 4:10–21](#)). This topic occurs elsewhere in the epistle ([Phil. 1:3–5](#); [2:25–30](#)), making it a major theme and a primary reason for Paul's writing to the Philippians.

**Read Philippians 4:10-23**

**\*This is a translation by N.T. Wright from his book, "Philippians for Everyone"**

*I've been having a great celebration in the Lord because your concern for me has once again burst into flower. (You were of course concerned for me before, but you didn't have an opportunity to show it.)*

*I'm not talking about lacking anything. I've learnt to be content with what I have, I know how to do without, and I know how to cope with plenty. In every possible situation I've learned the hidden secret of being full and hungry, of having plenty and going without, and it's this: "I have strength for everything in the one who gives me power."*

*But you did the right thing by entering into partnership with me in my suffering. Indeed, as you people in Philippi know well, when the gospel was getting under way and I was moving on from Macedonia, there wasn't a single other church, except yourselves, that entered into a two-way partnership with me, giving and receiving. Yes, when I was in Thessalonica you sent help to me, not just once but twice.*

*I stress that it isn't the gift I'm interested in. My concern is that you should have a healthy profit balance showing up on your account. For myself, I've received full payment, and I'm well stocked up. In fact, I'm full to overflowing, now that I have received from Epaphroditus what you sent. It's like a sacrifice with a beautiful smell, a worthy offering, giving pleasure to God. What's more, my God will meet all your needs, too, out of his store of glorious riches in King Jesus. Glory be to our God and father forever and ever, Amen!*

*Give my greetings to all God's people in King Jesus. The family with me here send their greetings. All God's people send you greetings, especially those from Caesar's household.*

*The grace of the Lord Jesus, the Messiah, be with your spirit.*

### **Discussion Questions**

1. What is Paul rejoicing in? Many people think of Philippians as a thank you letter. Yet Paul never thanks the Philippians for their partnership with them. Here he says he “rejoiced in the Lord” for their concern. What does that tell you about Paul’s perspective on their financial help?
2. Philippians 4 provides further insight into Paul’s long history with this church. He alludes to several previous occasions where they supported his work (Phil. 4:15–16). Now read 2 Corinthians 8:1–4, where Paul certainly has the Philippians in mind when he commends the giving of the “churches of Macedonia” (Philippi was a city in the region of Macedonia). How do these details further shed light on the warm, affectionate tone of Philippians (e.g., Phil. 1:3–8; 4:1)?
3. Paul testifies, “I can do all things through him who strengthens me” (Phil. 4:13). What does he mean by “all things”? What “things”? God “strengthens” him for what? (Don’t forget the importance of context!)
4. What is the difference between volunteering or donating and entering into partnership with someone?
5. What might Paul want to emphasize about God’s generosity with the phrases, “according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus”? How does God get glory when we are generous?
6. What keeps us 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”?
7. Who has God put into your life that is in need? What are their needs? What would it look like for you to partner with them and show concern for them?

### **Further Reading/Resources**<sup>1</sup>

**GIVEN MUCH, GIVING MUCH.** Christians should, by their nature and their experience of grace, have a strong impulse to give to others—to those in need, to the church as a whole, to missionaries, etc. Having been given so much (in Christ), there is a desire to give much (for Christ). Paul makes this very clear in 2 Corinthians 8:1–9. Paul tells the (sometimes stingy) Corinthians about the exemplary generosity of the Macedonian churches. Despite their poverty, they gave “in a wealth of generosity” and with an “abundance of joy” (2 Cor. 8:3). They gave “of their own accord,” even “begging” to be included in the relief of the more greatly impoverished saints in Jerusalem. Eventually Paul brings his appeal to a fine gospel-point. Giving like this proves that “love . . . is genuine. *For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich*” (2 Cor. 8:8–9). So, having received greatly, give greatly—not as any kind of repayment for Christ’s saving sacrifice, but with joy, as an “act of grace” (2 Cor. 8:7). Generosity should flow from the believer’s “confession of the gospel” (2 Cor. 9:13).

**CONCERN, SHARING, PARTNERSHIP.** These words and others like them are scattered throughout Philippians 4—and indeed over the whole epistle. The Philippians’ recent financial support was the primary impetus for Paul writing to them. He acknowledges their support multiple times before giving a more formal and thorough thanks in Philippians 4:10–20. As was suggested in our study of Philippians 2:19–30, so too here it is possible to miss the forest for the trees in such a passage. The key words are *sharing, concern, need, partnership, giving* (the trees). But the *why* behind those words (the forest) is that the gospel must get to the Gentiles, especially those who have not heard (Rom. 15:20). That is why Paul is often in “need,” why the Philippians have “concern,” why “giving and receiving” is necessary. Whether in Paul’s day or our own, missions are needed because God is intent to redeem a multitude from *every tribe, language, people, and nation* (Rev. 5:9).

**A FRAGRANT OFFERING AND SACRIFICE.** Paul describes the Philippians’ gift as “a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God” (Phil. 4:18). This kind of ceremonial worship language is found throughout the Old Testament (e.g., Gen. 8:21; Ex. 29:18; Lev. 4:31). While such burnt offerings and sacrifices have been done away with in the coming of the true and final Sacrifice (see Heb. 8–10), Paul is making a quick and powerful analogy. The Philippians’ financial support was an act of worship. It was sent to *Paul*, but in a very real sense it was also *to God*. It was “pleasing to God”—it *smelled* good to him. The Philippians, and we today, are called to be deliberate about this worshipful dimension to giving. (For more on giving, and particularly the differences between giving in the old and new covenant eras, see the article “Stewardship” on pages 2559–2560 in the ESV Study Bible.)

**ALL TO GOD’S GLORY.** After reflecting on how the Philippians’ gracious gift pleased the Lord (Phil. 4:18) and how God would supply all of their needs “according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:19), Paul explodes in a doxological declaration: “To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen” (Phil. 4:20). This is our “chief end,” according to the Westminster Catechism, to “glorify God and enjoy him forever.” This is also *God’s* chief end, according to the Bible. His interest in his own glory is relentless and pervasive. Again and again, we are told that God did this or that thing “for his glory,” “for his renown,” “for his name’s sake,” even “for his fame.” He is intent on revealing his glory to the whole world, especially his people, and to show that glory preeminently through his Son

<sup>1</sup>Philippians: A 12-Week Study © 2014 by Ryan Kelly. <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/course/knowning-bible-philippians/#week-1-overview>

(Phil. 2:1-11). It is right and loving for God to pursue and promote his own glory like this, because he is glorious. He is "great . . . and greatly to be praised" (Ps. 145:3).

**PHILIPPI**  
A ROMAN COLONY KNOWN FOR PATRIOTIC NATIONALISM

**SENT FROM PRISON**  
EPAPHRODITUS

**PAUL'S LETTER TO THE PHILIPPIANS**

**1:1-11 OPENING PRAYER**  
I THANK GOD WHEN I REMEMBER YOU!  
I'M CONFIDENT THAT THE ONE WHO BEGAN A GOOD WORK IN YOU WILL COMPLETE IT.

**1:12-26 PAUL'S IMPRISONMENT**  
PAUL USES IT TO GET OUT!  
JESUS REALLY LOVES YOU GUYS!  
NOT SO HARD!  
PARTICIPATING IN THE STORY OF JESUS

**2:6-11 THE MESSIAH POEM**  
ALTHOUGH HE EXISTED IN THE NATURE OF GOD, HE DID NOT REGARD HIS EQUALITY WITH GOD AS A THING TO BE EXPLOITED. RATHER, HE EMPTIED HIMSELF, TAKING UP THE NATURE OF A SERVANT. HE WAS BORN AS A HUMAN & RECOGNIZED AS A HUMAN. HE HUMILED HIMSELF BY BECOMING OBEDIENT TO THE POINT OF DEATH, EVEN DEATH ON A CROSS.

**2:19-30 TWO EXAMPLES**  
v19-21 TIMOTHY: LORD, PLEASE KEEP THE PHILIPPIANS SAFE.  
v23-30 EPAPHRODITUS: "HE CAME CLOSE TO DEATH TO SERVE THE MESSIAH."  
...HE'S OKAY!

**1:27-2:18 FOLLOWING JESUS' EXAMPLE**  
EXECUTION: "FOR ME, LIFE IS THE MESSIAH, AND SO DYING WOULD BE A GAIN."  
OR  
RELEASE: START MORE JESUS COMMUNITIES  
BETTER FOR OTHERS  
"JESUS IS SAVIOR & LORD!"  
"YOUR LIFE AS CITIZENS SHOULD BE CONSISTENT WITH THE GOOD NEWS ABOUT THE MESSIAH."  
"CAESAR IS SAVIOR & LORD!"  
"IN THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS..."

**3:1-11**  
ZEALOUS & SELF-RIGHTEOUS  
PAUL'S PAST  
"I PLEAD WITH YOU TO BE UNIFIED IN THE LORD"

**QUOTING ISAIAH 45:23**  
PAUL'S POINT: the One True God consists of GOD the FATHERS & the LORD JESUS

**THEREFORE, GOD HAS HIGHLY EXALTED HIM, AND GIVEN HIM THE NAME WHICH IS ABOVE EVERY NAME, SO THAT AT THE NAME OF JESUS EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, IN HEAVEN, ON EARTH, OR UNDER THE EARTH, AND EVERY TONGUE WILL CONFESS:**

**JESUS the MESSIAH is LORD! To the GLORY of GOD the FATHER!**

**A** EXPRESSES PAUL'S CONVICTION OF WHO JESUS IS...

**B** ...OFFERS AN EXAMPLE to follow

**RICH WITH OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCES**  
ADAM (GENESIS 1-3) (ISAIAH 40:55)  
EQUALITY WITH GOD  
MINE!

**A UNIQUE WIN**  
• HE SAW HIS  
• HIS AWARENESS OF JESUS  
• KNOWING JESUS