



Philippians

Chapter 4

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- Author: The Apostle Paul
- Recipients: The Church at Philippi
 - First church in Europe, in the region of Macedonia in northern Greece
 - Founded by Paul on his second Missionary Journey, AD 51 – predominantly Gentile
- Time and Place of Writing: Most likely during Paul's imprisonment in Rome, AD 61 or 62
- Occasion and Purpose: Acknowledging the generosity of the church, sending Epaphroditus back, urging unity in the body
- Significant Themes:
 - Joy
 - Right Thinking – knowing Christ
 - Holy Living
 - Exaltation of Christ

Background to Philippians

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- I. Opening 1:1-11
 - A. Salutation 1:1-2
 - B. Thanksgiving 1:3-8
 - C. Prayer 1:9-11
- II. Paul's Missionary Report 1:12-26
 - A. Paul's Circumstances 1:12-17
 - B. Paul's Attitude 1:18-26
- III. A Call to Sanctification 1:27-2:30
 - A. Christian Citizenship 1:27-2:4
 - B. Christian Humility 2:5-11
 - C. Christian Obedience 2:12-18
 - D. Resumption of Paul's Missionary Report 2:19-30
- IV. Doctrinal Polemics 3:1-4:1
 - A. Judaizers as the Context for Theology 3:1-6
 - B. The Essence of Pauline Theology 3:7-11
 - C. Practical Theology 3:12-4:1
- V. Final Concerns 4:2-23
 - A. Exhortations 4:2-9
 - B. A Word of Thanks 4:10-20
 - C. Closing 4:21-23

Outline of Philippians

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¹⁰ But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned *before*, but you lacked opportunity. ¹¹ Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. ¹² I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. ¹³ I can do all things through Him who strengthens me. ¹⁴ Nevertheless, you have done well to share *with me* in my affliction.

- Paul returns to his appreciation for the Philippians' gift and partnership in his ministry, which he mentioned in Phil 1:5. But he includes some qualifications, almost as if he is hesitant to seem too eager in receiving it. There may be several reasons:
 - In his other letters, he makes a point of not asking that churches help him even though he had a right to their support.
 - He did not want to seem to be expecting them to give more in his appreciation for the gift. He knew they were struggling also, and may not have wanted them to continue sending money when they had real needs in their own body.
 - To emphasize that his joy was not due to material blessing.

Final Concerns: Need and Contentment (Phil 4:10-14)

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¹² I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. ¹³ I can do all things through Him who strengthens me. ¹⁴ Nevertheless, you have done well to share *with me* in my affliction.

- Paul has been calling the Philippians to rejoice, and here he links joy with contentment, and true contentment is not based on our circumstances, but on the One who strengthens us.
- It may seem surprising that Paul talks of learning how to deal with prosperity, fullness, and abundance in the same context of learning how to deal with need, hunger, and humble means. But the reality is that we often find ourselves less content at the very point where our material needs have been most fully met.
- In this context, v. 13 (“I can do all things”) is not so much an inspirational quote to go out and achieve greatness in the world, but an acknowledgement that by focusing on Christ, rejoicing in Him and being content in whatever circumstance He brings, we can indeed bear all things.
- “You have done well...” recalls his statement in Gal 6:9 – “Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.”

Final Concerns: Need and Contentment (Phil 4:10-14)

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¹⁵ You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first *preaching* of the gospel, after I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving except you alone; ¹⁶ for even in Thessalonica you sent *a gift* more than once for my needs. ¹⁷ Not that I seek the gift *itself*, but I seek the profit which increases to your account. ¹⁸ But I have received everything in full and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. ¹⁹ And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. ²⁰ Now to our God and Father *be* the glory forever and ever. Amen.

- Paul again acknowledges the Philippians’ generosity, this time highlighting that they had a unique position as the only church that shared materially in his work for the Gospel.
- He wants them to understand that his joy in receiving the gift is not in what he got from the gift itself, but what it demonstrates about the Philippians’ maturity and love for the Gospel.
- He also emphasizes that God has provided abundantly – three increasing statements in v. 18 – perhaps to signal that they do not need to continue to give to him, while still showing appreciation for what they have already given.

Final Concerns: A Theology of Christian Giving (Phil 4:15-20)

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¹⁸ But I have received everything in full and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. ¹⁹ And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. ²⁰ Now to our God and Father *be* the glory forever and ever. Amen.

- Paul elevates the significance of their gift to a truly spiritual offering. His language in v.18 is almost identical to Eph 5:2 – “And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”
- V. 19 has been called “perhaps the greatest promise in the entire Bible” (James Boice) because it includes all the other promises.
 - God will supply all your needs – not some of them, and not only our physical needs, but especially our spiritual needs.
 - His supply is not based on the need itself, but according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. He won’t just barely meet the need, but instead lavishes His riches upon us.
- Paul seems to be caught up in the thought of God’s glory, and inserts a brief doxology here. As much as he is thankful to the Philippians for their partnership in the Gospel, ultimately it is God who provided, and He receives all of the glory.

Final Concerns: A Theology of Christian Giving (Phil 4:15-20)

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²¹ Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brothers who are with me greet you. ²² All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar’s household.

²³ The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

- The reference to Caesar’s household seems to indicate that he is writing from Rome, most likely during his imprisonment, and the members of the household are likely servants who have come to faith in Christ through Paul’s ministry.
- He refers to four groups of believers, all united by the Gospel, and his greeting is a prayer that they would experience and live out the unity that he has called them to throughout his letter.
 - The saints in Philippi: the local church to whom he is writing
 - The brothers who are with Paul: probably the fellow workers such as Timothy and Epaphroditus
 - All the saints in Rome: the local church where he is
 - Those of Caesar’s household: Believing servants of Caesar
- Paul closes his letter focusing on the one theme that has been constant throughout – the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Final Concerns: Closing and Greetings (Phil 4:21-23)

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