



# **Paul's Epistle to the Philippians**

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

# PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER FOUR

## Outline

- True Citizenship (3:20-4:1)
- Be United, Joyful, & Prayerful (4:2-7)
- Keys to Peace (4:8-9)
- The Philippians' Aid for Paul (4:10-20)
- Final Greetings (4:21-23)

# PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER FOUR

## True Citizenship (3:20-4:1)

**<sup>1</sup> Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved.**

- Paul described the Philippians as his:
  - **“Beloved and longed-for brethren.”**
    - This serves as another demonstration of Paul’s deep love and earnest desire to be with them in the flesh (Phil. 1:3-8, 2:19-24).
  - **“Joy and crown.”**
    - They were Paul’s joy / crown at the time of writing (Phil. 1:3-7, 29-30; 2:12,17; 4:10,14; see also 3 John 4), but, more specifically, they would be his joy / crown on the last day (Phil. 2:14-16; 1 Thess. 2:19-20).
- Knowing Christ’s promises, we have an obligation to **“stand fast in the Lord.”**
  - Unless Christians remain steadfast, Christ’s promises will not come to fruition (1 Cor. 15:58; Rev. 2:10).

# PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER FOUR

## Be United, Joyful, & Prayerful (4:2-7)

**<sup>2</sup> I implore Euodia and I implore Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. <sup>3</sup> And I urge you also, true companion, help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the Book of Life.**

- There was a problem in the church at Philippi between Euodia and Syntyche.

*“Nothing more is known of these two sisters in Christ other than what is written here ... All that can be gathered from the text is that there was some disagreement between them, and that the apostle entreated them to be reconciled to each other. Their difference does not appear to be doctrinal, or Paul would have corrected their error as he did Hymenaeus and Alexander (1 Tim. 1:20). Clearly, they were Christians, and the apostle exhorts them to make the Lord the focus of their efforts” (Blake, p.62).*

- Evidently, they were not “**of the same mind**” (see also Phil. 1:27, 2:2), causing disunity.
  - Notice the repetition of “**implore**” before each person’s name. This indicates that each woman bore equal responsibility in resolving the problem (1 Cor. 1:10; 1 Pet. 3:8).
  - The basis of their agreement needed to be “**in the Lord**” (see Phil. 2:1-5).

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- Paul urged his “**true companion**” (synzygus) to intervene and “**help**” resolve the issue.
  - This may refer to Epaphroditus (Phil. 2:25) or Timothy (Phil. 2:19), but it seems unlikely.
    - Was Epaphroditus / Timothy to read this about himself to the Philippians?
    - Some argue that the Greek word is a proper name referring to a person named Synzygus.  
*“It is supposed by some that the word rendered ‘yoke-fellow’ is a proper name, Synzygus ... This explanation would be favored by the play upon the name Onesimus in the Epistle to Philemon, and is not improbably correct”* (Vincent).
  - Some argue that Paul is referring to his wife, but we have no evidence of Paul ever marrying (1 Cor. 7:8).
    - Whoever the person was, he / she must have been so well-known in Philippi that the church knew exactly who Paul had in mind.

# PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER FOUR

## *Be United, Joyful, & Prayerful (4:2-7)*

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- Although we do not know specifically who the true companion was, this demonstrates the usefulness of relying on a third party to help settle disputes among brethren (1 Cor. 6:5).
- This letter would be read to the entire church (Phil.1:1), so every Christian would be aware of this problem (if they weren't already), yet only one person was told to directly intervene.
  - We must not unnecessarily insert ourselves into problems that do not involve us!
    - Do not claim to be a peacemaker if you are actually being a troublemaker!  
(Matt. 5:9; 2 Cor. 12:20; 1 Thess. 4:9-11)

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- Euodia and Syntyche once “**labored with**” Paul “**in the gospel**.”
  - Women’s roles as teachers are limited (1 Tim. 2:11-12; 1 Cor. 14:34-35); yet, numerous women worked with Paul in progressing the gospel (see Rom. 16:1-16).
- Euodia and Syntyche once labored with Paul alongside a man named Clement, as well as other “**fellow workers, whose names are in the Book of Life**.”
  - This is the only reference to Clement in the Bible; we know nothing about him beyond what is mentioned here.
  - Since Clement’s name was in the Book of Life, this indicates he was a faithful Christian (Rev. 21:27), as were the other fellow workers of Paul.
    - If this is all someone remembers of us, then what a wonderful legacy to leave behind!

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- Lessons learned from Paul's approach in this situation:
  - Paul felt obligated to help people who had helped him (Gal. 6:1-2).
  - Paul publicly named Euodia and Syntyche.
    - It may or may not be necessary to publicly name people who are wrong. Wisdom and discretion are necessary to know when such is required (Jude 22-23; 1 Tim. 1:20).
    - The entire church would be aware of the problem and feel a responsibility to do whatever they could, without interfering, to facilitate a resolution.
  - Paul publicly named Euodia and Syntyche, yet he did not go into all the specific details.
    - Wisdom and discretion is necessary when openly discussing certain sins (Eph. 5:12).
    - The Philippians likely knew more of the specific details than Paul did (consider 2 Cor. 10:15-16; Prov. 18:13).

# PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER FOUR

## Be United, Joyful, & Prayerful (4:2-7)

### **4 Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!**

- Paul again calls upon the Philippians to “rejoice.”
  - This time, the command was so important that Paul immediately repeated it: **“Again I will say, rejoice!”**
- If our rejoicing is **“in the Lord”** (i.e. He is the object and cause for our joy), then we will be able to rejoice **“always”** (1 Thess. 5:16-18).
  - This means being joyful during both the good and bad times (Phil. 4:6-7, 10-13).
  - Remember Paul’s circumstances at the time of writing yet the joy he felt in the Lord (Phil. 1:3-4, 18; 2:12-18; also consider Col. 1:24, 2:5; Phile. 7, 17-20).

*“To rejoice in the Lord does not mean that we are unconcerned about sorrow and distress, to suffering and to sin ... but it does mean that these frailties of the flesh will not be allowed to master or blind us from the radiance which shines from the Lord. Faith in Christ and obedience to Him are the sources of abiding joy” (Harkrider, p.50).*

# PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER FOUR

## Be United, Joyful, & Prayerful (4:2-7)

**5<sup>a</sup> Let your gentleness be known to all men.**

**Let your reasonableness be known to everyone (ESV)**

**Let your forbearance be known unto all men (ASV)**

- Paul urged the Philippians to have their “gentleness be known.”
  - “**Gentleness**” – Equitable, fair, mild, gentle (Thayer).
  - The same Greek word is used in James 3:17 to describe being reasonable (ESV).  
*“It means to show courtesy and be fair in our dealings with others. Not only must our life be characterized by a spirit of joy, but a spirit of fairness”* (Weaver, p.186).
- The Philippians’ gentleness needed be known “**to all men**,” not just known by believers.
  - Our gentleness should be visible to all to see, but not on display for all to see (compare Matt. 5:14-16 with Matt. 6:1-4, etc.).
  - Christians should be known for being fair, reasonable, patient, and forbearing.

# PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER FOUR

## Be United, Joyful, & Prayerful (4:2-7)

### **5<sup>b</sup> The Lord is at hand.**

- The motivation for being gentle is found in the fact that **“the Lord is at hand.”**
- There are two prevailing views as to the meaning of this phrase:
  - The Lord is near to His people (Matt. 28:20; Heb. 13:5; etc.).

*“The Lord is near to protect and shield his people. This is given as a reason they should ever use moderation, for the promise is: ‘Jehovah is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth. He will fulfill the desire of them that fear him; he also will hear their cry, and will save them’ (Psalm 145:18-19)” (Lipscomb, p.222).*

- Personally, I struggle to see how this Psalm connects with what Paul taught in the first half of the verse (**“let your gentleness be known to all men”**).
- I do, however, see how the Psalm might connect to Phil. 4:6:
  - **“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.”**

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  - The Lord is near to His people (Matt. 28:20; Heb. 13:5; Psalm 145:18; etc.).
  - The Lord is coming (James 5:8; 1 Pet. 4:7; also consider 2 Pet. 3:10-13).
    - “**At hand**” – Of time; concerning things imminent and soon to come to pass (Thayer).

*“The expectation that the Lord Jesus will ‘come,’ ought to be allowed to produce moderation of our passions, in our manner of living, in our expectations of what this world can furnish, and in our desires of earthly good. On him who feels that he is soon to die, and to stand at the bar of God – on him who expects soon to see the Lord Jesus coming in the clouds of heaven, it cannot fail to have this effect”* (Barnes, p.214).

- Personally, I believe this is Paul’s intent in using the expression because I see the phrase as pointing back to Phil. 4:5a instead of pointing forward to Phil. 4:6.

# PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER FOUR

## Be United, Joyful, & Prayerful (4:2-7)

### **5<sup>b</sup> The Lord is at hand.**

*“Whether one understands Paul’s statement in this verse to refer to the Lord’s presence or his coming, both statements convey an important truth ... In view of both the Lord’s closeness to us and the unexpected suddenness of his coming, all Christians should always so live as to be pleasing unto him and be prepared for his coming: ‘And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof’ (Rom. 13:11-14)” (Weaver, p.187).*

# PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER FOUR

## *Be United, Joyful, & Prayerful (4:2-7)*

**⁶ Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.**

- Paul instructed the Philippians to “**be anxious for nothing.**”
  - They needed to avoid anxiety despite impending conflict (see Phil. 1:29-30).
  - They did not need to be anxious because:
    - God cared for them (consider Matt. 6:25-34).
    - Persecution would not damage their souls (consider Matt. 10:28).
    - What they would endure was a sign of their salvation (Phil. 1:27-28).
    - They possessed eternal life, if they held fast (consider 1 John 5:10-13; Rev. 2:10).
    - They could look to the reward (Phil. 3:20-21).

# PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER FOUR

## Be United, Joyful, & Prayerful (4:2-7)

**⁶ Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.**

- Rather than being anxious, the Philippians needed to take “**everything**” to God in “**prayer and supplication**,” letting their “**requests be made known to God**.”
  - Prayer is an essential tool in the Christian’s toolbelt (Eph. 6:18).

*“The word rendered ‘supplication’ seems to be a stronger term in this context than prayer (or requests). It is a form of prayer that comes from a deeply felt sense of need and personal helplessness and vulnerability” (Blake, p.63).*

- Our prayers, supplications, and requests should be made “**with thanksgiving**” rather than arrogance, entitlement, or even fear (1 Pet. 5:5-7; 1 Thess. 5:16-18).
- God knows our desires before we ever ask them (Matt. 6:8), yet He still expects us to be humble enough to bring our requests to Him (consider Ezek. 36:37).

# PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER FOUR

## *Be United, Joyful, & Prayerful (4:2-7)*

**7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.**

- Being joyful and gentle, as well as carrying our anxieties to God in prayer will grant us “**the peace of God.**”
  - “**Peace**” – Tranquil state of a soul assured of its salvation through Christ, and so fearing nothing from God and content with its earthly lot, of whatsoever sort that is (Thayer).
  - As is the case with the love of Christ (Eph. 3:19), we can know of the peace of God, but we will never be able to fully comprehend the depths of it because it “**surpasses all understanding.**”

# PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER FOUR

## *Be United, Joyful, & Prayerful (4:2-7)*

**7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.**

- The peace of God acts as a “**guard**” for “**hearts and minds**” that are in union with Christ.
  - The Greek word translated as “**guard**” (“keep,” KJV) is a military term that implies protection (also consider 2 Thess. 2:3-5; 1 Pet. 1:3-5; Isa. 26:1-4).
    - For God to guard our minds and hearts, we must also do our part guarding them (Phil. 4:8-9; Prov. 4:23; Rom. 12:2).
      - Our actions are indicative of what resides in our hearts (Matt. 12:34, 15:19; Prov. 23:7).
    - Those whose hearts and minds are not in union with Christ may think they are at peace, but such is only a façade (Jer. 6:14; John 14:27).
      - True peace only comes in (“**through**”) Christ! (John 16:33; Col. 1:19-20)

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**7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.**

*“No confidence that a man can have in his own ability, no reliance that he can impose on his own plans, or on the promises or loyalty of his fellow-men, and no calculations which he can make on the future, can give him such peace of mind as sincere trust in God. Paul wanted the Philippians to understand that by making their requests known to God and going to him to talk of all of their trials and needs, their minds would be preserved from the despair of anxiety. The way to find peace and to have the heart kept from trouble is to go before the Lord with the problem (Isa. 26:3-4). ‘Keep’ is a military term meaning that the mind would be guarded as an army camp or fort is protected. It would be preserved from the infiltration of dangerous fears and unnecessary alarms” (Blake, p.63).*

# PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER FOUR

## Keys to Peace (4:8-9)

<sup>8</sup> Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.

- The peace of God mentioned in the previous verse can be obtained through meditating on “whatever things are:”
  - “**True**” – The Word is the standard (John 17:17).
    - Truth should bring us peace (2 John 3).
  - “**Noble**” (“honorable,” ESV).
    - This requires special effort (Acts 17:11; 2 Cor. 8:21; Rom. 12:17-18).
  - “**Just**” (“fair,” ISV).
    - See Micah 6:8 Lev. 19:15; Matt. 5:38-42.
  - “**Pure**” – This starts in the heart (Matt. 5:8).
    - No impurities (Eph. 5:3, ESV; 1 John 3:3).
  - “**Lovely**” – Friendly towards (Strong).
    - No Negative Nancys! (1 Cor. 13:4-7)
  - “**Of good report**” (“commendable,” ESV).
    - Actively looking to do good (Tit. 3:8,14).
  - Of “**virtue**” – Moral excellence (Thayer).
    - Such is necessary for securing our salvation (1 Pet. 1:5-8).
  - “**Praiseworthy**.”
    - This requires discernment (Phil. 1:9-11).

# PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER FOUR

## Keys to Peace (4:8-9)

**8 Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.**

- It is not enough to simply think on these things momentarily; we must “**meditate on**” them, i.e. wholly fix our minds and hearts upon them.
  - “**Meditate**” – Consider, take account, weigh, meditate on a thing, with a view to obtaining it (Thayer).

*“Think on these things: meditate upon them, revolve them in your minds, seriously consider them, and reason with yourselves about them, in order to put them into practice” (Gill).*

# PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER FOUR

## Keys to Peace (4:8-9)

**⁹ The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.**

- Whatever the Philippians “learned and received and heard and saw” in Paul needed to be imitated.
  - This is the second time Paul has called upon the Philippians to imitate him (Phil. 3:17).
  - “**The things**” learned / received / heard / seen in Paul likely refers to all of the qualities described in the previous verse.

*“The six virtues he had named (things that were excellent and worthy of praise) and called upon the Philippians carefully to think about were moral excellencies that had also been learned from Paul, by teaching and by example” (Weaver, p.195)*

# PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER FOUR

## Keys to Peace (4:8-9)

**<sup>9</sup> The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.**

- Whatever the Philippians “**learned and received and heard and saw**” in Paul needed to be imitated.

- They “**learned**” these things when he was present teaching them directly.
- They “**received**” these things via his epistles and correspondences.
- They “**heard**” these things when Paul sent messengers to them.
- They “**saw**” his teaching exemplified in his manner of life.

*“All four ... serve as legitimate means of acquiring understanding of the will of God ... One can receive teaching directly in a preaching or teaching setting, one can learn it by reading Bible teaching written down by another, one can learn it by hearing it repeated by others, and one can understand the will of God by observing it practiced by others”* (Blake, p.69).

- It wasn’t enough for the Philippians to know these things; they needed “**do**” them (also consider John 13:17).

# PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER FOUR

## Keys to Peace (4:8-9)

**⁹ The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.**

- If the Philippians put their knowledge into practice, Paul assured them “**the God of peace**” would be “**with**” them.
  - Notice the inversion of “peace of God” in v.7 to “**God of peace**” here.
  - This description of God is found repeatedly in Paul’s epistles (Rom. 15:33, 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:11; 1 Thess. 5:23).
    - Paul obviously found comfort in seeing God as the God of peace – we should too!
    - To have the peace of God is amazing; to have the God of peace Himself “**be with**” us is even more amazing! (Psalm 23:4)
      - His presence is dependent upon us abiding in His peace (2 Cor. 13:11).

*“God dwells with those who think holy thoughts and live holy lives; and with him comes the peace which is his, which he giveth”* (Spence, p.158).

# PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER FOUR

## *The Philippians' Aid for Paul (4:10-20)*

**10 But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your care for me has flourished again; though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity.**

- This section is likely the primary reason Paul wrote the letter – to express his gratitude for the Philippians “**care**” for him via financial support (Phil. 4:16-17).
  - Remember, some Christians slandered Paul for receiving such support (1 Cor. 9:3-18).
- Paul “**rejoiced in the Lord greatly**” at their generosity (also consider 2 Cor. 11:7-10).
  - Paul told the Philippians to rejoice in the Lord (Phil. 3:1, 4:4). Here, he does that himself.
  - This was not the first time (“**your care for me has flourished again**”) that the Philippians aided Paul (Phil. 4:15-16).
- “**Now at last**” is not a rebuke because Paul stated the Philippians “**surely did care**,” but they “**lacked opportunity**.”
  - The specific reason(s) are left unexplained, but the Philippians were not held accountable for being unable to do something they did not have opportunity to do (compare to 2 Cor. 8:8-12 ; also consider Gal. 6:10; James 4:17).

# PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER FOUR

## *The Philippians' Aid for Paul (4:10-20)*

**11 Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content:**

**Not that I complain of want; for I have learned, in whatever state I am, to be content (RSV)**

- Paul's joy described in the previous verse was not brought about by the fulfillment of his needs ("not that I speak in regard to need").
  - Paul was in need physically (Phil. 4:14, 18), but relief from that need was not his primary concern.
    - A similar expression is used in Phil. 2:30 to describe Epaphroditus's lack of regard for his physical life.
- Even if the Philippians did not aid him, Paul would be "**content**"; He "**learned**" to be content "**in whatever state**" he was in (also consider Phil. 4:6).
  - Contentment must be learned! (Heb. 13:5)
  - "**Content**" – Sufficient for oneself, strong enough or possessing enough to need no aid or support; independent of external circumstances (Thayer).

# PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER FOUR

## *The Philippians' Aid for Paul (4:10-20)*

**11 Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content:**

- Paul's self-sufficiency was not dependent upon self (Phil. 4:13; 2 Cor. 12:7-10).

*“The word ‘content’ was used often by the Stoics to describe how a man ought to be self-sufficient, or independent. To them contentment was the essence of all virtues. Of course, Paul does not mean exactly what the Stoic meant by the term, for while in this passage he stresses his independence of outward circumstances, he also is fully aware that his sufficiency comes from God and is not of himself ... In v.13 he shows that he is able to ‘do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.’ His self-sufficiency had its source and root in Christ who dwelt in him. This sufficiency in Christ may, in contrast to dependence on external good, be called self-sufficiency” (Weaver, p.200).*

# PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER FOUR

## *The Philippians' Aid for Paul (4:10-20)*

**12 I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.**

**I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty... (NIV)**

- Paul's contentment was rooted in the fact that he experienced both extremes of life:
  - He knew what it was like "**to be abased**" (e.g. "**hungry**" and "**suffer need**").
    - The Greek word for "**abased**" means to bring low (Strong). The same word is used in Phil. 2:8 to describe Christ's humiliation.
    - Paul was often in a forced state of abasement (2 Cor. 11:24-27). Here, however, the reference appears to be voluntary abasement (see 2 Cor. 11:7-10)

*“Abased’ is illustrated by what Paul said to the Corinthians: ‘Or did I commit a sin in abasing myself that ye might be exalted, because I preached to you the gospel of God for nought?’” (2 Cor. 11:7), where the sense of ‘keeping myself low’ could have been made with reference to his working as a tentmaker, but more probably pointing to the comparative poverty which was the result of his self-denying action” (Shepherd, p.229).*

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**I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty... (NIV)**

- Paul's contentment was rooted in the fact that he experienced both extremes of life:
  - He knew what it was like "**to be abased**" (e.g. "**hungry**" and "**suffer need**").
  - He knew what it was like to "**abound**" (e.g. "**full**").
    - "**Abound**" – To be abundantly furnished with, to have in abundance (Thayer).
    - The Philippians were partially responsible for Paul's occasions of abundance (Phil. 4:18).
- Both extremes taught Paul the secret (ASV, NASB, RSV, ESV, NIV, NET, etc.) to contentment.

# PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER FOUR

## *The Philippians' Aid for Paul (4:10-20)*

**13 I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.**

- The secret to Paul's contentment is found here: "**Christ.**"
  - Christ strengthened Paul in every circumstance (Phil. 4:12; also consider 2 Cor. 4:7-18; 2 Tim. 4:9-18).
    - Paul's strength during times of abasement was found "**through**" Christ.
    - Paul's strength during times of abundance was found "**through**" Christ.
  - Paul's self-sufficiency was completely dependent upon Christ.
    - "**...I am self-sufficient in Christ's sufficiency...**" (AMP)
  - Do we feel the same? (John 15:5)

# PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER FOUR

## *The Philippians' Aid for Paul (4:10-20)*

**<sup>13</sup> I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.**

- Do not abuse this verse by divorcing “**I can do all things**” from the previous verse!

*“Can do all things,” we are not to understand it absolutely, but restrictively to the subject matter he had before mentioned in the precedent verses” (Poole).*

- The core message is contentment with much or little, whether full or hungry, because our true sufficiency is in Christ.
- That said, one can still make secondary applications of the expression regarding our ability to do all that God demands and overcome every trial, temptation, etc.

*“Properly, ‘I have strength in all things,’ rather (according to the context) to bear than to do. But the universal extension of the maxim beyond the immediate occasion and context is not inadmissible. It represents the ultimate and ideal consciousness of the Christian. The first thing needful is to throw off mere self-sufficiency, to know our weakness and sin, and accept the salvation of God’s free grace in Christ; the next, to find the ‘strength made perfect in weakness,’ and in that to be strong” (Ellicott).*

# PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER FOUR

## *The Philippians' Aid for Paul (4:10-20)*

**14 Nevertheless you have done well that you shared in my distress.**

**Howbeit ye did well that ye had fellowship with my affliction (ASV)**

- “Nevertheless” serves to prevent a misunderstanding.
  - In touting his self-sufficiency in Christ, Paul stated that a lack of material things and lack of food would not affect his contentment. As such, the Philippians might have thought Paul did not need their help.
- Clearing up any potential confusion, Paul stated that the Philippians had “done well” sharing in Paul’s “distress.”
  - They not only did what was right (Gal. 6:10), they did it well (consider 2 Cor. 8:1-7).
  - It was not the gift Paul most appreciated but their fellowship in his afflictions (Phil. 4:17).
    - “Shared” – Fellowship, communicate with, be partaker of (Strong).
  - The Philippians had become active partners in Paul’s suffering though they did not personally endure that suffering (Rom. 12:15; also consider 1 Tim. 5:22).

# PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER FOUR

## *The Philippians' Aid for Paul (4:10-20)*

<sup>15</sup> Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only. <sup>16</sup> For even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities.

- “In the beginning of the gospel” has two possible meanings:
  - The early stages of the gospel going forth into the world.
    - “...early days of the gospel...” (NRSV, HCSB, ISV, Phillips).
    - “...at the beginning of my gospel ministry...” (NET).
  - The Philippians’ first introduction to the gospel (Phil. 1:5; Acts 16).
    - “...in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel...” (NIV).
    - “...when I first brought you the Good News...” (NLT).
- The subsequent clause “when I departed from Macedonia” supports the second view.
  - “...when I started preaching the good news in Macedonia...” (CEV).
  - “...when I first brought the Gospel to you and then went on my way...” (TLB).

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- “**When I departed**” is not referring to the point in which Paul had actually left Macedonia for Corinth (Acts 18:1) because Thessalonica was in Macedonia.

*“When I departed from Macedonia” is translated in a way that can be confusing in its English form. Ordinarily one would understand this to mean ‘after he had left’ Macedonia; however, the next verse specifically states ‘Thessalonica’ as a place they sent more than once to his need. Thessalonica was the provincial capital of Macedonia, therefore he meant ‘when I was departing’ and could not have meant “after he had gone” to Corinth which was in Achaia”* (Harkrider, p.59).

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*“[Scholars and translators] usually take the view that Paul had already left Macedonia and was in Corinth when he received the contribution he refers to in this verse. In this view 2 Corinthians 11:9 is supposed to refer to this particular contribution. Most of the commentators who adopt this view do not attempt to harmonize it with Paul’s next statement (v.15b) that at that time (the time when the Philippians sent him this particular contribution) ‘no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only.’ How could Paul say in 2 Corinthians 11:8 that in Corinth he received help from ‘other churches’ (plural), but in this verse say that ‘no church . . . But ye only’ (the Philippians, only one church) helped him at that time, and be speaking of the same time and place in both verses?” (Weaver, p.207).*

# PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER FOUR

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- “When I departed” is not referring to the point in which Paul had actually left Macedonia for Corinth (Acts 18:1) because Thessalonica was in Macedonia.
- As Paul “departed Macedonia” (specifically, Philippi), the Philippians were the “only” church who “shared with” Paul “concerning giving and receiving.”
  - They “sent aid once and again” to Paul while he was in Thessalonica (Acts 16:35-17:10).
    - Paul did not accept financial compensation from the Thessalonians when he labored there (1 Thess. 2:9; 2 Thess. 3:8).
    - This example proves it is scriptural for a church to send financial aid to a preacher who is not a member of their congregation (2 Cor. 11:7-8).
      - Such assistance is based on a man’s “**necessities**.”
      - Yet, notice the simplicity: the Philippians gave and Paul received.

# PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER FOUR

## *The Philippians' Aid for Paul (4:10-20)*

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- Were the Philippians a “sponsoring church?”

*“Under this arrangement, one congregation (specifically, the congregation's eldership or, if it lacks elders, the men of the congregation) agree to oversee the work of an individual (such as a missionary to another country) or group (such as a children's home). Other congregations and/or individuals, desiring to support that work, would send contributions to the overseeing congregation designated for that work. The work may be performed using a separate entity for legal purposes (and, as such, contributions would be sent to that entity) but the sponsoring church's elders/congregation would still maintain control and oversight of the entity and its work ... The sponsoring church arrangement exists so that individual congregations can co-operate on projects that one congregation alone would not be financially able to undertake, while maintaining local congregation oversight and control of the work” (Wikipedia, December 2025).*

# PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER FOUR

## *The Philippians' Aid for Paul (4:10-20)*

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- Were the Philippians a “sponsoring church?”

*“Absolutely nothing is said ... about other churches giving to Philippi, and Philippi in turn ... forwarded the monies on to Paul. Some in our time ... have made this argument based upon the terms ‘giving and receiving’ in this passage. If this is what Paul means in this statement, then does it not follow that only the sponsoring church (the receiving church) has ‘fellowship’ with the evangelist in such a case, since Paul said that ‘no church communicated (had fellowship, or shared) with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only?’ How many churches that are doing the giving to a sponsoring church think that only the sponsoring church, who is doing the receiving from them in this arrangement, is having fellowship with the evangelist they are helping support through that church? This alone is enough to show that Paul is not talking about other churches giving and Philippi receiving from them” (Weaver, p.209).*

# PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER FOUR

## *The Philippians' Aid for Paul (4:10-20)*

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- Were the Philippians a “sponsoring church?”

*“We see the simple manner in which the church in Philippi joined with Paul in the work of preaching the gospel ... The brethren simply raised the money and sent it directly to Paul. This is the way it should be done today”* (Guy N. Woods, 1946 Annual Lesson Commentary, p.341).

*“There is no example of two or more churches joining together their funds for the support of the gospel”* (H. Leo Boles, Gospel Advocate, November 3, 1932).

*“For one church to solicit funds from other churches for general distribution in other fields or places, thus becoming a treasury of other churches ... makes a sort of society out of the elders of a local church, and for such there is no scriptural precedent or example”* (Foy E. Wallace, Jr., Gospel Advocate, May 14, 1931).

- We wish brothers Woods, Boles, Wallace, etc. would have continued preaching the truth!

# PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER FOUR

## *The Philippians' Aid for Paul (4:10-20)*

**17 Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account.**

**Not that I seek the gift; rather, I seek the interest that accrues to your account (Mounce)**

**I do not say this because I am seeking a gift. Rather, I seek the credit that abounds to your account (NET)**

- Just as he did in Phil. 4:11, 14, Paul sought to avoid any potential understanding by clearly stating he did not “**seek the gift**.” Instead, he sought “**the fruit**” which abounded from the Philippians’ “**account**” (consider Gal. 6:6-10).

- Whatever good Paul accomplished, he considered the Philippians as joint harvesters.

*“Those themselves not preaching may have fruit in new converts made, or in the word of God multiplied by sustaining and aiding those who are preaching with their money and their prayers”* (Lipscomb, p.232-233).

- Nothing good that one does goes unnoticed by God (2 Tim. 1:12).

# PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER FOUR

## *The Philippians' Aid for Paul (4:10-20)*

**18<sup>a</sup> Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you,**

**But I have received everything in full and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent (NASB)**

**I have received full payment, and more. I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent (ESV)**

- Paul proves he did not seek the Philippians' gift by stating he had “**all and abound.**” He became “**full**” upon receiving their assistance administered by Epaphroditus (Phil. 2:25).
  - The Philippians met Paul’s necessities (Phil. 4:16); assistance was no longer necessary.
- We can observe at least two lessons from this example:
  - When assisting brethren today, we should not simply provide the “bare minimum” if we are capable of providing more.
  - Assistance should cease once a need is met.

# PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER FOUR

## *The Philippians' Aid for Paul (4:10-20)*

<sup>18b</sup> a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God.

- The Philippians' aid for Paul produced a “**sweet-smelling aroma**.”
  - This expression appears frequently in the Bible in reference to Old Testament sacrifices (Gen. 8:21; Exod. 29:18, 25, 41; Lev. 1:9, 13, 17; etc.).
  - When we do the Lord’s will, we produce an aroma that is “**well pleasing**” to Him (Eph. 5:1-2; Ezek. 20:41-44).
- The Philippians' aid for Paul was not just a sacrifice on behalf of Paul but it was also an “**acceptable sacrifice ... to God**” (also consider Heb. 13:16).
  - In helping one of God’s servants, the Philippians helped God (Matt. 25:37-40).  
*“Whatever is done to the servant is done for the Master”* (Shepherd, p. 233).

# PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER FOUR

## *The Philippians' Aid for Paul (4:10-20)*

**18<sup>b</sup> a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God.**

- Are we producing a sweet-smelling aroma to God via financial support of needy preachers?

*“Far too many gospel preachers are currently inadequately supported ... Some preachers labor with their hands, do without necessities, write for support that should come from the home congregation, and live their entire lives without a secure plan for their old age. Again, the ignorant protest: ‘Preachers are supposed to make sacrifices!’ Yes dear brother, but God has not assigned you the task of enforcing his sacrifice. In general, Americans live well, including many professed Christians who Monday through Saturday are materialistic and money driven, and then gather on Sunday to sing ‘I’m satisfied with just a cottage below.’ Some churches have squirreled away six figure savings accounts drawing interest, even though the Lord never authorized such behavior, but he did speak clearly on the matter of supporting preachers. The same Scriptures that speak of salvation, the church, baptism, and the Lord’s Supper are no less binding when they address support for the preaching of the gospel. 1 Corinthians 9:14 is no less important than Acts 2:38” (Blake, p.74-75).*

# PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER FOUR

## *The Philippians' Aid for Paul (4:10-20)*

**19 And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.**

**My God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus (ESV)**

- Just as the Philippians fully supplied Paul's need, God would fully “**supply**” their “**need**” (2 Cor. 9:6-8; Matt. 6:31-33).
  - God is able to meet all of our needs! Sometimes He does so directly; other times he does so indirectly, as seen by the Philippians (God) meeting Paul's needs.
  - “**All your need**” demands a broader interpretation than just material blessings (Eph. 1:3).
- God supplies our needs “**according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.**”

*“That is, in conformity with His being so rich, and consequently having so much to give”*  
(Heinrich Meyer's New Testament Commentary).

- This explains why God is able to supply all of our needs – the depths of His riches are immeasurable! (Rom. 11:33; Eph. 3:16, 2:4-7)
- The sphere of blessings are in Christ; fellowship with Him produces these blessings.

# PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER FOUR

## *The Philippians' Aid for Paul (4:10-20)*

**20 Now to our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.**

- Notice the shift in possessive pronouns (“**our God**”) from the previous verse.
  - This indicates that what is stated in this verse needed to be replicated by the Philippians, as well as all who claim God as their “**Father**.”
- “**Glory**” is “**forever**” due God as result of the the assurance that He will supply every need.
  - As beneficiaries, we should praise God for His goodness (Rom. 11:36).
  - This praise should never cease (2 Pet. 3:18; 1 Thess. 5:16-18).
- “**Amen**” (so be it) serves as affirmation of what was just stated.
  - This further indicates that what is stated needed to be replicated.
    - “**Amen**” – At the close of a sentence; so it is, so be it, may it be fulfilled ... thus made the substance of what was uttered their own (Thayer).

# PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER FOUR

## Final Greetings (4:21-23)

**<sup>21</sup> Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren who are with me greet you.**

- Paul began the letter by addressing saints in Christ Jesus (Phil. 1:1). Now, he closes the letter by stating, “**Greet every saint in Christ Jesus.**”
  - This is likely a greeting from Paul rather than a command for the Philippians to follow (compare to Rom. 16:16; etc.).
    - The subsequent two greetings support this interpretation.
    - This further demonstrates that a saint is one who is in Christ (Gal. 3:27).
  - Paul added that “**the brethren who are with me greet you.**”
    - This included Timothy (Phil. 1:1, 2:19-23), and likely some (or all) of the brethren listed in Col. 4:10-15; Phile. 23-24.

# PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER FOUR

## Final Greetings (4:21-23)

**22 All the saints greet you, but especially those who are of Caesar's household.**

- “All the saints” greeted the Philippians.
  - These are likely unnamed Roman saints outside the brethren who were with Paul.
- More specifically, “especially those who are of Caesar's household” sent greetings.
  - This is likely a subsect of Phil. 1:12-14 who were close to Caesar, or this a distinct group altogether (Caesar's family, friends, inner circle, servants, etc.).

*“This particular class of saints were not likely members of Caesar's immediate family, or his own blood-relatives, but domestic and administrative servants who were working for him ... Although these were not the same as the members of the praetorian guard mentioned earlier by Paul (1:13), they may have been close to Paul and could very well have rendered valuable service to him in his imprisonment ... This is another example of ‘the progress of the gospel’ in Rome that was made possible through his own imprisonment” (Weaver, p.217).*

# PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER FOUR

## Final Greetings (4:21-23)

**23 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.**

- The letter began with Paul wishing God's grace upon the Philippians (Phil. 1:2), and it closes with the same wish: "**The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.**"
  - Paul typically closed his letters with a version of this statement (Gal. 6:18; Phile. 25; 1 Cor. 16:23; 1 Thess. 5:28; 2 Thess. 3:18; 2 Tim. 4:22).