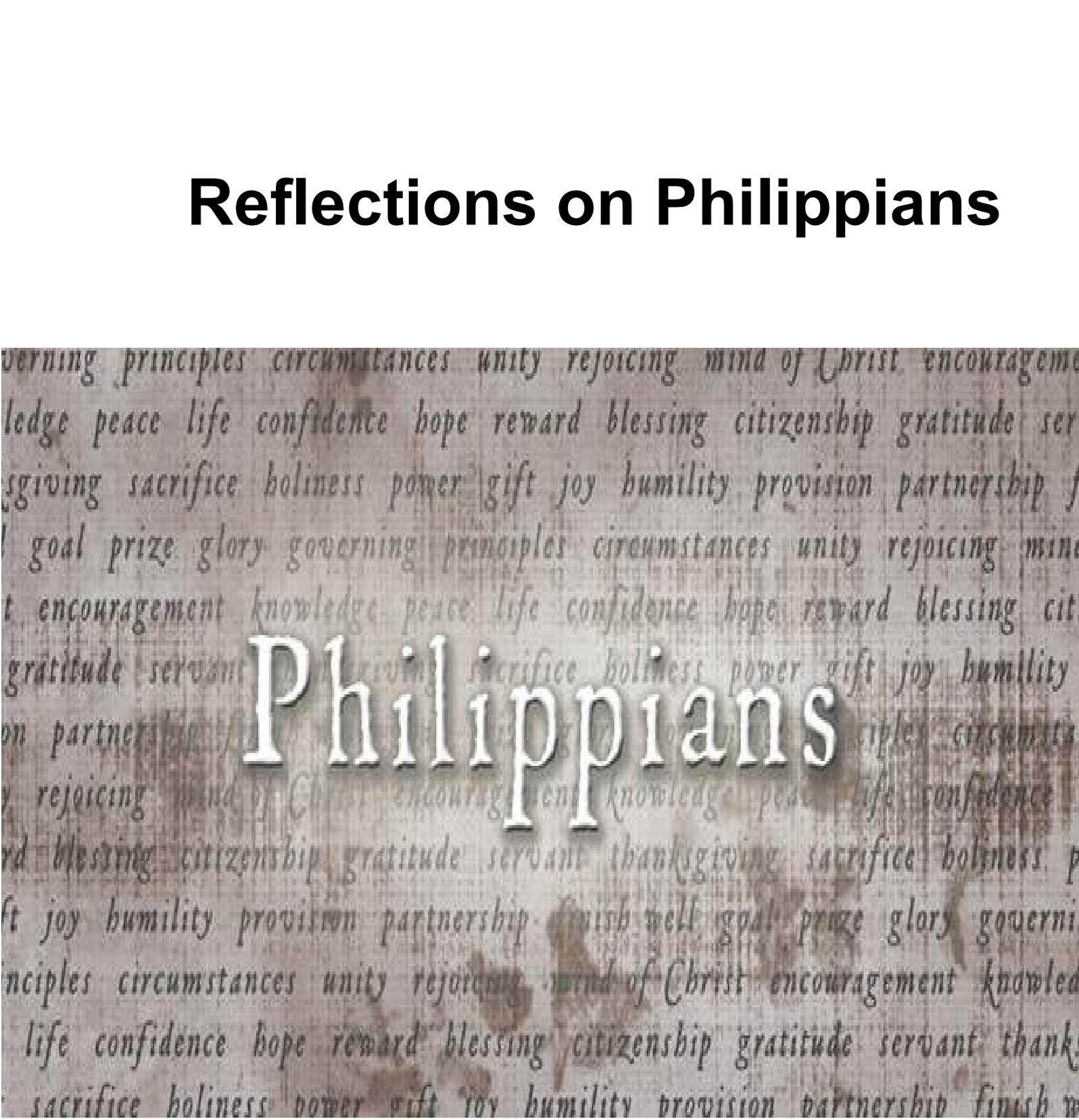


Reflections on Philippians



Philippians

By Dave Quinn

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About this booklet

Reflections from Philippians is a collection of thoughts from my daily blog at The PASSION Blog (www.passionaustralia.org/blog).

They are quick thoughts that have grown out of my morning devotions and my prayerful reading of the Bible.

They are not meant to be deeply theological but to provide a connection between faith, life and the Bible.

For best use of this devotional booklet, read the daily reading in your favourite version of the Bible and then read the devotion. In these devotions I use the NLT.

If you read one devotion a day this booklet will take about two weeks to complete.

I hope you enjoy these short devotions or “blog posts”. For longer articles and sermons please visit my main website.

God Bless,



Dave Quinn
Founder of PASSIONAustralia.org

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Introduction to Philippians

Paul's Letter to the Philippians was written to the first church that Paul established on European soil. It was in the Roman province of Macedonia. It was written while the Apostle Paul was in prison.

The main reason for writing the letter was to thank the Philippian Christians for the gift which they had sent to help him in his time of need. He also uses this letter to reassure them, so that they may have courage and confidence in spite of all his troubles and their own as well.

Paul pleads with the church to have the humble attitude of Jesus, rather than to be controlled by selfish ambition and pride. He reminds them that their life in union with Christ is a gift of God's grace which they have received through faith, not through obedience to the ceremonies of the Jewish Law.

Some of the other themes of this letter are joy, confidence, unity, and perseverance in the Christian faith and life. It also reveals the deep affection Paul had for the church at Philippi.

Outline of Philippians

Greetings from Paul—1:1-2

Paul's thanksgiving and prayer—1:3-11

Paul's joy that Christ is preached—1:12-19

Paul's life for Christ—1:20-26

Live as citizens of heaven—1:27-30

Having the attitude of Christ—2:1-11

Shine brightly for Christ—2:12-18

Paul commends Timothy—2:19-24

Paul commends Epaphroditus—2:25-30

The priceless value in knowing Christ—3:1-11

Pressing on towards the goal—3:12-21

Words of encouragement—4:2-9

Paul's thanks for the gifts—4:10-20

Paul's final greetings—4:21-23

Day 1—Paul's thanksgiving and prayer

For my devotions I am moving on to the Book of Philippians. This is one of the letters Paul wrote to the churches while he was in prison in Rome.

The first reading comes from Philippians 1:3-11. This section is titled, "Paul's thanksgiving and prayer". In this section two main things jumped out at me.

1. Paul's joy with the Philippians

Verses 3 says, "Every time I think of you, I give thanks to my God".

The Philippians give Paul special joy because they have been his partners in the Gospel. They have shared with him from the day they first heard about Christ until the day of writing.

Paul has a real love for the Philippians because they believed in the message of salvation and continued steadfastly in it. They took it so seriously that they partnered in his work – in prayer, encouragement and financially.

2. Paul's prayer for the Philippians

In verse 9 Paul says, "I pray that your love will overflow more and more, and that you will keep on growing in knowledge and understanding".

Paul wanted them to continue to grow in their faith and be blessed by God. He prayed they would have full understanding of the things of God, be pure and blameless in their walk with the Lord and be filled with the fruit of salvation.

Paul really loved the Philippians. He was like a spiritual father to them as he planted the church at Philippi on his second missionary journey. This is why he experienced so much joy, prayed for them and wanted the best for them.

I am really looking forward to continuing through the book of Philippians and seeing what lessons I can learn afresh.

God Bless,
Dave

Day 2—Paul’s joy that Christ is preached

Today in my devotions I looked at Philippians 1:12-19. The title of this section in the NLT is “Paul’s joy that Christ is preached”.

Verses 12-14 read, “And I want you to know, my dear brothers and sisters, that everything that has happened to me here has helped to spread the Good News. For everyone here, including the whole palace guard, knows that I am in chains because of Christ. And because of my imprisonment, most of the believers here have gained confidence and boldly speak God’s message without fear”.

Two things really jumped out at me from these verses.

1. Paul is pleased being in prison

The first is that Paul is glad to be in prison. He tells us that the whole palace guard knows he is there for the Gospel. Paul came in contact with people he would not normally be able to share Christ with. As we see from Acts 16 Paul got to share his faith with the jailer and his family.

2. Paul’s continued boldness encourages others

The second things is from verse 14. Paul says that, “...most of the believers here have gained confidence and boldly speak God’s message without fear”. Paul’s boldness despite being in prison gave other courage to continue to talk about Jesus. Acts 16 said they prayed and sang hymns while in chains!

Paul’s boldness to preach the message of Christ landed him in prison. However this did not stop him and everyone knew why he was there. We see the jailer family of the jailer came to Christ. And the other believers were greatly encouraged in their efforts.

Paul’s commitment to preaching the Gospel inspires me nearly 2000 years later.

God Bless,
Dave

Day 3—Paul's life for Christ

Today's reading comes from Philippians 1:20-26. It is titled, "Paul's life for Christ".

Verses 21-24 explains Paul's heart. They gives us a glimpse of his priorities....

"For to me, living means living for Christ, and dying is even better. But if I live, I can do more fruitful work for Christ. So I really don't know which is better. I'm torn between two desires: I long to go and be with Christ, which would be far better for me. But for your sakes, it is better that I continue to live".

For Paul, living was all about Christ. He was all consumed with Christ. He desired earnestly to go and be with Christ, but knew staying here would mean he could continue His work in the world.

Paul knew he could help others come to know Christ, he could plant churches, and he could strengthen the churches he had planted. In short his mission was to know Christ and make Him known.

Over the years I have known people like this. They have been completely sold out for God's Kingdom. Their life was hidden in Christ and His will was all they wanted. Some are alive still serving, while some have gone to be with their Lord.

I am so inspired by these three verses and the sold out Kingdom people I have met over the years. It is something that I aspire to myself. I hope and pray that I can wholeheartedly say, "To live is Christ, to die is gain".

Prayer

Dear God, thank You for Paul's words in this passage. Thank You for his commitment to Christ and his commitment to making Him known. I pray today that I will have that same commitment to Christ and to His mission in this world. I pray my life will be all about Christ. In Jesus' name, Amen.

God Bless,
Dave

Day 4—Live at citizens of heaven

Today's reading comes from Philippians 1:27-30. It is titled, "Live as citizens of heaven".

Verse 27 says, "Above all, you must live as citizens of heaven, conducting yourselves in a manner worthy of the Good News about Christ. Then, whether I come and see you again or only hear about you, I will know that you are standing together with one spirit and one purpose, fighting together for the faith, which is the Good News".

I like this idea of being a citizen of heaven. As Christians we live in this world, but citizenship is of another place – the Kingdom of Heaven. The moment we asked Jesus Christ into our lives our citizenship status changed.

Paul reminds us in today's passage to conduct ourselves worthy of being a citizen of heaven. We need to live in a way that shows we no longer belong to this world.

We are like an Ambassador who serves in a foreign country as a diplomat. They deal with their host country, build relational bridges and represent the interests of their country in that place.

Not only does the Ambassador have to serve his country in that place, but they need to represent the country well. All they do reflects on their homeland. We are like this as Christians.

So today let us remember our spiritual passports are stamped as citizens of heaven. Let us remember the words of Colossians 3:17, "And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father".

God Bless,
Dave

Day 5—Having the attitude of Christ

Today's devotion looked at Philippians 2:1-11. It is titled, "Having the attitude of Christ". It contains a number of ideas.

1. Be unified

Paul urges the believers to be unified in Christ. He asks them to make him happy by "agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose" (v2).

Being unified is about loving and caring for each other, putting differences aside and working together in our joint Kingdom purpose. Jesus prayed for His followers in John 17. He prayed that we might be one as He and the Father are one.

2. Be interested in others

Verses 3 says, "Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others too".

Life is not just about you and me as individuals. It is about all of us. When I fall into selfish patterns I don't look out for others. I can be concerned about my interests only. Jesus lived in a constant mission of the Father. He was interested in others to the point of sacrificing all.

3. Be humble

Verses 7-8 says, "Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross".

Christ left the glories of heaven to live in this world. He took a lowly place of a servant and even died a "criminals death" for our sin. His humility paved the way for our salvation. If Christ showed that humility, what do I have to be proud of?

So today, let us be unified in Christ's mission, be interested in others above ourselves and be humble in all we do.

God Bless,
Dave

Day 6—Shine brightly for Christ

Philippians 2:12-18 is my next devotional reading. It is titled, “Shine brightly for Christ”.

In verse 12 he says, “Dear friends, you always followed my instructions when I was with you. And now that I am away, it is even more important. Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear”.

In this passage Paul encourages the Philippians to continue on living right. He says they did well when he was with them, but it is important to keep it up while he is away.

As I read this passage it took me back to my primary school days. When the teacher was in the classroom with us, everyone behaved well. When the teacher left us alone, some of the kids (including me!) misbehaved. We would all sit down nicely before the teacher returned!

So the Philippians stayed on track while he was away (unlike my school friends and I!) Paul urged them to...

- Work hard to show the results of their salvation (v12)
- Obey God with deep reverence and fear (v12)
- Do everything without complaining and arguing (v14)
- Live clean, innocent lives as children of God (v15)
- Hold firmly to the word of life (v16)

If they continued to do these things Paul knew they would be on track. He wanted them to be a witness to the world in the way they lived. He wanted them to shine brightly in the midst of the crooked world around them.

So today, let us remember to shine brightly and be a good example in the way we live. As we do remember “God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him” (v13).

God Bless,
Dave

Day 7—Paul commends Timothy

Today's reading is from Philippians 2:19-24. It is titled, "Paul commends Timothy".

In this passage the Apostle Paul speaks highly of Timothy to the Philippians. In verse 12 we see he Paul wants to send Timothy to them to see how they are going.

Bible scholars tell us that Timothy had already been to Philippi. Timothy accompanied Paul on his second missionary journey when the church was planted. So some would have known him, but not all.

In his recommendation Paul says three encouraging things about Timothy...

1. That he really care for the Philippians. In verse 20 he says, "I have no one else like Timothy, who genuinely cares about your welfare".
2. That he cares for Christ's work. Verse 21 says, "All the others care only for themselves and not for what matters to Jesus Christ".
3. That he served Paul well. Verse 22 says, "But you know how Timothy has proved himself. Like a son with his father, he has served with me in preaching the Good News".

This is a great recommendation! One that most of us would be proud of. In it we see that Timothy really cares for the Philippians, he cares for Christ's work and he serves Paul and the Gospel like a son serving his father.

When I read this passage I can see why Paul love his "spiritual" son in the faith so much. He was a great young man with lots of potential and he really cared about what mattered to God.

God Bless,
Dave

Day 8—Paul commends Epaphroditus

In yesterday's reading Paul commended Timothy. In today's he commends Epaphroditus. It is found in Philippians 2:25-30.

Verse 25 says, "Meanwhile, I thought I should send Epaphroditus back to you. He is a true brother, co-worker, and fellow soldier. And he was your messenger to help me in my need".

The church at Philippi took up an offering for Paul while he was in prison in Rome. This was to help him through his time of need. The church sent Epaphroditus to deliver the offering and stay with Paul for a while.

Paul really appreciated the offering from the church he planted on his second missionary journey. In Philippians 4:18 he calls it a "sweet-smelling sacrifice that is acceptable and pleasing to God".

Paul also appreciated Epaphroditus coming and being with him. As we see above he described him as a true brother, a co-worker, a fellow soldier, and a messenger in his need.

In the final section of verses 29-30 Paul commends him back to the church and Philippi and asks them to recognise his great work...

"Welcome him with Christian love and with great joy, and give him the honor that people like him deserve. For he risked his life for the work of Christ, and he was at the point of death while doing for me what you couldn't do from far away".

Honouring people who served well was a big part of the early church. We see this in the commending of both Timothy and Epaphroditus. I believe it is something we should continue to practice today.

God Bless,
Dave

Day 9—The priceless value of knowing Christ

In today's reading Paul looks at the "Priceless value of knowing Christ". It is found in Philippians 3:1-11.

Paul starts by saying, "Whatever happens, my dear brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord. I never get tired of telling you these things, and I do it to safeguard your faith".

In this passage he starts with two ideas – rejoice in The Lord and the freedom faith in Him gives us and watch out for people who will shipwreck your faith.

In verses 2-4 Paul then talks about people wanting to get them to live under the old ways. Things like circumcision and following the Law in their own strength to make them right with God.

Paul knew this way of living. He lists his long list of achievements as a Jew and a Pharisee. He says he lived out the Law without fault, he persecuted the early church and was a member of the tribe of Benjamin.

If anyone had the right to be proud of his efforts it would be Paul. But as we see in verses 7-8 he had a change of heart and life...

"I once thought these things were valuable, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done. Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ".

Paul realised that knowing Christ and being known by Christ was all that was needed to find salvation. As he says in verse 9, "I become righteous through faith in Christ. For God's way of making us right with himself depends on faith".

So today let us hold firmly to Christ and put all our faith and hope in Him. He alone makes us righteous and right with the Father. Christ is all we need.

God Bless,
Dave

Day 10—Pressing towards the goal

Today's devotion comes from Philippians 3:12-21. It is titled, "Pressing toward the goal".

In verses 12-14 Paul says, "I don't mean to say that I have already achieved these things or that I have already reached perfection. But I press on to possess that perfection for which Christ Jesus first possessed me. No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us".

As I was reflecting on this I read the notes in the Life Application Study Bible for verses 12-14. It is interesting and explains this section well...

"3:12-14 Paul said that his goal was to know Christ, to be like Christ, and to be all Christ had in mind for him. This goal took all of Paul's energies. This is a helpful example for us. We should not let anything take our eyes off our goal—knowing Christ. With the single-mindedness of an athlete in training, we must lay aside everything harmful and forsake anything that may distract us from being effective Christians. What is holding you back?"

I think the first line says it all – to know Christ, to be like Christ, and to be all Christ had in mind for him".

This idea is much deeper than coming to Christ for our salvation and knowing we will go to heaven when we die.

It is all about knowing Christ, growing to be like Christ and being disciplined like an athlete to be all you can be for Christ.

Today I am asking myself the question – what is holding me back? Is there anything holding me back from being all I can be for Christ?

God Bless,
Dave

Day 11—Words of encouragement

Today's reading and devotion is from Philippians 4:2-9. It is titled, "Words of encouragement". In this passage three things spoke to me.

1. Get on well with each other

In verse 2 Paul appeals to Euodia and Syntyche. "Please, because you belong to the Lord, settle your disagreement".

It is so important that we get on well because the world is watching and Jesus said people will know we are His disciples because our love for one another.

2. Don't worry, pray

Verse 6 says, "Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done".

Sometimes I think worry is the default setting for us who live in this world. This is why prayer is so important. We connect with God and exchange our needs and concerns for His peace (v7).

3. Focus on what is good

In verse 8 Paul says, "Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise".

Finally Paul encourages us to focus on what is good. He says to "fix our thoughts" on these things. We need to keep a Kingdom focus.

So today let us get on well with each other, don't worry and keep praying, and focus on what is good. If we do these things, then "the God of peace will be with us" (v9).

God Bless,
Dave

Day 12—Paul thanks them for the gift

In today's reading Paul thanks the Philippians for the financial gifts and support. It is found in Philippians 4:10-20.

As I read this passage two main ideas jumped out at me...

1. The importance of supporting church planters

Verse 10 starts with, "How I praise the Lord that you are concerned about me again. I know you have always been concerned for me, but you didn't have the chance to help me".

Paul thanked them for their support in the past and said they were the only ones who supported him on his work through Macedonia. In verse 18 he says their gifts were a sweet smelling offering to The Lord.

This reminds me of the importance of supporting people who travel and plant churches. As history tells us, church planting is the best way to reach people for Christ and make disciples.

2. Paul knew what it is to be content

Philippians 4:13 says, "For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength".

This is a verse we often quote when we are nervous or trying someone new. Paul used it in the context of trials, suffering, and hunger. He knew what it was to be content in the good times or the bad.

Paul said in verse 11, "Not that I was ever in need, for I have learned how to be content with whatever I have". Paul knew Christ was enough. If he had lots, it was enough. If he had nothing, that was enough too.

As I am coming to an end of my devotions in Philippians these two thoughts will stay with me. It is important to support those who reach others for Christ and that if we have lots or nothing, if we have Christ we have all we need.

God Bless,
Dave

Day 13—Reminders from Philippians

Today for my devotions I looked back over the things I had been reminded about from Philippians. There was a few things that were quickened to me again.

1. Paul wanted the Philippians to grow in Christ – In verse 1:9 Paul says, “I pray that your love will overflow more and more, and that you will keep on growing in knowledge and understanding”.
2. Paul’s life was all about Christ – In 1:21 explains Paul’s heart. “For to me, living means living for Christ, and dying is even better”.
3. We need to live as citizens of heaven – 1:27 says, “Above all, you must live as citizens of heaven, conducting yourselves in a manner worthy of the Good News about Christ.
4. We need to have the humble attitude of Christ – 2:7 says, “Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being”.
5. Knowing Christ is everything – 3:8 says “Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ”.
6. We need to press on in Christ and His will – In verses 3:12 Paul says, “I don’t mean to say that I have already achieved these things or that I have already reached perfection. But I press on to possess that perfection for which Christ Jesus first possessed me.
7. We need to focus on what is good – In 4:8 it says, “Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honourable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise”

These are seven reminders I got from this reading and reflection of Philippians. There is a lot more than this in the Book, but these are the ones that spoke to me this time around.

God Bless,
Dave