

Be  
Free



DAILY DEVOTIONS

PART : 2



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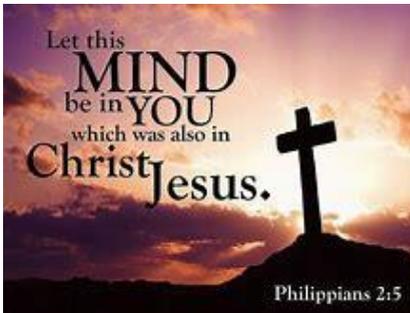
Week 4

# Philippians 2:5-11

**MONDAY** – Christ's mindset – our mindset



**Philippians 2: 5-6** <sup>5</sup> *In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:* <sup>6</sup> *Who, being in very nature[a] God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;*



- How has lockdown affected your relationships?
- Has it been – A time of quiet reflection? A time of strengthened bonds? A confining experience?
- A lack of privacy and personal space?
- Do you feel closer as a family or can you not wait to get out and away from it all?
- How do we manage in times like this? Are you frustrated, fearful, fed-up? Or quietly simmering?

This week we are going to focus on how this time of isolation has affected our relationship with one another and how Jesus modelled life for us. Today, write a letter to God. A lament! Pour out your heart – He understands the loneliness, the isolation, your cramped circumstance. Tell Him just how you feel today, God is big enough to take it! (Read a couple of Psalms: 3, 44 and 80 and see how the Psalmist expresses his grief and frustration to God). Then give Him your letter and allow Him to soothe and calm you.

**Listen and watch Lament 77 by Fellowship worship on YouTube.**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yw9Fp6XWq7w>

Some words of wisdom as we journey through this time: *In coming days, you and your loved ones may struggle with fear and anxiety and worry. You may also find yourselves with more time on your*

*hands than you know what to do with. Make the most of the opportunity. Learn a new skill. Read good books. Watch inspiring films. Reconnect with your family by having discussions about things that matter. Above all, remember*

*this wise admonition of C.S. Lewis: "If men had postponed the search for knowledge and beauty until they were secure, the search would never have begun."*

Living Amid a Pandemic: Wisdom from C.S. Lewis



**Prayer:** Dear God, I bring all my cares and fears to you.  
Soothe my restless, anxious spirit and fill me with your peace.  
AMEN.

## TUESDAY – Christ’s attitude – our attitude



**Philippians 2: 7** *Rather, He made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.*



Paul, in prison, no comforts, no amenities, in chains. Locked up. Locked in. LOCKDOWN.

Paul, in prison, uncomplaining, thinking of other Christians. Writing letters.

Speaking to his guards. Witnessing to Christ’s redeeming love. Here we are – locked in, still living in comfortable homes, still able to communicate, still managing to put food on our tables.

How do you cope when you arrive at the local supermarket, faced with sanitising your hands, finding that your favourite brand is not on the shelf? Queuing outside the pharmacy? Patience? Is this so hard? A friendly smile and word of greeting to someone who is putting themselves at risk to serve can make a difference.

What about the people who clear our refuse away each week? Pray for their safety and health. People who have to live in close proximity to one another. How would Jesus respond to their plight?

***You may want to pray this prayer adapted from Father Richard Rohr:***

*O Creator God, Our world is large, and yet the global community is so*

*fragile. We glimpse the needs of our sisters and brothers, and those needs are great. We want to turn away, but You call us back. We want simple solutions, but You want us to help solve the complex problems. Through Your Church, You call us to listen, to learn, to reflect and to act. Give us a deep sense of our place in this web of Creation. Give us the wisdom of mind and generosity of heart to seek your will in the world today. Inspire us to respond to the call to live in solidarity with the impoverished, so that all children of God might live in dignity and peace. Amen.*



Today, be imitators of Christ’s life. Look to Jesus, *who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to His own advantage. Rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness* (Phil 2: 6 & 7)

## WEDNESDAY – Communication



**Philippians 2: 3,4** *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.*



Paul, in prison, no comforts, no amenities, in chains. Locked up. Locked in.

### LOCKDOWN.

Communicating. Encouraging, Keeping in touch with the churches. Writing letters, sending words of hope. Praying for those he could not visit.

Who is our neighbour? Jesus gives us the answer in the parable of the Good Samaritan Luke 10 and ends with these words <sup>36</sup> *“Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbour to the man who fell among the robbers?”* <sup>37</sup> *He said, “The one who showed him mercy.” And Jesus said to him, “You go, and do likewise.”*

So, how do we respond to those who live alone, those who live with others yet feel the loneliness of separation? Those who are elderly and depend on the company of visitors who no longer arrive?



Paul shows us the way, even in those days when technology was unthought of. How much easier it is for us to be in touch with one another. An email, WhatsApp or Message is easy to do, but the sound of another's voice is so much more encouraging.

Some of you may understand and be feeling like this “Loneliness” by Annie Lennox.

### *Loneliness...*

*Is a place that I know well  
It's the distance between us  
And the space inside ourselves  
And emptiness....*

*Is the chattering in your head  
It's the call of the living  
And the race from life to death*

Today, the challenge is to be in touch with someone who needs encouragement. Pick up the phone, share encouragement.

**Listen. Listen. Listen.**



**Prayer:** Bind us together, Lord, Bind us together, With cords that cannot be broken. Bind us together, Lord, Bind us together Lord. Bind us together in Love. AMEN.

## THURSDAY – A time to heal



**2 Corinthians 5: 18-21** *All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to Himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making His appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake He made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.*

**Coronavirus.** This strikes fear into many a heart and we have been called to prayer for the healing of our nations. We pray for God's healing touch in our world, but what about the relationships in our lives that need healing?



The following quote by Philip Yancy is an encouragement and a challenge to us to use this time wisely:

*The people of God are not merely to mark time, waiting for God to step in and set right all that is wrong. Rather, they are to model the new heaven and new earth, and by so doing awaken longings for what God will someday bring to pass.*

Imagine how would it be to emerge from this time of lockdown to a world reconciled? Reconciled to

your family. Reconciled to colleagues. Reconciled to neighbours. Reconciled to God.

The time is now. The time is available. We are without excuse. We need to be ready, when we join with others again to be able to celebrate God's love and grace.

This will call for humility, read Philippians 2: 3 *“Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.”*



On the mount of crucifixion,  
Fountains opened deep and wide;  
Through the floodgates of God's mercy  
Flowed a vast and gracious tide.  
Grace and love, like mighty rivers,  
Poured incessant from above,  
And heav'n's peace and perfect justice  
Kissed a guilty world in love.



**Prayer:** God, such a great love! Help me to extend this to others.  
AMEN

## FRIDAY – Choose Joy



**Philippians 2: 5-11 The Messiah Poem** *In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to His own advantage; rather, He made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

GOOD NEWS! Is this not what we are all longing for? When I was growing up, my father always told us “You will be as happy as you choose to be!” Hard words to understand as a teenager. Hard advice to follow. Life is not fair. Life is difficult. Life brings challenges. It brings sadness, change, stressful situations. How do I choose joy?

And yet – Jesus brings us the good news.

Our sins are forgiven. Our longings are understood. Our fears are soothed. Our hearts are gladdened. We look to Jesus. We see the hardships He endured. For our sake. Gladly. Unceasingly. Unselfishly. Lovingly.

And we are thankful. We are thankful that even in times when we are unable to meet physically, we can communicate, we can see friends and family if we have technology. We

have God’s word to read. In our country we have freedom to worship, freedom to pray. Freedom to express our love for God.

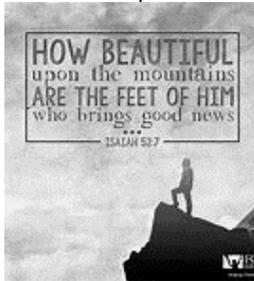
We may possibly still be confined to our homes when you read this, but we are a free people because of God’s amazing grace.

Today, the challenge is to be a bringer of good news

to someone else.

How can you do this? A phone call? A small gift of baking left at a neighbour’s gate? Just remember to WhatsApp them to look outside!

Be creative, bless someone else just because you can.



*How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, "Your God reigns!" Isaiah 52: 7*



**Prayer:** Jesus, today I choose Your joy, not as the world knows joy, but the joy of knowing that my life is hid in Yours. Make me a bringer of joy today. AMEN

Week 5

## Philippians 2: 19-39

*I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you. I have no one else like him, who will show genuine concern for your welfare. For everyone looks out for their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel. I hope, therefore, to send him as soon as I see how things go with me. And I am confident in the Lord that I myself will come soon. But I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus, my brother, co-worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger, whom you sent to take care of my needs. For he longs for all of you and is distressed because you heard he was ill. Indeed he was ill, and almost died. But God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, to spare me sorrow upon sorrow. Therefore I am all the more eager to send him, so that when you see him again you may be glad and I may have less anxiety. So then, welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honor people like him, because he almost died for the work of Christ. He risked his life to make up for the help you yourselves could not give me.*

Do not grieve, for the joy of the  
Lord is your strength.  
Nehemiah 8: 10

## MONDAY – Joy



**Philippians 2: 29** *So then, welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honour people like him.*

Philippians is known for its themes of **JOY**. Paul in his darkest hour, had joy. It just doesn't make sense. Is joy possible in these times?

Lockdown has forced us to face a new reality. How can we have joy!

*Biblical joy is choosing to respond to external circumstances with inner contentment and satisfaction, **because we know** that God will use these experiences to accomplish His work in and through our lives.* (Mel Walker). This joy does not mean an end to suffering, but a way through it.

Desmond Tutu and Dalai Lama in The Book of Joy can help us achieve the joy Paul experienced. They identified 8 Pillars of Joy:

**PERSPECTIVE** – our minds create our world. The wider our perspective, the bigger the picture, the smaller our self-interest.

**HUMILITY** – with perspective we understand that we cannot control all aspects of life. We need others.

**HUMOUR** – laughter and smiling connects people and eases tensions, despite circumstances.

**ACCEPTANCE** – the acceptance of reality is where change begins. Acceptance of the inevitable hardships of life.

**FORGIVENESS** – don't play the blame game. Unforgiveness leads to bitterness and the destroying of our souls.

**GRATITUDE** – we all have something to be grateful for.

**COMPASSION** – joy is found in developing concern for others.

**GENEROSITY** – it is in giving that we receive.

If we embrace these eight characteristics, (say them daily this week)

**Yes:**

joy in these times is possible. Hear Paul again:

*"Always be full of joy in the Lord!" (Phil 4: 4)*



**Prayer:** Lord, in the frustration, despondency and fear, may I concentrate on cultivating joy. Give me the perspective to look beyond my own borders to find the contentment and satisfaction that You bring. AMEN

## TUESDAY – Men worthy of imitation



**Philippians 2: 20; 25** <sup>20</sup>*I have no one else like him [Timothy], who will show genuine concern for your welfare.* <sup>25</sup>*.....Epaphroditus, my brother, co-worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger, whom you sent to take care of my needs.*

Hardship and suffering are much easier to endure when shared with real caring and joy. Paul chose these two men. Timothy was constantly concerned for the well-being of others above himself. Epaphroditus had the courage to serve others at great cost to himself. They were living, breathing examples of Jesus. These men did not hesitate. They did not have to think about their personal cost. Epaphroditus pushed himself almost to the point of death to bring a gift to Paul.

They are the role models that we need today.

What we see coming out of Paul's writings is that in times of hardship the way out, **despite** the fear, anger or despondency, is:

- To think beyond ourselves.
- Help unconditionally.
- Risk.
- Stand together.
- Seek God daily.

Let these principles soak into your thoughts.

I recently read of an ER nursing sister who at seven months pregnant was still working on the Covid-19 wards. She received much criticism for putting her unborn child at risk. Her response was "I am needed and I need to do what is right. I trust God with the life of my child."

Find someone to imitate who will make you a better person.

Life is like a piano, what you get out of it, depends on how you play it.  
Albert Einstein



.... And we  
All win



**Prayer:** Lord, you have given us so many role models to follow. Your faithful servants throughout all history. Help me to examine my life in the light of theirs and to seek to walk in their shoes. May I strive to be such a role model to others. AMEN

## WEDNESDAY – Follow this journey



**Philippians 2: 23** *I hope, therefore, to send him as soon as I see how things go with me.*

**Judges 18: 6** *“Go in peace,” the priest replied. “For the Lord is watching over your journey.”*

The nature of journeys is varied: expectations, hope, unknown pleasures and delights, hardships, unexpected challenges and broader horizons. The apostle Paul undertook countless journeys to spread the Gospel.

We are all on a journey right now – we do not have a choice about this pandemic. We have to continue, even if it is in trepidation. How we walk the road will determine what we each take out of it. Our freedom has been taken away, our choices are limited and we are dictated to on many fronts. Our emotions and reactions may vary from day to day. **But** we can determine how willingly we proceed and the decisions we make. It is about learning to control what we can, letting go of what we cannot, and choosing what our attitude will be. To stand up for the truth and do what Christ would see as right.

If our hope about this journey is intertwined with doubt, fear and anxiety, we can choose to stop and look to Jesus.

Just sit in stillness and let your mind focus on Him. And for a few moments let go – just hold Jesus in mind. It is an action, not a feeling. And then, one day at a time, find unshakable peace and joy.

Look for moments that will enrich your journey.

I cannot change the direction of the wind, but I **can** set my sails to always reach my destination.

Jimmy Dean

• Whatever is going to be the nature of your journey, take the hand of Your Lord, and go the distance!



**Prayer:** O Lord, Your glory fills the whole creation, and we find Your presence wherever we go. Quieten my mind. Guard us as we travel this road; surround us with Your loving care; protect us from every danger; and bring us in safely through this journey. AMEN

## THURSDAY – Messengers



**Philippians 2: 19 & 20** *I hope to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you. I have no one else like him, who will show genuine concern for your welfare.*

Paul sent Timothy to the Philippians, the Philippians sent Epaphroditus to Paul, and Paul sent him back. Messengers – the bearers of news. Each eagerly awaited news of the other. They carried messages of encouragement, gospel teachings, wisdom – and often with great risk to themselves. These were ordinary men making a difference in uncertain times.

We have all waited for news. Some of us will remember waiting for ‘snail-mail’ letters and checking the post box; or a telegram being delivered to our door. Today we check our messages, WhatsApp and FaceBook, Instagram, SnapChat. News and messages are important to us. We have a need to stay connected.

In these uncertain times, in order to be Christ’s messengers, we need to reach beyond those who are in lockdown with us, to bring greetings and messages to our wider community. Just to say “Hi. I haven’t been able to chat to you at church,

but how are you doing?” When we cannot meet together, we need to find ways of **staying** together. There is a shared joy when we reach out to each other.

As followers of the Gospel, we are called to send messages of hope and love, encouragement and strength. Paul, Timothy and Epaphroditus had to WALK to deliver their message! We have instant communication!

- Who is that person that pops into your head?

Send a message!



If we could be a community of messengers, imagine the ripples that would flow across this city! We are ordinary people in extraordinary times who **can** make a difference.

When we come out of this, what impact will our actions have had?



**Prayer:** Lord help me to be a messenger for You. Not just to my family and close friends, but to others in my circle. Help me to reach across the lockdown to someone who might just need a word of cheer. AMEN

## FRIDAY – Thanks for the heroes and little pleasures



**Philippians 2: 29 & 30** *So then, welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honour people like him, because he almost died for the work of Christ. He risked his life to make up for the help you yourselves could not give me.*

Today let us give thanks!

The community at Philippi welcomed Epaphroditus back. A hero that had risked his life to be a messenger for Christ. Can you imagine the joy when he returned!

Give thanks now? Find joy? – for the virus, or losing income, or being separated from others? How? But it is not about *feeling* grateful. There is a distinction about *feeling* grateful and *being* grateful. Gratitude is not necessarily a feeling. It is a conscious decision. Let us *think* and then *give thanks* for those things that are still ours.

Let us start by giving thanks for the heroes: the medical staff on the Covid-19 wards; the scientists working around the clock in research labs; the refuse people disposing of dangerous medical waste – ALL FOR OUR BENEFIT.



### Meditation:

I encourage you to take the time to meditate on the clip below – **Praise Song for the Pandemic**, and I invite you to use it as your prayer to end the week.

I am grateful for the three hours we are now allowed to exercise. On my early morning walk I experienced the freshness of the dew, the early rays of sunshine, the crispness in the air and the birds singing and flitting about. And I realised these beautiful pleasures are still here and will not change. And I am grateful for that!

- What are you grateful for?

This pandemic will pass and there may be great costs – but God sends little signs to say “I am still here!” Let us just say “Thank you.”

When demoralised gratitude can energise; when broken gratitude can heal; when in despair gratitude and bring hope. (Robert Emmons).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zCYoikGal6U>

**Go in peace. AMEN**

Week 6

# Philippians 3:1-14

## CONFIDENCE IN JESUS AND NOT OURSELVES:

Further, my brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you. Watch out for those dogs, those evildoers, those mutilators of the flesh. For it is we who are the circumcision, we who serve God by his Spirit, who boast in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh — though I myself have reasons for such confidence. If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless. But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

## MONDAY – Be confident in God



**Philippians 3: 4 & 7** *4 though I myself have reasons for such confidence. If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: 7But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.*

Being confident is the belief an outcome will be favourable. Be confident in God.

If you have confidence in yourself rather than Jesus this is probably because of what the world has taught. We expect a favourable outcome because we look at how successful people portray themselves. The good people, have a good background, work hard, have a nice job, a great CV, education at the best institutions been to Sunday School. And they have an amazing conversion story that places them in the top tier.

Paul had all these “qualifications”. He would have been confident in his own abilities but in Philippians he warns us that this is all nothing.

He considers this all to be garbage! Rubbish to be thrown out, not worth keeping. Why? It is because he values “knowing Christ Jesus my

Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things”

He has through experience known that all his qualifications meant nothing in the work of God. Remember he was in prison you don't have much there! He knew that righteousness comes from **faith** in God.

Righteousness is a right **relationship** with God. Not because of what you have done.

God wants your confidence in Him. He has done everything that is needed for the righteousness – all you need is FAITH.

Go and be God's hands in this pandemic. He will guide you. Don't look to your abilities, look for God's opportunities. Be confident in God!



**Prayer:** At this time Lord, I want to be acceptable to You. Help me put aside my fears and trust in Your providence and faithfulness.  
AMEN

## TUESDAY – Be valuable



**Philippians 3: 13 & 14** *Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.*

Value is the desirability of a thing in respect to its usefulness, exchangeability, merit or importance.

During this lockdown I have asked myself what do I value in life? And how has the lockdown changed my outlook? Is my value system that of the world?

More so than ever, in the age of lockdown, we are being forced to value what we have and what is important?

Paul looked at his circumstances and instead of becoming irritable about his imprisonment, rejoiced because the Gospel of Jesus was being enhanced. (Ephesians 2). He also valued the prize – knowing the power of the resurrection. He forgot what was behind he strove to win the prize!

If you have ever been in a foot race of any sort you would know that

strain of wanting to give up but giving your all because someone else might pip you at the post. It takes commitment and training to be able to do that!

Have you been ready to give up your faith this lockdown? I have had to challenge my thinking around God's role in? Is it part of His will?

Paul calls us to pause and value not ourselves, but the prize! He, in trying circumstances, was not in a heap but forgot what was behind and pressed on!

- What do you need to forget about in the past so that you might press on to win the prize?



**Prayer:** Strengthen my faith O Lord that I may focus on You, value You more than I have in the past. Forgive my sin of valuing things that allow me to take my eyes off the prize. AMEN

## WEDNESDAY – Be out of control



**Philippians 3: 6 & 7** If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: ....as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless. But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.

Control is the ability to manage or direct or perhaps check, limit, curb regulate or restrain.

There have been many occasions where I have felt out of control during lockdown. Simple administrative things that would normally be done just couldn't be done. Trying to find a time to talk to colleagues via Zoom is a problem. Popping out to get ...

What I have learned is simple: my plans don't work because of what is happening around me. I could continue to try but the result would be the same. The other option is change your plans. Throw out your plan and seek God's plan.

We can never experience a place or circumstance where God's presence has not gone before us. In Jesus we can have comfort that our plans don't always work out like we had thought. But He is there with us.

Paul was writing to the Philippians and recalling his plans as a young man, based on his heritage and pedigree – Jesus turned these upside down.

Paul, in jail, embraced the new way and with that embraced the fact that God was in control. No matter what, Paul knew **that** to be true. He did not say "God showed me a new plan which I now control" – he surrendered to God and believed that he would always be guided and protected.

Thought provoker:

If we say we are trusting in Christ, **plus** our own good works, are we really trusting in Christ at all?

- Be out of control so that God can be in control. I can't. God can! I think I'll let Him!



**Prayer:** Lord, I surrender my life to You today. Forgive me for wanting to take over when I don't like what is happening. AMEN

## THURSDAY – Be a winner



**Philippians 3: 13b & 14** *But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, 14: I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.*

Running a race is hard – the winner is the one who crosses the line first. In our journey being a winner in Christ is not about having crossed first but the way we have run the race and the attitude we have.

Isn't it great to be a winner at your workplace? The acknowledgement is ongoing. But if you are a winner in Christ, some of the choices you make will label you a loser in the workplace.

Paul does not say in this passage that he is winning. In fact, he reiterates *“Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal”* He continues to press on.

If you have ever walked in the mountains you will know that as you set out the top of the peak is enticing, a goal to look forward to. The view will be stunning! Along the

way of course, there are many uphill with false ridges and the disappointment of thinking it's just over there. You must press on!

Learning to forget what is behind and straining ahead takes an active decision. Taking that decision makes you a winner!

Life's journey with Christ is sometimes hard. Covid-19 has made our lives different. For some significantly harder than it was before the pandemic. We know that God is in control. Not that He has created this for us, but we will be stronger in our faith if we look to Him for a way to respond.

Responding might be different for each of us. The response can be material support or perhaps just a “how are you doing but respond we must.



**Prayer:** Thank you Lord that I can fix my eyes on You through all my circumstances and I pray today that I may do something for those who are also struggling at this time. AMEN

## FRIDAY – Be a team player



Philippians 3: 1 & 2 *Further, my brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you. Watch out for those dogs, those evildoers, those mutilators of the flesh*

Christian life is filled with challenges in today's world. And has been so for a while – it is not a new thing since Covid-19. Standing together in Christ is something that is critical.

I have wondered over the past few weeks if I have been standing together with our community or if I have just relied on someone else to pack the food parcels or waited for someone else to send a WhatsApp to find out how I am? Have I been so comfortable with myself and my thoughts that I have forgotten to stand together.

Paul writes to the Philippians and almost apologizes for reiterating some of the basics of his teaching. He quite quickly suggests that this is a good thing and a safeguard. Warnings about dogs, evildoers and mutilators of the flesh follow. He recognizes that by standing together as Christ-followers we are better in the faith. In chapter 2: 1 – 4 we are encouraged (v4) to look

after the interests of others rather than our own.

How do we do this when we are so far apart? To go back to yesterday, walking to the top of the mountain to see the view, is always better if you have someone along-side of you. When you feel it's too much, someone who is there to encourage you just to the next bit of welcome shade, will get you there in better shape.

We can only grow if we grow together. A forest tree grows upright because it has the protection from those around it. We grow together as a community because we are together.



**Prayer:** Thank you Lord that we can know you through fellowship with one another. Help me to know how I can be and encouragement and help to those in our community. AMEN

Week 7

# Philippians 4: 2-9

## MONDAY – We are known



**Philippians 4: 2:** *I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. 3: Yes, and I ask you, my true companion (named as Syzygus), help these women since they have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers whose names are in the book of life.*

These two Christian ladies had laboured for Paul. But they were currently at odds with each other. (We are not told what the disputes were about, but they were having negative effects on all!) Paul names them and admonishes them to work together. We can imagine that they would have taken Paul's words seriously as he had noted their names and recalled how they had worked together: quite a challenge!

Today, we need to recall that God knows our names (**Isaiah 43: 1**) and will call us to work together in His Name for the sake of the Gospel. Our daily witness may not seem important to us, but our names are not forgotten.

**Remember:** How we relate to God's word could well have eternal importance to those we know.



**Prayer:** Father God. We acknowledge that You have the perfect plan for our lives. May our daily lives be so influenced by the Holy Spirit that others find themselves called to follow Jesus too. He is The Way, The Truth and the Life. AMEN.

## TUESDAY – Rejoice



**Philippians 4: 4** *Rejoice in the Lord, always. I will say it again: Rejoice!* **5:** *Let your gentleness (translated moderation in KJV) be evident to all. The Lord is near.*

What should we understand when Paul encourages us to 'rejoice in the Lord, always'? Always rejoicing in the Lord involves an awareness and confidence in God's sovereignty and goodness in all the circumstances of our lives as Christians.

Our lives should express our gratitude for our salvation. Our gratitude will have positive effects on how we respond to unexpected

events such as Covid-19. Our bodies respond to our thoughts, good or bad. Recalling the truth that "The Lord is near" will affect our minds and therefore our attitudes.

The word *moderation* has a slightly different meaning to *gentleness* (NIV) and has a different nuance!

Moderation is the state or quality of avoiding extremes.

Let your lives show  
moderation to all



**Prayer:** Lord God. We put our lives and the lives of those we pray for into Your mighty hand. You know our names and You understand that what we read in the newspapers and what we see on TV can disturb us and prevent us from rejoicing in our salvation. Allow us to accept the truth of Your promises; help us to rejoice in the Lord, always. The Lord is near. AMEN

## WEDNESDAY – Don't be anxious



**Philippians 4: 6** *Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and thanksgiving, present your requests God. 7: And the peace of God will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

(These verses are to be used in Thursday's reading as well)

The world seems to have gone crazy. Seemingly unnecessary restrictions have been placed on people worldwide. Every news bulletin is crowded with stories of hopelessness, misery, despair and death. Bad news sells! We do not know whether or not we have reached the 'peak' of infections here, or whether our leaders have been clever enough to slow the spread. Is there more bad news to come? We just don't know. There's plenty to keep us worried.

Paul's letter tells us not to be anxious about **anything!** This advice comes from a man under the sentence of death! Prison or execution. What a choice.

In comparison, our hardships are insignificant. Yes, even for those who do not know where their next meal is coming from! Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones makes some valuable points in his sermon titled "*Keys to overcoming a spirit of fear*" (2Tim 1: 7-12, "I know whom I have believed..."):

- God has given us the power of love and a sound mind, empowering us to no longer fear.
- In a world of endless uncertainty, Jesus is a firm foundation.

It is one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.



**Prayer:** Teach me Lord, to live with prayer as the mainstay to my faith. I need to remember that He is able, to keep that which I've committed unto Him against that day. Everything, every day, in every way. AMEN

## THURSDAY – Peace



**Philippians 4: 6** *Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7: And the peace of God will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

Paul reminds us to pray about everything. We are reminded to bring everything, all our plans and activities to God in prayer. Not merely a 'please help me' prayer, but prayer with thanksgiving. God knows us and knows what we need. We need to acknowledge our needs God. He made us and designed us to live here:

**Psalm 139: 14** *I praise You because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Your works are wonderful, I know that full well.*

**John's gospel, chapter 14** is worth reading again (Jesus talked to His disciples before He was

crucified). In verse 27, Jesus gives a promise of peace. We can live at peace in the midst of a chaotic and cruel world. This is not the kind of empty peace the world offers; this is the true, eternal peace found only in Jesus Christ. It is the peace of God that surpasses all human understanding.

Through Jesus "believers today can live at peace in the midst of a chaotic and cruel world."



**Prayer:** Lord Jesus Christ. You have promised us the gift of peace at this time. Not a gift that comes with T's and C's, but peace in the knowledge that we are here for a purpose. Your purpose! Teach us how to trust You each and every day and put Your promises into practice. In faith we come to You. AMEN

## FRIDAY – Think on these



**Philippians 4: 8** *Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable (if anything is excellent or praiseworthy ) think about such things. 9: Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me, put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.*

This well-known passage of scripture is worth learning and repeating over and over again. If only all leaders could say these things of themselves, the world would be a better place!

It's all about integrity that comes as we grow more and more closely to know God and do his will.

- How well do we shape up to these high standards?

Whatever is true, noble, right, pure, lovely and admirable - think on these.



**Prayer:** Lord God: May your Spirit be allowed full access to our daily lives. May we be filled every day with Your power and clarity of understanding that we need to negotiate our way through each day. This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it! AMEN

Week 8

# Philippians 4: 10 – 20

**MONDAY** – Contentment regardless



**Philippians 4: 10–11** *I rejoiced greatly in the Lord that at last you renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you were concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.*

As I write this we have started level 4 of the Covid-19 lockdown. We know Paul too, was in “lockdown” and like us, his future was uncertain. Many of us may have heavy hearts as we take stock of our life and circumstances. Some are uncertain as to whether they still have a job to go to. How are they going to provide for their families? You may be an employer struggling to keep the doors of your business open and have employees depending on you.

Paul had faced many different trials and circumstances and, despite his current situation, he was overjoyed at hearing from the church in Philippi. His response to their support was filled with joy and thanksgiving and hope. Paul has learnt a valuable lesson - being joyful no matter what his circumstances are. Martin Luther once said “Contentment is a rare bird, but it sings sweetly in the breast”.

The transforming friendship of Jesus Christ was Paul’s real secret to contentment.

**Content makes poor men rich and discontent makes rich men poor.** *Benjamin Franklin*

- Are you content in your circumstances?



**Prayer:** Father God, help me to be like Paul and experience Your transforming love and friendship. AMEN.

## TUESDAY – Daily strength



**Philippians 4: 12–13** *I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength.*

The millionaire John D. Rockefeller, who founded the Standard Oil Company, was once asked 'how much money it takes to make a man happy'. He answered: "Just a bit more than he has". Paul, on the other hand, had learnt to be content in any and every situation. He was not saying that there was anything wrong with having food and possessions - on the contrary. Paul had learnt to not depend on his outer resources, but that his strength came from his inner resources. *'Whatever I have, wherever I am, I can make it through anything in the One who*

*makes me who I am.'* Vs 13 *The Message.*

Paul had been in need and troubles. The Philippians had shared in his troubles and had sent him money on many occasions. The Greek word Koinonia means fellowship, communion or close relationship. The idiom "a trouble shared is a trouble halved" has never been truer than during a crisis such as Covid-19; just a kind word, or a message of encouragement. Paul knew where his strength came from.

- Do you sometimes feel your strength is failing?
- Have you reached out to someone who is really struggling during lockdown?



**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, please help me when I stumble and my strength fails. May I be like Paul and know that I can do all things through You who gives me strength. AMEN

## WEDNESDAY – Giving and receiving



**Philippians 4: 14–16** *Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles. Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only; for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid more than once when I was in need.*

In his letter to the Philippians Paul's gratitude knew no bounds. You get a strong sense of joy and excitement as he writes to the community that had always been there for him.

Acts 20: 35 states that '*It is more blessed to give than to receive*' which teaches us that there is joy in the act of giving when it is done with pure motives. Paul is overjoyed and all he wants for the

Philippians is that they too, may be blessed.

Covid-19 challenges us to be cheerful and joyful givers of our time, our possessions, and our self on the one hand; and on the other hand to accept graciously and with joy and gratitude the help of those who reach out to us in our need so that we too may be blessed. It is after all more blessed to give than to receive.

- Have you reached out to someone in need?
- Sent an encouraging message or contacted someone you know is on their own during lockdown?



**Prayer:** Father God, help me to be a cheerful giver. May I have eyes to see those in need and reach out to them in this time of uncertainty. And may I be a joyful receiver when someone reaches out to me. AMEN

## THURSDAY – Pleasing to God



**Philippians 4: 17–18** *Not that I desire your gifts; what I desire is that more be credited to your account. I have received full payment and have more than enough. I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God.*

As I read Philippians, I have become aware of how Paul learnt to trust God with the small things in life. This helped him cope with the more serious problems that he faced. He turned to God in all things for guidance and wisdom.

- Do you entrust the small things in life to God?

In the situation we in South Africa and the rest of the world find ourselves in, we have had to face not only Covid-19, but the 'spinoffs' that affect our lives on a personal level as a result of the pandemic. This is easier said

than done! There are many decisions that have been taken that do not always sit well with us and we find it hard to accept. We have concern for our families and friends as we see the deteriorating economic situation overwhelming them. Or we may be fearful of some of our loved ones who are vulnerable to contracting the virus. All God desires from us, His children, is that we turn to Him in our time of need. He wants us to come to Him in prayer. He wants us to trust Him with the small things and the big.

Paul did just that and he was rewarded with all that he needed – no more, no less.



**Prayer:** Heavenly Father thank you that you watch over us and provide us with our daily bread. AMEN.

## FRIDAY – Jehovah Jireh



**Philippians 4: 19–20** *And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of His glory in Christ Jesus. To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

Looking back over the past eight weeks of our study of Philippians in this time of lockdown, I have become acutely aware of how dependent we are on God for our salvation. And on one another for encouragement and support.

Paul's greatest desire was to bring hope to the Philippians and to share the joy in Christ that he had. Paul expresses his love for God and his love for others. And he gives God all the glory.

Paul's joy and his faith are infectious. It was a beacon of hope for all who crossed his path.

I close this week's devotions with an excerpt from the song 'Oceans'

by Hillsong United, which has a very special meaning for me. May we too be a beacon of joy and hope.

*"Your grace abounds in deepest waters*

*Your sovereign hand  
Will be my guide  
Where feet may fail and fear  
surrounds me  
You've never failed and You  
won't start now*

*So I will call upon Your name  
And keep my eyes above the  
waves  
When oceans rise, my soul will  
rest in Your embrace  
For I am Yours and You are  
mine"*



**Prayer:** Jehovah Jireh you are my strength and provider. May Your sovereign hand be my strength and guide now and forever more.  
**AMEN**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dy9nwe9\\_xzw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dy9nwe9_xzw)

Hillsong United. Oceans.