

October Teaching Theme: Philippians

讲员 Speaker: Pastor William R Horne/Elder Arthur Yin

题目 Topic: Peace, Perspective, & The Sufficient God

经文 Scripture: Philippians 4

Monthly Theme: This month, we are going through a 4 part series on the letter to the Philippians. The church in Philippi was one of Paul's early Christian communities founded on his second missionary journey around 50 AD, which we read about in Acts 16. Philippi was a Roman colony known for its patriotic nationalism and was strategically populated by Emperor Octavian (Caesar Augustus) with retired military veterans, ensuring the region's allegiance to the Empire. In this context, Paul faced resistance preaching the Gospel - that Jesus is the true King of the whole world, not Caesar. As a result, the Christian community in this region continually faced persecution even after Paul left. Fast-forward 10-12 years, and Paul finds himself under Roman imprisonment for the proclamation of this Gospel. The church in Philippi sent Epaphroditus to help provide and care for Paul, and this letter is what Paul sent back with Epaphroditus to the church community. All of this context is crucial for us to understand the nuances of this letter. Contained within this short letter is a profound posture and mindset for the people of God to follow.

十月 **October:** 新約書信: 腓立比書 **New Testament Epistle: Philippians**

October 3rd - 腓立比書 1 Philippians 1

October 10th - 腓立比書 2 Philippians 2

October 17th - 腓立比書 3 Philippians 3

October 24th - 腓立比書 4 Philippians 4

October 31st – 諸聖節 All Saints Day (雲彩般的見證人 The Cloud of Witnesses – 希伯來書 Hebrews 11-12:3)

Primary Claim: To experience the “Peace of God,” we must gain a new perspective moving from self-sufficiency to Christ-sufficiency. Jesus is enough to sustain us even in our darkest hour.

Resources:

[Sermon Video](#) (English - Pastor Will)

[Sermon Slides](#) (English - Pastor Will)

[Sermon Video](#) (Chinese - Elder Yin)

[Sermon Summary](#) (Chinese - Elder Yin)

[Bible Project: Philippians Overview](#) (English - 9:13)

[Bible Project: Philippians Overview](#) (Chinese - 8:44)

[If you have not yet watched the overview video, it is helpful to get the big picture]

Discussion Questions (Pastor William R. Horne):

- (1) Read Philippians 4 together. What observations do you make, and what stands out to you? How would you summarize the chapter?

- (2) Re-read Philippians 4:4. What does Paul ground his command to “rejoice” in? What do you believe it looks like to “Rejoice in the Lord always”? How can one follow such a command?
- (3) Re-read Philippians 4:5. What does it look like to treat others with “gentleness”? What keeps us from acting in “gentleness” towards others, and what are some practices we can take up this week to “let our gentleness be known to all”?
- (4) Re-read Philippians 4:6-7. How can a life of prayer and thanksgiving help us live a life free of anxiety? What is one practice we can adopt this week to live this way?
- (5) Re-read Philippians 4:8. We could summarize Paul in this verse with “All Truth is God’s Truth.” What does it look like to live a life that views all that is true, beautiful, and just as belonging to God?
- (6) Re-read Philippians 4:10-13. What is Paul’s secret to contentment in all circumstances? What practices can we adopt to tap into that same strength?

Important Notes (Pastor William R. Horne):

Notes on Q2: Paul grounds his command to “Rejoice” in “the Lord.” Paul believes that joy amid suffering is a foundational marker for the follower of Jesus. Joy is not primarily a mood or emotion dependent upon your situation and circumstances, but Christian joy is an abiding and constant orientation of the Christian life flowing out of a relationship with the God of the Universe. Notice here also that “Rejoice” is a command - making it clear Joy in the Lord is not a feeling but a chosen attitude despite your situation. Joy then is both a gift and a practice - not primarily a feeling. It is a muscle we can strengthen with exercise - like self-control and faithfulness. Now, **this is not a dismissal of feelings and emotions, either positive or negative - but a call to put things back in the grand perspective of God’s redemptive work in the world.** Paul tells us in Galatians that Joy is a fruit of the Spirit, not a fruit of the situation. It derives from a life held in proper perspective - gratefulness for how God has worked in the past, eyes open to how God is forming us in the present, and hope in the promise of his coming again to complete what he has started.

Illustration: See walking with the Spirit of God is like trying to catch sleep. You cannot “choose” to fall asleep. The best you can do to try and catch sleep is to put yourself in a posture and rhythm that welcomes sleep. If you want to get good sleep, you need all the correct postures and rhythm in place. No caffeine after 3 pm. Not eating dinner too late. Keeping the same bedtime and wake time throughout the week. Turn off your phone and other screens. The right darkness, the right temperature, the right mindset. When sleep arrives, it is a beautiful gift that you put yourself in the right posture to welcome. This is just like walking with the Spirit and experiencing Joy in the Lord. **We must choose the posture of an attitude of joy, always fighting for the right perspective. This posture welcomes the work of the Spirit to gift us with the fruit of joy, which will give way to the emotion of joy.**

Notes on Q3: The word behind our translation, “gentleness,” is hard to pin down precisely, but it carries the connotation of being generous in treatment towards others, being kind, tolerant, not insisting on one’s own rights over others. Here, Paul’s exhortation is missional - the Philippians, despite their persecution, are to engage their neighbors, those outside the church community,

with patience, mercy, and compassion. This call to exhibit “gentleness” is grounded in the character of King Jesus himself. Paul uses this same word coupled with “meekness” in 2 Corinthians to describe the character of our Lord Jesus. The Early Church Fathers also recognized gentleness has core to the way God works. The unknown author of the early church letter Epistle to Diognetus wrote this, “Christ came to rule not by a reign of terror but in gentleness and meekness ... as one who saves by persuasion, not compulsion [or force], for compulsion is no attribute of God.” Just as God continually exhibits patience, kindness, tolerance, and gentleness towards us, our gentleness should be evident to all people.

Notes on Q4: Paul tells us that the remedy for much of our anxiety is found in the new perspective gained from prayer in every situation and thanksgiving. Prayer is not primarily about making our needs known to God, but about God, in His grace, changing us - our perspectives, attitudes, understandings, and ultimately our character displayed in our actions towards others. And when we gain that “God perspective,” putting things back in the big picture - our problems become smaller, and the things we fight over we realize are pretty unimportant. Core to the perspective change God graciously gives us in prayer is thanksgiving. As Paul has displayed, our capacity for gratitude should not be connected to the abundance of our resources but the ability to notice what we have. The ability to see things in light of God’s grand story. This idea is expressed well in the classic African-American prayer of thanksgiving - “The Lord woke me up this morning clothed, and in my right mind, he didn’t have to do it, but he did.”

Please note - this is not a dismissal of the complexity of anxiety and the need for healthy mental health practices. Instead, Paul is arguing that one essential mental health practice is a life of prayer and thanksgiving. Anxiety and worry plague many of us in our modern context; thus, we should acknowledge this is not an easy battle. Nevertheless, prayer and thanksgiving are foundational, and good mental health counseling and even medication in certain circumstances are not antithetical to this Christian foundation.

Notes on Q5: In other words, Paul is saying, “All Truth is God’s Truth,” calling us to the practice of Christian critical thinking - that we would take the best of our cultures and heritage as long as it is morally excellent, praiseworthy, conforming to the way of King Jesus. If we were tempted to apply Paul’s “Kingdom Citizen” framework in an escapist way, wanting to run away from the world - he does not allow us to do so here. Instead, Christians should affirm and embrace whatever is true and honorable wherever they find it. We are to engage the world and our cultures from a Kingdom perspective where all truth and beauty belong to God. Paul gives us a better way to engage the world around us - calling us to approach the marketplace, the arts, media, the academy, our cultural heritage, and traditions - looking for what is “true,” “beautiful,” and “just”; but doing so with a discerning eye looking through the lens of the Crucified King Jesus. In this sense, the Christian life is a pursuit of excellence - a call to culture-making. We

must change our perspective of the world around us and how we partake in it. And this opens us up for all sorts of new possibilities and partnerships in our communities as we seek our cities’ welfare from the posture of “exiled” Kingdom citizens. The Christian is called to do the hard work

of discernment - rejecting anti-Kingdom values, practicing wisdom in the grey and nuanced, and embracing the good, beautiful, and just in the world.

Notes on Q6: Paul's secret to contentment is found in verse 13, "I can do all this through him who gives me strength." "All things" in this well-known verse is references Paul's experience of need and his experience of prosperity. The Christian does not lean into network sufficiency or self-sufficiency but Christ sufficiency. This is a mindset that takes time and attention to our spiritual formation to form. Adopting the four previous practices Paul has mentioned (joy in the Lord, gentleness towards all, prayer & thanksgiving, and health cultural engagement) is an excellent place to develop the ability to be content in all circumstances.