

# 40 DAYS IN PHILIPPIANS

A 40-day devotional through the letter of Philippians





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

Paul's letter to the Philippian church is first and foremost a thank you letter. They had sent one of their own members, Epaphroditus, to encourage him and to bring him gifts and provisions. From the beginning the Philippian believers were very generous and supportive of Paul. Even when he had barely left Philippi and had arrived for his brief stay in Thessalonica, they sent him aid "again and again" (see Phil. 4:14-16). Apparently, this was not the practice of many of the churches. It certainly endeared Paul to them in a special way, as is reflected throughout his letter to them.

As an apostle, Paul's calling was to take the gospel to new places and establish churches. It was his practice to follow up his efforts with subsequent visits and/or letters to these churches. His heart was to encourage and strengthen them so that they would stand firm in their faith. With that in mind, it is no surprise this letter contains both words of encouragement and correction.

It is clear that Paul wrote his letter to the Philippian church while he was in prison. He refers to this in Philippians 1:12-14. Where he was being held is not certain. He did not specify in his letter where he was. That would not have been necessary. Clearly the Philippians already knew where he was, since they had sent Epaphroditus to encourage him. Moreover, Epaphroditus was probably the one who carried the letter from Paul to the Philippians. Most scholars believe the letter was written when Paul was in prison at Rome (Acts 28:11-31). However, some wonder if it was during his imprisonment in Caesarea just prior to being sent to Rome to stand trial (Acts 23:23-26:32). We have no way of knowing for sure and knowing would not change our understanding of this letter.

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## DAY 1

### SCRIPTURE

This letter is from Paul and Timothy, slaves of Christ Jesus. I am writing to all of God's holy people in Philippi who belong to Christ Jesus, including the church leaders and deacons. May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace.

Philippians 1:1-2

### OBSERVATION

Paul's greeting of "grace and peace" is meant to be a blessing that he pronounces on the Philippians. "Grace" not only summarizes the saving work of God through Jesus Christ, but it also means the ongoing strength that enables God's people to do his work. The word Paul uses for "Peace" here does not mean the absence of struggle. Paul understood struggle. He was in the middle of it! Also, Paul, who was Jewish, borrowed from the common Jewish salutation of "Shalom", which means, "mercy and peace." "Shalom" encompasses the idea of wholeness.

### APPLICATION

Who in your life needs your blessing of grace and peace? In what ways could God use you to extend grace and peace through your words and actions?

(My personal application)

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### PRAYER

Pray for God's grace and peace to be upon someone's life today.

(My personal prayer)

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## DAY 2

### SCRIPTURE

Every time I think of you, I give thanks to my God. Whenever I pray, I make my requests for all of you with joy, for you have been my partners in spreading the Good News about Christ from the time you first heard it until now. And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns.

Philippians 1:3-6

### OBSERVATION

In one sense Paul's letter to the Philippian church is a thank you letter for their support of his ministry. They had provided finances and supplies. Additionally, they had sent one of their own, Epaphroditus, to help him. So Paul began his letter by telling them how much he thanked God for them. Thinking about them in his prayers brought him much joy. Paul recognized that it was God who caused them to be so generous. He was confident that the Lord would continue to motivate them to do good things. Paul seemed to be saying that if the Philippians continued to be led by God to be generous, then the Lord would continue to do good things through them.

### APPLICATION

When God leads our lives we will be generous and our generosity will overflow in ways that will advance the message of Jesus. Who are you currently partnering with that shares the gospel? Is there a ministry with which God would have you begin to partner?

(My personal application)

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### PRAYER

Thank God for allowing you to be a partner in spreading the gospel. Pray for those you currently partner with. Ask Him to show you how He wants to continue doing a good work through you.

(My personal prayer)

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### DAY 3

#### SCRIPTURE

So it is right that I should feel as I do about all of you, for you have a special place in my heart. You share with me the special favor of God, both in my imprisonment and in defending and confirming the truth of the Good News. 8 God knows how much I love you and long for you with the tender compassion of Christ Jesus.

Philippians 1:7-8

#### OBSERVATION

Paul was in prison for his witness for Christ. Nevertheless, the Philippians continued to support him. They had not abandoned him or their faith, even though things were tough. They continued to live in grace and through faith. This was a great comfort to Paul! Knowing that they were standing firm in their faith and in their support of him was very encouraging. As a result, his affection for them grew even stronger.

#### APPLICATION

When we stand by people who are in the trenches doing God's work, we bring them great encouragement. Who needs to know you believed in them and you are there for them as they share Christ in hard places? What is God asking you to do on their behalf?

(My personal application)

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#### PRAYER

Ask God to show you how you could encourage someone who is giving their lives for the sake of the gospel. Take some time to thank God for that person.

(My personal prayer)

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## DAY 4

### SCRIPTURE

I pray that your love will overflow more and more, and that you will keep on growing in knowledge and understanding. For I want you to understand what really matters, so that you may live pure and blameless lives until the day of Christ's return. May you always be filled with the fruit of your salvation—the righteous character produced in your life by Jesus Christ—for this will bring much glory and praise to God.

Philippians 1:9-11

### OBSERVATION

This was Paul's specific prayer for the Philippians: That their love would literally "overflow more and more." Paul is praying this for the Philippian church, and in another sense, for us as individuals. He wants our love for each other and for God to overflow. This kind of love would so influence our understanding and insight into life that as a church we would be able to discern what was best. Plus it would help us to act in such a way as to be pure and blameless in God's eyes. Paul's prayer would be that we display the fruit of "right living" and it would bring glory and praise to God.

### APPLICATION

Is your love for God and his people growing? What might be holding you back from having this kind of love?

(My personal application)

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### PRAYER

Pray that your love for God and for the people of your church would grow.

(My personal prayer)

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## DAY 5

### SCRIPTURE

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.

Philippians 1:12-14

### OBSERVATION

Even though Paul was in prison for spreading the gospel of Jesus, he wanted the Philippians to know that his situation wasn't hopeless, nor had it stopped the spread of the gospel. On the contrary, it actually opened up opportunities that may have never existed otherwise. For example, the prison guards were able to hear the good news of Jesus. Additionally, Paul's imprisonment resulted in others being bolder to speak about Christ.

### APPLICATION

Paul's challenges teach us that there is no situation in life that can prevent the gospel from being spread. In fact, the bleaker the situation, the more opportunity there may be for others to learn about Jesus. How could God use your current situations to reveal Jesus to others?

(My personal application)

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### PRAYER

Pray that the Lord would use your current situation to point people to Jesus. Pray for opportunities and boldness to talk to others about Jesus.

(My personal prayer)

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## DAY 6

### SCRIPTURE:

It's true that some are preaching out of jealousy and rivalry. But others preach about Christ with pure motives. They preach because they love me, for they know I have been appointed to defend the Good News. Those others do not have pure motives as they preach about Christ. They preach with selfish ambition, not sincerely, intending to make my chains more painful to me. But that doesn't matter. Whether their motives are false or genuine, the message about Christ is being preached either way, so I rejoice. And I will continue to rejoice.

Philippians 1:15-18

### OBSERVATION

Oddly, some people were motivated by envy and rivalry to preach Christ in the hope that to do so would cause Paul more trouble while he was in prison. In other words, they were less interested in the life-giving message of the gospel than they were with their own selfish ambition to be elevated as more important than Paul. Others, however, were motivated by their love for Paul to preach Christ and carry on his work. But Paul saw beyond motivations to the results. As long as Jesus was being preached, he didn't care who was doing it or why. The important thing was that Christ was being proclaimed and that caused him to rejoice.

### APPLICATION

Where do you see the gospel being proclaimed in your community? Do you rejoice in that, even if you or your church isn't directly involved?

(My personal application)

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### PRAYER

Thank God for all the ways the gospel is proclaimed in your community.

(My personal prayer)

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## DAY 7

### SCRIPTURE

But that doesn't matter. Whether their motives are false or genuine, the message about Christ is being preached either way, so I rejoice. And I will continue to rejoice. For I know that as you pray for me and the Spirit of Jesus Christ helps me, this will lead to my deliverance. For I fully expect and hope that I will never be ashamed, but that I will continue to be bold for Christ, as I have been in the past. And I trust that my life will bring honor to Christ, whether I live or die.

Philippians 1:18-20

### OBSERVATION

Being in prison did not discourage Paul or make him want to give up on life. He could see that his imprisonment was actually resulting in an increase in the spread of the gospel. So he leaned on the prayers of others and his confidence in the work of the Holy Spirit. Paul believed that Christ would be honored no matter what happened to him; whether he lived or died. And for Paul that was victory – it was just as good as being released from prison. There was no shame in being chained up, as long as Christ was proclaimed.

### APPLICATION

Are you discouraged about your situation in life? Who is praying for you and encouraging you to be steadfast in your faith? Who needs your prayerful support and encouragement to stay the course God has for them?

(My personal application)

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### PRAYER

Ask God to help you see your situation from his kingdom perspective.

(My personal prayer)

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**DAY 8**

**SCRIPTURE**

For to me, living means living for Christ, and dying is even better.

Philippians 1:21

**OBSERVATION**

Paul was fully aware that he could die while in prison and that his days could be numbered. He had come face-to-face with his own mortality. In this one verse, he expressed in a short sentence his understanding as to what his life was about. Jesus Christ was Paul's life. He lived for Jesus, period. In fact, Paul considered himself a slave to Jesus. In other words, Paul was not free to serve his own interests but only those of Christ. So, if he were to keep on living that would be a continuation of Jesus living through Paul. Therefore, it would be logical for Paul to say that death would be a gain for him, because it would mean even more of Jesus.

**APPLICATION**

There are countless books, messages, inspirational speakers and more that say we should live our life with the end in mind. That is what Paul did. Since he knew his death would mean more of Jesus, he chose Jesus as his life while alive. How would your life look different if you chose this phrase as your daily guide: "For (your name) to live is Christ, therefore to die is gain"?

(My personal application)

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**PRAYER**

Ask God to begin to reveal to you what the future might look like with Jesus as your primary focus in all of your life.

(My personal prayer)

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**DAY 9**

**SCRIPTURE**

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. Knowing this, I am convinced that I will remain alive so I can continue to help all of you grow and experience the joy of your faith. And when I come to you again, you will have even more reason to take pride in Christ Jesus because of what he is doing through me.

Philippians 1:22-26

**OBSERVATION**

Paul did not believe God would let him live only to be stuck in prison and not effective for Christ. He knew that if his life was spared, it would result in productive ministry. So he admitted that if he could make the choice, he would struggle to choose between life and death. To die would allow him to be with Jesus, but living would allow him to continue to serve the Philippians and hopefully come visit them again. He was convinced that living was the better and necessary option.

**APPLICATION**

For the person who lives their life for Christ, there is no such thing as being stuck in a hopeless situation. Paul looked beyond his own bleak circumstances toward those who could benefit from the ministry Jesus gave him. Who could you strengthen and encourage by using your gifts and ministry God has given you?

(My personal application)

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**PRAYER**

Ask God to begin to open your eyes to see people who need Jesus expressing himself through you.

(My personal prayer)

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## DAY 10

### SCRIPTURE:

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. Don't be intimidated in any way by your enemies. This will be a sign to them that they are going to be destroyed, but that you are going to be saved, even by God himself.

Philippians 1:27-28

### OBSERVATION

Paul's greatest concern for the Philippians was that they would not survive the pressures of the persecution they would face for their faith. He knew that the only way they would stand firm was if they were united and stood together in one spirit and mind. If they came together in unity and purpose, then their corporate faith would be a sign to their critics that it was impossible to defeat the believers and stop their spread of the gospel. And it would also be a sign that the salvation they believed in was real. So he told them to live a life worthy of the gospel; to live as united citizens of the kingdom of God.

### APPLICATION

We need people. Our faith survives and thrives in community. For Christians, the old adage, "United we stand, divided we fall" is accurate. The more we connect with a group of believers and work together as a church, the more impact we make for the gospel and the less chance our faith becomes weak. What role do you play in your church to make this a reality?

(My personal application)

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### PRAYER

Ask God how he would have you involved in your church to support upcoming opportunities or ongoing ministries.

(My personal prayer)

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## DAY 11

### SCRIPTURE

For you have been given not only the privilege of trusting in Christ but also the privilege of suffering for him. We are in this struggle together. You have seen my struggle in the past, and you know that I am still in the midst of it.

Philippians 1:29-30

### OBSERVATION

There really was no doubt in Paul's mind that standing firm in the faith would result in a certain amount of suffering. If the Philippians were to strive together for the gospel, then they would experience hardship. He saw suffering as an unavoidable part of being a follower of Christ. For Paul, such suffering was not a regrettable burden but rather a gift. It was a badge of honor. He was proud that the Philippians were worthy of suffering for Christ.

### APPLICATION

Could our lack of suffering for the sake of Christ be because we are not really united together for the faith? Could it be that the enemy doesn't attack us because he has already defeated us by isolating us from each other? What are your thoughts?

(My personal application)

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### PRAYER

Talk to Jesus about your role in being a part of the community of believers in your church.

(My personal prayer)

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## DAY 12

### SCRIPTURE

Is there any encouragement from belonging to Christ? Any comfort from his love? Any fellowship together in the Spirit? Are your hearts tender and compassionate? Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose.

Philippians 2:1-2

### OBSERVATION

Paul had already written about the joy the Philippians had brought him. Here he asks them to make his joy complete by being united in their thoughts and in how they love each other. He recognized that such unity among believers would only truly come from their relationship with Jesus. He called upon them to draw encouragement and love from the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. In other words, the strength of their unity with each other would be directly proportional to the depth of their relationship with Jesus.

### APPLICATION

Have you ever considered that your church needs you to have a growing, thriving relationship with Jesus? Can you imagine the difference that could be made if everyone was working together in unity as a result of us all growing with Jesus? What steps can you take to draw closer to Jesus?

(My personal application)

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### PRAYER

Ask God to fill you with his encouragement and love, and with the Holy Spirit.

(My personal prayer)

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**DAY 13**

**SCRIPTURE**

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.

Philippians 2:3-4

**OBSERVATION**

Paul continued his plea for unity among the Philippians by presenting them with a radically new way of relating to each other. Instead of looking out for their own wellbeing, they were to consider others as more important. This would require humility. They lived in a culture where looking out for oneself was acceptable, if not expected. Paul, however, challenged them to put aside their selfish opinions and instead, elevate others to a place above themselves.

**APPLICATION**

How would your relationships change if you adopted this way of viewing and treating others? How would your family be different if you quit worrying about your needs and concentrated on serving the interests of your spouse? Or your kids? Or your parents? What would this look like in your work place? Or in your role in the church?

(My personal application)

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**PRAYER**

Ask God to open your eyes to the needs and interests of others.

(My personal prayer)

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## DAY 14

### SCRIPTURE

You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had. Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. 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.

Philippians 2:5-8

### OBSERVATION

In case the Philippians thought they were above looking out for the interests of others, he reminded them of the example of Jesus. Jesus was God. He was with God the Father from the beginning. Yet he did not cling to his glory, but willingly gave it up to become a servant for us. Not only did he humble himself by coming to live among us, he obediently lowered himself to the point of experiencing the most gruesome form of death imaginable – all to serve us.

### APPLICATION

Paul seems to be saying that the humility required to serve others is often an act of obedience to God. It is a decision of the mind. We may have to choose to walk away from what is easy and natural to do what is right. What might you have to choose to give up in order to serve the interests of the other people in your life?

(My personal application)

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### PRAYER

Take some time to thank Jesus for his decision to be obedient and for the example of humility he is to you.

(My personal prayer)

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**DAY 15**

**SCRIPTURE**

Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honor and gave him the name above all other names, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue declare that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Philippians 2:9-11

**OBSERVATION**

Paul continued his discussion of the example of Jesus. He pointed out that God exalted Jesus for dying on the cross to serve us. As a result, the day will come when everyone Jesus came to serve will bow down and claim him as Lord. In turn, that day will bring the Father great glory.

**APPLICATION**

Humbly serving others results in blessing and honor. However, honor and glory is not our motivation. Our goal is humble obedience to God through serving others. The resulting honor from God is a wonderful consequence. Who is God asking you to humbly serve today?

(My personal application)

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**PRAYER**

Talk to God about how you are looking forward to the day when you get to see Jesus. Marvel at how he was elevated as a result of his dying for your sins.

(My personal prayer)

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**DAY 16**

**SCRIPTURE**

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. For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him.

Philippians 2:12-13

**OBSERVATION**

These verses are still addressing Paul's plea to consider others as more important. He encouraged them to continue to be obedient in this area. For Paul, such behavior toward each other was the greatest evidence of their salvation. Paul understood God's will was for believers to serve each other. God was at work adjusting their hearts and attitudes in this regard. They, in turn, needed to respond in reverence to God by behaving accordingly.

**APPLICATION**

What steps or actions do you need to take today to align your behavior to God's desire for you to serve the interests of others?

(My personal application)

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**PRAYER**

Ask God to work in and through you his will and his pleasure with regard to serving others.

(My personal prayer)

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**DAY 17**

**SCRIPTURE**

Do everything without complaining and arguing, so that no one can criticize you. Live clean, innocent lives as children of God, shining like bright lights in a world full of crooked and perverse people. Hold firmly to the word of life; then, on the day of Christ's return, I will be proud that I did not run the race in vain and that my work was not useless.

Philippians 2:14-16

**OBSERVATION**

Paul wanted the Philippians to impact their world with the gospel. He hated the thought that the time and effort he had invested in them might be wasted. Rather, he wanted to be proud of them at Jesus' return for who they had become and the impact they had made for Christ. To be complaining, arguing, grumbling, and questioning each other was the opposite of being unified in Christ and serving the interests of each other. Paul knew that such behavior would not stand out in a world already full of crooked and depraved people.

**APPLICATION**

Have you ever stopped to think that the attitude and behaviors you exhibit toward others, especially fellow believers, could be impacting someone else's response to the gospel of Christ?

(My personal application)

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**PRAYER**

Talk to the Lord about the kind of person you hope he finds you to be when he returns.

(My personal prayer)

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## DAY 18

### SCRIPTURE

But I will rejoice even if I lose my life, pouring it out like a liquid offering to God, just like your faithful service is an offering to God. And I want all of you to share that joy. Yes, you should rejoice, and I will share your joy.

Philippians 2:17-18

### OBSERVATION

In both the pagan and Jewish world of Paul's day, sacrifices were usually accompanied and completed by a drink of wine ("drink offering"), which was either poured out on the main sacrifice or at the foot of the altar. Here Paul recognized the very real possibility that he might be put to death. If so, he wanted the Philippians to view his death as a "drink offering" that completed their sacrifice and service. In other words, he was commending them for standing firm in their faith and for their sacrificial act of serving him the way that they had. If it came to it, he would be proud to complete their sacrifice through martyrdom. He urged them to view such a fate in the same way. He wanted them to be glad and rejoice that he could give all that he had for Christ and the church.

### APPLICATION

Is there a limit as to what you could rejoice about? If serving the Lord required you or someone else great hardship, even death, would you be able to "be glad and rejoice"?

(My personal application)

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### PRAYER

Ask God to give you a glad heart and a rejoicing spirit.

(My personal prayer)

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**DAY 19**

**SCRIPTURE**

If the Lord Jesus is willing, I hope to send Timothy to you soon for a visit. Then he can cheer me up by telling me how you are getting along. I have no one else like Timothy, who genuinely cares about your welfare. All the others care only for themselves and not for what matters to Jesus Christ. But you know how Timothy has proved himself. Like a son with his father, he has served with me in preaching the Good News. I hope to send him to you just as soon as I find out what is going to happen to me here. And I have confidence from the Lord that I myself will come to see you soon.

Philippians 2:19-24

**OBSERVATION**

Paul was a spiritual father and mentor to Timothy. Timothy had been with him when Paul brought the gospel to the Philippians. He apparently was still with Paul, yet he himself was not being held in prison. So Paul hoped to send Timothy back to Philippi to serve the believers there. He knew Timothy was committed to the interests of Jesus and would serve the Philippians well in Paul's absence.

**APPLICATION**

Do you have a "spiritual mentor"? Perhaps someone you look up to that walks faithfully with God? Is there someone who needs you to pour into their life as a kind of "spiritual mentor" or guide?

(My personal application)

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**PRAYER**

Pray that God would give you a person who models spiritual maturity or show you someone you can encourage and pour into.

(My personal prayer)

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## DAY 20

### SCRIPTURE

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. I am sending him because he has been longing to see you, and he was very distressed that you heard he was ill. And he certainly was ill; in fact, he almost died. But God had mercy on him—and also on me, so that I would not have one sorrow after another. So I am all the more anxious to send him back to you, for I know you will be glad to see him, and then I will not be so worried about you. Welcome him in the Lord's 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.

Philippians 2:25-30

### OBSERVATION

Epaphroditus had been sent by the Philippians to bring supplies and gifts to Paul. Apparently, he had also stayed with Paul to minister to him. However, Epaphroditus had become ill and nearly died. Paul was relieved that he had not died, as that would have added to the sorrow of Paul's current circumstances. The Philippians had received news about Epaphroditus' illness and were worried about him. So Paul sent him back to Philippi with much appreciation for the sacrifice Epaphroditus had made on behalf of both Paul and the Philippian church.

### APPLICATION

Like Epaphroditus, is God asking you to go somewhere to represent Christ that might be challenging? Or could he be asking you to support someone else by providing supplies or funding?

(My personal application)

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### PRAYER

Talk to the Lord about how he would want to use you in support of a mission endeavor of some sort.

(My personal prayer)

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## DAY 21

### SCRIPTURE

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. Watch out for those dogs, those people who do evil, those mutilators who say you must be circumcised to be saved. For we who worship by the Spirit of God are the ones who are truly circumcised. We rely on what Christ Jesus has done for us. We put no confidence in human effort.

Philippians 3:1-3

### OBSERVATION

Paul turns a corner in his letter to address a growing problem facing the churches of his day. Some were teaching that non-Jewish Christians must be circumcised and keep the Jewish law. Paul warns them to beware of such "dogs" - as he calls them. Yet he doesn't treat this matter as a burden to pull him or the Philippians down. He encourages them to keep an attitude of rejoicing in the Lord. He reminds them that true circumcision is a spiritual reality, not a physical one. Those who trust in Christ are already circumcised in a spiritual sense. There is nothing more they need to do.

### APPLICATION

No one is suggesting Christians be circumcised today, but there are many other issues or behaviors people say Christians must or must not do in order to be right with Jesus. What legalistic requirements have you felt imposed upon you to make you a "good" Christian? Are there any requirements you are imposing on other believers?

(My personal application)

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### PRAYER

Write out a prayer expressing your joy in the Lord that Jesus did everything needed for you to be right in God's eyes.

(My personal prayer)

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## DAY 22

### SCRIPTURE

Though I could have confidence in my own effort if anyone could. Indeed, if others have reason for confidence in their own efforts, I have even more! I was circumcised when I was eight days old. I am a pure-blooded citizen of Israel and a member of the tribe of Benjamin—a real Hebrew if there ever was one! I was a member of the Pharisees, who demand the strictest obedience to the Jewish law. I was so zealous that I harshly persecuted the church. And as for righteousness, I obeyed the law without fault.

Philippians 3:4-6

### OBSERVATION

Paul engaged the debate with those teaching that Christians had to keep the Jewish law. He pointed out his own credentials as being as “good” of a Jew as anyone. He was a super-Jew. When it came to keeping to law, no one could find fault with him. In the verses to follow, he will gather up all of these works and appearances and throw them in the trash.

### APPLICATION

Take an inventory of your life. Be honest. What are the things you have done or are doing that make you feel better as a Christian?

(My personal application)

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### PRAYER

Confess to God your pride in your acts of self-righteousness. Ask him to help you put all your confidence solely in Jesus.

(My personal prayer)

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**DAY 23**

**SCRIPTURE**

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 and become one with him. I no longer count on my own righteousness through obeying the law; rather, I become righteous through faith in Christ. For God's way of making us right with himself depends on faith.

Philippians 3:7-9

**OBSERVATION**

When it came to being right with God, Paul had more going for him than anyone else. However, he considered it all as worthless – like trash. He realized that true righteousness came only from being in a relationship with Christ. Being right with God could never come from doing good things. It came from believing in Jesus Christ.

**APPLICATION**

Righteousness is by faith, not things we do or don't do. God imparts it to us when we believe in Jesus Christ. What we could not earn is given to us as a gift. Do you view yourself as righteous in God's eyes?

(My personal application)

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**PRAYER**

Talk to God about what it means to be found in Christ, not having a righteousness of your own, but a righteousness that comes through faith in Christ.

(My personal prayer)

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**DAY 24**

**SCRIPTURE**

I want to know Christ and experience the mighty power that raised him from the dead. I want to suffer with him, sharing in his death, so that one way or another I will experience the resurrection from the dead!

Philippians 3:10-11

**OBSERVATION**

Paul states his ultimate goal: He wants to experience fully what it means to be in Christ. That is, he wants to know Jesus intimately and experience in himself the same power that raised Jesus from the dead. He is so sold out to Christ that he is willing to suffer and even die as Jesus did. Ultimately, the reality of the resurrected life is his goal and purpose.

**APPLICATION**

As believers in Christ, our ultimate destiny is our resurrected existence in the presence of Jesus. Eternity is all Jesus all the time. Are you moving toward that reality in your relationship with him today?

(My personal application)

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**PRAYER**

Talk to Jesus about how you picture what it will be like to be in his presence someday.

(My personal prayer)

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**DAY 25**

**SCRIPTURE**

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.

Philippians 3:12-14

**OBSERVATION**

Paul continued his thoughts on knowing Christ. He desired to know Christ in this present life with the same intimacy that he would know him in heaven. He admitted he was a long way from that perfect reality, but he would live his life straining toward such perfect relationship with Jesus. That was his destiny; it was the very reason that Jesus saved him. Therefore, without looking back he would press on toward the reality of that destiny.

**APPLICATION**

Do you view your life as a race toward the prize of perfect fellowship with Jesus? What are some of the distractions you face that take your eyes off of that finish line?

(My personal application)

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**PRAYER**

Ask the Lord to help you as you nurture your relationship with Jesus.

(My personal prayer)

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**DAY 26**

**SCRIPTURE**

Let all who are spiritually mature agree on these things. If you disagree on some point, I believe God will make it plain to you. But we must hold on to the progress we have already made.

Philippians 3:15-16

**OBSERVATION**

Paul was so convinced every believer should have the same mindset of desiring intimacy with Jesus that he was confident God would correct those who thought otherwise. In other words, Paul believed that maturing believers would eventually come to the same understanding and intensity about their relationship with Jesus. However, knowing how easy it was to take one's eyes off the prize, he urged them to maintain their fellowship with Jesus and not lose ground.

**APPLICATION**

Are you growing in your relationship with Jesus or losing ground? What is one thing you could incorporate into your life to help you grow in your relationship with Jesus?

(My personal application)

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**PRAYER**

Talk to Jesus about the state of your relationship with him.

(My personal prayer)

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**DAY 27**

**SCRIPTURE**

Dear brothers and sisters, pattern your lives after mine, and learn from those who follow our example. For I have told you often before, and I say it again with tears in my eyes, that there are many whose conduct shows they are really enemies of the cross of Christ. They are headed for destruction. Their god is their appetite, they brag about shameful things, and they think only about this life here on earth.

Philippians 3:17-19

**OBSERVATION**

Paul knew that in this life building an intimate relationship with Jesus was hard. There were a lot of earthly things that would distract the Philippians from the important matter of knowing Christ. There were even false teachers who would try to lead them away from that purpose. So, Paul encouraged them to follow him, and others like him, as examples of how to live out their faith.

**APPLICATION**

It's really easy to put Paul on a pedestal and think that we could never be like him. Yet he tells us to imitate him. That means his example is not too hard to follow. However, the bigger point here is that we need examples to imitate. We need others who will model for us a life in pursuit of Jesus. Who in your life could you imitate as you pursue Jesus?

(My personal application)

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**PRAYER**

Ask God to show you someone to imitate as a follower of Christ.

(My personal prayer)

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**DAY 28**

**SCRIPTURE**

But we are citizens of heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives. And we are eagerly waiting for him to return as our Savior. He will take our weak mortal bodies and change them into glorious bodies like his own, using the same power with which he will bring everything under his control.

Philippians 3:20-21

**OBSERVATION**

Paul again reminded the believers of their destiny: they were already citizens of heaven. Someday Jesus would return and when he did their earthly bodies would be changed into the same kind of body as that of the resurrected Jesus.

**APPLICATION**

When you think about the reality that your ultimate destiny is that of a person with a new body living as a citizen of heaven in perfect relationship with Jesus, how does that affect your thinking about life now?

(My personal application)

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**PRAYER**

Take some time to write out a prayer of thanksgiving to Jesus for making your eternal destiny possible.

(My personal prayer)

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**DAY 29**

**SCRIPTURE**

Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stay true to the Lord. I love you and long to see you, dear friends, for you are my joy and the crown I receive for my work.

Philippians 4:1

**OBSERVATION**

Even though in our Bibles this verse begins a new chapter, in Paul's original letter it was a continuation of the previous paragraph. The word "Therefore" is the linking conjunction. Since their destiny is heaven and they will participate in the same renewal process of their bodies as Jesus, this ought to cause them to stand firm in their faith, regardless of the pressures they face. Paul's longing is to present them to Jesus as a church that has stood firm in their faith. For Paul that would be a crown of victory for him.

**APPLICATION**

Have you ever considered that you have a role in ensuring that your church stands firm in the faith? Do you view the returning of Jesus and your entry into heaven as an individual victory or a corporate church victory?

(My personal application)

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**PRAYER**

Ask God to show you how to live more as a believer in partnership with the church.

(My personal prayer)

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**DAY 30**

**SCRIPTURE**

Now I appeal to Euodia and Syntyche. Please, because you belong to the Lord, settle your disagreement. And I ask you, my true partner, to help these two women, for they worked hard with me in telling others the Good News. They worked along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are written in the Book of Life.

Philippians 4:2-3

**OBSERVATION**

Paul had learned that two women, Euodia and Syntyche, had been in disagreement with each other. Perhaps he has had them in mind all along, as he has been addressing the issue of unity throughout his letter. He urges both of them to find common ground in their thinking. That common ground is in the Lord. He enlists the help of another person who he addresses as “true companion” or “loyal yokefellow.” He reminds all of them that they have worked side-by-side in proclaiming the gospel and that their names are in the book of life. In other words, their dispute pales in comparison to the larger things of God, such as the gospel and their heavenly destiny.

**APPLICATION**

What dispute might you have with someone? Is your position really that important when compared to the bigger matters of proclaiming the gospel or living as citizens of heaven? What steps do you need to take to begin the process of reconciliation?

(My personal application)

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**PRAYER**

Talk to the Lord regarding who he would have you take some steps toward reconciliation.

(My personal prayer)

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**DAY 31**

**SCRIPTURE**

Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again—rejoice! Let everyone see that you are considerate in all you do. Remember, the Lord is coming soon.

Philippians 4:4-5

**OBSERVATION**

These two verses are a continuation of Paul's guidance to Euodia and Syntyche to be unified in the Lord. He points them to the Lord and encourages them to rejoice in what they have in Him. After all, the Lord is near. By doing so, their personal opinions and positions will be subdued; others will see the difference.

**APPLICATION**

It's hard to be intolerant of the positions of others when we are focusing on the good things we have in Christ. List some things for which you can rejoice in the Lord.

(My personal application)

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**PRAYER**

Ask the Lord to help you to see any conflict you may have from His perspective.

(My personal prayer)

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**DAY 32**

**SCRIPTURE**

Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:6-7

**OBSERVATION**

Again, to be true to the text we should view these verses as a continuation of Paul's advice to Euodia and Syntyche on how to resolve their conflict. They need to turn their anxiety of the dispute into prayer. Everything should be brought to the Lord in prayer. They are encouraged to petition God regarding their concerns, doing so in an attitude of thanksgiving. Paul is confident that by doing so the Lord will bring about a peace that is beyond understanding. Such peace will guard them against wrong thinking and attitudes.

**APPLICATION**

Prayer aligns our thoughts with that of Jesus. What thoughts, attitudes, fears or anxieties do you need to bring to the Lord in prayer today?

(My personal application)

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**PRAYER**

Write out a prayer of appeal to God regarding your concerns. Bring it all to Him.

(My personal prayer)

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**DAY 33**

**SCRIPTURE**

And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. 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.

Philippians 4:8

**OBSERVATION**

Paul summarizes what he has been trying to communicate concerning the attitude the Philippian believers are to have, especially in regards to one another. They are to gravitate toward and dwell on thoughts that reflect the nature of God: things that are true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, excellent, and praise-worthy.

**APPLICATION**

Our culture seems to gravitate to things that are the opposite. Standards in speech and behaviors are continually lowered, not lifted to a higher level. How do you protect your thoughts, speech and actions from being pulled down by the culture around us? What is God asking you to think differently about?

(My personal application)

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**PRAYER**

Ask God to help you focus your thoughts on godly things.

(My personal prayer)

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**DAY 34**

**SCRIPTURE**

Keep putting into practice all you learned and received from me—everything you heard from me and saw me doing. Then the God of peace will be with you.

Philippians 4:9

**OBSERVATION**

Paul has experienced the peace of God in his life as he pursues knowing Christ to the full. He wants for the Philippians what he has experienced himself. Therefore, he offers himself as a model to imitate.

**APPLICATION**

We all need someone to look to as a good example of one who lives for Christ. Who is your spiritual model? Are you becoming a good model for someone else?

(My personal application)

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**PRAYER**

Ask God to reveal a good spiritual model for you to follow and to shape you into a model for someone else.

(My personal prayer)

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**DAY 35**

**SCRIPTURE**

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.

Philippians 4:10

**OBSERVATION**

Paul wants them to know how happy he is that the Philippians were able to send gifts to Paul to meet his needs while in prison. Apparently, they had wanted to do so earlier but for some reason had been prevented from doing so. As we will see in the coming verses, Paul's joy is based more on the Philippians' willingness to be generous than his need for what they sent.

**APPLICATION**

Is there someone who would be encouraged by an act of support from you? What could you do to encourage someone today?

(My personal application)

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**PRAYER**

Ask the Lord to show you how you could encourage someone through an expression of support.

(My personal prayer)

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**DAY 36**

**SCRIPTURE**

Not that I was ever in need, for I have learned how to be content with whatever I have. I know how to live on almost nothing or with everything. I have learned the secret of living in every situation, whether it is with a full stomach or empty, with plenty or little. For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength.

Philippians 4:11-13

**OBSERVATION**

Paul has experienced almost every kind of circumstance: shipwrecks, hunger, thirst, sleep deprivation, floggings, imprisonments (see 2 Corinthians 10:23-27), as well as times of plenty and abundance. Through it all, the Lord has given him strength to endure. As a consequence, Paul has learned that his real provision comes from Christ. Therefore, he can be content in any situation.

**APPLICATION**

Are you prone to be discontent in your circumstances? What does Paul's experience teach you?

(My personal application)

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**PRAYER**

Ask Jesus to reveal himself to you and to give you his strength in your areas of discontent.

(My personal prayer)

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**DAY 37**

**SCRIPTURE**

Even so, you have done well to share with me in my present difficulty. As you know, you Philippians were the only ones who gave me financial help when I first brought you the Good News and then traveled on from Macedonia. No other church did this. Even when I was in Thessalonica you sent help more than once.

Philippians 4:14-16

**OBSERVATION**

Paul viewed the long-term, consistent generosity of the Philippian church as a partnership. They had come to his aid again and again as he experienced the trials and sufferings of being a messenger of the gospel. Apparently, they were the only church who had kept track of him and aided him. In fact, the Philippian church began their partnership with him almost immediately. When Paul brought the gospel to Philippi, he was only there for "several days" before the magistrates asked him to leave the city. He travel next to Thessalonica (Acts 16:39-17:1). Even though the church in Philippi would have only been a handful of fledgling believers, they immediately began to support Paul.

**APPLICATION**

There are people all over the world who God has raised up to take the gospel message. They give up a great deal and risk much to be obedient to this call. The consistent, long-term support of others brings these servants great joy. Are you consistently and faithfully supporting one of these? How could you contribute to your church's mission efforts?

(My personal application)

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**PRAYER**

Talk to the Lord regarding your investment into the ministry of others.

(My personal prayer)

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**DAY 38**

**SCRIPTURE**

I don't say this because I want a gift from you. Rather, I want you to receive a reward for your kindness. At the moment I have all I need—and more! I am generously supplied with the gifts you sent me with Epaphroditus. They are a sweet-smelling sacrifice that is acceptable and pleasing to God.

Philippians 4:17-18

**OBSERVATION**

Paul never asked others to help him financially. He was content in trusting the Lord for sufficient provision. He already stated his confidence that God would give him the strength to meet any circumstance he would face. Yet, Paul did desire to see the generosity of the Philippians because he knew what they gave would be stored up in the heavenly realms and credited to them. Their gifts and supplies brought to him by Epaphroditus was seen by the Lord as a pleasing sacrifice of worship.

**APPLICATION**

Like the Philippians, our generosity toward ministry should not be motivated by the benefit we will receive. However, there is a direct correlation between what is credited to our heavenly account and God's pleasure with these acts of sacrifice. How would you rate your generosity account? Do you associate giving as an act of worship to the Lord?

(My personal application)

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**PRAYER**

Talk to the Lord regarding the level of investment he would have you make in his kingdom work.

(My personal prayer)

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**DAY 39**

**SCRIPTURE**

And this same God who takes care of me will supply all your needs from his glorious riches, which have been given to us in Christ Jesus. Now all glory to God our Father forever and ever! Amen.

Philippians 4:19-20

**OBSERVATION**

Paul wanted the Philippians to know that they would not go lacking because of what they gave. In fact, he was confident that God would supply them with whatever they needed. Even though Paul could not personally reimburse them, he knew that the Lord had unlimited riches by which to do so.

**APPLICATION**

Concern for our provision should not hinder our generosity in giving to God's work. Jesus Christ has all the riches in heaven at his disposal to provide for our needs. And he will provide them. How does this understanding impact you today?

(My personal application)

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**PRAYER**

Ask the Lord to be the provider of your daily needs.

(My personal prayer)

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**DAY 40**

**SCRIPTURE**

Give my greetings to each of God's holy people—all who belong to Christ Jesus. The brothers who are with me send you their greetings. And all the rest of God's people send you greetings, too, especially those in Caesar's household. May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

Philippians 4:21-23

**OBSERVATION**

Paul was taken to Rome as a prisoner in order to present his case before Caesar. In these verses the providential hand of God is evident – some of Caesar's own family members and servants had become believers. God used the sufferings of Paul to bring the gospel to the inner most circles of Roman power. As a result, Caesar's own household was sending greetings to the Philippian church!

**APPLICATION**

Every believer we meet is a miracle of God's providential work. Because of this, we have immediate fellowship and a reason to celebrate with every other believer in the world. Who needs you to celebrate the hand of God on their life?

(My personal application)

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**PRAYER**

Ask God to reveal to you other believers who could use the encouragement of your presence.

(My personal prayer)

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